CHAPTER 4

SUPPLE BODIES: CULTIVATING A DESIRE TO LEARN

> You're taking the kids on a journey and who knows where you're going to go.
>
> Kindergarten teacher, Westville PS
>
> There's not that proper development any more and for me personally; I like those structured steps where you actually wean them off and gradually push them on.
>
> Kindergarten teacher, Northside PS

This is the first of three chapters drawing on a year-long study into classrooms in two schools to investigate the ways in which teaching engenders different bodily dispositions to learning. In this chapter, the focus is on how children learn to write in their first year of school and the particular forms of conduct they embody through the pedagogies their teachers employ. Children arrive in kindergarten with differing abilities but, by and large, their existing habitus is quite malleable. Their first year at school is a formative time in terms of its impact upon their bodies and minds, and the degree to which they develop a disposition for literate practice and academic engagement more generally. As supple bodies they are more amenable to change and so pedagogy plays an important role in ensuring students acquire the embodied capital upon which academic success depends. This chapter provides a comparative ethnography of two kindergarten classrooms examining the practice of two teachers who, as is evident from the quotes above, possess quite different educational philosophies and teaching methodologies. Their respective pedagogies appear to generate varying degrees of disciplinary force, an effect compounded by each teacher's distinctive classroom design and teaching/learning regimen. Drawing on the Spinozan notion of affect discussed in Chapter 2, the following analysis examines each teacher's practice and the extent to which its affective impact capacitates students in the process of learning to write. The chapter begins with a discussion of Narelle Stevenson and her kindergarten class at Westville PS, a school in Sydney's economically disadvantaged outer western suburbs.

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS AT WESTVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Narelle was in her fifth year of teaching. She was 38 and had entered the profession later in life having left school early to work in various jobs before gaining entry to university as a mature-age student. In the years since completing her training, she had taught in numerous schools as a casual teacher and had only

just secured a permanent position teaching kindergarten at Westville PS. KS, Narelle's class at Westville, was very large for kindergarten with 28 students[i]. It had a 40 percent language background other than English (LBOTE) population of mainly Samoan and Indian students, with one Turkish and one Vietnamese student. KS also had eight Aboriginal students, the highest number in any class at the school. As is the case in most state primary schools in NSW, KS was not streamed for ability. A range of ability levels was evident, from children arriving at school with limited spoken English to those with some knowledge of letters and sounds and the ability to write their name. In teaching KS, Narelle explained how she placed emphasis on being a positive role model: "You work hard and through your enthusiasm that flows through to the children". In relation to teaching writing she added, "I think being positive is the most important thing 'cos I've had kids that will just scribble nearly the whole year and then all of a sudden they'll just get it. But if you discourage them early I don't think they're going to feel successful". Given the emphasis Narelle assigned to the psychological nature of learning, her focus on positive reinforcement and developmental readiness, she was clearly influenced by a progressivist philosophy of education. As with most teachers, however, Narelle's practice was quite eclectic and in certain areas of her teaching she differed markedly from the stereotypical 'whole language' model of immersion pedagogy. In teaching reading she stressed the need to drill her students in phonics, yet this degree of regimentation and use of habit-forming techniques were not evident in any other area of her practice.

LIMITED BOUNDARIES AND SPACE TO LEARN

When teachers are assigned a classroom at the beginning of a school year, the organisation of this pedagogic space is bound by a range of factors: size, aspect, availability of resources. Within these constraints teachers organise the space to give it a particular character which reflects their educational philosophy and teaching style. Where they position their own and their students' desks, how they organise teaching resources and display students' work, where they locate and the extent to which they use black or white boards, all possess a disciplinary function given their affective impact upon students' bodies. Narelle's classroom was very large, 11 metres by 8.5 metres. If available, kindergarten classes are often located in larger or double classrooms in Australian schools due to the range of activities they engage in, requiring desks, adequate floor space and additional discrete learning and play areas. This was the case with Narelle's classroom (See Figure 1) which was spacious and well resourced with its own toilet/washroom and bagroom. There were distinct areas within the classroom that were designated specific learning spaces: desks arranged in splayed fashion in front of a large blackboard; a sitting space marked out with gaffer tape for teacher-directed floor activities; a play area where toys, games and puzzles were stored; a computer desk for individual computer use; and a reading area with bean bags for free reading and reading group activities.

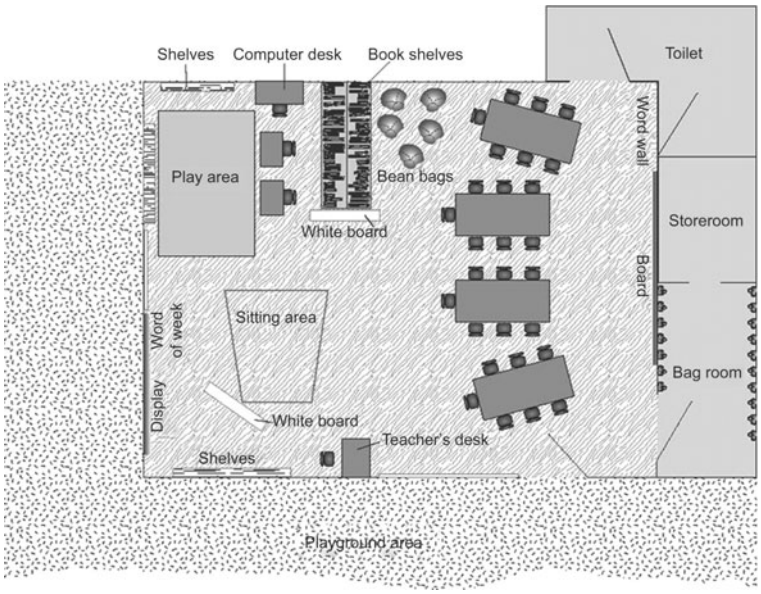

Figure 1

Narelle pointed out, "I need a big classroom. I think ideally every classroom should be that big for kindergarten to Year 6. Kids need space. They also need boundaries". There is a suggestion here that despite wanting to provide students with a comfortable environment with plenty of room, the process of learning within a school context necessitates restrictions upon students' bodies and an unfamiliar structuring of activity. Despite an understanding of the need for boundaries, Narelle tended to arrange her classroom space in terms of accommodating students' existing habitus explaining, "… kids come into school, they've had four or five years of being able to watch a DVD, run around, play with their toys, listen to a CD, get on a computer. All of a sudden they get into kindergarten; they can't just sit there from 9 till 3 listening to one person talk. It's impossible so I think they need a lot of variety". Narelle was attuned to the difficulties many kindergarten children face in coming to terms with classroom routines, yet her solution to the problem of home/school transition rested largely upon replicating the variety found in the home environment within the classroom. To a certain extent restrictions were imposed upon the students' bodies in Narelle's room through the use of a contained sitting area for teacher-directed activities, the use of desks and the compart-mentalisation of the classroom into various discrete learning spaces. Each of these areas imposed a differential disciplining upon the students' bodies resulting in a range of learning postures some more, and some less, conducive towards acquiring a disposition for academic work. To KS, learning was presented as an activity that

occurs in a range of places, not only sitting at a desk or on the floor listening to the teacher. This is of course the case. While learning may not be dependent upon a specific context or spatiality, the utility of a pedagogic space can contribute to certain types of learning, such as that involving academic work and specifically writing. Learning to write, for example, requires a certain bodily control and degree of concentration. It demands a particular posture that ensures the activity is undertaken in an efficient manner. Bodies need to be invested with the discipline to sit still and work at a desk for sustained periods of time to complete the often tedious process of mastering the mechanics of handwriting: a skill habituated through repetition (Foucault, 1977, p. 152). The embodiment of this discipline is akin to Elias's notion of "the civilising process" in that students' bodies are "civilised" for scholarly labour, a process empowering them to learn (Elias, 1978).

In Narelle's classroom the spatial design evoked a homely atmosphere of ease and comfort more conducive to play than work. While it is important for children to feel that school is not an alienating experience, particularly in kindergarten, there is also an expectation that it is a place of learning quite different from home. This situation was complicated by the existence of multiply coded spaces within the room. While Narelle designated certain areas 'work spaces', such as the gaffer-taped sitting area and the desks, these sites were also used for play, and so the boundaries imposed during teacher-directed activities tended to dissolve when teacher supervision was reduced. For students who had already acquired the necessary disposition for academic work, this multiple coding of sites may have posed less of a problem. This is often the case with children who have had some experience of pre-school education where routines similar to school and the practice of sitting at desks to draw, trace and write have already been instilled. To children without this experience, or a home environment where sitting at a desk to complete play activities and concentrate is not evident, a pedagogic space such as Narelle's classroom may simply confirm their existing habitus. These observations about the utility of the spatiality of KS's classroom should not be read as a rationale for a return to the rigid design of a traditional classroom with limited space and rows of desks, but rather to focus more attention on the kind of bodily skills children need for effective learning in the early years of school. In learning to write it is essential that children acquire the necessary bodily discipline to allow them to focus their attention on acquiring this skill. In kindergarten much time is devoted to socialising students into school and classroom routines. As Narelle pointed out: "You start from day one teaching them little things about this is what we do at school. This is what we do when we need to line up, this is what we do when we're going outside and you have to teach that specifically". While such regimentation to acquire the *carnal genres* of schooling is necessary for effective classroom and playground management, less emphasis is given to the ways in which a similar discipline is needed for learning. This is compounded in the early years of school by a romanticised notion of childhood that often pervades early childhood education (James and Prout, 1990; Gittins, 1998; Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2006) in which adult intervention is considered detrimental to a child's own maturation process. Such a perspective, however, has the potential to inhibit the

formation of the appropriate corporeal dispositions for learning and lead to an embodied reluctance to engage in academic work in later years.

The size and design of the pedagogic space within Narelle's classroom also made supervision difficult, with a resultant impact upon bodily discipline. During group work and free time, the most frequent pedagogic modes in Narelle's classroom, students were located in a range of different sites around the room. This made supervision difficult and children were left to rely on their own self-discipline to monitor their behaviour. This does not present a problem if students already possess a disposition for academic work, but in kindergarten this is something many children are yet to acquire. The dispersed arrangement of desks and learning sites reduced the room's panoptic potential. Panoptic power possesses immense pedagogic affect. It need not only be viewed in the negative sense Foucault intended; it can promote self-supervision and greater attention to an assigned task, over time equipping students with the discipline to work independently. The degree to which the utility of a pedagogic space allows for the effective supervision of students, especially in the first year of school, does not necessitate the serial arrangement of desks but rather an awareness that many students require as much assistance with the bodily routines of learning as with those related to school organisation. The arrangement of a pedagogic space with a view to panoptic force as a positive feature may assist students in acquiring these particular carnal genres of learning.

As well as the positioning of her students' desks and various learning sites within the classroom, Narelle's placement of her own desk is significant. Traditionally the teacher's desk was placed at the front of the room in a central position near the blackboard (Walkerdine,1984, p. 156), reflecting the instructional nature of traditional pedagogies in which the teacher's body acted as a vectorial force within the room. Discipline was not self-derived, it was dependent upon a teacher directing and supervising activities until students had embodied the necessary discipline to apply themselves to their work. Narelle's desk was located at the side of the room, where she placed books to be marked and prepared teaching materials. This location seemed to represent a decentring of her position within the classroom. It was a spatial design suggesting disciplinary force did not emanate from the teacher but was already invested in students' bodies. The relocation of the teacher's desk to a far less central position within the room is characteristic of the student-directed nature of progressivist pedagogies (Walkerdine, 1984, p. 157). This arrangement is said to allow for a more active approach to the learning process in contrast to what is viewed as the passivity of 'chalk and talk'. The so-called passivity of students' bodies within more traditional pedagogies is generally considered representative of a passive mind, yet it may actually be indicative of a disciplined body in which corporeal governance allows for a highly engaged and therefore 'active' rather than passive mind (Watkins and Noble, 2010).

