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TEACHERS LEARNING FROM POLICY:

CASES FROM THE MICHIGAN READING REFORM

By

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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS LEARNING FROM POLICY:
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This study focuses on the stories of three teachers learning from and about a state-level reading policy and the ways in which their learning influences their practices in teaching reading. It explores the relationships among these teachers' learning, their interpretation of the policy, and changes in their classrooms. These issues are examined in the context of a state-initiated reform in elementary reading in Michigan.

The study suggests that teachers, like all learners, bring their own experiences and beliefs to their learning which influences the sense they make of the policy. In turn, the sense they make of the policy shapes how and what they learn. Thus, learning and interpretation mutually shape each other in an iterative process.

The study also explores the nature of the learning opportunities connected to the policy that these teachers experience, such as inservice workshops and preservice education courses. It suggests that although certain kinds of learning opportunities may help a teacher understand the new kind of pedagogy the policy advocates, the teachers' perceptions of the learning opportunities are as significant as the nature of the opportunities themselves, in terms of what they actually learn.

Finally, the study raises questions about how researchers and policymakers understand the relationship between policy and practice.

It suggests that change in practice may need to be measured not just by how close a teacher's practice is to a standard vision of the policy, but also by how far a teacher has travelled in his or her thinking and practices in light of a policy. It also suggests that policies need to be looked at in the larger context of ideas that exist in educational circles to understand their impact, or lack of impact, on teachers' thinking and actions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

LEARNING TO TEACH READING

> It was very frightening when it first came out because, you know, they would go over the new definition and show us all of those graphs and charts. And I went, "Oh no! I've been doing it wrong all these years." I think all teachers go through this when they are given new information to learn.
> (T. Fielder, interview, February 20, 1991)

When we met, Tom Fielder had been teaching second graders to read for several years. He had always taught reading in what would be considered "traditional" ways. Students learned to read by first learning phonics and sight words. They read from basal readers and answered questions about the text in workbooks that accompany the basals. Mr. Fielder said he felt successful teaching that way. His students did well on standardized tests for reading and the third grade teachers in his building were pleased to get Mr. Fielder's students. They knew his students came well-prepared in the basics.

In the mid-1980s Mr. Fielder heard that the state of Michigan was revising its definition for reading and was setting new goals and objectives for reading instruction. He later reported that rumors of the change made him quite anxious. He felt successful in teaching children to read and liked the way he did it. He knew his practices were similar to many teachers in the state, but he also knew that there were more innovative ideas on teaching reading that some teachers, in his building and elsewhere, were following. When the new definition was

officially announced in 1985, it represented a shift away from the modal practices and thinking with which Mr. Fielder identified. The definition stated: "Reading is the process of constructing meaning through dynamic interaction among the reader, the text, and the context of the reading situation." (Michigan Reading Association [MRA], 1987). Mr. Fielder, like many educators across the state, said he was not sure what the definition meant and what its implications were to reading practices. The definition focused on constructing meaning of text and called reading a dynamic process. It brought to the fore the reader's role in the reading process and the context or purposes for reading. But what did these ideas mean for how students learn to read in classrooms? What different things would Mr. Fielder have to do to teach in a way compatible with this definition? Mr. Fielder did not know the answers to these questions. Given how he thought about reading instruction and the way he taught reading, though, he said he knew he would have a lot to learn.

The Reading Policy: A Shift in Focus

From the very beginning state policymakers also knew that teachers would need to learn new things in order to implement changes in reading practice envisioned by the policy. Charles Peters, one of the key policymakers for the reading policy who was a language arts coordinator for a large intermediate school district in the state, remarked:

> I think it is one of the issues that became very clear about this whole process is that change was occurring because of this knowledge and I think in the past knowledge has not been a primary factor. . . . It's not gimmicks. It's not things that are going to be kind of glitzy. It's knowledge.
> (interview, October 25, 1989).

Prior to the policy, reading instruction in most classrooms in the state looked a lot like Mr. Fielder's. Students spent much of their instructional time being drilled on isolated skills or answering literal questions in reading workbooks. What reading students did was primarily short passages in basal readers. Little time was devoted to comprehension of text (Durkin, 1978-79; MRA, 1987). These practices were consistent with state policy at the time. Reading was defined by the state as a series of discrete, hierarchically ordered skills that needed to be learned before readers could comprehend text. The state reading test, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), measured how well students mastered the isolated skills.

The new focus in reading was very different. State policymakers, in the new reading definition, highlighted for the first time that readers bring things to their reading (their prior knowledge) which influence the meaning they construct of text. The definition also stated that readers have different purposes for reading (the context of reading) which shape readers' interpretations of text. These ideas suggested that different readers might construct different meanings of text. And this shift in focus implied radically different ways of thinking about reading instruction. First, reading comprehension rather than acquisition of skills was the main focus for reading. Second, student ideas, experiences, and purposes for reading became factors in how readers read and interpret text. Teachers would have to learn how to help students make sense of text rather than merely recognize words and would need greater insight into who their students were and what they were thinking.

Policy documents which accompanied the new definition also included the idea of readers' using strategies to read more effectively. These strategies were of two sorts. The first were cognitive strategies that good readers use to make sense of text, including such things as predicting events in a story, summarizing information, and monitoring their comprehension. These strategies help readers think about their own thinking and regulate it as they are reading. The second kind of strategies involved understanding the organization of narrative text. These strategies help readers understand how stories unfold and how different parts of stories (setting, character, theme,) relate.

The strategies are useful in helping readers recall story events and concepts more readily. Although good readers know and use these strategies intuitively, the policy suggested that they can also be taught to help "non-strategic" readers read more effectively (MRA, 1987). As did ideas about prior knowledge and multiple interpretations, the idea of teaching reading strategies implied great changes in reading instruction. Teachers would need to learn how to teach the strategies and how to help students use them effectively as they read.

Elaine Weber, the state reading consultant, talked about teachers needing to "reprogram their radar" because of the policy so that they would see reading as a process of making sense of text rather than a process of collecting skills. She said she knew the new ideas in reading were unfamiliar to most teachers and, therefore, the reform meant that they had things to learn (E. Weber, interview, August 27, 1990). For Dr. Weber, the ideas were quite familiar. She had just completed her doctorate in reading at Michigan State University and at

least part of her motivation in initiating the reform was to align classroom practices with what she thought current reading research was saying about reading instruction. To carry out the mission, she elicited the help of many educators, both researchers and teachers, to review reading curriculum and instruction. She particularly relied on Charles Peters and Karen Wixson, a new faculty member in reading education at the University of Michigan. Together, Drs. Weber, Wixson, and Peters orchestrated the state reform.

These three policymakers concentrated their work in four areas: they wrote the new definition for reading; developed new goals and objectives; organized several state-sponsored reading conferences to introduce their ideas to teachers; and finally, developed a new state assessment for reading (the MEAP test). These four efforts and the documents surrounding them made up the state policy for reading. It was codified when the State Board of Education adopted the new definition in 1985 and when the revised MEAP test in reading was administered state-wide for the first time in the fall of 1989.

As Dr. Peters's and Dr. Weber's earlier comments indicate, state policymakers thought that teachers needed to learn things to change their practices in light of the policy. Yet it is difficult to know from their comments <u>what</u> and <u>how</u> they thought teachers might need to learn. To carry out the policy's ideas in practice, teachers would need to learn about the ideas, but they would also need to learn from them. Whereas the first kind of "learning" is largely a matter of raising teachers' awareness of the policy by giving them information about it, the latter implies, to traditional teachers at least, acquiring new ways

of thinking about reading. The two kinds of learning are not necessarily distinct. Sproull (1981) makes an argument, in fact, that how practitioners are made aware of policies shapes how they implement them. Nor are they unusual. Cohen and Barnes (1992) suggest that by definition, new policies contain new ideas or new configuration of old ideas (there would be little reason for them otherwise) and therefore imply some acquisition of new ways of thinking. But although neither unusual nor distinct, the two kinds of learning raise different pedagogical problems for policymakers. Making practitioners aware of a policy seems essentially a problem of giving information. The way in which information is given may shape what sense practitioners do with it, but the learning necessary for teachers to be aware of a policy is what Jackson (1986) might label as reproductive learning. Helping practitioners make sense of new ideas and acquire new understandings is not a matter of practitioners reproducing knowledge about policy given to them, but of transforming knowledge into ideas that make sense.

For the reading policy, then, teacher learning was a complex issue. Teachers needed to be made aware of the changes in the policy and learn new conceptions of reading and new ideas about reading from the policy. What did policymakers do to help teachers learn? Did their actions appear to take into account both kinds of learning?

The Perspective of the State Department of Education

Weber planned a series of reading conferences across the state. These conferences were two or three days events in which participants were introduced to the ideas of the policy in large group orientation meetings and then taught practical applications of the policy--that is,

new classroom activities and reading strategies to use with students--in small group sessions. Each of these small group sessions were called modules and were designed to demonstrate one reading strategy and/or activity that could be used in classrooms. The conferences were held around the state and generated a great deal of interest among state educators. Attendance at these conferences was significantly larger than Weber and others expected. Karen Wixson estimated that 1,300 people attended one conference. Another reformer commented that Weber had been surprised by the large numbers at all three of the major conferences (S. Standerford, personal communication, June 18, 1990).

But despite the larger numbers of participants at the state conferences their effort reached only a small percentage of teachers. Other teachers in the state needed to learn about the policy as well. To spread policy awareness beyond those who attended the conferences, Weber provided participants with scripts of each of the conference sessions, so that participants could deliver the same lessons about the policy to teachers in their own districts. These conferences, in fact, were dubbed "The Training of Trainers" conferences because the goal from the very beginning was to train people to spread the word of the policy to others. For example, Mr. Fielder attended a week-long reading inservice program on the policy in his district. The organizers used scripts and materials from the state conferences to tell teachers in their district about the new ideas from the state initiative.

Along with the state conferences and their local replications, policymakers saw the new MEAP test as a vehicle for teacher learning. Some policymakers talked about the test "driving" instruction in that it

would make teachers aware of new questions to ask students and new ideas about text. On the test, students read longer passages of "authentic" pieces of text (rather than ones contrived solely for the test) to assess their comprehension. They were given expository as well as narrative text to read, and they were asked about their interests and familiarity with topics about which they read. Although the main purpose for revising the test was to assess more appropriately students' reading abilities, some policymakers saw additional benefits in that the test would encourage teachers to use new instructional practices; e.g., reading longer pieces of text, reading different kinds of text, and questioning students on their prior knowledge and reading interests. The MEAP was a vehicle for learning in that it was an incentive (or perhaps a stick, depending on one's perspective) for teachers to think about the policy.[1]

State policymakers faced a daunting task in teaching teachers about the policy. They had many teachers across the state to teach and for most of them, the ideas policymakers were teaching were quite foreign. Like many teachers faced with uncertain and enormous teaching tasks, policymakers taught the way they knew how. The conference sessions were conducted using very traditional pedagogy. Participants sat in chairs and listened to presenters tell them new ideas. Spin-off workshops and conferences in districts often followed the same format. Teachers had few, if any, opportunities to learn new ideas about reading or reading pedagogy in new pedagogical ways or to reconstruct what they were learning. Learning from the MEAP test as well gave teachers few opportunities to construct their own meaning of the policy. Teachers

were to learn the "correct" lessons on how to teach reading in new ways or be indicted by low student test scores.

If policymakers' actions can be seen to represent their views of how and what teachers needed to learn, then learning for policymakers seems to have been a matter of teachers gaining information in didactic ways about the policy and the new activities connected to it. Teachers were to learn by reproducing in their classrooms the knowledge that was given to them in the inservice and by administering the MEAP. There was little, if any, indication that policymakers thought teachers would construct their own meaning of the ideas they were being taught, and certainly few, if any, opportunities given to teachers to play around with the ideas they were hearing.

That policymakers would employ traditional pedagogy to teach teachers about their efforts may not be unusual, but it is in this case ironic. The policy itself is based on the idea that learners construct meaning of new information in different ways because of their different prior experiences, yet policymakers acted as if all teachers, once made aware of the policy, would make the same sense of it and would implement the new ideas and activities intact in their classrooms.

Policymakers not only seemed unaware that teachers might need different kinds of learning opportunities to learn from the reading policy, they also seemed unclear about what it was they wanted teachers to learn. Policymakers would say different things about it and all seemed to construct different images of appropriate practice as they went along (S. Standerford, personal communication, June 18, 1990). Some policymakers saw the policy as advocating "whole language"--

children socially constructing meaning of text in their classrooms, whereas others viewed it as based in cognitive psychology with individual reader's constructing their own meaning (E. Weber, interview, August 27, 1990; C. Peters, interview, August 13, 1991). One reading teacher who attended the state conferences, worked with Weber on other staff development programs, and was familiar with the MEAP said she had a hard time putting together the big picture of the policy. The reading teacher could derive no clear images of practice from her learning. For instance, how did the idea of longer text passages which practitioners saw in the MEAP fit with teaching metacognitive strategies that they were exposed to in the inservice? How did any of these ideas make reading a dynamic, interactive process? What were teachers supposed to do with more than one "right" interpretation of text? What should reading practice look like if it followed the policy's vision? Policymakers gave few answers to these questions.

Teachers Learning from Policy

Researchers also do not put teachers learning from policy in clear perspective. Rather they consider it from different perspectives, with the central questions of how teachers might learn from policies and what they might need to learn to implement policies often not directly addressed. For instance, much of the policy implementation literature focuses on external factors in teachers' environments that shape their responses to policy. These include such things as the structure of schooling (Weick, 1982; Meyer & Rowan, 1978); the relationship between policymakers and practitioners (Firestone, 1989; McLaughlin, 1990); the nature of policymaker's and practitioner's work (Lipsky, 1980); and the

conditions and circumstances in which practitioners operate (Lieberman, 1982; Schwille, et al., 1983; Johnson & O'Connor, 1979).

This literature is helpful in that it suggests that policies and practice are not tightly linked and that "policy as implemented often seems different from policy adopted" (Baier, March, & Saeten, 1988, p. 150). Mr. Fielder may make changes in his reading practice because of the new reading policy that are quite distinct from another teacher because circumstances and resources in their work are different. But the literature does not help us get clearer about the role learning plays in implementing policy ideas. Even the few studies that mention learning as a factor in implementing policy reforms do not often consider how and what the learning might look like. Nor do they consider the relationship between what and how teachers learn and how they enact policy in their classrooms. The learning process that teachers undertake is still a mystery.[2]

The implementation literature as well looks at teachers as members of a group; that is, people whose work has a similar nature or who experience the same working conditions. The assumption is that similarities in environments will result in similarities in responses to policies. But, considering group characteristics may not be a particularly useful lens through which to look at teachers learning from policy. Current ideas about learning coming from cognitive psychology focus on the role a learner's personal orientations play in learning. This body of research portrays learners taking in new information by assimilating it to what they already know and how they already perceive the world (Anderson, et al., 1977; Anderson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980).

Who the learner is (what experiences, ideas, and beliefs they have) will shape how they make sense of new information they receive. And in the process of assimilating new ideas, both old and new ideas may change to "fit" together. Learning is a process of harmonizing new and old ideas to each other. New ideas are interpreted in unique ways by learners because of what they already know and believe.

These ideas about learning suggest that the issue of teachers learning from policy may need to be looked at with a finer grain. How teachers learn from policy and how they play it out in their classrooms may have less to do with external factors in their environment than with characteristics of individual learners.

A few policy researchers have looked at the policy/practice relationship as one which individual practitioners construct. These studies consider how individual practitioner's perceptions of policies shape the ways in which policies play out (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972; Kingdon, 1984; Keisler & Sproull, 1982; Weiss & Cohen, 1991, McLaughlin, 1987). They suggest that how policies get attended to and how they are perceived is shaped by practitioners' existing beliefs and capacities. McLaughlin (1987) writes:

> Change is ultimately the problem of the smallest unit. At each point in the policy process, a policy is transformed as individuals interpret and respond to it. What actually is delivered or provided under the aegis of a policy depends finally on the individual at the end of the line (p. 174).

This literature is helpful in that it suggests that the individual's interpretation of policy actually influences practice. Policy therefore is largely what practitioners perceive it to be rather than some external documents or legislation. Mr. Fielder may change his

reading practice in a way that is quite distinct from other teachers not solely because his environment differs, but because he interprets the policy to mean different things.

The "policy-as-perceived" literature helps us understand individual responses to policy and puts into the conversation on policy implementation the notion that what gets implemented is not a reflex of what gets adopted because implementation is mediated through individual practitioner's beliefs and experiences. This research, though, stops at the point of suggesting that practitioners uniquely perceive policies. It says little about the how practitioners come to perceive policies. What beliefs, capacities, experiences influence practitioners' perceptions? If practitioners' perceptions shape policies, what shapes practitioners' perceptions? Where, if at all, does learning fit?

The final body of literature that bears on the issue of teachers learning from policy is that which looks at teacher learning itself. But even this does not provide a great deal of information about experienced teachers' learning. Carter (1990) in fact, in a recent review of teacher education literature, claims that there are very few studies which actually consider the learning processes of teachers. Instead, much of the recent teacher education literature (particularly studies which consider educating teachers to teach in the new ways reforms such as the Michigan reading policy advocate) focuses on what a teacher needs to know. The emphasis of many of these studies is how much and what kind of subject matter knowledge might be necessary for teachers (Shulman, 1987; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987). But as with the policy implementation literature, although learning and knowledge

are seen as important components in helping teachers teach in new ways, the nature of the learning process is still underdeveloped.

A few studies do look at how teachers acquire knowledge which they use to teach. Among experienced teachers, the importance of personal beliefs, ideas, and experiences is suggested in a series of research articles on teachers' personal, practical knowledge (Clandinnin, 1985; Johnson, 1989). Experienced teachers understand teaching through a special knowledge that they develop from theories about learning and teaching and from their practical experiences. This knowledge is "blended by the personal background and characteristics of the teacher and expressed by her in particular situations" (Clandinnin, 1985, p. 362.) Learning to teach in this literature has much to do with the personal nature of the teacher/learner--who they are and what they bring to their learning--as well as the context in which they work.

Hollingsworth's (1987) study of 14 preservice teachers learning to teach reading suggests similar influences on learning. In the study, preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and reading "served as filters" for processing ideas they encountered both in their coursework and in their field experiences. Kagan (1992), in a recent review of teacher education literature, summarized twenty-seven studies on beginning teachers' learning which support that what preservice and beginning teachers learn is shaped by the ideas, beliefs, and experiences with teaching and learning that they bring to their professional education.

These studies of both experienced and preservice teachers fit well with the cognitive psychology perspective outlined previously. What

teachers bring to their learning shapes how they process new information. This suggests that what teachers bring to their encounters with policies influences how they perceive policies, and the learning they may do surrounding the policy as well.

But policies, in general, do not become policies merely to affect the learning of practitioners. They seek to change things that practitioners do. So how, if at all, does this view of learning affect what teachers "do" with policies? What is the relationship among teachers learning from policy, their perceptions of it, and changes in their classrooms?

Again borrowing from cognitive psychology, change in beliefs and ideas occurs when new ideas can no longer be assimilated to existing frameworks because discrepancies between new and old ideas become too numerous or too great. When this happens, new ideas help create new frameworks that become the frameworks with which succeeding information is processed (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1983; Bruner, 1983). Kennedy (1991) applies this idea of dissonance and learning directly to change in teaching practices when she suggests that for teachers to learn new ideas, they must first be made aware of differences between their existing practices and the new ideas. One way in which teachers can be made aware is through vivid images of new practices. For change to occur, new ideas about teaching must be startling enough to provoke a sense of dissonance so that teachers can not easily assimilate the new ideas into their existing practices. In the Hollingsworth study cited earlier (1989) preservice teachers were seen to change their beliefs about teaching and learning when they faced some dissonance between

their own beliefs and their cooperating teachers'. In working out the dissonance these preservice teachers gained richer understandings about teaching reading than those preservice teachers who did not encounter any challenges. So this view of learning suggests that to undertake change, teachers need to perceive dissonance between their current practices and the policy's ideas. They then need to be willing to learn new ideas and to enact them to lessen the dissonance that they themselves have created. But, this suggestion puts us into a bewildering loop--if policies are only what teachers perceive them to be, what would be necessary for them to perceive dissonance? Change and learning are difficult tasks for most people. What would a policy have to do to start the process of perceiving dissonance, learning, and then change?

How and what teachers learn from policy and what changes in practice play out is a bit confusing. Looking at the state efforts to help teachers learn gives us an image of new ideas taught with old pedagogies and pieces of changed reading practices not put together into a coherent picture. State policymakers wanted teachers to teach reading in new ways, and they thought the opportunities to learn about the policy might do the trick. Research literature offers us a few different ideas about teacher learning and about policy playing out in practice that raise questions about the efficacy of the state effort. But the ideas from research themselves seem fragmented and leave many questions about the relationships among learning, interpretation, and implementation. How do teachers interpret learning opportunities related to a policy? What and how did teachers make sense of learning

opportunities surrounding policy? What did teachers perceive themselves needing to learn? And how does what teachers interpret policies to be and the learning they do affect changes they make in practice?

It is these kinds of questions that this study explores. Specifically, it looks at the relationships among teachers' perceptions of the Michigan reading policy, their learning surrounding it, and changes in their reading practices. These relationships are interconnected and complex. To explore them requires looking carefully at individuals, listening to what they say about their learning, their understanding of policy, and their reading practices. It also requires looking at what individuals do in their classrooms and then attempting to link in some way what they say about their learning and understanding of the reading policy and how they teach reading.

What follows are cases of three teachers who learned, interpreted, and implemented the reading policy in unique ways. By looking at the relationships among interpretation, learning, and implementation through stories of these teachers' thinking and practices, I hope to keep intact as much as possible the complexities that they faced as they attempted to interpret, learn, and implement policy. Coles (1989) writes, "We owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them" (p. 30). Through stories of these teachers' efforts in the often messy context in which they occurred, I hope to learn more about what it means for teachers to learn from policies and how that plays out in their lives as teachers.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. MEAP scores are very important in the state. They are publicly reported and often used by various people as measures of the worth of school districts. Until these changes in the MEAP, many schools scored quite high on the tests--particularly middle-class districts. After the revisions, scores plummeted. The new tests sent many district administrators scrambling to figure out how to change instruction so that students in their districts would regain their high scores.

2. Elmore & McLaughlin (1988) state that for teachers to carry out new educational reforms, they need to acquire conceptual understandings of the reform and to do so, they would need more than traditional staff development opportunities. McDonnell & Elmore (1987) also suggest that practitioners may need to learn to build their capacities to carry out policies. These studies are notable in that they are among the few that even consider learning as a factor in teachers' making sense of policies, but they, too, touch only lightly on the actual learning process of teachers.

CHAPTER 2

THE CASE OF CATHERINE PRICE

Kingdon (1984) writes that public policy is not the brainchild of any single actor, but that instead it is the outgrowth of ideas that already exist in a community. The ideas precede the actual formation of a policy, and therefore, most often, someone is "doing" the policy long before it is such.

Ms. Price is a teacher who has been "doing" the reading policy for some time. Since the 1950s when she began teaching, Ms. Price has believed that comprehension of text should be the focus of reading instruction and that children's prior knowledge and experiences shape the sense they make of text. She has had a literature-based reading program for many years and has included expository text in her instruction as well. So ideas such as the emphasis on comprehension, expository text, and readers' prior knowledge that are associated with the policy are not new ideas to Ms. Price.

But even so, Ms. Price speaks of learning new things from the policy. She says she learned about writing from a workshop on the policy that she attended. She says she learned a new language. And finally, she says she learned from and about the policy through other ideas which she could connect to it. Each of these experiences shaped

Ms. Price's thinking about the policy and ultimately, shaped the effect the policy had on her teaching practice.

Ms. Price's past beliefs and practices, and her new learning from the policy, distinguish her as a teacher attempting ambitious instructional practices. Ms. Price describes herself as an innovator who continually tries new ideas to find better ways to teach her students. But her ambitious practices are not always easy to pull off. Ms. Price speaks of tensions she experiences in her teaching between her desire to have a child-centered classroom in which student interest and choice set the curriculum and her belief that children need to learn certain ideas and information in school.

In Ms. Price's case, this tension is most apparent in her literacy instruction. She places a high value in students deciding what and when they read and write, and how they interpret the text they read. But at the same time, she thinks students need to develop a repertoire of reading and language skills and abilities. Ms. Price can often work toward both of these goals with little conflict, but sometimes these goals demand different kinds of instruction and responses to student thinking. In these times, Ms. Price struggles over which way to go. The new ideas she associates with the policy seem to her to suggest even greater student control over their learning, and therefore the policy contributes to the tensions that Ms. Price already experiences.

How has Ms. Price's learning from the policy played out in her practices? Does her new learning contribute the tensions she already faces?

