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A DESCRIPTION OF WRITING CURRICULUM IN FOUR CLASSROOMS

By

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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTION OF WRITING CURRICULUM IN FOUR CLASSROOMS

By

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This study was a description of how writing curriculum was enacted in four classrooms of one school district. The associated research involved ascertaining operant definitions of writing, investigating curriculum and curriculum change, analyzing student writing, and determining various influences recognized by the teachers of writing.

The methodology used included participant-observation over a two-year period, analysis of still photographs, and both formal and informal interviews with certain individuals in these settings, including teachers, students, and administrators.

Writing was found to occupy instructional time at all sites, but nevertheless was defined in several contrasting ways at different sites and by different participants. In several sites, the definitions of writing seemed to originate with the classroom teacher and be unique to that setting; however, at one site (an elementary school), both the definition and the practice of writing were consistent from one room to another. Also at this school was evidence of schoolwide emphasis on writing.

An investigation into the causes for this emphasis in the school and in the individual classrooms pointed to several likely causes, including the nature of that particular school setting and the professional background of that school's principal. In the other schools, however, the enacted writing curriculum was a result of other factors, including workload and the background of the writing teachers.

This study of writing and writing curriculum indicated that curriculum change should consider writing's varying definitions and should be based on qualitative research into the actual, enacted classroom writing curriculum.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The last several years of education have offered many reports critical of the process and product of our schools. A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) first riveted the public's attention with the now-famous sentence, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people." Then, at least partially due to the widespread media coverage these reports received, these "school problems" evolved into "public problems." Increasingly, they were seen as responsible for everything from escalating crime rates to a widening trade deficit, from a stolen car to a lost job.

Curriculum

In dramatizing the magnitude of this problem in our "educational foundations," the authors of A Nation at Risk illustrated copiously, telling of the cost of inadequate education, the inability of our high school graduates to cope with work demands, and the doubtful capacity of our country to compete in world markets. In addition, other national reports (at least ten "major releases" in 1983 alone, as well as "dozens of state task

force reports, interim studies and articles about school renewal, effective schools, business-school partnerships or ways to meet the educational needs of a rapidly changing society" [Education Committee of the States, 1983]) took into consideration the complexity of this educational "erosion"--that any "quick fix" of simplistic solutions would face failure, that many educational problems were actually rooted in the "foundations" of theory and practice; that schools and educators, actually, are complex organisms subject to a myriad of internal and external pressures.

In agreement with this notion of schooling's complexity, recent writers have noted that teachers are driven more to keep students and classes minimally disruptive rather than driven to "educate them" in the more traditional sense of teaching them to read and write (Cusick, 1983). One message is that the total school experience--the total school "curriculum"--is as variable, reactive, and complex as a higher-order living organism, and the nature of the school curriculum is frequently determined by more than a simple desire to educate. The classroom teacher is, rather, receptive to different influences emanating from varying sources that affect what he teaches within the individual classroom, and the product of this many-pressured teacher's classroom might understandably not jibe with the public's preconceptions of accomplishment and literacy.

Literacy

In fact, this product of our public schools is sometimes illiterate. A widely used measure of literacy (Hunter & Harmon,

1979) recently proclaimed that 57 million Americans lack the skills --learning, reading, arguing, and writing--that would enable them to function fully in our society. Although not all of this number were high school graduates, most of them were to some extent products of our public schools, and

> . . . The aggregate message of all the statistics is more important than their specific accuracy. A much larger proportion of the U.S. population than had until recently been known or assumed suffers serious disadvantage because of limited educational attainment. In this country persons with limited education are often the same persons who suffer from one or more of the other major social disadvantages--poverty, unemployment, racial or ethnic discrimination, social isolation. Inadequate education will probably be only one manifestation of their deprivation. The greater the number of those disadvantages, the more serious the suffering for members of our society in which one's worth is judged by one's job, possessions, and credentials. (Hunter & Harmon, 1979)

To summarize to this point, there is an array of problems extant in our schools, there is increased public awareness of these problems, and there are analyses that argue the complex nature both of the schools and of the solutions to these educational problems.

Writing

Literacy, a term that appears with predictable frequency in these school analyses, was defined as Hunter and Harmon as the possession of the skills "necessary to get along within one's environment," and those skills the people themselves deem necessary for a fulfilling life. Judy (1980) elaborated on the second part of this definition:

> . . . Reading and writing instruction represents far more than mere decoding and encoding of print. Unlike any other subject in the curriculum, English historically has carried an enormous load of social, academic, cultural, and intellectual

> expectations. Learning English, it is said, will make you wise, get you a job, teach you etiquette, make you a virtuous person, fill you with culture. It will do nothing less than make you a full person, socially acceptable at that. These are, to put in mildly, great expectations.

Any discussion of education should, then, necessarily involve literacy and will additionally involve writing, in that writing is both a symbol of literacy and education, and writing is an enabler, a tool for other educational accomplishments. Accordingly, basic literacy for all citizens is a frequently stated universal goal (Judy, 1980) and, as noted previously, supersedes a purely academic definition in that it will help make one a "full person" who finds it possible to live up to his potential. Writing, then, is logically a worthy aspect of education and literacy for study, one of wide recognition and universal significance.

Realistically, then, responding to an important but unmanageably immense and vague issue concerning this erosion in our "educational foundations" might be impossible. Responding to a specific, important aspect of an educational problem, writing (and the related issue of curriculum, how writing is presented in the schools) is somewhat more manageable, yet still of momentous importance both in responding to criticism of education and suggesting changes in policy that will result in a better-educated, more literate populace. As Chorny (1984) stated in a recent article in English Education:

> The basic challenge for future research in English education is in the continuing exploration of how children and students grow in language and of how they learn and develop through the use of language in and out of school.

Background

I hope that my description of language study in four classrooms will provide some answers in these related problem areas: writing, curriculum, literacy, and education.

I would like to offer some general background to this study. Initially, I entered the research site, an elementary school, with a plan to observe how the students wrote and what kind of writing product they turned out. As time went by, this focus grew to include the notion of just how this subject matter of writing was presented in the classrooms as a writing curriculum and what contrasts, if any, existed between what the teacher said she was teaching, what the students thought they actually learned, and what I observed being taught. About the time of my initial observations at this school, I was enrolled in graduate curriculum classes and simultaneously became interested in the heuristic of curriculum presented by Goodlad (1979), which not only piqued my curiosity but insightfully described some situations I encountered in my classroom observations.

An additional result of this blend of my experiences during initial "days in the field" as a participant-observer with associated readings I performed during course work, I became interested in how classrooms functioned as units, sometimes seemingly maintaining a unique personality, sometimes not. Oftentimes, it seemed that a classroom--even when I did not analyze the written production of the students--"taught" lessons with some consistency. In other words, the arrangement of furniture, time

schedules, processes, social interactions of the teacher and students, and bulletin board displays presented a subtle but effective daily "curriculum" that contained perceivable messages for all who entered the classroom. And while this more subtle level of curriculum had an independent message of its own, it also affected the enactment of the more consciously conceived writing curriculum previously mentioned.

How did these more subtle formulations of curriculum originate? How did they contribute to the life of the classroom? As I read, the term "classroom ecology" seemed to be used in the education literature to represent this characteristic of classroom life that intrigued me.

I not only made some initial conceptual changes in the scope of my research, but I expanded my observation sites as well. I came to include one more classroom at the elementary level (for a total of two) and added one at the junior high level and one at the senior high. In that I was in four "writing" classrooms, many differences --in writing curriculum, in classroom ecology--soon became apparent. My contrasting observational experiences became sort of a "conceptual lever," as differences in situations caused me to awaken to a myriad of possibilities for further exploration: What caused these differences? Were there consistencies from one classroom in the same school to another? Why? Was it really true that individual classrooms functioned as independent units--especially after the doors were closed? In what proved to be jarring contrasts

in curriculum, classroom ecology, teaching techniques, and so on, what were the pressures and influences that determined what writing curriculum occurred daily?

So my work evolved as a natural consequence of two strands of influences that recurred over a two-year period. The first was my series of observations in public-school writing classes; the second was my related course work for my doctoral program. I grew intellectually and conceptually as a result of this combination. No one influence was more predominant: The blend and the timing were healthy, with one strand of influence always able to feed off the other. For example, if I encountered a situation during my observations that was interesting or noteworthy, it seemed something I heard in my graduate class would help me understand it, and I would return to my observation site the day after my class armed with notes and ideas to serve as a framework for my fieldnotes. Conversely, I was repeatedly able to bring direct observations of the public-school classrooms to bear in my graduate classes. This "reality therapy" to what seemed sometimes a glut of theory made these graduate classroom discussions more understandable and more useful.

Therefore, my study is centered on the real life of four public-school classrooms, but it relates to the conceptual areas of curriculum, classroom ecology, writing, and content determinants. These four areas, although intertwined in the daily life of the classroom, have been given distinct treatment by several researchers. Goodlad (1979) spelled out the existence of

"distinctly different curricula," even within the confines of one educational unit. Basically, Goodlad proposed that these different curricula coexist and are recognized by different agents in the educational process. If the classroom and the curriculum have this organic, multilayered "thumbprint" of individuality, how does the writing curriculum in different classrooms take shape and substance? Do teacher (as curriculum "shaper") and student (as "consumer" of this curriculum) indicate similar perceptions of "writing," and if not, what effect does such a contrast in curricula have on the students' learning?

Implicitly important here is the question of to what degree individual classrooms are independent and insular. Several important studies have proposed that this feature exists--a historically understandable quality--affecting the nature of what occurs in classrooms (Lortie, 1975). This notion will relate to any discussion of Goodlad's "enacted" curriculum: In possible contrast to what is formally written, or assumed to happen, what curriculum does the individual classroom teacher actually enact?

Several documents have discussed the nature of the individual classroom. Specifically, they have explored the idea that "curriculum" is defined not only by what teachers and others write and say they do, but is implied and effectively "taught" by frequently overlooked features of that individual classroom. For example, in a recent article, Marshall (1987) proposed that instructors can shape this "ecology" of their classrooms. The

instructor can provide an orientation for the students as to what will happen there: work, learning, or a vague orientation that is impossible for students to ascertain. This study and several others have shown that more traditional curriculum can be affected and shaped by the teacher's manipulation of this ecology. If the teacher is aware of this characteristic of instruction, this shaping can reflect the importance of what he is trying to teach, and thus greatly facilitate desired learning outcomes.

Therefore, my study of writing curriculum involved, necessarily, a look into individual classrooms. These individual classrooms revealed curriculum on various levels, including the one the teacher enacted and the one that the students perceived--which may or may not have been similar.

The third area of interest was writing. How did writing occur in the enacted curriculum of the classrooms I observed? In a well-known study of writing, Applebee (1984a; Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1986) observed that much school writing largely ignores personal and imaginative writing, instead favoring short-answer responses that have little relationship to the real lives of the students.

Applebee, working with the National Council of Teachers of English, explored what was actually occurring in writing classrooms. He conducted a study of various high schools' ninth- and eleventh-grade classes in all subjects. He also conducted a survey of ninth- and eleventh-grade students, followed certain individual students, examined textbooks, and interviewed innovative teachers.

Applebee found that 44% of student writing was on the word and sentence level and that this percentage was uniform across subject-matter areas. Grading and class discussion were primarily on this level also. Overall, he found that there was little concern for original ideas in student writing and that only about 3% of student writing was on the text level, which he defined as three or more continuous sentences. Applebee's work, both in approach and findings, provided inspiration for my own explorations.

The fourth area of interest, content determinants, has been a focus of Michigan State University's Institute for Research on Teaching. What is it--for instance, political pressure, administrative dictate, professionalism--that influences the content of what teachers teach? In this case, what shaped the writing curriculum in each classroom?

Lortie's (1975) notion of classroom insularity and Sarason's (1982) concept of the ecology of the school and the classroom are important here, also. If the writing teachers enact a certain writing curriculum, what forces combine to shape that curriculum? As Cusick (1983) wrote, teachers feel themselves under pressure from outside to ensure that all students will have an opportunity for education and that this pressure defines the teacher's primary responsibility as keeping students in school--not teaching a particular curriculum.

Research Mode

My research mode was the result of a well-thought-out plan involving duration, method, and site selection.

I observed over 200 hours of classroom time spanning a two-year period. My time was spent in three schools: elementary, junior high, and high school, with an emphasis on elementary. (I observed two classrooms at this level.) In all cases I formally offered my services as participant, suggesting that I might help facilitate the process of regular instruction in these classrooms, rather than detract from it as an obstruction or a source of nervous tension. In addition to regular and copious note-taking, I also took photographs of classroom activity; interviewed students, teachers, and principals at each level; and collected assignments and writing samples from each site.

There are certain reasons for my reliance on naturalistic, qualitative study, a type of research defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Erickson (1979, 1986a, 1986b), and Erickson, Florio, and Buschman (1980) and practiced by many current researchers, including Florio and Clark (1982, 1984), Cusick (1983), and Erickson. First, my initial goals involved exploring enacted curriculum, as opposed to reading and hearing what was more formally written down as curriculum. Again, I was interested in what actually occurred in a writing classroom, as opposed to what someone said should occur, or what someone supposed was occurring. My role as participant-observer afforded me, I believe, with this insight. Second, I wanted to be involved in each classroom over time, in that I could

come to know the implied portion of the curriculum. That is, I wanted to be there as assignments changed, as the students grew more relaxed in my presence, as the more subtle aspects of the classroom --bulletin board displays, for instance--evolved throughout the weeks of instruction. Third, I wanted to gain a certain measure of professional respect from the teacher and the principal of each school, with the result that they would discuss curriculum with me as a trusted colleague. Finally, as an English teacher myself, I felt more relaxed and confident working with naturalistic studies, and from my own experience judged such studies to be as reliable and valid as more experimental studies, hence more likely to be read and understood. Thus, by pursuing a naturalistic approach, I hoped to produce a valid, readable work that has real potential to influence practice. My research methods, then, began with the classroom, returned regularly to other research for additional insight, and eventually returned to the classroom.

I saw myself as a researcher not unlike an anthropologist, one who, in the words of Geertz (1984), "characteristically approaches such broader interpretations and more abstract analyses from the direction of exceedingly extended acquaintances with extremely small matters." My time as a participant-observer, therefore, gave substance to developing theory. I came to realize that there is not so much an isolated subject-matter area of "writing" as there is "writing curriculum," which is given form by decision-making "professionals who exercise judgments in constructing the education

of their students" (Porter & Brophy, 1987). As these authors stated, much of the total work of Michigan State's Institute for Research on Teaching has recognized this inseparability of the teacher and education, and that "sophisticated methods of interviewing and observing teachers, development of rich descriptions of classroom processes, and frequently, information about linkages between classroom processes and student outcomes" are necessary to intelligent research on teaching and to eventual improvement in educational practice.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore several related aspects of writing curriculum in the public schools. Specifically, it was concerned with varying writing curricula coexisting within particular classrooms and a particular school district, the natures of writing curricula, and the pressures that have shaped these curricula. Four specific classrooms were at the center of this study: two elementary, one junior high, and one senior high. Differences across grade levels, differences among teachers, and salient influences within individual school settings were identified.

Significance

This study has both research significance and policy significance.

Research Significance

Goodlad's work extends across the entire field of curriculum, but this study concentrated on the limited field of writing

curriculum at four specific observation sites. Applebee's work, including his analysis of types of writing done in schools, provided a model for various aspects of this study, but this study supplements his work with particular attention to enacted and perceived curriculum, both concepts attributed to Goodlad.

This study used ideas and terminology of these two separate research works and combined them, resulting in a workable approach to describing what occurred in these contemporary writing classrooms.

Finally, once the writing curriculum is described, an attempt is made to determine why the curriculum has taken its observed, "enacted" shape. "This area of study, while strongly related to the nature of the observed writing curriculum, takes on the additional focus of analyzing the forces molding this curriculum, and the shape of this curriculum as the result of "negotiation" (Dunn, Florio-Ruane, & Clark, 1984). Whereas the initial Michigan State Content Determinants Project (Schwille et al., 1979) had elementary school mathematics as its focus, this study concentrated on selected writing teachers' perceptions of forces shaping what they teach in the classroom.

Policy Significance

Various researchers, including Applebee (1984a, 1984b), have pointed out that the typical teacher of writing has multiple teaching tasks to perform concurrently, all of them perceived to be important. The English teacher--usually seen as the primary teacher

of writing--for the last ten years has increasingly found himself under pressure from the popular press, governmental levels, school administration, and parents to perform better as a teacher of writing than he has been doing. One important accomplishment of this study was to provide data to individual writing teachers that clarify what "writing" is being taught and what aspects of classroom life provide evidence for that formulation. Thus, introduction of these basic concepts of writing and curriculum will serve to make these teachers and others aware of actual, existing curriculum and of possible strategies for change.

Specific educational-improvement strategies might grow from this increased knowledge of writing classrooms, including the planning of in-service education that would enhance teacher and student performance in the classroom, K through 12 (Fullan & Pompfret, 1977). Also, curriculum planners could consider these explorations of curriculum levels as they compose district student learning outcomes, objectives, or even a statewide mandated core curriculum. In addition, preparatory classes for English teachers might modify instruction based on the findings of this study, so that future classroom instruction would be enhanced.

Finally, this study's attention to curriculum determinants in the writing area could provide insight into the pressures felt by individual teachers and possibly offer ways of modifying or alleviating these pressures for the good of the learner and the

teacher. And here, too, educators could determine what works in facilitating writing-curriculum reform.

Research Questions

The research questions I initially proposed were these:

1. What constitutes "writing" in four writing classrooms? Does the word writing have different interpretations? Do various participants in the writing process--teacher, student, administrator--define the word differently?

2. What forms does writing take in classrooms? Do various contextual formats contribute to a recognizable pattern of writing curriculum and instruction?

3. What pressures and influences decide the individual definitions of writing? Does the individual teacher's definition change, based on influences within and without the classroom? How does she accommodate these various pressures and influences within her enacted writing curriculum?

With care, I selected four sites for study. In that writing is basic to education, and apparently taught in some form K through 12, the research sites represent the three levels of public schools: elementary, junior high, and high school. Since this study was largely qualitative, research sites had to be accessible in physical distance from each other, in distance from my office and home, and in their openness to an outsider. A special feature of this study was the presence of the researcher at the sites over a two-year period (in the case of the elementary site) and 20-week periods (at

the other two sites); therefore, accessibility in all these definitions was especially important.

In addition, the importance of the researcher's character and the related involvement of trust were involved. The primary subjects present at each site were children, and both educators and parents tend to be wary of strange adults--even with academic motives--habituating the classrooms attended by their young.

I selected research sites, therefore, on the basis of suitability, accessibility, and trust. As I had had a long relationship with a particular school district that offered all needed levels of instruction, I wrote the necessary letters and eventually received permission to study the desired groups.

Access was not trouble-free, however. Surprisingly, even though the majority of my contacts within this district were at the high school level, that level proved the most difficult. My first choice of writing class proved to have been dissolved. My second choice had a teacher who proved to be surprisingly reluctant. (She would let me in only if I promised to abstain from "back-biting" she had recently been aware of.) My third choice willingly let me in for the desired period.

The junior high level was also difficult. Again, the teachers were surprisingly reluctant to let me in--even if I promised to help them (be a "participant") in the process of instruction. One teacher said that she was just too ashamed of her class's behavior to have a visitor. Finally, though, the principal gave me a list of names, described the teachers and what he saw as their teaching

personalities to me, and led me to a teacher with a quite positive attitude toward being a subject for research.

The elementary school site was the easiest of the three in which to gain access. There were several reasons for this ease: First, I had known the principal of this school for several years. Second, we had a common interest in writing. Third, the individuals in this school had become used to observation, as the school had recently become well-known for its programs and regularly received visitors from across the state.

The four teachers themselves had gained a reputation for creativity and professionalism. This characteristic had been relayed to me informally, and also by direct communications from the specific principals. As they were outstanding educators, they were interesting to observe in that they apparently intelligently chose from a variety of approaches when they taught writing. This "thinking" quality I could translate to a "reactive" one: They continually made decisions concerning classroom content. A primary focus was, of course, to analyze just how those professional decisions about writing curriculum were made.

As the classrooms and teachers were all in the same district, my gaining copies of formal curriculum materials--documents, textbooks, objectives--was facilitated. This material proved useful in contrasting enacted and perceived levels of curriculum with the curriculum that was more formally presented.

There were other, sometimes jarring contrasts in the schools I observed. One classroom had 21 students; the school in which it was located was very small, with only 12 regular classrooms. Another site offered a classroom with only 18 students present, in a school of 700. The third school, however, offered a class size of 26, within a total school population of 1,600. The students themselves ranged from gifted to learning disabled, according to informal, anecdotal information I obtained from the teacher. I collected data on all three schools, in four classrooms.

I would like to explain just how I collected data relevant to the research questions. First, I studied writing curriculum through extensive observations of these four classrooms. I collected a corpus of notes based on these observations and added to them results from extensive interviews with participants: teachers, students, and principals. Student interviews focused on their perceived definitions of writing. Teacher interviews involved their definitions of writing and what they said they were trying to teach. Also, teacher interviews dealt with the factors that influenced them to teach writing in a given way. Principals' interviews attempted to discover the extent of their involvement with the teaching of writing and the formulation of curriculum in the schools.

I took photographs of several activities in each class, along with wall displays and seating arrangements. These photographs were used to document the nature of the context for writing curriculum in these classrooms.

I kept certain assignments given by the teachers, and certain writing samples and completed assignments of the students. Several of these assignments and writing samples are contained in the appendix to this report.

The qualitative aspect of this research involved observing and listening in order to describe a specific population. My goal was to understand writing as it occurred in these four classrooms, and to understand how writing occurred as a function of its location in the school contexts involving a particular school, teacher, principal, and situation. Much of my analysis was, therefore, in the form of reflections of a participant-observer.

Additionally, the interview results offered some specific quantitative data (e.g., repetition of certain influences) that I represented visually in synoptic charts. Also, certain data gained by observation--principally, the ratio of writing displays to available wall space--are represented by synoptic tables as well.

Overall, I attempted to triangulate my sources of data so that my assertions and conclusions might be more meaningful and valid.

Therefore, this study dealt with writing in four public-school classrooms, as well as related issues of curriculum, classroom ecology, and content determinants. My description of these classrooms and discussion of these issues should give additional understanding to those concerned with education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter contains a review of literature in several areas: writing, classroom ecology, content determinants, curriculum, and naturalistic research methods.

Writing

I initially concentrated my research on writing: how it occurs in the classroom. A reasonable logic to approaching the existing literature on writing is to begin with comprehensive overviews of research on writing, and subsequently to progress to more specific, individual studies. This organization is the one I followed in this literature review. Two exceptionally comprehensive sources dealing with writing research are Hillocks's (1984) Research on Written Composition and the portion of the third edition of the Handbook of Research on Teaching (Wittrock, 1986) dealing with written composition, written by Scardamalia and Bereiter. The former work is a metastudy of published research and certain other papers and dissertations totaling about 2,000 separate articles. In his exhaustive search for what works in writing instruction, not only did Hillocks deal with instructional implications of the studies,

but he also was critical of certain weaknesses in extant research. For example, Hillocks claimed that

> Research on the composing process has provided many valuable insights, hypotheses, and points of departure for further research. At the same time, however, it is not without problems. In the case studies, there are tendencies to present data selectively rather than systematically, to interpret data without a consistent analysis, to infer cause-and-effect relationships without adequate warrant, and to ignore the range of possible effects which the presence of researchers might have on results. (p. 51)

Some of the well-known researchers Hillocks criticized include Janet Emig (for not presenting proper "rules and categories" for data analysis; p. 53) and Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins, two members of the "New Hampshire School." The latter two researchers have made much use of the case-study approach, and Hillocks criticized several aspects of their work, including their tendency to infer cause-and-effect relationships without adequate support (p. 54). Whereas Hillocks seemed to favor the positivistic school of educational research, and Graves and Emig "have condemned all experimental research as positivistic and scientistic" (p. 246), Hillocks asserted that "if we wish to understand the processes of composing and to improve the teaching of composition, we need to use whatever modes of research are useful to learn as much as we can" (p. 246).

Hillocks's "Implications and Recommendations for Practice" in the teaching of writing offer these summaries/conclusions from this meta-analysis:

--That "environmental" instruction--as opposed to the presentational and natural process modes--is most effective. In

this mode, the instructor encourages much student interaction about compositional problems and "places priority on high levels of student involvement . . . structured problem-solving activities, with clear objectives, planned to enable students to deal with similar problems in composing" (p. 247).

