A PORTRAIT OF GRACE: 
TEACHING FOR MEANINGFULNESS 
IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

by

Mary Lisa Earp

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the 
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University 
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY 
IN 
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

APPROVED:

Jerome A. Niles, Chair

Joyce Graham

Patricia P. Kelly

Susan G. Magliaro

Terry M. Wildman

April 3, 1996

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Teaching for Meaningfulness, Family Atmosphere, Authentic Activity, School Setting, Therefore Teacher, Graceful Teacher
A PORTRAIT OF GRACE:

TEACHING FOR MEANINGFULNESS IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

by

Mary Lisa Earp

Jerome A. Niles, Chair
Curriculum and Instruction

(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to explore teaching for meaningfulness in a school setting. I feel that a better understanding of teaching for meaningfulness can support the practice of teachers who desire to teach for meaningfulness.

I elected to do a case study using qualitative methods while focusing for five months on a teacher's literacy program. Through this look at the everyday life of one public school teacher and her class a picture of an exemplary example of teaching for meaningfulness could be painted. Interviews, fieldnotes, journals, observations, various site artifacts, and a brief teacher autobiography comprised the primary data collection sources. Informants included a third grade teacher, eighteen third grade students, and a school language arts coordinator.
Data were transcribed and coded to determine those categories in this classroom that related to teaching for meaningfulness. Triangulation provided a systematic means of collecting and analyzing informants' reactions and comments.

The results of the study indicate that in the teacher's classroom, teaching for meaningfulness includes three aspects:

1. The teacher builds a family atmosphere in the classroom through sharing her life with students, providing them with opportunities to share their lives, and promoting acceptance of one another.

2. The teacher provides authentic activity that supports students as they join the cultures of readers and writers. To support this membership in these cultures, the teacher models the use of the skills of the culture, provides activities similar to those of members of the culture, encourages students to discuss their work with other students who desire membership, invites other members of the culture into the classroom, and connects the activity to the lives and interests of students.

3. The teacher negotiates such school constraints as time, space, curriculum, materials, and assessment.

The conclusions of this study suggest that the strength of teaching for meaningfulness lies in the integration of these three aspects by the teacher.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Four years ago I began the adventure of exploring teaching for meaningfulness. Many people have assisted and supported me through this experience, and this document is a direct result of their support. To each of them I am most grateful.

Dr. Jerry Niles, my advisor, has given me his time, attention, thought, and support. In looking at Jerry I see the title of my dissertation: *A Portrait of Grace: Teaching for Meaningfulness in School Settings*. Jerry has shared this gift of grace with me for the past four years and exemplifies a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness.

Pat Kelly, Terry Wildman, Sue Magliaro, and Joyce Graham have each encouraged me to think about learning and teaching in unique ways. I believe that my own students see a glimpse of each of them in the activities I plan and in the manifestation of my personal beliefs about teaching and learning. In addition, I would like to thank Jan Nespor for introducing me to the world of qualitative research.

I am indebted to Joy Marks and the children for inviting me into their class and sharing their beliefs with me. My visits were always welcomed and I came to feel a part of this community. Their openness provided me with a picture of TFM.

One person who has given me numerous things to consider is Father Rob Goldsmith. Some of the ideas I have discussed in this document have their roots in ideas he shared with me.

There are people in my personal life that have supported me throughout this experience. A special thanks goes to the "Friday Night Club": Jim, Laura, Mary Lou,
Bill, Connie, Bob, Dennis, Lynn, Charlie, Maggie, Anne, and its newest member, Mark, for helping me keep things in perspective and encouraging me to take time to play.

Sarah Carper has been a special friend. Discussing possibilities for the future has been therapeutic to say the least.

There are three very special educators who have impacted me as a teacher. Sarah Simmons, Liza Highfill, and Mary Watt have encouraged me when needed and shared their beliefs about teaching and learning as co-learners. As "The Wrong Group" we have had some great times, both as educators and friends.

The faculty and staff at Roland E. Cook Elementary School have supported me throughout this adventure, and I feel lucky to work with such caring and accepting educators. In particular, I would like to thank Deedie Kagey for always understanding when I needed time away from the school for observations or to visit Tech.

In graduate school you need a student support system and Sally Jeffrey and Anita Dutrow have been mine. One of the greatest gifts I take with me from Virginia Tech is our friendship.

My husband, Bayne Sandridge, has been beside me through this entire adventure as confidant, computer expert, support system, proofreader, and partner. I look forward to our next adventure, whatever that might be.

And, finally, my parents, Jane and Buddy Earp, have been there for me during this adventure as well as during all my past adventures. In any endeavor I have undertaken, they have supported me unconditionally. They are my greatest cheerleaders, my role

v
models, and my heroes. I am truly blessed to have such wonderful parents; I hope I have made them proud.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: BEGINNINGS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating This Story</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: TEACHING FOR MEANINGFULNESS...</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a Family Atmosphere</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining a New Culture</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The School Setting</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing a Family Atmosphere</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Her Life With Students</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' Sharing of Their Own Lives</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting the Distinctness of Individuals</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting Differing Abilities</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting One Another</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;We&quot; Classroom</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: JOINING THE CULTURES OF READERS AND WRITERS</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Activity</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature of Authentic Activity</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills of the Culture</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling by the Teacher</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Teacher Writing Conferences</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Connections with Other Members of the Culture</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assuming the Role of the Writer</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE: TEACHING FOR MEANINGFULNESS IN A SCHOOL SETTING......................................................... 114
Therefore and However Teachers......................................................... 130
Curriculum......................................................................................... 132
Using a Thematic Approach................................................................. 138
Assessment......................................................................................... 139
Self-Assessment.................................................................................. 143
Instances of Incompatibility in School or Parental Expectations and Teaching for Meaningfulness................................. 144
The Therefore Teacher and Assessment................................................ 145
Materials.............................................................................................. 145
Skills and Strategies........................................................................... 148
Mandated Skills and SOL's Covered in the Scene................................... 150
Space................................................................................................. 151
Time................................................................................................. 153
Time and Writing Workshop................................................................. 156
Schools That Empower......................................................................... 159
The Proof Is in the Children................................................................. 160
Conclusion.......................................................................................... 161

CHAPTER SIX: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER FOR MEANINGFULNESS.......................................................... 162
Three Aspects of Teaching for Meaningfulness................................. 183
Teaching for Meaningfulness in Joy's Class......................................... 185
Considering Family Holiday Customs................................................ 186
Teacher Sharing of a Personal Story...................................................... 188
Students' Writing of Family Stories...................................................... 190
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. MANIFESTATION OF TEACHER'S PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH TASKS AND ACTIONS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. STUDENTS' MANIFESTATION OF PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH ACTIONS AND WORDS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. MEANINGFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. MODEL OF TRUST IN A CLASSROOM SETTING</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CLASSROOMS THAT PROVIDE ONLY A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CLASSROOMS THAT PROVIDE ONLY AUTHENTIC ACTIVITY</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. CLASSROOMS THAT PROVIDE ONLY THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. CLASSROOMS THAT PROVIDE TWO ASPECTS OF TEACHING FOR MEANINGFULNESS</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CLASSROOMS THAT PROVIDE THE THREE ASPECTS OF TEACHING FOR MEANINGFULNESS</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings

One spring I was asked by two local college Student Education Associations to speak from the perspective of a reading specialist about the reading-writing connection. I remember walking into the meeting with a box loaded with materials and books used by my reading students at a local elementary school. My session would highlight using trade books to help students make connections between these pieces of literature and mandated school objectives and as an entry point into writing.

As I looked around the room, one face seemed familiar, and I soon realized that Becky Adams, a student I taught in fourth grade during my first year of teaching, was present as a member of the organization. Our resulting conversation caused me to reflect upon my journey as a teacher since working with her. Eleven years of teaching experiences rushed through my mind as I quickly considered the growth and change in my beliefs about teaching and learning since my first year of teaching.