Background

Ms. Price has taught for over 30 years. She began teaching at age 18 when she entered a teaching order of nuns immediately after high school. While teaching, she graduated from college, received a master's degree in education, and, very recently, completed an educational specialist certificate. A few years ago, Ms. Price left the convent and taught in a private alternative school run by friends. Although she loved teaching in this school, which she described as being in harmony with her beliefs about how children learn, she felt her own professional growth called her to teach in public schools. For the last five years, she has been teaching a fifth/sixth grade classroom of underachieving-gifted students at Lewis School.

Students in Ms. Price's class have been identified from a variety of tests as highly able but working below their abilities. These students are distinct from other students in the district who are identified as gifted and working at their ability level. The latter group is placed in another program which focuses on advancing students through curriculum at an accelerated pace. The program in which Ms. Price teaches focuses on helping students work up to their learning potential. During both years I observed, Ms. Price's class had many more boys than girls. Ms. Price said that boys and girls get identified equally for the program but boys tend to choose it more often. The reverse is true for the other gifted program.

Ms. Price commented that many of her students are referred to the program because they are trouble-makers in "normal" classrooms. She admits that she sees little difference between the students she now has

and those she has always taught. She claims that her teaching hasn't changed because she is working in a "gifted" program, for she would do what she does--and has done what she does--for all kinds of students. She said, "I don't see myself as being in an irregular classroom. I think I've always taught this way. If I were in a regular classroom I'd do the same things I'm doing" (interview, February 11, 1991).

All the attention to gifted education is a bit surprising in the district. Drummond is a district with little money for extra programs and limited administrative staff to direct them. The gifted program is funded in a joint effort with the neighboring school district. Children from both districts can attend either the underachieving or the straight-line gifted classes.

Drummond school district is comprised of three small towns--Drummond, Lewis and Blakely. It is near a major rust belt city which has been facing a bleak economic future for some years. Predominantly working-class, inhabitants of the area have been, in the past, skilled workers at a nearby auto plant, workers for the railroad, or farmers. Unemployment lately has been high. The population is stable, with little in or out migration and homogeneous with fewer than .5% minorities. Many of the people trace their roots to Eastern Europe. The superintendent said that most residents support the schools but generally have low academic expectations for their children.

Lewis, the town in the district in which Ms. Price teaches, consists of a video-store, a few bars, a grain elevator, and a vinyl siding company. Even on sunny days, the town looks tired. The school is one of the better kept buildings in town. It is one of four

elementary schools in the district. It draws students from families in the middle range of economic status in the district, although that status may soon change as more of Lewis's population gets laid-off from their work in the automobile plants. Likewise, Lewis consistently scores on standardized tests in the district's middle range. Most of the staff at Lewis have taught together for many years. Although there is a friendly atmosphere in the school among the staff, there is a clear division between teachers who see themselves as innovators and those who do not. Ms. Price falls into the former group.

Ms. Price's Existing Beliefs and Practices

Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Ms. Price is an eager learner who for her entire adult life has been engaged with ideas about teaching and learning. She attends many conferences and classes on new instructional approaches. She reads voraciously, both professional books and fiction. She has been involved with numerous district and county committees in charge of redesigning curriculum. At times, Ms. Price almost seems to take in ideas indiscriminately. In talking about her views of teaching and learning, she mentions John Dewey and a new book on brain patterns put out by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in the same sentence, and each seems to have the same degree of influence on her beliefs about experiential learning. So Ms. Price's beliefs stem from both well-established, educational philosophy and less well-established, educational "fads" that strike her fancy for shorter periods of time.

Ms. Price describes her teaching as child-centered in that she thinks the crucial factor in any learning experience is what students

are interested in and what their abilities are. She sees her role as teacher to keep a sense of a curriculum that she wants to teach, but mediating that curriculum with her understanding of what and where her students are intellectually. When I asked her if there was a district curriculum that she followed, she responded that there was, but that it was not the only piece she considered when constructing her practices:

> I have my basic curriculum and we go with it . . . but is there a curriculum beyond it? Definitely. The child--where the child takes the curriculum. So that the curriculum is what it is, but basically students are going to help direct that curriculum by who they are (interview, February 11, 1991).

To find out where they are, Ms. Price talks about dancing with her students. She discovered this metaphor in a book she recently read called The Dancing Wu Li Masters (Zukav, 1980) which is about a martial arts instructor who teaches his students by finding their centers and dancing with them until they are interested in dancing alone. The dancing that Ms. Price sees herself needing to do involves finding her students' abilities and interests and mixing that with her sense of a curriculum--topics, objectives, subject matter knowledge and resources. The goal of the dance is for students to be their own teachers--to follow their own interests without a master. But Ms. Price sees the dance as tricky because it not only means finding students' "centers" but convincing them to incorporate new ideas into their dance.

In her classroom, Ms. Price's beliefs in child-centered instruction manifest themselves in a great deal of student choice and individualized instruction. During large chunks of the day, students are free to work on their own projects. They can choose where they wish to work and with whom they wish to collaborate, as well as what work

they do at any given time. Ms. Price spends hours after school writing up individual instructional plans for students so that everyone is working at an appropriate level and on topics that hold some interest to them. There is a great deal of time devoted to reading during the day. On some days I saw as much as an hour of silent reading time in which students read a variety of materials, from wrestling magazines to Charles Dickens.

Another important belief of Ms. Price's is that people learn best when they can connect ideas and experiences. Connections need to occur between what they already know and new ideas. Connections also need to occur among the new ideas and information students are learning. Ms. Price says she sees learners not taking in new ideas unless they can see connections. She said, "If I don't see connections, I will not take things in. I won't have anything to do with them. I use the term connections a lot because I see in it very much a basis for learning" (interview, November 23, 1991).

One way Ms. Price helps students see connections is by integrating her instruction. When I first asked her if I could observe her teach reading, she replied that I would have to watch her all day. Although she puts a schedule on the board each morning that delineates a time for each subject, she says she is teaching all of them all the time. The schedule is only to keep students who need order happy. Ms. Price chooses books to read in language arts that deal with topics studied in social studies or science. She has students write during mathematics so that they can see how an algebraic expression relates to a sentence with various components that make up a complete idea. She thinks of over-

arching themes for her instruction such as balance or interdependence and then works the themes into her instruction across the day and year. When I asked her if she teaches the various subject matters differently she said she didn't think so because she was "trying very hard to integrate" and she really thought "it is happening" (interview, February 11, 1991).

The other way Ms. Price helps students connect is through "hands-on" activities. She sees these as useful in connecting what happens in school with out-of-school interests. Students were engaged in at least one activity-based lesson on each day that I observed. One day they worked on a social studies simulation in which they needed to act as pioneers moving west in covered wagons. Another day, they "discovered" properties of weights and balances by designing race cars and running them on homemade tracks. Ms. Price talked about these activities as "hooks to reel students in" by making what they learning in school have relevance to the outside world. In the social studies simulation, for instance, one of her goals was for students to connect what they experienced--making decisions as part of a wagon train--with what pioneers might actually have experienced and thereby become aware of how difficult and frightening pioneers' lives were.

So many of Ms. Price's beliefs about teaching and learning foreshadowed some of the ideas of the reading policy--integrating reading throughout the day, connecting what children experience and already know to what they learn in school, asserting the importance of children's prior knowledge and understanding in the learning process. But observing Ms. Price teach also revealed some beliefs about which the

policy is silent. There are skills that Ms. Price thinks are essential for students to learn regardless of their individual interests or prior experiences. These include such things as grammar skills, punctuation, and use of literary devices. Ms. Price also demands careful reading of text and taught students how to use text to support interpretations. So that, interwoven with an open, child-centered pedagogy that would look very pleasing to many state reformers, was some teacher-controlled, didactic pedagogy aimed at transmitting a fixed set of ideas to students. The latter practices may or may not look pleasing to many of the reformers, but given the absence of comments on such things as teaching grammar and warrants for textual interpretation, this is difficult to ascertain. Some examples from Ms. Price's reading and language arts practice seem helpful here.

Her Practice

Teaching Literature

> All the literature that's out will tell you to get a book started with something that will hook them right away. Sometimes you don't have to work very hard at it, sometimes you do and sometimes it is just painful. But I think if it doesn't happen then you shouldn't go on with it (interview, February 11, 1991).

Ms. Price's main goal in reading a book in class is that it is something that students will find meaningful in their lives. An avid reader, Ms. Price sees reading as an important part of her own life and she often shares her enthusiasm about books with her students. She reads on a wide range of topics and will hunt up books on a subject that she knows interests one of her students. Ms. Price said she has found one of the truly successful things she does to motivate reluctant

readers is to read a book with them and discuss it. This means she is frequently reading children's books on topics not to her personal taste, but ones she knows make a difference to students. As she commented about her reading instruction:

> I dwell on the small ways to let them succeed in reading and I have to just watch to see what those are. I have to dance with them. I really do. I have to feel where they are (interview, February 11, 1991).

Ms. Price's passion and knowledge about literature is obvious in her instruction. As I learned in our first interview, she only uses tradebooks with her class, declining the district's offer of a "literature-based" reading text which she sees as much less engaging for students. Students do a lot of individual reading. They can choose whatever they want to read during this time and Ms. Price has a wide range of books in her class for them. When she chooses texts for the whole class to read, she attempts to find ones that relate in some way to topics they are discussing in other subject areas, but primarily she is concerned with finding a book that builds on students' interests and prior experiences. In the two years I observed her, she read The Call of the Wild because she had a large group of boys in her class who were interested in hunting and outdoor life, and because she loves the book herself.

I watched Ms. Price teach The Call of the Wild on a few different occasions. She introduced the book by asking students if they had read anything else by London. Many hands went up and various titles were shouted out. Some students said how cool they thought his stories were. One boy said he stayed up all night finishing White Fang. Ms. Price passed around a map of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon to show

where most of the book takes place. She then delivered a knowledgeable and inspiring account of the author:

> If you remember, those of you who have read "To Build a Fire," when Jack London wrote about needing to build a fire, you really felt like you needed a fire. Jack London wrote that story for a good reason. He was out making a living, trying to support his family in strange ways. He would deliver newspapers and do other odd jobs. He really struggled to provide food and a home. He liked adventure. He got into trouble because he took so many risks, but he never blamed others for his troubles. Some people compare trouble to a mountain. Some people walk around the mountain and they never have any trouble. Some people stop and turn away from it. Others go over it and have no trouble. But others willingly go through it, and feel it, feel what trouble is like, and come out stronger. That's what Jack London did (observation, February 4, 1991).

She went on to tell students that even though some might have read the book before, they were going to read it very differently this time: "London does something in his writing to get the reader involved and I want you to think about that when you read . . . . We are going to look at the many levels of change that happen in the book. We're going to take a look at what it means to the dog, to the people in the story, and to ourselves." By this time, all students seemed very engaged and attentively listened as Ms. Price read the first chapter.

Often in the lessons I observed, Ms. Price took care to point out what she considered beautiful or meaningful passages of text; e.g., "'He felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity' That's a heavy sentence. . . . Have any of you been outside on a hot day working hard with no water? You feel pressed by the heat and the dryness. Well, the dog felt this. Pressed down by the sense that something terrible would happen." During another lesson, she asked, "What do you think the phrase, 'Far more potent were the memories of his heredity that made

things he had never seen seem familiar' means?" Students responded to these questions of Ms. Price's with comments that reflected much more than literal comprehension of the words. For example, in response to her question above about heredity, one student said that he thought the phrase referred to the dog's instinct which meant he knew how to be wild like his ancestors and wanted to be wild in his heart. She asked students to tell the class what phrases or parts of the story they thought were beautiful, and students frequently did. In all the lessons I observed there was a great deal of discussion of the book with students responding to each other as well as to Ms. Price.

Throughout her teaching of this novel, Ms. Price insisted that students stick very closely to the text when constructing their ideas about the book. Students had much room to respond to the book in individual ways and to direct the flow of the discussion of the book, but Ms. Price kept pushing them to look at the text to form their ideas. For students to recall details and events was important not as a way to check whether they had read the text but to help them understand what London was attempting to communicate in the book. The following is an example from a class discussion in which the relationships between the men and the dogs were the focus:

Ms. Price: What happened to Francois and Perrault? Look back in the paragraph.
Joe: They were dying?
Ms. Price: Did the book say that? Where does it say that?
Joe: I don't know.
Ms. Price: You can't just make things up. It has to be in the book.
Tony: I can say why Francois and Perrault put their arms around Buck.
Ms. Price: Okay, why?
Tony: Because they loved him.

> Ms. Price: But where were they going?
> Josh: It says they received official orders, so they must have been ordered to go elsewhere.
> Ms. Price: Good. It's just one little sentence. It would be easy to miss. But, we don't want to miss things in the text (observation, February 11, 1991).

This discussion continued for a time with Ms. Price asking students to go back to the text to recall what was really happening. She did so, it seemed, so that students would form interpretations that they could support with text. Students couldn't just make things up in Ms. Price. Even though her classroom is child-centered, it is not ruleless nor without standards.

I found this "close-to-the-text" reading at first perplexing. The state reform says very little about text and offers no help for teachers in deciding how to use text in reading instruction. Most elementary classes I have seen either focus on students' emotional responses to text with little consideration of the text itself (J. Camp, observation, February 13, 1991) or focus on literal recall of text details and events with little consideration of the meaningfulness of the text (B. Robinson, observation, March 19, 1992). Ms. Price's instruction falls somewhere in between. She stresses respect for the text and a need to use it to construct meaning, yet the importance of a close reading is to help students plumb the text to get the most out of it. Her goal in reading is to help students understand what authors are trying to communicate and, therein, find reading a meaningful experience.

Reading literature in Ms. Price's classroom centers on students' interests, thinking, and past experiences. This is very important to Ms. Price. She wants her students to see reading as vital to their lives as

it is to hers. Yet her child-centered literature instruction does not mean that students can read and interpret text any way they wish. Ms. Price also teaches students the skill of using text to construct meaning and insists that their interpretations are warranted by examples from text. Another example of this was a discussion on The Call of the Wild in which Ms. Price asked students whether they thought Buck had changed after his kidnapping. Most students responded that he had because he had gotten stronger or more wild. Ms. Price asked them to read sentences in the book that supported their statements. One boy thought that Buck had remained the same and Ms. Price asked what in the text led him to that conclusion. The boy said he couldn't find any exact sentences that made him feel that way, he just did. As the class shouted that he was wrong, Ms. Price said that everyone has a right to interpret stories they way they thought best, but that he needed some evidence to back up his thinking. She suggested he go back and reread the chapter to find what might have made him think about Buck not changing and then report back to the class later.

For Ms. Price there are rules for interpreting text to which she expects her students to adhere. "Feelings" are not in themselves enough of a warrant to justify constructing meaning of text. So Ms. Price's literature instruction covers two goals: one, to get students interested in reading by using their thinking and interests as starting points for instruction; and second, to help them learn how to read text and construct valid interpretations.

Whether Ms. Price's teaching of literature jives with visions in the policy is difficult to know. The issues of what literature to teach

and how to teach it are not mentioned in the policy documents. Furthermore, although debates in literary criticism over textual interpretation are quite heated, the reading policy says nothing of them. Readers interpret text, according to the policy, but how they should do so is not specified.

Language Arts Skills

In addition to reading literature, Ms. Price also teaches language arts skills--such things as punctuation, capitalization, literacy devices like cause and effect, and vocabulary. Although Ms. Price occasionally teaches skills through text the class is reading, most often she teaches separate lessons using worksheets which she has gathered from different language arts instructional activity books. Ms. Price said that she teaches language arts skills to the whole class in separate lessons because she thinks all kids need to know these things to read and write well and this is an efficient way of teaching them.

In a lesson I observed on punctuation and capitalization, students proof read a piece of text which had deliberately been written with many errors. Ms. Price introduced this work by asking students if they could share some strategies they used to know when to capitalize words:

> Ricky: Whenever I see a dot, I know to capitalize the first letter in the next word.
> Ms. Price: Ah . . . so when you see a period, you know the next letter is a capital. Another?
> Katie: When you write I or the name of someone important.
> Ms. Price: Does it have to be an important person?
> Katie: No, just anyone's name (observation, November 22, 1991).

The class went through a few more strategies together and then worked on their papers individually. Ms. Price walked around helping students.

After about twenty minutes, students were directed to hand in the worksheet and go onto the next subject.

A lesson on using cause and effect in text had a similar format. Ms. Price passed out a worksheet labelled "Cause and Effect: Using cause and effect to explain a historical event." It consisted of two passages, one about the Wright Brothers and one on the Mayflower, and questions on causes and effects explicated in the text--e.g., for the Wright Brothers, "What caused the glider to nose-dive into a sand dune?" Ms. Price wrote the words cause and effect on the board and then had students read the passage about the Mayflower. She asked students to pick out three examples of cause and effect in the passage.

> Ms. Price: This is a hard one. Anyone have any?
> Steven: However . . . .
> Ms. Price: [interrupting him] No. A cause and effect sentence would not likely start with however. Do you know what I mean by cause and effect? [Steven nods yes.] Anyone?
> Tony: [reading from the passage] "He didn't like lubbers much."
> Ms. Price: Is there someone who could help Tony?
> Josh: They didn't get along.
> Ms. Price: Okay. Where does it say that, Nick?
> Nick: [reading] "There was friction."
> Ms. Price: Okay. Nick, read the sentence that talks about there being friction.
> Nick: "The average seaman of 1620 was an illiterate brawler who disliked 'lubbers.'"
> Ms. Price: Good. So the cause is that seaman dislike lubbers and the effect is that there is friction (observation, February 11, 1991).

The class worked through all examples and questions on the worksheet in similar fashion: students reading a sentence that they think showed cause and effect, Ms. Price confirming or disconfirming their ideas with little explanatory discourse, and finally, Ms. Price's rephrasing or summarizing student ideas into coherent, "correct" answers.

Ms. Price teaches language skills separately from books students are reading as well as from their writing. This contrasts with Lucy Salvucci's practice, for instance, in which skills are almost always taught in context--through questions students have in their efforts to make sense of text--and certainly would not jive with some interpretations of the policy which suggests that skills never be taught as end goals in themselves. Ms. Price said she teaches skills this way because she thinks of them as tools all students need. And often students need to learn tools in contrived settings. She gave an example from a science project lesson:

> For instance, the other day I wanted them to summarize what it was that they had done in "Our World in Motion" program. What we did was go over how to do a summary and then we learned how to do a summary, but we did it with other material that we understood. And so once we did that, then I gave them the task of summarizing the program (interview, December 17, 1991).

Students needed to learn how to summarize text to help them learn. This was a skill and, in the above example at least, it appeared more beneficial to Ms. Price to learn the skill in a decontextualized way <u>outside</u> of the text students ultimately had to summarize. In Ms. Price's view language arts skills are knowledge that needs to be transmitted to students for them to be able to comprehend text at all. Teaching skills to the whole class using teacher-directed pedagogy, out of the context of their reading and writing, thus makes the most sense.

There are then two pieces that make up Ms. Price's reading/language arts practices--teaching literature and teaching language arts skills. These are sometimes related--e.g., Ms. Price will teach a vocabulary lesson using words from the book the class is

reading--but other times separate. And within both of these pieces, Ms. Price uses different pedagogies. Some lessons appear open-ended going in the direction student interest takes them and others appear very didactic--lessons in which Ms. Price is transmitting knowledge to students for them to take in.

Some of Ms. Price's beliefs and practices fit well with other visions of the policy. Dr. Weber said that she thought model policy classrooms would be ones in which "instruction is driven by children" (interview, August 29, 1990). Dr. Peters commented that he hoped that teachers would be encouraged by the policy to use more literature to teach reading and would integrate reading with social studies and science (interview, October 25, 1989). Dr. Wixson talked about the importance of students reading long passages of text instead of short, basal entries (interview, October 25, 1989). For other beliefs and practices of Ms. Price it is difficult to know whether the policy would support them or not. There is little advice in policy documents on how teachers should teach such things as literary devices or skills like punctuation and vocabulary. So although in many ways Ms. Price's classroom might look like a model one for reformers, in other ways it is unclear what they might think of how Ms. Price teaches.

Ms. Price herself saw the policy as very congruent with what she believes and does. Like many teachers, she said her first reaction to the policy was that she already did it. She said much of what she learned about the policy legitimated her existing ideas rather than introducing new ones. But even though she saw herself as basically

consistent with the policy's vision, she commented that she learned new things from it.

Ms. Price's Learning About and From the Policy

Ms. Price's introduction to the reading policy was a week-long inservice program called Reading Update which was conducted by the district's two reading consultants. Both consultants were members of the state department's Curriculum Review Committee which designed and presented workshops on the new reading definition throughout Michigan. Reading Update was taken directly from the state workshops, using most of the same materials. So that although Ms. Price did not attend an official state inservice, she did hear about the reform from people who were directly involved in designing inservice programs on the reform.

Ms. Price described the workshop as "almost overwhelming". Teachers were given an enormous amount of materials and information about activities they could use in their classrooms. Ms. Price said that most of this stuff, she put in her classroom cupboard because "it was too much, too fast, too whatever" and she needed time to sort it out before she could use it. Each of the five days of the workshop focused on different reading strategies--what they were intended to do and how to use them with students. For example, one day a presenter talked about the importance of accessing students' prior knowledge about a topic before reading a story. Reading research supporting the claim and showing the difference it makes in student comprehension was cited and then participants learned how to do an activity (a KWL chart) which would help them get at students' prior knowledge.

In general, the workshop left Ms. Price bewildered. The amount of information she received was too much for her and left her puzzled rather than informed. She said, "I mean I got a lot of good information, but what could I do with it? I could give you little facts they said, but it wasn't a part of me" (interview, February 11, 1991). Ms. Price did talk, though, of three experiences stemming from Reading Update which were meaningful to her.

Learning to Write: Experiencing Policy as Learner

During our first interview, I asked Ms. Price a general question about her experiences at Reading Update. She started describing in very bland tones how each day they tackled new strategies to teach reading, listening, speaking and writing. But then she stopped and said:

> [One morning] we were asked to write something. We were told there was a cracked window and we were to picture it. I wrote it and then I volunteered to read it. I don't think I even reread it before I read it and I surprised myself. I loved it. I was thrilled. That has influenced me..how I want to go about teaching my kids (interview, February 11, 1991).

Ms. Price said that she had never written much before the workshop, but after this experience she started writing often and now highly values her time writing. She has started keeping a daily writing journal and has recently purchased a sketch book so she can both draw and write. She said she is thrilled with her writing and that she unravels what she is thinking and feeling in her writing.

The writing experience in Reading Update encouraged her to write so that now writing is an important part of Ms. Price's life. She writes daily and she speaks of writing as a way in which she makes sense of the world. Her own writing experiences have led to major changes in

how she teaches writing. She learned that as a writer she needs time and quiet to write and that she writes more when she has choice over what she writes. She began to think that her students as writers might need these conditions as well. She commented:

> I've always felt as though writing was important, but I never gave it the attention before and the quiet that it needed. I never trusted this whole process of giving time for it. I was worried that the kids would be bored (interview, December 17, 1991).

Ms. Price said that she has made writing in her classroom less structured because of her own writing experiences. She no longer gives students subjects to write about or story starters. She makes sure they have ideas about characters, places, and situations which they wish to write about and then gives them time to write. As an example of the changes in her practice, Ms. Price described a book-making project the class had been working on all year. Students had to write, edit, type, and illustrate a story and then make a hard cover for it. In the past Ms. Price said she would have set aside so many weeks for this project and insisted students finish in that time period. This year she has allowed students as much time as they need (so that some students had still not finished by mid-April when I last observed Ms. Price) and allowed them a much wider range of topics on which to write. She now is convinced that both time and choice over ideas are crucial elements in good writing experiences for students.

Ms. Price's writing experience at Reading Update had a powerful effect on her as a learner and a direct effect on her teaching of writing. At Reading Update, Ms. Price wrote. She experienced as a learner new ideas about writing and was able to transfer this experience

to her own students' learning. If she needed quiet, time, and choice when she wrote, it made sense that her students would need those things also. Whereas the other inservice sessions on reading strategies presented new ideas connected with the policy from the teachers' perspective--how they might be used with their students in their classrooms--the writing session made teachers learners in new situations. It allowed teachers to understand what their students might experience if they were to change their classrooms as the policy suggested.

The power of this experience for Ms. Price supports research that suggests that teachers may need to experience as learners a different kind of teaching in order to enact it (Duckworth, ??). Inservice sessions which give teachers activities to do in their classrooms as ways of changing practice or offer images of what changed practice might look like in classrooms (Kennedy, 1991) may not be sufficiently potent to affect teachers' work with their own students.

It is in her creative writing work with students that Ms. Price's learning from the reform is most evident.[1] Because writing is a meaningful experience in her own life in which she learns about herself and thinks about her relationships with others, she wants to give her students similar opportunities. She talks about creative writing as helping students learn to "read the world around them," to better understand themselves, and to "center themselves."