--That the foci of instruction, to be most effective, should be inquiry (about "strategies for dealing with sets of data," use of scales, and sentence-combining). However, other effective foci include free writing and teaching from models. Hillocks's cogent summary of the utility of teaching traditional grammar was that "school boards, administrators, and teachers who impose the systematic study of traditional school grammar on their students over lengthy periods of time in the name of teaching writing do them a gross disservice which should not be tolerated by anyone concerned with the effective teaching of good writing" (p. 248). In other words, this focus of a "writing" class is one that "has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. Every other focus of instruction examined in this review is stronger" (p. 248).

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986), authors of the "Research on Written Composition" chapter in the Handbook of Research on Teaching, noted that writing has recently "risen from a relatively neglected school subject to an object of lively attention in both the popular and the academic media" (p. 778), and that the "'writing problem' is not a matter of a minority for whom writing is especially problematic but rather a matter of the majority" (p. 778).

The authors noted that research activity can be divided into older and newer topics. The older topics included evaluation of writing, document design, and instructional improvement. The newer topics included early development of written symbolism, discourse analysis, story grammar, basic writers, the "new" rhetoric, writing "apprehension," classroom practices, "response," and the composing process.

Some of the more noteworthy portions of this comprehensive chapter, as in Hillocks, involved a discussion of method. They noted that while both positivistic and naturalistic research methods have been used in the study of writing,

> two general approaches seem to be currently in contention as ways to bring the many strands of writing research together. One approach might be characterized as "contextual" . . . the other is a cognitive science approach, drawing broadly on the contributions of various disciplines to this hybrid science. (p. 780)

In addition, the authors echoed Hillocks's eclectic findings regarding foci of instruction when they summarized this important tenet of writing research:

> Experts and novices alike generate content partly by heuristic search, guided by knowledge of what they are looking for, and partly by associative processes that bring content spontaneously to mind. Good writing undoubtedly requires both. Novice writers, however, appear to rely more on associative processes and to lack the executive controls that would enable them to undertake heuristic searches on their own initiative. Such an analysis serves to remind us that it is the discourse production system as a whole that generates an item of text, not a particular subcomponent of it. (p. 787)

Krashen's (1984) goal in Writing: Research, Theory, and Applications was to "relate research in writing to pedagogy, to

introduce teachers and writers to empirical research on writing" (p. 2). As a result of a less comprehensive review of the literature than Hillocks's, Krashen summarized that

> self-motivated reading relates to writing, . . . that writing frequency relates to writing ability, that aspects of the writing skill can be deliberately taught, that formal grammar study does not contribute significantly to writing, and that good and poor writers have different composing processes and concerns. (p. 20)

In addition, he noted that

> We gain competence in writing the same way we gain competence in oral language; by understanding messages encoded in written language, by reading for meaning. In this way, we gain a subconscious "feel" for written language, we acquire this code as a second dialect. (p. 28)

Thus, Krashen argued for the construction of an environment that will facilitate the acquisition of written language, an environment rich with books, magazines, posters, and time to read, rather than a curriculum that emphasizes direct teaching of form, i.e., organization and grammar rules (p. 36). He repeatedly drew the parallel: A student learning to write is similar to a student learning a second (foreign) language. There are too many rules in a second language to use as a conscious and overt basis for instruction; rather, the second language must be presented as comprehensible, meaningful input.

As this literature review passes from those books and articles that primarily have attempted to give overviews of the teaching of writing, we come to James Britton (1978), one of the most respected of modern writing theorists. In one of his best-known discussions, he wrote that there are "three purposes that writing might achieve

for children in school" (p. 222). One was "that of establishing and maintaining a satisfying personal relationship with the teacher." This motive was apparently a blend of the academic and the social, and these worlds, in the eyes of the student, were embodied by the teacher. The second purpose was traditional learning: "organizing our knowledge of the world and extending it in an organized way so that it remains coherent, unified, reliable." This type of learning brought writing to bear on problems the student had relating to the external world. Finally, the third purpose was more of an artistic use of writing, in which writing was a tool for exploration and shaping of the writer's inner self, values, and the like.

Not a pure overview or theoretical article, Applebee's (1984) Contexts for Learning to Write was part of a three-and-one-half-year study supported by the National Institute of Education, describing problems in learning to write and writing instruction, and making suggestions for curriculum reform. Applebee and his associates combined a case study of two high schools (at which 13,293 minutes of instruction were observed) with a national survey of 20 schools as a basis for this study. He found that the majority of student writing was aimed at the teacher-as-examiner; other audiences for student writing (for instance, other students, a business, the general public) were generally overlooked in the typical writing classroom. The function of such writing was largely informational (as opposed to personal and imaginative), and most student writing was based on information given by the teacher or the text. Applebee

concluded that students were required to write paragraph or longer responses only about 3% of the time, and

> Even in those contexts where students were being asked to write at some length, the writing often served merely as a vehicle to test knowledge of specific content, with the teacher functioning primarily as an examiner. . . . Its relationship to the learning of new writing skills must be at best tenuous. (p. 2)

The contrast between Britton's functions of writing in schools and Applebee's findings in American schools is this: Of Britton's array of the potential uses of writing, American schools stress only the first two: writing to "get along" with the teacher and writing to learn other, external academic subjects. Little time, apparently, is spent on writing to explore inner thoughts and feelings. In fact, Applebee found that "writing" is most often the writing of words and sentences. Writing is <u>not</u> the writing of compositions, essays, articles, or even paragraphs. Finally, little time is actually spent on the student's concentrating on the study of writing in order to improve his or her written output. Rather, "writing time" is nonexistent or is designed to serve as an adjunct to other areas of study in the curriculum, and to evidence the extent of student learning in these areas.

<u>Writing Curriculum</u>

In a chapter of Applebee's book, Marshall (1984) noted that "to speak of composing processes without reference to the schooling which shapes them may be to isolate an effect from the cause" (p. 119). This statement is a provocative one that leads to thinking not just about the types of writing that occur in classrooms, but

the reasons that these types of writing occur. In other words, Marshall prompted researchers to think of writing as a part of curriculum shaped by persons who design it and enact it daily. Much work has been done in this area--individual and social shaping of subject matter in the schools--by researchers from Michigan State University's Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT).

Several of these IRT researchers working in two elementary classrooms (Clark et al., 1981) undertook a naturalistic study "of writing and its instruction" (p. 1). This study was, then, one of the process of writing instruction, one that centered not so much on writing outcomes as it delved into the social shaping of these outcomes. As this shaping occurs over time, and in actions as well as words, they thought it appropriate to use the participant-observer research technique.

The researchers found that writing does occur in school--in fact, that "writing is ubiquitous there" (p. 22). But, in contrast to Applebee's work, these researchers noted occurrences of not just formal (academic) writing, but of all occasions for writing. In fact, they found that writing occurred in a wide variety of forms and was used for a wide variety of purposes, including (a) writing to know oneself and others, (b) writing to occupy free time, (c) writing to participate in community, and (d) writing to demonstrate academic achievement. Also, they found that writing was "taught explicitly and directly" (p. 23), but not in terms of "discrete compositional or grammatical skills." Rather, writing was taught as

"development of occasions for writing" that used writing as a means to tie together contextually and socially important activities, and existed as a largely invisible, but important, part of the experienced curriculum.

In a related article, two of the same authors elaborated on the social nature of classroom writing, or "classroom literacy," noting that

> to study the processes of teaching and learning writing in the classroom was, in fact, to study the writing curriculum. Thus it was a long time before the teachers and researchers in dialogue with one another discovered the curricula for writing embedded in everyday activities in the classroom. (Florio & Clark, 1984, p. 111)

Thus, Clark et al. blended the researching of writing to several related notions: the concept of curriculum and its different levels (including the "hidden" curriculum) and the concept of classroom ecology, with all its potential for uniqueness and reactivity. Throughout their discussion, they perceived that the most suitable research method for this study of "writing" and the areas inextricably linked with writing was a naturalistic one.

A prototypical naturalistic study was that of Emig (1983), entitled "The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders." Emig studied the process of writing as expressed by several twelfth graders in a Chicago-area school. As a result of this case study, she ascertained that there were "two modes of composing--reflexive and extensive" (p. 88), with the former found more often in school. She broke down "writing" into a set of components, including context, stimuli, planning, starting, composing aloud, stopping,

contemplating, reformulating, and influence by teachers. She noted that

> The first teachers of composition--by giving certain descriptions of the composing process and by evaluating the products of student writing by highly selective criteria--set rigid parameters to students' writing behaviors in school-sponsored writing that the students find difficult to make more supple.
>
> These descriptions of the composing process differ markedly from descriptions by established writers and with the students' own accounts, conceptualizations, and practices. Students' awareness of these discrepancies leads to certain behaviors and attitudes: outward conformity but inward cynicism and hostility. (p. 90)

Emig characterized writing as experienced in American secondary schools as "a limited, and limiting, experience" (p. 92), resulting from illiterate teachers who do not write themselves, teaching in an outdated, inappropriate presentational mode, using only themselves as audience.

Emig explained her vituperative attitude (in the introduction to the above-mentioned article) by stating that, at the time of the original study, she "was not sufficiently sympathetic toward teachers in the circumstances in which they work. I tried to right the balance when I did a later interview in the English Journal" (p. 62). Seemingly, Emig gradually had become aware of the ecology of the individual classroom situation, and of the determining factors that influence the teacher and the curriculum.

Ecology of the Classroom

One classic study of ecology is Schoolteacher (Lortie, 1975). Lortie pointed out that a salient characteristic of today's classroom is its insularity and discussed how this characteristic is

a logical result of the history of United States education. "Throughout the long, formative decades of the modern school system," Lortie said, "schools were organized around teacher separation rather than teacher interdependence" (p. 14). In addition, teachers' average tenure was short. Add to these features the fact that many teachers were married women who tried to combine the profession of teacher with the realities of a traditional woman's household role, and today's classroom independence and insularity become understandable. Lortie thus explained classroom insularity, with reference to historical-sociological antecedents, and demonstrated the "connections between the ecology of schools and personal realities" (p. 17). He documented a fragmented, often-ineffective modern classroom and explained this classroom as a product of the history of the schools and teaching.

In The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, Sarason (1982) described the school as existing within an open system of pressures. He said that the school systems today are not encapsulated, but instead are subject to influences from outside: courts, laws, parents, community pressures. "It is all too easy to pinpoint a problem in schools and to propose changes within schools, unaware that the problem did not arise only in the context of schools" (p. 11). He found an irony in that most school administrators are not trained in dealing with these outside influences. Also, in most of our discussions about schools, we voice reflections of an "encapsulated school" notion, a notion that, according to Sarason, is invalid.

One of Sarason's contributions might be that of providing a metaphor that appropriated a modern image of (biological) ecology--a complex series of relationships that mutually affect one another--to explain circumstances in the schools. His discussion of these relationships, that "the existing structure of a setting or culture defines the permissible ways in which goals and problems will be approached" (p. 27), seemed to be applicable to any informed discussion of the individual writing classroom's ecology, as well.

Curriculum Influences

Cusick's (1983) case-study approach of three high schools offered specific details of "enacted curriculum" in writing classes. Much of this book's value lay in the abundance of rich description afforded by the author's role as a participant-observer, offering an eventual rendering of what many writers have termed "grounded theory." In his discussions of the ecology of the classroom, Cusick pointed out that simultaneous to classrooms existing as independent entities (as Lortie suggested), so do they also resist encapsulization and an existence independent of outside influences. He saw schools, classrooms, and curriculum as subject to this paramount pressure exerted by the whole of American thought: that all students shall have an opportunity for education. Associated with this pressure is its corollary: that the teacher's job is to keep these students in class, in school, and if he/she does so without disruption in the school's equilibrium, he/she is judged as an adequate teacher.

Cusick also elaborated on the apparent autonomy of observed classrooms. Any changes in curriculum, he noted, "came from individuals following their own predilections" (p. 84), and not from working relationships among teachers, or among teachers and other groups of the educational hierarchy. He also noted that "what was published and advertised" in curriculum documents "gave no hint as to what went on in class" (p. 84).

Applebee (1984a) discussed the writing process as he saw it enacted within individual classrooms in the Midwest. He said that "while students may come to school with some attitudes and practices already in place, these attitudes and practices are influenced greatly by the school environment" (p. 118). And he saw this environment in part as social: "The nature of the writing students are asked to produce, the instruction they are given, and the responses they receive must have dramatic impact" (p. 118) on the curriculum experienced by these students. Like Florio, Clark, and others, Applebee underscored the socially negotiated nature of the school curriculum.

Marshall (1987) was especially attentive to shaping behaviors: how instructors can shape the ecology of their classrooms. His suggestions included the teacher's establishing "orientations," including work, learning, or no orientation. By formulating specific strategies--framing lessons, attention focus, error treatment--a teacher can consciously establish a positive classroom ecology. Marshall, like Applebee, attempted to establish the

importance of recording and analyzing teacher-student interactions, in that these interactions greatly influence the quality of classroom instruction.

Taylor, Blum, and Logsdon (1986) wrote that learning to read can be positively influenced by adjusting the school environment to reflect richness in print and language. In this study, they analyzed early childhood education and confronted the problem of identifying critical variables "that can compensate for a lack of early literacy exposure" (p. 133). Specifically, they found that written language displays, storybooks, class schedules, rules, and so on, that were displayed in accessible, important locations in the classroom marked significant manipulations of classroom ecology that positively affected children's learning to read.

Classroom environment is not only important for preschoolers learning to read, but it is just as important for "exceptional children, for whom learning to read and write is frequently a struggle" (Dudley-Marling & Rhodes, 1986, p. 289). By prominently displaying meaningful print, the teacher demonstrates to students that "print is interesting and worth exploring" (p. 290). Teachers can also manipulate the classroom environment by reading and writing in view of their students, reading aloud, and so on. In this view of ecology, the authors included "assignments, teacher behavior, and the physical environment of the classroom" (p. 290).

Donald Graves (1984) (from the New Hampshire school of writing researchers, mentioned earlier) set down some guidelines for a flourishing writing classroom. Major components of this environment

included the teacher's serving as model (because students "rarely observe adults in the act of writing"), managing the classroom well (because students need to respond individually to urges and needs to write), and establishing a positive physical and psychological environment (p. 22). All of these subtle factors, Graves said, contribute to the writing curriculum as experienced by the student. The implication is that such factors, by their apparent subtlety, often go unnoticed to the detriment of teaching of writing. Conversely, if the teacher attends to them, they can strengthen the writing curriculum.

Content Determinants

What were the subtle and the not-so-subtle factors that influenced curricular decisions? What affected the way teachers teach, and the content of that teaching? That was the focus of the content-determinants project, a series of related research and publications produced by scholars at Michigan State University's Institute for Research on Teaching. Porter and Brophy (1987), in a summary of the Institute's work to that date, highlighted the findings on teacher thinking and content determinants:

> --Teachers' routines are included along with teachers' conscious planning and interactive decision making as determinants of instruction. Many teacher practices occur not because they are consciously planned but because routines developed through prior experience are activated automatically in relevant situations. . . .
>
> --. . . Some aspects of instruction occur in response to external pressures rather than to the teacher's own ideas about what is appropriate.

--Direct influences (power) and indirect influences (persuasion) are distinguished to explain why, for example, some teachers continue to teach in a way that is consistent with a policy even after that policy has been terminated, whereas other teachers will resist compliance with a policy or will comply with it only so long as it is in effect and backed by sanctions.

--Personal experiences, especially teachers' own experiences as students, are represented as important determinants of how teachers think and what they do.

--Teachers' thoughts and actions are represented as dynamic, reflecting the fact that teachers can and do learn from experience. (p. 6)

Generally, content-determinants research has explored the "dilemmas" in teachers' "enduring problems of practice--problems that are inherent in the fact that teachers are charged with simultaneously meeting the needs of 25 or 30 students, while working within the resource limits and constraints typically found in schools" (Porter & Brophy, 1987, p. 7). Research has indicated that teachers frequently are overwhelmed with possible goals and, to cope, "simplify their work environment by focusing their efforts" (p. 8).

In Schwille et al.'s (1979) discussion of the sociological perspectives of content determinants, they highlighted their exploration of "the school as a social institution" (p. 2). In a discussion of Britain's "new sociology," the authors mentioned a "relativist" view of classroom content: that, rather than knowledge being absolute and timeless, it is altered with the purposes and the influences of the transmitting agents (teachers, authors, and so on). The researchers thus attempted to measure "the content delivered to individual children in the classroom" (p. 7) as

influenced by external factors, including "pressures from parents, teachers, and the school principal as well as district instructional objectives, textbooks supplied to the teacher, and test results reported to the local newspaper" (p. 14).

Their work called upon what I have called classroom ecology in that they saw teachers as occupying a middle ground between popular conceptions as either "good followers" of hierarchical directives or "professionals exercising independent judgment" (p. 12). In summary, the researchers tried to determine

> --To what extent is the content of classroom instruction determined by factors external to the teacher?
>
> --To the extent that content is not determined by external factors, how are decisions made and what is the role of the teacher? (p. 13)

Porter et al. (1979) argued that "selection of content is at least as important as selection of teaching strategies and that when content varies, students learn what they are taught" (p. 2). The content-determinants project focused mainly on fourth-grade math, with methodology including analyzing test items, policy capturing, and direct observation of classroom settings. One of the more interesting conclusions of this line of research involved the view of teachers as "political brokers," autonomous "within limits at the operating level of educational organizations: the teacher is seen as a rational decision maker who allows for external pressures in his or her calculations of benefits and costs" (p. 20). Teachers were seen as persons who "will teach what they have been taught before, what they feel comfortable with, and what they deem

appropriate for their students" in the absence of external pressures--but they rarely operate in such a "vacuum" (Porter, Floden, Freeman, Schmidt, & Schwille, 1986).

The previous discussion of writing, ecology, and content determinants related to curriculum because all in some way are part of, or affect, "a course, or body of courses, offered by an educational institution" (Goodlad, 1979, p. 43). All of the items discussed related to more specific aspects of the content taught, social relationships, or classroom influences. The literature on curriculum reflected some topics encountered in earlier discussions of the literature on writing, including selection of appropriate research methods, and the influence of various factors on the presentation of the subject taught.

Thus, curriculum is a ubiquitous, somewhat general term that occurs often in discussions of education and improvement of education. Paramount, possibly, in the literature on curriculum was the notion of "commonplaces" found in the work of Schwab (1978). The author said that any discussion of curriculum must consider five bodies of experience: the subject matter, the learner, the milieu, the teachers, and the construction of curriculum. These commonplaces comprise a body of experience needed for curriculum revision, hence educational improvement. The review of literature has, to this point, dealt not only with curriculum, but to some degree, with each of these commonplaces except the last: construction of curriculum.

Curriculum Improvement

I initiated this paper with a discussion of current nationwide calls for educational improvement. Curriculum improvement is a term that has enjoyed synonymous use. In relation to the above notion of Schwab's commonplaces necessary for curriculum improvement is Bruner's (1963) discussion in The Process of Education. As more current outpouring of curriculum-improvement literature might have as its cause the trade deficit, with accompanying industrial and economic pressure from Japan, so do Bruner's writings have a cause in world affairs--external to education itself. The impetus was the Soviet launching of Sputnik in 1959. Bruner's "themes" for curriculum designs resulting from the Woods Hole Conference involved:

--Teach structure and basic subject matter that would facilitate transfer.

--Become alert to student readiness to learn material.

--Apply intuition, and encourage students to make hypotheses.

--Encourage desire to learn. (p. 7)

Bruner concluded with an issue that has recurred often in readings on curriculum, a topic that broadly relates to the question of teacher professionalism: how best to aid the teacher in instruction. He delineated two approaches. The first is to teach the teacher well, and to let him/her be the judge of appropriate materials for instruction. The second is to obtain quality materials that would remain "teacherproof."

Eisner (1977) noted that, in any curriculum planning, certain quandaries exist: We want to provide freedom, but we also want to teach respected basics; we want balance and well-roundedness, but we want to teach to individual needs. However, Eisner stated that--in a continuation of the professionalism issue raised by Bruner--the teacher, or "educational connoisseur," must be at the heart of efforts to improve curriculum and practice.

> Educational practice as it occurs in schools is an inordinately complicated affair filled with contingencies that are extremely difficult to predict, let alone control. Connoisseurship in education, as in other areas, is that art of perception that makes the appreciation of such complexity possible. Connoisseurship is an appreciative art. (p. 346)

Whereas other writers have given us definitions of curriculum, proper areas of curriculum concern, and certain dilemmas, what Eisner contributed is a very basic approach to curriculum thinking, or a paradigm: that teaching is more of an art than a science, and this resulting artistic complexity renders education susceptible to description, criticism, and change from within, from an insider's humanistic perspective.

Ross (1984) continued the topic of curriculum criticism: Just who is best qualified to study curriculum and to suggest changes? Her answer, like Eisner's, was that the practitioner (or connoisseur) should be designing changes in curriculum and should likely prepare suggestions after studying the classroom naturalistically. This understandable study would help to develop an empirical base for judgments about curriculum.

Like Eisner and Ross, Tyler (1981), referring to an earlier work (1950), argued that since "curriculum development is a practical enterprise, not a theoretical study" (p. 18), curriculum work must be based on an informed study of the classroom, the school, and the society that influences them.

Apple (1983) wrote of the relationship between the "motives of schooling" and ideological purpose. He introduced the concept of corporate control of curriculum, both form and content. The value of Apple's contributions lay in his delineation of the importance of curriculum, that what and how we teach affects our students' relationship with the power structure existing in society as a whole. Additionally, in situations in which practitioners are passive receivers of packaged curriculum (one of Bruner's options mentioned earlier), they run the risk of becoming "de-skilled" nonprofessionals, people who are managed by external forces who set "the goals, the process, the outcome, and the evaluative criteria" but who remain "external to the situation" (p. 151). Thus, Apple provided insight into both the importance of education and the relationships between curriculum, teachers, and society.

Research Modes

The writers I have discussed in this chapter defined curriculum and discussed its characteristics and its relationships to other issues: educational criticism, change, professionalism, and control. A strongly related issue, alluded to briefly in Chapter I and at the beginning of this chapter, is the concept of research

paradigm, "that network of shared assumptions and conceptions" (Shulman, 1986, p. 5) that is to be brought to bear on a research problem. In this case, how should one study writing curriculum or related issues? I plan to offer a brief overview of basic paradigms for research and to elaborate on an explanation of the naturalistic mode I have chosen for my work.

Borg and Gall (1983), in a discussion of the field of educational research, distinguished between two schools of research methods--the positivistic and the "antipositivistic, subjective methods of inquiry" (p. 26). Positivism includes the scientific method: to hypothesize, to "deduce empirical consequences of the hypothesis," and "to test the hypothesis by collecting data" (p. 25). Antipositivism, however, includes

> . . . a strong subjective element. . . . The personal framework of the researcher is a strong determinant of what he or she will discover about the phenomena under investigation. The case study researcher sacrifices generalizability--one of the hallmarks of positivistic science--for an in-depth understanding of a single instance of the phenomena under investigation. (p. 27)

Borg and Gall continued in their discussion to note that whereas both research paradigms have faults, both can be contributory to knowledge of and contributions to the practice of education. These authors, like Eisner, Emig, Erickson, and others, stated that the antipositivist school of research, including case study and ethnography, is appropriate exploratory research.

> They can be employed profitably to generate observations and hypotheses in areas where little prior investigation has occurred or where more objective methods are not available. Interesting observations and hypotheses generated by this

> approach then can be tested using the methods of positivistic science. (p. 27)

In a method appropriate to an introduction to educational research, the authors thus gave an overview of research options, while subsequently admitting to a positivistic orientation of their book, and indeed of much research in the field of education.

Stenhouse (1979), however, argued against positivism's goal of ascertaining "general principles" on which educational criticism and resulting change can be based. He noted that within the case study (a type of antipositivist research),

> The figure or centre of attention is the individual. . . . Education is less concerned with predictions and possibilities than that which is accepted as actually occurring in time and space. Its happenings are located within the coordinates of living rather than within the coordinates of theory. It is descriptive rather than experimental. It deals in insight rather than law as a basis for understanding. (p. 5)

Stenhouse asked researchers to "Give me your evidence. Discuss it with me. Appeal to my judgement. Do not simply tell me your conclusions and ask me to trust your wisdom" (p. 6). Implicit here was Stenhouse's call for antipositivist, naturalistic research methods, those that describe the "concrete and particular" (p. 7), to arrive eventually at a more theoretical perception. The subjective bias (of the person who observes naturalistically) the author saw as a strength of the work, in that if the researcher makes the potential biases inherent in his or her observational role a matter of record, the reviewer of this research can take them into consideration.

Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) saw a trend toward more acceptance of qualitative research methods, or

> approaches to research that acknowledge the capacity of individuals to interpret social events and to attribute personal meanings to the world in which they function. . . . Meaning is derived from social interaction, that subjective meanings are a legitimate focus for study and that naturalistic research must be conducted in social context. (p. 194)

The focus of such descriptive research thus tended to become more process oriented, and to color all observation with the meaning with the cultural context of a situation. Observer bias--the tendency for an observer to see what he/she wants to see--may exist, as in positivistic research. The difference is that the naturalistic researcher makes the possibility of such bias a matter of open discussion in the reporting of the research, whereas the positivistic researcher does not. Similarly, the ecological validity ("the extent to which behavior observed in one context is generalisable to another"--Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984, p. 198) of naturalistic studies is strong because of the completeness of the description. That is, if a reader of naturalistic research tries to incorporate some of the conclusions of the study into his or her own classroom life, he can form a realistic view of the contextual life of the originally studied situation, and compare and contrast it with the life in his own classroom. Thus, if the incorporation doesn't work, he has the completeness of the original description to help him see the differences in situation that may have caused these innovations to fail in the new application. However, even as the inherent weakness of naturalistic studies to generalize to other

populations ("population validity") is often noted, possibly it is outweighed by the strength of the ecological validity, and by this type of study's often-included feature of open discussion of such weaknesses.

This type of qualitative "research pattern" (Shulman's term), characterized by rich description of a school setting and an ecological awareness of the effects of larger contexts on the classroom, thus has found a place in contemporary research on education (Shulman, 1986). In fact, a recent Handbook of Research on Teaching (Wittrock, 1986) had a chapter on research paradigms and one devoted solely to qualitative methods (Erickson, 1986a). Concerning research in English education, the ethnographic method and an orientation toward study of process have had considerable influence. In a recent article in English Education, Chorny (1984) celebrated two qualitative researchers who, in their time, made significant contributions not only in the results of their work, but in the methods each employed:

> Essentially, [Britton] confirmed the need, in language studies, for examining process in relation to product and stressed the importance of contexts in such examination. Finally, Emig demonstrated the potential of the case study method for research in English education. In their time, both the work and its publication were bold acts. (p. 23)

Chorny continued discussing naturalistic research as an alternative that proved appealing to him, as traditional research had served him with only "a period of increasing impatience with the limited answers" that it could give about life in the English classroom (p. 23). He argued for acceptance of qualitative modes of

research as one avenue to be pursued by scholars investigating language arts processes. Both Chorny and Freeman, Samuelson, and Sanders (1986) argued an additional point: that, if the purpose of educational research is to effect a positive change on classroom practice, it should take a form other than "theory and numbers" (Freeman et al., 1986, p. 10) and effectively communicate with practitioners. The qualitative researcher's, or ethnographer's, communication takes the form of "describing a specific population via a means more telling than numbers: the world of language which reflects context, action, and events" (Freeman et al., 1986, p. 11). And this type of research paradigm seemed to these authors particularly suitable because the "richness" that is often a characteristic of this mode matches "the opulent and thorny field" that is writing (p. 11).

It is with some degree of respect that I conclude this literature review (of material on writing, classroom ecology, curriculum determinants, curriculum, and naturalistic research methods), in that I believe this type of a multidimensional approach <u>is</u> necessary to make sense of the "opulent and thorny field" of writing curriculum in three schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this section, I will discuss my initial plans for research and how these plans evolved into the mature structure used in Chapters IV and V of this report.

Author's Background

Even in the earliest stages of my research, I had felt drawn to writing as a subject. Writing, in recent years, has been the subject of many articles and much research. From Janet Emig, with her discussion of writing as a way of thinking, to Stephen Tchudi, with his case for writing as a visible act of literacy, this topic is one that has become almost synonymous with the whole function of education. "If our kids can write," researchers and the public seem to say, "then our schools must be doing a good job." I liked this topic of writing because it seemed to have intrinsic worth: My investigations, then, would not be a waste of time.

Some researchers, Donald H. Graves among them, have focused on the writing processes of younger children, those in the early elementary grades. Common sense told me that what occurs at this early age as a "first taste" of public-school writing), is probably greatly influential in the children's subsequent education and,

specifically, in their attitude toward writing. In informal observations occurring before those done for this report, I witnessed many instances in which these young students displayed enthusiasm for their school work--including writing--that shocked and surprised me, a secondary teacher.

These factors helped to draw me initially into researching early writing. Perhaps also important was my occupation as high school English teacher--a daily observer of students who, it often seemed, were reluctant and unenthusiastic writers. I'm relatively sure that, at the back of my mind, I dreamed of finding something in the nature of the writing process itself as it occurred in early elementary grades that could be "bottled" and, figuratively speaking, slipped into high school cafeteria food. I had this vision: My students would ingest this magic ingredient, and soon 30 high school juniors would show up in my fifth hour, well-prepared, eager to write, polish, and read their thoughtful essays to the class! My motive here was somewhat selfish: If not rich and famous, I would at least feel more fulfilled as a writing teacher.

At this early stage of my research, then, writing in elementary school was my focus. My earliest research questions were (as outlined in Chapter I):

--What constitutes "writing" in four writing classrooms?

--What forms does writing take in classrooms?

--What pressures and influences decide the individual definitions of writing?

From this early point, different factors combined to alter somewhat my areas of research and interest.

Evolution of Interests

I should point out that, at this writing, tomorrow marks exactly two years and nine months since I as a researcher set foot in a first-grade classroom. During that time, I have been subject to an intellectual gestation process that has resulted in an evolution of these research questions. Primary influences have included (a) my enrollment in graduate classes and other seminars, (b) my reading (required and related), (c) my participant-observations, and probably more important, (d) the effects that these varying modes of "information gathering" had on each other. Typically, I would see something occurring during one of my observations that made me notice, made me think. Subsequently, I would encounter a reading or a reference to a reading that seemed to bear on this observed activity and seemed to help explain or clarify it. Conversely, at other times, I would encounter an idea in my reading that would bear on my later observations in the elementary school classroom. Overall, this combination of regular, trained participant-observation combined with other methods of professional growth to catalyze my mind, and the resulting reaction was chronicled in my evolving areas of interest and progressive series of research questions.

As an illustration of evolution, one of the most stimulating ideas I encountered was discovered during my preparation for a

comprehensive exam in curriculum. Quite honestly, I had not looked forward to doing these readings, as "curriculum," as an area for study, seemed to exude a certain innate dryness and boredom. I soon found that many readings--especially Eisner, Apple, and Goodlad--were not dry and boring, but greatly interesting, and moreover, that these readings seemed to have direct and important relationships to what I was seeing in my participant-observations. Most important was the idea of curriculum itself: that in school and classroom settings, what I was observing was not so much writing, as it was writing curriculum as it was enacted by the teacher and perceived by the students (Goodlad, 1979). Along with the idea with which I began my research (the content of first graders' writing), the concept of a multi-layered curriculum began to intrigue me: Just how was this "first graders' writing" a product of a specific writing curriculum? How was this curriculum perceived by the various participants--student, teacher, principal--of the instructional process? Finally, the notion of curriculum control occurred to me. I came to wonder just how the content of the writing curriculum--and to some extent, all curriculum--was determined. These notions, again, developed progressively as a result of interaction between a regular pattern of elementary school observations and other influences on my professional growth.

I considered the importance of expanding my observation sites. Later in my research, I found it worthwhile to continue observing in the original elementary school, but also to visit a junior high and a high school in the same district as my original first-grade site.

My goal here was to achieve some sort of multi-site perspective on my original elementary classroom: What situations and occurrences I had come to accept as "normal" in first grade might, when contrasted with other classrooms and other ages of children, become more noticeable and distinct. Although I based much of my participant-observation in the original first-grade classroom with which I had begun, I eventually spent significant additional time in a third-grade classroom of the same school, a seventh grade in a nearby junior high, and an upper-level senior-high English class in the same district.

My actions on yet another level (in addition to interaction between graduate classes and research, and to comparison/contrast among my four sites) produced stimulation for my thinking. This level was inside each of the four distinct sites: I found myself gathering information of different types--including interviews, fieldnotes, and document collection, including photographs--during the same time periods. In performing this type of concurrent data gathering, I was encouraged to look for similarities and differences across data types. For example, as I interviewed various participants in each setting, I attempted to test and validate certain emerging concepts that I had formulated via my fieldnote collection. This "triangulation" of data (see Figure 1) served much the same function as my observation at different sites: In both situations, I was forced to look at data in relationship to related input and to reevaluate those data and, if necessary, to modify my

concepts. In other words, by making these methodological decisions, I was encouraged to look "with new eyes" and make "the familiar strange" (Erickson et al., 1980).

My changing research questions documented my developing orientation. I rephrased my original research questions, making only minor alterations to the first one, but arriving at What is the nature of the writing curriculum? for the second. This revised research question combined several earlier, implied questions into a simplified statement and also represented my shift of focus away from the content of student writing to the concept of writing curriculum. Again, I became more concerned with observable manifestations of writing--especially levels of writing curriculum --than a detailed analysis of the student writing product itself.

In addition, as I became aware of contrasting writing curricula, I felt more than ever that the notion of control was important. I was curious about the pressures that led to an enacted writing curriculum. What were the forces that shaped and determined that curriculum? Who, or what, determined the type of writing curriculum that I observed in a classroom? Therefore, I rewrote several related issues into this research question: Who or what determines the writing curriculum?

Research Questions

Therefore, I gradually arrived at the following three research questions, which served as a focus for my participant-observation and other research:

1. How does writing occur in the classroom?
2. What is the nature of the writing curriculum?
3. Who or what determines the writing curriculum?

The answers I found to these three questions are detailed in Chapters IV and V of this report.

Research Plan

Relatively early in my academic career, I decided that I was better suited for qualitative research than quantitative. At the beginning, I felt more at ease in that world, which I believe to be a more verbal and more observational world. As I studied further in the field of ethnography, the notion of "participant-observer" seemed a worthwhile one--an appropriate role for a researcher.

I am sure that my background as a teacher of writing helped influence my perceptions of this, the "right" way for me to research. At the beginning of my observations, I had spent 18 years in various writing classrooms, always facing too many students and an avalanche of papers. Somehow, I knew that most teachers of writing, as well as their students, would welcome an additional skilled writing teacher in their midst and would accept me if I approached them not just as a "researcher," but as an immediately helpful presence in their classrooms, a person who was willing to lend a hand (rather, a mind and a set of eyes) to reading rough drafts and making helpful suggestions. I was not disappointed. I felt welcome at all sites.

Additionally, and especially at the elementary school, I was a "long-term" presence, and as such, I feel the quality of my relationship with informants (students, teachers, and so on) was good. An atmosphere of trust developed between us, which helped in my solicitation of honest and involved responses from all parties. I know that I looked forward to my participant-observations, and I feel that my presence in these sites was accepted and even desired.

I began to observe at the elementary level during the second semester of 1986. During that semester, I averaged six hours of observation per week, adding up to approximately 120 hours. Later in my graduate program, I continued observing at the same school, seeing many of the same students, but in a different classroom. It was at that time I decided to spend more limited time at other sites, also. The two sites were (a) a seventh-grade language arts class and (b) a British literature class for high school juniors and seniors. Both new sites were part of the same school district as the initial elementary school; total observational time for the second phase of my program totaled approximately 100 hours. Again, at all levels, but especially the elementary, I became accepted as a regular fixture of the writing classroom, or more specifically, as "the writing man."

During that time period, I took on the dual roles of participant and of observer. To facilitate the former, I encouraged the teachers to use me as a writing helper in any way they needed. Typically, I functioned as a participant in the elementary level of a "listener" as the students read me first drafts. I aided them in

revising their drafts, but then--as always--felt the pull of my note-taking on the process. Some days, during an especially busy class, I would "participate" as a writing teacher to the extent that any note-taking took place after the children had left, or when I was sitting in my truck that afternoon preparing to leave the school parking lot.

During my more than 200 hours of participant-observation, I took over 100 pages of fieldnotes. In addition, I made copies of certain documents: selected representative material, including writing assignments of the teachers and writing production of the students. Also, I undertook a schedule of interviews of the different participants in this writing enterprise: several students (a total of 12) from each of the grade levels, four teachers, and three principals. Several of these interviews were taped and transcribed; several were recorded in note form. The interviews with the teachers all took place after school hours, with two of them held in a nonschool setting. The principals' interviews were generally held in their private offices, with one, however, held on the school's front steps--taking advantage of a pleasant spring day. All the student interviews were held in school, but in a more private setting than the regular classroom--generally in the schools' libraries.

Finally, I took several rolls of photographs at each site. Using both regular and wide-angle lenses, I attempted to capture a visual sense of the classrooms, specific aspects of writing

curriculum, and certain contrasts in these visual aspects of curriculum and classrooms that became apparent to me.

Triangulation

In all, then, my data included (a) fieldnotes, (b) collected documents, (c) interview responses, and (d) photographs, all of which I attempted to triangulate into meaningful patterns concerning writing and curriculum as experienced in certain research sites. (See Figure 1.)

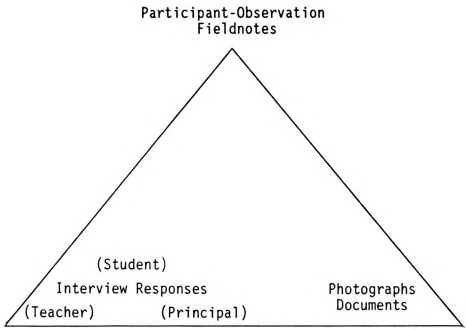


Figure 1. Triangulation of data sources.

Analysis

As I stated earlier, I emphasized throughout my research my role as a participant. This emphasis was due to the feeling of

"rightness"--that this participation was a way in which my research could be of immediate help to students' learning writing, rather than a hindrance to it. As I became an increasingly natural element in each of these settings, I believe the resulting comfortable relationship that developed resulted in my gaining an honest "feel" for each setting--what Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) termed "tacit knowledge" (p. 145).

Along with this type of knowledge, however, I took many fieldnotes, usually--as I was almost constantly busy in each setting--at the conclusion of class, sitting in an empty classroom, or in the cab of my truck in the school parking lot. As I took these notes, I tried to attend to "major phases" in the classroom, in both the areas of writing (my initial conceptual focus) and social interaction (which often blended with the writing) (Erickson, 1986a, 1986b).

As my focus evolved from the general conceptual issue I had when I entered the field, and my research questions correspondingly changed, so did the selection of topics treated in my fieldnotes reflect these "emergent issues" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 150). Gradually, I began looking less at the nature of the students' writing and more at writing curriculum, and at the process by which that curriculum was determined.

As time progressed, I had to work at keeping the situations "strange." Several times during my research, I used my three sites as "conceptual levers," a distancing, perspective-changing device

(Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 118). I was then more able to notice features of each site that may have been fading into familiar obscurity.

Also, my taking of still photographs helped to solidify and challenge some emerging perceptions, as did my regular collection of various documents from the three settings. These devices of data collection stabilized the studied areas into data appropriate for a different--more visual and pictorial--mode and pace of analysis. As a result, I began to see linkages and patterns evidencing themselves across the various sources of data.

In the first semester of my observations, I began the regular keeping of an "intellectual autobiography," which featured a type of analytic memo. This mode of writing aided in my "progressive focusing" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 165) that I alluded to earlier, that of refining my initial "writing" area of interest to include writing curriculum and its determinants. Additionally, as my research neared completion, I created a list of 33 codes generated by my fieldnotes, and used these codes to make my increasing collection of data more comprehensible, and to make me, once again, more "reflexive" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 165) about those data, even up to the final stages of my days in the field.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Pine Park Elementary School

Overview

I've discussed writing as a significant educational problem, surveyed related literature, outlined questions that have guided my own research, and highlighted my methodological approach, participant-observation. A natural place to begin presenting my data is with an explanation of how I chose my initial "site" (of a total of four) for this participant-observation. I began to collect data by joining a first-grade classroom at Pine Park Elementary School, and remained a regular visitor in that room over a period of four months.

The very first knowledge I had of Pine Park was of its location: For years, I had taught English at a secondary school located about one-half mile away. After school hours, I had jogged over the trails that circumscribe Pine Park. Yet, I had no personal or intellectual connection to Pine Park, its teachers, or its programs. However, due to a chance meeting at a writing conference, events were set in motion that were to result in my observations.

I sat in the large audience at a Toby Fulwiler writing lecture at Oakland University. As I recall, a conversation at lunch,

prompted by reading each other's name tags, resulted in a mutual introduction for the principal of Pine Park and me. It was evident that we shared an interest in writing, as we both were attending this conference. Before leaving, this principal--a Dr. Cunningham--enthusiastically suggested that we work together on a "writing project" in the future.

The next year an occasion arose that made this cooperation possible. I frequently had written "Creative Writers in the Classroom" grants, administered by the Michigan Council for the Arts. The funding was competitive; therefore, I had tried to incorporate some unusual angle into my proposals. This year I had had a bright idea: Why not take my high school Creative Writing class to Pine Park? Why not have my visiting professional writer talk to both levels--high school and elementary--at once? Why not encourage the older students to tutor the younger ones, and by so doing come to know both the creative process and poetry better than they would otherwise? I called Dr. Cunningham with my idea, and she was--as she has been ever since--enthusiastic.

What classroom should we work with? I stated earlier that I had had little or no professional or personal relationships with faculty at Pine Park, even though we were members of the same school district. The one person I did know there, however slightly, was the classroom teacher who had been elected the president of our education association.

This woman had been visible and necessary to me: During her tenure, we had struck the district, and I had become involved with

the union in a public-relations capacity. During this rather stressful juncture, when I didn't know if I would remain employed or not, I became acquainted with Josie, this teachers' union president. I found that she was a good public speaker, that she was poised under pressure, that she could deal with the myriad pressures that occupied her, and still teach her elementary class daily.

Josie was, then, the most familiar teacher to me at Pine Park, and Dr. Cunningham and I enlisted her participation.

The Creative Writing project received funding and went well. I did not "burn any bridges" at the conclusion of this project, but tried to keep professional lines and ties open. Later, when I was looking for a site for my later ethnographic observations, Josie's classroom at Pine Park came immediately to mind.

If I had needed a site, this classroom showed great potential for being a good one. Actually, as comes up later, this site seemed basic, in a wholesome sense of the word. In explanation: Here, I was dealing with first graders, the teachers' union president, initial school writing experiences, and a positive principal who, it turns out, was a Ph.D. in Education from Michigan State University, and had taken the same ethnography sequence of which I was now a part. The potential seemed to be present: Would this classroom display the energy at which these participants and other factors hinted? Would I be able to record and interpret the activities of this "energized" classroom? My chance meeting and casual acquaintances were to result in a long relationship (over two years,

in various capacities) in which I, as a participant-observer, would involve myself in the learning and social structures of this first grade and other levels of this school.

By the early part of February 1986, I found myself at Pine Park Elementary, a school of 300 students, grades K through 6. I alerted Dr. Cunningham to my presence, walked down the main hall and turned right, then assumed my vantage point in Josie's first-grade classroom, from which I began my participant-observation. (Share that point for a second by examining Figure 2.) From this position in the center, back of the classroom, I--over a four-month time span --spent many afternoons observing and helping 24 first-grade students and their teacher. Without these chance events, which culminated in description and analysis, this report could not have been written.

Negotiating Entry

The physical entry was trouble-free: I had the convenience of a last-hour conference period and the approval of my principal. The elementary schools in our district had a later starting time; therefore, their school day extended later--convenient for me. My observation was quickly approved by the district's supervisor of testing and recommended to the school board. As I walked up Pine Park's sidewalk, I felt both adequate and inadequate for the observations: adequate in that I had had several classes to prepare me for this task, but inadequate in that I--professionally or personally--was not accustomed to the presence of first graders.

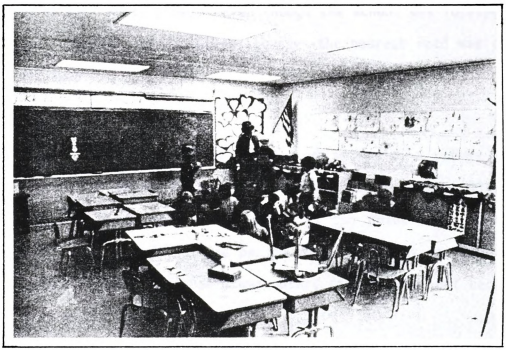


Figure 2. My vantage point in Josie's room.

The Community

This public elementary school, located in a Detroit suburb, received nearly all of its students from buses. The physical structure itself was rather small (350 students enrolled at present), clean, and modern (opened in 1966). Pine Park was set in a beautiful environment that included a well-equipped playground fringed by tall white pines. Even though the school was located in Oakland--Michigan's most populous county--the nearest road was over 100 feet away.

The School

Pine Park impressed me as somewhat of an oasis, a refuge in a busy world. It seemed like a comfortable place to send children, and I felt good about visiting here, to the point that I found myself visiting beyond the time period required for my research. I kept coming back, not because I was unsure of my notes, but because I liked coming back.

This school, Pine Park, came to represent not duty (a place I was required to be, to take a minimum amount of notes, etc.), but escape. Also, these Pine Park visits seemed to give me a chance to view "basic education," that is, public-school education that is "Shakespeare": pure, fundamental, and as significant as a public school could offer. I felt that most of home and society's influences might not have been left behind as the students climbed down from their buses each morning; yet, the particular setting of this school that lay back from the highway, back from "big people"

and our problems, at times made this notion sublimely and pleasantly believable.

I found it: a first-grade classroom in a private area abutting the library. The windows at the end of the hallway looked out at the trees, the February snow, the progression of the seasons. The hallway itself seemed like a long tunnel of a bulletin board that democratically displayed the posted work of each child. (See photograph, Figure 3.) According to a recent brochure, Pine Park's location

> . . . makes it possible for residents to take advantage of a wide variety of other educational, recreational and cultural interests. In 45 minutes or less, one can visit the city of Detroit with its fine museums, restaurants and clubs. Cranbrook Institute, Greenfield Village, Meadowbrook, The University of Michigan, Oakland University, Eastern Michigan University and the University of Detroit offer additional cultural and recreational opportunities as well, and are also within a hour's drive. . . . [Forty] lakes, riding stables, golf courses, tennis clubs and ski areas [are] within or near the district boundaries and it is indeed a pleasant area in which to live and learn.

As I entered the room, I was intent on pursuing (through my participant-observation of this first grade) the "living and learning" declaration of the brochure. For this class of first graders: How did they live? How did they learn? How did they write?

From this first day's visit to the most recent, I noticed the many ways writing was featured, most prominently in the life of the school. Specifically, the classroom featured writing displays posted on the walls; the school as a whole displayed writing in the hallways. Writing had a specific time (afternoon) and place (front,

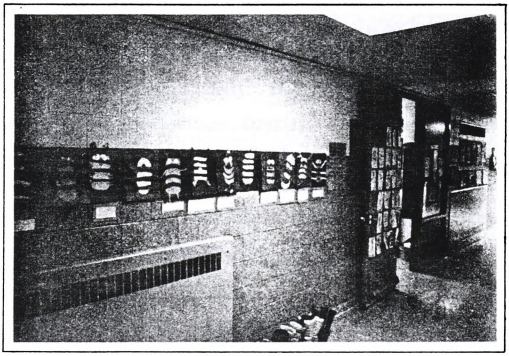


Figure 3. A hallway display at Pine Park.

right in the classroom--see photo, Figure 4). The children's written "books" were kept proudly visible. The students I interviewed had ready, consistent definitions of writing, and the teacher and principal responded easily and concretely to my questions about writing's place in their school. During an early conversation with Dr. Cunningham, the principal, she made it a point to show me writing displays around the school, including a focal point for student writing: a collection of quail eggs in a display case that were hatching out daily. The school had published its own book, The Pine Park Writing Experience: Beginning a Process Approach, and the school features a large wooden sign located next to the road that says, "N.C.T.E. Center for Excellence." The organization was the National Council of Teachers of English, and the award had been given on the basis of the school's writing program.