I remember, as a first-year teacher, being informed of the county policy that all basal reader stories must be read and all "skill practice" sheets and workbook pages completed. Students were grouped homogeneously, and skills were taught directly out of the teacher's guide. I made several attempts to include real literature as part of our reading program. A study of four trade books provided a deviation from the basal. One

---

1 Pseudonyms have been used for all names of participants with the exception of the researcher.
trade book was read in small groups which gave students an opportunity to cooperatively answer story questions rather than individually.

The sequence of the math book dictated math instruction. I would explain the math process and then assign math problems for classwork and homework. Science and social studies lessons entailed reading the textbook, lecture, copying notes, and answering questions about the topic.

I asked students to write every day but frequently assigned this as homework. Skill work associated with grammar occupied much of the time designated for "writing." At that time, I believe I saw my teaching responsibilities comprised of sharing with students, usually through a one-way discourse or "teacher talk" (Shor, 1992), the things I and/or the school felt students should know and then constantly checking to see if they could recite this knowledge. It is almost as though "good" teaching was synonymous with total school control; the school and I decided what students needed to know and how it was to be learned. This view of schooling now makes me think of Shor's "zero paradigm," which defines students as "deficits to be filled with skills, words, and facts, ignoring the culture they bring to class" (p. 200).

In retrospect, I think my efforts to include trade books and writing demonstrated an attempt to provide students with a variety of literacy opportunities. I saw reading as more than scanning stories in the basal and completing worksheets related to these stories. I remembered my love and enjoyment of books as a child and wanted my students to experience this enjoyment. To be writers, I knew that students needed to
write, but feared being intrusive. The mandated curriculum left little time to do reading beyond the basal. I knew I wanted "more" for my students, but incorporating additional reading and writing experiences into the program appeared problematic. My continued attempts to bring additional literature and writing into the classroom left me questioning what I desired in my literacy program and how to achieve this goal.

When I accepted a position as a Chapter I reading and math teacher several years later, the program involved teaching specific district Chapter I objectives through the use of materials different from those being used in "regular" classrooms. In Chapter I math classes, a self-paced program I designed involved students in solving computational problems, playing math-based games, and working with manipulatives. Trade books provided a resource for teaching reading skills required by the Chapter I program, district, and state. Language experience stories used the students' language to write class books about topics of their choice.

Three real origins for my decisions about the types of activities to be used in my Chapter I classes come to mind: a Chapter I emphasis on the use of supplementary materials, three years of teaching and observing children, and the experiences, interactions, and related professional reading from my graduate program. Through grounding writing instruction in the students' language, I believed their stories could be used to teach reading. I maintained that adequate time based on individual needs should be provided for students to acquire the math skills. As a Chapter I teacher, I worked to
provide activities for my students that met their individual needs and connected to their language.

Several years later I accepted the position of school language arts coordinator. In this situation, I worked with students throughout the school in the areas of reading and writing. While unit tests and workbooks continued to be mandatory components of the language arts program, alternative materials such as trade books now provided options. Our basal reading series used a controlled vocabulary and included numerous excerpts, so I found myself replacing some of these stories with trade books. I attempted to select literature that would inspire students to read.

The district's policy eventually changed again, allowing teachers to select, with the district's approval, reading materials to be used. Mandated skills included the Virginia Department of Education Standards of Learning (1989) and those skills in the basal. Through this change an even greater variety of materials and methods could be considered in my teaching.

I see the next changes in my teaching as my most significant, and in some ways I consider this to be my embarkation into student empowerment. I began making a conscious effort to share control with my students through providing opportunities for them to make decisions about topics or books we would explore, subjects about which to write, and projects to be assessed. School experiences often related to those of their everyday lives, for example, a study of the newspaper resulted in news stories and editorials written about the students' individual experiences and issues of personal
importance. This type of teaching encouraged the acceptance of differing beliefs and opinions as practiced by the students and modeled by me.

Shor (1992) describes the teacher’s need “to listen carefully to students to draw out the themes and words from which critical curricula are built” (p. 54). Listening closely to the children provided information that led to classroom experiences which promoted more active student participation. Acceptance of the distinctness of individuals, those things that made the student unique, became a part of our social interactions. Students were encouraged to share differing opinions and consider a variety of possibilities rather than being expected to consider only those possibilities shared by the teacher or the textbook. Instead of focusing on weaknesses and remediation, a focus on strengths and building upon these strengths became a major emphasis.

A new consideration of the classroom environment brought about changes in the classroom rule system. For example, in the past, students were only allowed to share their work with one another when specifically stated by me. We changed this “rule” to “You can talk to one another or me [the teacher] about your work at any time unless I specifically ask you not to.” This change arose based on three emerging personal beliefs: learning is social (Vygotsky, 1978); students can learn a great deal from one another through sharing ideas, opinions, and possibilities; and in-school social interactions and discourse should be similar to those outside the school environment.
I don't think I truly considered the importance of empowering students through classroom discourse until reading about it in *Empowering Education* (Shor, 1992). Shor speaks of rules for talking as "a key mechanism for empowering or disempowering students" (p. 14) and describes one quality of empowering classroom dialogue as "situated in the conditions and cultures of the students so that their language, themes, understandings, levels of development, and needs are the starting points" (p. 88). I think my attempts to open opportunities for students to share their ideas, understandings, and opinions with other students demonstrated a belief in building upon their current knowledge. In addition, their discussions furthered my understanding of them as learners; they provided entry points: openings for connections between school activities and their lives. We began to set rules that allowed for differences in beliefs as well as acceptance of and respect for individual beliefs.

My teaching involved three important questions: What do the children need to know? Why do they need to know that? How can I help them learn that? I found my answers to what children need to know focused on things they could use outside of school. The "why" of needing to know these things centered on being able to make competent decisions in life and having the skills, knowledge, and experience to do so. How to help them learn revolved around making the experiences in which students participated in school more like those of real life in a classroom environment that encouraged risk-taking, experimenting, exploring new ideas and possibilities, and
respecting different opinions and experiences. I shared my beliefs about "a quality education" in a piece I wrote for a local organization:

A quality education is one where parent, teacher, and child work together to help each child develop to his or her full potential. Parents begin this educational process by spending time with the child, reading and talking with the child, and providing a good role model for the child. Since children want to be like their parents, the role model provided is the one the child will emulate.

A quality education continues at school. It involves teaching those skills and strategies necessary to function in the world. But, more importantly, it is a caring, nurturing environment where children feel comfortable enough to take chances, experiment, and try new things. This environment helps to build in children the self-confidence and knowledge to make good decisions for themselves.

A quality education is a cooperative effort between parent, teacher, and child. It enables children to become productive, contributing members of society. (Earp, 1990)

In considering experiences for my students, I attempted to plan activities that built connections between the school activity and its use in their present and future lives. Literacy, for example, was placed in the context of its use in everyday life. School activities became more authentic (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 34), or more like
that of a reader or writer. Students were positioned as problem solvers rather than passive recipients of information. They began exploring possibilities and sharing and supporting their opinions. An environment which promoted risk taking, respect, and trust among members developed in our classroom.

All of these things led to what I call "Teaching for Meaningfulness." In teaching for meaningfulness, or TFM, helping students build connections between school experiences and their use in real life provided a goal. I felt that helping students make connections between school activities and their lives and experiences enhanced their school learning as well as supported positive attitudes about learning. Relationships built on mutual respect and trust encouraged students to share their lives and interests with others, express opinions, explore new possibilities, and undertake unfamiliar activities. Also, I wanted this learning to be long-term or what some teachers have described to me as internalized. For this type of learning to occur, I felt students had to see the learning as important and useful in their present and future lives. I hoped that our school activities would help them gain knowledge of a subject area or concept and lead to an understanding of the concept's use in other aspects of their lives.