CHAPTER 4

A REGIMEN OF TALK AND NO CHALK

While pedagogic spaces possess differing degrees of disciplinary force, it is the utilisation of these spaces which amplifies its affective impact upon students' bodies: the degree of movement allowed, the level of noise permitted, the use of different learning spaces and the overall classroom routine. All of these factors are constitutive of a disciplinary apparatus that has a formative impact upon the nature of a student's pedagogic embodiment. In line with the progressivism that informed Narelle's teaching methodology, the classroom regimen she imposed was relatively relaxed. While she was strict about the need for routine – a structuring of the school day in terms of when and where activities were undertaken and lining up to enter and leave class – within these parameters considerable license was given to students' movement around the room, talking and use of free time. Narelle made full use of her classroom. In addition to the arrangement of different learning spaces around the room, the walls were covered with a plethora of teaching materials, primarily displaying groups of words organised around different themes: family, school, activities, days of the week, songs, nursery rhymes, as well as a 'word of the week' chart. Narelle was a great advocate of 'environmental print', a strategy associated with the immersion philosophy underpinning the whole language approach (Kuby and Aldridge, 1997). Rather than simply displaying words around her classroom, Narelle had devised what she termed a 'word walk' as part of her teaching routine. After a letter and sound drill, which was generally the first activity of the day conducted in the gaffer-taped floor space, the class walked around the room visiting various sites where words were displayed, chanting these lists and responding to Narelle's questions. This was a highly motivating activity as students seemed keen to leave the more restrictive space on the floor and move about the room. Yet, despite Narelle often rearranging children so they had a better view of the words on display or to limit disruption, it seemed the same children sought the prime positions and participated more actively. Many students repeated the words but did not watch as Narelle pointed to them on the charts. As a result the aim of this exercise, to increase students' sight word vocabulary, was not met as effectively as it could have been. The continual movement of this activity was a distraction for many. The students' ability to concentrate, dependent to a considerable extent on their own corporeal governance, was an assumed skill and not understood as a learned capacity that required training for this type of lesson to be effective.

Movement was a feature of Narelle's classroom regimen, as is evident from the various locations where activities were conducted (see Appendix 1.). She frequently moved students to different sites in the room when a new activity was undertaken. Generally, however, with the exception of the morning 'word walk', whole class activities alternated between those conducted on the floor and those at the desks. Group activities could be undertaken in various locations with different groups working on the floor, in the bean bag area, at the desks or even just outside the classroom on the asphalt playground area. Time allocated to activities varied considerably ranging from 5 to 55 minutes with the morning sessions comprising

seven to nine different activities and the mid-morning session, between recess and lunch, involving four or five. On average, activities were 15 to 20 minutes in length with the exception of two longer activities: a reading group session of 40 minutes and a group writing task of 55 minutes. The actual writing component of the latter varied depending on each child's interest and application. Some finished quickly and then commenced drawing, reading or playing educational games.

The issue of the number and duration of activities is returned to in the discussion of curriculum implementation, but these factors are significant here in how they relate to movement within the classroom and their impact upon regimen. Given the number and frequent change of activities, children were not settled in any one spot for very long periods of time. Their bodies were frequently required to adjust to a new environment and to refocus their attention on a new task, often self- rather than teacher-directed given Narelle's preference for group work. Throughout the course of the year there did not appear to be any graduated move towards children spending longer periods of time on activities, particularly those requiring them to sit at a desk and concentrate on a specific task. The emphasis was clearly on movement. As writing time was generally self-directed with children choosing topic and length; the less able students tended to make an attempt to write and then left the desk area to engage in other less taxing activities. This is not to say that Narelle did not provide assistance. She continually moved from student to student and desk to desk offering advice and positive reinforcement, yet those who spent longer periods of time at their desks tended to be the more capable students who were comfortable sitting at a desk and appeared to find writing pleasurable. One of these children was a boy named Reuben who had arrived in kindergarten already able to write his name and several words. His handwriting was very mature for his age with quite small, well-formed letters. He was an Anglo-Australian boy, quite reserved and well behaved, interested in school and well liked. Narelle referred to him as her "top student". Reuben was frequently observed as one of the last students to leave the desk area during writing time. On one occasion later in the year he not only completed his assigned task, but, rather than move to the floor or bean bag area, left his desk only to sit at another desk in the play area and recommence writing. Reuben clearly already possessed a disposition for writing and academic work. This was evident from his first weeks at school with the self-governance he possessed providing him with the necessary control and diligence for literate practice even when other students in the class failed to display a similar level of application.

While the design of a space may in itself possess a certain disciplinary force (McCarthy, 2005), it is how a space is used that is perhaps of greater importance. This is also the case with the use of objects within a space. Sitting at a desk is obviously more restrictive than sitting in a bean bag or lying on the floor and it necessitates a different posture, one that is far more constrained than that which many children are used to. In Narelle's class it was not simply that most students did not spend much time seated at a desk but that when they did they did not seem to do so comfortably. Activity and movement seemed to pervade every aspect of the classroom regimen. Even when working at their desks, children's bodies were

still moving, not only swinging on their chairs and playing with equipment but constantly getting up and down to move around the room to talk to other students, ask Narelle questions, or, less frequently, to access environmental print. Although at times Narelle did correct her students' posture – most notably at the beginning of handwriting activities – generally movement was not checked.

It was not only that KS were constantly moving when working at their desks; there was also continual noise. This didn't worry Narelle. She felt talk was good and was pleased when students asked each other how to spell or find a word and ran around to show each other. Yet, there was no time during writing sessions in which children worked quietly and independently; time in which they could think carefully and reflect upon their own work rather than ask or talk to a friend. Movement and talk were indicative of the classroom regimen and most children embraced this mode of behaviour as standard practice. This is not to say that students shouldn't talk to their classmates. The often prohibitive classroom regimen of traditional pedagogies stifled useful collaborative talk, but ongoing student interaction, especially when writing, does not allow for the quiet and degree of control needed to produce text effectively. This is especially the case in the early years when students are yet to habituate foundational skills such as forming letters and words. Constant interruptions to concentration can affect the flow of writing.

LEARNING MOVES

While generally only viewed from a classroom management perspective, both a teacher's organisation of a pedagogic space and the rules and routines of their classroom regimen contribute to a student's disposition to learning. The body, however, receives little attention in discussion of the design and implementation of curriculum. In the following analysis of the ways in which Narelle implemented the English curriculum, the focus is on the embodied dimensions of how she approached the teaching of handwriting and written expression. Narelle commenced each day with a brief letter/sound drill of approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The use of drill and the degree of teacher direction it demands were not typical of Narelle's overall pedagogic approach. Her practice tended to be dominated by the use of rotational, small group activities. This is exemplified by Narelle's approach to teaching handwriting, such as in one 30-minute session when students were divided into four groups. Each group undertook a different activity aimed at refining their fine motor skills. These included playing with play dough, threading beads, painting down strokes with a brush and water and a guided drawing session conducted by Narelle. In this last activity, students had to watch Narelle and copy the strokes she drew to complete a picture. Groups only spent 6 or 7 minutes engaged in each task before moving. These frequent changes tended to dilute the effectiveness of each task. Children became unsettled as they participated in each group activity, aware they would have to move on. This unsettledness was not conducive to the accumulation of bodily affect crucial for the development of self-governance.

Together with students' bodies tending to lack control due to the pedagogic mode which Narelle employed, the affective impact was also reduced as a result of the children's lack of application to the self-directed activities: the bead threading, play dough manipulation and brush strokes. Children such as Reuben, and others who already possessed some rudimentary handwriting skills, seemed uninterested in these activities. Even those who had limited experience with writing tended to be more focused on talking to their friends and only sporadically engaged with the materials. The exception to this was when children engaged in the brush strokes task; an activity they found quite fun especially since it was conducted outside on the asphalt play area. This location presented problems for Narelle as she periodically had to check students' disruptive behaviour and interrupt her guided drawing group. It was in this last group, however, in which Narelle directed the activity, that children were quiet, sat relatively straight and concentrated intently on following what Narelle was doing. Here, as the students mimicked Narelle's strokes, they were learning to focus on a set task, employ the grip and assume the posture required for handwriting. Given this degree of application and its absence in the self-directed groups, it seems unusual that Narelle did not have all the children sitting at their desks engaged in the same activity. She could have spent more time on guided drawing and begun to focus on certain strokes and the directionality of specific letters, similar to the technique she used with letter/sound correspondence. With handwriting, however, there is a different affective impact with the focus being the acquisition of a muscular and perceptual memory of letter shapes. Instead the effect of Narelle's teacher-directed writing activity was nullified by its brevity. As soon as the children had assumed the appropriate posture and begun to concentrate on their set task, they were required to adopt the more relaxed disciplinary stance of manipulating objects either on the floor or at another desk.

The pedagogic affect associated with this writing session, which was intensified for the duration of the teacher-directed activity, seemed to have had little accumulative effect given the greater frequency and combined longer duration of the other activities. Narelle did not seem confident in teaching this aspect of the curriculum and, with little guidance offered in the syllabus, she seemed to flounder. Despite a growing emphasis on the use of computer keyboards and touch technology, handwriting is still a skill that needs to be habituated with a reasonable degree of proficiency before the end of kindergarten. Without this, students' ability to compose text is impeded as they need to devote most of their conscious attention to forming letters rather than writing words and relying on embodied memory to perform the more mechanical work. Narelle seemed aware of this when remarking: "It stunts their writing if they can't form those letters and you know it's such an effort for them to do it. It might be all in their head but if they can't put it on the page it's really hard for kids". Yet with an emphasis on rotational group work, which worked against the cultivation of muscular memory, Narelle's students did not seem to be learning to write as effectively as they might.

This is evident in the three examples of students' work chosen by Narelle as being representative of the work of high achieving, average and low ability students shown below. These work samples show the students' writing at different intervals throughout the year: within the first couple of months, at mid-year and towards the end of their time in kindergarten. The texts are not from specific handwriting lessons but from the various daily writing activities the children undertook and so provide samples of handwriting not simply copied by students but produced without assistance. Arguably, these more accurately reflect the students' writing capability. Although dealing with aspects of handwriting throughout the year, Narelle did not introduce handwriting books until towards the end of the school year. Students were familiar with the letter shapes they practised periodically, but there seemed no imperative to 'cement' this understanding in the same way as with letters and sounds in learning to read. Narelle felt it was more important for students to start writing straight away placing emphasis on the cognition of letters and sounds over the bodily skill of handwriting. While students may have developed an automatic understanding of letter/sound relationships, the following work samples suggest the same degree of automaticity was not attained in reproducing letters graphically.

The first set of work samples were written by Reuben, the high achieving student referred to earlier. In the first of his texts (Figure 2a), written early in the year, Reuben shows considerable control in his writing. The letters are well formed and quite small, unusual for a child of his age. He includes narrow but uniform spacing between words and concludes his sentence with a full stop. He has illustrated his work with a detailed picture of himself, clothed, with facial features and also arms with hands and fingers. In the other texts from Reuben's corpus of work, however (Figures 2b – 2d), the same degree of control is not evident. This may be partly explained by the increasing complexity of the content of his texts as Reuben begins to give more attention to 'what' his writing is about, rather than 'how' he writes. Yet, given the marked difference between the first text and the three later texts, the latter showing much larger and less carefully formed letters, it would suggest that despite possessing a good control of handwriting on arriving at school, Reuben was giving far less attention to this aspect of his work as the year progressed. Considering the relaxed disciplinary codes that operated in Narelle's classroom, it could be that Reuben felt no obligation to give much attention to his handwriting. This may not have been a conscious decision; it was probably just symptomatic of Narelle's pedagogic approach and the particular classroom regimen she had established. In the second set of texts by Kelly, a student