Ms. Price has students work on creative writing pieces frequently. Often she asks the district reading consultant to plan a writing lesson

for her class. She described one writing task in which she and the reading consultant took her class outside to stare at trees:

> I said I think they need to know they can read many things in this world. And so we went out and we read a tree for fifteen minutes. We chose whatever tree we wanted and we sat down. Here were all these boys sitting down looking at trees. I was in tears, I was back here with my eyes straining. I couldn't even look. All these boys and they were just--they took a little piece of twig from their trees and took some paint and they sat there. They sat there for fifteen minutes with their twigs dipped in paint and studied the tree, became intimate with the tree to the degree that they could, and then they did a sketch of the tree and came in and wrote, just wrote for fifteen minutes . . . . And Steven came the next day and he said 'Wow, did that come out of me!' (interview, February 11, 1991).

Ms. Price talked about many of her writing lessons with the same degree of passion. They are experiences meaningful to her as a teacher and meaningful to her students. She doesn't always plan writing. Instead she spontaneously decides to ask students to write when circumstances in the classroom make it seem fruitful: "So that when I'm working with students and there's a situation that comes up where there's that special moment, I grab it. Whether I've planned writing or not, I grab it and go with it" (interview, February 11, 1991).

Ms. Price teaches separate lessons on expository writing and these look very different from her creative writing teaching. Many of these lessons are part of her social studies and science teaching for which students write reports on assigned topics that connect with their subject area units. For instance, one day I observed students were working on reports for social studies on people who were famous during westward expansion in the United States. This assignment was very regulated. First, students were given an outline of areas in which they should find information about their biographee--early life, education,

places they've lived, contributions, and so forth. Then they were given help in transforming their notes into sentences. Finally, Ms. Price gave another outline with which to organize their sentences into a complete report. Other than choosing the person whom they wished to write about, students were given little choice over how, what, and when to write.

The lesson was typical of how students write when it is not creative writing. This project was very teacher-directed and Ms. Price's goal in teaching it this way was so that students would learn how to gather information from non-fiction books, synthesize and organize it, and then write a report. Ms. Price talked about this being a writing skill that she sees as important for students to develop.

Ms. Price's experience writing a creative piece about a cracked window and the writing Ms. Price now does because of the experience have clearly led Ms. Price to teach creative writing differently. Students have more choice over what and when they write. But Ms. Price's teaching of expository text seems unchanged by her writing experience. Students have little choice over what they write, what format they use, and when they write. Students follow guidelines and do so in a timely manner. This division of creative writing and expository writing is similar to the division of teaching literature and teaching language arts skills. Ms. Price seemingly doesn't feel tension in approaching writing in two ways (as she didn't mention tension between her literature and language skills instruction) because the two types of writing lessons have different objectives. The goal for expository writing is to help students develop their abilities to use information

to write reports--an academic skill valued in school. The goal for creative writing is to help students reflect on and learn about the world around them. Whatever epistemological tensions that might exist--such as what is writing? how does one learn to write?--do not arise for Ms. Price because the two serve different purposes.

Acquiring Language

Another new learning that Ms. Price associated with the policy, was acquiring new language to talk about reading instruction. Although many of the ideas she heard about at Reading Update seemed familiar, they were often couched in terms unfamiliar to her.Ms. Price commented:

> I think I've really always taught this way, even when I was teaching in the 50s . . . but I could not put words on what I was doing before and now I can put words to it (interview, February 11, 1991).

Some new terms that Ms. Price mentioned were "reading as an interactive process" and "accessing prior knowledge." Learning these terms gave her language to talk about what she does with other teachers. She said it had been difficult in the past to describe to other teachers how she taught and what she thought but now she knew that these words meant something to her colleagues and they served as good descriptors of how she thought about her own practices.

When I asked Ms. Price about what she might have learned from Reading Update, she reported both learning about writing and learning new language in our first interview. These she identified as direct consequences of her having heard about the policy at this inservice. But the third learning that Ms. Price reported from the policy happened over time and she did not talk about it until I interviewed her the second year.

Connecting Ideas

When I returned to talk to Ms. Price the second year and asked her again about Reading Update, she answered differently from how she had in the first year. Ms. Price talked about two new experiences she had that had helped her understand the ideas she first heard at Reading Update.

One experience was working with a science educator on designing a science curriculum using a conceptual change model. This experience gave her more help in thinking about how to teach using children's thinking as the starting point for instruction. In this case, Ms. Price said she learned the importance of knowing what children already think about the topics they are going to learn and then planning instruction that builds on, or in the conceptual change model, changes student thinking about the topic. The other experience was a book she read called "Brain-Based Learning". Ms. Price said this book helped her understand that the brain was patterned by prior experiences and understandings to accept new information in particular ways. To teach so that children would learn, teachers had to be aware of their students' brain patterns and plan their instructions to fit with them.

Ms. Price connected these experiences to Reading Update by seeing them all advocating "the need to provide an opportunity for listening to the child to see what's in there and the need to check-out prior knowledge." Ms. Price went on to describe how all of these experiences were about "making connections in learning" and "working with prior knowledge to find the value of the child." Although Ms. Price mentioned these ideas about prior knowledge and instruction starting with the child the first time I asked her about Reading Update, it was as though

they did not really make sense to her until they were reinforced by these two new experiences. Ms. Price commented:

> "It's [Reading Update] really just been a part of me now. And it's helped the other things [conceptual change and brain-based learning] become a part of me too. I love it now. I've done my reading differently . . . I mean if I am reading something I will talk to myself about it in front of the kids because that's what is in me and I want to do it more because I know something is happening in their minds. . . .I'm checking in on them more . . . what's going on in their minds" (interview, December 17, 1991).

What is interesting in Ms. Price's talk about her learning from the policy is the change that occurred as she connected the reading reform with other ideas to which she was being exposed. Policy researchers write of practitioners' interpreting policy because of conditions or ideas that already exist in the practitioner's world. They interpret policy through their existing beliefs and experiences with other policies (McLaughlin, 1987). They interpret and enact policy because of existing conditions (Lieberman, 1982; Lipsky, 1980). Or they interpret policy because of how they found out about it (Sproull, 1981). Each of these presents an image of policy entering into practitioners' worlds and being interpreted in the context of existing ideological or practical conditions. But Ms. Price's story is one of policies and ideas mutually shaping each other. New policies such as the reading reform make sense when they connect with other ideas, such as conceptual change or "brain-based learning," which in turn get made sense of because of how they connect to the reading reform. Whereas at first Ms. Price claimed that many of the ideas at Reading Update were bewildering and the experience was overwhelming, when she connected them with other

ideas, they became an important piece in her thinking about teaching and learning reading.

Ms. Price spoke of her learning about and from the policy in three ways: first, she learned about writing both as a learner and a writer and then as a teacher of writing; secondly, she learned a language with which she could better talk about her teaching; and finally, she connected over time policy ideas with other ideas about teaching and learning and in the process constructed an interpretation of the policy that was meaningful to her. Some of the learning occurred immediately--the language, the writing. Other learning occurred over time--the connecting of ideas. Some of Ms. Price's learning can be directly traced to the workshop and some is more diffuse---an individual sense-making process that took place because of who Ms. Price is. The main impact, though, of all of the experiences on Ms. Price seemed to be a increasingly strong commitment to seeing students' prior knowledge, interests, and experience at the heart of instruction and the place to start in teaching.

Yet, as seen in the description of her practices, this commitment co-exists with a commitment to students also learning a fixed collection of skills which Ms. Price frequently sees best taught through traditional pedagogy---i.e., worksheets, teaching-as-telling. Most often Ms. Price can fit these two commitments into her literacy practice easily because she sees them as two separate things--two kinds of instruction designed to achieve two kinds of learning objectives. But sometimes the two conflict in her practice. Talking to Ms. Price and

watching her teach made clear some tensions that she sees and some that perhaps she does not see but seemed apparent to me as an observer.

Tensions in Practice

Tensions Ms. Price Identifies

During one creative writing lesson I observed, two boys did no work at all in the time Ms. Price gave them. This writing assignment was based on an idea about writing from different perspective which Ms. Price wanted students to learn how to do. The assignment was to think about a scene in a painting or one that they conjured up in their imaginations and then to write a short piece describing that scene from one of the object's in the scene perspective. For instance, if the scene was the classroom, they could describe the classroom from a pencil's perspective. Ms. Price told students they could move around and discuss their scenes and objects with each other, but then she wanted them to begin writing. These two boys wandered around the room talking with others as other students did, but then as other students began to settle down, they continued wandering and finally sat in their seats daydreaming. Ms. Price noticed the two boys and frequently asked them about their thinking and asked if she could help them in any way. The boys said they did not need her help. After about twenty minutes of watching them not work, Ms. Price came back to where I was sitting and said, "I've got to let them do that and not try to take control. But it is so hard for me." After a few more minutes, the class had to leave to go to music, and the boys had done no work. At this point, Ms. Price suggested that the boys come in after lunch to write their pieces "to

see if they would be more inspired then" (observation, November 22, 1991).

Ms. Price said at lunch that this experience, and others like it, are very frustrating for her. On the one hand she wants students to have control over their writing and choice in writing, but on the other hand, she thinks it is valuable for students to try to write from different perspectives. So although Ms. Price firmly believes in what she calls "child-centered" approaches to writing, she struggles with what that means in her classroom when students choose not to write. What is her role if not to intervene when students don't do assignments? How can she tell what is just not working and what is not working because as a writer one is thinking about writing and needs more time to actually write? Her own experiences in writing pointed out the value of things like choice and control over time and space, but those things assume that the writer <u>wants</u> to write and will eventually write. But what do those things mean when one applies them to students who may not ever want to write? These are difficult questions for Ms. Price and even though her beliefs about writing and learning--as well as her learning about writing from the policy--point her in one direction, she is not always comfortable with it. Her beliefs put her in the middle of a tension between a goal of student control over their own learning and a teacher's sense of what students should be learning in school.

<u>Tensions I Observed</u>

Not all tensions I noted in Ms. Price's practice were ones she identified. Another example of her facing two competing goals occurred in a lesson on note-taking that I observed. This lesson was one of many

that Ms. Price had been teaching about note-taking. The class was learning how to write reports and Ms. Price told me prior to this lesson that her purpose was to help students develop the skill of taking notes on text that would be useful for writing reports. She said she thought her students had a hard time deciding what information in a piece of text was important.

The lesson began with Ms. Price asking students to read acts from a play on Geronimo and to highlight what they thought would be important information if they were to use the play to write about Geronimo's life. After students had finished, Ms. Price asked them to read to the class what they had highlighted. The first few students offered text that Ms. Price and the rest of the class seemed to agree was important. No one offered other suggestions or questioned the choices. But in the last act of the play, John suggested the entire act be highlighted.

> Ms. Price: So did Anthony. Would you read the whole thing?
> John: Yes.
> Ms. Price: Okay. I guess the first paragraph would help us pinpoint the setting. So that's valuable. It's not essential, but it adds to things . . . . Some of you might have left it out. You'll make your own choices, but those sentences don't help me a whole lot.

The class went to the next act. Jenny suggested the idea that Mexican soldiers had scalped Indian women and children was important.

> Ms. Price: Why did you think this was important?
> Jenny: Because it provided a reason for Geronimo to hate them so much.
> Ms. Price: It gets motivation, I guess. How many left it out?
> Brianne: I don't know. It didn't seem very important to me.
> Ms. Price: Okay. We're all going to have different reasons for taking notes. I know people who highlight the whole thing and that's not helpful to

> me because it seems like then they have to summarize. I can't highlight anything. I need to jot down words that are important. But that's just me. Hopefully today you will find something that is useful to you in remembering information (observation, March 22, 1991).

The lesson continued with students deciding what they thought was important information in the play, but seldom was there agreement on what that was. Throughout it, Ms. Price seemed really caught. Believing in students constructing individual meaning of text, which is what they were doing, she also wants them to learn how to differentiate essential from unessential information in text. Should Ms. Price have contradicted students' suggestions on what was important in the play and therein violate her belief in individual construction of meaning? If she chose not to contradict them, would they learn the skill of discerning important information from text? If she chose to contradict them, how would she decide whose conception of main idea and important details is correct? After the lesson, Ms. Price commented that she had really struggled in teaching it. She hadn't thought that students would come up with different ideas about what was important, although in the middle of teaching, she understood why that was happening. Her final comment to me was that she would have to think about this lesson more.

Figuring out which goal to work for and which pedagogy to use in any one lesson creates a tension. In this lesson, is the individual construction of meaning of the Geronimo text more valuable than the skill of taking notes on essential information? In the previous example, does the value of students having control over their writing outweigh the possible learning they might do by writing a story from another object's perspective? Rather than solving this tension by

always choosing one side or the other, Ms. Price seems to manage the tension (Lampert, 1985) in that she deals with the problem in a specific context and uses the problem as a way of reflecting on her own thinking and practices. She attempts both to use child-centered approaches and teach more directedly. But in watching Ms. Price do this difficult managing, I not only wondered about the tension Ms. Price felt but wondered how that tension affected students. Did they learn about essential ideas in text or did they feel validated in their meaning-making of the Geronimo play? Or were they just confused? Did the two boys feel like they had control of their writing and were they really struggling to think of things to write? Or were they just goofing off and hoping to get away with it?

Tensions such as the ones just described are perhaps inherent in teaching, especially when teachers attempt more ambitious practices. All teachers have a variety of instructional goals and objectives that lend themselves to different ways of teaching and thinking about teaching. Throwing into the picture ideas such as child-centered instruction and student control over learning only complicate the picture more. Ms. Price has multiple agendas in her teaching and the multiple agendas are not always easy for her to pull off in practice. But what role does the policy play in this tension? Does it offer her any help? If indeed teachers such as Ms. Price interpret the policy to be advocating a child-centered vision of literacy instruction, then how should it look in their classrooms? Are there fixed language skills to learn and important learning experiences for students to have, and if

so, how should they be taught? There is no guidance in the policy that would help teachers answer those questions.

Ms. Price, a Case of . . .

Ms. Price's case of learning from and about the policy raises some interesting issues in policy implementation. The first issue is the kind of learning experiences teachers might need to pull off the policy in their practices. Ms. Price's most powerful experience connected to the policy was one in which she became a learner in the new way of learning that the policy advocated. The experience of being asked to write led Ms. Price to become a writer and understand what it meant to write. It helped her see what conditions might be necessary for her students to write well--things such as choice over topics and time--and, therefore, what she might need to do as a teacher to set up good writing experience. This perspective seems often lacking from most staff development programs. Nothing in the state inservice workshops allowed teachers to experience learning in new ways. Instead, activities were presented from the teachers' perspective--they were modelled for teachers so that they could see what they needed to do differently. Ms. Price found these types of sessions in her own inservice experience not particularly helpful, because she could not see herself using the activities intact in her classroom. Without some understanding that teachers may need a different kind of learning experience to be able to carry out the kinds of reforms policies outline--rather than just carrying out activities associated with policies-- it is unclear how effective staff development will be in helping teachers adopt new policy ideas in their practices.

The second issue has to do with Ms. Price's learning over time as she connected the policy with other ideas. If this study had been finished in a year, my story of Ms. Price's learning would have been quite different. At first, she talked of little learning from the policy. As she said in the first interview, it was something she put in the cupboard--both the inservice materials that physically got put in the cupboard and the ideas she put in her mental cupboard. But, this changed as she associated what she remembered from the policy with other new ideas that she was learning. Elmore & McLaughlin (1988) write that policy implementation takes place over time. Ms. Price seems an example of this, as well as an example that learning from policy takes place over time. The way Ms. Price made sense of the reading policy evolved as it connected with new ideas she was encountering. These ideas were mutually shaped by each other and, it seems, it was in the mutually shaping process that the ideas gained importance in Ms. Price's thinking. This seems a variation on Kingdon's comments I referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Even though Ms. Price was already "doing" many of the ideas and practices associated with a view of this policy, the policy enabled her to make different sense of those practices and ideas. In the process, her understanding of the ideas and of the policy changed. So her learning from the policy changed and increased in the time period I observed and talked to her. Given Ms. Price's reflective nature and her interest in new ideas, it seems that this process of making sense of the reading policy is not over.

The third issue is that policy may help teachers attempting to implement its vision in their practices. This policy reform included

some ideas about what reading is and the purpose of reading. But it contained little about what that would mean in a classroom. When asked, reformers could offer little help in constructing what a classroom would look like that would be aligned to the policy. Moreover, it did not address at all, either in the documentation connected to the policy nor in the inservice work, how the policy ideas would fit with other ideas about reading instruction that teachers held. How were teachers such as Ms. Price to teach punctuation, literary devices such as cause and effect, or language tools such as note-taking? The policy's silence on these issues means that teachers such as Ms. Price are left on their own to figure out what to do. For teachers to understand how to pull off the vision of literacy instruction the state is advocating they need reformers to recognize the complexities of practices and to offer guidance to teachers in making "good" pedagogical decisions given those complexities.

Ms. Price is clearly a teacher who thinks very hard about teaching. She has taught for a number of years, and in listening to her talk about her teaching, her "hard thinking" is not a new habit. Ideas about teaching and learning are serious business for Ms. Price. Ms. Price took the ideas connected to the reading policy to heart and attempted, over the last two years, to make sense of them and use them in her practice. Observing and interviewing her made me wonder whether policymakers take their own work as seriously. Ms. Price deserved more than new activities and quick overviews of research which were the primary learning opportunities she was given. That she was left to make sense of the policy ideas on her own by fitting them in with other ideas

seems evidence that something more would have been helpful to Ms. Price. Her learning might have been facilitated, perhaps strengthened, by more thoughtful inservice work at the state and district level. The final issue, then, that Ms. Price's case raises is that even though the modal teacher response to inservice work may be a desire for more classroom activities, policymakers need to recognize that teachers such as Ms. Price may offer their greatest chance for successfully implementing their ideas into practice, but that these teachers need better ways to learn about it.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Although Reading Update had a session on writing and Ms. Price thinks of writing as a big piece of the state reform because of that, it was really not part of the reform, nor was writing any part of the state inservice work as far as I can tell.

CHAPTER 3

THE CASE OF TOM FIELDER

I Just Call It Reading. . . .

One of the difficulties of doing this study has been not knowing what to call the subject of the policy. State officials called their work a "new definition of reading," yet surrounded the definition with goals and objectives for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Some teachers use the terms language arts or literacy to denote their teaching of the four areas in a connected fashion. When I asked Mr. Fielder what he calls this subject area, he responded somewhat wryly: "I just call it reading" (interview, February 20, 1991).

Mr. Fielder's comment is indicative of his general disregard for change in teaching practice. By anyone's standards Mr. Fielder's reading practice would be considered very traditional. He teaches phonics with worksheets, uses basal readers with his ability- tracked reading groups, and drills students on sight words. He has always taught something called reading and he still does, regardless of the popularity of new language or ideas. Mr. Fielder's traditionalism acts almost like a badge--something that announces to which ideological camp of teaching Mr. Fielder sees himself belonging. Mr. Fielder calls himself a "dinosaur" and said, "I know there aren't many of us left any more" (interview, December 10, 1991).

Yet despite his commitments to traditional ways of teaching, Mr. Fielder speaks of changes he has made in his reading practice as a direct result of the state initiative. Mr. Fielder teaches in the same school as Ms. Price and attended the same week-long inservice program. As a result of what he learned at the inservice, Mr. Fielder reads different kinds of text with students and uses different pedagogical practices to help students relate what they read to their own experiences.

Of the three teachers in this study Mr. Fielder is the most forthright about the effects the state policy has had on his teaching. He speaks quite eloquently about how he felt learning about the new reading definition, what it means to him, and how it has altered what he does when he teaches students to read. Yet of these teachers, Mr. Fielder's practice looks the most familiar and traditional and his interpretation of the policy is the most conservative. So how does one measure learning and change from policy? Why does Mr. Fielder construct his reading practice as he does?

Mr. Fielder's Sense Making of the Policy

Mr. Fielder believes the new definition for reading is about reading as an interactive process: "I sound like a Johnny-One-Note. I guess to me it sounds like reading is interactive. You have to bring to reading things that you know to be able to read the information and interpret it" (interview, February 20, 1991). Reading as an interactive process means to Mr. Fielder that a reader's interpretation of text is based not just on meaning embedded in the text but on the experiences, beliefs, knowledge--"things that you know"--that the reader brings to

the act of reading. A reader's prior understandings help him or her comprehend text and construct meaning of what is being read.

Although Mr. Fielder said he always thought of his own reading as interactive--i.e., that he made sense of what he read through his prior knowledge and experiences--he didn't use this view of reading when he taught his students to read. The definition made him rethink what was necessary in his instruction: "I'm much more aware of the need to access prior knowledge, because I actually never did that. . . . So I'm more aware of the need to get them involved" (interview, February 20, 1991).

This new insight into how children might best learn to read seemed to Mr. Fielder to have large consequences to his instruction and, as a result, caused him much anxiety. His first reaction to the state policy was, "Oh no! I've been doing it wrong all these years!" When I asked him what caused his anxiety, he said:

> You just want to do a good job. I picked this profession because it was something I want to do . . . I really love to teach . . . I really like helping these little guys learn to do something. I enjoy seeing the spark and that is why I chose this. . . . So the anxiety was built by the fact that there seemed to be a better way to do the job than I was doing it" (interview, February 20, 1991).

Mr. Fielder's interpretation of the policy was it presented a better way to think about reading instruction. Although the main idea Mr. Fielder associated with the policy resonated with his beliefs about his own reading, it seemed new when applied to how his students should learn to read. Like Ms. Price for whom some of the policy's ideas seemed familiar, Mr. Fielder saw the policy as offering both new and old ideas.

How Mr. Fielder Learned About the Policy

Mr. Fielder reported learning about the policy from four sources: a week-long district inservice called Reading Update, building staff meetings, a new reading textbook series, and the MEAP test. The district inservice and the staff meetings were specifically designed to introduce teachers to the new reading policy and to give them suggestions of new classroom practices. Mr. Fielder's concern that the state had a better vision of reading instruction led him to attend the district inservice which was conducted by the two district reading coordinators, both of whom had been involved at the state level in designing reading conferences for teachers which were connected to the new definition. Much of Reading Update was taken directly from materials the reading coordinators helped produce for the state reading conferences.

Mr. Fielder went to Reading Update to learn "things that I could use to help me implement the new [definition]." To Mr. Fielder, the reading definition portrayed reading as an interactive process, and the strategies were the activities that teachers could use in their instruction to help students interact with text. These strategies included such things as helping students learn how to summarize information when they read, or predict story events, or follow story structure.

Mr. Fielder said he learned many strategies at Reading Update, but he was particularly taken with new ideas on how to question students about text so as to access their prior knowledge. Accessing prior

knowledge was the primary way Mr. Fielder saw reading becoming an interactive process. He said:

> I think what the new definition basically said to me is that the child has to be a part of the reading process. And I can honestly say I didn't exclude children before, but I didn't include them as much as I do now. And by including them, I'm talking about accessing prior knowledge when we start a story (interview, December 10, 1991).

Students are included in the reading process--i.e., reading becomes interactive--when students can connect what they already know with text they read.

After Reading Update, Mr. Fielder continued to learn about new reading strategies during staff meetings in his building. One of the district reading coordinators was given time once a month at building meetings to talk about a new activity that teachers could use. Mr. Fielder said he found these monthly sessions a good reinforcement for what he had learned at Reading Update. He said of both Reading Update and the staff meetings, "It was just interesting seeing all those techniques. There were a ton of handouts which I carried all home. I pull them out every once in a while and read over some of the stuff when I need to." Although Mr. Fielder said he does not use all or even most of the activities he learned, learning them helped him think about what it means for students to be involved in their reading and gave him ideas of things to do in his classroom to achieve student involvement.

Mr. Fielder learned new approaches in reading instruction as well by piloting a new basal series (Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich's 1988 basal series) and serving on the district curriculum committee which adopted a new reading series in 1989. A major criterion for the committee's choice of a text was its alignment to the view of reading

put forth in the new definition. Although some committee members saw adoption of any basal text as antithetical to the state initiative, Mr. Fielder and others fought to get a basal series that would help teachers, such as themselves, adopt new practices yet continue using a basal. He said, "So finally the committee came around with some pushing from the administration that we needed a reading series that was updated so that those who don't use whole language would have some updated tools" (interview, February 20, 1991). Mr. Fielder cited different questioning strategies and a greater emphasis on comprehension skills as the major changes in the new text. Both of these changes he saw as supportive of changes advocated in the new state vision and helpful to him in his own efforts to get students more involved.

Finally, Mr. Fielder talked about learning from the new MEAP test. He saw the MEAP as demanding greater comprehension abilities from his students and a more developed understanding of reading informational texts. He commented that with the new MEAP he feels more pressure to "make sure I do a lot of comprehension type things, making sure students are able to attack an article in such a way that they can get information" (interview, February 20, 1991). When I asked him why he felt more pressure, he replied, "I never used to feel pressure because I honestly disassociated myself from it. It was a fourth grade test and I said who cares about that? But, districts are using the MEAP test now as a measure for school improvement. When that happens, all of a sudden everyone is held accountable for what they teach." (interview, February 20, 1991). When I asked him what he meant by "comprehension type things" he said, "More drawing-conclusions type thing, more putting two

and two together to get an answer, rather than just reading the article and saying, 'The dog is black.'" (interview, February 20, 1991).