Helping students make these connections was not always without complications. In situations where there was limited motivation to learn on the part of the students, I had to find ways that would make this learning more interesting and relevant to them. I attempted to make connections between the lives and interests of students and our school activities, but some students displayed a lack of willingness to share these lives and
interests. Time constraints of the school day limited and often brought an early conclusion to our discussions. My work caused me to diligently consider new possibilities for addressing these complications.

As students participated in what I considered to be meaningful experiences in the classroom, I observed changes in them. They began to read more than in the past and to see books as useful in a variety of situations. Their writing grew more complex, and they spent more time revising and editing their pieces. Suggestions during peer editing became critical from the perspective of a reader to a writer and as two writers supporting one another. Students' thinking seemed deeper as they considered not only the literal aspects of what they were reading but also the concepts that could be used in their everyday lives. I think I was seeing what Shor (1992) might call "critical literacy" which Shor describes as follows:

Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (p. 129)

My excitement about teaching for meaningfulness in my own classroom encouraged me to explore this type of teaching and its results. I began taking classes about teaching, learning, and research. These classes and the associated discussions,
interactions, professional literature, and writing caused me to consider new and extended possibilities related to teaching for meaningfulness. Opportunities to interview and observe teachers whom I believed were teaching for meaningfulness and their students allowed me to continue my search for a broader understanding of this type of teaching.

As I continued to explore teaching for meaningfulness, I decided to take a more in-depth look at this teaching while searching outside my personal practice. To do so I needed to find an exemplary example of the type of teaching I wanted to study. A teacher at a local elementary school came to mind. Joy Marks was preparing to begin her eighth year of teaching at a K-5 elementary school located in a predominately middle income area of a local county school system. In the preceding five years, Joy had been teaching second grade and was preparing to enter her first year as a third grade teacher. Twenty-five children would be entering this classroom on the first day of school. Joy's teaching fit my current understanding of teaching for meaningfulness. I felt that observing and talking with Joy and her students would further my growth in understanding of teaching for meaningfulness.

For the next five months I spent considerable time observing and talking with Joy, observing and talking with her students, talking with her colleagues, and participating in an inservice on writing workshop taught by Joy and a colleague. I focused on the area of literacy based upon my personal interest in literacy issues as well as time constraints associated with my teaching responsibilities.
Prior to the beginning of the school year, Joy and I discussed her beliefs about teaching and learning and her experiences as a teacher. In addition, Joy wrote a short autobiography as a means of sharing her history with me.

After school began I visited Joy's classroom a total of ten times. Eight of these visits involved observing and videotaping literacy activities in which the class was participating and then interviewing and audiotaping Joy and some of the students as they discussed the classroom activity. I entered each interview with a list of questions, or an interview plan, that related to teaching for meaningfulness and these questions and additional ideas that arose were discussed. In fieldnotes, I described the occurrences of each visit. Joy and I had hoped to keep a journal but issues of time soon resulted in its discontinuation. I was able to attend a workshop taught by Joy and her school language arts coordinator, Jane Ross, entitled "Writing Workshop in the K-5 Classroom," which allowed me to hear Joy describe her teaching and her beliefs in a setting designed as a forum to share these beliefs with colleagues. I completed my exploration five months after its origination, one month prior to the birth of Joy's first child. (For a detailed description of this methodology see Appendix A.)

In my mind, I began to form a picture of Joy's teaching as a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness. Joy's beliefs and goals were first introduced in an early conversation:

My main goal would be to get the children to love learning so that they can take this with them for the rest of their lives. I hope that beyond the
walls of this room they will want to soak up all this world has to offer. I
want to teach them that so that this love for learning never changes. I
want to teach them very much a love for this world and for each other. I
think if you teach them a love for nature and a love for our world then
conservationalism and environmentalism are both going to come with it.
If you can teach children the wonder of a tree as it changes through the
seasons then they're going to think trees are pretty awesome and they're
not going to want to destroy them. So I think you can teach a lot that way.
That's what I want to do, let them go with values of caring and loving our
world and each other and loving learning. Self-esteem is real important.
That comes out with their writing because they're writing about their lives
and they're learning that their lives are important. They each learn that
their life is a story and the things that happen to them are very important.
What they think about things really makes a difference.

Joy also described her hopes for the children as learners:

I want kids who want to be at school, who want to learn, who are excited
about learning. I want risk takers who want to try new things, who aren't
afraid to try new things, and who will share what they know.

Joy explained how she promotes and supports this risk taking:

The family atmosphere in the classroom is just vital, very supportive, very
loving in that we're all in this together. Everybody's going to act like a
goof someday. We all have bad days and we all have good days but we're all in it together. We support each other. The fact that there's not a wrong answer very often helps. If you ask an open-ended question instead of a yes or no, right or wrong question, then if they have some totally off the wall response you're safer to respond with "That is a very interesting answer" rather than "I don't know where you got that." That kind of responding encourages them to open up and try and to share what they can with the class.

Joy's invitational and accepting nature opens the door for learning, sharing, and acceptance in her classroom.

**Navigating This Story**

For practicing and preservice teachers who are interested in teaching for meaningfulness, this book provides a view of a classroom where this type of teaching is apparent. A series of five scenes taken directly from the videotapes provide the reader with a picture of daily occurrences in Joy's classroom. The word *scenes* reminded me of an experience during a recent trip to New York City. I attended a Broadway play, and I can recall the feeling of being absorbed by every scene, of feeling a part of the action that was occurring on the stage. I believe that sharing each scene from Joy's classroom in its entirety will allow the reader a similar feeling of being a part of the action occurring in this classroom. Each scene, selected to illustrate an aspect of TFM or their integration, is
preceded by a short introduction to some aspect or aspects of teaching for
meaningfulness to be discussed related to that scene and is followed by a discussion of
the scene's manifestation of teaching for meaningfulness.

Chapter 2 begins with an explanation of teaching for meaningfulness. This is
followed by the first scene and a brief discussion of the three aspects of teaching for
meaningfulness using the scene from Joy's classroom as the focal point. Chapters 3, 4,
and 5 each begin with a short explanation of an aspect of teaching for meaningfulness to
be discussed followed by a scene and then concluding with a more detailed discussion of
the scene occurrences as related to the corresponding aspect of teaching for
meaningfulness. Chapter 3 focuses on the atmosphere that Joy works with the students to
build. Chapter 4 describes Joy's use of authentic activity (Brown et al., 1989, p. 34) that
relates to the lives and interests of the students. Joy's negotiation of the school setting is
discussed in Chapter 5. A final scene in Chapter 6 is then used to illustrate the
integration of the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness in the classroom.

These scenes and the accompanying discussions are intended to generate new
possibilities by the reader associated with teaching for meaningfulness. The idea is not
to be a teacher who is identical to Joy but rather a teacher who considers the classroom
environment, the school activity, and the school setting in a way that leads to teaching for
meaningfulness.
CHAPTER TWO

Teaching for Meaningfulness

Imagine a classroom community where students and the teacher are comfortable sharing their lives, interests, and beliefs with other members. In this classroom community students feel safe and secure taking risks and participating in unfamiliar ventures. The distinctness that individualizes each student is accepted and respected by students and the teacher. Trust as well as learning and laughter are apparent. Shared experiences help form a bond among members. A feeling of family fills the room.

Imagine a classroom where students, working to become writers and readers, participate in activities like those of readers and writers and are filled with a desire to join these cultures. Connections between these activities and the prior knowledge, experiences, lives, and interests of each student are promoted by the teacher and the activities she creates. The teacher, as a reader and writer, models for students the activity of readers or writers and supports students as they practice cultural nuances of each. Classroom interactions and activities include analyses of skills used by readers and writers, self-assessments of individual progress, and support for one another as readers and writers.