Figure 2a

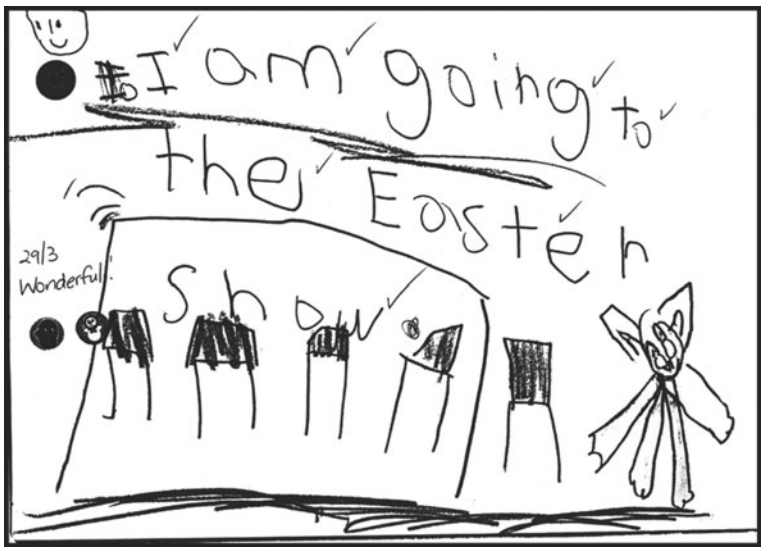

Figure 2b

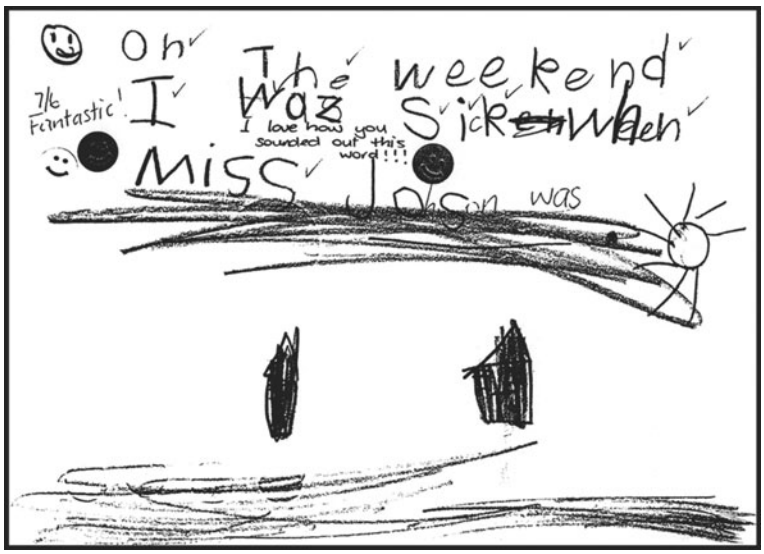

Figure 2c

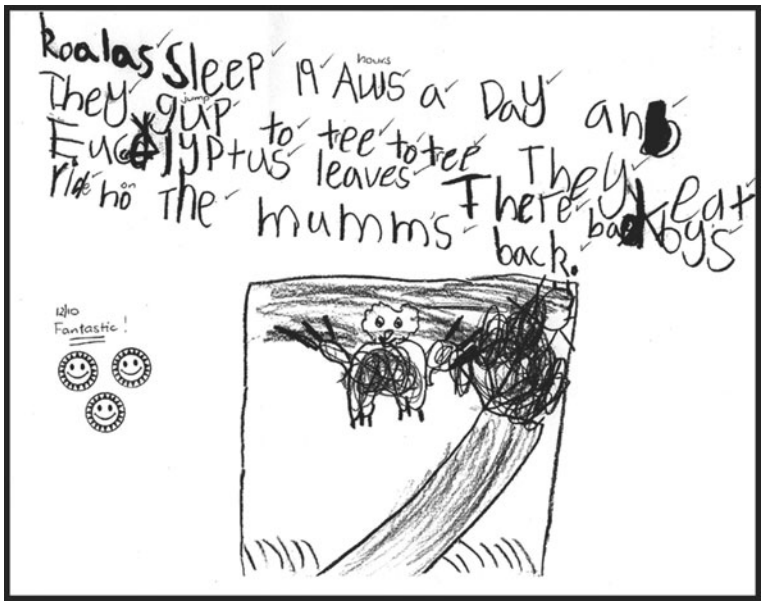

Figure 2d

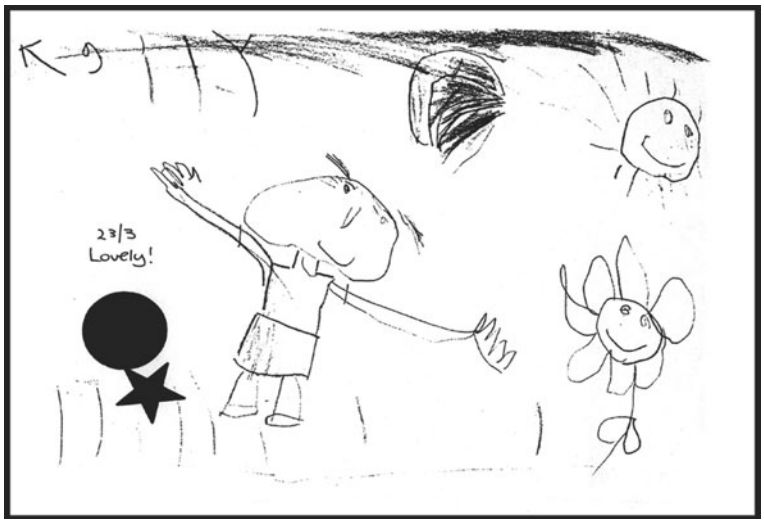

Figure 3a

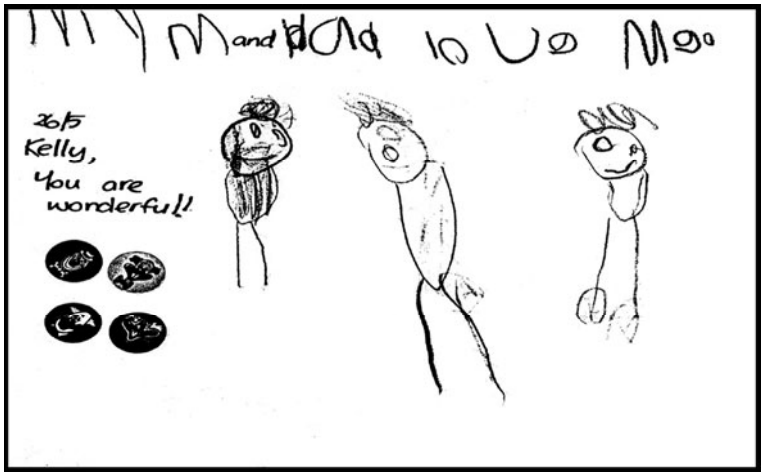

Figure 3b

Narelle judged to be of average ability, some progress is evident though minimal. In Kelly's first text (Figure 3a) she has written her name, but appears to have some difficulty with the letter 'e'. Two months later when the second text (Figure 3b) was

written, she is still reversing her ‘e’ in ‘love’ and ‘me’; the second of these words being one of the first learnt at the beginning of the year. Kelly attempted to write “my Mum and Dad love me” in this text. She has successfully written the initial sound ‘m’ in the word “Mum” but has made no attempt with ‘u’ and ‘m’. This is unusual given ‘Mum’ is a phonetically regular word, but together with this, the words ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’ both appeared on one of the environmental print lists within view of the desk area, yet Kelly made no attempt to access this information. Kelly also didn’t include the word ‘and’ in her sentence, which is another common sight word and well known at this stage by the class.

Kelly’s work seems to display something of the same lack of application that is evident, although to a far less extent, in Reuben’s work. Given the regimen that existed within the classroom and Narelle’s preference for a pedagogy with limited teacher-directedness, there seemed insufficient disciplinary force to ensure Kelly was focused on her handwriting. She was largely reliant on the dispositions she brought to school, which don’t seem to compel her to apply herself when working independently at a task; a capacity requiring considerable bodily control and concentration. This lack of application is also evident in the drawing that accompanies her writing. In the first text, drawn two months prior to this, Kelly put a great deal of effort into drawing a picture of herself. There is more detail evident in the facial features and she has also drawn clothes, arms, hands and fingers. In her second picture the drawings are less complex. The facial features are quite immature, she has not included arms and necks and the figures are not clothed. Kelly’s work here seems to display a lack of interest, a feeling of ‘near enough is good enough’. Despite the apparent lack of effort, Narelle writes ‘You are wonderful’, a comment offering little information about the work itself, in particular Kelly’s difficulty in forming the letter ‘e’. While positive reinforcement is important, this is not balanced by any critical appraisal. Further, more emphasis seems to be placed on ‘self-esteem’ than ‘self-control’, evident in Narelle’s comment: “I think the teacher has to have a really positive attitude. You need to have high expectations, to believe that the children can just do it”. This essentialised view of the desire to learn emanating primarily from the students themselves and not necessarily being grounded in any externally derived bodily affect related to knowledge and skill seems to drive Narelle’s pedagogy. A teacher’s positive comments can have an important affective impact, as do negative comments (Tomkins, 1962), yet without the requisite embodiment of knowledge and skill, the pedagogic effectiveness of this form of affect can be limited. As the year progressed Kelly’s remaining work samples (Figures 3c and 3d) indicate her reversed ‘e’ has been corrected, but she still displays quite irregular control over her writing.

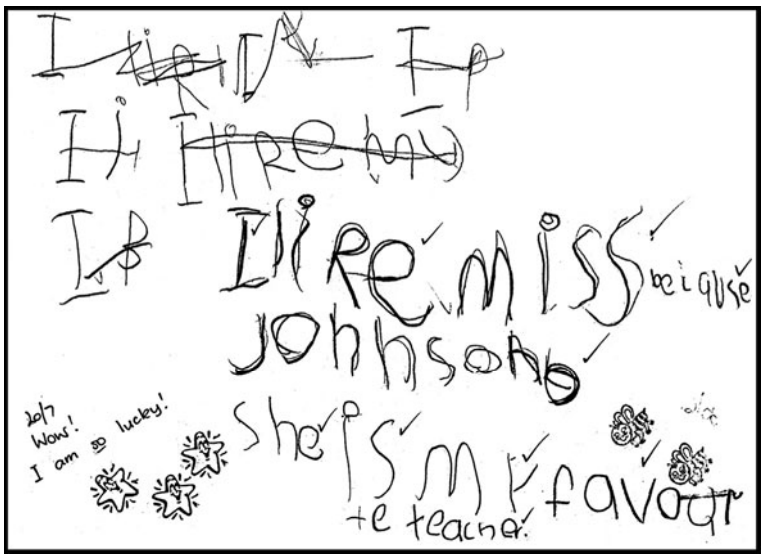

Figure 3c

Figure 3d

In Figure 3c the words ‘because’, ‘favourite’ and ‘teacher’ were supplied by Narelle, and Kelly shows a more mature hand in writing these. In the rest of the text, however, a similar control is not evident. This would indicate the degree of strain placed upon Kelly’s writing when she needs to devote attention to spelling words herself. Given its impact on a child’s ability to compose text, this seems to provide justification for the habituation of the muscular memory of letters as early as possible. In the last of Kelly’s work samples (Figure 3d) her writing seems to have made limited progress in the two and a half months since the previous text. Her various attempts at drawing a koala, however, show she is putting more effort into some aspects of her work. As writing is a far more difficult task at this stage, both cognitively and corporeally, and as there is no requirement to write more than she has, it is understandable that Kelly chose to use the time remaining before the activity concluded to give her attention to drawing.

The last set of work samples was written by an Anglo-Australian girl named Anne Marie, who Narelle identified as one of the least able students in KS. It is clear from the first of Anne Marie’s texts (Figure 4a) that she has not had much experience with writing prior to school. Even after six weeks she is unable to write her name, one of the first requirements of kindergarten. There is evidence of an ability to form some letters but interestingly, with this first text and her sample set overall, there is a backwards slope to her writing. This would suggest that Anne Marie is not using the appropriate posture for writing and also failing to position her pen and paper correctly. Clearly, there was little teacher intervention throughout the year to correct this problem and, even when marking Anne Marie’s work, Narelle simply provides the comment, “Great”. Nothing is added which acknowledges the problems with her student’s writing. Instead, without feedback and correction, Anne Marie was habituating a less effective way of writing. Yet, in relation to this, Narelle commented: “I guess you want them to start writing straight away, so they develop a few bad habits at the beginning and it’s hard to break them sometimes”. Narelle didn’t seem to give much importance to instructing her students to ensure the process of habituation was both effective and expeditious. With a limited degree of guidance Anne Marie shows some evidence of progress in Figure 4b, though this is a text that had been copied from the board. Having been modelled by Narelle, her letters are better formed, yet the same problem with incorrect slope is evident and not commented upon by Narelle. Unassisted, as in Figure 4c, Anne Marie experiences serious difficulty. She has produced approximations of some letters but her writing lacks coherence and so Narelle writes the sentence that Anne Marie intends. This lack of progress, particularly given that most of her classmates are already able to form letters, could have its own affective impact. Constant problems left uncorrected simply reinforce Kelly’s lack of ability. This could result in poor self-esteem and a dispositional antipathy towards academic endeavour, which if engrained, are difficult to reverse. Although she is reversing letters and some words, in Anne Marie’s last text (Figure 4d) there is a marked improvement. Yet, as with Kelly, in this example Anne Marie has decided to devote more time to drawing than writing and, as this activity is