Mr. Fielder also mentioned that because the new MEAP test has an informational reading selection for which students receive a separate score, he has emphasized informational texts more than he previously did. Primary grade students in particular have scored low on this part of the new test, largely because of their lack of exposure to expository text. To give them more practice in "getting information from what they read," Mr. Fielder said he uses the Weekly Reader series more frequently than he has in the past and questions them about material in it more thoroughly. He also treats science and social studies text more like the stories in the basal reader; i.e., that he thinks about accessing students' prior knowledge about topics and using reading strategies to help them comprehend the information they are reading (interview, February 20, 1991).

Mr. Fielder learned then about the state initiative from a variety of experiences. He received quite formal "training" in the new definition from the week-long Reading Update program, with more informal reminders of new ideas and strategies in monthly staff meetings. He piloted a new basal text and served on the curriculum committee which attempted to compare texts with the new definition. He attended to the informational reading selection on the new MEAP test. The sense Mr. Fielder has made of all these experiences seems to be that the state is asking him two things: first, to emphasize informational text; and secondly, to teach reading as an interactive process in which what

students bring to reading--their prior knowledge--plays a critical role in how they comprehend text.

Both of these changes were tied to how and what to teach in reading. Unlike Ms. Price, Mr. Fielder did not interpret the policy to be a broad philosophical platform on teaching and learning. His focus was more narrow. He spoke of going to Reading Update to find <u>things to do</u> with his students to teach reading better, such things as new questioning strategies. The instructional strategies that he learned were helpful tools for Mr. Fielder in changing his teaching to accommodate the new state vision for reading. So even though Mr. Fielder knew that some of his colleagues had broader ambitions of learning new ways to think about reading and learning from their experiences connected to the policy, he felt satisfied picking up "new strategies that I'm comfortable working with" to teach reading.

Given that state officials talk about teachers needing to "reprogram their radar" about reading (Weber) to understand the state policy or needing to "reconceptualize reading" (Wixson), it is difficult to know if Mr. Fielder's interpretation of their work is what they had in mind. Is doing different things during reading time reconceptualizing a subject or reprogramming one's thinking about it? In other words, is the message Mr. Fielder constructed the one state officials thought they sent and how would they view the changes Mr. Fielder has adopted because of their work?

What Has Changed?

Mr. Fielder has been teaching in Lewis for over ten years. He teaches in the same rural/suburban school that Ms. Price does, although

unlike Ms. Price, this is the only school in which Mr. Fielder has ever taught. Mr. Fielder grew up in a nearby town and still lives with his parents. His mother, a retired school librarian, often helps Mr. Fielder with school work such as designing bulletin boards or editing students' stories. Mr. Fielder talks about himself as a very traditional person who does not buy into "fads" easily either in teaching or his personal life. Whatever changes Mr. Fielder adopts, they are carefully considered before they appear in Mr. Fielder's practice. He said about himself and other teachers in his building,

> I don't think you'll find anybody in this building who will throw out their whole program and adopt another program overnight. . . . You see if it works, see if you are comfortable with it, see if it helps your students and if it doesn't, then you will adopt it or abandon it. . . . So you know, the drastic swings that you see in education from extreme to extreme, really don't seem to be in effect a lot here (interview, December 10, 1991).

But Mr. Fielder has changed because of the new state reading definition. The major changes Mr. Fielder mentioned have been increased reading of informational text and questioning of students as a pre-reading activity. Mr. Fielder has found the new reading series a great help to him in carrying out these changes. The new basal series (Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich Laureate Edition, 1990 edition) has informational reading selections in each unit, a list of pre-reading questions for each selection, and a series of comprehension building questions not only for each selection but across selections within units. Although Mr. Fielder said he learned the new ideas at Reading Update, the basal series "got him on the right track" in using these ideas in his practice.

This was a pleasing situation for Mr. Fielder because he could change in the direction of the state policy and at the same time continue to use his basal reading text as the foundation of his instruction. The most helpful session Mr. Fielder attended at Reading Update was one in which the presenter demonstrated how to use a basal reading text and still teach according to the new state policy--i.e., using reading strategies. Mr. Fielder said:

> They had one guy come in and say "I use a textbook and this is how I implement it [the policy] using these strategies." I got a lot out of him in the fact that he seemed to be doing some of the things I do. (interview, February 20, 1991).

Mr. Fielder told me about this session on two separate occasions. He knew many of his fellow teachers were abandoning textbooks in favor of tradebooks. This was something Mr. Fielder did not want to do. After this session, he felt he could make some changes in reading to align himself with the new policy but still keep an important piece of his reading instruction which was the textbook. By having this presenter come to Reading Update and show teachers how to use their basal readers in new ways, Mr. Fielder felt the district was sanctioning his continued use of a text. His feelings were only further confirmed when the district finally adopted a new textbook series for teachers to use.

So the areas of change that Mr. Fielder connected to the state policy were greater use of informational text as part of his reading instruction and more, as well as different, pre-reading instructional strategies. Using informational text in reading was to help students better learn to comprehend different kinds of text and instructional strategies were to help them access their prior knowledge before reading

to comprehend all text better. Both of these changes seemed substantial to Mr. Fielder.

What Does This Change Look Like?

Use of Informational Text

Mr. Fielder has changed his reading practices since the state reform to include not only more reading of informational text but use of reading strategies to help students read this text. He said:

> I try to approach them [informational texts] the way I do in reading group--to access any prior knowledge they have so that they are thinking along the lines that they need to be thinking so that they can pull out information. . . . I'm happy to report that there are a half a dozen students in here who can read an informational article and pull out information. . . . I admit it has not been one of my stronger areas, nor was it a concern of mine until the state MEAP test decided it was something we should worry about . . . but it's okay." (interview, February 20, 1991).

On all days I observed, Mr. Fielder had students read some expository text selection and used "strategies" in his instruction. During one lesson, for example, Mr. Fielder passed out Weekly Readers that had on the cover a big picture of a tooth holding an umbrella to protect itself from the sweets and fried foods that were raining down upon it. The title of the article was 'Tooth-Friendly Snacks'. Mr. Fielder started the discussion about the article:

> Mr. Fielder: Who can predict what the article on the front page is going to be about?
> Class: [shouts] TEETH!
> Mr. Fielder: Good. Who can tell me why it is important to brush your teeth?
> Raymond: Because they could rot. My grandfather's teeth started to rot. . . .
> Mr. Fielder: [interrupting Raymond] Okay. What do you think this picture means?
> Lisa: Junk food is bad for him.
> Mr. Fielder: Yes.

Derek: He doesn't want to get cavities from the food.
Mr. Fielder: Good.

After receiving a few more comments about food and teeth, the class had a discussion about what they could do to protect their own teeth and why they thought certain foods caused more problems than others. After this discussion, Mr. Fielder directed students to read the article to find out if their ideas were correct. After doing so he asked them questions suggested at the end of the article--"Which of these snacks is best for your teeth? " "How can you tell which snacks are good for teeth?" "Did you learn something new by reading it?" (observation, February 20, 1991).

Mr. Fielder said that prior to the reading definition and MEAP test he did not think of The Weekly Reader as part of his reading instruction, yet now he does. Consequently, he uses similar instructional strategies reading it as he does with the basal text. This includes such things as predicting events from context clues and accessing prior knowledge, as he did in the previous example. He does this because he wants students to be better at "getting information from what they read" (int. 2/91) whether it be expository or narrative text. So the state policy expanded Mr. Fielder's notions of what counted as reading instruction. Prior to his learning from and about the policy, Mr. Fielder thought of the basal reader as the only text he used in his formal reading instruction. Now he includes other text--The Weekly Reader, the book he reads aloud to the class, the social studies text--as vehicles to teach reading. And because they are so, for the first time Mr. Fielder uses strategies to help students read and comprehend them better.

Questioning Students

The other change that Mr. Fielder spoke most about was a difference in the way he questions students about what they read. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Fielder said that prior to the new definition, he mostly asked literal questions of students after they read a story; things such as What color was Dan's bicycle? or What was Ruth's dog's name? He commented, "When I think of the way I did reading four or five years ago, I would say, 'This is a story about so and so and such and such. Which page can you find it on? What can you find on this page? Oh, doesn't this sound like an interesting thing.'. . . and then we would read." (interview, February 20, 1991). But, now Mr. Fielder says he questions students about their ideas prior to reading a piece of text---"But now it's, 'Doesn't this sound interesting? And what do you think?' " (interview, February 20, 1991).

An example of Mr. Fielder's new style of questioning occurred with one group which was reading a story about a boy's house. A skill lesson on using pictures to predict a story topic accompanied the story. Mr. Fielder drew a house on the board that looked similar to the drawing of the house in the beginning of the story.

Mr. Fielder: What have I drawn on the board?
Corey: A house.
Mr. Fielder: Is that all?
Corey: A tree.
Mr. Fielder: Right. There are lots of things in this picture. I am going to write 3 sentences on the board. I want you to read them to yourself and decide how they go with the picture, if they go with the picture. [The three sentences were: This is a school. This is a house. This is a zoo.] Which of these goes with this picture?
Sean: This is a house.
Mr. Fielder: How do you know that?
Sean: Because of the house.

Mr. Fielder: Good. Why is it not a zoo or a school?
Bill: Because there would be animals.
Mr. Fielder: How do you know it is not a school?
Sean: Because there are no kids around.
Mr. Fielder: Good thinking. I like that you read and looked and thought about what you read. And you could tell me why things worked and why things didn't work. What is this story that we are going to read about, do you think?
Group: Someone's house. (observation, November 26, 1991).

In this example, Mr. Fielder created some discussion about the story prior to reading it and asked students to predict the story setting by looking at the picture. More importantly, perhaps, he asked them why they thought certain things, such as why it was a house and not a school. This kind of questioning seemed very different from asking students to recall facts about what they just read--what was Ruth's dog's name--because it was asking for them to relate what they already knew to what they were about to read. The "answers" were not to be found in the text, but generated, to some degree at least, from students' putting ideas together. With another reading group, prior to reading a expository selection on pioneers, Mr. Fielder asked students how they thought the pioneers felt when they first saw the giant sequoia trees and then asked them how they would feel? (observation, February 1, 1991). Again, these questions were very different from the literal questions Mr. Fielder described himself asking in the past. Mr. Fielder calls them "non-traditional questions" which are "questions about prior knowledge." The purpose is to "get students involved."

Reading more informational text, using instructional strategies with different kinds of text, and questioning students to access prior knowledge are all changes in Mr. Fielder's reading instruction that he

directly attributes to the state initiative. These changes have made his teaching look different. Mr. Fielder said there is more discussion around text and students feel more excited about reading than they have in the past. Mr. Fielder adopted these changes in some part because he felt accountable to do so- -he felt some pressure from the MEAP if nothing else--but also because he saw his students better comprehending what they read and becoming more involved with their reading. This last point is the most important to Mr. Fielder. He mentioned often when we talked that his goal for reading instruction is to help kids become engaged, life-long readers, "to create a positive attitude toward reading among the students." Because the changes he has made appear to be helping him achieve his reading goal, he is sticking with them.

But to write a case of Mr. Fielder as a "changed" teacher would only be telling half of his story. There is much in Mr. Fielder's reading instruction that seems resistant to changes often associated with the state policy (use of tradebooks, connections of reading and writing, integrated teaching).

What Has Not Changed?

Reading as Separate Skill Lessons

Although he knows that many teachers in the district have abandoned basal texts in favor of tradebooks and have adopted a whole language approach (which, in Mr. Fielder's view, is one in which reading and writing are connected and skills are not taught separately), Mr. Fielder continued to teach reading as a series of smaller instructional pieces that cumulate in students learning how to read. Mr. Fielder describes the parts of his reading instruction in the following way:

> I have my formalized instructional strand, my vocabulary strand which is basically phonics--at least part of it. I do sight words separately so that is part of my vocabulary strand . . . .Then I have the formalized reading instruction which is using the textbook and working on comprehension skills. And then I have my Sustained Silent Reading which is part of my reading instruction. Then we have the typical go to the library and check out books they can read (interview, February 20, 1991).

These different parts--phonics, sight words, comprehension work, sustained silent reading--are all listed on the daily schedule as separate lessons and Mr. Fielder does little to connect the work done in one area with the work in another.

Mr. Fielder talked about some of these elements--phonics and sight words particularly--as "tools" that students need to learn to read. He teaches these reading tools to the whole class in a very didactic fashion. The teaching is mostly telling with student talk limited to short responses to questions Mr. Fielder poses. A lesson in phonics I observed seemed a typical example. The class was reviewing the "bossy r" sound. Mr. Fielder started the lesson by saying "Today we are going to review the vowel families that go with 'bossy r's'. We call it the 'bossy r' because the 'r' goes up to the poor vowel families and makes them make a special sound." He wrote IR, UR, ER on the board and asked Lindsey what sound they all made, to which she replied "ER."

> Mr. Fielder: How many agree? [The whole class raises their hands.] Let's see with some words. [Mr. Fielder writes STIR on the board.] What is this word?
> A girl: Stir.
> Mr. Fielder: What is this word, Josh? [Mr. Fielder writes BURN on the board.]
> Josh: [hesitates]
> Mr. Fielder: Use your decoding skills.
> Josh: Burn
> Mr. Fielder: This word? [writes CLERK on the board.]
> A boy: Clerk.

> Mr. Fielder: Good, so we have just proved what Lindsey said. Look at the words, focus on the words, because if you see them and hear them it goes into your brain. What is the word? [points to STIR--one student shouts "STIR"]. This word? [points to BURN, class shouts "BURN"]. This word? [points to CLERK. Class shouts "CLERK".]

Mr. Fielder then passed out a worksheet that asked students to circle the "bossy r" words that matched pictures and, on the flip-side, one that required them to fill in the sentences with the correct "bossy r" word. Mr. Fielder recited the words on the worksheet first, and then the class repeated them. One student read the directions for each side of the worksheet, and Mr. Fielder reminded them to "use your decoding skills. We've practiced and practiced them, so I expect you to use them." With that the students went to work (observation, February 1, 1991).

Another time, I observed a sight word drill-and-practice lesson in which Mr. Fielder passed out to students two copies of the sight-word list for the week. One copy was on green paper and students cut the words into squares to make flash cards to bring home to study. The other list was on white paper and students used this to study in class. Mr. Fielder asked a girl to read the words in the first column from top to bottom. Before she started Mr. Fielder said, "Remember, these are sight words. We do not sound them out. We just need to know them." The girl then read the words (better, bring, clean, cut, done, always, about) correctly. Stephanie read the words in the second list, stumbling over the word "could." Mr. Fielder responded, "The third word makes the 'u' sound," at which time Stephanie shouted out "Could!" Mr. Fielder replied, "A little work gets you a long way." Mr. Fielder then

instructed students to "CUT!" At that command, students cut up the green copy of the list and placed their words in little bags to take home for practice. A few who were fast cutters studied the words when they finished. Mr. Fielder congratulated them on their good use of time.

After cutting, Mr. Fielder wrote ten words on the board. After writing each word, Mr. Fielder held up a flash card with the word printed on it and asked students to read it. He asked them to read each word four times, moving the card slightly each time so that students had to move their eyes and head to follow the flash card. During one of the flash card routines Mr. Fielder said: "You have to follow the card. You need to use your voice and eyes to get it in your memory." Mr. Fielder did this for each of the ten words, with students shouting the words more loudly with each repeat.

In phonics and sight word lessons, student spent a great deal of time filling out worksheets and doing other written seat work. Every morning, Mr. Fielder puts a packet of worksheets and assignments on student desks. One day these included a worksheet on words that have the u-vowel sound, a letter form students were to use to write Mr. Fielder a letter about something important to them, a fill-in the blanks worksheet on cause and effect, and three drill-and-practice addition papers. Students worked on these assignments through much of the morning while Mr. Fielder taught the individual reading groups.

Mr. Fielder said that he emphasizes phonics and sight words in the beginning of the year before he goes "heavy-duty into comprehension skills" in the second semester. At first he wants students to gain

confidence in their ability to actually identify words so that they can begin to enjoy reading (interview, November 26, 1991). Mr. Fielder said he has always taught separate lessons on phonics and sight words as part of his reading instruction and he believes they are an important component. He is even more concerned about teaching them now because he doesn't think the new reading series gives students enough practice in either of these areas for them to acquire them as tools. He commented:

> I think a child needs a tool that they can have control over. It [phonics] is something that they can use to figure out words by themselves. Another tool would be sight words. This gives them immediate control over what they are doing (interview, February 1, 1991).

Mr. Fielder's teaching of phonics and sight words then hardly seemed changed. He still teaches these as separate skills to learn, out of the context of text students are reading. Moreover, he teaches them as drill-and-practice lessons to the whole class. Mr. Fielder teaches spelling, penmanship, and grammar in similar fashion: all as separate lessons, all in a predetermined order. These skills are tools that Mr. Fielder thinks students need to acquire in order to read. He said he teaches them as separate lessons so that he can make sure he covers all the skills that are necessary and so that he can present them in the order in which he think they need to be taught. Although Mr. Fielder knows that there are more-integrated, less-skill bound reading practices which other teachers have adopted, his approach is the one that makes the most sense to him.

Recall of Text

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Fielder has changed some of the ways that he questions students about text. He asks more open-ended

questions before reading to help students connect what they already know to what they read. But Mr. Fielder also spoke of retaining some of what he calls "traditional questioning"--that is, asking direct questions that have fixed answers. He does so to help him assess whether students have read text carefully. One lesson in which Mr. Fielder worked with the higher ability group had examples of both kinds of questioning. The group was reading a story called "Jenny and the Tennis Nut." It was about a girl, Jenny, whose father loves tennis and wants her to be a tennis player. Jenny loves gymnastics but does not want to disappoint her father by not liking tennis. The problem in the story is Jenny's figuring out a way to talk to her dad about her likes and dislikes. Mr. Fielder started his work with the group by asking them who remembered the parts of a story. The group responded, "Character, setting, problem." Mr. Fielder then directed students to read specific paragraphs in the story to find clues about characters, setting, and problem.

> Mr. Fielder: Now read the first paragraph on page 169.
> Look for clue words that the setting is outside.
> Who can tell us clues to the fact that the setting
> is outside?
> Girl: The word fence.
> Mr. Fielder: Good. Adam?
> Adam: Yard.
> Mr. Fielder: Good job on setting.
> (observation, February 1, 1991).

The group, under Mr. Fielder's direction, went through the entire story reading specific paragraphs and being asked to find words that "gave clues" as to the details of setting and character. Student responses were all short-answer with little, if any, discussion surrounding them. The point of the questioning seemed to be to twofold: first, to get

students to read text carefully (i.e., correctly) so as to pick up clues on the story's context; and secondly, to help Mr. Fielder see if students could recognize words such as fence, outside, and yard on the page. The questioning did not seem to be about students making sense or interpreting text.

But after Mr. Fielder and his students marched through the text finding clue words his questioning switched from this directed, "right answer" approach to one focusing on interpretation of text. He began to ask questions that were open-ended and designed to help students think about how the story related to their own lives. For instance, Mr. Fielder asked his students how Jenny and her dad started to solve their communication problem.

> Mr. Fielder: What do they do?
> Chris: They talk to each other.
> Mr. Fielder: Yeah, very good. So they did something that we can do when we have a problem with our parents or teachers. We've picked up some ideas for our own life through reading this story. What do you think Jenny's dad is like?
> Ron: A tennis nut.
> Mr. Fielder: Well, we know he is a tennis nut, but once he listens to Jenny we know that her dad is what else? [no one responds] I know this is pretty broad, but what do you think? Has her father given up teaching tennis to Jenny?
> Derek: No.
> Angela: No, but he is going to watch her at gymnastics too.
> Mr. Fielder: Right. I think he's a father who listens (observation, February 1, 1991).

Mr. Fielder asked these questions with a different tone of voice and style. He paused between questions and responses as if he were thinking hard about how he might respond. He allowed some chatter among students so that they could share what they were thinking. At the end, when Mr. Fielder said he thought Jenny now had a father who listened, Mr. Fielder

and the group seemed satisfied, as if they had figured out what the story was about after all and they found it pleasant.

Mr. Fielder's questioning, like the rest of his reading instruction, is a mixture of old and new practices. There are new elements--informational reading, instructional strategies-- that he has adopted because of what he learned from the state initiative. But there are also old practices--isolated skill lessons, ability groups, basal readers that he has not changed because of what her heard from the state effort. Given that Mr. Fielder talks about other teachers adopting more innovative practices than he--whole language, integrated literacy instruction--because of the reading policy, it seems impossible to conclude that he is unaware of alternative portraits of teaching. He knows that some teachers in his building who received the same instruction at Reading Update have responded very differently to the ideas presented. However he interprets the state's new reading definition and its implications for practice, it is not out of ignorance of other interpretations but deliberate choices of what is best in his professional judgment. Why?

Understanding Change and Resistance to Change

Mr. Fielder quite frequently talked about the changes he has made in his reading practice as having to "fit" with his more longstanding ideas and practices in reading. He said:

> I teach in a way that is comfortable for me and then I try to accommodate new ideas. I'm not comfortable, for instance, with whole language. I like things in nice little cubicles. I work well with them (interview, February 20, 1991).

In looking at the changes Mr. Fielder has adopted in response to the state policy, it seems clear that he has been able to fit these new practices--questioning, informational text, and so forth--into his existing framework for reading instruction. He can still use the basal text, divide reading up into "little cubicles," and ability group his students. So although the changes he has made in the last few years seem large to Mr. Fielder and caused him anxiety, he has moved swiftly from the uneasiness he initially felt to construct a practice in which new ideas about how to teach students to read coexist with many of his old beliefs about reading instruction. Although to an outsider this melange of practices may seem an uneasy one, to Mr. Fielder the different pieces fit well together. Each piece (e.g., phonics, accessing prior knowledge, sight words, textual interpretation) has its own function and can be taught using a pedagogy that best matches that function. Each piece contributes to children learning to read.

Fitting the new and old together to construct a practice that is both changed yet remains the same, Tom's practice raises the question of whether the learning opportunities he had surrounding the policy were strong enough to initiate fundamental change in teaching. Cognitive psychologists write that learners normally respond to new ideas by assimilating them to their existing schemata, unless the new ideas so dramatically challenge the premise of the existing schemata that they change it. Kennedy (1991) relates this theory to teacher education by writing that teachers need to be given vivid portraits of changed practices that challenge their existing beliefs about teaching so as to shed those beliefs and think about change. Although Mr. Fielder had

numerous learning opportunities surrounding the policy, none of them may have been vivid enough to undermine his beliefs and cause him to question how he fundamentally thinks about reading.

What kind of learning opportunity could challenge Mr. Fielder's beliefs? Mr. Fielder perceived the state policy to be about reading instruction in the abstract. He saw it giving him new messages about how students learn to read and what kind of reading students need to do. But Mr. Fielder constructs his reading practices by drawing on a much wider array of beliefs and ideas than those connected to reading instruction. Particularly, he draws upon his ideas on how his students in his school learn. It is within the particular context of his classroom that Mr. Fielder makes decisions about how to teach. Ideas about reading instruction make up only a part of that context and Mr. Fielder has many strong feelings about other parts of the context as well.

On every occasion we talked, Mr. Fielder expressed concern about the kinds of lives his children led outside of his classroom. Lewis's economy, tied to farming and the nearby automobile plants, has been hard hit lately and many of Mr. Fielder's students live in families facing serious economic difficulties. Mr. Fielder talks about his students' families being in disarray, parents lacking both time and energy to provide order--which Mr. Fielder sees as vital for children. "I know that my students are on their own a great deal. That this may be the only place they have any decent stimulation. We're working with kids who are very concrete. And they are going to be even more so because we're starting to deal with children who are, for lack of a better word,

brain dead because they sit in front of television all the time so there is not an awful lot going on." (interview, February 20, 1991).

Because Mr. Fielder sees little order and adult guidance in his students' lives, he is very committed to providing these qualities in his classroom--and he does so very well. I observed one day when Mr. Fielder's students were finishing a Thanksgiving art project that involved them dyeing handkerchiefs with natural dyes they had made the previous day. All during the day, Mr. Fielder called three students at a time to soak their handkerchiefs in the dye pots. He set a timer and when the timer went off the students and Mr. Fielder went over to the pots, rung out their handkerchiefs and hung them on hangers on the light fixtures in the room. This whole procedure, which in many classrooms would have resulted in lost instruction time if not total chaos, was handled very smoothly. Students quietly did what they had to do and patiently waited their turn. Mr. Fielder never missed a beat and continued to teach while he set a timer, rung out cloth, and hung up hangers (observation, November 26, 1991). This example is indicative of the kind of controlled orderly classroom that Mr. Fielder maintains. During all the times I was in the classroom, students always seemed to know what was expected of them, what was going to happen next, and what their responsibilities were.