Imagine this community and activity built in a school setting. State and local educational mandates are covered, but in the atmosphere and activity described above.

Imagine a teacher who could build and support such a classroom.
The type of classroom just depicted is a classroom where the teacher teaches for meaningfulness. "Teaching for meaningfulness" describes the process in which school experiences and environments are considered, built, and reflected upon by the teacher in the attempt to provide students, as participants, with opportunities to build connections between school tasks, those of the culture to which the learner desires entry, and their daily lives and experiences. Students are encouraged in a desire to join the culture through the teacher's actions as well as their participation in the activity.

Teaching for meaningfulness, or TFM, focuses on the reflective nature of the teacher as practitioner (Schön, 1983) as she considers the tasks that are part of meaningful experiences for students as well as the types of relationships that support meaningful participation in these experiences. Classroom activity is situated in the authentic activity of the culture (Brown et al., 1989, p. 34). Teachers as members of the culture provide students with support that enables them to grow as members. Classroom relationships support learners in their growth as a member of the culture.

Certain factors related to the teacher's understanding of meaningfulness promote TFM. The teacher's personal practical knowledge, which Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define as an emphasis on "the teacher's knowing of a classroom" found "in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions" (p. 25), manifests itself through tasks and actions provided by the teacher (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Manifestation of teacher's personal practical knowledge through tasks and actions.

Consider the following scenario: A teacher desires to provide opportunities for students to select writing topics. A childhood experience of desiring to select her own topics initiates this consideration. Interactions with other educators and professional literature about writing inspires the teacher to include self-selection of topics by students as part of the literacy program. Observing students' desire to write about topics of their own choosing supports the teacher's desire to provide these opportunities. This belief strengthens as the teacher observes student participation. A desire for students to become literate writers encourages the teacher to continue this activity. The teacher's decision to provide students with opportunities to select writing topics results from her past experiences, present beliefs, and desires for the future.

Teachers constantly renegotiate personal practical knowledge, considering present knowledge to initiate activities for students and then, through observations of
student participation, reconsidering this knowledge. In addition, encounters outside the classroom with other educators, professional literature, and general life experiences provide the teacher with additional ideas to consider.

The lives, interests, and experiences of students play an important role in teaching for meaningfulness. Each student comes to school with a form of personal practical knowledge (PPK), the student's knowing of a classroom found in the student's past experiences, present mind and body, and future plans and actions. The manifestation of this personal practical knowledge through each student's participation in classroom activities provides the teacher with information about student meaningfulness (see Figure 2).
manifestation through actions and words

Student

PPK

Student

PPK

Student

PPK

Figure 2. Students' manifestation of personal practical knowledge (PPK) through actions and words.

The teacher's beliefs about student meaningfulness manifest themselves through the teacher's language, actions, interactions, and planned classroom activities. Students' beliefs about meaningfulness manifest themselves through students' participation in these activities as well as through their language, interactions, and actions. Meaningfulness in the classroom is the intersection of the teacher's manifestation of meaningfulness and the students' manifestation of meaningfulness (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Meaningfulness in the classroom.
Different dimensions of meaningfulness relate to this intersection: meaningfulness specific to an individual student and the teacher (see Figure 3, striped areas), meaningfulness specific to the teacher and some but not all students (see Figure 3, checked areas), meaningfulness specific to some students but not the teacher (see Figure 3, dotted areas), meaningfulness specific to individual students or the teacher (see Figure 3, white areas), and meaningfulness for the teacher and all students (see Figure 3, shaded area).

It is important to note the dynamic nature of TFM as the different areas of intersection are in constant flux for both teacher and student (see Figure 3). The teacher who teaches for meaningfulness continually seeks to enlarge these areas of intersection.

In teaching for meaningfulness, the teacher, in the school setting, attempts to increase these intersections through creating tasks that connect to the lives, interests, and experiences of each student and reflect the activity of members of the culture in their everyday practice. An accepting, respectful, trusting atmosphere encourages students to share their lives and interests as well as take risks, explore new possibilities, and participate in unfamiliar activities.

Another focus in teaching for meaningfulness is the connection between the in-school and everyday lives of students. For this connection to be made, students must feel safe and comfortable sharing these everyday lives with the teacher and with other students. In addition, the teacher's knowledge of each student is of utmost importance. The teacher uses her interactions with each student to learn about their everyday lives.
Teaching for meaningfulness includes the nature of teacher knowledge of students, how this knowledge is gathered, and how it is used.

The goal in teaching for meaningfulness is to increase these intersections, or areas, of meaningfulness. Possibilities for increasing these intersections can now be considered. The classroom we will visit provides some insight into how one teacher teaches for meaningfulness.

The first scene can be used to consider how Joy, the teacher introduced in Chapter 1, begins to build the relationships and community in her classroom. Incidents allow insight into Joy's knowledge of students and the nature of this knowledge. Connections develop between school activities and the lives and interests of students as they participate in activity similar to that of writers. In addition, the activity covers school mandated skills.
"This is the moment you've been waiting for."

Joy smiled at the students and asked them to get their writer's notebooks.

"What we are doing is so important," Joy began, "and this is the moment we have been waiting for for such a long time. Those of you who had me last year know what a big day this is...and a lot of you have been asking me since the beginning of school, 'When are we going to start writing workshop?,' because you love it so much. Well, this is the time when we are going to start writing workshop."

Joy began talking with the children about writing workshop. She described how, for some students, writing workshop would be a new experience. For those who were in her class the past year as second graders this would be an opportunity to share their personal knowledge of writing workshop, its logistics, and their feelings about this activity.

Joy asked children who had previously participated in writing workshop to share some of their thoughts and experiences about this classroom activity. Elizabeth launched the discussion. "I think writing workshop is something you can look forward to because you can learn more things about life and you can learn from other people's books."

Joy reiterated Elizabeth's comment. "Elizabeth talked about several things. We are going to learn about reading other people's writing. We are going to write books and publish. This is a fun time to learn about being a writer."

Nick continued, "In writing workshop, it's not like you have to write about one thing, you can write about anything you want."
At this point Joy related a story from her personal experiences of writing. In a quiet voice she began, "When I was in school I never had a teacher who said, 'You can write about anything you want.' Now you are going to get that opportunity. My teachers would say to write a story about frogs or George Washington. Maybe that day I didn't feel like writing a story about George Washington. I always wrote the story because I respected my teachers and I followed rules, but I may have wanted to write a story about my little brother and how he crawled under the cabinet and dumped cereal all over the floor." Joy and the children looked at each other and began to laugh.

"Now sometimes I will tell you what to write about but not in writing workshop. This is totally your time," added Joy.

Next Rebecca shared her feelings. "In writing workshop, I felt free to write whatever I wanted. If I got stuck on one subject I could do something else."

"How many of you have gotten stuck?" Joy asked. A number of students raised their hands. "All writers have this happen to them. It happens to grown-ups, too. If you get stuck, you can go on to something else. That's what writers do."

The discussion then turned to the students' roles as authors. Joy explained, "Writing workshop is a time when you get to be an author. You'll have a private writing studio at your desk. All writers have one. This is your private thinking space."

In anticipation of the question of topic Joy pronounced, "You might ask, 'What do we write about, Mrs. Marks?' That is totally up to you. We are going to talk about
getting ideas. Sometimes you may work on a book for months. Sometimes you will write shorter stories. That's completely up to you."

The discussion about ideas continued. "You have a writer's notebook. When I read a wonderful story to you and when you get great ideas you put them in here. Yesterday I read some of the stories you have written and they were amazing. You guys are already authors because your writing has begun. The reason you have your writer's notebook is you may want to use these ideas."

Joy then moved on to a specific example. "Josh, may I mention your story?"

Josh responded, "Yes."