Figure 4a

Figure 4b

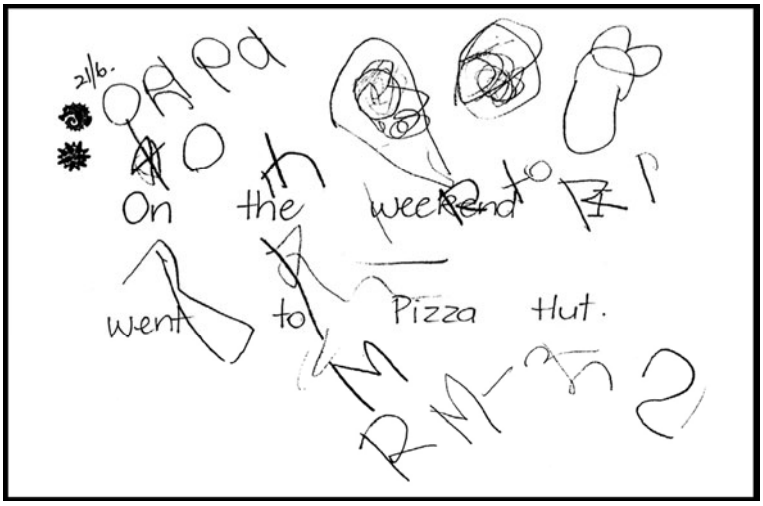

Figure 4c

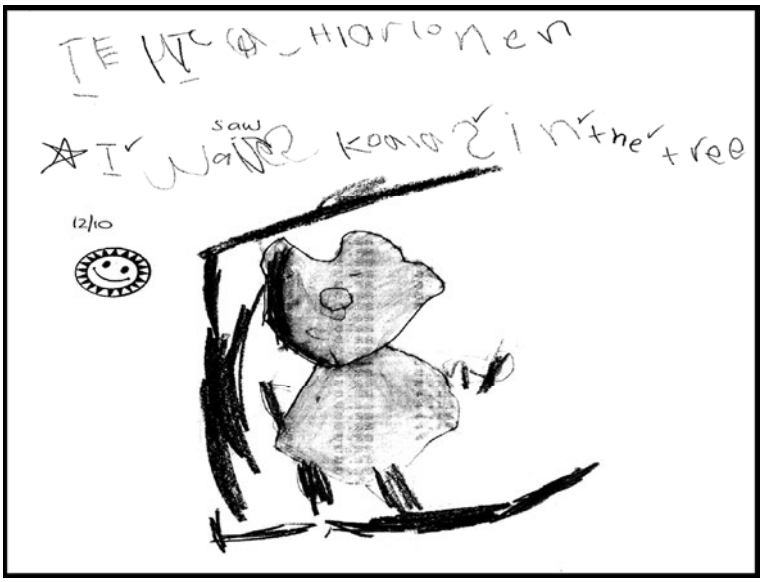

Figure 4d

largely self- directed with limited externally imposed discipline, there is nothing compelling her to improve upon the text she has written.

Narelle's preference for limited teacher intervention was not only evident in her approach to handwriting; it also framed her teaching of written expression. Although the first set of activities for each day were teacher-directed – the letter/sound drill, the word walk and another activity termed 'Secret Sentence', involving students reading a sentence based on the word wall – following these, students were generally given free writing time. This was a period of 15 to 30 minutes in which they could draw on the words discussed in the previous activities to write their own short text. In principle, this seems an effective strategy. Having first conducted the letter/sound drill, acquainted students with a set of sight words and completed the Secret Sentence activity, it seems appropriate for students to then start writing. It is at this point, however, that students required considerable teacher direction and a narrowing of the parameters of what to write rather than a self-directed activity with no guidelines regarding topic. As students were yet to perfect their handwriting, a considerable cognitive load was simply devoted to the mechanics of the process. With no topic provided, many children like Anne Marie simply floundered. Alternatively, they merely wrote about a limited range of topics, generally beginning, 'I like …' or 'I love …' as was Kelly's tendency. It was only students such as Reuben, already a reasonably proficient writer and possessing a habitus to work independently, who produced the much longer and more creative texts. Narelle was aware of this narrow range of topics in her students' writing pointing out that "For quite a while they were all writing 'I like to …', 'I like school', 'I like my mum'". She added, however, that "They were all doing that and then as more and more took more risks and tried to write different things and, that's rewarded, then the kids took off". In asking Narelle what prompted the students' 'risk taking' she explained,

> I think mainly I do. … you've got to be so careful because you don't want to deflate them, but you say to them, "Look this is fantastic. I love the way you write this, but let's have a look in your book. Gee, you've been writing this a lot haven't you? Gee I'd love to see you write something different now".

When left to their own devices students generally produced a limited range of topics. It was only through Narelle's intervention that students were prompted to experiment with their writing. Typically, however, the impetus for producing text resided with the students and the morning session was more about a display of their current writing ability and habitus for writing than developing and extending their capacity to write.

While a considerable amount of time in Narelle's classroom was devoted to self-directed writing, this was not always the case. Narelle judged the ratio of free writing time to writing on a teacher-determined topic to be 70 percent free/30 percent teacher-directed. Narelle provided an example of how she approached writing on a specific topic in two lessons. Following some preliminary work reading a story about koalas and modelling writing, which was later removed from the board, Narelle commenced the first of these lessons by reading another book

about koalas to KS who were seated on the floor. This text was written in a personal style but contained quite a deal of factual information. Narelle frequently stopped reading to ask students questions to reinforce key facts. Following this, she then selected students to come to the front of the class to repeat a fact about koalas using a puppet as stimulus. Many students had trouble remembering the key points and needed prompting by Narelle. After this, Narelle had students move to the desk area to begin writing. She placed the words 'koala' and 'eucalyptus leaves' on the board and then asked students to "tell me some things about koalas". The students, however, needed far more direction to help begin and guide their writing before being left to work independently.

The term 'independently', however, is something of a misnomer. All writing sessions in KS were conducted as collaborative exercises, yet 'collaboration' at a kindergarten level is not particularly focused. While there was a lot of talk, little had to do with koalas and the text they were required to write. This is not to suggest that students shouldn't collaborate with their classmates, but there needs to be a balance between talk and quiet, collaboration and independent work, to develop a child's individual capacity to apply themselves to a task. As with the free writing sessions, it was the students with the greater self-governance and disposition for writing, such as Reuben, who applied themselves to writing, producing the longer and more effective texts. The number of words that students write at this stage is important because it is generally an indication of competence and application. In the time allocated, Reuben managed to write three sentences (see Figure 2d), one being a compound sentence. He also attempted some simple punctuation. Reuben was able to make considerable use of the information in the preliminary activity to write a factual description. Kelly, however, only wrote one sentence and, while she included a fact about koalas, she framed it in personal terms, once again using the word 'like' (see Figure 3d). She was not extended by this activity and, apart from the word 'koala' written on the board, the only new word she attempted was 'back'. As has been discussed earlier, Kelly opted to devote more time to drawing and did not persist with the more demanding task of writing.

Similarly, Anne Marie only wrote one sentence and drew on little of the information from the lesson (see Figure 4d). There were a number of reasons for this, such as her difficulties with handwriting and the lack of disciplinary force compelling her to apply herself. It may also be the case that Anne Marie, and Kelly for that matter, did not know what else to do given the minimal explanation and level of instruction that were provided. This was not much of a problem for Reuben, as he already possessed the requisite habitus to succeed with minimal input. For Kelly and Anne Marie, and many other students in the class, there needed to be far more teacher scaffolding prior to them undertaking such a complex task. A staging of activities was needed that dealt with the different aspects of writing the text that was expected of them. In other words, there needed to be a greater degree of 'affective force' – the intensity with which knowledge and skills are taught – to enhance these students' capacity to write[ii]. Such a staging of activities is not undertaken within one session or one day but over a period of days or even longer, slowly and effectively scaffolding children's learning with the

intention of maximising affect to the point where there is the requisite accumulation to allow them to work independently. Such a pedagogy places emphasis on the incremental staging of knowledge and skills resulting in what could be termed, following Damasio, 'a somatic familiarity' for what is required to complete a task, which is formative in, and acts in concert with, the reflective processes of consciousness. As a result, when engaged in a task, a student's body and mind work as one.

BODILY IMPACT

Narelle, however, was generally unaware of the impact that the relaxed disciplinary codes she established in her classroom had upon her students' learning. Her organisation of the pedagogic space and the regimen within the classroom were not geared towards students attaining the requisite dispositions for academic work and, in particular, those required for effective literate practice. Her pedagogy appeared to have limited impact upon her students' existing habitus and so those students, such as Reuben, who arrived in kindergarten with the appropriate embodied capital for schooling, were more likely to be successful, at least at this stage of their learning. The majority of students, however, were unaccustomed to the postures and work habits required at school and which are necessary for learning to write. Without a regimen to exert the appropriate disciplinary force these students had difficulty, as was the case with Kelly and Anne Marie. This unawareness of the bodily aspects of learning and their impact on cognition was not only reflected in Narelle's spatial design of the classroom and its routines, it was evident in her writing pedagogy. While demonstrating she had no philosophical opposition to the use of drill, as it underpinned her approach to teaching reading, there was a failure to use a similar technique to ensure her students habituated the mechanics of handwriting. As a result, many students experienced difficulties with forming letters which impacted upon their written expression. This was compounded by the insufficient teacher direction during writing sessions. The steps involved in producing a text were not appropriately scaffolded and so students were reliant upon their ability to access environmental print, discussion with classmates and their existing capabilities when writing. The pedagogic affect of this strategy was minimal and not sustained. Scaffolding knowledge and skills effectively to assist students write may seem to have little connection with the corporeality of learning, yet it has a similar intensity to drill in that its aim is the maximisation and accumulation of affect; the corporeal data upon which consciousness depends. Without this degree of intensity, learning is far less effective. Despite Narelle's enthusiasm for teaching and her positive reinforcement of students' achievement, many students in KS moved into Year 1 with a less than adequate foundation from which to develop their writing skills.

CHAPTER 4

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER AND STUDENTS AT NORTHSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Narelle's pedagogy differed considerably from that of Jane Peters, the kindergarten teacher at Northside PS. Jane, who was trained as an infants teacher and had only ever taught kindergarten, Years 1 and 2, had over 30 years experience[iii]. KP, Jane's class at Northside PS in the northern suburbs of Sydney, had 24 students. While mostly from higher socio-economic backgrounds than the students in KS; Jane's class was also more culturally and linguistically diverse. Just over 50 percent had a LBOTE with a number requiring ESL support. The LBOTE students were primarily mainland and Hong Kong Chinese, Korean, Indian and Sri Lankan. The ability levels of these students was also diverse, ranging from one student with a mild intellectual disability to another Jane referred to as "one of the brightest most wonderful children I have ever had the pleasure of teaching". None of the students in KP, however, could read or write when they started kindergarten.

Unlike Narelle, Jane was trained at a time when the teacher's role was foregrounded within pedagogic practice. Progressivism had yet to impact upon teacher education and so traditional modes of pedagogy with the teacher directing students' learning framed Jane's pre-service training and still largely governed her practice. She felt that "the sign of an effective teacher is if you've really got the children there in the palm of your hand for the bulk of the day or for the bulk of the lesson" and maintained a strong commitment to these teaching ideals commenting,

> I think it works best. The whole thing is, no matter what you're learning in life be you an adult or child you've got to be taught something first, then there's got to be an explanation and practice and after that then you've actually got this knowledge then you move off into applying it. But if you don't have that instructional period first I don't know how children can just drift around and learn ad hoc.

Jane recalled quite a detailed treatment of how to teach handwriting in her pre-service training with considerable emphasis placed on "the position of the non-writing hand and the writing hand and the angle of the book, correct posture, pulling your chair in, making sure your back is straight, all that sort of stuff". She incorporated progressivist techniques such as group work into her teaching methodology and explained how she had varied her practice over the years, but despite this was adamant that instruction was vital for effective learning.

LEARNING BOUNDARIES

In contrast to the kindergarten classrooms at Westville, those at Northside were quite small and Jane's was particularly so. Space was at a premium at Northside. The school site was overcrowded and Jane's classroom was a small, old, timber demountable building with a narrow verandah and storeroom situated away from the main school buildings and facing a busy street. Its dimensions were 6.5 metres by 7.4 metres and Jane continually complained about its size. Although

she would have preferred a larger room, she explained that a classroom "can be too big because you can't be really observing what's going on all the time and far corners of the room aren't used". Jane may have lacked the space, resources and amenity of Narelle's classroom but she was able to arrange what was available into an effective yet somewhat crowded pedagogic space. There was a sharp contrast, however, between the design of Jane's and Narelle's classrooms. Although partly influenced by the size of the room, Jane opted for a more conventional classroom design (see Figure 5). The desks were not organised in rows, as this is rare in contemporary primary school classrooms and particularly so in kindergarten, but the desks and floor area were arranged in such a way that students were directed as much as possible to the front of the room where the black and white boards, sight words, display table and teacher's chair were all located.