One reason that Mr. Fielder does not like many of the new images of literacy instruction is that they appear disorderly to him. Tradebooks and whole language don't offer a sequential, planned approach to learning how to read. Mr. Fielder said he sticks with basal readers and separate skill lessons because they do present concepts in an

orderly manner, one lesson building on another: "I think that a nice methodical progression is very beneficial to students, especially the kind of student we have from many disarrayed households. They don't get any order at home and so they need order in school" (interview, November 26, 1991). Mr. Fielder talks about students needing order, needing to learn responsibility for their own actions, and needing to understand commitment to their community.

The learning opportunities connected to the policy that Mr. Fielder had offered him alternative images of reading instruction but did not consider other issues, such as social context. Mr. Fielder makes decisions about how he teaches reading using beliefs and ideas about much more than reading instruction. He considers his beliefs about the lives of his particular children and what they might need from him beyond the skills or information they need to acquire. His theories on how they should learn in general seem to frame which ideas about reading instruction he finds useful.

His argument is similar to that of Delpit (1988) who suggests that although new approaches to literacy may be appropriate for some children, they may not be appropriate for all children. And although Mr. Fielder's thinking about what is appropriate and why is different from Delpit's (if for no other reason than Mr. Fielder is not making an argument about minority children and their relationship to the dominant culture), both seem to share a sense that even though they may see value in the new literacy approaches, their broader commitment to their students suggests other approaches. Mr. Fielder said that if he were to teach in another community, such as one of the more affluent suburbs, he

would probably teach reading differently because his students would have different needs. Unless the learning opportunities associated with policy address these broader concerns that influence how teachers teach reading--for instance an opportunity for Mr. Fielder to question his belief that children from economically depressed homes need order in school--than it seems unlikely that they will adopt more wholesale changes.

Is he right? This reform policy is touted as appropriate for all learners in all contexts but does not address what it might mean to teach reading according to the new vision to children of various cultural backgrounds, economic conditions, or social experiences. Should reading in suburban Detroit look the same as it does inner city Flint? Can children from families experiencing severe economic circumstances learn to read using a whole language approach as well as children from affluent households? Do children with little adult intervention in their outside lives prosper in classrooms where order and control are less overtly demonstrated? Again, because the policy does not address these questions, Mr. Fielder's answers go unchallenged.

Mr. Fielder, a Case of . . .

Mr. Fielder is an interesting case of what it takes for teachers to change and how that change is measured. Mr. Fielder did have various learning opportunities connected to the new policy from which he learned and changed his practices. He went to a reading inservice connected to the policy, he used a new basal reader, he became familiar with the MEAP test. These opportunities were fairly extensive compared to those of many teachers in the state. But these opportunities seemed to challenge

only a few of the ideas and beliefs that Mr. Fielder draws upon to construct his reading practice. They did not address Mr. Fielder's concerns about the social context in which he teaches and the presumed experiences with reading his particular students need. One possible conclusion then from Mr. Fielder's story is that changes in reading instruction involve far more than alternative views of reading or reading pedagogy. Unless learning opportunities offer help to teachers in reevaluating their own thinking about the role reading and the role school plays in their students' lives and unless they address the particular issue of whether these policies are equally appropriate for all students, then it seems likely that teachers like Mr. Fielder will continue to pick and choose pieces of the policy that they see best suiting their own context and resisting any more wholesale change.

Another possible conclusion, though, is that it is not the policy nor the learning opportunities that are solely responsible for Mr. Fielder's lack of big changes. Another factor in Mr. Fielder's learning surrounding the policy is his <u>perception</u> of the learning opportunities--what he thought he needed to learn and what he thought the policy was teaching. Mr. Fielder perceived the policy to be about reading instruction and he sought out from the learning opportunities available only messages about reading instruction. This was different from Ms. Price who interpreted the policy as addressing how it is students learn in general and used the same learning opportunities as Mr. Fielder to rethink her ideas about learning. So Mr. Fielder's restricted view of the policy seems as much a product of how he perceived the policy's messages as the messages themselves.

And this raises the question of why learners learn what they do. What role do Mr. Fielder's personal dispositions--his resistance to change, his anxiety over new ideas--play in how he learns from policy?[1] Challenging teachers' personal dispositions seems a much more difficult task than changing their ideas about reading or pedagogy and is normally viewed as something beyond the purview of staff development. But it may be necessary to do so to bring about changes in practice policymakers envision. What kind of learning opportunities would overcome Mr. Fielder's resistance to change? What experiences might break through his anxiety? What kind of support would Mr. Fielder need to break through his personal resistance to take the risks associated with wholesale change? Thinking about teachers as learners from policy who bring to their learning personal dispositions and habits that shape the learning they do seems important for policymakers. Just as Mr. Fielder considers the psycho-social baggage his students bring to their learning, policymakers involved in staff development need to consider the needs of their learners as well.

This story also points out the difficulty of determining the impact of the policy on Mr. Fielder's reading practices. To Mr. Fielder, the state policy has had far reaching effects on his practice. He was anxious when he first heard about it and anxious when he first attempted change. Of all the teachers I've observed, Mr. Fielder talks the most about learning and change directly related to the state reform. And the changes he made are important to him in that he thinks he is doing a better job of teaching reading now then he was before. Because

Mr. Fielder is so traditional and suspicious of change, his efforts in changing his reading practices should not be devalued.

Yet, to an outsider Mr. Fielder's practice might seem largely untouched by the policy. He still teaches from basals and does separate skill lessons unconnected to the text students are reading. He still sees reading as a series of skills that need to be mastered before comprehension can be achieved.

From whose perspective do we measure change? This questions is important in that Mr. Fielder's learning and change need to neither be devalued for not being sufficient (if measured against a standard vision they probably would be) nor overinflated for being greater than they are (Mr. Fielder's perspective on how far he has come may lead to this). Valuing how hard it is for teachers such as Mr. Fielder to change helps researchers and policymakers respect teachers' efforts and understand that change is not an easy nor fast process. But seeing how much change there might be left to accomplish allows researchers and policymakers to think about what they might do to help teachers change more.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. I do not want to suggest here that Mr. Fielder is an example of Buchmann's (1986) dichotomy of personal and professional roles. In fact, Mr. Fielder is a good example of why Buchmann's argument has some flaws. In saying that Mr. Fielder's personal dispositions play a part in the professional choices he makes is not to say that he is deciding what and how to teach based on personal convenience or whim. Instead, it is saying that Mr. Fielder, like all of us, constructs his understandings and enactment of professional standards and commitments through his personality. To think he could do otherwise seems somewhat ridiculous.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE OF LUCY SALVUCCI

Ms. Salvucci is a teacher whose practice would probably please many of the policy's reformers. Like Ms. Price, Ms. Salvucci provides many opportunities for students to read and write text. Sense-making of text, rather than skill acquisition, is central in Ms. Salvucci's view of reading and writing instruction. And many of the "new" literacy hallmarks such as writer's workshop, author's chairs, and reading companions are part of Ms. Salvucci's day.

But when I asked Ms. Salvucci about her awareness of the state policy, she spoke of no learning from or about it. Neither did she talk of any direct attention to it. This was surprising. Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder talked about learning from the policy, how could Ms. Salvucci not? Ms. Salvucci works in a district which appears attuned to reform efforts and is known for its innovative literacy instruction, certainly more so than Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder's district. Administrators in Ms. Salvucci's district spoke a great deal about the state policy and their relationship to it. How could a teacher who worked there and who seemed to follow many of the policy's ideas not know about it?

Ms. Salvucci as an Innovative Teacher

Of all three teachers' rooms, Ms. Salvucci's <u>looks</u> the least like a traditional classroom. It is one-third of a large pod in a building

designed to be an open classroom. So although blocked off from the other pods by high bookcases and cupboards, there is much open space and a sense of potential to use space in unique ways. Bookcases overflow with books, and more books are stacked in various bins around the room. Student writing is displayed throughout the room on bulletin boards. A computer with a word processing program is set up in a corner for children to use for writing. There is a large cart shoved in the corner with numerous mathematics manipulative and games. Although not large, the room has two good-sized open spaces for groups of students to meet. Room for these spaces is created by pushing student desks together in a tight clump. Because students sit at their desks infrequently (whereas they spend a great deal of time in the open spaces) this arrangements works well.

Children throughout the day read, discuss, and produce text. For instance, on the first day I observed in Ms. Salvucci's class, students started out the day writing about their weekend events. They continued writing their "Weekend News" and working on other writing projects for almost an hour. During this time students asked each other to read their stories for comments. After writing time, Ms. Salvucci read a book to the class on dinosaurs. They discussed such things as how people know about dinosaurs, what paleontologist do, and what fossils are. Next, students read books by themselves or with reading partners. During this time, Ms. Salvucci worked with small groups of students reading and discussing a poem. After this reading period, Ms. Salvucci and students read a picture book on dinosaurs together and discussed the difference between the picture book and the informational book they had

read on the topic. They ended their day by reciting together a poem on the joys of reading. The only "non-literacy " event was a 45-minute mathematics lesson in which students worked on place value using beans and cups.

Students read trade books and stories on a variety of topics in which they are interested, instead of working their way through basal readers. They frequently run to the media center right outside Ms. Salvucci's room for more and different books to read. The abundance of reading materials, as well as student choice over their reading, seems very much in-line with the policy's goal of increasing student motivation to read and the suggested way to achieve this goal. Reformers cite providing "texts for students that are well-written and have worth or value to the reader" as an important component of reading instruction (Michigan State Department of Education, 1987, p.6). Ms. Salvucci does this. She attempts to nurture student interest and pleasure in reading throughout the day.

Students keep reading logs to record the stories and books they read and writing folders to keep track of their writing throughout the year. Writing in Ms. Salvucci's class is done in stages---prewriting, draft writing, conferencing, editing, and finally publishing--as delineated in various writing process curricula, as well as the state's guidelines for writing instruction.

Ms. Salvucci embeds her skill instruction in texts students read, moving always from "the whole to the part." By this she means that skills such as vocabulary, spelling, grammar, phonics, and sight words are taught as they are necessary for students to make sense of what they

are reading. Ms. Salvucci gave an example of skill instruction embedded in text with the book Amelia Bedelia. The humor in this book is that Amelia, the children's new nanny, does not understand American idioms--painting the town red, stealing a base--and so interprets them literally which gets her into a great deal of trouble. Ms. Salvucci said students generally love this book because it pokes fun at adults and are motivated to read it even though the vocabulary is difficult. Students themselves aren't always sure what the idioms mean nor what idioms are, so Ms. Salvucci uses their desire to understand the humor in the book to teach vocabulary and idioms. She sees this as a much more effective approach to teaching these skills than any separate lesson on vocabulary words or idioms she might otherwise teach. Often when students are reading or writing, Ms. Salvucci points out phonemes to help students decode or spell words. Or while reading a book to the class, she will point out how she used phonics to figure out the pronunciation of a word. Normally she constructs individual spelling lessons for students using words they have misspelled in their own writing. Although Ms. Salvucci does teach some literacy skills as separate pieces disconnected from text, most of her skill instruction either is planned with or grows out of text students read because, she says, "research has shown that when doing words in isolation, kids don't retain them as long as they retain them in context" (interview, March 4, 1991).

So Ms. Salvucci is an innovative teacher with ambitious reading practices if she is viewed in light of past modal practices. Her literacy instruction shares many features with some views of the state policy. In that sense, she is a success for the policy--a teacher whose

classroom reformers could point to as offering a new way of teaching reading.

How did she get there?

Learning to Teach

The first answer to that question is: Ms. Salvucci learned but not from the policy. When I asked Ms. Salvucci about the state policy, she said she was unfamiliar with it. Ms. Salvucci had a dim recollection of seeing the reading definition at a staff meeting once and remembered seeing a copy of the new MEAP test, but she did not pay much attention to them. Ms. Salvucci read the reading definition for the first time during one of our interviews. She commented, "It's what I try to do in my classroom. Getting the children involved, getting them connected to the book" (interview, March 4, 1991). She noted that the policy even seemed to use the same language to talk about reading as she--reading as interactive, students bringing their prior knowledge to reading. Ms. Salvucci expressed no great interest in learning more about the definition. Because she perceived the policy to be suggesting ways of thinking similar to her own, she perceived there to be no new ideas to learn from it.

Her talk about the policy was similar to other comments she made about learning and changing since becoming a teacher--i.e., that there has been little need to do either. In our first interview, when I asked Ms. Salvucci if her current practices represented a shift in her teaching. She replied, "No, I've always taught this way." Later on in the interview, I asked if she had learned from any district initiatives, she again said they had not affected her much because they seemed

similar to her existing practices. In the second year of interviewing, I asked Ms. Salvucci more general questions about change and learning. Had her practices changed at all and had she learned anything new about teaching literacy? She said she has changed her practices only in minor ways--new books to read with children, new games to make-- because what she has been exposed to since becoming a teacher has always seemed repetitive of what she already knew. Finally, I asked her if she could think of opportunities that would be helpful to her to learn new ways to teach reading and she said, "You mean if I weren't already teaching this way?" (interview, March 4, 1991). So Ms. Salvucci's practices do not stem from "new" learning as a teacher. Neither the state policy nor district initiatives have had much direct affect on her reading practices or her thinking about reading.

But Ms. Salvucci did learn many of the same ideas of the policy. The second answer to the question how did Ms. Salvucci get there is that she did not learn from the policy, but in close connection to it. Ms. Salvucci is a relatively new teacher who entered a teacher education program at a nearby state university around the same time as the state became interested in changing reading instruction. Ms. Salvucci viewed herself as fortunate that she came into teaching "when the transition was being made from traditional teaching to more developmental, hands-on approach" (interview, March 4, 1991). Her preservice education, particularly her special education course, presented an innovative, child-centered approach to teaching and Ms. Salvucci saw herself following that vision.

In her teacher education courses, Ms. Salvucci said she learned such things as how to teach reading using literature, how to connect reading and writing, and how to integrate subject matter learning around large themes. She called these practices a whole-language approach to literacy. Accompanying this view of reading, she also said she learned how to give reading and writing tasks that children could accomplish at a variety of levels, from children drawing pictures of a story to text with well-developed sentence structure, and how to evaluate student work so that it measured individual progress rather than attainment of a fixed set of skills (interview, March 4, 1991). This focus served her well in securing a student teaching assignment at Parkwood School(and later an elementary teaching job there). She student taught twice at Parkwood, first in a hearing-impaired class and again in a "regular" classroom. She commented that these teaching experiences solidified her commitment to different approaches to literacy instruction:

> My major in hearing impaired talked a lot about language and especially a whole language approach to reading and writing. So I was kind of directed in that way through my special ED training. . . . And when I did my student teaching [at Parkwood] I did it in the hearing impaired program and that is the way they do all of their teaching. And I felt that if it was working with those kids, why wouldn't it work for the regular population? (interview, March 25, 1992).

When Ms. Salvucci student taught the second time, she continued to teach reading using a whole language approach. Because she found this approach successful with her students in both her student-teaching experiences, she followed it when she began teaching in her own classroom and still continues to do so.

One reason Ms. Salvucci may have been so receptive to the new ideas about reading practice that she encountered in her preservice

education was that, unlike many people who become teachers, Ms. Salvucci had difficulty as a child learning to read from "traditional" methods. She was in the lowest reading group through most of elementary school and felt, as a child, that she was not a very good learner. When she thought of herself teaching children to read, her own bad experiences led her to seek out alternative methods. She said:

> When I was reading in school, it was very, very difficult for me to learn how to read. I think it was because they were taking me about it the wrong way. So worksheets? Yeah, I was worksheeted to death because I wasn't a good reader. So when I was young, I never got a lot of reading practice in school. I was always in the last group to be seen and by that time I was so busy doing my pile of worksheets that I was brain dead" (interview, March 25, 1992).

Ms. Salvucci's own learning as a child and her teacher education courses stirred her interest to teach reading differently--without reading groups, basal readers, and so forth. Her experiences student teaching at Parkwood continued to support her thinking. She was primed to reject the traditional view of reading as a set of skills to be learned and her first teaching experiences only increased her commitments. This was more than serendipity. Many of the same people who taught at Ms. Salvucci's college of education were involved in various ways with Ms. Salvucci's district. In turn, many district people influenced the direction of the education courses. And both sets of people, district and college of education, played roles in designing the state policy. Not only, then, were Ms. Salvucci's preservice education, district initiatives, and state policy all brainchildren of the same intellectual parents--the ferment that reading instruction needed to be different from what it had been in the past--but brainchildren of the same physical parents as well. From this

perspective, Ms. Salvucci's sense that the policy's ideas were what she "already did" makes some sense.

So Ms. Salvucci learned to be an "innovative" teacher in respect to past practices, but not innovative in her approach to teaching in the sense of seeing new opportunities to learn and change as a teacher. This is very different from Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder. Both of them spoke of learning about teaching reading from both formal learning opportunities--the policy, district workshops, the MEAP test--and from the informal opportunity to learn in their classrooms from their students. They both spoke of changes in their practices as well. Ms. Price, whose practices are similar to Ms. Salvucci, said she learns a great deal about her students by listening to their comments on books they read and talking to them about their writing. She sees the learning she does in her practice as essential in helping her figure out what to teach and how to teach it. Mr. Fielder's talk about who his particular students are and what they might need from school also reflects a kind of learning from his classroom experiences. How he teaches is based on how he perceives his students and their needs, rather than a wholesale following of practices learned in the past.

But change and continued learning from either the formal or informal opportunities that were available to Ms. Salvucci do not appear to figure in to her view of teaching. This is an interesting situation. Having learned, has Ms. Salvucci learned no more?

Learning from Formal Opportunities

From Policy

When I asked Ms. Salvucci why the policy did not seem like something she needed to attend to, she said:

> In this district and in this building we've been doing the reading and writing and so forth for so long, before it was mandated. So the district may feel that we've been, you know, that we're okay and we don't need more (interview, March 4, 1991).

Ms. Salvucci perceived herself and her district as being far ahead of the state policy and, therefore, did not see it as something from which she could learn more. But, other teachers in her district whose practices were very similar to Ms. Salvucci's, were familiar with the policy and talked of learning from it (K. Ensor, interview, March 4, 1991). Like Ms. Price, the innovations in these teachers' practices did not prevent them from seeing new ideas in the policy or new opportunities in the policy to think about their existing practices. Ms. Salvucci's construction of the policy as something old hat was not shared by her colleagues even though many were also "innovative" teachers.

From District Inservices

Ms. Salvucci talked about ideas put forth in the district in much the same way. At the time Ms. Salvucci started teaching, Parkwood was just getting rid of basal readers and moving toward use of tradebooks to teach reading. Parkwood has always had a reputation of being trend-setting. In the early 1970s, they built many schools with removable walls to facilitate open-classroom ideas. One administrator during this time became particularly excited about British infant schools and her

excitement later became the impetus for Parkwood's developmental learning focus. Around the mid-1980s Parkwood adopted both a whole language perspective on reading and something they called "developmentally appropriate curriculum." The latter was based in a philosophy of learning that centered on the idea that children should be allowed to learn at their own pace and should not be expected to master concepts at artificially contrived times. To get district teachers to move in the direction of these initiatives, administrators banned basal readers and workbooks from schools and required teachers to attend numerous inservice opportunities to learn the "new instructional practices in reading and writing.

In the summer after Ms. Salvucci's first year of teaching, the district required all elementary teachers to attend a week-long workshop which focused on whole language instruction. Ms. Salvucci said for the most part she felt well ahead of her colleagues in thinking about reading instruction and she viewed this summer inservice as nothing more than a review of her teacher education courses. What she primarily gained from this experience, and in general from all the district staff development programs Ms. Salvucci said she has attended in her five years teaching, has been suggestion for new books to use in her classroom and some new activities to do with students. She did not talk about being exposed to any new ideas about reading or writing nor any challenges to her way of thinking.

So Ms. Salvucci's talk about learning from the kinds of formal opportunities that Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price found helpful reflects little, if any, new learning. She did not find the policy nor district

inservices to be good sources of new ideas about reading instruction nor did she view them as opportunities to reflect on her current practices. Over the two years that I talked to Ms. Salvucci, she mentioned books she has read and her master's courses as sources from which she has gotten new ideas, but again, like her talk about district inservices, these ideas are limited to titles of books that her students might like to read, games that are helpful in teaching specific concepts, or ways of setting up her classroom to minimize confusion when students move around. These opportunities as well do not seem to have brought into Ms. Salvucci's life many openings to think about her teaching. Instead, they have brought new materials or practices to augment what she already does. Because she sees herself "doing" what is being suggested, she perceives these formal opportunities as holding few riches for her.

Her Classroom as an Opportunity to Learn

Ms. Salvucci's classroom is filled with student talk about reading and writing text. Students read books together and they share their writing with one another. They read to Ms. Salvucci, and talk to her about what they are reading and writing. This kind of classroom environment seems full of opportunities to learn about student thinking and learning. But in talking to Ms. Salvucci about her teaching and in watching her teach, it was hard to see if Ms. Salvucci saw her classroom as an opportunity to learn. Two examples seem useful here.

On frequent occasions, I observed student authors sharing their work with the class. Ms. Salvucci had learned about using "author's chair" for students who wished to share their writing with their classmates in her language arts method class. The routine of author's

chair started with the student author sitting in a designated chair and asking the class a specific question that they should keep in mind when they listened to the student's story. Ms. Salvucci said that this routine was to help students listen more attentively and offer more constructive help to their peers. Some of the author's questions asked for help with their stories--"After listening to my story, what do you think I should name the penguin?"--and others were factual questions for students to answer--"Can you tell if penguins fly after listening to my story?"

In the times I observed these sharing sessions I never heard students answer the questions authors asked. Most frequently authors would read their writing, stop and stare at their audience after they finished, and then sit down when the audience clapped--which they always did. If there were comments after the stories, they bore little if any relationship to the questions asked. Almost all of them were generic -- "I really liked your story," or "Did you write the story yourself?" Often Ms. Salvucci would use the author chair time to set up other activities she was going to use during the day, and rarely did she comment on students' questions or answers. Frequently, Ms. Salvucci's only intervention was to ask who was the next to sit in the chair.

When I asked Ms. Salvucci what she thought about these sharing times, she said she thought they were very successful because students got advice from their peers about their writing. When I specifically probed her after one such session <u>what</u> advice she thought students received, she said advice about how to continue with their stories. I did not press her further (although I now wished I had) but it made me

question what Ms. Salvucci was hearing that I wasn't. Did the comments students make which appeared generic to me appear as something else to her? Or was she perhaps not attending to comments because she was attending to other things? Some teachers assign students seatwork to free up their time to work with small groups or prepare for the rest of the day or just to give themselves some quiet. Does authors' chair serve a similar function for Ms. Salvucci? How much was Ms. Salvucci learning about her students' writing or other students' thinking about writing on these occasions?

A second example that puzzled me at the time was a writing conference Ms. Salvucci had with a boy who had written a story about going to his grandmother's house. This was the first time I observed Ms. Salvucci and before school that day I had asked her to tell me about the writing conferences she would have that day. She said that most of the students with whom she was going to conference were in the middle of writing stories and she hoped to find out what problems they might be having and help them find their own solutions to the problems. Ms. Salvucci started off her conference with Ryan by commenting on his opening sentence.

Ms. Salvucci: I was reading your book over the weekend and I wanted to talk to you about it. You start off, "Sunday we went to Grandma's house." Normally we want to start off a story with something interesting or exciting to grab the reader. Can you think of something?
Ryan: No.
Ms. Salvucci: Well, we need a different way to start the story because it wasn't last Sunday, was it?
Ryan: [Shakes his head].
Ms. Salvucci: It was one Sunday, wasn't it?
Ryan: It was Super Bowl Sunday.
Ms. Salvucci: So you could write "Super Bowl Sunday was fun at Grandma's."

> Ryan: [Doesn't respond].
> Ms. Salvucci: Okay? I don't want to rewrite your story. We just needed a grabbing first sentence (observation, March 4,1991).

Without saying anything, Ryan took his paper and sat down. When I looked at Ryan's paper after the conference, I saw that he had crossed off his original opening sentence and written "Super Bowl Sunday was fun at Grandma's." He made no other changes. Given what Ms. Salvucci had said she wanted to do in these conferences, her responses to Ryan were puzzling. What did Ms. Salvucci learn about problems Ryan felt in writing? The conference centered on a problem Ms. Salvucci saw in the writing for which she provided a solution. How else might this conference have been handled so that Ms. Salvucci would have learned more about Ryan's thinking and writing?

These examples were representative of kind of interactions between Ms. Salvucci and her students that I observed. Although it is impossible to say anything definitive about how Ms. Salvucci teaches and, especially, how she thinks about her teaching, watching her interactions and talking to her about her teaching, made me question whether what students said about their writing and reading altered in any way how she thought about her practices. It made me question whether she perceived her classroom to be a place to continue to learn about teaching. For instance, after watching students in the author's chair many times and seeing little if any helpful feedback being given to authors from their classmates, I wondered if an author's chair, at least as it was configured in Ms. Salvucci's classroom, really was a useful addition to students learning to write. But Ms. Salvucci did not mention any doubts about its usefulness nor did she change how she used

it in the two years that I observed her.[1] Does Ms. Salvucci use what her students say in the rich opportunities she provides them as a way to learn about and change her teaching?