Description of Josie, Her Students, and Her Classroom

Twenty-four first graders were enrolled in Josie's class--12 girls, 12 boys. The great majority of students in this class and this school were white. The economic backgrounds of the students included those who were quite well-to-do, and those who were comparatively poor. Many students of this district had parents who worked for the auto and related industries. The area served by Pine Park Elementary School was "home" to individuals who made in excess of $100,000 per year, and those who were on welfare. Parents picked up their children in Lincoln Continentals, and rusted vans. As

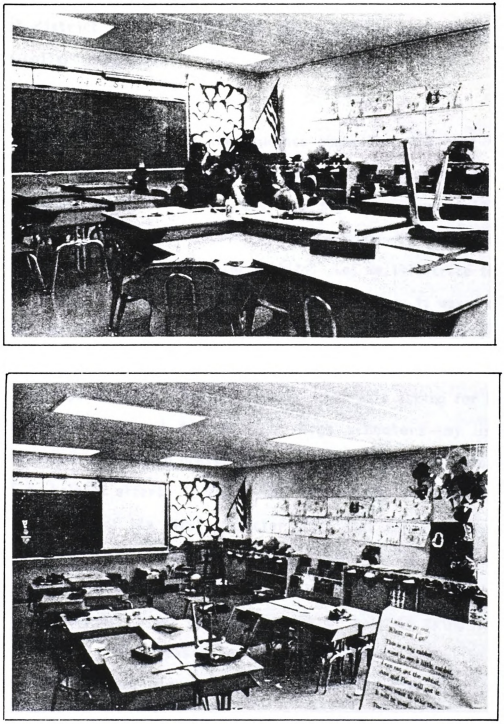


Figure 4. The "writing corner" of Josie's room.

opposed to other, more affluent suburbs of Detroit, however, the school district of which Pine Park was a portion had a distinct "blue-collar" reputation.

Becoming a Participant

My first impression of the students themselves was that they were "busy" and that they needed help on certain fundamental tasks. "Busy" means that the classroom was nearly always full of activities: getting drinks, going to the bathroom, coloring, doing workbook pages, cutting out Easter rabbits. Let me illustrate their "need for help." During one of my first observations, it was a cold day and recess time. Without apparent hesitation, several first graders came up to me and asked for help tying their hoods and buttoning tops of coats. Realize, please, that this asking for help was both shocking and gratifying. High schoolers--my usual students--don't need help dressing, I have found, and would probably resist my helpful efforts if I offered. This openness of the first graders was one of the first characteristics that really impressed me. I found Josie to be occasionally exhausted, possibly as a result of coordinating the teachers' union activities I have mentioned; however, I was gratified to be of help in tying their little coats. One reason was at this point--early in my observations--I had begun to fit into the first-grade social organization as a participant, a useful member of their social structure, a "knot-tier" who would help protect little children from winter winds. Even at this early point, inexperienced as I was with

participant-observation, I had begun to see myself as a functional presence in this classroom, needed by Josie, the overworked teacher, and by the students, who displayed a compendium of needs both personal and educational. This type of observation thus began making me feel somewhat different from a mere note-taker: It made me feel better.

A short time before this initial observation, Dr. Cunningham, the principal of Pine Park, had composed and sent to the parents of Josie's students a letter explaining my presence in the school and the purpose of my research. The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at Michigan State, whose approval was needed for my research, did not accept her letter. I had to write a revised version. At the time, I had thought that this committee was a trifling and aggravating part of university bureaucracy. However, after having been in the classroom for several days and participating (as I did above) in that classroom's life, I had begun to look at the situation more objectively. These first graders were wholly accepting and very trusting. They promptly and openly took me into their individual and social lives. I, over the course of some months, was to become a part of the only first grade many of them would ever know--as I have said, a basic and integral stage of their educational lives. Especially in a long-term observation, remember, I was to interact with some of these students over a two-year period--it was important that my motives be honest, and my presence in their lives be a positive one. As I became more

attached to the students--and, more important, more aware of the influence I had with them--I came to realize that any protective steps that MSU could take were steps that I approved. The safety of these kids (and all "human subjects" of research) was worth the trouble.

And these energetic, busy, needing, trusting kids--what, exactly, did they look like? Well, they were all over the spectrum. One of the girls and one of the boys--both first graders--were close to Josie's size--well over five feet tall. Many were tiny, little munchkins. Some were loud; some were quiet. However, they shared one similarity: They were all writers. Remember, we're discussing first grade, and when I say writing, I am not referring to filling in workbook pages and listing spelling words. The operational definition of writing will come up later in this report; however, these writers were "story producers." Josie stated (in a 2-28-86 interview), "I think I'm reaching most of the kids," in inculcating a definition of writers as writers of story. Josie's personal response in an interview was reinforced by my observations, by my collection of student writing production (see Appendix), as well as by a student's interview comment (5-7-86) that "Yes! Everybody writes! Everybody reads a story sometime." And everyone wrote a story--no lists for these first graders!

Writing at Pine Park

The Pine Park Writing Experience (referred to above) included a page that gave an overview of this school's philosophy of teaching

writing. Specifically, this essay said that writing at this school should (a) reflect the processes natural to writers and (b) tap the students' higher-level thinking skills in this natural environment. The authors of this piece (Dr. Cunningham and the five selected teachers initially involved in emphasizing writing at Pine Park) admitted to the influence of Donald Graves, Madeleine Hunter, Donald Murray, Toby Fulwiler, and others--all noted writing or educational theorists.

The six school district employees--as stated in this introductory essay--worked with Ruth Nathan, an adjunct professor from Oakland University, who had written a book on early writing. This writing program has spread to the other teachers in this building and other elementary schools in the local school district, and has become a pilot program for other school districts in Oakland County. In addition, two of the five initially involved teachers have begun "shared-time" duties in which they spend one-half day in their classrooms and one-half day in-servicing other district elementary schools in this philosophy and practice of writing.

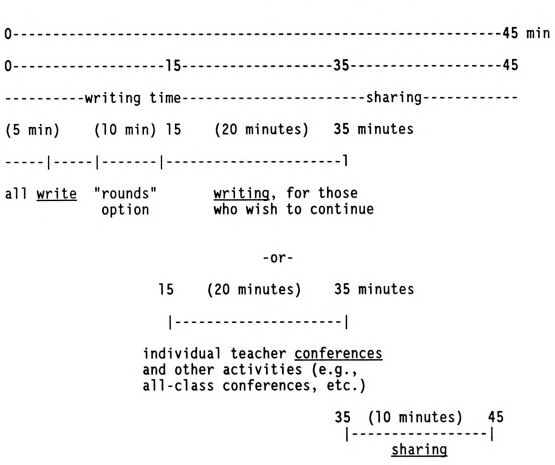
This introductory essay centered on these aspects of writing "process": that it "recognizes authors' (e.g., draft paper, etc.) conference needs (e.g., conferencing at all levels) and publications demands." On page 2 of the same book, Dr. Nathan, the consultant, remarked that:

> Writing is a cooperative effort between teachers and children here. It is joyful, noncompetitive, and nourishing, while at the same time highly demanding. In others [six] words, children write at length, they revise, and they edit, but in an atmosphere of acceptance and respect. This milieu has been

designed with several purposes in mind, but the major purpose has been to prevent fear and avoidance of the whole process at later stages.

For a more graphic overview of the writing process as it was designed, examine this page from The Pine Park Writing Experience:

Below is a time line for a 45-minute writing period:



Donald M. Murray, noted expert on children's writing, had written a cogent "The Qualities of Good Writing," which appeared on page 6 of the Pine Park book. He claimed that good writing:

1. Must have content and meaning.
2. Must have authority: specific, accurate information.

3. Is characterized by an individual voice.
4. Is developed well.
5. Features good design, and gives the reader a sense of completeness.
6. Is appropriately clear and simple.

Influences on Writing Curriculum

Although the philosophy and practice of writing espoused by Murray and others sounded good in theory, all of it would have remained theoretical if it had not been implemented by a deeply committed staff. Why would Josie, the first-grade teacher, or Dr. Cunningham, her principal, be willing to put forth great effort for the implementation of this writing program?

To begin with, Josie had been a fellow in the fourth annual Oakland Writing Project, an offshoot of the Bay Area Writing Project. This month-long summer seminar featured speakers and literature that brought together some of the most current, innovative ideas on writing with the people who can implement these ideas--the classroom teachers. Josie, in interviews, told that this seminar served as an exposure to "different people that I had not had a full knowledge of before." In addition, Josie believed that her principal, Dr. Cunningham, was greatly influential:

> There's no doubt that this wouldn't have happened if it weren't for Dr. Cunningham. She is an instructional leader in a lot of ways, and at the same time, being a new principal, she knew that she was being evaluated. She really wanted to look for a project that would bring a group focus to the building. I think that was her main focus: to find a project that all of us could be interested in. When she brought Ruth in, the first five people that volunteered did it more out of the sense of

> semi-loyalty, or whatever. "O.K., we'll try it." This is not something I'm not interested in. This is not something I can't support. . . . Because of her real commitment to it, she took the time to come in and look at the work they were doing, and she took a few minutes to say, "I see you're working on the writing program!" She'd come in and watch the kids work. So I would say she was the prime mover. (Interview, 2-28-86)

In response to my interview question to Dr. Cunningham on why she chose to pursue writing as a curricular emphasis (rather than the myriad other options available to an elementary principal), she answered:

> Well, writing probably was a very old pursuit, since I began in the high school as an English and Social Studies teacher. . . . So in a sense, the writing program brought me back in full circle. I went up to the Institute [for Research on Teaching at Michigan State], and really found out a lot about the individual-skill approach, then I went into the thinking approach, the cognitive psychologists, and by the time I came out of the Institute five years later, I was well in perspective. (Interview, 3-12-86)

Dr. Cunningham had met Dr. Nathan, later to become a consultant to Pine Park's writing program, through:

> . . . a network kind of affair, because I talked to a very good friend of mine . . . telling her how much I wanted to get out of these writing classes, and she said, "You should meet a friend of mine." She was just finishing her Ph.D.

Finally, a project like this needed money and attracted attention, including visitors from other districts. (I can attest to the great number of visitors: During the latter part of my observation, I served as a spokesperson for the project, no doubt in part to my long-term observation, and in part to take some of the constant public-relations workload off the directly involved individuals, Josie and Dr. Cunningham.) Just how did these two individuals involve and get the support ("money") of the school

board? I thought of three reasons: First, Josie had been the teachers' union president for four years. I would speculate that her "reasonable" request would get a "reasonable" response from the board. To the board, then, Josie would probably rate a degree of attention and cooperation superior to that achieved by a "rank and file" teacher. Second, other local institutions were involved with the project: Oakland University and the Oakland Intermediate School District. This involvement might have elicited a spirit of involvement and a hope of on-going support for the project consistent with findings concerning curricular implementation (Fullan & Pompfret, 1977). Finally, Dr. Cunningham had been a school board member herself. This occupational history of the school's principal might have helped her to understand the workings of a school board, and effectively to manipulate her local school board to achieve her curricular goals--in essence, to enact this change in writing curriculum.

So much for the philosophy behind the writing curriculum at Pine Park, and the confluence of events and personalities that had initially formulated it. Josie, the teacher, and her principal, Dr. Cunningham, had done much to ensure that writing did occur in this first-grade classroom with regularity and consistency. Now, this report explores the nature of the writing curriculum at Pine Park.

The Schoolwide Writing Program

Writing was prominent in the life of this classroom and of this school. As mentioned in an earlier section, either student writing

itself, or writing about this student writing, was evident on every trip I made to Pine Park. During my visit of March 7, 1986, for example: As I drove to the school, I passed a lacquered, inscribed wooden sign, with the words "National Center for Excellence--N.C.T.E." evident. The sign was an anomaly in this school district. Of the district's 11 elementary and 4 secondary schools, this was the only school that prominently displayed a school's affiliation with the National Council of Teachers of English--the largest professional organization of English teachers in the country. All other schools featured--if they had any signs at all--signs displaying the school's name. Upon investigation (an interview with Dr. Cunningham, the school's principal), I learned that this award had been given for Pine Park's writing program.

During the same visit, as I entered the school proper, the first thing I saw was a tripod displaying a recent newspaper article. This article was from a recent Oakland Press and was placed close to eye level for me, in a noticeable position that would cause most visitors to the school to see it. The content of this article concerned writing at Pine Park and featured interviews with teachers and students involved with the writing program.

On virtually all of my visits, I encountered the exterior sign, the tripod, the recent news article (at least three separate ones were published during the span of my observations). In addition, I frequently encountered other "visitors" to Pine Park. In every case, these visitors were teachers and administrators from other school districts who were there to examine the writing program. In

several cases, the principal or the classroom teacher enlisted my help to "show them around," the real meaning of which soon became clear--tell them about the writing program at Pine Park and answer their questions: How does it work? How would it work in other schools? Are there any weaknesses? Do I have any reservations? These physical features that I encountered--signs, articles, and visitors--attested to both the occurrence and the relative importance of writing at this site.

During my research, I formally interviewed Josie, the classroom teacher, twice; and Dr. Cunningham, the principal, once. Also, I interviewed four students repeatedly and in depth. In retrospect, the transcripts of the interviews themselves--considering now only the interviews with the adults--indicate about 90% of our conversation concerned aspects of writing. Typically, in an interview with Josie, the teacher, she remarked that "I have been so involved in the writing project, sometimes I wonder if I kind of let everything else slide. . . . I got to the point where I saw how important it was that the writing become part of everything" (Interview, 2-28-86).

In an interview with Dirk, a first-grade student in this classroom, he mentioned what, for him, was a memorable incident:

Q. Did you ever see Mrs. [Josie] Hammond write anything?
A. Yeah!
Q. What does she write?
A. She writes some stories, like I remember it was Halloween and she wrote a story about Halloween.
Q. Did she do it on the board or on paper?
A. On paper. We were making things about Halloween, too!
Q. Was her story any good?

A. Yeah!
Q. Was it scary?
A. Not really. I can't really remember. (Interview, 2-19-86)

In support of my earlier assertion that writing was prominent in the life of this school and this classroom, then, were the data I've cited in this and other sections of this report. In these data, writing occurred in the concrete sense of student activities and production, and in the more abstract sense of its presence in the minds of students, teacher, principal, and visitors.

Arrangement of the Room

I have mentioned that all students in this classroom did write. Figure 3 is a photograph of a school hallway; Figures 2 and 4 are of the "writing corner" of Josie's classroom. These photos represented the concrete presence of writing as school life at Pine Park, both in the classroom and in the main artery of the school.

Display of Writing

Elementary students, even these first graders, have a curriculum that includes art, music, math, reading, physical education, and social studies. Noteworthy in the first photo was that (a) there were "projects" by every student in the classroom, and (b) each one of the projects involved a display of student writing. By featuring these projects in such a prominent way, the school was proclaiming that "Every student writes, and every student work is worthy of pride." This feature provides more support in evidence of this school's curricular emphasis. Additionally, the "writing corner" (as so designated by Josie and known by the

students) occupied a prominent section of the classroom, in the front, right of the room. There were other locations in which this writing activity could have been located, but it was found in front, right. As I entered this room during my three months of observations, I sat in the back and--naturally, it seemed--immediately looked to the front to locate important agendas. In the middle, front was the chalkboard, at which Josie frequently explained, wrote, and coordinated the classroom affairs. At the left, front was the teacher's desk. In a map of the room (see Figure 5), this front, right writing corner seemed to be not only prominent, but unique in that it was the only area of the classroom that was carpeted. All of these features seemed to coincide with the fact that it was the only area of the classroom in which a special section was reserved for a specific subject matter.

This location seemed to be a marketing decision. Much of the success of selling a project is based on its location in the supermarket. In this first-grade "supermarket" of subject matters and curricula, display space was at a premium. What would constitute the most optimal display space? Possibly eye-level (we're talking first graders, remember!), front-right, in a "flat" display--that is, with the project standing in the shelves so that the covers were identifiable. Note in Figure 4 that this was the location of the published "books" that the students had written. (In the photographs, look to the immediate right of the globe.)

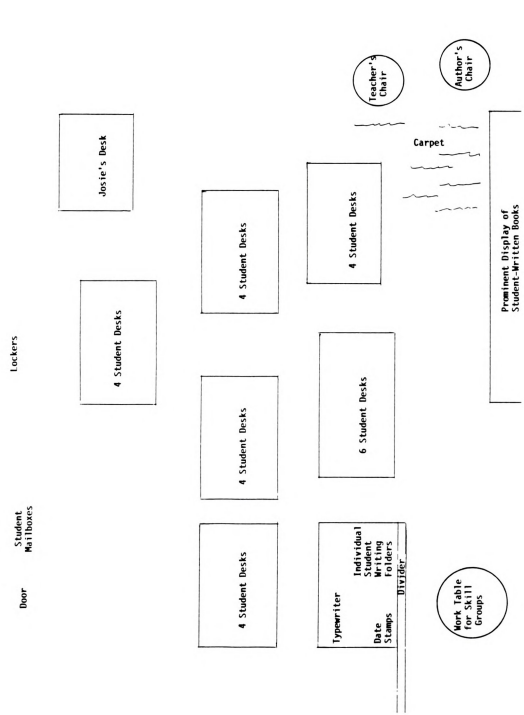


Figure 5. Map of Josie's room.

Again, this physical location of writing-related paraphernalia argued for the prominence of writing in the life of this classroom.

Finally, visible in all photographs of Josie's room, there is one chair that was higher than all the others, even the teacher's chair. This chair was known by all as the "writer's chair," and was used only when a student writer was reading a story he or she had written. If first graders have a certain reverence for height and size, then the desirability of this chair--sitting in it, doing associated work, and so on--would become apparent. The short vignette that follows should support the notion that these first graders revered height and size.

Early in March, I was present for an indoor recess. An indoor recess occurred in cases of inclement weather and involved all students (not just the ones with earaches, etc.) remaining in for the time period during which they would usually have gone to the playground. In this specific recess, the teacher, Josie, instructed the students that she was going to play an exercise record and that all of them would participate. Many eyes went back to me, and many students wondered aloud if I would participate, also. I did, and as the portion of the record grew near in which all were to jump and touch as high as they could with both hands, all eyes were on me. I jumped, and touched both hands to the ceiling. These little people were both awed and excited, and remained buzzing to each other about the six-foot "giant" in the back of the room who had touched the ceiling.

If you were a tiny first grader, wouldn't you be excited at size and height? And wouldn't you associate anything that could make you taller than your classmates with a positive, good feeling? I thought so, and believed as "small" a thing as the height and location of this writing chair contributed to the status of the writing program in this classroom.

Writing was a prominent feature of this classroom and this school and, as such, influenced the students to pursue writing. And these students wrote, and produced writing in accordance with their concept of the term.

Good evidence for this production was incorporated in the published "books" themselves. I noticed an impressive number of books written by the students. In interviews, both the teacher and the students assured me that "Everybody writes!" (Dirk, 2-19-86); that Josie thought she was "reaching most of the kids . . . that they understand the job" and that "they all will make an effort" (Interview, 2-28-86). As I mentioned before, both students and teacher were referring to writing as meaning, consistently, a sort of story-writing that somewhat resembled adult "nonfiction novels" or "new journalism." As Randee put it:

A. If you had to tell me what writing means, what would you say writing is? Writing is what?
A. If you think of something that you like very much, um, you take a pencil and we have paper and we write it.
Q. What kind of subjects do you like to write about?
A. We like writing about our dogs, or our mom and dad. We write about school. (Interview, 5-7-86)

This realistic approach to finding subjects was seconded by Nate in another interview, in which he said: "She usually asks us if, um, it's real or not. She usually knows right!" (Interview, 2-26-86).

However, when asked if she accepted fiction, Josie replied with an enthusiastic "Oh, yeah!" (Interview, 2-28-86). At a later informal meeting, when I told her of the students' perception of "appropriate topics," she was incredulous. Apparently, she had no idea that they felt realism, or autobiography, was the only appropriate subject.

I've included a complete story (see Appendix G) from rough draft to final "book" stage, with adult peer-reader revisions and corrections visible. In this story by Marcy, one can see her notion of an appropriate subject: a personal account of her recent visit to relatives "up North," to celebrate Easter. This story resembled a "nonfiction novel" in that the author took some liberties, possibly, with the literal and complete truth. If an adult were writing in this form, of course, he would be aware of truth and divergence from this truth. As Marcy and other class members wrote, however, they diverged from truth, possibly due to lack of verbal and intellectual development. As they tried to tell the whole truth about their experiences, they lacked the vocabulary and the control of verbal structures necessary to be completely accurate. For example, on page 7, Marcy wrote: "My cousin Bryan has a bunk bed. I will sleep in the top bunk." These are simple structures, with a minimum of single-word modification. To get any more completeness, hence accuracy, she had to develop vocabulary and precision in

structuring clauses and phrases. This simplicity might be more obvious in her illustration accompanying that page of text: The drawing had stick figures who were sleeping, apparently, side by side, instead of on that bunk bed of the text.

Overall, this writing was a very impressive account of an incident in Marcy's life, and in its production, Marcy performed remarkably well, considering she had been alive in this language environment for only six years, and in school for less than two. She used basic sentences, some modification, and completeness in relating an event--all structures that she could build on in later language development. And I thought that she--and the rest of the students--enjoyed this writing: Note that many of the illustrated people are smiling. Also, as Nate said:

> Q. How do you feel when you're writing?
> A. I really felt good! I felt I was the only kid in first grade that ever did that. (Interview, 2-19-86)

Teacher Workload

All of this detail is to support my assertion that all students in this classroom wrote, and they wrote in accordance with a set definition. However, some students seemed to write more than others. As I would weekly search through the finished student books, some names were always represented; some weren't. Several students seemed to have material in rough-draft form available (in their folders--see map in Figure 5), but never managed a final book. Josie, however, assured me that all students had produced at least one book by January, when my observations began. I have reason to

believe that one reason more books were not in evidence was due to the teacher workload associated with this process writing program. Typically, in repeated instances in which I visited this classroom while process writing was going full-tilt, I saw the teacher attempting to do many things at once. Most of these things involved a one-to-one talk with a student (about rough draft, completeness, readiness to publish, spelling, etc.). In an interview, Josie talked about this hectic classroom life I repeatedly saw:

> If there is one component about the program that I think is real threatening to anyone is . . . [she] really has to be committed to it, it demands teacher time. . . . It demands being involved, looking at their writing, seeing how you can help on a one-to-one [basis], trying to figure out if a group situation would work. Every day is a little bit different. There is a pattern on how you do the job, but the experience is different every day; their writing is different every day. It demands so much thought by the teacher. (Interview, 2-28-86)

In other words, my observations and interviews generally spoke to the success of the program in that "all students wrote," but the evidence of completed books on the shelf argued, apparently, against that. From my observations of the classroom, coupled with my experience as a writing teacher myself, however, I can disregard this apparently discrepant case as a disguising of evidence resulting from technical limitations in this classroom situation, a situation that put a productive (but complex) writing program into combat with a willing but besieged teacher.

Teacher Control of Writing

In this classroom, the students wrote, but they did not do so exactly freely. Rather, the students received writing time and materials as allotted by the teacher. First, let's listen to Dirk:

Q. How do you know when it's time to start writing in the classroom?
A. She tells us.
Q. When does it happen? Once a day, once every other day, or what?
A. Every day, or once a day, or both.
Q. She does it sometimes more than one time a day?
A. Yeah, sometimes.
Q. Do you ever start writing on your own without Josie telling you to do it?
A. We can't.
Q. Why can't you?
A. I don't know.
Q. So, if you got in there, picked up your paper, and started writing in the middle of the day, you'd be in a little bit of trouble?
A. Yeah, we don't even know where the paper is, so we can't!
Q. Is that right?
A. She has to cut it! And we don't even know where the stamps are . . . or anything like that. [The stamps referred to are the date stamps that were used to stamp rough drafts, to keep track of students' progress.] (Interview, 2-29-86)

This interview with a student supported the assertion of teacher control of the writing process. Also supportive were two environmental qualities, so pervasive that they might easily be overlooked. First, Figure 2 showed the writing corner, and the map (Figure 5) showed the geographical arrangement of the classroom. In my observations, Josie exhibited the power to make decisions about this geographical arrangement of the classroom, including the movement and arrangement of desks, the placement of children, the decoration of bulletin boards, and the suspension of artwork from the ceiling. Second, Josie--in one of my initial, exploratory,

informal interviews back in January--asked me just what I wanted to observe. When she perceived that I was more interested in writing than anything else (a perception that may or may not have been true at that time, but was probably based on the fact that she knew I was a writing teacher), she offered to teach writing at a time during the school day that was convenient for me to observe. Add to these observations another interview response, this one from Randee, a student:

> A. How do you know when you've finished a piece of writing?
> A. What you do is, um, you see if you want anything else in there, and you go tell your teacher that you might be finished. She'll meet with you; she'll read it with you and see if you want it to be published. And if she says yes, you go put it by the typewriter. (Interview, 5-7-86)

And from Mike, another student:

> Q. When do you put in the drawings?
> A. She'll say: "Mike you need to illustrate and publish." (Interview, 5-7-86)

My inference, based on this evidence, was that writing in this classroom--materials, time, location, procedures--was controlled by the teacher.