"Josh wrote about the time he went to Matthew's house. He might want to write a story about Matthew and the fun times they have, and knowing Matthew that will probably be a pretty exciting book. Jessica wrote about her grandfather and how she's teaching him to speak English. I think that would make an incredible book. Nick wrote in his notebook about what he and his dad did one weekend. He could write 'Nick's Cub Scout Adventures.'"

Joy then moved to a discussion of the distinctness of each person's life stories. "I could never tell you what to write about because I do not live your life. I live my life and I have many stories to tell. There is no way I could know about Nick's incredible weekend unless Nick chose to tell that story. Every single one of you has an incredible life and wonderful stories to tell. You might think the events in your lives are just ordinary things and no one would want to hear about them but when you become a
writer you will be amazed at what people think when they hear your writing. They care about you and your writing."

Next, writer's notebooks were described as sources for ideas. "Your writer's notebook is an idea notebook. Do you have to use an idea in here?"

Some of the students responded, "No."

Joy continued, "Of course not, but you can use it as a reference."

The class discussion then moved towards the logistics of writing workshop. Joy began, "Let's talk about what writers do during writing workshop time. We won't go into a great deal of detail because I want to give you some time to write, but let's talk about what writers do. When writers write they go through five steps. There are different names for the steps. When you get to fourth grade your teacher may call it something different. What's the first thing a writer does?"

Maggie listed the first step of writing, the thinking stage. Joy shared, "The thinking stage might last awhile and that's okay. It's a quiet time. Ms. Earp asked me to write a story about my life and boy, talk about thinking. I had to spend a lot of time in this stage. It was hard for me. I had to go back to when I was a little girl and used to play school all the way up to today."

Joy introduced the next stage. "After this time when you've got so many wonderful ideas, then you're ready to get them down. They do not go out your mouth; they go down your arm, out your pencil, and then, Josh, what stage are you in?"

Josh answered, "Sloppy copy."
"Why do we call it sloppy copy?"

Bryan responded, "Because we do not worry about spelling."

"We do not worry about spelling. We do not worry about making it perfect to turn in. We do not even worry about erasing. If you spell something wrong you can mark through it and fix it right beside it. If you want to change something you can draw arrows. This takes the longest time, when you're writing down those ideas."

Joy introduced the third stage. "Next is something you have to do all by yourself."

Elizabeth stated, "Revise."

Joy continued, "That's the revising stage. You are looking at something again. You are going to look at your writing again and ask yourself some questions that we'll talk about next time. Then what, Brittany?"

"Editing."

Joy smiled, "That's when you get with your editor-in-chief who is no other than..."

The students shouted, "Mrs. Marks."

"And I'll help you fix those last little things in your writing," Joy commented.

"Being third graders you can probably fix most of these things yourself. I'll just help you with the things you have left out. If Eve Bunting had published one of her incredible books and did not spell words right, if she left out some things and she did not catch them, if she published the book and put it on the shelf and there were some misspelled
words, wouldn't she be embarrassed? Every author has an editor. The editor does not ever change the ideas but double checks the spelling, periods, and all that important stuff. The editor makes sure it looks just fine."

"Then we get to the final and most exciting stage of all." Hands flew into the air and began waving. "If you know it you can say it."

"Publishing!"

Joy continued, "Yes, oh, you guys know so much from second grade. I'm so impressed you remember. This is probably my favorite stage, either this or the thinking stage. Publishing is where you have finished your story and you are ready to share it with the world. When you publish it you put it in final book form. Then we'll put it in the author's crate. It will be there to show Mom, Dad, any teachers who come in, and the whole world! It will be wonderful. It's a real exciting thing. Elizabeth, you brought in a book you published last year. Would you hold it up and tell us about it?"

Elizabeth held up her book. "This is a book I published last year. It's about my dog, and it took me a long time."

"Thank you very much," Joy commended. "If some of you forgot, that was sort of for inspiration. Elizabeth and Amanda brought in their portfolios from last year. What's inside, Amanda?"

"Stories and sloppy copies and creative writings we did last year."
"Yes, absolutely. Look at that, it's bulging! At the end of the year yours will look like that. We'll remember today and our shiny new covers and our blank pages inside and we'll probably laugh. It is going to expand like you would not believe."

"To get us started today I would like each of you to take some notebook paper and put it on the right hand side of your folder. Then put one sheet on the left hand side. You're going to write on it, so you may not want to put it in the pocket just yet. Put 'Ideas' at the top of the sheet. Last year we called it something else. What was it?"

"Idea menu."

"Right. This is still an idea menu but we are going to call it 'Ideas.' We are growing up a lot in our writing so we are going to change some of the things that we do. This is one of the most important pages in our folder because it's going to contain all our ideas. It's a place we consult or go to for help when we're stuck on an idea. Do you think Nicole's idea list is going to be like Brittany's? Is Nicole's life like Brittany's?"

"No," replied some students.

"Not even close. So every single person is going to have different ideas. The first thing I want you to do is take a look in your writer's notebooks at some of the ideas you've written about in here. If you can find one that would make something wonderful to write a book about, jot it down on your idea list."

The children quietly began writing ideas on their lists.

Several minutes later Joy said, "Raise your hand if you were able to find at least one idea from your writer's notebook." Every hand in the room rose. "Good. Sometimes
the things in your writer’s notebooks may not spring an idea and that’s okay. Is there anyone who would like to share one? If someone shares an idea and it reminds you of something, could you write that on your idea sheet?”

"Yeah."

"We call that stealing ideas. When you are a writer you have a license to steal ideas. It’s sort of like in Harriet the Spy. If Chase says something and you say, ‘Oh, that would be great,’ write it down.”

Chase shared, "A beach trip."

Joy encouraged, "If it feels good, steal it and write it down on your idea menu."

"A trip to Busch Gardens and the beach," listed Elizabeth.

Martha added, "A pet story."

"Martin Luther King," inserted Maggie.

"Helping with a baby," said Rebecca.

"Helping with a baby," exclaimed Joy, now four months pregnant. "Boy, that gets my wheels spinning. That’s something I can write about.”

Lucas continued, "First day of third grade."

"Grandparents," Elizabeth remarked.

Chase elaborated upon Elizabeth’s idea. "Grandparents and movies."

Joy stated, "The ideas in this room are so thick I can almost see them. Think for a minute about what is special and important to you. I think that Hannah is probably thinking about her dogs."
Hannah nodded.

Joy continued, "That's the first thing she told me when I called on her. If Mrs. Marks was making a list right now what do you think is important to her?"

Nick responded, "Having a baby."

"You better believe it. That would definitely be on my idea list. Special things might have to do with our pets, our families, and our feelings. They might have to do with special things in your past. Think of the things that are important to you. It might be something you just love."

Joy asked the students to continue to think about ideas. Students listed ideas about pets and vacation spots. Names of grandparents and siblings were added to the lists. "I'm going to give you some quiet time to think of the special things that mean a lot to you. Write them down on your idea list."

The children continued to add ideas to their lists as Joy meandered around the room and surveyed the students' recordings. Joy commented, "Oh, I'm amazed at what I see!" A few minutes later she added, "Wow! I see great ideas!"

Joy then checked to see if the students had listed ideas. "Raise your hand if you have at least one idea," Joy requested. Each student responded with a raised hand. "Let me tell you a little more about this idea list. It's going to stay in the front of your portfolio. What happens if you're on the bus tomorrow and the most amazing idea you've ever thought of pops into your brain? When you get to school you can get in the portfolio box, grab your portfolio, and write down the idea."
"What I'm going to do is let you add more ideas or, if you want to stop, star one of your ideas and go ahead and get started on your writing."