Coupled with her talk of limited learning from formal opportunities such as district inservices, and state and district policies, these questions seemed particularly important. Although innovative when considered in light of modal practice, Ms. Salvucci does not talk of continued learning after she became a teacher. Although child-centered, she does not appear to learn from opportunities in her classroom. Ms. Salvucci's and Ms. Price's teaching share some common characteristics--lots of student talk and choice over what they read for instance--but they may be that way for different reasons. Innovations for Ms. Price stem from her own reflection and thinking about practice which are fostered by new ideas she encounters. For Ms. Price, change and learning are longstanding and important features in her practice. But Ms. Salvucci's innovative practices are a product of how she learned to teach and not of her continued learning and reflection. Although her classroom may look very different from Mr. Fielder's, she may share his resistance to change.

Ms. Salvucci's teaching seems a paradox. She is an innovative teacher who hasn't changed. She is a "traditional" teacher in the sense of not changing in her teaching, yet she teaches in innovative ways. How might one explain the contradiction of innovations without change?

Possible Explanations

One large explanation may be in the opportunities. Parkwood administrators mandated innovations rather than encourage teachers to reexamine their teaching and discuss teaching with each other. The innovations were not generated from teacher reflection but from district directives. And because Ms. Salvucci already complied with the directives, she may have had little reason to see the district as offering her opportunities to learn about her practices.

State policymakers had clearer ideas about what kinds of practices they did not want to see in classrooms than the kinds practices or thinking about teaching they did want. The main thrust of state policymakers' work was to change teacher behavior away from skill-bound, fragmented reading instruction toward the kinds of practices Ms. Salvucci already employed. Again, because the focus of state policymakers was on getting teachers to "do" practices that Ms. Salvucci did and not reflect on their current practices to see possible differences between what they do and the new ideas, Ms. Salvucci saw the policy as nothing new. There was little in the formal opportunities that would have created a sense of dissonance in Ms. Salvucci and, therefore, little to create a need to learn and change.

Although it seems fair to say that the formal opportunities for Ms. Salvucci to learn about reading may not have been very useful to her, it does not seem to explain totally Ms. Salvucci's response to them. For again, the opportunities that Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price had available to them seem no more full of opportunity to learn than those Ms. Salvucci experienced, yet they learned from them.

Why Would They Do It, and She Not?

Seeing potential in learning opportunities is a mixed blessing for teachers. Reflecting on practice, learning from students and adapting practice to better fit their needs, engaging in new ideas about teaching and learning may be very beneficial to their teaching and certainly they are qualities that the educational community values, but they are hard things to do and are not often supported except in the abstract. Opportunities to learn may be given to teachers, but time and resources to learn seldom are. As Mr. Fielder's and Ms. Price's cases attest, learning and changing from this policy took time and created anxiety.

Unlike Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder, Ms. Salvucci is a relatively new teacher. She is also a young woman with many personal and professional demands. She has a two-year old daughter and during the last year I observed, she was pregnant and having a difficult time. Over Thanksgiving, Ms. Salvucci had surgery to help continue the pregnancy. She was told at that time that the fetus had been put under stress and that she needed to be very careful about getting plenty of rest and watching her diet--things that she found not easy to do as a teacher and mother of a young child. During the last two years, Ms. Salvucci was also attempting to finish a master's degree in special education. She was pursuing the degree not only because she was interested in teaching students for whom she would need special education certification, but because, with recent budget cuts in the district and rumors of large teacher lay-offs, Ms. Salvucci wanted to have multiple options in the kind of teaching positions she would be eligible to take.

In our conversations Ms. Salvucci would talk about her struggle to spend time with her daughter and still have time to plan for the kind of teaching she wants to do. She would talk about how much time she had to spend on her master's coursework--getting papers done that seemed somewhat nonsensical to her, finding time to work on group projects--and how that too interfered with the time she spent with her family and on her teaching preparation. She would mention, as many teachers do, her husband's frustration with the amount of time and money she does devote to her teaching. The demands that Ms. Salvucci faces are not unique to her. In many ways, Ms. Salvucci reminded me of myself as a beginning teacher with small children and a husband starting off his career with all the difficulties and ambiguities that that presents. Certainly many woman who teach, like Ms. Salvucci, are starting off their personal and professional lives and bring those experiences and constraints into the classroom with them when they teach.

And Ms. Salvucci has set for herself a difficult agenda. The kind of teaching Ms. Salvucci does requires a great deal of time and energy at a time in her life when time and energy are hard to find. She spends many more hours planning lessons and gathering resources than traditional teachers who rely more heavily on textbooks and prepared lessons to structure their instruction and curriculum. She spends more hours looking at students' writing than most elementary teachers. As Cohen (1989) comments, the kind of ambitious teaching that teachers like Ms. Salvucci attempt is difficult and uncertain. So, putting these two pieces together--that Ms. Salvucci has many demands on her life and that the task she asks herself to do is already filled with difficulty and

uncertainty--offers the possibility that Ms. Salvucci's perception of nothing to learn from state policy (or district initiatives) is in part a safety value in her life. Learning new ideas and challenging her beliefs would only bring more uncertainty and difficulty into her teaching that would require more time and energy to sort out. Her practice is going well and her life is full already. She may approach her teaching the way she does because there is little in her world that would encourage her to do otherwise. But again, Ms. Salvucci's response is one of many possible ones. Teachers in similar circumstances and with similar practices as Ms. Salvucci have made different choices--to dig deeper into issues of literacy instruction and to continue to learn and change.

Ms. Salvucci, a Case of. . .

Ms. Salvucci's case raises two different kinds of thoughts and questions for me: one kind has to with researching change and learning from policy, while the other has to do with change and learning from policy.

The first set of thoughts and questions has to do with researching issues of change and learning connected to policy. When I first observed Ms. Salvucci it surprised me that she knew little about the state policy. How could her classroom look so like a model of the state reform without her knowing about it? After discovering how Ms. Salvucci learned to teach, it seemed less surprising, but her story highlighted the messiness of tracing the sources of a teacher's learning. It may indeed be very misleading to cast Ms. Salvucci as learning from her preservice experiences but not from district or state policies. Neither

Parkwood's initiatives nor the state reform, were invented whole cloth out of the heads of the respective policymakers. Nor were ideas Ms. Salvucci encountered in her teacher education classes unique to that program. All these sources pulled, albeit in somewhat different combinations, from ideas about reading extant in the field--cognitive psychology, social constructivism, strategy instruction, and whole language. Moreover, many of Ms. Salvucci's teacher educators, Parkwood educators, and state reformers formed their ideas about literacy instruction from the same sources, i.e., they attended the same graduate schools of education, were members of the same state associations, and attended the same reading conferences. Many of Parkwood's teachers and Ms. Salvucci's teacher educators became instrumental in the state efforts. In turn, state reformers helped legitimate Parkwood administrators' fervor for change in literacy instruction (S. Spaniel, interview, September, 1992).

In other words, although Ms. Salvucci may not have associated her teacher education, district efforts, and state reform, the three were connected as different parts of the same conversation about literacy that was taking place among teachers, state policy makers, district educators, and reading researchers at the time. So to say that Ms. Salvucci was not influenced by state policy or district efforts may be only telling the story from her perspective--what she saw as influencing her. The ideas and learning opportunities that influenced Ms. Salvucci were shaped by broader ideas about literacy which encompassed both district and state reforms.

The connectedness of ideas embedded in reforms points out the problem of researchers assuming causal relationships between what they observe in teaching practice and the ideas in a policy or in a teacher education program. In some policy-and-practice studies that look at classroom practices without interviewing teachers, Ms. Salvucci might be counted as responding to state policy because her practices would contain some of the characteristics connected to the policy. In other policy-and-practice studies that relied on surveys asking teachers if they had heard of policies or for their sources of learning to teach, Ms. Salvucci might be counted as not affected by policy. Both of these types of studies would probably get it wrong. The sources of teacher learning may not be that distinct and to trace teacher learning to one source without recognizing the context in which that source developed would be misleading.

But regardless of the source of ideas that Ms. Salvucci originally drew on to learn to teach, her continued learning seems in question. So another set of questions has to do with what it would take for teachers such as Ms. Salvucci to respond to state policy, to learn more from it. If teachers, like all learners, subjectively construct learning opportunities to hold potential for them or not, what can state policymakers do to help teachers see potential? Because many of the learning opportunities districts and the state offer are based on changing traditional teachers' classroom practices, a teacher such as Ms. Salvucci might hear the reform message as mostly arguing against something she doesn't do, and therefore ignore it. There are many teachers in Michigan such as Ms. Salvucci whose preservice education and

schools support innovative practices. Many of these practices, like Ms. Salvucci's, would fit at least some reformers' visions of what this policy was all about. Many of these practices may in fact be better than state visions. What would it mean for these teachers to be affected by the reform when changing their teaching practices may not be the issue? What would it take for these teachers to be affected by the reform if, like Ms. Salvucci, their personal and professional plates were already overflowing?

Learning opportunities given to teachers which only focus on new activities or focus on changing a traditional practice to the new vision are not enough for these teachers. Part of the agenda of the reform has to be helping all teachers reflect on their practices--what are their ideas about how children learn to read and do their practices support their ideas? Policy can serve as a beacon not only of a set of particular ideas and practices but also as a beacon of reflection and inquiry into practice. To do so, policymakers need to figure out how it is that teachers can be helped to develop a sense of inquiry about their practice. Part of the reason most district and state inservice focus on classroom activities is that it is familiar ground, both for the inservice provider and the participants. Helping teachers look at their own practice, giving them opportunities and support to do so, and then helping them make sense of what they might discover is much less familiar.

But to help teachers like Ms. Salvucci to develop a sense of inquiry and a need to continue to learn more may be a tall order for policymakers. Innovative practices may mask recalcitrant attitudes

toward learning and change. What might it take for teachers such as Ms. Salvucci to undertake these activities? How could Ms. Salvucci be given more time and more space given the financial and political constraints most districts and states have? And would time and space to consider her teaching be enough or does Ms. Salvucci need something more for her to see learning and reflection as resources rather than threats? As with the questions that Mr. Fielder's and Ms. Price's cases raise, these seem crucial for policymakers to confront if they are to work with and influence teachers such as Ms. Salvucci.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. In the last observation I made in March 1992 Ms. Salvucci did change the form of author's chair. Many students wanted to share their stories and author's chair was beginning to take up a great deal of time. So Ms. Salvucci set two author's chairs to run concurrently. Otherwise, the routine remained the same. This, of course, meant that she had even less of an opportunity to attend to the questions and comments of students.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARING THE CASES

The obvious starting point in comparing these cases is to look across the three to see how the reading policy seems to have played out in the classrooms. Do Ms. Price's, Mr. Fielder's, and Ms. Salvucci's practices seem affected by the policy? What did their practices look like before the policy and what do they look like now?

These cases portray images of the teachers' reading practices before the policy that were quite diverse. Mr. Fielder's practices had many features of traditional reading instruction--basal readers, ability-groups, and isolated skill lessons. Ms. Salvucci's had many innovative features--writer's workshop, literature-based reading instruction, and skill lessons embedded in literature. Ms. Price's practices had both innovative and traditional features--literature-based reading, integrated writing and reading instruction and isolated skill lessons. What is curious about these three teachers is that none of them saw the policy as a radical call to change their reading practices, even though their practices were quite different from each other. Ms. Salvucci felt completely supported by it and saw no need to change. Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder (Mr. Fielder to a greater degree) recognized some dissonance between what they did and the policy, and so changed some of their practices, but they did not see the policy as requiring a major

overthrow. Mr. Fielder for instance did not read the policy to be about whole language, as Ms. Salvucci did, and therefore did not feel a need to embrace whole language practices. Ms. Price had some concern that the policy may not support her separate skill lessons, but because the policy said little directly about skills, she felt no need to change how she taught them. So even though Mr. Fielder's, Ms. Price's, and Ms. Salvucci's existing practices and beliefs were very distinct, the policy made its way into all of their classrooms without fundamentally disrupting them.

These cases present images of practice that were equally diverse after the policy. Because the policy was not perceived as a fundamental shake-up for any of the teachers, it worked its way into their practices to different degrees and in different ways. New questioning strategies were merged with existing ways of using basal readers. New writing approaches was merged with old skill instruction. So what and how did these teachers learn in the vicinity of the policy? How did they fit it into their practices?

Reading Practices--Fitting Policy

Tom Fielder

For Mr. Fielder, reading continues to be a series of separate lessons--phonics, sight words, silent reading, group reading, and so forth. Reading is first a technical activity for which students need to acquire certain skills--he calls them tools--and then an intellectual one in which students comprehend text. Mr. Fielder said that he spends the first half of the year focusing on reading skills and only after he feels students have some firm understanding of them does he go "heavy

into comprehension." The policy did not change Mr. Fielder's basic orientation toward reading. It did not convince him, for instance, that reading was the act of constructing meaning of text rather than the acquisition of a set of skills nor that skill instruction could be taught in conjunction with text students read. It did make him think differently about how students can best do the intellectual activity of comprehension, which he saw the policy emphasizing. Mr. Fielder said the policy helped him see that students "bring to reading things that they know" and that it is through the things that they know that they construct meaning of text.

This new awareness has resulted in him asking more questions of students. This is the biggest visible change in his practice attributable to the policy. As he said, in many ways the policy is just remembering to ask students "What do you think?" What do you feel?" He particularly asks more questions before reading a text so that he is aware of students' prior understandings and can use them to aid their comprehension. Additionally, because the MEAP test focused on students comprehending expository text as well as narrative, Mr. Fielder has begun questioning students when they read text in social studies and science along with his questioning tied to their basal readers.

The policy then affected how Mr. Fielder talks to students about text and expanded his notion of what texts are legitimate to use to teach reading. Whereas prior to the policy Mr. Fielder thought of reading instruction only in terms of the basal reader, he now uses reading activities (e.g., pre-reading questions) with many text that students read during the day. These changes in practice that Mr.

Fielder attributes the policy though have not disturb Mr. Fielder's sense that learning to read is fundamentally the acquisition of a series of skills which are essential prior to comprehension. Mr. Fielder "fit" the policy into his practice by isolating it to one area of his reading instruction--comprehension. And changes in this area, for Mr. Fielder, seem to have few ramifications to other parts of his instruction.

Catherine Price

For Ms. Price, reading is not a series of separate lessons, but something that is integrated throughout the day. It is the intellectual activity that children do in school--they read to learn in all subject areas--and so her reading instruction occurs while she is teaching every subject. She said: "Anytime of the day, every time of the day, I'm teaching language arts. I'm teaching listening. I'm teaching speaking. I'm teaching writing and I'm teaching reading" (interview, February 11, 1991). Ms. Price reads literature with her class because she thinks that reading good literature is how students get hooked on reading. Through literature, children see the relevance of reading to their own lives. She commented, "If kids are not going to interact with whatever it is [we're reading], if they're not connecting with it somehow, then there is no point in it for them" Ms. Price saw the policy reinforcing her views. She said the policy made it even clearer to her that "you have to hook" students by "integrating reading with their lives somehow" (interview, February 11, 1991). It also helped her learn how to make writing an engaging activity for her students. She said that before the policy she never "gave it [writing] the attention and the quiet" (interview, December 17, 1991) which she now sees as important if

students are to write in meaningful ways. Because of the policy, Ms. Price has changed her writing instruction to allow for more student choice and control. These were always elements of her reading practice, but the policy helped her incorporate them into writing as well.

But for Ms. Price reading and writing also have technical aspects which need to be taught. Ms. Price thinks students need to learn some "tools" such as vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling to "feel good about themselves, what they read and write." And so she teaches skills in separate lessons, not through the literature they are reading, because this is the most efficient way for all students to acquire what they need. Unlike Mr. Fielder, teaching tools of reading and writing makes up a small portion of Ms. Price's day and even though Ms. Price does not teach skills <u>through literature</u>, she often uses other, shorter pieces of text in her instruction. Like Mr. Fielder though, Ms. Price does not see the policy addressing this part of her reading and writing instruction. She said she thought some "whole language gurus" would not like the way she teaches skills and that she wasn't sure the policy would either, but she was not sure how else to teach them.

Ms. Price fit the policy into her practice by seeing it as legitimating most of her existing views of reading and helping her expand those views into writing. She saw the policy promoting integrated, literature-based reading practices that help students see reading as meaningful and help them connect what they read to their real lives. Unlike Mr. Fielder, she did not see the policy as being only about reading comprehension. She thought its message of making reading meaningful to students applied to all instruction during the day. Yet,

she was unclear what this meant for her skill instruction. She wasn't sure how to teach effectively the technical aspects of reading that she sees as important in ways which the policy might approve. She saw the policy as offering her little help in figuring out new ways and so continued with her existing skill instruction.

Lucy Salvucci

Like Ms. Price, Ms. Salvucci's reading instruction is integrated throughout the day. It is the intellectual activity of students making meaning of text they read and write. In many ways Ms. Price's and Ms. Salvucci's practices look similar. In both, students read and write throughout the day, using a variety of different kinds of text. Ms. Salvucci differs from Ms. Price in that she sees even the technical aspects of reading--skills--as being taught through the text students read or write. Ms. Salvucci said she always teaches skills going "from the whole to the part," meaning that she teaches skills when students have problems in their reading and writing (these are the "wholes") so that the skills (these are the "parts") help them solve their problems. Ms. Salvucci calls her instruction "whole-language" and probably the whole-language gurus who Ms. Price saw as being displeased with her practice, would like Ms. Salvucci's, or at least like the routines and procedures Ms. Salvucci uses. Much of Ms. Salvucci's practice seems to follow the forms of the "innovative" practices without necessarily embodying the spirit behind them.

Ms. Salvucci made little use of the policy. She was not concerned with it and so paid little attention to it. When she did read a copy of the new reading definition, she saw it as completely reinforcing her own

view of reading. She said, "It's what I try to do in my classroom. Getting the children involved, getting them connected to the book" (interview, March 4, 1991). So the policy did not directly change Ms. Salvucci's thinking about reading practices at all: first because she was unaware of it; and secondly, because, when aware, she thought it was asking her to do what she already did.

Ms. Salvucci then fit policy into her practice, much as Ms. Price did by seeing it as legitimating her existing practices. Unlike Ms. Price though, Ms. Salvucci saw the policy as offering her nothing new. She perceived the policy to be advocating a whole language approach to reading that was identical to her own.

One question that these diverse responses to the policy playing out practice raise is whether they all fit with visions of practice the policy might support? But a difficulty in answering that question is that there is very little guidance in the policy itself as to what one might look for in classrooms to see evidence of the policy in action. As was mentioned various times in the cases, neither the policymakers nor the policy documents present clear images of what teachers who are "doing" the policy might be doing. One document that does give some indicators of model classroom practices suggests that in such classrooms teachers would use "questions and student responses to guide the structure of cognitive processing in constructing meaning" and would promote "a literate environment by modeling the behaviors of a literate person." (MRA, 1987). These statements are hardly helpful. What are the behaviors of a literate person and are they same for all? What things would a teacher do to guide the structure of cognitive

processing? What does it mean anyway? Asking the policymakers themselves what they hoped to see in classrooms resulted in no clearer images. Elaine Weber said she hoped that teachers would orient their practices toward meeting children's reading needs. Karen Wixson said she would be satisfied if she saw teachers using longer passages of text in reading instruction. Charles Peters commented that in some way reading should be taught throughout the day. Like many people seeking to change practices, the policymakers were much clearer about what they no longer wanted to see--skill-based instruction--than what they did want to see.

The absence of any vivid models of how the reading policy should play out in practice left teachers on their own to construct their ideas of what the policy might look like. And that is what Mr. Fielder, Ms. Price and Ms. Salvucci did.

That practitioners would construct different interpretations of the policy and that policy would play out differently in classrooms is not startling news. Researchers suggest that local variation in policy implementation is, in fact, a sign of good policy in that it is adaptable to meet diverse needs (Johnson & O'Connor, 1979; McLaughlin, 1990). Additionally, researchers give a variety of reasons <u>why</u> practitioners might interpret and implement policies differently. These include such reason as, their beliefs about schooling, learning and teaching (Sarason, 1982; Weiss & Cohen, 1991); their attention to policies (Sproull, 1981); and conditions in which they work (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Schwille, et al., 1983). But these cases point to another factor that has not been frequently explored in the policy

literature and that is the learning teachers do connected to policies. As one of the policymakers said, this policy required teachers to learn about reading and reading practice (C. Peters, interview, August 13, 1991). And Mr. Fielder, Ms. Price, and Ms. Salvucci did learn. But the nature of their learning experiences, what they brought to those experiences, and how they perceived the experiences varied.

Teachers' Learning Experiences

These three teachers learned how to teach reading from roughly the same set of ideas.[1] Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price from ideas directly associated with the policy, and Ms. Salvucci from ideas she viewed as closely connected to it. But they all teach differently. What can we learn from what they were taught that might account for their differences?

What They Were Taught

The major source of information about the reading policy for both Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder was the district workshop, Reading Update. This was organized and taught by the district reading coordinators both of whom were involved in designing the state conferences to introduce the policy. The format and information of Reading Update was largely taken from the state materials. The inservice was a series of sessions each devoted to teaching a new reading strategy that would help teachers "do" the policy. These strategies were taken from cognitive psychology as processes that good readers did intuitively, but as ones that could be taught to all students to make them better readers. They included such things as teaching students how to predict story events or how to summarize what they read. At the workshop, teachers were taught the

strategies through traditional pedagogy. Presenters told teachers the policy's new ideas about reading and then modelled the strategies that teachers could use to enact these ideas in their classrooms. A few of the sessions, specifically those that dealt with writing and using literature as reading text, veered from this traditional form. At least in the writing sessions, teachers were taught new ideas about writing by writing themselves. But except for these sessions, teachers were taught about the policy through the classroom strategies that were connected to the policy.

One of the coordinators of the inservice program, Terry Junger, said she hoped teachers would take away from Reading Update one activity that they would try out in their classrooms, and by doing this she hoped they would start the process of rethinking their reading practices. She commented:

> I have a number of friends who went to our Reading Update who have said to me, "We are going to have fun this year. . . . And they understand what fun means and they understand how to implement some of the stuff. . . . I think people will latch on to one of the strategies and try it and that is fine. Hopefully, someone will show them how to fit that into the big picture. We told people at Reading Update to try one thing, one thing and give yourself five years to feel comfortable with it (T. Junger, interview, September 7, 1990).

What was taught then, from the coordinator's perspective, were ideas and activities. At one level, this story fits with the stories Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price told about their learning at the workshop. Ms. Price commented that she got so much new information that she could not process it all and instead, put many of the materials away, both physically and intellectually. Mr. Fielder said he that he picked up many new ideas of things to try out in his classroom, some of which

appealed to him and others which did not. They both talked about Reading Update as giving them things-new stuff to do and think about connected to reading.

But at another level, Ms. Price's and Mr. Fielder's talk about their experiences in Reading Update reveals differences between what the coordinators say they taught and what they as learners say they learned. Their talk reveals differences as well between the two of them. So even though learning is often seen as a reflex of teaching (Cohen, 1989), Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price are good examples of two learners who were taught the same things yet learned quite differently.

What They Said They Learned

Learning as Learner or Teacher

Ms. Price said the most meaningful learning she did at Reading Update was learning how to write. Although Ms. Price had been teaching writing in a "new" way--using the writing process--for a few years, she never felt as comfortable teaching writing as she did reading. She said she never "trusted her instincts" when she taught writing (interview, December 17, 1991) and was always worried about keeping writing assignments moving along. Before her experience at Reading Update she said that she "never trusted this whole process of giving time for it [writing]. . . . [She] was worried that kids would be bored" (interview, December 17, 1991). In the inservice writing session, Ms. Price learned about writing by actually writing. She was asked to write about a broken window in any way she wanted and then to share what she wrote with her group. She found that experience very moving--she had never thought of herself being able to write before nor had she ever received

peer feedback on her writing. The experience led her to write more in her own life. Writing became for Ms. Price an important way to experience the world and she wanted her students to understand this as well. Because Ms. Price was asked to be a learner in the writing session--was asked to write herself--and because of what that experience generated in her own life, Ms. Price learned what might be necessary in her classroom if she were to give her students the same kind of experiences with writing she had. She learned such things as how where she wrote, what she wrote about, and how much time she had to write contributed to the quality of her writing. In her inservice experience Ms. Price learned about writing not by watching a teacher demonstrate how to teach "according to the policy" but by experiencing the policy as a learner. She translated her experience into her teaching practices so that she could help her children learn how to write better.