Rules at Pine Park

Additionally, this classroom was part of a rule-dominated environment. The students were continually aware of what constituted proper and appropriate behavior in a particular situation. For instance, during an early observation (2-12-86), the students were making a lot of noise getting ready for recess. Josie, frowning and refusing to engage in "small talk" with the students during this informal moment, raised her voice. "Head!

Hands! Mouths!" she said. All students stopped what they were doing and engaged in this ritual: Talking stopped. They put their hands on top of their heads, then covered their mouths with their hands. When they were thus "muffled," Josie talked to them in a calm voice about their behavior, which she labeled as inappropriate. She--at this time, and others--told them, "You're not acting like first graders!"

A related incident that involved student awareness of rules occurred on the playground. During a May 7 visit, I responded to the students' entreaties to join them on the playground. As I walked toward them, many students came running up to me, wanting me to play various games with them: "Duck, duck, goose" and kickball. It had been quite a while since I had played kickball, and I felt that, somehow, "Duck, duck, goose" had been inadvertently omitted from my childhood game experience. When I told them of my ignorance, they assured me that they knew the rules and would be happy to teach me.

In kickball, they led me to a long line around home plate. I became aware that most of the figures around me were males, and I felt that any girls playing were responding to the special nature of the situation by participating. (This was reinforced when a first-grade girl kicked the ball and ran the wrong way on the basepaths, to the shouts of the boys.) However, all knew quite a collection of rules: One stood in the long line, kicked the ball rolled by the pitcher, ran the basepaths to try to get home, and the ball was

fielded by the individuals on defense. They tried to prevent the kicker from reaching home. Also, several informal rules were implied: First, girls didn't play this game, and second, girls lined up in small groups behind first and third base, and cheered the players. (They did this, in unison: "Go, Michael, go! Go, Michael, go!") During all of this kickball, many rules were followed, but only a few of them were spoken--mainly to correct rule-breaking actions, as in the situation of the girl running the wrong way.

And now back to "Duck, duck, goose," a game of which I was totally ignorant. First, it was obvious that this game was for girls--most of the boys remained playing kickball. The participants sat me down in part of a circle, and one girl slowly went through the rules for me: Stand up, walk around the circle's outside, touching the top of each participant's head and chanting "Duck . . . duck," as I touched each one. They assured each other than I should not be first, because I was just learning the game, and that Katy should, because she said, "After all, I'm the birthday girl." They knew which way to run (clockwise), and they knew to run if someone was tapped at the same time "Goose!" was uttered. If the chanter was caught by the person who was tapped and labeled "goose," the chanter had to repeat her duties. If not, the new person started chanting. One little boy stood watching, and while encouraged to enter this game, would not.

These students proved good at rules: They seemed to display an eagerness to learn just how to behave--in games and in the

classroom--and to retain such rules as they were given. The rules were many: In the classroom, the students automatically lined up single file before they exited the room for recess or at the end of the day. The teacher put "sn" and other graphemes on the board, and the students said words like "snake," to learn a phonics rule. At a Valentine's Day party, I overheard students saying, "Thank you," as they received a valentine from someone. On one of my first participation days, as I was helping a student with her rough draft (2-11-86), I was determining what word she meant, and tried to write the correct spelling of that word overtop the original. (See Marcy's story--the rough draft--for a look at the process.) This girl corrected me: "My teacher usually prints the words." (I was using cursive.) On 2-12-86, Josie asked me to stand by the outside door in the hallway in order to escort the students in from recess. About three-fourths of them looked quizzically at me, and many questioned just what I was doing there at that time. My role had changed; I was not following the order (rules) that they had become accustomed to.

Rules for Writing

So, both inside the classroom and out, and both formally and informally, the students participated in a rule-dominated environment. It was normal to expect that certain rules pervaded the actual writing of these students.

The students wrote primarily about experience. First, consider what Nate said in his interview:

Q. So you sat there and wanted to make up something that never happened. . . . Could you do that?
A. Yet, but usually she asks us if, um, it's real or not. She usually knows right! . . . .
Q. But it has happened to you. Okay, that's good. (Interview, 2-26-86)

And in a later interview with Randee, a student:

Q. What kind of subjects do you like to write about?
A. We like writing about our dogs, or our mom and dad. We write about school.
Q. If you had to write now, would you have a good topic?
A. I would write about my dog. I would write about the time when I went to Kensington Park. (Interview, 5-7-86)

And in an interview with Josie, the teacher:

> . . . When they write, what I want them to do is to take their own language, their own ideas, their own thoughts, and to put it down on paper so it has meaning to them, and in that sense it is a language experience. (Interview, 2-28-86)

All respondents--teacher and students--seemed to agree that this is how writing subjects were chosen: If these subjects began in personal experience of the students themselves, the subjects were appropriate. My observations reinforced that this is what the students wrote about: trips (like Marcy's Easter trip--see Appendix G), pets, car accidents, cut lips. Their writing world of the first grade was thus a very realistic, personal, autobiographical one.

Additionally, these students' classroom environment was characterized by a question-and-answer pattern. At one time I was present (2-28-86), a student was reading to the rest of the class from a professionally written book. She was pausing after every page to show them the illustrations, and during this time, Josie (the teacher) was asking aloud, "What is this girl [character in the story] thinking?" and "What is she getting her grandmother?" She

would constantly interrupt the reader-audience interaction with questions like these, and would wait for student answers. I noticed also that students periodically would make guesses at the progress of the story, in the nature of what was going to happen next. (This type of response was something like a question, in that the student "tossed out" this type of comment and waited for an answer from the other students, the teacher, or from the natural evolution of the reading.) Additionally, the students would make comments that affirmed what they had just heard, but possibly stated it in their "paraphrasing" language, e.g., "She threw her out! She threw her out the door!" Again, this type of comment is similar to straight question-answer in that they seemed to wait for head-nodding by the teacher, which would signify "That's correct" to their question-paraphrase.

During another visit (2-2-86), Josie was working at the chalkboard. After reading a story about Samantha, Josie stated (in writing, on the board), "I like Samantha." She then orally remarked, "What information can we add?" And the kids answered this question with "She is a cat!" and "She is dead!" Finally, during the visit mentioned before, the indoor recess, in which Marie in informal play assumed the role of the teacher, this student drew the girl (Figure 6) on the board, enlisted another student to be her "student," and immediately asked him, "What is this?" She felt that this "teacher" was supposed to ask questions, and she expected the "student" to give an answer.

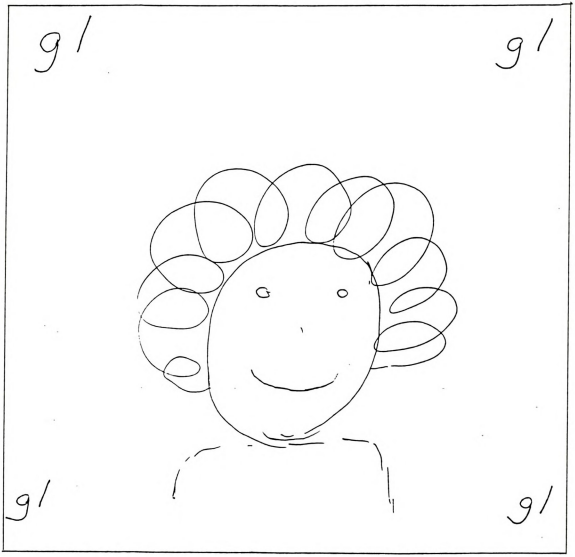


Figure 6. Marie's drawing of a girl.

Students also developed a knowledge of certain story concepts and terminology, including idea, draft, complete, publish, and book. In a 2-28-86 interview:

Q. How do you know when you're finished with something?
A. Well, you write until the first things are taken to get published.

Nate used the term published correctly here and implied knowledge of the sequence of rough draft, final copy. In a May 7 interview with Kelly and three other students:

Q. How do you know when you are finished with a piece of writing?
A. What you do is, um, you see if you want anything else in there, and you go tell your teacher that you might be finished. She'll meet with you; she'll read it with you and see if you want it to be published. And if she says yes, you go put it by the typewriter.

Here, the students implied knowledge of draft, complete, and book (which resulted from placing the text next to the typewriter).

And recall Randee's comment of May 7, in response to my question about the nature of the writing process: "If you think of something that you like very much, um, you take a pencil and we have paper and we write it." She had a notion of the place of creative ideas in this writing process. Taken together, the interviews supported the assertion that the students were correct in their use of certain writing terminology. Supporting this assertion also were many instances during my observations in which I would ask a student exactly what he was doing at that moment. At all times, that student would clarify for me at what stage he was in the writing process--draft, illustration, revision. These students also could

and did guide me physically to locations of their "books" and "drafts," and proved able to explain just what was what in the writing process in this classroom, as it involved them.

Did the students "draft" manuscripts, in the adult "polish, polish, polish" sense of the word? Examine two "stamp histories" evident from the date stamps used on their rough drafts:

Casey: 9-16-85, 9-18-85, 9-23-85, 10-21-85, 10-23-85, 11-6-85, 11-13-85 (book published)

Katie: 9-16-85, 9-18-85, 9-25-85, 10-14-85, 10-23-85, 10-28-85 (book published)

The students, it seemed, saw "writing" as something that evolved through drafts, changes, and refinement over a period of time. If they learned this process well (and I have every reason to believe that they did, in that they seemed especially receptive to rules), I think they would learn a valid, adult concept of "How Writers Write." (See the reference to Malcolm Cowley's study in my "Summary and Conclusions" section.)

Student Enthusiasm

Finally, the actions of this group of students were often enthusiastic. For support, consider this vignette that occurred in the classroom during the time Josie was absent and a substitute was in charge (5-7-86). It was at the end of the school day, and the substitute teacher said that she needed some help--two kids--to help clean the classroom. "I need a sweeper!" she exclaimed, and from her standing position, scanned the room for volunteers. Ten students or more (out of the 20 present) immediately raised their

hands, extended them to full length, and waved them from side to side. The goal of this hand-waving seemed to involve interrupting the sub's field of vision and extending one's hand higher than one's classmates. During this waving, I heard many voices, most of which were saying, "Me! Me!" with intonation and implied enthusiasm or desperation. After about ten seconds of hesitation and watching the hands go up, the teacher said, "Mike wins!" At this point, analyzing the last comment in isolation, I might have thought that this incident was a kind of contest, with financial or grade award. However, looking at the whole incident, the award was one of--apparently--the thrill or honor of helping the teacher with the menial housekeeping tasks of the classroom.

Before long, after a succession of such "awards," a boy was washing the higher board, a girl was washing the lower board, a boy was placing chairs up on desks, a boy was sweeping the floor, and another two boys were placing the dustpan in the appropriate place on the floor. Another student was behind me (as I sat at my vantage point in the back of the room), filling buckets for different scrubbing tasks. After three or four minutes, with eight or ten students helping in communal clean-up, some others were still saying, "Can I help!" As I took notes furiously on this interesting scene, a couple of girls looked over my shoulder and asked what I was doing. One--Marie--was singing and patting me on the shoulder to keep time. I said, "You kids have this place really clean! You should clean my house!" They laughed and responded, "We do it all the time!"

As I observed that day--the clean-up and the universal singing of "John Brown's baby had a cold upon his chest/and they rubbed him with camphorated oil" during the few minutes until the bell--the enthusiasm of this class impressed me. As a high school teacher, I found the contrast between a typical group that I would teach and this group to be startling. If I, that day, had made the same request for clean-up help to any of my classes, the students' reaction surely would not have been the same as the reaction of these first graders!

My first vignette supporting the enthusiasm of the first graders involved a nonacademic area; my second, shorter, support was from the academic area of writing. On an instance when Nate read one of his stories aloud to the class (2-13-86), he finished less than ten minutes before the bell. Granted that these students imperfectly tell time at this point in their development, but they had been operating during a full day of school, with no naps to rejuvenate them. Yet five or six students had questions for Nate, and their straight postures and eye focus implied attentiveness and concentration. They, as a whole, made no moves back off the carpet toward their desks to pack for going home, and communicated nothing else--either verbally or nonverbally--that would suggest they wanted to get out of this writing and listening activity. Here, too (as in volunteering for clean-up duties), the students' postures, expressions, and active involvement signified enthusiasm for this first-grade experience.

Pine Park Revisited

Negotiating Reentry

I called Dr. Cunningham about one year later. I told her that I needed to supplement my research efforts with a second series of visits to her school, and that I needed a classroom for a research site. She made a few queries, then told me that she had located a third-grade teacher who would be comfortable with having me as a regular visitor.

The teacher, Joleen, was new to Pine Park. About my age--late thirties, early forties--she had recently moved from the Pacific Northwest and had managed to interview and obtain a job teaching at Pine Park, a short distance from her new home. The principal emphasized that Joleen's thorough preparation and enthusiasm had greatly contributed to her winning the job (Interview, 5-31-88). Later discussions with Joleen added that she, as a prospective employee, had seemed willing to "buy into the program" (2-1-88). The "program" in question was, of course, the Pine Park writing program.

The purpose of my visiting another classroom at this same elementary school and establishing a second research site was to establish a sense of distance from my initial (Josie's) classroom. I had hoped certain behaviors and structures would surface that would serve as catalysts for my thinking about writing and curriculum.

Description of Joleen, Her Students, and Arrangement of Her Third-Grade Classroom

On my first visit to Pine Park's third grade, I saw a familiar arrangement of classroom furniture: The teacher's desk sat off to one front corner (to my left), the student desks were arranged in groups to the right of a sight line between me and the teacher's desk, and individual study carrels were located to the left of that line. The bulletin board, blackboard, and most of the painted concrete walls were used as display boards, announcing daily activities and mottoes (for instance, "You are the key to a good classroom," with a picture of a girl holding a key), and identifying "centers" in the room (see Figure 7).

Since my research questions at that time primarily concerned writing, I centered my attention on a niche close to my observation location, near-right, that was labeled the "writing center." It was a niche formed from the natural contour of the concrete wall separating the classroom from the hallway, and was about two feet deep by four feet wide. Similar to a "writing corner" in Josie's first-grade classroom, this area featured two posters. One said, "5 Steps to Good Writing: (1) Choose a Topic. (2) Write. (3) Revise. (4) Proofread. (5) Make a final copy." Another advertised "Guidelines for the process of writing" and gave four major steps and 27 substeps. This center, additionally, had ten dictionaries, old, loose computer paper (which I discovered was proper for children to use in writing "drafts"), crayons (for illustrating stories), a "conference box" (used to store drafts and keep track of

Figure 7. Joleen's room at Pine Park.

conferences on these drafts), scissors, and completed stories, typed, illustrated, and bound for display. This center was located between the door to the hallway and the student lockers, and was characterized by easy accessibility. During every visit including this one (2-1-88), students entered the writing corner and took what they needed back to their desk for work. (See map of the classroom, Figure 8.)

Joleen, at my arrival, always seemed to be standing in the front, right of her class. She usually seemed to be actively involved in some teaching function: leading a discussion, answering questions concerning seatwork, writing instructions on the board. Joleen, from my first visit throughout the duration of my observations, greeted me with a smile and a glance, and always seemed happy to use me as something more than the "writing man," but as a contributor to the learning activities of the class.

Two other things struck me immediately, other than these impressions of friendliness and activity: The spatial organization of the classroom was very similar to Josie's first grade that I had previously visited, and the pattern of writing activities through time (the chronological organization) also was similar to the first-grade pattern. Compare and contrast the map of Joleen's classroom (Figure 8) to my earlier map of Josie's classroom (Figure 5). Note that many visual structures were similar: Desks were arranged in groups, each room had a writing center, and each room featured displays of writing as well as of traditional holiday projects. In addition, the processes involving the students were approximately

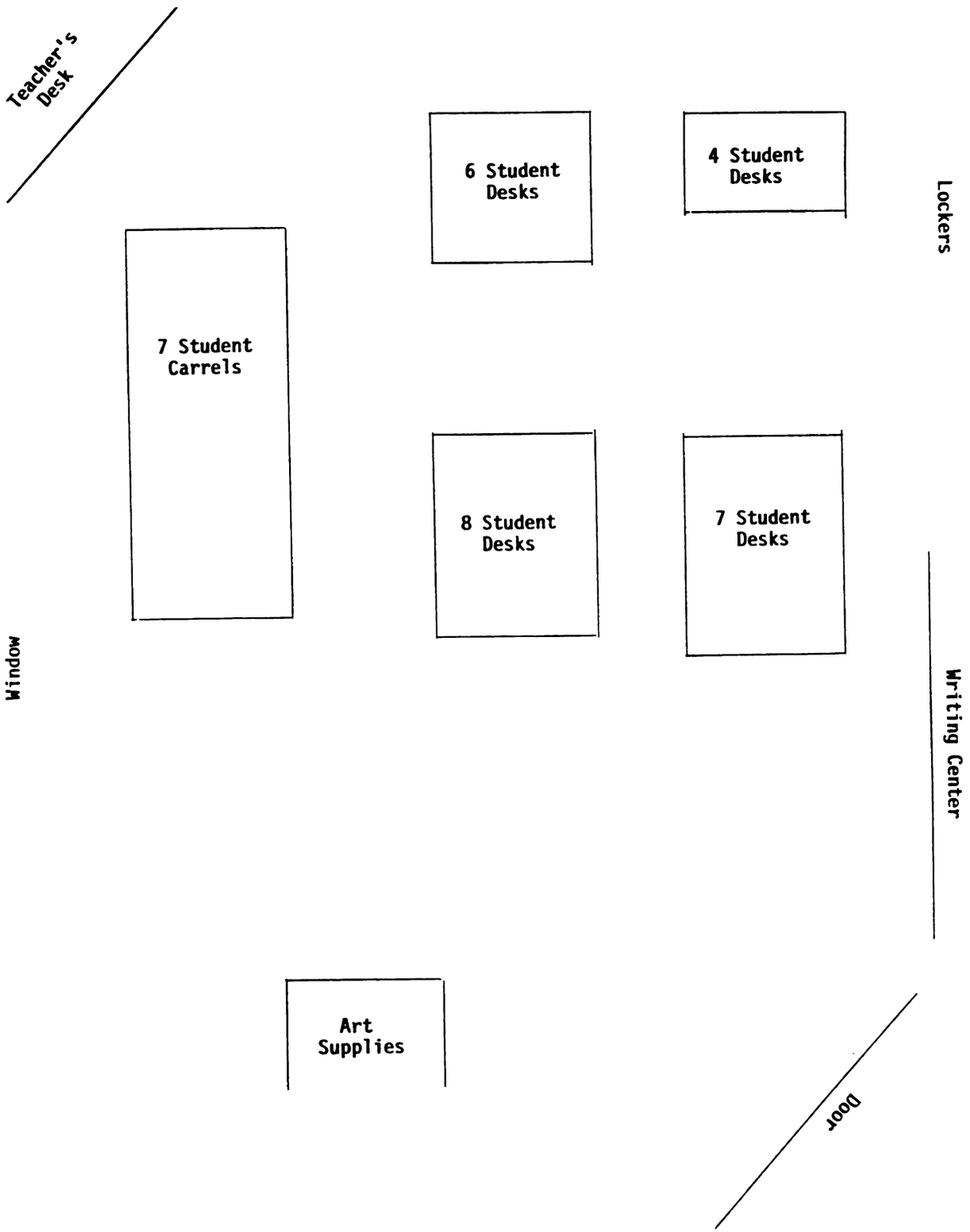


Figure 8. Map of Joleen's room.

the same: On this visit (2-1-88), two students were distributing "writing folders" to their owners. One student, Janey, took it upon herself to explain to me (without prompting) what the red folders were, and to whom she was giving them. As Joleen, the teacher, handed out Xeroxed writing prompts (from a commercially prepared package), I began to reflect on the sameness at Pine Park from class to class, and grade to grade, that was reflected in the rooms' layouts and in the roles played by the students and teacher during "writing time." Also, I began to realize that the students had been acculturated into this writing program, and realized what their proper roles were.

For example, I conducted a later interview with Aaron, whom I observed often out of his seat, moving from place to place throughout the classroom, apparently without academic purpose. Both the elementary classrooms I visited over the years had "stars" in them: children whom the teacher selected to read reports while I was observing. (In fact, Marcy was selected to read--and she did so beautifully--while I observed her as a first grader, and again when she was a third grader.) Aaron was never selected for these performances, and, in fact, was characterized by his third-grade teacher as a hyperactive child who was a real source of discipline problems in the classroom.

There were two reasons I decided to interview Aaron. One was that Aaron reacted to my presence as an observer every time I was in the room, doing things like leaving his desk and coming over to

mine, trying to read what I was writing, and showing me his work-in-progress. I therefore had to notice him, and felt obligated to learn his name. The second reason was that I empathized with Aaron's teacher and felt that my time with Aaron--interviewing him out of the room--would take some pressure off her. And yes, there might have been a third reason: I had begun to like the kid. One day I walked in to observe on an odd day--my schedule had been disrupted earlier in the week. "I thought you came in every Monday!" Aaron protested, as I attempted to enter the room quietly and begin my work. As an observer (or a person), it's nice to be noticed.

The interview began as Aaron, dressed in grey sweatpants and blue sweatshirt, first wondered, "What's that thing on your chin?" "A cleft," I responded. During the interview (5-10-88), Aaron insisted on drawing a representation of the classroom. This rendering included the "writing table" (see Aaron's first drawing, Figure 9), a posted writing assignment, and what looked like the box that served as a repository for student writing folders (see his second drawing, Figure 10).