For the remainder of their time, the children added to their idea lists or began writing stories. Joy walked around and talked with the children, kneeling next to each one or bending over and smiling in her conversations with them. The class came to an end as the students returned their writing workshop portfolios to the portfolio box in preparation for physical education.
Teaching for Meaningfulness

Three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness: the classroom environment, joining the culture of writers, and negotiating the school setting, emerge in the writing workshop session scene shared at the beginning of the chapter. These three aspects help define teaching for meaningfulness in a public school setting. Life in Joy's classroom provides illustrations of each aspect.

Building a Family Atmosphere

The classroom environment, or "family atmosphere" as Joy calls it, enables teaching for meaningfulness. Sergiovanni (1994) states, "Students who are fortunate enough to experience belonging from family, extended family, friends, and neighbors feel attached and loved, experience the warmth and safety of intimacy, and are more cooperative and trusting of others (p. 10). Joy supports the developing of this family atmosphere in a number of ways including sharing her life with the students, providing opportunities for them to share their lives, and promoting acceptance of one another through modeling acceptance and involving students in the sharing of their lives and interests.

Learning about each student plays an important role in Joy's interaction with them. Ayers (1993) describes how teachers need to be one part detective. Ayers states, "We sift the clues children leave, follow the leads, and diligently uncover the facts in order to fill out and make credible the story of their growth and development" (p. 33).
For students to share these lives the teacher must work with the children to build an environment that supports this sharing. In addition, tasks must be provided that enable this sharing. Ayers adds,

The point in all of this is to create a range of ways for children to tell us about themselves, to become more whole and more fully alive in the classroom. No single activity will be powerful for everyone; no single idea will tell the whole of it. But by letting the child's school work become an aid in the teacher's investigation of children, everyone benefits. The school experience can then become stronger and deeper. (p. 44)

In this scene, Joy shares her life and interests with the children through her description of herself as a writer growing up who desired to write about personally selected topics. Joy explains why she shares her life with her students, "I stand at the overhead and I share my family stories and I think that conveys a sense of trust and openness and not being judgmental of one another....That has to come first because you're asking the kids to open up and share."

The students are also encouraged to share. In the first scene, the children share their feelings about writing workshop and ideas for story topics. Elizabeth looks forward to writing workshop and describes how it helps them learn about life. Story ideas about beach trips, pets, biographies, relatives, and helping with a baby are shared. Students work with Joy to list the stages of writing workshop and Amanda shares her writing workshop portfolio from the past school year.
Joy describes events in the lives of children as special and important. Individual interests are considered. For example, Joy speaks of Hannah's focus on her dogs when thinking about something special and important. This sharing allows an opportunity for students to learn about one another and the distinct features of each individual. Joy's accepting comments encourage the children to share their lives.

A respect for the distinctness of each person in the classroom, what makes each person the person she or he is, is another dimension of the family atmosphere. As a means of introducing this to students, Joy speaks of the individual lives that each live and the rich stories related to these lives. Nick's story about his camping weekend provides an example of the uniqueness of Nick's participation in that weekend. Joy mentions the variance of 'Ideas' lists based on the differences in students' lives. Each student is described as living an incredible life and the distinctness of each related story is valued.

Each learner comes to the classroom with distinct experiences, ideas, and beliefs. This distinctness sets students apart as individuals. It is important for the teacher to be aware of and accept the distinctness of each child in a way that values. Through seeing this valuing of the distinctness of each child, students may emulate and develop similar behaviors.

The classroom community, or family atmosphere as Joy refers to it, enables teaching for meaningfulness. Dewey (1938) questions, "Does not the principle of regard for individual freedom and for decency and kindliness of human relations come back in the end to the conviction that these things are tributary to a higher quality of experience?"
(pp. 25-26). The family atmosphere allows for this individual freedom through acceptance and respect for the distinctness of each individual in the classroom.

For experiences to be meaningful, teachers use students' prior knowledge and experiences, or their shared personal practical knowledge, as entry points. The relationships within the classroom can support or constrain the connection between school experiences and these entry points. Dewey (1938) states,

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. (p. 35)

The teacher who is intent on teaching for meaningfulness works to build a community that encourages students to participate in diverse experiences. This environment involves trust by students and the teacher: trust of the teacher by the students that they will be allowed to explore new ideas without penalty in an atmosphere of mutual respect for differences and similarities in opinions; trust of other students by students that everyone's right to an opinion will be respected; trust by the teacher of the students that they can and will learn in this type of environment, and trust by the teacher and students of themselves that their beliefs are important and valid (see Figure 4).
Some students like Elizabeth, who shared her book, and Amanda, who shared her portfolio, will be comfortable sharing their stories and their distinctness with others immediately. Other students may need time to build enough trust in the classroom community to feel that they can share their work with others. Shor (1992) speaks of how "many students will need successive experiences of themselves as knowledgeable, articulate beings before they value what they bring to class" (p. 73). While some students
such as Elizabeth and Amanda are comfortable sharing immediately, others will need
time to realize that their beliefs will be valued by others in the class.

The family atmosphere described involves a foundation of respect for the
distinctness of each individual and their value as a member of the community. Joy's
supports this family atmosphere through learning about the lives of students, sharing her
life with them, and respecting and accepting each student's individuality. Joy's classroom
becomes a "We" classroom, a place where all are respected, accepted, and supported by
one another.

**Joining a New Culture**

Many classrooms found today can be described as traditional classrooms. Brown
et al. (1989) write, "Too often the practices of contemporary schooling deny students the
chance to engage the relevant domain culture, because that culture is not in evidence" (p.
34). In her presidential address as revised for *Educational Researcher*, Lauren Resnick
(1987) states,

Out of school, because they are continuously engaged with objects and
situations that make sense to them, people do not fall into the trap of
forgetting what their calculation or their reasoning is about. Mental
activities make sense in terms of their results in a specific circumstance;
actions are grounded in the logic of immediate situations. In school,
however, symbolic activities tend to become detached from any
meaningful context. School learning then becomes a matter of learning symbol manipulation rules and saying or writing things according to the rules. (p. 15)

Resnick describes in-school learning as having little continuity with what students know outside school and a "tendency for school knowledge to be disconnected from real life" (p. 15). In traditional schools and classrooms, students often participate in tasks that do not resemble those of the actual culture. They engage in activities that hold little or no similarity to the work of members of the culture.

Joy's classroom provides students with opportunities to participate in tasks similar to those of members of cultures such as reader and writer. For example, Joy describes writing workshop as a time when students get to be authors. School activities introduce students to activities of a writer such as a writer's consideration of an idea and its use in writing stories. Amanda's portfolio is used as an example of drafting and revising a story. Elizabeth shows a book she published during the prior school year. Students look to experiences of vacations in Myrtle Beach or outings with parents for story ideas. Joy encourages individual decision making about topics and revisions. Joy's editing of students' work reflects the use of editors by a published author as Joy explains to the students,

And I will help you fix those last little things in your writing. Being third graders you can probably fix most of these things yourself. I'll just help you with the things you have left out. If Eve Bunting had published one of
her incredible books and did not spell words right, if she left out some things and she did not catch them, if she published a book and put it on the shelf and there were some misspelled words, wouldn't she be embarrassed? Every author has an editor. The editor does not ever change the ideas but double checks the spelling, periods, and all that important stuff. The editor makes sure it looks just fine.

Sharon Derry (1992) suggests, "The vision of education and classroom activity associated with culturally situated cognition is that of creating minicommunities and experiences that are simulations and extensions of productive and motivated communities of practice within larger society" (p. 417). In classes where this type of activity is apparent, tasks planned by the teacher engage learners in activities that will support the joining of respective cultures. Brown et al. (1989) state,

Unfortunately, students are too often asked to use the tools of a discipline without being able to adopt its culture. To learn to use tools as practitioners use them, a student, like an apprentice, must enter that community and its culture. (p. 33)

Students in TFM classrooms participate in authentic tasks similar to those of a member of the culture. These activities promote understanding of the culture and use of the tools of the culture.