In contrast, Ms. Salvucci did not learn about writing from any inservice connected with the policy. In fact, she never mentioned writing as a part of the state policy. She said she learned how to teach writing in her preservice education courses in which she was taught how to set up a writer's workshop in her class. She learned about writing in stages, about peer feedback, and about evaluating students' writing in diverse ways. But she was taught these things from the teacher's perspective--i.e., the practices a teacher engages in when teaching a writing workshop. Ms. Salvucci was not given opportunities to experience what it meant to be the kind of writer she was teaching her students to be. When I asked Ms. Salvucci if she ever wrote she said that the only writing she does, outside of letters, is writing her

church bulletin. This is largely a matter of compiling notes that various people give her and writing them up in time to meet a deadline. In other words, it is largely a technical activity in which things such as pre-reading activities, choice over topics, time, and environment for writing would make little difference. Ms. Salvucci does not think of herself as a writer and does not write, as Ms. Price does, on any routine basis.

So Ms. Salvucci's and Ms. Price's learning experiences with writing are very different. Ms. Price learned how to be a writer and, because of that, developed some understanding of what it is her students might experience when they write in her classroom. And Ms. Salvucci learned how to teach writing.

Mr. Fielder learned new ideas <u>as a teacher</u> as well. He said, "I went to Reading Update . . . looking for things that I could use to help me implement the new strategies. . . . Like today, when I was reading from <u>The Boxcar Children</u> . . . that was a think-aloud strategy. And let's see, Read React. I've done that this year" (interview, February 20, 1991). Mr. Fielder said he learned the most in sessions that told him classroom strategies that he could use to teach in the new way and then modelled them for him. The most meaningful learning Mr. Fielder did was in a session on how to change the way he questioned students about their reading so as to access their prior knowledge and therein improve their comprehension. The workshop was important to him because it gave him new activities that he could use with his basal reader to help him teach the way he now thought was valuable.

Given that some researchers suggests it is difficult for teachers to teach in ways they themselves have never learned (Cohen, 1989; Brown, 1991), the difference in learning experiences surrounding the policy that Ms. Salvucci and Mr. Fielder had compared to Ms. Price seems important. Mr. Fielder did not learn new reading strategies as a reader and Ms. Salvucci did learn how to write as a writer. Both learned different ways to teach students how to read and write without learning how their teaching might be experienced by their students. What does it mean to a learner to have "prior knowledge accessed" before reading a story? How does conferencing about written text affect what one writes? Ms. Salvucci and Mr. Fielder could not answer these questions from the learner's perspective.

Ms. Price too was taught how to teach reading strategies, but said she did not learn them. Unlike Mr. Fielder and Ms. Salvucci, she found learning about new ways to teach from a teacher's perspective "bewildering." Instead, she learned new ways to teach writing by experiencing those new ways as a learner. This was unusual. Most learning opportunities connected to the policy did not play out so as to encourage teachers to become students of the new instruction it envisioned. And even those that did encourage teachers to become students, such as this writing inservice, were not construed by all teachers as opportunities to learn in new ways. Mr. Fielder had the same opportunity to learn as Ms. Price--he attended the same inservice--but he perceived it quite differently. The opportunity to experience "new ideas" as a learner then is in part given to teachers by making available to them learning experiences that encourage them to become

learners. But it is also in part taken by teachers who construe these opportunities to learn in new ways as valuable and important.

Learning New Language

Ms. Price also talked about acquiring new language from Reading Update which gave her a way to talk about what she already believed. "Reading as an interactive process" helped her articulate her belief that reading was made meaningful for students by connecting what they read with experiences in their lives. "Activating students' prior knowledge" helped her communicate her beliefs that instruction needed to start with students' existing understandings. Ms. Price said that she had always believed in these ideas, but the policy gave her "words [for] what I was doing . . . now I can put words to it" (interview, February 11, 1991). She found these words helpful in communicating her thoughts to other teachers--something that in the past had been difficult for her. Although this language at first just seemed to give her labels for her existing thinking and beliefs, later she said that the language she learned at Reading Update helped her to connect the policy's ideas with other new ideas she was encountering because all used the same words. She said "everything I'm learning is about prior knowledge" so that when she heard that phrase in her reading inservice, her science curriculum work, and in books about children's learning she put all of these experiences together. In doing so, she understood them better. She commented, "I didn't own the phrase before, but now I do" (personal communication, August, 1992).

Ms. Price's talk about the language of the policy seems important because it is through the similarities in language in various

initiatives that she was able to connect ideas. And it is by connecting ideas from various sources that Ms. Price made sense of them. This sense that language not only identifies thoughts, but shapes them is not a new idea. Mead (1934) wrote: "Language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or the appearance of the situation or object" (p.78). Bruner (1990) summarizes Vygotsky's view of language not just as "narrative or label but as a system of cutting up the world into categories and relations" (p. 158). For Ms. Price, the language shaped a category of learning in which she could then fit many of the new ideas she was encountering. So the language seems to have played a greater role in her thinking about the reading policy than her talk about it might indicate. Ms. Price's learning from the language is also interesting in comparison to Ms. Salvucci's talk about the policy's language. Whereas the language was new for Ms. Price, it was familiar to Ms. Salvucci. She said that she had learned all about "prior knowledge" and "reading as interactive" and "integrated instruction" in her preservice education courses. Ms. Salvucci's comments suggest that the familiarity of the policy's language contributed to her sense that there was nothing new to learn from it.

If indeed some other language had been used to communicate the same ideas, it is possible that Ms. Salvucci would have interpreted the policy as offering an opportunity to learn something new. If so, this is something of a conundrum for policymakers for, on the one hand, the commonness of language (i.e., the fact that it was not unique to the policy but used in the broader community) helped Ms. Price learn and

connect ideas so that she made greater sense of them. But, on the other hand, it may have masked for Ms. Salvucci differences that actually existed between her thinking and the policymakers'. If language is seen not just as attaching labels to ideas but as shaping the ideas then the language used to communicate ideas in a policy will influence how teachers learn from policy and what sense they make of it. But because teachers attach different meanings to the same words, exactly how language shapes their thinking will vary with the individual teacher.

Mr. Fielder mentioned the same language as Ms. Price and Ms. Salvucci in connection to the policy--reading as an interactive process, student's prior knowledge--yet his use of these words seems quite different from the others'. Whereas Ms. Price connected these words in some big picture about learning, Mr. Fielder restricted them to a picture of reading instruction. How it is, for instance, that he can help children understand text better if they access their prior knowledge. To Mr. Fielder, interaction, prior knowledge are tools to do better this thing called reading comprehension. Mr. Fielder related a story about the policy's language:

> I think we talked last time that the one thing that stuck with me from the state's thing [policy] is that reading is interactive. So I try to make it interactive, not passive. My brother and I were driving to Detroit to take my mom shopping. He is not an educator and he was talking about how you have to get people interested in what they are reading and blah, blah, blah. We're going 65 miles per hour down the highway and I just said 'It's called accessing prior knowledge and we're now doing it so leave me alone' (interview, February 20, 1991).

So the language that Mr. Fielder associated with the policy may also have shaped his thinking and allowed him to cut up the world in new categories, but the world he cuts up is quite different from Ms.

Price's. The domain that Mr. Fielder sees the policy dealing with is reading instruction, even more narrowly reading comprehension, not learning and teaching at large.

Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price talk differently about what they learned at Reading Update. Ms. Price learned about writing and Mr. Fielder learned about using basal readers in new ways. Through the policy's language, Ms. Price connected her learning from Reading Update with other ideas about how children learn and in the process honed her ideas about learning and teaching generally, not just learning how to read. Mr. Fielder saw the policy as about teaching reading and therefore learned about reading instruction. When we think about children learning in schools, it seems obvious that as learners they take away different messages from what they are taught. One explanation for this is that they bring different resources to their learning (Heath, 1982; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983) The reading policy itself is based on a view of learning in which who the learner is--his or her experiences, beliefs, ideas---affects the meaning he or she constructs. Although learners may be taught the same ideas and information, who they are will affect what sense they make of it--i.e., what they learn. One possible way then to understand differences in Mr. Fielder's, Ms. Price's, and Ms. Salvucci's learning is to look at who they are and what understandings and experiences with reading they bring to their learning of the policy.

What They Brought to their Learning Experiences

Mr. Fielder thinks of himself as a person who has not ventured far from things that are familiar to him, both professionally and

personally. He went to a nearby college, has only taught in one school, and lives with his parents in his family home. Mr. Fielder talked poignantly about his choice to be the care-taker of his parents and how that, on the one hand, gives him the stability and consistency in life that he seeks but, on the other, limits what he sees himself able to do. Mr. Fielder told me a revealing story when a group in his class read a story about playing dominoes. Mr. Fielder told the group a great deal about the game that was not in the story and played a number of games with them. I commented later that he seemed to be quite expert on dominoes and he said that every summer evening for most of his life he has played the game with his father on the porch, even though he said he hates dominoes. As a kid he tried to hid them from his father so they would do something else, but he added "what can you do" (interview, March 26, 1992). For Mr. Fielder, past experiences and relationships have great meaning. Although he may feel ambivalent toward them, the sense of coherence and stability that they provide seems valuable to him.

He chooses to teach in many of the same ways that he remembers his teachers teaching. Mr. Fielder talked a great deal of needing to be comfortable in the way he teaches, needing things to feel familiar, and needing any new ideas about teaching to fit with his existing practices and beliefs. He said about Reading Update, for instance, that he was looking for new ideas that fit "within the framework that I'm comfortable working in" (interview, February 20, 1991). This does not seem to mean that he avoids new ideas. Mr. Fielder attends numerous staff development programs on a wide variety of topics, but he carefully

considers any new idea he encounters. Because of this, when he first heard about the reading policy it made him anxious. He thought the state was telling him that there was a better way to teach reading and something in the messages he heard surrounding the policy led him to think they might be right. (This seems the case because, as he said, the way reading was described in Reading Update--as an interactive process where the reader constructs meaning of text based on his prior experiences and understanding-- resonated with how he thinks about his own reading, even though he never applied it to how children learn to read).

His anxiety pushed him to attend the district's reading inservice and some of what he heard there made sense. He learned that he should question students differently so that he could access their prior knowledge to help them comprehend new text more effectively. This change in practice seemed dramatic to Mr. Fielder, but it also seemed one that he could adopt without having to upset his whole way of thinking about reading instruction. He did not view what he learned connected to the policy as asking him to give up separate phonics instruction, for instance, or ability grouping in reading. In other words, although the change in questioning was a big change, it did not challenge Mr. Fielder's fundamental beliefs about how to teach reading. He made sense of what he learned and used it in his classroom by fitting it with existing practices, not overthrowing them.

As a learner what Mr. Fielder seems to have brought to his learning experiences with the policy is a desire to know more about it and an openness to think about new practices but a counterbalancing

desire to have the new ideas fit with existing practices. And his existing practices are quite traditional, according to Mr. Fielder as well as to me as an observer. To fit these threes things together--need for familiarity, traditional practice, and the policy--it makes sense that Mr. Fielder would see the policy as an opportunity to learn about changes in reading instruction rather than a wholesale change in thinking about learning or teaching. His personal disposition not to engage in large changes, nor any changes very easily, would seem to disallow a larger, more radical reading of the policy.

Ms. Salvucci's not seeing opportunities to learn in the policy may equally be tied to who she is as a learner. Like Mr. Fielder, Ms. Salvucci may have brought things to her learning that worked against her seeing the policy as anything but congruent with what she currently did. As was described in her case, Ms. Salvucci already has many "new ideas" in her practice which make her practice ambitious. She does not use a basal reader but finds tradebooks for students to read that she thinks will interest them more. She teaches skills through their reading when students need the skill to figure out a problem in their reading or writing. She allows students to develop at their own pace, rather than pushing them all to master concepts in a predetermined time period. All of these practices require Ms. Salvucci to deal with greater uncertainty over what and how her students are learning than if she followed more traditional practices.

For Ms. Salvucci to see the policy as another learning opportunity would open her up to the possibility of more uncertainty and challenges. And Ms. Salvucci may not want that. Her life is already complex with a

young daughter, a difficult pregnancy, a master's degree program. Because her practices seem to work for her and because she receives little pressure to change from her district, there is little reason for Ms. Salvucci to think of herself as needing to learn more. Interpreting the policy as nothing new allows Ms. Salvucci not to have to learn from it.

This contrasts with Ms. Price who both professionally and personally has engaged in great changes. Ms. Price left home at 18 to become a nun and later left her religious order and got married. She speaks of making these changes in her life because she learned new things and wanted new experiences. For example, Ms. Price talked about her decision to teach in public schools instead of continuing in private ones as important "for her own growth" to help her experience teaching in a different, less homogenous environment. Unlike Mr. Fielder who appears to need familiarity, Ms. Price seems to seek change because it contributes to new understandings about herself.

Since she began teaching in the 1950s Ms. Price has experimented with what she calls various forms of child-centered teaching. Although always having child-centeredness as a guiding principle, Ms. Price talks of changing her practice continually to incorporate new ideas she encounters and to meet the needs of new children. She saw the reading policy as similar to what she already believed and did, yet she still viewed it as an opportunity to learn more. And she did learn. She learned about herself as a writer which led her to think about different ways to teach writing. Initially she found much of what else she learned in the reading inservice useless because it only offered her

activities. But as she continued thinking about what she learned and connecting it to various other experiences she was having, she found the experiences she had at Reading Update more meaningful. What the reading policy ultimately gave to her was a new way to think about her beliefs and a deeper understanding of how her beliefs, as well as other ideas she was encountering, fit into a broad picture of learning and teaching.

As a learner then, Ms. Price loves to engage big ideas. What she learns becomes meaningful to her when she can see how it relates to other things she is thinking about and when she can paint a coherent picture of all the new information and ideas she encounters. So her disposition is one that seeks new ideas and engages in change. Her seeing the policy as an opportunity to examine her own thinking and to connect it to other ideas fits into his picture.

Writing about personal dispositions and characteristics of Mr. Fielder, Ms. Price, and Ms. Salvucci is tricky. What I know about their lives is limited and my ability to make sense of what they tell me is even more limited. That is not the intent here. But thinking about who these teachers are as people seems inescapable because what they bring to their learning plays a part in if and how they perceive the policy as an opportunity to learn. Regardless of what they were taught surrounding the policy, the way these teachers perceived the opportunity was what shaped their learning. And their differing perceptions of the policy offer possible explanations for why they make sense of the policy in their practices differently, even though in Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price's cases in particular, many of the factors cited by researchers as

influencing teachers' interpretations (e.g., working conditions, exposure to the policy) were the same.

Bruner (1990) when writing about how people's perceptions of the world are related to their desires and beliefs, uses the examples of some people perceiving the Sahara as something to cross on foot or the Atlantic as something to cross in a small boat (Acts of Meaning, p. 40). It is not that these people have stronger feet or that they are more adaptable to living in water that produces these different perceptions, but something in the people that creates a sense of deserts and oceans being opportunities rather than barriers. It is not just what learning opportunities are available to teachers that affects their learning from policy and ultimately their interpretations of policy. Teachers subjectively construct the opportunities to see them as either full of potential or barren. And the sense they make of the learning opportunities relates to the sense they make of the policy and how the policy plays out in their practices.

This becomes something of a chicken and egg story because what seems to influence their subjective construction of the learning opportunities is in part how they interpret the policy while at the same time how they interpret the policy influences the learning they perceive themselves needing to do and the affect of that learning on their practices. For example, in the inservice did Mr. Fielder focus on learning classroom strategies because he thought that was what the policy was about or did he think the policy was about new classroom strategies and therefore focused on learning them in his inservice work? Did Ms. Price learn about writing and, therefore, connect it to the

policy, or did she think the policy was about writing and because she felt uneasy about her writing instruction actively seek out an opportunity to learn about writing? Ms. Salvucci perceived there to be no learning opportunities available to her connected to the policy. She talked about only briefly hearing about the policy in her district meetings and not at all through other sources, yet other teachers in her school and district were very familiar with it and spoke of discussions with principals and district administrators about the state policy (K. Ensor, interview, March 4, 1991). Did Ms. Salvucci interpret the policy to be what she already did and so ignore any mention of it? Or because there was little mention of it, did Ms. Salvucci assume it advocated a view of reading which she already held and therefore was beside the point?

These are obviously rhetorical questions whose aim is not to ferret out truth. Lively (1984) through one of her characters muses about truth:

> He remembered as a small boy, being exhorted to tell the truth; at that point one had been given the impression that this was a perfectly simple matter--you did not say that things had happened which had not, neither did you say that things which had not happened had. What was not explained was the wealth of complexity surrounding this basic maxim (p. 21).

Certainly the complexity in these cases is rich. It is made even richer by the fact that the policy itself is vague--the "truth" of it constructed differently by different policymakers at different times in the policy history. Establishing the "truth" seems neither possible nor the point in this case. The importance is that learning connected to policy, has two facets that need to be understood--one is an external

analysis or understanding of what might have been available to teachers to learn surrounding the policy and how the nature of it might affect what it is that teachers learn about and from the policy. But the other is how teachers perceive these opportunities, and it is the latter that most seems to interplay with teachers' interpretations and sense of change.

Yet this way of thinking about teachers learning from policies is not often mentioned. For example, McDonnell & Elmore (1987) write about learning as capacity-building which in its worst characterization presents learning as a reflex of what is taught and as an uniform event in which all learners learn the same thing. Policymakers or their ambassadors teach information to build teachers' intellectual capacities to enact policies and all teachers learn and use the information in the same way. The learning surrounding policy is to create more uniform practices. This policy did not create more uniform practices nor did Mr. Fielder, Ms. Salvucci and Ms. Price learn the same things from it. The teachers as learners, like all learners, constructed their own meaning of what they were taught. They acted, in fact, as the policy said they would act "reading" the policy in a dynamic interaction among their prior understandings, the policy's messages, and the context in which they taught.

If teachers are learners from policy, then policymakers become teachers. And in this role they face the same tensions that all teachers do who alternate between a desire to transmit certain information and ideas to their students, and the recognition that their students will construct their own meaning of whatever information and ideas are

taught. In our educational culture, both sides of the tension are valued. Learners are expected to acquire some set of fixed ideas and information. Policymakers in this case sought to change reading instruction in a particular direction by giving teachers new information and ideas about reading. But at the same time, learners are encouraged to make of the ideas what they will so that a plurality of ideas and opinions exist. Even the most naive of policymakers in this case knew that teachers would take what they learned connected to the policy and play it out in their classrooms in different ways (E. Weber, interview, August 27, 1990). By casting the policy into the educational waters policymakers introduced another set of ideas which would be construed to mean many different things. And so in an attempt to refocus reading instruction around a certain set of ideas, they may have actually opened up the possibility for greater diversity in what happens in classrooms during reading time.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. In this section, I will write about Ms. Price's and Mr. Fielder's learning from policy more than Ms. Salvucci's experiences for two reasons. First, because Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price talked about their learning from the policy and Ms. Salvucci did not. Secondly, Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price shared a common learning experience at Reading Update for which I have both their accounts of what they learned and the presenters' account of what she taught. This allows me to look more closely at the issue of how learners perceive experiences differently from each other as well as how learners perceive experiences differently from the teachers.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

It is interesting looking at the issue of teacher learning from a policy that is itself about learning. One reading of the policy is that it assumes a constructivist view of learning: readers construct their own meaning of text based on their prior knowledge (what they bring to their reading), the context in which they are reading, and the text itself. This reading of the policy suggests that readers--learners--will learn various things from text because they will construct different meanings of it. This reading of the policy suggests that learners <u>of the policy</u> will construct various meanings of it.

Countering this view of learning though is the view of learning assumed by policymakers in their efforts to teach teachers about the policy. Inservice sessions on the policy were taught with traditional pedagogy--presenters telling teachers new ideas and activities which they expected teachers to "learn" and incorporate intact into their classrooms. The MEAP test was designed to "drive" instruction in that teachers would hear "the message" and change their instruction accordingly (K. Wixson & C. Peters, interview, October 25, 1989). The view of teaching and learning that fell out from what policymakers did surrounding the policy seems classic "knowledge reproduction." Learners

were viewed as empty vessels which policymakers, as teachers, could fill with new, "correct" ideas (Jackson, 1986).

Viewing their policy as text which readers would interpret in various ways and then implement in various ways would have been quite troublesome for policymakers. They thought they finally knew the right way to teach reading and they wanted teachers in the state to learn it. So what do these teachers' stories say about how and what they learned from and about the policy? Did they do what policymakers said they would do as learners, or what policymakers wanted them to do?

They Learned Different Things Depending on Who They Were and What They Knew

At one level this sounds like a fairly simplistic statement in line with the constructivist reading of the policy. Ms. Price, Mr. Fielder, and Ms. Salvucci knew different things about reading and reading instruction and they did different things in their reading practices. Mr. Fielder viewed reading as a series of skills which students needed to learn prior to being able to comprehend text. He thought the best way to teach these skills was in a methodical, organized way with separate lessons for phonics, vocabulary, and sight words. His views led him to reject much of what he heard about new ways of teaching reading, particularly whole language approaches. Ms. Salvucci and Ms. Price, on the other hand, embraced many of the new ideas. They both said they taught reading throughout the day as part of their instruction in different subject areas. They read literature with their students and orchestrated many opportunities during the day for students to read and write. The major difference between Ms. Salvucci

and Ms. Price was their teaching of skills. Ms. Salvucci believed skills should and could be taught when students needed them to make sense of text. She described her skill instruction as going from "the whole to the part", meaning from the text to the individual skill. Ms. Price taught lessons on specific grammar skills and literary devices. She often used text to teach these skills, but did not, like Ms. Salvucci, teach them when students encountered difficulties with text. Rather, she taught them as separate lessons for all students. This difference between the two teachers was not as much ideological--Ms. Price believed that skills probably should be taught through text students read--as practical. Ms. Price was unsure how she could carry off teaching all the skills she felt her students needed to learn if she attempted to do it primarily through their reading and writing.

The differences among the teachers meant that they brought different ideas and practices to their learning from the policy--different "prior knowledge"-- which influenced how and what they learned from it. So that even though Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder were taught the same things about the policy in their district inservice program they learned different things and made different sense of the policy.

But their stories point out that saying learners learn differently depending on their prior knowledge and experiences is actually saying something that is very complex, because figuring out what a learner's prior knowledge is, as well as how it shapes his or her learning, is difficult. Ms. Salvucci and Ms. Price brought similar ideas about reading and reading practices to their learning about the policy, yet they learned very different things from it. This seemed to be so

because in addition to their beliefs about reading and reading practices, they brought different dispositions toward learning. Ms. Price brought an eagerness to see the policy as something else from which to learn and she did learn new ideas from it--about writing, about language, about students' prior knowledge. Ms. Salvucci brought a reluctance to see the policy as something from which she could learn and so did not. She continued to see it as duplication of what she already knew. Here are two teachers who started from similar places in thinking about reading and reading practices when they encountered the policy, yet who ended up learning different things from it.

Mr. Fielder brought a traditional view of reading to his learning from the policy, and anxiety over learning new ideas about reading. Yet, he also brought his sense of the policy resonating with some familiar thoughts about his own reading processes. He knew when he read, for instance, that if he already knew something about a topic it was easier for him to comprehend what he was reading. He also knew that what he knew influenced how he interpreted text. But before learning from the policy, Mr. Fielder never applied this understanding of his own reading to teaching children how to read. What he learned from the policy helped him do so. Even though Mr. Fielder brought traditional ideas about teaching and some fear of learning and change, he also brought a sense that the views of the policy were reasonable and helpful to him in teaching reading better.

Looking at what and how these teachers learned, points out that they brought multi-faceted and variegated baggage to their learning from the policy. "Prior knowledge" is not just what they "know", but who

they are as learners, and what they believe. And across the three teachers, different ideas, beliefs, and dispositions took precedence over others in shaping the learning these teachers did. That is, even though these teachers shared some ideas, beliefs and experiences (Ms. Salvucci's and Ms. Price's ideas about reading; Mr. Fielder's and Ms. Salvucci's reluctance to learn), the ideas did not all play the same role in shaping what and how the teachers learned. Ms. Price's and Ms. Salvucci's similarities in practices did not result in the same learning from the policy. Nor did Mr. Fielder's and Ms. Salvucci's resistance to change.

Much of what these stories point out is in line with cognitive views of learning. Learning is a process in which learners' schemata--their prior knowledge--affect what and how they learn. And when learning occurs, most often, new ideas are assimilated to fit into the learners' existing schemata (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1983; Bruner, 1983) Yet, these stories add flesh to this very bony and linear description of learning. And, it seems, the flesh is what helps us understand how and what these teachers learned from this policy. These stories suggest that "prior knowledge" is actually an array of experiences, ideas, beliefs, and dispositions that form in unique ways when learners learn and therefore change, in unique ways, how and what they learn.

What They Know Changed and So Did Their Learning

Ms. Price's case also points out that this array of experiences, ideas, beliefs, and so forth does not remain the same. It changes and therefore the learning learners do changes. Ms. Price continued to

learn different ideas from the policy as she learned other new ideas and connected them to the policy. For instance, in connecting the ideas about student learning that she learned in the policy with ideas from conceptual change instruction in science and "brain-based" learning she made different sense than she originally did of what the reading policy was all about. Particularly, she said she developed a new understanding of how students' prior knowledge influenced their reading comprehension. Her rethinking of the reading policy, in turn, helped her make different sense of the new ideas she encountered. The reading policy, when she "relearned" it, changed what she learned about conceptual change in science. So her story suggests that prior knowledge is not a one way filter of new learning, it is shaped as well by new ideas that are learned. What Ms. Price "knew" changed as she learned and in turn changed what learning she did.