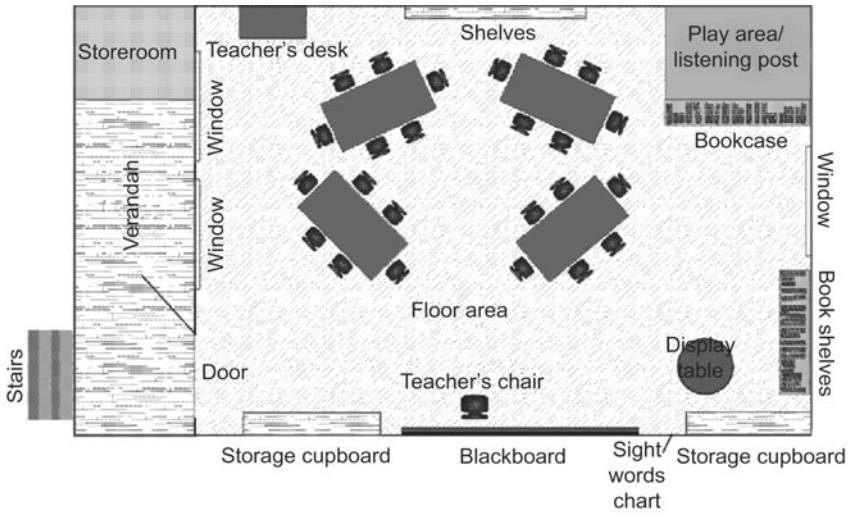

Figure 5

Jane's desk was at the back of the room and functioned more as a storage space. There was not enough space to have her desk at the front as it would have obscured students' view of the board. Jane's chair rather than her desk marked her presence in the room. The spatial vectors of the classroom were focused on a central position at the front of the room and learning was framed as a teacher-directed activity. This arrangement seemed to invest the room with a panoptic quality that exerted a particular disciplinary force upon KP. While students' attention was drawn to the front of the classroom, they were also aware their teacher's gaze was directed at them seemingly instilling a self-corrective to monitor their behaviour. Even early

in the year, KP demonstrated a considerable degree of quiet and control. Students seemed to have embodied the classroom routines quite rapidly and exhibited considerable self-governance in how they conducted themselves within this pedagogic space. Of course, there were many factors contributing to the students' self-discipline and desire to behave. It was not simply a function of the organisation of the pedagogic space and the classroom dynamic that this created. Many of the children in KP may have attended childcare or pre-school and so were more amenable to the restrictions placed upon their behaviour in the classroom. The ethnic mix of the class and having an observer present may also have had an impact[iv].

There were marked differences between the size and organisation of Jane's and Narelle's classrooms and also the use they made of them. Jane's classroom had a different ambience to that of the kindergarten class at Westville. The former seemed to effuse a sense of order and control. The size of the room automatically restricted movement. There was not the range of learning sites available, as in Narelle's classroom. For KP the options were limited. Learning was generally undertaken seated at a desk or more commonly in rows or in a discussion circle on the floor with Jane in a central position. The bodily discipline exerted by this arrangement seemed more intense and sustained than in Narelle's classroom. The intensity of the discipline generated within Jane's classroom was not simply a result of its spatial design, it was also a function of how she utilised the space. Jane offered few free time activities during the day and so the issue of the multiple coding of space was of less concern with KP. To Jane's students, spaces within the classroom were more obviously coded as work rather than play areas and so there was no confusion as to what behaviour was required. There was one small space in the back corner of the room where toys and puzzles were stored and where group listening activities were conducted, but this was only used at specific times during the day. Group activities were usually only undertaken in the mid-morning session with craft and free choice periods left to the afternoon. As a result, the space as a whole functioned as a work environment for set times during the day and students seemed to routinely adopt the postures and behaviour for this mode of practice. In doing this for sustained periods during the morning session, KP soon embodied the necessary discipline to work reasonably independently during the mid-morning group activities when Jane's guidance and supervision were less constant as she moved around the room attending to one group at a time.

Another factor contributing to KP's ability to work effectively during group activities was the panoptic quality of the classroom design. When she conducted a lesson, Jane had students seated either at their desks or on the floor facing the front of the room. During group activities this was not necessarily the case. Students were located in different sites around the room although, apart from the students in the listening post area, most groups were seated at desks. Given that during a sizeable portion of the day preceding group time students were facing the front of the room with Jane conducting lessons and closely monitoring their behaviour, when given a greater degree of independence to work in a group without constant

teacher supervision, students seemed able to do so with few checks. A residual effect from the morning session seemed evident. Although no longer constantly under the teacher's gaze, the intensity of her presence in the time preceding group activities seemed to leave a lasting impression. Consequently, if engaged in group activities or independent work when the teacher's gaze was temporarily removed, students were able to work effectively.

ORDERLY CONDUCT AND LEARNING TO LEARN

Jane established a classroom regimen that emphasised order and quiet. This didn't mean the students never talked, raised their voices or laughed, but a sense of calm and regularity pervaded the room. Every morning at Northside the day commenced with an assembly for the younger children. Prior to the morning bell, kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 lined up in class groups to listen to news and events that could affect the day's routine. At Westville, assemblies were generally only a weekly occurrence with daily information relayed to students through an intercom system that periodically interrupted lessons. Following the assembly at Northside, students forwarded to class in lines accompanied by their teacher. KP were stopped outside their classroom to ensure they were orderly and, after hanging their bags on their hooks on the verandah, proceeded into class. Each morning commenced with a similar routine. Once inside, students sat in a semi-circle on the floor with Jane at the front seated on her chair. Unusually, given Northside is a state school with students from a diversity of faiths, Jane started with a prayer. With eyes closed, heads bowed and hands together, children said a brief prayer which seemed to have a settling effect before they commenced the day's activities. After this, there was a morning greeting, questioning about the day of the week and then roll call with one child chosen to count the students present. Following this, Jane commenced a review of the previous day's work, awarding stickers to children for good work and often reading out, as well as displaying, their efforts. Some children also corrected or completed work during this time.

Jane then started the day's teaching with language work. The morning session was generally devoted to reading, writing, talking and listening skills. Unlike KS, KP did not begin work on letter/sound correspondence until the beginning of Term 2. As there were so many LBOTE students with poor spoken English, Jane felt it was better to work on improving their facility with spoken language before embarking on a drill in letters and sounds. During Term 1, therefore, there were a lot of verbal activities coupled with daily sight word and sentence construction tasks. Jane also devoted considerable time to developing students' fine motor skills and having students perfect the movements required in handwriting. Despite differences in what they taught, Jane and Narelle both emphasised the importance of routine and the need to instil the particular rhythms of the school day in students as soon as possible. Yet, while both teachers stressed the importance of this for kindergarten, the routines Jane and Narelle established in their respective classrooms differed considerably. Jane, like Narelle, focused on aspects of the English curriculum in the morning session and instituted a regular set of activities

at this time. Students in both classes had similarly been taught to raise their hands to answer questions, not to call out and to follow instructions. Yet beyond these standard classroom practices, which were differentially enforced, expectations with regard to students' behaviour in the two classes varied markedly. Jane's sense of routine extended beyond basic classroom management. She favoured a regimen that curbed movement and noise within the class and encouraged bodily composure when lessons were in progress. Although movement was curtailed in Jane's classroom due to a lack of space, it was also kept to a minimum because Jane felt it had an unsettling effect on students. As a result, Jane located the sight word chart and other similar stimulus material at the front of the room near the board within easy view where students could access the information if required without moving from their desks. While she felt environmental print could play a valuable part in the teaching of writing, she didn't want students moving unnecessarily around the room and placed more of an emphasis on the aural, rather than visual aspects of spelling. To develop students' written vocabulary, she encouraged the use of students' own knowledge of letters and sounds to form words rather than seeking information from class displays.

Jane encouraged self-reliance in writing. Such an approach, however, requires minimal distraction and maximum attention. These are not simply cognitive functions; they are dependent upon bodily control, the precursor of a scholarly disposition. Jane, therefore, established quite a sedentary routine within her classroom. Most activities during the morning session were conducted with students seated on the floor at the front of the room with generally only one desk-based activity (see Appendix 2.). Given that students were required to sit still and listen for long periods, Jane interspersed these floor-based activities with what I term 'body breaks', short intervals between activities when students either moved their bodies by following simple instructions – for example, "two wiggles, three claps, one jump, two turnarounds, touch your toes, sit on the floor" – or sang songs with accompanying hand and body actions. Such techniques are standard practice for kindergarten teachers and were also used by Narelle. With KS at Westville, however, they were used far less and for a different purpose. Jane tended to weave them into her classroom routine as a strategy for signalling a change of activity and to allow a temporary relaxation of the bodily postures she required of her students when lessons were in progress. Narelle generally used them as an intermittent corrective for poor behaviour, and to gain students' attention during group work when noise levels were too high. For Jane, body breaks were a technique to prevent restlessness during teacher-directed activities. To Narelle, they seemed to function more as a periodic interruption to a classroom regimen in which movement and noise were the norm.

Posture was also an important issue for Jane, not simply in the teaching of handwriting but because it affected students' overall performance. As she explained, "Posture at any point in time, is really important because if you're not sitting properly well you're probably not thinking properly". Jane saw a connection between bodily control and academic achievement and so from the beginning of the year sought to establish a regimen geared towards her students acquiring postures for academic engagement. The minimisation of movement within the classroom and Jane's

concentration on teacher-directed activities in the morning session were not simply classroom management techniques but strategies to encourage the acquisition of a habitus for literate practice and for learning to learn. To Jane, self-governance was an essential aspect of learning and something she actively taught. She did not seem to view bodily discipline and a corresponding diligence for work as just a function of maturation but as skills that required persistent training for them to be habituated as bodily capacity. Jane explained that many children arrived in kindergarten finding it extremely difficult to sit still for sustained periods of time, remarking that at home "a lot of children don't even sit at a table to eat any more; they often just lie down on the floor". Jane sought to gradually accustom her students' bodies to the demands of scholarly labour. She felt students needed to acquire the requisite embodied capital to work effectively. While ostensibly quite constraining, her pedagogy was actually about heightening rather than inhibiting agency, seen here as the ability to write effectively and act with a greater degree of control in the world. This is a view Durkheim (2002, p. 45) shared, judging the capacity for self-control to be "one of the chief powers that education should develop".

Although KP did not appear to spend a lot of time at their desks, Jane considered there was a 50/50 split between desk and floor time. More desk-based activities were undertaken in the mid-morning and afternoon sessions and Jane explained that as the year progressed she would have children spend more time sitting at their desks and so accustom their bodies to the seating arrangement favoured in later years of school. When seated at their desks Jane required students to sit straight and not lean back and rock on their chairs. Similar demands were made by Narelle but generally not adhered to by students. Jane seemed far more vigilant, or at least students were more responsive to Jane's requests for this type of behaviour. This was not so much because Jane repeatedly asked her students to sit up but because her classroom regimen emphasised order and control, a feature that was reinforced by the organisation of the pedagogic space. Similarly, when KP students were sitting at their desks, at least during the morning sessions, lessons were teacher-directed. The students were focused on Jane and completing their work and their bodies simply conformed to the postures required and which the regimen and spatiality encouraged.

Although Jane favoured teacher-directed activities before recess, her lessons with KP were not always conducted in this way. The class also participated in group-based activities at this time. This format was more a feature of the mid-morning session and was generally organised as a set of rotational language-based tasks followed by work in maths groups. In one mid-morning lesson Jane organised the class into five groups with each allotted a language-based task. Prior to the class commencing these activities, Jane explained each in detail, questioning students to ensure they understood what was required. What was interesting about the way Jane conducted group-based activities, however, was that her students only undertook *one* activity in the time allocated. Activities were rotated but not within the single 30-minute time slot. Instead, Jane rotated activities over the school week and so each day, each of the five groups undertook only one of the five different activities organised for the week. KP, therefore, were engaged in an activity for a sustained period of time. In addition to this, Jane's organisation of group-based

activities was designed to minimise movement and so maintain the regimen of order and control which had been established by the teacher-directedness of the morning session. Even though Jane's supervision was far less intense during this time, because students were engaged in a single task and movement was limited, the change in pedagogic mode did not result in a marked relaxation of disciplinary power exerted upon their bodies. KP seemed to have embodied a considerable degree of self-governance which allowed them to undertake group-based activities in an efficient manner, applying themselves to a task with diligence and minimal talk.

Jane was also insistent about minimising noise in the classroom. She remarked "When we're doing handwriting I expect them to be quiet and concentrating and 'yes' they generally are because I'm doing it with them. When we do directed drawing you could hear a pin drop".