When teachers are teaching for meaningfulness, learners engage in activity of the culture and work with members of the culture. To join the desired culture, students
observe and engage in discourse with a member of the culture. Specific tools or skills needed as a member are discussed within the context of their task. Students discuss their understanding of the culture with other students as well as the teacher. They are encouraged to assess their growth as members and are provided with tools to do so. For this joining to occur, a respectful, caring, trusting, and accepting atmosphere must be built. In building this atmosphere, the teacher models these traits as well as expects and promotes them among students. The school setting provides a forum for the described activities and interactions.

Joy uses her knowledge of writing to provide writing activities that are authentic in nature. This knowledge, part of Joy's personal practical knowledge, stems from a number of experiences, and as a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness, Joy continues to consciously work to expand her understanding of writers. Joy considers her experiences as a writer; for example, Joy recalls her childhood desire to select her own writing topics. Education courses in college introduced Joy to the work of Donald Graves (1983), which provided her with a base for considering her writing program. Joy has added to this knowledge through reading the works of Lucy Calkins (1991), Regie Routman (1991), and, most recently, Shelley Harwayne (1992). Team teaching writing workshop with a university professor provided Joy with additional perspectives. Also, Joy seeks out other teachers interested in this type of teaching and develops supportive relationships with them through sharing ideas, suggestions, and literature. In one instance, this relationship led to the joint teaching of an inservice by Joy and Jane Ross,
the language arts coordinator at Joy's school. In addition, Joy observes the students as they participate in writing tasks and considers the relationship between the activity and that of writers as Joy states, "If I'm asking them to be an author they need to understand what an author is and what an author does and that an author has a voice....I'm asking for their voice to come out in their writing." When discussing their response to this in past years Joy replies, "They loved this....They were writing their heart and soul....There were none who did not participate....They were very actively involved and excited about it."

This authentic activity, "the ordinary practices of the culture" (Brown et al., 1989, p. 34), allows learners to "gain access to the standpoint that enables practitioners to act meaningfully and purposefully" (p. 36). In this scene, it reflects the activity of a member of the culture of writers through considering authors' ideas for stories. As Glaser (1991) states, "With the help of advanced peers or a teacher who provides supportive scaffolding, the collaborative group maintains a mature version of a task and its goals rather than tackles less meaningful task components" (p. 134). Glaser describes the culture as a domain and adds,

In environments for learning that reflect an authentic domain of work, students are encouraged to understand the problems and opportunities that competent individuals in that domain encounter. Learning situations can be created in which students become apprentices who see how knowledge is used in competent performance as they gain proficiency themselves. (p. 135)
In Joy's classroom, the learning situations as closely reflect that of a member of the writing culture as possible within a school setting. As students participate through considering ideas, writing, revising, editing with a writer, and publishing their work, they become more proficient in reading, writing, or other subject areas. The caring, respectful, accepting family atmosphere enables a willingness and desire to participate in this activity and to become a member of the culture.

To encourage students to ground their stories in their own experiences, Joy writes stories about her life for the children. As a writer, Joy plans authentic activities for students and models participation in these activities. Joy shares with students her thinking, her use of the tools of the culture, and her actual work as a member of the culture.

As often as possible, Joy begins with the knowledge of the students. Shor (1992) states, "A critical and empowering class begins by examining its subject matter from the students' point of view and by helping students see themselves as knowledgeable people" (p. 37). Hermine Marshall (1992) describes learning-oriented classroom as follows: "In learning-oriented classrooms, the teacher's role is to facilitate students' active construction of knowledge by helping them build on what they already know in meaningful and relevant ways" (p. ix). As Joy begins her lesson, students who previously participated in writing workshop express their own thoughts and beliefs about this experience. Based on their prior experiences in writing workshop, the students list the stages of writing. Amanda shares her portfolio from the past year as a model for students
who are just gaining knowledge of writing workshop. Elizabeth shows a book written in
writing workshop the previous year. Joy, with Josh's permission, mentions Josh's story
about his visit to Matthew's house and then mentions several other ideas written by
students.

In this lesson, the children share their ideas for stories, and Joy encourages other
students to "steal" these ideas if they find the topic appeals to them. Ideas are gained not
only from the literature they are reading but also from the ideas of other students in the
classroom.

Through providing opportunities for students to write about their lives and
experiences, Joy helps learners make connections between their school activities and
their past experiences. In describing writing workshop, Joy asserts, "Because
I was asking the kids to think about their own lives it was meaningful." Blumenfield,
Puro, and Mergendoller (1992) state, "Students are able to understand material better
when its relationship to their own experiences and to prior knowledge is apparent, and
new ideas are presented in an organized manner using examples, explanations,
summaries, and activities" (p. 237). Shor (1992) describes the need for presenting
questions "in a meaningful context related to the students' situation and to the ongoing
curriculum" (p. 57). Shor also speaks of providing a context that connects student prior
experience to the new information or curriculum. Shor states, "Students learn to be
passive or cynical in classes that transfer facts, skills, or values without meaningful
connection to their needs, interests, or community cultures" (p. 18). Routman (1991)
discusses how "genuine literacy acts are authentic and meaningful" (p. 9) and believes that "students become engaged with teacher demonstrations and begin to take responsibility for their learning only when they have meaningful curricular choices that relate to their interests and their lives" (p. 11). In her TFM classroom through her personal practical knowledge and its continuous renegotiation, Joy provides tasks that allow connections between the school learning and the lives and interests of the students.

Tasks provided by the TFM teacher allow students to participate in some form of the activity of the culture. In addition, they afford the teacher a clearer understanding of students' lives and interests through students' participation in these tasks. Marshall (1992) describes meaningful tasks as "closely related to needed real-world knowledge and skills" (p. 17). Camp (1992) describes meaningful tasks as "tasks that are complex and challenging, that are consistent with goals for learning and inherently valuable to learning, that are closely related to real-world skills and challenges, that allow students to use the processes and strategies relevant to genuine performance" (p. 244). TFM focuses on providing students with opportunities to make connections between their school experiences and their everyday lives while participating in activity similar to that of a member of the culture.

The second aspect of teaching for meaningfulness, providing authentic activity, supports students as they join cultures such as reader and writer. In this scene, Joy introduces her students to several activities of writers, such as the writer's use of personal experience as a source of ideas. This allows for a connection to be made between their
school and out-of-school lives. They build on their prior knowledge of writing, and Joy models for them as a writer. This activity, provided by Joy based upon her understanding of writers, supports students as they join the culture of writers.

The School Setting

The two aspects of TFM just discussed, building the family atmosphere and providing authentic activities that relate to the lives and interests of students, are central to teaching for meaningfulness. But a third aspect, negotiating the school setting itself, must also be considered.

Issues of assessment, mandated objectives and skills, time, space, curriculum, and materials are relevant to this discussion. Writing and certain associated skills must be taught. The fragmentation of the school day by such things as special area classes and lunch can be problematic. The school system provides certain materials, but, if the need for additional materials arises, the teacher often must accept responsibility for selecting and acquiring funding for the materials. The number of children living in the attendance area and the number of teachers funded by the local school system dictates class size. Joy looks for ways to build a family atmosphere and to provide activities that are like that of a writer within this school setting.

As Joy's teaching occurs in a public school setting, expectations such as coverage of specific skills and topics, assessment, materials, time, and space also affect teaching for meaningfulness. Joy, as a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness, negotiates these
constraints. The writing the students prepare to do, while a mandated activity with supporting skills, reflects that of a writer as Joy's students decide on writing topics. They are given extended periods of time to write. State and local writing objectives are covered but in a way that allows students to make decisions about their topics. Personal experiences like camping trips and pet escapades provide writing topics. Joy bases decisions about the teaching of any skill upon the needs of students as assessed through their writing. The utilization of space though clustering students' desks in groups encourages students to consult with one another as needed. Assessment methods such as listening to the ideas they share and surveying their written ideas give Joy additional information about each child. Time becomes a factor when school scheduling of physical education class brings to a close the writing session. Joy negotiates each of these issues as she works to teach for meaningfulness.