Aaron, upon direct questioning, also was able to reconstruct a typical sequence of events that would occur when his teacher said, "We're going to write today!" He knew this sequence: "First get the book out. Second--whether math, science, English, Social Studies, or anything. Third, what page to turn to. Fourth, she goes over it with the class. Fifth, sometimes she assigns next

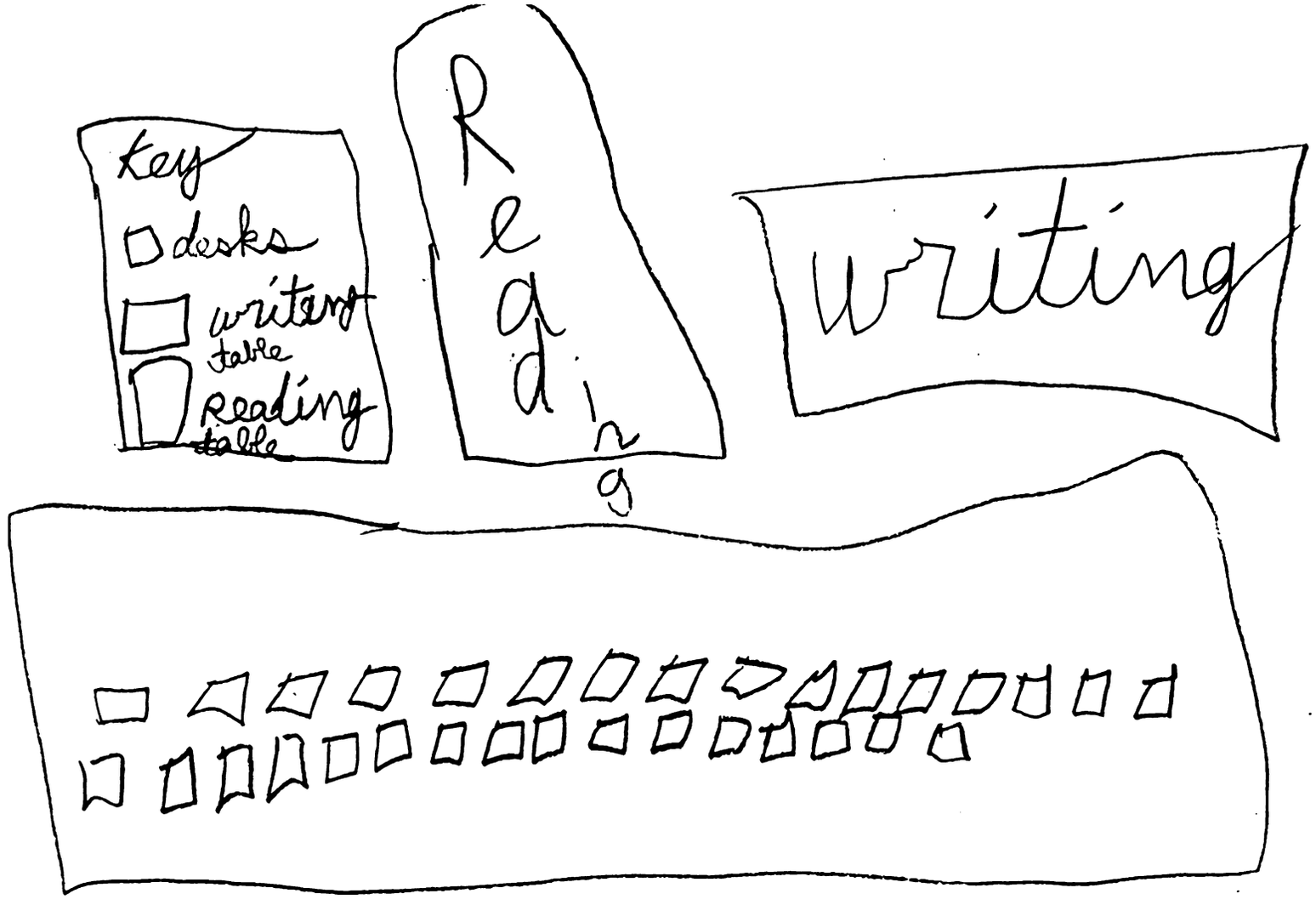


Figure 9. Aaron's drawing of writing area.

Figure 10. Aaron's drawing of writing file.

page, sometimes not; and sixth, sometimes we do it in class, sometimes homework" (Interview, 5-10-88).

Similarities in Writing Curricula

What the classroom showed me, coupled with what Aaron drew and said, related to some of my research questions. First, writing was being done in this, Joleen's, third-grade classroom, just as it had occurred in Josie's first-grade classroom previously, at the same elementary school. My observations of the physical arrangement of the room, the processes undertaken within that room, and the comments of interviewed participants reinforced the occurrence of writing, and delineated the nature of that process and curriculum with some consistency, some sameness from classroom to classroom, teacher to teacher, and year to year.

Each participant displayed some consistency in defining the ways in which the writing process occurred. When Joleen asked for "quiet writing," a student asked her, "Can we conference?" Later that day (5-10-88), as I listened to students "conference," I noted that they had internalized the procedures involved in conferencing: They searched for a willing listener, politely asked, "Can we conference?," stood and read their drafts, and afterward listened for criticism. Included with their awareness of different steps in process writing, they displayed knowledge of the circumstances in which writing should occur. For example, Aaron, the low-achieving student, said during an interview that writing would occur "whether Math, English, Social Studies, Science, or anything" (Interview,

5-10-88). Joleen (his teacher) defined writing, in part, as a method "to find out how much they know about the subject" (Interview, 5-16-88). And the students seemed to have an internalized definition of just what constituted "writing": At one point in my observations, Joleen called for the students to work on "Spelling Devils." One child immediately complained, saying, "I thought we were going to have writing!" (Fieldnotes, 4-18-88). Later that day, Joleen attempted to interject a discussion of "their/there/they're" into a writing assignment. Aaron protested, saying, "This isn't English class!" In other words, to these third graders, "writing" wasn't spelling and it wasn't lessons in correct word usage. Additionally, both student and teacher implied that writing was used across subject-matter boundaries. And, in an interview with the principal of this elementary school, Dr. Cunningham, when asked, "What and how do you think a good writing teacher should teach?" she answered, "I like writing across the curriculum" (Interview, 5-31-88).

This consistency of writing curriculum across different sites and times led me to believe that the teaching of writing in this elementary school was characterized by a certain regular, possibly regulated, set of performance and curricular expectations directed at the students and teachers. I was reminded of an earlier comment of Joleen's--that she had felt she must "buy into" the principal's program in order to obtain her teaching job. And the principal's program, in part, was this writing curriculum:

Q. Do you feel that there is a writing curriculum used in classes here? What is the nature of that curriculum?
A. It's in print--every teacher gets a copy. It's a process writing booklet available to all teachers here. (Interview with Dr. Cunningham, 5-31-88)

This consistent writing curriculum, based on my observations, occurred at Pine Park, even within the "closed classroom" alluded to by Cusick (1983). During the same interview, Dr. Cunningham alluded to similar barriers to consistent curriculum:

Q. You are familiar with the saying, "When the door closes, I teach what I want to teach." Do you think that this happens with your writing teachers? Is it good or bad?
A. I don't think we have a whole lot of that at Pine Park. We have a lot of discussions across grade level. They see parents have a right to expectation of similar content of third grade. Teachers talk twice a month. One-half the staff has visitors. We take this public!

Hallway Writing Displays

In addition to interview responses and direct classroom observations, a tour down common school hallways provided me with evidence of this consistency in writing curriculum at Pine Park.

My visits to Pine Park over the years had conditioned me to observe the hallway displays, and I had, faithfully. In fact, this habit had spilled over into my observations of the other buildings, so that I systematically contrasted the nature of selected schools' hallway displays (see Figure 11). I had known that Pine Park's hallways seemed functional in that they offered me a sense of what the students were doing in their classes. As I examined them more closely and contrasted them with hallways of other schools I visited, this "functionality" seemed to be a representation of curriculum. Other schools offered hallways that were sanitary

Site-Ordering Meta-Matrix: Source, Length, and Topic of Writing Displayed in Common School Hallways

School	Source	Length	Topic
Pine Park	St	S	Unicorns
	St	P	Chinese New Year
	St	P	Animal types
	St	W	Self-portraits
	St	P	Constitution
	St	P	February holidays
	St	S	Hearts
	St	E	"How to" process
	St	P	Problem solving
	St	P	Winter
	St	E	Succeeding in puzzles
	St	S	Home life/autobiog.
	St	P	"If I were president, I would. . . ."
	St	P	Families
Maxim	St	Ph	Advertising packages
	N	S	"March Is Reading Month"
	N	S	Summer programs
	N	S	Motivational posters: "Feel Good About Yourself"
Central Point	N	S	"Exit," "Staff"
	N	S	Commercial advertising poster: Crest, Pert

Key: St = Student written
N = Not student written
W = Word
Ph = Phrase
S = Sentence
P = Paragraph (three to six sentences)
E = Essay (seven sentences or more)

Figure 11. Contrasts in hallway displays.

corridors; Pine Park had hallways that "taught" things in ways noticeable to the visitor and, more important, to the students. A visit to Pine Park, remember, began with a drive down Pine Park Road--featuring the "Center for Writing Excellence" sign--followed by admission through the main entrance (by the office's glass wall, through which the visitor could be observed), proceeded down these hallways, and culminated in the classroom. I thought about my attention to hallways and, in an autobiographical section of my notes, reflected that:

> I noted . . . a slight change in the hallway display Monday. Do I note it because I'm conditioned to looking at bulletin boards/walls there as an approach to my classroom site? Or is it because everything is on a smaller scale--I don't have the immensity of school populations, size of the individuals, or number of classrooms and influences/distractions to contend with? In other words, focuses can be established and clarified in a smaller school setting! Could this imply that a smaller school setting can be conducive to control, purpose, and direction? (Fieldnotes, 4-13-88)

Certainly, the hallways of Pine Park displayed a singularity of focus. The main hall outside the office had a "Quiet, we're writing the constitution" mural, complete with texts and writing utensils (Fieldnotes, 2-1-88). As I progressed down toward the classroom, the hallway display changed emphasis to displays of student writing projects: wild animal reports, with one-half of the page showing the animal and one-half writing describing the animal.

This idea of hallway displays as a type of publishing was alluded to in various interviews I had done. First, Pine Park's principal--the same person responsible for hiring the writing consultant, Ruth Nathan, and the one who had established the

"program" of schoolwide writing emphasis that Joleen as a teacher-candidate had had to "buy into"--responded in a manner consistent with this student publication as she responded to this question:

> Q. What and how do you think a good writing teacher should teach?
> A. I like the steps in process writing. [The "steps" referred to commonly contain--for example, in Donald Murray's work--"publication" of student work.) I like teachers who will give part of writing time to students' topics, and I like writing across the curriculum. (Interview, 5-31-88)

In an interview with the new teacher, Joleen, I asked her:

> Q. Is there a unified, agreed-upon "program" or curriculum of teaching writing at your school? How is this program in evidence? Do you "buy" into it?
> A. Yes! Very much! Dr. Cunningham says in the announcements, "We will have writing visitors today. Would you please update and attend to your projects." There's that added pressure. She'll leave them notes. . . . This is her baby. She's very proud of it. (Interview, 5-16-88)

Pine Park Summarized

Therefore, by combining my classroom observations (over time and two different sites), external grounds and hallway observations, photographs taken of these structures and displays, and interviews with student, principal, and teacher participants, I can assert that at Pine Park "writing" existed in a consistent and recognizable form throughout the school. I believe that this emphasis on including the subject matter of writing and organizing how writing was taught --the "writing curriculum"--was largely determined by a principal who possessed clear educational goals, acting within an educational structure--Pine Park Elementary School--that was accommodating to her influence. This curricular emphasis on writing was reflected by

learned processes, by classroom organization and behaviors, and by display focus in the common areas of the school.

In Pine Park Elementary, then, the "enacted" curriculum seemed quite similar to the writing curriculum as it existed conceptually in the minds of the principal, teachers, and certain guiding documents. Additionally, the nature of this writing curriculum was directly observable in that it was reflected in the proxemics of the classroom, and in displays of student work both within individual classrooms and in school hallways. These displays seemed to work not only as advertisements of what students had been doing, but as an establishment or reaffirmation of focus on writing as a whole-school curriculum focus. As such, the displays and other visual data of the school established an "implicit" set of curricular guidelines for learning at Pine Park.

Maxim Junior High School

My visits to schools other than Pine Park served to provide some "conceptual levers" that brought these assertions about writing curriculum into clearer focus.

Maxim Junior High School sat about two and one-half miles from Pine Park, one of its feeder schools. Maxim was a sprawling, single-story, yellow-brick building, located close to a busy intersection. While Maxim retained a view of a golf course to its front and a large subdivision of middle-class residences to its right, two new strip malls, with K-Mart, Burger King, and their offspring, seemed to be encroaching upon the school's atmosphere.

Negotiating Entry

My initial contact with this school was through the principal, Mr. Barstow. As I stated in an earlier chapter, while my entry became progressively more difficult as I encountered schools other than Pine Park, I nevertheless soon found myself winding my way down long, windowed hallways in my search for Mrs. Wilson's classroom.

Mrs. Wilson's Seventh-Grade Classroom

A view of this room gave me this: eight tables, round, with three or four student chairs at each one. Most of the tables had two or three students sitting there; two had one student each. The teacher's desk, with a table next to it, stood at my left as I entered the room. The room had a blackboard at one end--my right--and a rather puzzling glassed-in enclosure to my left. Ordinary windows straight ahead of me faced a courtyard. The teacher, Mrs. Wilson, stood facing her class, leaning some of her weight on her desk, conducting a discussion concerning medieval projects, and planning a day devoted to role-playing some of the characters and concepts they had learned.

Arrangement of the Room

Visually, this classroom offered additional detail: On the walls were posted large (average size about 20" by 30") posters, cut in somewhat irregular outlines, and displaying information on armaments, castles, knights' armor, tapestry, scrolls, the Black Death, and coats of arms (see photo, Figure 12). All information

Figure 12. Displays in Mrs. Wilson's room.

posted on the walls was directly relating to the class study of the Medieval Period. As I took notes on the decorations and proxemics of the classroom, I also noted what students seemed to be doing at these round tables. The 18 students present during my initial observation were doing similar work, in that all topics represented something relating to medievalism. I saw several reading books and taking notes from them, several stenciling and pasting projects together, and I heard most of the students talking throughout whatever they were doing with their hands and eyes. I later learned that the writing involved in this assignment gave students a choice of 40 options. All 40 involved student writing in some form, including producing a "list," "labeling," "writing a letter," "writing a short play," or "making a program for a tournament" (Fieldnotes, 2-17-88).

To get a closer look, I changed seats, asking permission of two girls, Tammy and Kahlia, to join them at their table. They smiled at me and let me watch them putting together a medieval diary and menu. They had burned the edges of their diary pages before this class, and shared with me their plans for cooking medieval recipes for their eventual day-long banquet (Fieldnotes, 2-3-88). As I sat there, I noted that of the 18 students present that day, most were bent over their tables' work surfaces and appeared to have a medieval-related project under way. Additionally, I heard frequent conversational fragments from nearby tables, in which problems of research and preparation of projects predominated as topics (Fieldnotes, 3-16-88).

Student Writing: Some Contrasts and Comparisons

These characteristics of proxemics (see map, Figure 13), project orientation, and interdisciplinary study combining "language arts" with art and other areas, notably history, continued to be evident throughout my observations at Maxim in this classroom. Writing was an enterprise of this curriculum, but Mrs. Wilson's classroom demonstrated a curriculum that somewhat contrasted with what I had previously seen at Pine Park Elementary. Specifically, whereas the proxemics of the students' seating was similar, writing projects maintained more of a classwide content focus. In this case, for instance, all students in Mrs. Wilson's classroom worked with the Medieval Period. At Pine Park, the students were sometimes given "story starters"--a commercial aid designed to prompt imaginations and writing in elementary schoolers--but most often were instructed to write about their lives, about what interested them, on an individual basis.

There was some similarity, also, in that the students in each situation were sometimes called upon to research subjects for writing. The third graders, in one Pine Park visit, were involved in a "scavenger hunt" that took place during a pleasant spring day on the playground. On this day, we hunted spiders, leaves, ants, and the like, and these objects were used as objects for writing. This "scavenging" I see as a type of direct, "hands-on" research, culminating in the students' writing about science. On the other hand, the seventh graders of Mrs. Wilson's class researched more

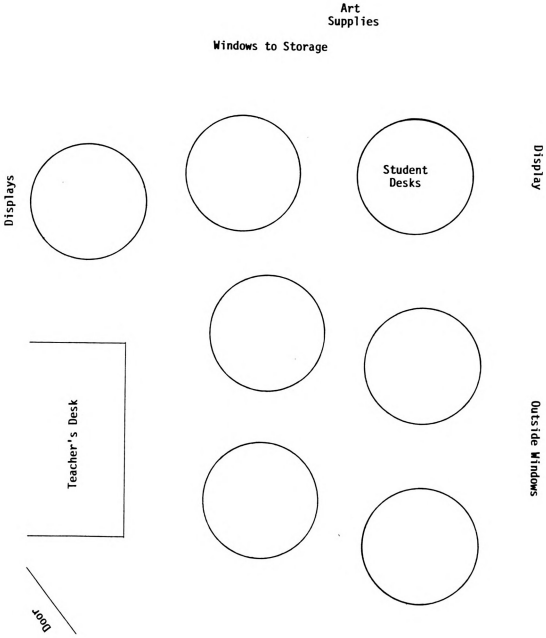


Figure 13. Map of Mrs. Wilson's room.

formally, by taking their individual topics to the Maxim library, and by examining print media for relevant information.

On many observations, the students in Mrs. Wilson's class wrote rough drafts, and after consulting with a "reader"--often another student, often Mrs. Wilson herself, sometimes me--produced a final copy. This final copy was, then, somehow "published": During the Medieval assignment, material was often posted for others to read. Occasionally, material was in the form of a script (see Figure 14) and was acted, or in the case of the two girls' recipe, was cooked and distributed to classmates.

In summary, the writing curriculum in Mrs. Wilson's class assumed a definite form, and that form was relatively consistent over time. To illustrate, I have a newspaper article dated approximately one year before my period of participant-observation at Maxim that recounts a similar assignment. Mrs. Wilson and her students researched frontier life in 1850s America, and the students "invented their parents' occupations, some historical background and lifestyle. . . . Dress was as authentic as could be fashioned. . . . No plastic wrap was allowed and all items were wrapped in cloth napkins." The writing that occurred here involved individual or group "projects," involving in-depth study of a negotiated (between student and teacher, and between student and student) area, research in different modes, multifaceted student participation, and a presentation in front of peers. In my interview with Mrs. Wilson,

SKIT

Scene 1

Punch introduces himself.

PUNCH: Hello everyone! My name in Punch! But of course I know all of you know me already! I am here to steal the King's crown. I have been wanting to accomplish this stunt for a long time and now I am about to succeed.

Scene 2

Punch goes into the castle. He runs into the cook.

COOK: Oh, excuse me! I'm quite sorry for running into you. I have to get back to my stew before it overcooks. You know how the King is when his stew is overcooked.

The cook exits.

PUNCH: Whew! (Wipes his head.) That was a close one!

Scene 3

Guard enters.

GUARD: You there (pointing to Punch)! What are you doing here!? What is your name?!

PUNCH: I am here to see the King!

GUARD: On what basis?

PUNCH: Well . . . (pause) A messenger sent for me and said that the King wanted to see me right away!

GUARD: The King has not sent for anyone. He is in the throne room right now! (pause) I'm going to have to arrest you for entering this castle without permission!

Punch then hits the guard on the head. Guard screams "AH." "KABOOM" sign goes up.

PUNCH: Now to find out where the King is!

Figure 14. Student script.

Scene 4

Punch moves down the corridor to the throne room. The Jester stops him, carrying a scroll.

JESTER: Where are you going, sir?

PUNCH: (In a cruel voice) Nowhere!

Punch bops the Jester over the head. Jester screams "AH." "KABOOM" sign goes up.

Scene 5

Punch goes to the King.

KING: Punch, what are you doing here? This is surely a surprise! It has come to my attention that you have been wanted in Germany, and in many other countries as well, for hitting people on the head with your stick! Is this true?

PUNCH: Well. . . .

All of the sudden, Punch hits the King on the head, which knocks the King's crown off. Punch steals the crown.

PUNCH: I have succeeded! Mmmm. . . . What's that down there?

Punch leans over the side of the castle. All of the sudden the crown falls off Punch's head and into the moat.

PUNCH: NOOOOOOOO! My crown! My crown! It's just fallen into the moat and it's floating away! [Punch starts crying!]

THE END

Figure 14. Continued.

she had some comments on how this curriculum was shaped in her classroom:

Q. How would you define writing . . . as it is taught in your class?
A. It is expressing yourself and being creative.
Q. What forces do you see at work shaping the way you teach writing?
A. I love writing and always have. I have no pressures from anybody. I do this totally myself . . . because I've never taught much writing before. There has to be a way for everybody to be better. I try to make it fun.
Q. How do you utilize classroom time, shape, and design to reflect your values concerning the teaching of writing?
A. I make up 90-100% of my own assignments. . . . I love it in here. I need freedom of movement for us to relate to each other. If they put me in a desk with rows, I don't know what I'd do.
Q. Have you changed the way you have taught writing in the several years you have taught it? What has influenced you to change?
A. Change has been continuous! And I did that with art, too. I get real bored, really easy! (Interview, 6-2-88)

Influences on Writing Curriculum

Elsewhere, in less structured conversations, Mrs. Wilson told of her background and training as an artist, and of her years spent teaching art. Additionally, she alluded to her recent training at a summer workshop, the Oakland Writing Project (also mentioned by Josie of Pine Park's first grade as an information source). Earlier, also, Mrs. Wilson mentioned her proclivity for workshops: One was in the works for "Writing on the Right Side of the Brain," as was a mini-grant awarded to this teacher, in order that she teach process writing to teachers at Maxim Junior High who had not had adequate writing training. In fact, Mrs. Wilson stated that she had been to lots of workshops in seven years--she "knows a lot!" (Fieldnotes, 2-17-88).

Here were indications of knowledge of writing and consistency in writing curriculum. The writing of the seventh graders in Mrs. Wilson's classroom always reflected uniqueness and individuality--both in the types of assignments being completed and in the children's treatment of the assignments. In addition to the individualized writing activities I related earlier, I also observed that students tended to identify with their published work. For example, many of the wall decorations, scrolls, and the like posted during my early observations were not only one-of-a-kind, unduplicated by anyone else in the class, but were invested with the names of the students who produced them. In one exemplary case, the students had drawn "A Map to the Castle," and had named landmarks after the students who had worked on the project: "Castle Roberts" and "Lake Sam," for example. Just as the writing project was unique (and a source of pride for the teacher), so did the students pride themselves on the uniqueness of their responses (Fieldnotes, 2-17-88).

Also, there was a continual murmur evidenced from the class as a whole, as the children's voices farther from me blended into a background of seventh-grade voices, male and female, punctuated frequently by "Mrs. Wilson!" requests made at a noticeably higher level.

Occasionally during my visits to Maxim, there were exceptions to this apparent harmony of purpose and method. Once, as Mrs. Wilson and I were returning from a short, semi-private conversation

in the doorway to the classroom, she loudly said, "Be quiet, or move!" At that moment, she moved rapidly among several of the eight tables, pointing her fingers at different chairs, and motioning with her hands and eyes to indicate a new arrangement of students at those tables. At that point, Mrs. Wilson spoke even louder, and established a rule--that all students must raise their hands to talk. Then, all murmurs that were usually present during this class ceased, except from one girl. Mrs. Wilson then demanded, "Shut your mouth and listen!" I left the room to copy some student materials, and I felt some relief as I started down the hallway.

Writing did occur in Mrs. Wilson's classroom, then--not without interruptions, but with some regularity and consistency. This curriculum was identifiable in its emphases by my observation of how the students and the teacher spent their time, and was reinforced by perusal of related documents from a time before my period of observation, and by my direct observation of more implicit qualities of the setting, including proxemics and student publications. Mrs. Wilson's interview responses--both formal and informal--might indicate that she had had less training than I felt she had: Other, noninterview evidence pointed to the shaping of her writing curriculum through workshop attendance and grant involvement. I feel that Mrs. Wilson's formal interview responses--in which she more or less denied the presence of outside influences or pressures--can be understood in light of the writing curriculum that she enforced: The woman highly valued creativity and individuality in her students, her assignments, and herself.

Therefore, I can understand her tendency to, possibly, understate the influence that outside forces had had on determining writing curriculum in her classroom.

Additionally, interviews with students indicated that, among other things, they were familiar with this writing curriculum and could tell me some of the salient details of it. For example, Jeannie (grade 7), when asked to define the writing process, said it was "putting down your personal thoughts about anything, really." She thought that Mrs. Wilson gave "creative assignments--I think [she] does a good job! I like the art combination" (Interview, 5-11-88). Mark, from the same class, responded that this class represented the majority of his school writing assignments, and all "creative" writing assignments. Whereas other teachers had made him "copy stuff down from the book and everything," Mrs. Wilson let him do "creative stuff," and he said, "I like creative better." In Mark's case, as in Jeannie's, he had a ready definition of writing: "Putting down your personal thoughts about anything, really." In both students' cases, these definitions did not include spelling or grammar (Interview, 5-11-88). Shawn, age 11, added that writing was "ideas in class--the teacher gives a schedule--today idea, tomorrow outline." And his ideal writing classroom would be arranged "pretty much like sixth hour [Mrs. Wilson's class]. A leisurely atmosphere. You could ask friends questions. You could be more laid back" (Interview, 5-6-88).