This was not only the case with handwriting sessions; in all Jane's teacher-directed activities, either at the desk or on the floor, students were very attentive. They still actively engaged in class discussion and responded to questioning, but there was limited unnecessary noise and an understanding about when talk was and wasn't appropriate. Because her teacher-directed activities allowed a regimen which promoted quiet and constructive talk, children engaged in limited chatter and collaborated quite effectively during group activities. This was also the case when students worked relatively independently such as during story writing. Jane allowed some talk during this time because, "With story writing it's part of the process. They're listening to other people, trying to sound out words and that's good. That's all part of learning". While students did engage in other forms of talk during these sessions it was generally minimal. There was little noise in Jane's classroom with a sense of 'a corporate body' working towards a similar goal.

Kamler *et al.* (1994, pp. 3/4) identified a similar phenomenon with the kindergarten class they observed. To Kamler *et al.*, however, the notion of a "corporate body" was understood in a negative sense. The "disciplining and shaping" of the students' bodies they observed was conceived as a form of subjection with the intended aim being the production of a corporate subjectivity: "Learning to position oneself as a student subject means becoming more like everyone else, minimising difference, and 'rounding off the edges' of the other less desirable subjectivities one may take up in different contexts in order to fit into and to produce a classroom habitus" (Kamler *et al.*, 1994, p. 4). In many respects this is true, yet this normative corporeality need not necessarily be understood as problematic. By assuming that the production of a corporate body results in a corporate subjectivity, Kamler *et al.* seem to ignore the possibility that disciplinary power may also be agentic. While certain classroom practices may have a homogenising effect, the disciplinary power that results, and is invested in students' bodies, can be utilised in potentially enabling ways. Also, students' subjectivities are far more fluid than what they suggest. Kamler *et al.* similarly neglect the sociality of being; the necessity within a school context, and indeed any institutional setting, to conform to a particular set of bodily schemas which allow for the productive functioning of bodies in space. These *carnal genres* inscribed within bodies possess a utility largely indicative of the spatiality in which they are formed. While in one sense they are restrictive, they can be productive in

that bodies perform less effectively without particular generic codings. Jane instituted a regimen in her classroom that allowed for the production of carnal genres that disciplined her students' bodies and minds in such a way as to promote a propensity for academic work and, in particular, learning to write. Rather than a form of subjection this discipline, which operated on a corporate basis, proved enabling.

BODIES OF WRITING

What characterised Jane's practice was the emphasis she placed on teacher directedness. This impacted upon the classroom regimen she established and it was also an integral aspect of her approach to curriculum implementation. When questioned about this feature of her practice and her attitude towards group-based activities Jane was quite tentative at first. She remarked, "In theory probably the whole day should be worked in groups because *they* always say that's how you get to work with individuals better". Jane felt an obligation to let group-based activities dominate her practice but she expressed reservations about devoting too much time to this methodology: "I'm not there as a guiding force when they're in groups so I can't see what they're doing. I think it's extremely difficult unless you've got a lot of helpers in the room and those helpers have to know what they're doing". To some extent Jane felt she was abrogating her responsibility as a teacher if she placed too much emphasis on group work, adding,

> For the life of me I couldn't structure my whole day as groups, my conscience wouldn't let me. Teaching a new concept in maths or correct letter formation or … I couldn't do it. They need social mixing time, free time, learning to take turns, etc but it's a lot easier to get around and observe when everyone is doing the same thing and you can quickly check that they're doing things properly.

Jane did not simply prefer teacher-directed lessons because she felt they were easier to organise, she viewed them as a more effective way of teaching. She felt more assured that students would understand a particular aspect of work with her explaining it to them and guiding their application than if they undertook this process themselves, as they would within the context of group-based learning. In many respects this relates to the intensity of affect which is amplified with sustained teacher direction. Although not expressed in these terms, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development refers to a similar process, in that students are more capable of successfully completing a task if they firstly receive guidance.

Jane's pedagogy was very much in line with this position yet it didn't simply focus on educating the mind. In implementing the curriculum for writing, Jane placed considerable emphasis upon the physicality of the writing process, far more than was evident in the syllabus she was required to implement. She not only drilled her students in letter/sound correspondence (although not until Term 2), she also drilled her students in the mechanics of handwriting, pointing out, "They need a lot of practice at it because it just doesn't come automatically". Consequently, Jane

commenced activities which focused on fine motor skills as early as possible. She displayed a thorough knowledge of the skills progression required in learning the mechanics of handwriting, much of which has simply disappeared from English curricula. Jane was also acutely aware that if her students were to habituate the appropriate technique for writing that it required considerable direction on her part. During Jane's handwriting lessons KP students sat at their desks and were extremely attentive, their gaze alternating between observing Jane's movements on the board, and reproducing these shapes in their books. In this way, they didn't simply acquire a grounding in the directionality and shape of the letters of the alphabet, they acquired the discipline required for writing. Over the course of the year students seemed to embody a particular composure when writing which allowed them to apply themselves to their work for sustained periods. The affective impact of the group dynamic was considerable, an effect which was achieved through the regularity of performing the task and the teacher direction involved while doing so.

Given that Jane did not commence systematic instruction in phonics until the beginning of the second term, her approach to story writing was quite different to that of Narelle's who started her students writing short texts from the beginning of the year. As mentioned, Jane was slow in beginning this work because many of her students had poor spoken English. In Term 1 she focused on improving their facility with spoken English, developing their sight word vocabulary, acquainting them with concepts of written language such as the sentence, and employing strategies to reinforce English syntax. A regular daily activity conducted throughout the year in the morning session involved the class working with sight words. At these times KP sat on the floor at the front of the room close to the sight word chart near the board. The chart, on permanent display throughout the year, contained a set of sight words that were added to each week. Towards the end of Term 1 the chart contained 29 words[v] from a range of grammatical categories allowing students to compose a variety of simple sentences from what was available; with complexity in sentence structure increasing as the year progressed. Jane's routine with the chart involved pointing at words and having students read them out aloud. She would place a series of the words in a sentence and, before the class read it aloud, had them count the number of words in the sentence and drew their attention to the spaces between words. Other activities included constructing sentences from a selection of jumbled words. Jane's intention was to reinforce the notion of a sentence and to highlight the syntactic patterns of English. The fact that the words were on separate cards and could be physically manipulated was an effective way to demonstrate the process of sentence construction and the relationship between parts of speech. These words and how they combined to make sentences were reinforced on a daily basis. The contained and repetitive nature of this activity possessed considerable affective impact, reinforcing the process of sentence construction, and the expanding bank of words allowed for increasing complexity and creativity as the year progressed.

During Term 1, before her students had commenced work on letter/sound correspondence, Jane would conduct either a modelled writing exercise or an activity in which she and the class would jointly construct a text. She had reservations about free writing activities with kindergarten even if she had been able to commence work

on letter/sound relationships much earlier, explaining that she would only use it "as extension work for kids with some degree of capability. It's dependent on capability. It would be a futile exercise for a lot of children. They just couldn't do it, unless you had a really skilled group. They'd probably spend most of the time just drawing the picture and become a bit ratty and go play with a toy or something else". Instead, Jane chose to further model aspects of the writing process with her students. Her approach to modelling did not simply involve students watching what she did, it actively involved them in the exercise. On one such occasion Jane and her students jointly constructed a procedural text about 'How to make a honey sandwich', effectively modelling the steps involved in constructing this type of text. Jane used the week's big book story about a hungry giant – an oversized book for use with whole classes or groups – as stimulus. After discussing the book and reading it through with the class, pointing to each word as they read through together, Jane placed four pieces of cardboard behind each other on the whiteboard at the front of the room. She explained to the class how they had to write out the steps required to make a honey sandwich for the giant and began by asking students what they needed first. Not happy with the response 'bread' she asked for the answer to be placed in a sentence and was offered the response 'get some bread', which was then repeated by the class. Jane proceeded to write this on the first card and drew a quick picture to accompany the command. Following this, she asked the class to read out the sentence, pointing to each word as they did so. This procedure was followed until the text was complete. Jane then had the class read the whole text through clapping their hands as each word was read. She also questioned them about the number of sentences in the text. In doing this, Jane sought to concentrate on developing her students' competency in the verbal construction of text as a scaffold for more independent story writing which occurred in the next term.

Throughout this activity Jane foregrounded the corporeality of learning. This is evident in a number of instances, most obviously in how she had students use their bodies to differentiate words in a sentence, clapping as each word was read. It is also apparent in the constant repetition of sentences by individual students and the class overall, reinforcing the relationship between spoken and written text and a conceptual awareness of sentence structure. Yet, it was not only the students' bodies that were rhythmically involved in this exercise; an intercorporeality existed between Jane and her students whereby they worked together to construct the text; Jane using a ruler to guide their reading throughout and students responding by saying and finally clapping each word. Jane explained that "everything is very layered in kindergarten", by which she meant that there is an interconnectedness between skills development in speaking and writing, listening and reading. However, the layered nature of the pedagogy at this level is not simply a function of the conceptual relatedness of the various linguistic modes, it has a bodily dimension in that the repetitive techniques which Jane employed resulted in an accumulation of affect which sedimented into habituated skills and knowledge, the foundation upon which more complex understanding is based (Watkins, 2010).

Jane tended to incorporate drill into various aspects of her pedagogic practice. The term 'drill', however, needs some explanation. It is employed here to refer to

an assemblage of techniques that through repetitive use intend the habituation of knowledge and skills. Progressivist pedagogies tend to deride such techniques as artificial, an imposition upon natural development. Given the appropriate stimulus within an enriched learning environment, it is assumed the requisite skills will develop without the need for such active intervention. In contrast, drill and practice is often presented as the dominant methodology of traditional pedagogies used to the point where affect is muted and student understanding is limited. Yet, perhaps the effectiveness of these techniques should be reconsidered especially for teaching the routine and often foundational aspects of subjects. Drill need not necessarily be understood as a procedure whereby students mindlessly repeat information or perform an activity until it becomes engrained; although repetition is undoubtedly a key feature of drill techniques. The notion of drill needs to be reconceptualised as a set of techniques which intend the embodiment of knowledge and skills through the accumulation of affect. While there is a need for repetition, it can be undertaken in various ways. Students can iteratively engage in a combination of related activities that target a similar skill and which over time involve greater degrees of complexity, scaffolding and reinforcing students' learning. Jane's use of drill exemplified this process. She integrated the phonic and graphic representation of letters using an iterative and layered approach in which drill played a major role until "these things [were] cemented in". Jane's practice utilised a quite broad conceptualisation of drill. It didn't simply involve repeating banks of information; it was undertaken in a serial fashion with related skills and knowledge performed repeatedly until they were inscribed within students' bodies and minds. As a result, a greater ease of combining these elements for the purposes of reading and writing was attained, or as she referred to it – "the joy of putting it altogether".

Once the class acquired some command of letter/sound relationships and was beginning to sound out words and incorporate them into their story writing, Jane conducted activities in which this process was modelled for students, serving as a further scaffold to their independent story writing. These activities usually took the form of a joint construction yet, unlike the example already discussed in which students offered whole words to form a text, in these activities Jane helped students to sound out each word and offered assistance with difficult spelling. In one such lesson, she had the class sit on the floor in front of the blackboard which was partly covered with butcher's paper. Jane was on her knees positioned between the board and her students. For this activity, she had students write a short 'story' about one of the teachers at the school who had recently had a baby. After talking about the baby, the class were asked to put some of this information into a sentence. One student offered the sentence, "Mrs Long had a baby boy and his name is Christopher". Jane then chose students to write the sentence on the butcher's paper, one word at a time with the rest of the class mirroring this process with their own 'air writing'. Prior to doing this, each word was sounded out with students clapping each of the separate sounds of simple words and with those that posed some problem, she had the class listen for initial sounds and any others they could discern. Attempts were made and rules were explained. When the sentence was completed, Jane had the class read and clap each word and then placed a full stop at the end, following a similar process with

another sentence. In this activity, layer upon layer of understanding of sounds, letters, words and sentences was accumulated and the regularity with which these and related activities were conducted on an individual, group and whole class basis ensured a heightening of affect and the embodiment of knowledge and skill. Jane didn't prevent her students from independently engaging in story writing until they possessed this capacity; rather, she simply ensured it was a more directed activity given students had limited resources with which to work early in the year. As none of the students in KP was able to write when they commenced kindergarten, few possessed the capacity to work outside these parameters in the first half of the year. However, as their knowledge of letter/sound correspondence and handwriting improved students were writing much longer and more complex texts.