The teachers' stories suggest that their learning was a messy process in which <u>what</u> they learned varied because of this array of experiences, ideas, and beliefs called "prior knowledge." This fits with the first view of learning in the beginning of the chapter--a reading of the policy as supporting a constructivist view of learning. These teachers seemed to do what policymakers thought they would do as learners--construct their own meaning of the policy.

But these stories suggest an additional way in which prior knowledge may shape learning experiences. These teachers constructed different kinds of learning opportunities for themselves. So not only was what they learned different, but the way in which they learned.

They Constructed Different Learning Experiences Depending on Who They Were and What They Knew

Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder both attended the same inservice session on writing in which they were asked to write in a different way than they had in the past--a way which the policy might support. The inservice presenter modelled a new kind of writing instruction in the session and allowed the participants to become learners of this new kind of instruction. Ms. Price learned a great deal from this experience. It spurred her to write more in her own life and think about teaching writing differently in her classroom. Through this inservice experience and through her own writing, Ms. Price gained insight into what might be helpful to writers and what might hinder them. She used this insight to change how she taught writing to her students.

For Mr. Fielder, this experience meant very little. He never mentioned writing as a part of the policy, nor did he mention any changes in his writing instruction or his own writing because of what he learned. Mr. Fielder said he learned most from inservice sessions in which he could watch presenters model new activities, where he could see how he as a teacher should act in new ways. He did not use whatever he learned from the policy as a way to change his own reading or writing practices. For instance, Mr. Fielder did not talk about questioning himself more before he read a book, even though he now thought this was a useful thing to ask students to do before they read.

Like Mr. Fielder, Ms. Salvucci learned new ideas about reading and writing from a teacher's perspective--what teacher thinking and behavior the new ideas implied. She learned in her teacher education course such things as how she should set up a writer's workshop or how she should

create a literate environment in her classroom. She did not relate what she learned about teaching reading and writing to her own reading and writing. For instance, she did not talk about using process writing to write her church bulletin, even though she thought process writing was important for her students to learn to write. So that although she learned new ideas about how to teach reading and writing, she had no experiences learning with these new ideas.

Ms. Price became a learner in these new ways, and Ms. Salvucci and Mr. Fielder did not. This difference in how they learned seems to have contributed to how these teachers made sense of the policy. Ms. Salvucci and Mr. Fielder talked about the policy (in Ms. Salvucci's case ideas associated with the policy) more in terms of how it changed what they did as teachers--new activities and strategies to use with their students, whereas Ms. Price talked about the policy as a changed approach to learning. The assumption that Ms. Salvucci's and Mr. Fielder's sense making of the policy rested on was that if their teaching changed, so would their students' learning-learning as a reflex of teaching. Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price, though, are good examples of why this may be a questionable assumption. They learned quite different things from what they were taught. But because Mr. Fielder and Ms. Salvucci did not experience the new ways of teaching as learners, it would have been difficult for them to understand how what they did as teachers played out for their learners and thus difficult to understand what might be necessary and important for their learners to learn in new ways.

There are examples of staff development efforts in which teachers have opportunities to become learners of new kinds of instruction (the Bay Area Writer's Project, Marilyn Burn's mathematics workshops, Summer Math are a few). The district inservice program that Ms. Price and Mr. Fielder attended had a few opportunities to do so. But Mr. Fielder's story points out that even when these opportunities are given, some teachers may not construct them as such. As teachers' arrays of experiences, ideas, and beliefs influence what they learn, they may also influence how they construct their opportunities to learn. And this raises additional problems for those interested in helping teachers learn from policies. Even if state policymakers in this case could have figured out ways to help teachers in the state become learners in the new instructional ways of the policy, would all teachers have become learners? What would state policymakers have had to do to help teachers like Mr. Fielder see that understanding the policy from the learners' perspective may help him understand how to teach in new ways?

Additionally, how could state policymakers help teachers learn to transfer the understandings they gained as learners to their teaching practices?. Ms. Price, as a learner and teacher, was able to do this, but could all teachers? Lortie (1975) suggests that going to the other side of the desk (changing from learners to teachers) is a longstanding problem that beginning teachers face in learning to teach, so do experienced teachers learning to teach in new ways face the same problem?[1]

If policymakers wanted teachers to learn about new ways of teaching reading from this policy, then they would have to figure out

some answers to these kinds of questions. This study has been focusing on teachers learning from policy and has only briefly mentioned that if teachers are learners from policy, then policymakers become teachers and as such face many of the same problems all teachers face. The irony of this story is that if the policy is to be believed, then the job of teacher becomes more difficult. If learners' prior knowledge shapes what and how they learn, how can teachers come know the learners' prior knowledge and plan their teaching in light of it? Ms. Price struggles with this problem in her classroom where she has ready access to her students and comes to know them well, but how could policymakers come to know their learners' prior knowledge when they teach them at a distance? How could policymakers as teachers come to understand the learning and change that their students have done?

From Whose Perspective Should We Come to Understand Learning?

This study raises many questions about how we come to understand teachers learning. If their learning is shaped by who they are and what they bring to learning then teachers will learn different things from what they are taught and they will learn in different ways. So how do we think about what teachers have learned? Should their learning be measured as change or an outcome?

If we are to understand learning from the learner's perspective then we need to understand where the learner started--this array of experiences, ideas, knowledge and beliefs--and where they ended up after they learned. Learning from the learner's perspective is the distance they have travelled between what they knew, were, and believed and what they now know, are, and believe. From this perspective, Mr. Fielder has

learned a great deal. As a result of what he learned from the policy, he has changed how he questions students and what texts he uses to teach reading Ms. Price has also travelled some distance because of the policy. She has changed her writing practices and her thinking about reading. But Ms. Salvucci speaks of no changes directly related to the policy.

If, though, we are to understand "learning" from the policymakers' perspective, we need to see learning as an outcome--something that is manifested in reading practices that resemble images of practice envisioned in their policy. Policymakers, like many teachers, measure learning by gauging how close learners seem to be to what they, as teachers, thought they taught. From this perspective, Ms. Salvucci has learned a great deal because her practices look similar to at least some readings of the policy. Mr. Fielder has learned little because his practices are still traditional, far away from most images of practices associated with the policy. That policymakers might understand learning from this perspective makes sense in that they believe they know the right way to teach reading and they want teachers to "know" it as well. Like many teachers, policymakers may want learning to be a reflex of their teaching--they want their learners to learn what as teachers they already know.

Mr. Fielder, Ms. Price, and Ms. Salvucci's stories can either be viewed as successes or failures for the reading policy depending on which perspective one chooses. Ms. Salvucci is a success to those looking for certain kinds of practices in classrooms, but a failure if looking for continued change and learning. Mr. Fielder is a successful

learner, but policymakers may still question his practices. The purpose of outlining the two perspectives is not to decide which is right. Rather it is to raise the possibility that we may be able to get smarter about teacher learning from policies by looking at both perspectives.

What Can We Do With Understanding Learning from These Two Perspectives?

The learners' perspective is critical to our understanding of how it is that the policy has played out for these teachers and why. It helps us understand which parts of their arrays of experiences, beliefs, ideas, and knowledge interact with the learning opportunities so as to help them learn and change. It helps us understand what makes the learning difficult and what other kind of learning opportunities may need to be offered to make it less difficult. It helps us see where the policy may be weak, or just wrong--where is it that teachers resist possible messages of the policy for good reasons. This perspective helps us see the genuine efforts to learn and change that teachers have made because of this policy. It also gives us an opportunity to learn from those genuine efforts so that we can understand how to affect continued change and learning.

The policymaker's, or teacher's, perspective on learning is a little more difficult to see value in, not because it is valueless but because its value seems to be changing. In traditional policy studies, the policymaker's perspective was helpful in assessing which teachers were doing better and how much farther everyone had to go. It assumed that there was a clear image of what teachers and students should be doing because of the policy, and therefore some way to measure how much

farther teachers had to go to get it right. But as has been mentioned a number of times in this study, for the reading policy there were few clear signals given to teachers about what enacting the policy would look like. Furthermore, as the policy itself implies, policymakers all constructed different meanings of their efforts and so even if one policymaker put forth an image of exemplary practice, it is unlikely that others involved would agree. What reading should look like because of the policy seems to continue to change and be constructed differently by different policymakers. So what does this perspective have to offer if not a sense of how much farther teachers have to change?

What this perspective offers is a reminder that the ultimate goal of the policy was not to affect teacher learning, but to change how students learn to read in classrooms. Regardless of the lack of clarity and changeable nature of what exactly the policy should look like in practice, it seems important to have a perspective on learning that looks beyond where teachers currently are. The value of this perspective is that it holds out a sense that there is a goal, albeit not a fixed one, to which teachers, as well as policymakers, need to orient their continued change and learning.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. Brown (1991) gives an example of teachers who learned new ways of holding discussions by becoming discussion participants but who had difficulties transferring their own experiences to their teaching practices, even though they found them valuable.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCEDURES

I based this study on interviews with teachers and observations in their classrooms, both focused on teachers' learning from and about policy. I was concerned with how teachers understood the reading policy, how and where they learned about the policy, and how, if at all, their learning played out in their classrooms. Not much is known about how experienced teachers learn, especially how they learn from policy, so the intent of the study was to explore the terrain to find out which issues and concerns about teacher learning might be most salient. Given the nature of these questions a method was required which captured data on both what teachers perceived their learning to be and what went on in their classrooms. This suggested a field methods approach using both interviews with the teachers and extensive classroom observations.

Looking at learning is difficult because learning is a very complex and personal event that occurs within an individual in a particular context and time. Even the learners themselves cannot often articulate exactly what it is they are thinking, what has influenced their thinking, and when they actually can say they have "learned" something. This study attempted to do something that may be even more complex in that I asked teachers to reconstruct learning that occurred in the past--learning which may in some ways have shaped their current

thinking and practices. This means that I had to ask teachers to step outside their current context and time to remember what they might have been thinking and doing at the time they first learned from and about the policy. A few times in the interviews, it was clear that stepping outside was hard for the teachers to do--to separate themselves from what they now know/think/believe to remember what they knew/thought/and believed at the time they first heard about the reading policy and then think forward from that time to their current context.

The interviews I did with these teachers provided me opportunities to listen to their reconstructions of their own learning, as well as listen to many other thoughts about teaching, reading, their students, and schools. Observations helped me put in context much of what they told me. These three teachers' learning was shaped by the contexts in which it played out, their classrooms, their districts, communities, as well as by who they were and what they brought to their learning experiences. Bruner (1990) suggests that what one does "reveals what one thinks, feels, or believes" because "saying and doing represent a functionally inseparable unit." (p. 19). In this study, what teachers did in their classrooms helped me understand the meaning they gave to terms they used--e.g., "whole language", "literature-based instruction", "integrated instruction". In this way, the interviews and observations informed one another and helped me better understand how these teachers thought and acted about the policy and about their reading practices.

My ability to figure out what the issues were--in other words, what I should look for in observing these teachers and what I should ask them--improved as I got to know them better and understood more about

the environments in which they worked. Ethnographers write about the importance of placing oneself in the words of the people one is studying to understand their frames of reference (Blumer, 1976; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Observing these teachers work with their students in their classrooms, talking to others in their schools, hanging out in the teachers' lounges, talking to administrators in their districts, and exploring the communities in which their schools were located helped me develop a better sense of their frames of references and of the experience and opportunities that might be important to them.

In his justification of field methods Cusick (1983) writes:

> A field study after all, is only an individual's attempt to unravel and explain a human event giving particular attention to the collective understandings of those who created the event. If the event is significant, and the account is intelligible and plausible, then the result can be of value to those interested and involved in similar events. (p. 135).

This study is my attempt to unravel three teachers' stories about their learning surrounding the reading policy, their learning to teach reading, and their reading practices, in the hopes that their stories may be of value to those trying to understand the relationship between policy and practice, to develop reading policies, or to design learning opportunities for teachers.

Site Selection

This study is part of a larger research project which has been looking at the relationship between state-level instructional policies and mathematics and reading instruction. In this project, researchers selected school districts to provide contrasting socio-economic and demographic characteristics--SES, type of community (rural, suburban,

urban), reputation of district, size--where district personnel were willing to participate in the study. The rationale for diversity among sites was that policies are likely to be attended to and played out differently in districts with varying economic, geographic, social and political conditions (McLaughlin, 1987; Sproull, 1981).

Teacher Selection

Within the schools selected for the larger project, I selected two teachers from the same site and one from another site. Choosing two teachers who shared the same teaching context and who experienced the same district policies and one teacher who differed allowed me to raise questions about impact of context and district input on these three teachers' stories. For the larger project, researchers chose to look at second and fifth grade teachers so that they could explore differences that might exist between policy implementation in primary and intermediate grade levels. This seemed particularly important for a reading policy because primary grades have traditionally focused in reading instruction on teaching reading skills whereas intermediate grades have been concerned with improving comprehension and fluency.

Within the selected sites and grade levels, I chose three teachers to study. My principal concern was finding teachers who were willing to be interviewed and observed for a two-year period. Teacher learning and change rarely occur quickly (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Richardson, 1990). Thus, it was important to find teachers who were interested in participating for at least two school years.

I deliberately did not seek to select teachers who might be considered exemplary. I wanted to study teachers who, although not

statistically representative, would not seem like outliers in the teaching population in the state. But figuring out the dimensions on which the teachers I studied should be similar to other teachers was difficult because little is known about what really influences teachers' learning. Does type of students, colleagues, years of experience, and so forth, shape how and what teachers learn? Because the dimensions of teacher learning were unclear, instead, I looked for teachers who represented a range on dimensions important in teaching reading. These included such things as whether the teachers were considered "innovative" or "traditional" in their practices; whether they taught primary or intermediate level; what kind of students they had (SES, rural or urban, ability grouped or not, and so forth), and what, if any, their exposure to the policy had been. The three teachers I selected varied on these dimensions in the following ways: (1) Ms. Salvucci and Ms. Price were considered innovative by their principals, Mr. Fielder was considered a more traditional teacher; (2) Mr. Fielder and Ms. Salvucci taught second grade, Ms. Price taught fifth grade; (3) Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price had attended a workshop dedicated to the policy, Ms. Salvucci had not; (4) Mr. Fielder and Ms. Price worked in the same rural school with lower SES students, Ms. Salvucci worked in an affluent suburban school; (5) Ms. Salvucci and Mr. Fielder taught heterogeneously grouped students, Ms. Price taught students labelled "gifted under-achievers."

In addition to varying on the above dimensions, these teachers also varied along other dimensions commonly considered important--age, years of teaching experience, kinds of teaching experiences, kinds of

preservice education, and gender. Not all of these dimensions ended up being important in the study, but some did (such as preservice education and age) and so became useful areas in which to have contrasts. Second, for each dimension, there tended to be two teachers who were similar and one who was not. This meant that I could explore more subtle differences between two teachers who were similar along the dimension as well as differences between the pair more similar and the third teacher.

Having the teachers I selected vary along different dimensions seemed important not only for the opportunities it allowed me to investigate, but also for the appeal of these teachers' stories to a wider audience. Having teachers who have different types of reading practices, learning experiences, life circumstances, kinds of students and so forth may allow more policymakers, educational researchers, and teachers to see these three teachers' stories as familiar--ones which resonate with stories of teachers they know and with whom they work.

As an exploratory study, the sample of teachers I chose was not intended to offer generalizable findings about how Michigan teachers learned from the reading policy and, therefore, the sample is not representative of teachers in the state. However, <u>because</u> it was an exploratory study, the sample of teachers should vary to "facilitate the expansion of the developing theory" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 67) of teacher learning from policy. Choosing three teachers rather than one teacher gave me the variance that seemed necessary. And, although more than three teachers would have introduced even greater variance, a larger number of teachers in the study would not have allowed me to interview and observe them as extensively as I did the three teachers.

The trade-offs in this kind of work are always between breadth and depth and, although choosing two, four, five or six teachers would be in any case arbitrary, the choice of three was consistent with the goals of the study and the limitations of research conducted by me as an individual investigator.

State and District Level Data

As part of the larger research project, researchers collected data from state-level informants, from district personnel, and from school principals about their own work in relationship to the policy, and state and district procedures, policies, and practices in general. We used this information to gain an understanding of the context of the teachers as well as the learning opportunities related to the policy that may have been available to them. Along with one or two other project researchers, I interviewed state policymakers, Karen Wixson, Charlie Peters, and Elaine Weber. Additionally, we interviewed teachers and district educators involved in designing state conferences on the policy and the MEAP tests. District reading coordinators for both school districts represented were interviewed, as were both building principals. Finally, I read interviews of other teachers in both schools to check for additional perceptions of school policies and procedures.

In addition to interviewing state and district people, I attended one state and one district inservice program on literacy instruction to understand better the kinds of experiences that were available to the teachers. I wrote field notes for both inservices.

Data Collection

I collected data from the three teachers for a two year period, during the 1990/91 and 1991/92 school years. For both the classroom observations and teacher interviews, I used a series of structured observation guidelines and interview protocols that I helped design for the larger research project. These instruments were designed to help focus data collection on what was assumed to be critical features of reading practice--use of text, discourse patterns, teaching of reading skills, grouping of students; features of teacher learning-- learning experiences connected to the policy, formal teacher education, informal learning opportunities; and finally, features of knowledge of the policy--familiarity with policy and interpretation of policy. Many of the questions and focal areas in these instruments were drawn from interviews used in the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach study conducted by the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (MSU, 1986-1990) in which many of the researchers had been involved. These instruments were modified over the two year period by project researchers when new areas of interest arose. Furthermore, I modified the interview protocols to allow me to probe more deeply into teachers' experiences with learning about the policy, learning to teach, and with changes in their practices related to what they learned. For instance, during the second year of interviewing, I asked many additional questions about the teachers' own lives; such questions as, where they lived, what their families were like, what they did in their spare time, where they went school, what they were like in elementary school, how they learned to read, and what, if at all, they read now as adults.

These questions were important for me to gain a fuller picture of their lives as learners and how the context of their lives outside of school might influence their lives as teachers.

For each day of classroom observation, I took extensive field notes of the events of the day. What I chose to observe in the teachers' classroom and what I chose to write about in my field notes were shaped by the analytic questions in the observation guide, as well as, what appeared most salient to the teacher and students during the day I observed. Below is a sample of questions from the observation guide on discourse patterns in the literacy instruction:

> Reflect on the discourse patterns that you observed during the day. How did students participate? What kinds of things did students say, how much did they participate, what were they encouraged to do and not to do? Who talked? To whom? How were student ideas treated? What counted as legitimate talk? Was there press for convergence? Was there conversation in which no one right answer was guiding the discussion?

These analytic questions served as reminders of classroom occurrences for me to look for and note and therefore helped me approach the different classroom observations I did over a two year period with some consistency.

After taking field notes in the classrooms, I "wrote up" each of my observations using the observation guide as a structure for my notes. These notes included narrative descriptions of the day's observation which ranged from 8-15 single-spaced pages in length. They also included answers to the analytic questions about reading practices in the guide. Again, these questions were on discourse during the lesson, special terminology used, student responses, student engagement, teacher assessment of students, and classroom atmosphere. I also taped and

transcribed parts of the day so that I could verify the exact discourse of the class in my notes. These second-level notes on my daily observations of teachers were most valuable in writing cases of the teachers. It was the first stage of analysis of the field notes I wrote in the classrooms and helped me reflect at the time on what I observed. The reflection helped me raise questions to explore in future observations and interviews with the teachers. Using the structured observation guide helped me to write similar notes across the different observations for all three teachers.

For the interviews, I used three different interview protocols. The pre-observation and post-observation protocols, each of which focused on the observation, and a long interview on the teachers' ideas, practices, and learning. The pre-observation interview focused on the teachers' planning and their expectation of what might occur during the day. The post-observation interview was extensive, focusing on what and how the teachers were trying to teach, what they thought had been accomplished, what they thought students might have learned, and how, if at all, they planned on following-up the lesson. Additionally, I asked teachers where in their curriculum this lesson fit and whether the day was typical of their teaching.

The long interview, centered on the following three areas:

1. Teacher understanding of the reading policy. The interview format included questions on teachers' awareness of the state efforts, their thinking about the new reading definition, their experiences with the policy (inservice work, conversation with

peers, etc.), and the effects, if any, of the policy on their practices.

2. Teachers' reading practices. This section of the interview included questions on their reading practices in general--the purposes of reading instruction, what they see as important to teach, the pedagogy they see as appropriate, how they see reading relating to other subjects they teach. Additionally, it included questions about changes in their reading practices, both individual changes, but also changes at the school or district level such as new textbooks, new assessment measures, staff development programs, and so forth.

3. Teacher learning. The interview protocol included questions on where and how they learned to teach reading, both preservice and staff development. It also included questions about the teachers' informal learning experiences which may have contributed to their understanding of reading, as well as their personal reading habits.

The post-observation interviews lasted from thirty to sixty minutes. The long interview lasted from 90 minutes to two hours. I taped both of these interviews and transcribed the tapes. I did pre-observation interviews by telephone the night before or in person before the school day began and took notes of these interviews.

In addition to the formal interviews, I would converse with teachers during non-teaching times of the day--on the playground during recess duty, walking students to and from lunch or special area classes, at assemblies, or during class time when they were not teaching. I

noted these conversations in my field notes and incorporated them into my notes of the day.

The nature of this kind of research is that it involves judgments on what data to collect and how to interpret it. As the researcher, my thinking about reading instruction, about teaching, and about the policy obviously influenced what I saw and heard and how I made sense of it. So to check in some way my judgments about the data, throughout the two year period of data collection, I asked other researchers to read my field notes and interviews. Other researchers' perspectives on my field notes and interviews helped to develop my thinking about these teachers' classroom practices and their talk about their own learning. And because other researchers read the data while I was still observing and interviewing these teachers, their comments helped me think about new features to look for in the teachers' reading practices and new questions to ask about their learning. Although obviously sharing my data with other researchers did not eliminate my biases entirely, it helped me see how others made sense of my data and I gained the benefit of others' perspectives on what I was collecting.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis in this study were interactive over the two-year period. As mentioned earlier, the first step in analyzing the data was done during the time I observed the teachers as I wrote up notes of the observations. Writing up notes, reading transcribed interviews, and receiving other researchers' comments on my data prior to returning to observe and interview the teachers, again,

helped refine what I looked for in practice next, so that the instruments did not remain static throughout the two years.

Analysis of Interview Data

The interview data included my notes of the pre-observation interviews and informal conversations, and transcriptions of taped post-observation and long teacher interviews. Because I talked to these teachers numerous times over the two year period, the data comprised a large data set. I organized the data both by person and by themes so that I could construct both individual cases of teachers and comparisons among the teachers.

As I read notes and the transcriptions of individual teacher interviews, I tagged the data around categories that were pertinent to my questions: what do the teachers say about their views of the policy; what are the teachers' reports about their learning; what changes in their reading practices do the teachers report? I then reconstructed the individual interview data into these categories and formulated possible answers to these questions. These answers helped me refine questions to ask the teachers in future interviews which in turn helped me develop new categories around which to reconstruct my data. Thus I developed categories of analysis in an iterative process. For instance, for the first few teacher interviews, I created a category "view of reading and reading instruction." After looking over comments from a few teacher interviews that pertained to this category, it became clear that the teachers said quite different things about what they thought reading was and what they thought reading instruction was. This became an interesting area to ask the teachers more questions about and it

became imperative that I set up two categories--view of reading and view of reading instruction--rather than one. After setting up new categories, I went back to previous interviews and pulled out additional comments which pertained to them.

I engaged in a similar process for all the teacher interviews and informal conversations and then combined the reconstructed interviews for each teacher. These combined reconstructed interviews served as the main body of interview data for the individual teacher case studies. The reconstructed interviews also made it easier for me to compare across teachers because the data for all three teachers was grouped in the same categories.

Analysis of Observation Data

The observation data primarily informed the interview data in that it provided a context in which to see the enactment of the teachers' statements. For instance, Ms. Salvucci described her reading practice as whole language. She said that she integrates subject area instruction around themes and always teaches skills going from the "whole to the part." Although these terms are commonplace in teaching circles, they mean very different things to different teachers. So my observation data collected in Ms. Salvucci's classroom helped me construct an image of what she meant by whole language, moving from the whole to the part, and integrated subject area instruction. Putting together her actions with her statements while I was still collecting data, again allowed me to check my current hypotheses of what I was seeing and hearing and so refine my thinking about the teachers.

I separated the observation data into categories similar to the interview data. From the reconstructed versions of the interviews and observation data, I constructed the three case studies of these teachers and the chapter focused on comparisons of the teachers.

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