I found the interview with Maxim's second-year principal, Mr. Barstow, extremely interesting. A young man, probably in his middle

thirties, Mr. Barstow responded to a series of questions I asked him:

Q. What and how do you think a good writing teacher should teach?
A. It's a skill that improves with experience. One of the keys is to see good examples of it and to hear it. You have to have a good teacher, like anything else. I see a teacher who has objectives and methodology. . . . It's okay.
Q. Is the teaching of writing a priority of yours? Explain.
A. I'll be honest with you. There was so much shit wrong with this building, only now am I getting--in my third year--around to curriculum. Now, it's a priority, but I feel it's right up there with three or four other programs.
Q. Do you feel there is a writing curriculum used in classes here?
A. Yeah . . . it's growing. People are finding some success with it. Process writing--one more bandwagon--but if teachers are finding some success with it, that's okay.
Q. Do you, in any way, exert power and influence in this school to ensure that students become better writers?
A. Yeah. I've gone to people individually to say, "Please go for workshops. Go to Oakland Schools, or we'll have a workshop here if you don't feel like leaving."
Q. You are familiar with the saying, "When the door closes, I teach what I want to teach." Do you think that this happens with your writing teachers?
A. Not as much. I'd say that was true years ago. Part of that was due to the curriculum leadership. I think that you're paid to do a job. I think somebody needs to be in charge. I think if curriculum is to go anywhere, it has to have some supervision. If you plant enough seeds, this happens internally. You can't ram curriculum down teachers' throats. (Interview, 5-6-88)

Maxim Summarized

This research at Maxim Junior High indicated that writing was taught in the seventh-grade class I observed, and it was presented consistently and regularly, with observable salient features. These features were identifiable to the participant-observer, and also were familiar and consistent in the internalized definition of

selected participants in this setting. This systematic definition and presentation of writing as a subject was part of the writing curriculum.

This writing curriculum in existence in Mrs. Wilson's seventh grade was somewhat in contrast to the curriculum at Pine Park. I shall discuss these contrasts later in this report.

Whereas both Pine Park and Maxim sites evidenced the occurrence of writing in classrooms, each separate school displayed a distinct set of features that implied just how writing was taught.

Pine Park, in both classrooms I observed, had similar writing programs. Similar proxemics of classroom furniture existed, as did similar wall decorations. Watching the students engage in writing activities showed me that these children had internalized a consistent set of rules that governed their activities during "writing time"; these rules and expectations were verbalized by the children during interviews, and similar sets of rules and expectations were related in interviews with the two teachers and the principal of the school.

Additionally, touring Pine Park's hallways and grounds provided more evidence for this consistent writing curriculum. First, all hallways of the school were relatively filled with documentation (i.e., student papers) that supported this consistent writing curriculum. The exterior grounds of the school even revealed this emphasis on writing. It was in this "extra-classroom" consistency that an important feature of Pine Park's writing curriculum was observed: This writing curriculum was emphasized schoolwide.

Classroom to classroom, up and down the hallways, on the sign in front of the school: All of these locations prominently related to some aspect of the school's writing curriculum. The triangulation of these physical features of the school with results from interviews (with various participants), and with my participant-observation of two classrooms, convinced me that the writing curriculum at Pine Park was a schoolwide writing curriculum.

I originally hoped to achieve "conceptual leverage" with my participant-observation at Maxim Junior High School. I feel that I did just that: While my classroom observational site (Mrs. Wilson's room) provided me with similar rich data on writing and the writing curriculum, other types of sources made me notice certain contrasts between the two schools. For instance, my cataloguing of hallway displays and other external evidence of writing curriculum turned up a comparative absence of writing data (see Figure 12). Subsequently, my interviews with the principal and with the teacher indicated that the writing curriculum at Maxim was not determined schoolwide and was not consistent from classroom to classroom, or grade to grade. Neither was writing curriculum mandated by textbooks, or by formal curriculum documents at the building or district level. Rather, the writing curriculum was determined by independent influences, such as personality and background of the teacher, and workshops encouraged and attended.

Central Point High School

I regularly visited a third site, Central Point High School. As I became a participant-observer there, I began to form an understanding of another writing curriculum, its enactment, its reflection in the more concrete aspects of school and classroom life, and the forces that were at work shaping that writing curriculum in this school.

Note two things: I was at the third school, in hopes that these visits would "jar" my thinking a bit, and would serve to make me notice important features of all the schools of my observations. Second, by the sum total of my participant-observations, I hoped that I would become more knowledgeable about how curriculum "works" in schools.

My initial walk into Central Point was a familiar one, in contrast to my first days at Pine Park and Maxim. The reason was that Central Point was my home school: I had been employed there for a number of years. Additionally, students who attend Pine Park usually attend Maxim Junior High, then progress to Central Point.

A Difficult Entry

Based on these facts, I might have expected that it would have been easier for me to obtain entry to Central Point than to the other two schools, and that a certain curricular uniformity would be evidenced at all three schools in the same district. Neither was the case. The first expectation of easy entry was rather quickly eroded as I attempted to alter my role as teacher at the school. As

I extended overtures expressing my interest, not in teaching but in becoming a "participant-observer" in another English teacher's classroom, I was turned down. The teacher I had chosen--a relatively new hiree--looked at me, then avoided my eyes and started shuffling some papers on the top of her desk. Finally, she spoke: "Yes, you can come in . . . I guess . . . but only if you promise not to do any backbiting." She continued shuffling papers while I tried to explain that I would never consider "backbiting." I left the room sure that she had had a recent bad experience with the staff at Central Point, and unsure of my status in that room as a participant-observer. I felt that I would be under an obligation to prove--daily?--my altruistic motives and my good character. I decided to try my second choice, Mrs. Burr.

Mrs. Burr's Eleventh-Grade Class

Mrs. Burr was an experienced English teacher with whom I had had a professional relationship for many years. She formerly had been assigned many of the remedial-reading classes at Central Point, but had more recently been assigned relatively advanced classes in literature and writing. I had begun at Central Point guided by the premise that my observation would be somehow more valid if I watched someone (and a classroom) who was unfamiliar--that this "strangeness" would be obvious to me, and that my notes and conclusions on writing, curriculum, and so on, would effortlessly take shape. As I began my tenure with Mrs. Burr's sixth-hour class (British Literature, to include student writing instruction), I felt

that my primary task would be "to make the familiar strange"--in other words, to remove myself from the familiarity and predictability of the classroom life enough to escape easy assumptions, and to see the real social processes that were at work there.

An Awkward Role

I gradually came to realize that, ironically, this setting (at my own high school) was the most difficult of the three schools for me to enter, and the most difficult of the three for me to observe. In addition to my (first-choice) teacher's assigning me a role in the ebb and flow of department politics (and showing hesitance in letting me put that role aside for one as participant-observer), my observations presented a special sort of difficulty. For support, I would like to offer this portion of my intellectual autobiography:

> Even during breaks it is difficult to talk to Mrs. Burr. I think it is more difficult on this level because each sound has meaning to me, a high school teacher. Also, I feel more uncomfortable in this high school classroom: I think it's because I hear the material said and see the actions as I'm in the back of the room, and I'm always alert to proper and improper behavior. Whereas in the other two rooms, I'm more of a true observer, or maybe a participant in a scientific sense, here, I'm a "lifer"--a lifelong English teacher in high school. My sense of propriety in methods and student behavior runs deep. Hard to objectify. This could explain my surprising discomfort at observing here. (Fieldnotes, 3-18-88)

In other words, there were real problems in trying to undertake naturalistic observation within my familiar "home" school. Whereas, in the other schools, I had established very few prior judgments about what was proper and improper behavior, at Central Point I had established a veritable encyclopedia of standards--standards for

maintenance of a good English classroom, if you will. And when I saw one of those standards being violated, something in me demanded that I notice the rule-breaker and restore my version of "order" in by class--by my pointed glances, frowns, and other oft-practiced techniques. Additionally, as my first abortive attempt at establishing an observational site showed me, I was seen by others at this school not as a "passive observer" or "the writing man," but as someone who had a personal and professional reputation, and a system of social ties with other human beings.

All of these contrasts served not to negate the quality of my observations at Central Point, but to give an interesting "conceptual lever," which I had anticipated in the first place. Before I was able to explore much in the way of writing and curriculum, however, this conceptual lever caused me to reexamine the basic relationship of a participant-observer and his research site.

Hallway Writing Displays

My first familiar-unfamiliar walk down Central Point's hallways as a participant-observer showed me displays that were markedly different from those at the other two schools (see graph, Figure 15). The nature of the hallway displays at Central Point showed either no display at all, or it showed data concerning school activities (sports, yearbook sales) or college information (see chart, Figure 11). Posters, when I saw them, were mostly located in the top one-half, glass sections of classroom doors, and were turned

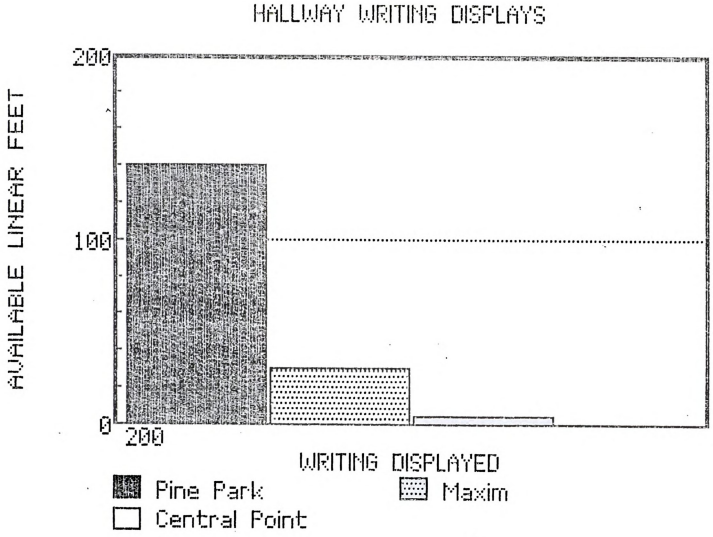


Figure 15. Hallway writing displays at three schools.

to face inwards. The only other writing I saw was of a more functional nature: signs saying "Men" or "Women" stenciled in green paint on lavatory doors, or signs saying "Exit" or the like, posted over certain areas of the hallway. I saw no student-produced writing in Central Point's hallways.

As I entered Mrs. Burr's class for the first time, I had a difficult time finding a place to sit. At my other two sites, I had located a place to sit that would offer a view of most of the class, and a certain unobtrusiveness. In this class, one glance assured me that the students were seated in rows and that most or all of the desks were full (see Figure 16). As Mrs. Burr was located near the entrance at her desk, I had a choice: sit near her in the front of the room, or sit in back on the floor. To me at that point, I felt that I could (a) be a "teacher," or (b) be a rather uncomfortable participant-observer. I chose the second alternative.

Arrangement of the Room

As my classroom map and photos indicate, the proxemics of Mrs. Burr's class contrasted with that displayed in the other two classrooms. Her room displayed posters of Jack London, Stephen Crane, Thoreau, a literary map of the United States, and a diagram of Shakespeare's Globe Theater. All of her bulletin board displays represented "writers" and "places significant to writers and writing" but no writing, student-produced or other (see photos, Figure 16). As can only be implied by the map and the photos, I felt that--in contrast to Pine Park and Maxim--I was more of an

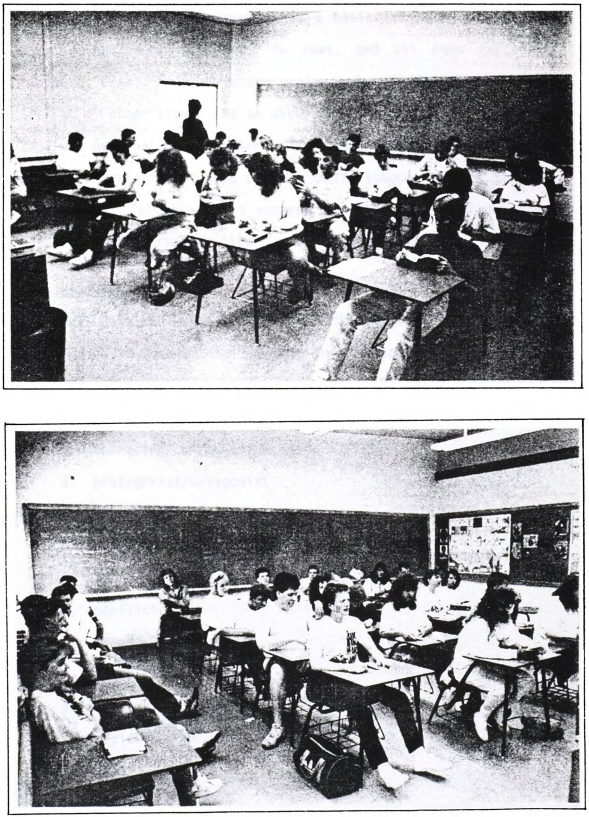


Figure 16. Mrs. Burr's class.

intruder here. There seemed to be a noticeable structure in Mrs. Burr's room, with all desks in rows, and all rows facing the teacher's desk. This structure contrasted with the structure I had seen at my other sites. As an observer, I was the player of a role that was not that of a teacher--even though some of the students had probably identified me as a teacher in the school--and not that of a student. (I felt that as I entered the room for the first time.) Several occurrences in that room solidified this impression.

Classroom Activities

Mrs. Burr had written a list of literary terms on the board and was engaged in leading the students in a related discussion. These were the items:

1. setting
2. character/characterization
3. protagonist/antagonist
4. plot-climax
5. foreshadowing
6. irony
6. conflict
7. theme
8. symbolism
9. figurative language
10. style--use of soliloquy
11. mood

Mrs. Burr had written two "6's" in the above list, and in the course of the rather lengthy discussion of the terms and definitions, not one student mentioned the error. Additionally, as Mrs. Burr asked the students for answers, several students contributed oral responses without being called on by the teacher. Mrs. Burr ignored all responses other than that of the person she called on by name and reinforced by visual contact. As the discussion progressed, Mrs. Burr had to "shush" them once only, and this correction was aimed at murmurs and whispers produced by several students.

From my vantage point at the back of the room, I could see about 17 students' desks, and 14 of them had note-taking equipment on their tops. The discussion continued until three minutes before the bell, at which time the murmurs increased in volume, until quieted by Mrs. Burr with a "Shh! I'm not done." At some point, however, about a minute before the bell marking the end of the school day, several students (about 9 out of the 25 present) stood and began walking toward the exit. At this time, Mrs. Burr had stopped talking to the class as a whole, and she did not offer any disciplinary comments but spoke quietly about the assignment for the next day.

Certain Rules

What this classroom showed me this day (2-19-88) and others was that Mrs. Burr controlled the classroom environment with a set of implicit rules that were generally understood and followed by all

the participants in this setting. Specifically, most of the instruction was teacher centered, with the teacher lecturing, assigning, or--most commonly--leading a discussion. Mrs. Burr's role was apparently to stand in front of the five straight rows of student desks; to write study guidelines, assignments, and vocabulary words on the board behind her; and to monitor "proper" activities by her students. During the majority of class time, the students' proper activities included staying seated, facing the front of the room, taking notes on the subjects being discussed, participating in the discussion (also according to implicit rules), and eventually passing some form of "test" on covered material.

For example, in a class session involved with the banquet scene from Shakespeare's Macbeth, Mrs. Burr, standing in front of the rows of students, asked: "What does that say about Lady Macbeth? Lady Macbeth responds to Macbeth's performance in what way? What does that tell about her character?" A student responded to the last question with: "She's the dominant one."

During this class session and others, this pattern of teacher and student talk remained about the same, with the teacher--from her physical position, centered in the front of five straight rows of students at their desks--generally asking questions of the students, waiting for a volunteered answer, then paraphrasing the student answer. The teacher seemed to guide the discussion into areas she felt necessary to cover. During the class session described above, I kept track of the ratio of teacher talk to student talk for a

two-minute period. In that time, the teacher was responsible for 100 words, the students for 51 (Fieldnotes, 2-26-88).

An interesting aside presented itself on this period of observation: By this time, I found myself sitting behind a student, Mark, whom I had had in class before. Mark, a small, quiet boy with a good intellect, I felt was out to impress me with his ability to comprehend Shakespeare. At any rate, on this day (2-26-88), Mark raised his hand and, in an uncharacteristically loud voice, asked, "Couldn't he have seen this coming?" Not only was the volume of his question unusual for him (and for student responses in this class), but also unusual in that his utterance was phrased in the form of a question and was not a short response to a teacher question. His comment was greatly noticeable in this setting because it contrasted with the established pattern. I believe that, had it occurred at another one of my sites, it would not have been at all unusual.

Writing in Eleventh Grade

The nature of the writing that occurred in Mrs. Burr's class coincided with the nature of these oral instructional patterns I have noted. For example, as the students studied Macbeth from their large, hard-bound textbook, Mrs. Burr notified them that they would have an examination over the material. On 4-22-88, she presented the test, a "written" examination. In this "Literary Analysis Test," Mrs. Burr had, by and large, set forth the stimuli for writing in the form of quotations, symbols, literary terms, and application of the lessons of the play to modern society. The

students, while required to write rather than to fill in the blanks or to mark multiple-choice responses, were asked to complete ideas that had been formulated by the teacher. Most of the required student responses would be rather short.

The form of the writing I saw taking place in Mrs. Burr's junior-level English class, then, took on characteristics that were in agreement with Applebee's (1984a) study. Mrs. Burr, during the course of my observation at Central Point High School, required much writing of her students, but much of that writing was to complete assignments, notes, and tests that the teacher structured. As I observed there, I noted that Mrs. Burr used a large textbook and, upon examination, that the textbook contained literature from Beowulf to Margaret Atwood, a contemporary writer. Also, that text contained writing exercises at the conclusions of most of the numerous literary selections. Additionally, the students possessed another assigned text to be used in Mrs. Burr's class. This book was a grammar and composition text. And finally, I observed Mrs. Burr frequently make use of Central Point's "dry copy" service to produce nontextbook assignments from various reproducible sources, including teacher handbooks on vocabulary and usage. The point of this aspect of my observation is that, in Mrs. Burr's class, writing took on a definition different from that I found enacted in any of my other observation sites. At Central Point, Mrs. Burr seemed to feel responsible for a myriad of language issues. Some of the more identifiable of these included (a) teaching important literary works; (b) giving the students literary biographies; (c) memorizing

important dates and places of literature; (d) building vocabulary; and (e) inculcating correct grammar, punctuation, and usage habits. She was attempting to teach to these implicit objectives (there was no formal curriculum guide) in 188 school days, one hour a day.

Influences on Writing Curriculum

My interview data with Mrs. Burr reinforced most of my perceptions. For example, when I asked her, "How do you define writing?" she responded, "Writing is a thinking, communicating, problem-solving process." Her definition seemed to back up what I had perceived happening in her class.

Mrs. Burr, in the same interview, remarked that there was no "unified . . . 'program' or curriculum of teaching writing" at her school. Her analysis coincided with that of the Central Point principal, Mr. Stoddard. During an interview, he stated that the notion of curriculum was "so nebulous" because of the district's "not putting enough dollars into it." Even though he thought a common writing curriculum was a good idea, he acknowledged that presently there was "no common curriculum" (Interview, 5-31-88). I would agree: With the exception of the written assignments evidenced in the textbooks used, I saw nothing resembling a formal writing curriculum. Also, as I asked Mrs. Burr to explain the determinants of the enacted writing curriculum in her class, she remarked that she was currently influenced by:

1. Graduate work--research into current writing theory.

2. Time--It is impossible to integrate a comprehensive writing curriculum into a general literature class.

3. Constraints--Too many students--too many papers!

It seems that while Mrs. Burr was extremely knowledgeable about current writing theory, certain limiting factors within the school structure caused her to fall short of her own stated ideal writing class, in which students would write "three to five times per week" (Interview, 6-27-88).

Therefore, in this English BB class--which I believed to be representative of a "writing" class at Central Point High School, in which most of the junior students learned and practiced writing--"writing" was defined for the students in a way much different from that I had seen at Pine Park Elementary and Maxim Junior High. Even though these schools were--in order--"feeder" schools for Central Point, the writing curricula offered jarring contrasts. These contrasts seemed to have been the result of several content determinants, of which most of the respective teachers and principals were aware. I have attempted to display this array of content determinants graphically in Figure 17. The determinants of how these teachers taught writing varied greatly, but most of them gave weight to classroom experience and to practical constraints as significant influences on their teaching.

During my observations in Mrs. Burr's room, I became aware of other rules that the students followed. For example, whereas the students were seated, facing the front, and many of them were taking

Perceived Influences on
Classroom Writing Curriculum

	Textbooks	Writing Project	University Training	Formal Curriculum/ Documents	Pressure From Superiors	Pressure From Parents	Classroom Experience	Practical Constraints (Time, Paper Load, (etc.)
Pine Park Elem. (Josie)	Y	X	(Y)	X	X	(Y)	(X)	(X)
Pine Park Elem. (Joleen)	(X)	Y	(Y)	X	X	(Y)	(X)	(X)
Maxim Jr. High (Mrs. Wilson)	(Y)	(X)	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	(Y)
Central H.S. (Mrs. Burr)	X	Y	(X)	Y	Y	Y	X	X

Key: X = Influence claimed unambiguously
(X) = Influence claimed ambiguously
Y = Influence denied unambiguously
(Y) = Influence denied ambiguously

Figure 17. Content determinants.

notes during the majority of class, toward the end of the class (and of the day's school because this hour was the last one of the day), several clustered around the door, both seated on top of desks and standing (Fieldnotes, 2-19-88).

Unassigned Writing

An interesting alternate level of communication seemed operational during Mrs. Burr's classes. This level was student-to-student and generally involved the writing and passing of notes. As I mentioned in the preceding paragraph, I frequently observed students in Mrs. Burr's class taking notes. Once, I had an opportunity to skim a copious set of "notes" taken during class by a girl seated near me. These "notes," in fact, actually were a one-and-one-half-page personal letter (Fieldnotes, 4-22-88). During one of my later observations (2-26-88), one girl passed a note across three rows of students to the recipient, seated near me. The passing of the note had a ripple effect, with students who had maintained the semblance of being a rule-following class being aware of the passing of this note, with one boy observed smiling at the receiver. As the receiver wrote an answer, then sent the note back, this same smiling boy acted as an intermediary, helping pass it on. Later in the same class session, Mrs. Burr looked down at her book for a minute, and then a student seated in my row threw a piece of paper across the room. The note-writers and the paper-thrower were not noticed or disciplined by Mrs. Burr.

I compared my perception of class rules with that perception gained by interview responses. I decided to talk to Candy, a slim girl of 16, because I did not know her and because she was one of the people I had seen writing notes and letters during class.

Q. Describe the best writing situation that you can imagine: How many students are in the class? Where is it located? What are the topics? What forms are encouraged?
A. It'd have a few kids--but enough for class discussion. I'd prefer tables and not desks. You'd have to be talking, and we'd need some noise--a radio? We'd not get into so much depth on history of literature. We'd have freedom to go outside, to lay on the grass.
Q. If you could change the way you write in your English class, how would you change it?
A. Eighty percent of our time is spent on reading the story, and only 20% (not even) is spent on writing. I like to write more than that. You should be able to write in Coleridge's style. (Interview, 4-27-88)

Another student--Sam, in the same class--said it more directly: "The teacher sets the writing class guidelines" (Interview, 5-6-88), but both students alluded to the same thing--that certain rules and procedures were followed in that class, and these rules and procedures became an assumed part of the class's activities. Both of these students seemed aware that these rules were not consistent from teacher to teacher, even within the same school, Central Point. For example, while Sam spoke of the existing rules in Mrs. Burr's class, he added, "We hardly do any writing in history--or any other class." Candy added, "Mr. Hammond gives you more writing."

Central Point Summarized

So just how were writing and writing curriculum enacted at Central Point High School? I think my data point to a set of rules that were in operation there:

1. The teacher--reacting to an independently perceived set of influences--defined writing in her classroom.

2. Much of this definition was revealed by what happened in that classroom on a daily basis.

3. This definition was reinforced by the more concrete visual appearance of the classroom--the implicit curriculum, in Goodlad's words.

4. The classroom was governed by a set of rules and procedures, most of which seemed to originate with the teacher.

5. Little "formal" curriculum was available or used. The closest thing to this formal curriculum was the set of structures provided by the textbook.

6. There was little consistency from class to class in the way writing was taught.

7. Writing was learned and used primarily in English classes.

8. The writing classes and curriculum were not a schoolwide or a districtwide priority. This lack of emphasis was implied by interview results and by visual observation of common areas of the school, including hallways and bulletin boards.

9. The writing classroom functioned independently in the school. The only connections the classroom had with larger networks of subject matter or curriculum involved the teacher's individual responses to more nebulous pressures or "determinants," for instance, feelings of professional responsibility.