DISCIPLINED TO WRITE

This was the case with all three of the students whose texts are discussed here. As with Narelle's class, Jane supplied work samples from one above average, one average and one lower ability student. Hannah, an Anglo-Australian student, considered of above average ability by Jane, was far less capable than Reuben, Narelle's top student. She was unable to write when she arrived at school and, as with the other students, spent most of her story writing time in the first two terms retelling, tracing and copying; samples of which are provided in Figures 6a and b. In Figure 6c, written during week 1 of Term 3, Hannah begins to display far more confidence in her writing, independently constructing a text about holidays. Many of the words in the text are familiar by this stage of the year, but she also includes relatively new words from the sight word chart and attempts both 'because' and 'going' to produce a complex sentence. In the next sample (Figure 6d), written seven weeks later, Hannah shows an even greater degree of confidence. She has written four sentences and attempted unfamiliar words. Six weeks later, in the final sample, Figure 6e, a text with the sentence beginning provided, Hannah has written seven sentences. She lacks the ability at this stage to produce more coherent text by regularly inserting conjunctions to produce compound sentences but, as is evident in Figure 6c and the last sentence of this text, she is displaying some capacity to do so. Overall the sample set shows Hannah's growing competence in writing as the year progressed. This wasn't only in terms of her story writing ability; the work samples also illustrate a greater control of handwriting with letters becoming smaller and better formed, a competence which allows her to write quite lengthy texts towards the year's end and to focus on simply writing rather than also illustrating her work.

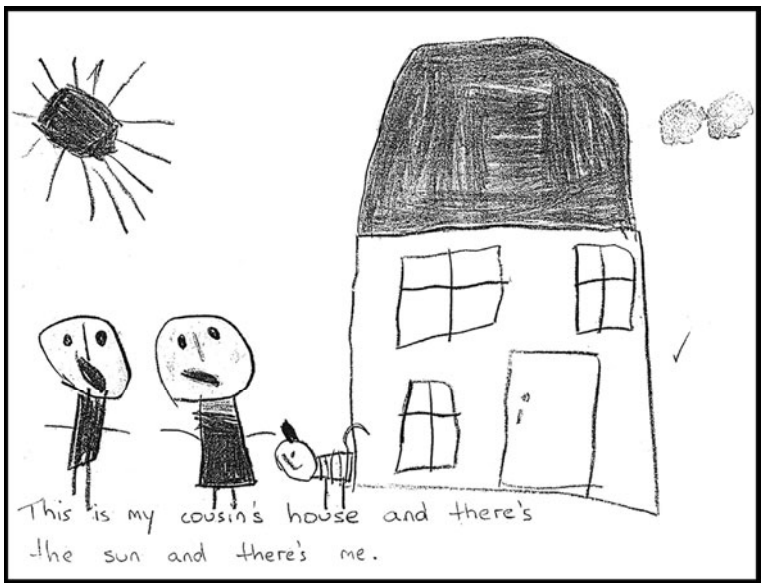

Figure 6a

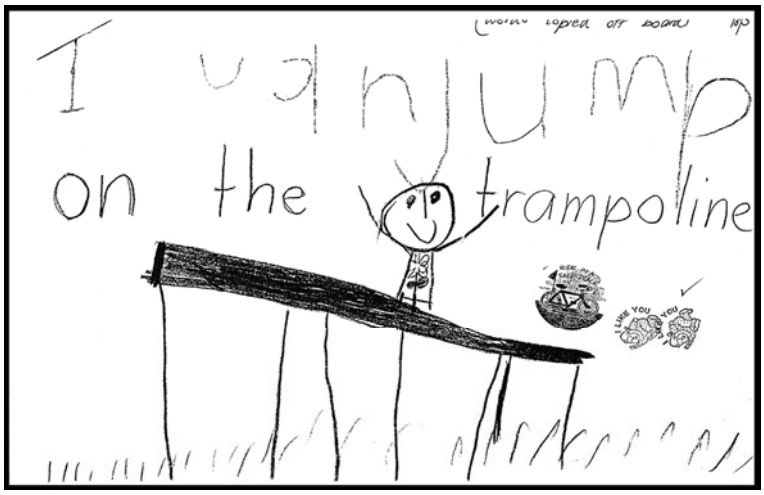

Figure 6b

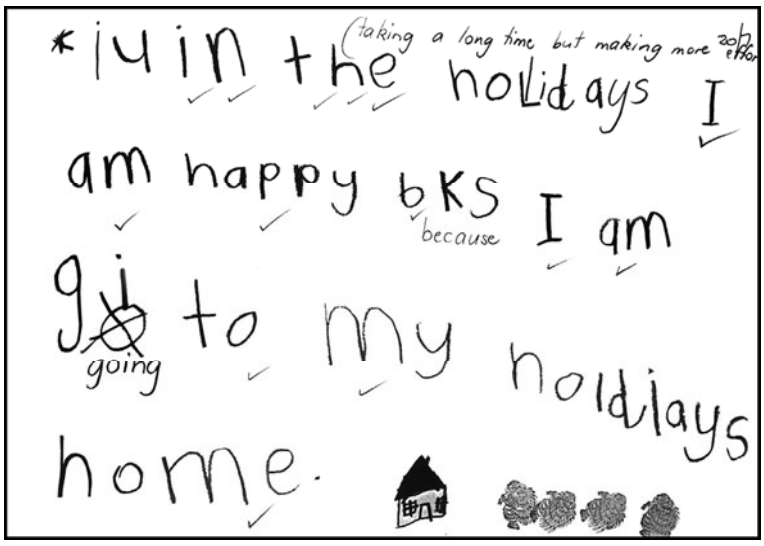

Figure 6c

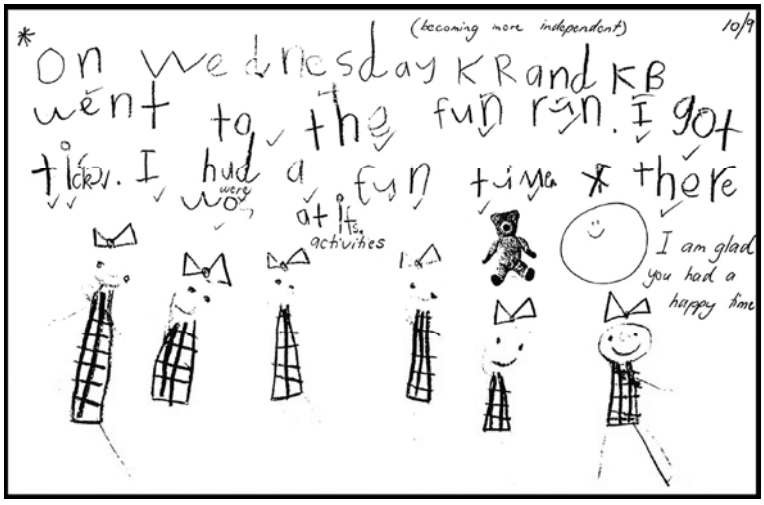

Figure 6d

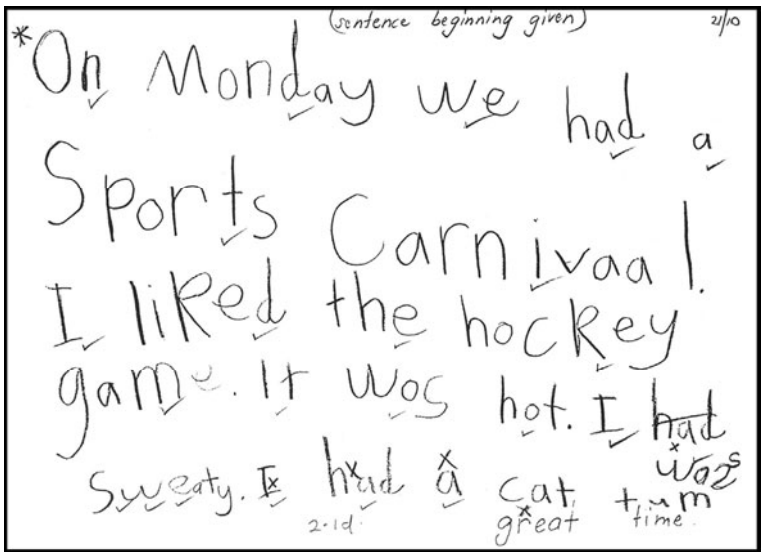

Figure 6e

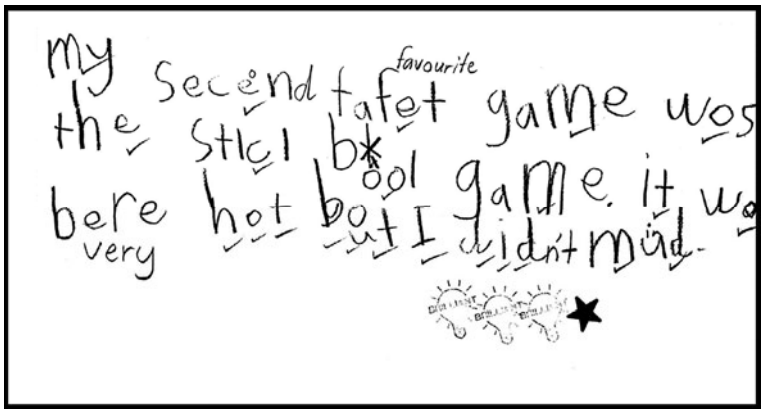

Figure 6e continued.

The second set of texts was written by Matthew, an ESL student whose first language was Mandarin and who Jane judged to be representative of an average student within KP. As with Hannah, Matthew spent much of the beginning of the year retelling, tracing and copying.

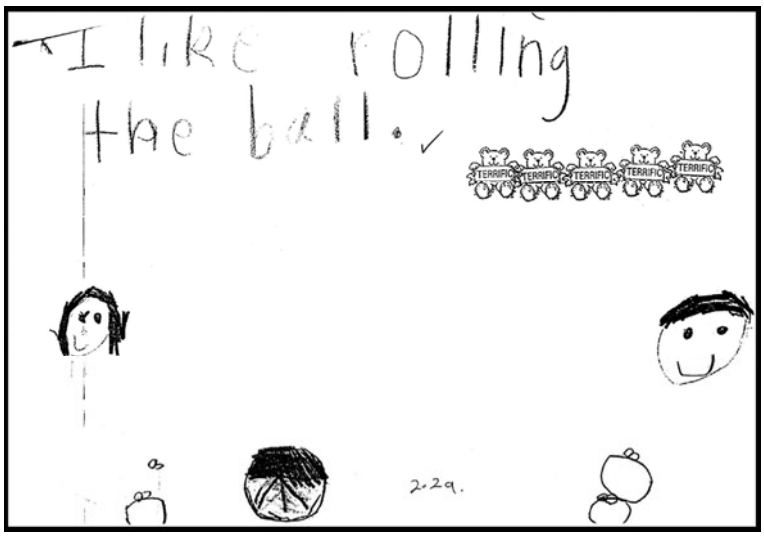

Figure 7a

By the end of Term 1 he was showing considerable competence with his handwriting as is evident in Figure 7a. His letters are well formed and words are regularly spaced. Halfway through Term 2, he was able to competently complete a short text of his own composition (Figure 7b), attempting the unfamiliar word 'titanic'. As with Hannah, Matthew drew most of these words from the sight word chart, with 'titanic' either supplied by Jane or familiarised to the extent that he could reproduce it in his writing. He also includes a quite detailed picture of the ship. With greater phonic understanding towards the end of Term 3, Matthew began to experiment far more, producing quite a lengthy piece of writing in Figure 7c. There is an overuse of 'and' in the first sentence, but he has combined a range of words from the sight word chart with several new words which he has sounded out independently. In the last sample, Figure 7d, with the sentence beginning also supplied by Jane, Matthew produced a lengthy text comprising a complex, compound and simple sentences. He also attempted a number of new words – some successfully, some unsuccessfully – but an increased degree of confidence is evident in his willingness to attempt unfamiliar words and the discipline he has to persist despite repeated mistakes.

The last sample set was written by Daniel, another Mandarin-speaking ESL student who Jane considered representative of her lower band of students. Daniel spent much of his story writing time in Terms 1 and 2 engaged in similar activities to Hannah and Matthew, but he showed far more reluctance to commence writing.

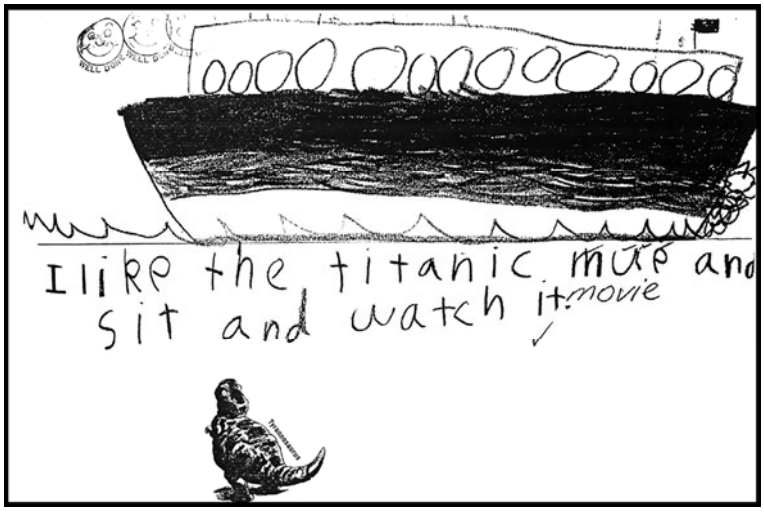

Figure 7b

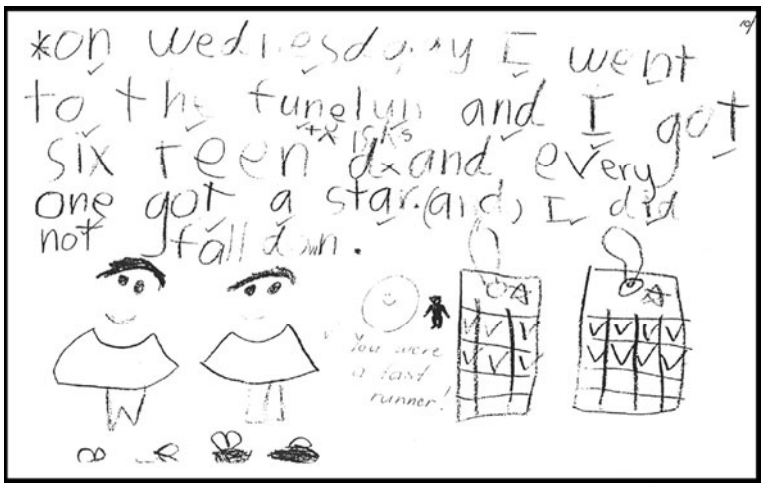

Figure 7c

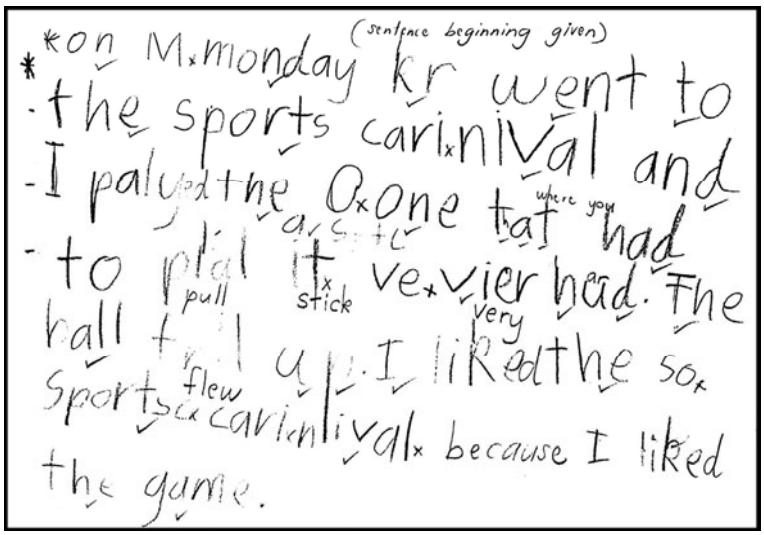

Figure 7d

In one of his first efforts at copying a sentence from the board (Figure 8a) written towards the beginning of Term 2, Daniel displays reasonable control of a pencil despite failing to complete the familiar word 'the' successfully. Five weeks later, as he was given more independence to construct text, his writing appears less confident as he has had to devote far more concentration to the content of his text rather than simply forming letters (Figure 8b). While copied, the first three words are not as well formed as the earlier text and although he manages to write 'I see a' well he has great difficulty with 'red rose'. He has managed to identify the sounds 'e' in 'red' and 'r' and 's' in rose. He was also very close in his first attempt at 'd' in 'red', initially writing the voiceless 't' as opposed to the voiced 'd'. Given his command of English, this is an understandable error. Daniel's attempts at these last two words and the text overall are revealing in a number of ways. In contrast to the texts collected from Narelle's classroom, those from KP reveal far more teacher intervention in the students' construction of text and also a greater degree of application on the part of the students. Writing for Daniel was a difficult task, especially as English was not his first language. Despite this, he persisted with his story writing, reattempting words with and without teacher assistance. As with both Kelly and Anne Marie in KS, Daniel had a tendency to reverse letters. This occurred at times with the letter 's' but, whereas Daniel's work was corrected, the errors in Kelly's and Anne Marie's texts were not. Jane ticked the words Daniel could write correctly without assistance and provided corrections where he did not, a marking procedure evident in other students' work.

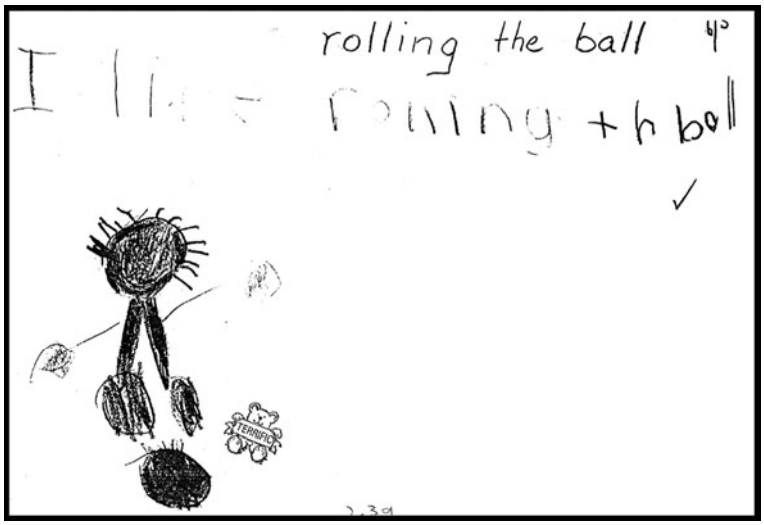

Figure 8a

Figure 8b

These differences in marking and comments on students' work relate very much to Narelle's and Jane's different perspectives on the use of praise and its impact on learning. To Narelle it functioned as a prime motivating force. She made considerable use of stickers as rewards throughout the day and comments on work were always positive. Jane was more sparing with her praise. She devoted time each morning to praising students' efforts in her review of the previous day's work. Stickers, stamps and positive comments, however, only accompanied texts that were correct or showed improvement. Jane felt that "Children have to learn to cope with failure. You have to learn to cope with criticism. If you're constantly being told everything's fantastic and all of a sudden, 'bang' you hit a wall, well children can't handle it". Together with this, the overuse of positive reinforcement can limit its effect. Narelle's tendency to do so seemed to reinforce poor habits rather than provide encouragement for improved effort. This seemed the case with Kelly and Anne Marie. The affective impact of positive reinforcement seems overstated in education. While positive comments can generate a feeling of pride that can be motivational, criticism is not necessarily detrimental. The affective impact of criticism, producing degrees of shame, may equally function as a motivating force, encouraging students to apply themselves far more to a task. Tomkins (1962, p. 368) attached considerable significance to negative affects critiquing progressivist education for its overuse of praise. When coupled with a disciplinary apparatus within a classroom that encourages a disposition for learning, constructive criticism can possess immense pedagogic affect particularly if genuine effort is rewarded with praise. Through such a process, students embody a sense of self-worth grounded in demonstrated achievement.

Figure 8c

Jane's measured use of praise is seen in Daniel's final two texts. In Figure 8c, produced towards the end of Term 3, Jane was not overly complimentary but her ticks are an indication to Daniel that his work is improving and the smiley face she draws provides additional reinforcement. Daniel still displayed problems with some of his letters, such as continuing at times to reverse his 's' but, despite difficulties and numerous mistakes, he persists with the task, self-correcting and reattempting several words. In Figure 8d, written at the beginning of Term 4, Daniel finally appears to have corrected his problem of reversing 's' and while he still displays difficulty with his handwriting, there is a marked improvement from the previous text. His writing shows a greater confidence, not only drawing on words from the sight word chart, but also sounding out words such as 'todei' and 'stri'. Although there is still room for improvement, Daniel made considerable progress throughout the year, particularly given his poor command of English and lack of familiarity with an alphabetic script.

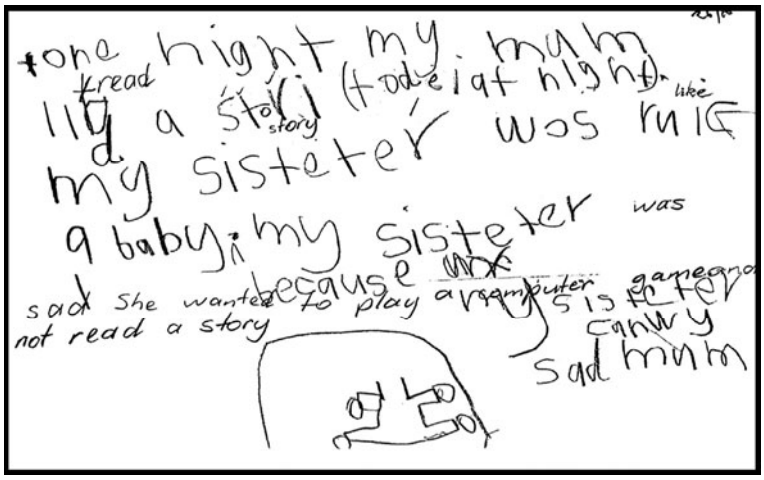

Figure 8d

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although similarities were evident, Jane's and Narelle's approaches to teaching kindergarten how to write differed markedly. Jane's pedagogy exhibited a sensitivity towards the corporeality of learning. This was evident not only in the disciplinary techniques she employed to predispose her students towards the demands of academic labour (reflected most obviously in her classroom's panoptic design and its regimen of quiet and control), but also in her repetitive and carefully scaffolded approach towards curriculum implementation. In teaching writing, Jane aimed to have her students habituate the phonic and graphic representation of

letters to ensure they could then devote a far greater cognitive load towards the complexities of composition. To do this she used a range of 'drill' techniques from simple repetitive exercises to a variety of staged and related activities performed on an iterative basis. The process of constructing text, particularly at this early stage, is an arduous one requiring considerable support. Jane repeatedly modelled the process for her students by working with them as a class to gauge the letters necessary to then form words and sentences. The corporate nature of this approach seemed to heighten its pedagogic affect/effect. Students' learning was consistently supported as they achieved planes of relative independence signifying the incremental embodiment of the skills involved in learning to write. The affective impact of Jane's practice was heightened by the degree of teacher directedness she employed. It was only through the emphasis she placed on this pedagogic mode that she was able to utilise the strategies she did. It also ensured students were kept on task acquiring the skills, knowledge and discipline necessary to work effectively when unassisted.

The same degree of teacher directedness was not evident in Narelle's practice. Although she often conducted short teacher-directed activities, such as the daily phonics drill, she tended to favour self-directed and group-based tasks, particularly in teaching writing. The disciplinary force generated by these pedagogic modes was far less intense than that which existed in Jane's classroom. Students in KS tended to exhibit more relaxed bodily postures; an effect compounded by Narelle's diffused arrangement of the pedagogic space and her classroom regimen of movement and talk. These learning postures lacked the control necessary for effective literate practice and the rigours of academic work. This was not problematic for some students as they had entered kindergarten with the appropriate embodied capital to engage in activities with relatively little assistance, at least at this stage of their learning. For the majority, however, who were not in this category, the lack of disciplinary force tended to simply reinforce an existing habitus that did not predispose them to the complex process of learning to write. Coupled with this, Narelle's pedagogy did not give emphasis to the habituation of the mechanics of handwriting and the construction of text. In kindergarten, students still possess a reasonably plastic habitus; dispositions are not firmly engrained. It is at this formative stage of embodiment that students, as supple bodies, need to acquire a disposition for learning and also the foundational skills involved in literate practice. Without these, learning to write becomes an even more difficult process and students flounder as they engage in the increasingly demanding aspects of writing in the years following kindergarten.

POSTSCRIPT

In the year following this study Jane retired from the teaching profession. Narelle was identified as an exemplary teacher and appointed to a consultancy position within the NSW Department of Education and Training to advise teachers on literacy pedagogy.