Summary

Each of my four observational sites, then--Josie's classroom and Joleen's classroom at Pine Park, Mrs. Wilson's at Maxim Junior High, and Mrs. Burr's at Central Point High School--offered a unique environment for study. By the conclusion of my time spent at these four sites, I felt that I could draw some valid conclusions concerning writing, curriculum, and content determinants.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation has been a description of "how children and students grow in language" (Chorny, 1984). A naturalistic or qualitative study seemed ideally suited to the study of writing and writing curriculum. The researcher would be present during some aspects of curriculum that happen through time; for example, the ebb and flow of organizational pressures, and the advent and enactment of change. My presence as a researcher for the longer periods of time required of qualitative research also made possible my noticing features of these four sites that possibly could have escaped another, less qualitative researcher: room arrangements, student and teacher behaviors, and so on. Moreover, my choice of the qualitative mode of research enabled me--at the same time I was accessing increasingly intimate knowledge of four classrooms--to acquire a participant's more knowledgeable feeling for the continuous meshing of lives and subject matters that comprise the classroom. As Eisner (1977) wrote, one must be a "connoisseur" of the classroom to appreciate the features of life in that site. My mode of research helped me to blend my role as researcher with a participant's understanding of life in those four sites, and to acquire--in the words of Borg and Gall (1983)--"an in-depth

understanding of a single instance of the phenomena under investigation." Necessarily, the study gradually provided insight into such important and contemporary educational issues as literacy, school improvement, curriculum, and classroom ecology, as well as into writing itself.

Research Questions Reviewed

My research initially involved this question: What constituted "writing" in various classrooms? In my first contacts with principals and teachers of three schools, I stressed that I was interested in observing a classroom in which writing was occurring. I was concerned not only with definitions of writing, but also: Did the various participants in the classroom define the word writing differently As I spent time in the field, I also became involved with the question: What forms did writing take in classrooms? What contextual formats were associated with each mode of writing instruction? Finally, I concentrated on: What were the pressures and influences that appeared to influence the teacher's definition of writing? These questions guided me during my initial explorations. My investigation, however, gradually came to concentrate on:

1. How does writing occur in the classroom?
2. What is the nature of the writing curriculum?
3. Who or what determines the writing curriculum?

Writing soon proved inextricably linked to writing curriculum, and to how that writing curriculum was shaped. In other words,

what I initially perceived as researchable content perhaps separate from the people in the classrooms became, under study, very much linked to the teacher, the students, and other individuals charged with the enactment of a writing program and the production of this writing. Writing was--as Clark et al. (1981) wrote, a socially enacted entity, subject to certain pressures, and incorporating a potential for change. Consequently, I would like to consider each of these simplified and "evolved" research questions, in order.

How Does Writing Occur in the Classroom?

During my observations, I found that "writing" was representative of a variety of formal and informal activities, and thus assumed several definitions. In each classroom site, students spent time writing, and this writing occupied instructional time. At Maxim and Central Point, the definitions of writing and related appropriate/inappropriate behaviors seemed to originate with the classroom teacher, and all participants--teacher, students, principals--recognized that writing did not occur similarly in other classrooms of their respective schools. However, in both observed classrooms of Pine Park, "writing" was both a subject matter given instructional time and a process that involved distinct and orderly stages of production, revision, and publication. Especially at Pine Park and at Maxim, the mode in which the students wrote (and interacted during writing) reflected the "environmental" mode mentioned by Hillocks (1984) as being the most effective organization for student writing achievement. The students--even

those in first grade--gave me evidence both that they had internalized much of this structure for writing, and that they had a voracious appetite for rules and propriety in many activities, including writing. In addition, the stages of writing learned and practiced by the students were essentially the stages recounted for me by other participants at that school, including the teachers and the principal, and were similar to the stages presented in the written, formal curriculum of Pine Park. All Pine Park participants seemed to expect a similarity in this definition of writing as they moved from classroom to classroom.

Much of this student writing at Pine Park Elementary and that at Maxim Junior High, while produced in a teacher-orchestrated environment, was produced not only for that teacher, but also displayed for peer/student audiences, and for the writer himself. This direction of student writing contrasts with the predominant direction found by Applebee (1984a) in his study of secondary schools, in that most student writing was aimed at the teacher-as-audience. In addition, most writing at Pine Park and at Maxim seemed to combine Britton's (1978, 1987) three purposes for student writing: to build a good relationship with the teacher, to organize knowledge, and to provide a unique representation of the writer himself.

What is the Nature of the Writing Curriculum?

Writing was never a sterile, stable definition of a subject matter, but was continually defined and redefined by the teacher in

the classroom into a teachable subject matter, or writing curriculum. Writing was sometimes studied for its own sake, and sometimes it was used as a way of learning other subjects. This definition became part of the understood culture of each classroom. This quality reinforced Krashen's (1984) observation that the study of writing should not be limited solely to that "study of writing." Rather, writing is only part of the language environment of a classroom: This classroom included reading, displaying, listening, and other language processes reflected in the classroom's daily life. Many students learned this operational, many-faceted definition of writing--in some cases one that was unique to a site or teacher--and wrote in ways that accommodated this operational definition. This definition--varying from site to site in this research--is a product of a subject matter being administered by the teachers, who individually are responsive to varying influences. In two cases out of the four studied (Maxim and Central Point), the teachers themselves formed "writing curriculum" by mixing professional background and judgment with situational realities. At Pine Park, this mixing was superseded by intervention of the principal and certain formal curriculum documents. Pine Park was the only site to imply continuity in curriculum--from room to room, grade to grade--affirming that in spite of popular beliefs concerning closed classroom doors and ingrained independence of teachers and curriculum, curriculum can extend beyond the individual classroom. These findings show that "educational improvement plans"

called for in studies critical of education might begin by agreeing on definitions: Writing, literacy, and related terms are defined differently, even by the individuals who staff our schools. Also, Pine Park's example illustrates that curriculum modification can occur on a district or building level, and eventually be enacted on a classroom level with some fidelity to an overall plan.

As I noted earlier, my focus soon changed from the analysis of the writing product produced by the students, to an analysis of the writing process as it occurred in the classrooms being studied. Following the suggestion of Krashen, I cultivated heightened awareness of certain environmental clues that indicated how writing was presented and used in a particular classroom. For example, in two classrooms at Pine Park, I photographed similar displays representing the writing process; I observed and mapped out similar patterns of movement among the students as they engaged in writing. In my observations at the junior high and high school, I found these external manifestations of the "how" writing was defined, taught, and learned to be different from that at Pine Park and these "local meanings" were recognized by the students. For example, at Central Point, a student would have appeared out of place initiating this process: raising her hand, asking to share her paper with the class, then requesting wall space for displaying it. At Maxim, as well as at Pine Park, these requests would be honored and accepted socially. Also, Pine Park classrooms consistently featured prominent areas devoted to the writing process, and the students demonstrated that they knew how to use these areas.

Displays both in the individual rooms and in common school hallways featured student writing. In Maxim Junior High and Central Point High, however, there was not such a singularity of purpose evidenced in either area allocation inside the classroom or in hallway displays (see Figure 19). At Central Point, the display emphasis seemed to be on literature, including some writing about that literature. This difference does not reflect a necessarily "good" or "bad" curriculum or teaching practice. It does, however, reflect varying definitions of writing curriculum. It appears, therefore, that an informed observer can focus on overt processes and on static classroom and school arrangements and displays, and subsequently approximate the operational definition of curriculum.

Who or What Determines the Writing Curriculum?

True to the evolving nature of the rest of my report, this question developed into one that embraced more than a static definition. Instead, it grew into a look at the enacted writing curriculum working within an associated classroom context.

During the course of my observing first-, third-, seventh-, and eleventh-grade writers, teachers, and the visible environment for writing in the same school system, I found that while the elementary teachers were establishing a consistent definition of writing and a similar enacted writing curriculum, such consistency seemed absent in the transition from these grades to junior high, and subsequently to high school. The literature on teacher interaction, including

Cusick (1983) and Lortie (1975), implied both classroom insularity and classroom interdependence and reactivity to certain school and societal pressures. My observations pointed to cooperative, interdependent classrooms at the elementary level (Pine Park), and more independent, insular ones at the junior high and the high school. The elementary site was just over 300 students; the other schools at the time of my observations were four to five times as large. There was one principal for these 300 elementary students, whereas there were two for the 600-plus students at Maxim Junior High and three for the 1,400 at Central Point High School. It seemed, then, that the "individual vision" of a motivated principal might more readily find emphasis and enactment in a smaller school setting. My interview data from Pine Park teachers and principal pointed to the existence of this individual vision of the principal as being the precipitating force behind this writing curriculum reform. This force shaped a great deal of the educational environment of this school and, in time, controlled and reinforced curriculum change and influenced many of the other actors in the school (see Figure 19). The data from the other schools showed highly trained and dedicated principals who were drawn to a multiplicity of goals and endeavors, but who did not share this elementary principal's singular goal of emphasizing writing.

I observed four teachers, beginning with Josie at Pine Park. Josie, a firmly entrenched, secure teacher, while initially influenced in her teaching of writing by a visionary principal, subsequently became guided by her own sense of what was "right" for

her to teach. Josie gradually became an active participant in Pine Park's schoolwide writing emphasis, to the point that she is now a one-half-time writing consultant for the district's elementary schools, in charge of converting other teachers to Pine Park's process-writing curriculum.

Joleen, the other teacher I observed at Pine Park, was a comparatively recent hiree at this school. The principal, while a strong influence on Joleen, displayed this influence in a contrasting way: Part of the screening process for job applicants involved the principal's giving Joleen a chance to "buy into" Pine Park's writing program. Joleen felt that she should buy into it during the interview, or give up hope of getting this job.

Both of these Pine Park teachers, then, emphasized the principal's role in determining the writing curriculum that was presented in their respective classrooms. That influence was a continuing one in that the principal--through time--encouraged staff work on proposals and grants, hired a consultant, and refined and publicized the program. This principal and the teachers' professionalism, in concert, appeared to be predominant curriculum determinants, in lieu of pressures provided by formal (district-level) documents, textbooks, specific coursework, or parental influences.

The other teachers I observed provided some contrasts. First, Mrs. Wilson at Maxim Junior High said that she felt no pressures from anybody. She asserted that her curriculum was entirely self-determined--that, for her, curriculum change was continuous, an

expected part of her professional life. The writing activity in her room seemed to reflect, more than anything, the teacher's personality and unique job history: lengthy project-oriented, involving multimedia art and dramatics in conjunction with the more expected writing features, including research and publication. Her classroom writing curriculum--apparently not shared by anyone else at Maxim--seemed to reflect her personal valuing of creativity, uniqueness, art, and presentation. In contrast to Pine Park, no school-specific curriculum plan was present, just as there was no formal curriculum emanating from central district offices or government level; no pressures seemingly felt from parents, other teachers, or administrators; and no guidelines from writing textbooks.

Mrs. Burr, of Central Point High School in the same district, echoed the lack of any specific, formal writing curriculum. She did, however, mention that there was a central administrative mandate that writing be taught in conjunction with literature at this level. She, more than the other observed teachers, used a textbook (that was almost wholly literature), but stated that she was primarily influenced as a writing teacher by her recent graduate work in literacy and writing. More than any of the other teachers, moreover, she emphasized that the practical realities of time, number of students per class, and workload combined to shape how she taught writing, and to explain why the observed writing curriculum differed from the ideal curriculum that she had discussed with me.

Like Maxim, Central Point High School exhibited little in the way of schoolwide emphasis, or classroom-to-classroom similarities in the teaching of writing. Mrs. Burr, like Mrs. Wilson before her, was working largely independently of the other English Department members and other teachers at Central Point.

Implications for Educational Reform

In my time spent at these four sites in one district, then, I found distinct contrasts from school to school in the operational definitions of "writing": Teaching methods, content, processes, and arrangements reflected these contrasts. My time spent in one school, smaller than the rest, showed me that writing curriculum can be consistent from classroom to classroom, and that an empowered individual working within a favorable setting (in this case, the school principal) can precipitate a consistent definition and shape of writing curriculum. Most writing classrooms (and, moreover, the human shapers of these classrooms) are also greatly influenced by their unique professional backgrounds, and a related process of reflection of their teaching.

Additional Speculations

What can be learned from this study, then, relates to the issues of educational reform, literacy, and writing with which I began Chapter I. I would like to review some implications of this study, which--after more than two years in the making--seem obvious, but should be clarified:

First, there will be no "quick fixes" in curricular reform. The classroom is a place rich in life and detail, and defies quick analysis and description. Classrooms are not all alike. Definitions and activities are not necessarily shared, even among classrooms and teachers in the same district.

Second, qualitative research (and researchers) should be included in addressing educational problems. Necessary in "educational reform" is a realistic understanding of how classrooms function and how meaning is shaped in those classrooms.

Third, this realistic understanding can be achieved by a trained teacher conducting a long-term participant-observation of individual classrooms and schools. The teacher is the "educational connoisseur" who can provide a realistic feeling for the complexity and activity that constitute life in the classroom. Only then, with this necessary understanding and "feeling" for the way classrooms and schools function, will subsequent curricular work in those classrooms and schools be possible.

Fourth, anyone who studies curriculum has to "open the doors" and experience the curriculum as it is enacted by the teacher and experienced by the students. Formal curriculum documents and pronouncements by supervisors might not always reflect what is actually occurring on the classroom level.

Fifth, the pressures faced by the teacher are myriad, and any discussion of curriculum has to take into account the nature of these pressures--including the organizational pressures of the school--and how they affect the teacher's enactment of curriculum.

Finally, commitment of the principal seems to be necessary for curricular emphasis on a school level. The principal incorporates certain powers that prove to be enablers for schoolwide curricular reform.

Get to know well both the situations and the participants, I believe, and only then can a human enterprise be understood and, if necessary, modified, and only then will emotion be replaced by reasonable efforts at improving education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION LETTER

2745 Haley Rd.
Milford, MI 48042
January 31, 1988

Mr. John Doe
111 Anywhere S.
Middletown, MI 48221

Dear Mr. Doe:

I'd like to introduce myself: My name is Ed Hara, and I'm an English teacher working in the Walled Lake School District. Recently, I've initiated some research involving the teaching of writing in our schools.

As part of this research, I am observing classes and interviewing selected students. At all times, I am participating in the regular instructional pattern of the classroom, attempting to not only aid the teacher and students, but also to understand the significant patterns of behavior that are occurring. During the one-semester duration of my observation, I will attempt to record not only what formal documents say about writing, but what "writing" means to the students.

Should I select your son/daughter for a short interview about what he thinks concerning writing, I would talk to him briefly within the classroom setting or immediately adjacent to it. Your son/daughter is free to decline to participate, and will not be penalized in any way should she decline, or decide to terminate the interview at any point. All results will be treated with strict confidence, and the subjects of my interviews will remain anonymous.

I think that this increased focus on classroom writing will prove to be helpful to teaching in our district in the future, and I certainly hope to receive your consent for this interview. Won't you please send the enclosed card to me at your earliest convenience?

If you have questions, please call me at home (698-4517) or at school (624-1523).

Sincerely,

Ed Hara

APPENDIX B

PAGE FROM INTELLECTUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

all good
5
1B

3-16-88 CHS - diary

Update to s class. She comes over, gives me a progress report 3 that's about right and makes up to "We covered all that but he — but you weren't there yet, so you missed it." Was it my imagination or was she irritated? If she was irritated, why? good

It is becoming clear that — possibly — [illegible] counts on my being there not to help, but to be an audience. She might feel — and I can back this up — "unappreciated." Dick asked her before if she ever gets any positive strokes for any of the creative things she does. She answered in the negative — that, as long as she (or Dick in his class) don't cause trouble, she is generally "appreciated". No one, however, makes a big deal out of things she does.

Angelina has talked about reward for her job, it has been on personal satisfaction or extra-school reinforcement (e.g., a news article on the activity). May be somehow — although I feel she would be quick to deny it — from the embodiment of that in extra-school accolades that her job (otherwise) doesn't offer.

APPENDIX C

PAGE FROM PINE PARK BOOKLET

While we have integrated writing with reading (we read like writers now), listening, and speaking (daily, we share orally to develop our topics, to revise, as well as to celebrate our published work), we believe we have tapped into another, equally fundamental relationship: the relationship between writing, critical thinking, cooperative learning, and generic skills. Walk into any of our writing classrooms and you will see children problem solving and working together with the teacher most likely on the sidelines acting as a coach rather than as an evaluator. This is just what the United States Commission for Writing Improvement recommended. Children at Oakley Park also write to think in journals provided during Math, Science, Social Studies, English literature and health.

In 1985 we pledged to support professional development throughout Walled Lake. By the end of this year, 1987, [Pine Park] teachers and Walled Lake's writing consultants will have given Inservice training in a process-approach-to-writing to every elementary teacher in Walled Lake. Our building remains open to all interested aids, teachers, administrators, and parents who want to see our writing initiative.

In closing, we would encourage those of you who visit [Pine Park] to write us or tell us of your suggestions. We still feel, as all students of writing should, that room for growth exists at every turn. Each day we learn something new.

APPENDIX D

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Students at Pine Park: 2-17-86

1. What things do you write about?
2. When do you know you are supposed to write?
3. What things--parts--do you go through when you write?
4. Do you ever starting writing on your own--when you want to?
5. How long do you spend on a story? When do you have to quit?
6. Do you write when you are not writing stories? When? At home?
7. What makes you feel good during writing? Reading? The class?
8. What kind of equipment do you have to use for writing? Where do you keep it?
9. Which would you rather do? (A) Write your own story. (B) Write an answer to a question.
10. Which do you prefer: Read your own story, or listen to someone else's?
11. Is there anything that you don't like about writing and reading?
12. What can you write about?
13. Who else writes--in school, in the world? (Give examples.)
14. What would your best class day be like?
15. How does Mrs. _____ feel about writing?
16. How will you use writing in school? In life?
17. Do you ever help someone write? Does someone help you?
18. Do people want to hear what you have written?
19. When can you help someone?
20. When can you write? (home, school)
21. What do you think writing <u>is</u>?

APPENDIX E

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Interview_____ Date_____

1. How would you define writing?

2. How would you define writing as it is taught in your class?

3. If there is any difference in the definitions of #1 and #2 above, why does that difference occur?

4. What forces do you see at work shaping the way you teach writing? (Suggestions: administration, education, parents, students, media pressures, political pressures, curriculum guides, textbooks, other [peer] teachers, time/practicality constraints, experience in your own teaching career with "what works.")

5. Try to elaborate on several of the above that affect the way you teach writing:

   A.

   B.

   C.

6. Do you think that you are successful in producing good writers? Explain.

7. Is there a unified, agreed-upon "program" or curriculum of teaching writing at your school? How is this program in evidence? Do you "buy into it?"

8. How do you utilize classroom time, shape, and design to reflect your values concerning the teaching of writing?

9. How could you better teach writing according to your definition? Design the ideal classroom for yourself.

10. What factors seem to hold you back from the ideal teaching of writing?

11. Do you emphasize word, sentence, paragraph, or essay level? Why? Give me a typical writing assignment. Would this "typical" writing assignment prove to be that if I looked in your plan book? Why or why not?

12. Do you feel that you are ever judged on your ability to teach writing? Who does this judging, and when?

13. Do you know of any objectives for teaching writing? Do you--or would you--utilize them? Why?

14. You have taught writing in some way for several years. Have you changed the way you have taught writing in this time? What has influenced you to change?

APPENDIX F

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Administrator's Interview:

Name_____ Position_____
Date_____

1. What and how do you think a good writing teacher should teach?

2. How have you developed these views concerning a good writing program? (What has influenced you?)

3. Is the teaching of writing a priority of yours? Explain.

4. Do you feel that there is a writing curriculum used in classes here? What is the nature of that curriculum?

5. Do you feel that the students of [school] become good writers? How do you make that judgment?

6. Do you, in any way, exert power and influence in this school to ensure that students become better writers?

7. Have you ever observed Ms. _____'s teaching of writing? How do you know she is teaching writing?

8. If you could have your ideal writing (classroom) situation, how would it look?

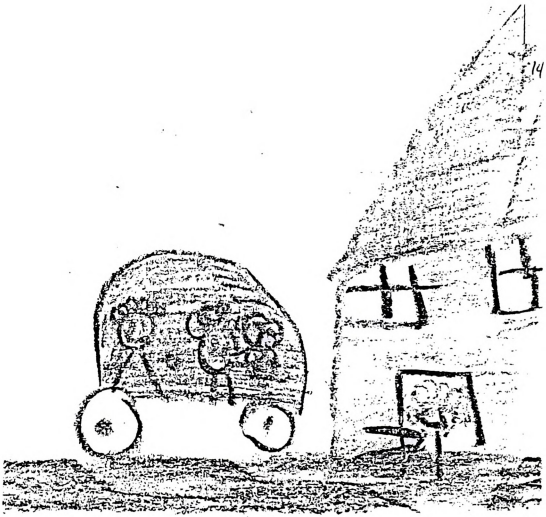
9. What are the barriers that you see to enacting this ideal situation?

10. You are familiar with the saying, "When the door closes, I teach what I want to teach." Do you think that this happens with your writing teachers? Is it good or bad?

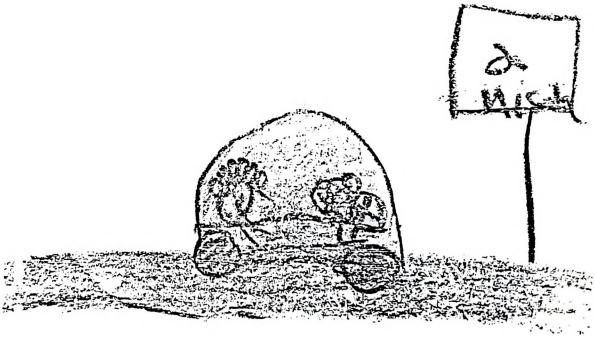
APPENDIX G

MARCY'S STORY

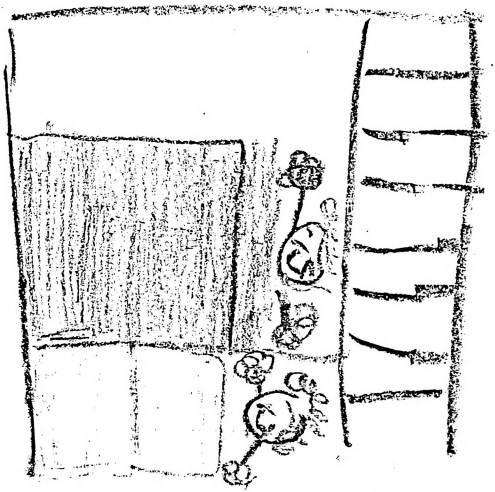
E A S T E R U P N O R T H



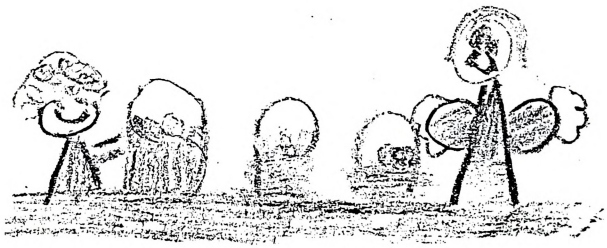
I AM GOING UP NORTH FOR EASTER. MY AUNT LIVES UP NORTH AND MY UNCLE LIVES UP NORTH. MY TWO COUSINS BRYAN AND CHAD LIVE UP NORTH TOO. I AM GOING TO HAVE A GOOD TIME.



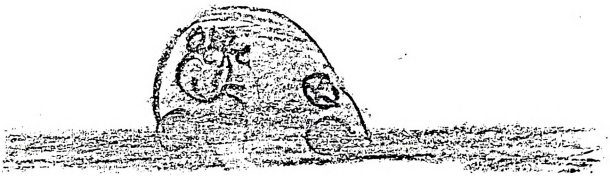
IT IS A LONG DRIVE. IT WILL TAKE A DAY TO DRIVE UP. I AM GOING TO KNIT ON THE WAY. MY AUNT WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE ME AND MY BROTHER. MY UNCLE TOM WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE ME AND MY BROTHER TOO. MY COUSINS WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE ME TOO.



MY COUSIN BRYAN HAS A BUNK BED. I WILL SLEEP IN THE TOP BUNK.



THE NEXT DAY WILL BE EASTER AND WE'LL HAVE SOME EASTER BASKETS OUT IN THE FAMILY ROOM. WE WILL OPEN THEM.



THE NEXT DAY WE WILL GO HOME.

BY: MARCY

MARCH 24, 1986

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