**Conclusion**

Joy, as a teacher who is intent upon teaching for meaningfulness, works with her students to build a community where students are comfortable sharing their lives and interests with other members. This family atmosphere, as Joy calls it, provides students with an environment that is accepting, trusting, and respectful. Students participate in activities like those of members of desired cultures such as readers and writers. In teaching for meaningfulness, Joy attempts to help students build connections between the school experience and their lives and interests. To be able to create these connections, or
entry points, Joy needs extensive knowledge about each student's life and interests and uses multiple methods to acquire that knowledge. Joy reflects upon classroom experiences and environments in order to provide students with activities that are similar to those of a member of the desired culture. An accepting, nurturing, respectful environment is built. Joy negotiates school constraints. In this scene, as Joy introduces students to writing workshop she also integrates the three aspects of TFM in order to teach for meaningfulness.
CHAPTER THREE

A Family Atmosphere

As teachers enter a classroom, they bring with them their personal practical knowledge of students, learning, and teaching. Past teaching experiences and life experiences provide a base for this knowledge. Students also bring to school a multitude of experiences from their own lives. The teacher who desires to teach for meaningfulness provides opportunities for students to share these lives while supporting this sharing. Acceptance of each student as an individual is evident. In addition, activities provided allow for connections to be made between the school experience and the past experiences of the child.

For the teacher to provide entry points for these connections, knowledge of these individual as well as community lives must be gained by the teacher. A respectful, caring, trusting, and accepting environment promotes sharing of this information by students.

In addition, this caring environment encourages students to take risks and participate in new activities. Ayers (1993) states,

I believe that people learn best when they are nurtured as well as challenged, when they are allowed to explore, experiment, and take risks.

We learn when we feel good about ourselves and others, when we trust the environment and the people in our lives, when we are safe. (pp. 62-63)
Joy calls this environment "a family atmosphere" and works with her students to build this atmosphere.
Joy sat down on a stool in front of the class and began. "Okay, let's see if by the
time I get to ten even my passer outers are ready." In a normal tone of voice she
counted, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten."

"Okay. What I'd like is for you to have your writer's notebooks and your
portfolios closed right now. Let's talk for just one moment. Last week when we had
those CogAT tests and we had to do those instead of all the stuff we normally get to do
that we enjoy so much, I had you think about writing workshop for me and I asked you to
write down on a piece of paper what you think about writing workshop. What does it feel
like to have writing workshop? Remember when I asked you to do that?"

Students responded, "Yes."

Joy continued, "Well, I loved reading what you wrote down. First of all I want to
say thank you for being honest and thank you for telling me exactly how you felt. Some
of you surprised me with your answers but I was very pleased to read your responses and
find out what you think about writing workshop. Most of you really had some wonderful
things to say about writing workshop. Some of you said it's kind of hard and a couple of
you said it's really not your favorite thing to do. That's fine, too. What I'd like to know
today is why you think, when Mrs. Marks plans her week with you, she schedules three
times a week to have writing workshop. It must mean that it's pretty important. Why do
you think I would spend that much time? I have certain things I have to teach. There's a
book and it has a list of things that I have to teach when I teach third grade and I have to
do those things but I can decide how I want to do them. I have to teach certain things
like we have to have math and I have to teach spelling and I have to teach reading. But why do you think I spend so much time on writing workshop? It doesn't say on any of my lists that I have to do it. So what do you think? Why do you think I put so much emphasis on it and we spend so much time on it? Why do you think it's important? Think about that for me for a minute and then I want to hear what you guys think. Why is it so important? Chase, what do you think?"

Chase answered, "Maybe because we don't get to write what we want to write a lot. We have to do what the books say like in math and reading. We don't get to write what we want so we have writing workshop."

"So you think it's important because you get that chance to do what you want to do. What do you think, Rebecca?"

"I think it's because we get to write what we want to write about and you get to hear about our lives."

"It's an opportunity for me to hear more about your life," Joy reiterated. That's an interesting answer. What do you think, Nicole?"

"It's just that you know that we really like writing workshop a lot and you give us more time to do it."

"Okay, maybe it's because I know you really like it. Nick, what do you think?"

"So we can learn more things about writing. And when we get older and we really need to write better when we get in the higher grades, but also because it's fun."

"Okay, so we can learn about writing and because it's fun. Elizabeth?"

52
"You can use it to see how we write and what we write about."

"Okay, so I can learn about you and what you're writing about," Joy continued. "Well, all of you are really right. All of those are very important reasons why we do writing workshop. Writing workshop is a very important time and it's okay if it's not your favorite time of the day. Don't think you're letting me down if you wrote that down because three of you wrote 'You know, it's really not my favorite time.' That's okay. Everybody's different and it would be a pretty boring world if we all loved exactly the same stuff, if we were all exactly alike. So it's okay."

"What I do want you to do is think about all the things people said and why writing workshop is so important, why we spend so much time on it, and then set some goals for yourself. What do you think I mean when I say set goals? Last year we talked a lot about that in my class. I'd say, 'Okay, we've only got so much time left, let's set some writing workshop goals.' What do you think I mean when I ask you to set a goal? Matthew, what do you think?"

"To work real hard on what you think and your idea."

"Definitely. Setting a goal means definitely working hard. It also means picking out the particular thing you want to accomplish. Maybe if you're Jim your goal is to finish your dog story by Christmas. Maybe that's his goal. He's writing a story about his dog and so he's going to set his goal. If that's his job when writing workshop time comes he's going to be very serious about getting that job done because he's working towards that goal. Having a goal is really important in writing workshop. Maybe you're
Katherine and you're going to write a brand new story. You've already published your story about your dog and you're going to start something new. That would be a fine goal to have. Okay, does anybody have a goal they want to share that they've already established for themselves? Maggie?"

"To get my story done today because I'm really close to finishing."

"What is your story?" asked Joy.

"About my cat."

"Okay, the one about your cat, your final copy of it. Wonderful! Elizabeth, do you have some goals you've set?"

"I've finished a book and I'm working on the sloppy copy on another one."

"What is your goal?" Joy asked.

"To get my book finished," Elizabeth responded.

"Okay, to finish your second book. Some of you may want to set goals like this: 'Well, I've written a true story so my next goal is to write a fiction story or a made-up story' or 'I wrote a serious story so now I think I'll write a funny story or a silly story.' You may make your goals that way. Maybe you want to do a poetry book or your next goal would be to do a chapter book. You will decide because you're the writer. You can set your own goals and you can do your own thing. Okay, does anybody have any questions about that? Well, what I want you to do is spend a little time with yourself in your private writer's studio. Think about what your goals are because this time really is important. See if you can set those goals for you. I'm going to make a quick walk around
and I'm going to stop by. I want you to be able to tell me in just a sentence or two what it is that you're going to be doing or working towards. It might be that you're starting fresh at the very beginning, at the thinking stage. It might be that you're already in another stage. Maybe you have a goal in mind. If you need to write it down then your idea menu would be a great place to keep a list of those goals. Any questions for my writers?

Okay, this is your time. We have, oh, we have a long time today. That's wonderful! We started right on time. We'll have probably forty-five minutes so set some good goals for yourself. I'm going to come around and see what it is you're working on."

Preparing to write, the students began taking papers out of their portfolios. Some began writing immediately, others appeared to be thinking. Joy walked around the room, bending over to talk with each student and smiling in her conversations with them. After speaking with every student Joy began privately conferencing with individual students. This continued for the next thirty minutes.

To conclude writing workshop, Joy began, "What I'd like to know is what you accomplished today. You can show me by giving writing workshop a rating. Put your hand over your heart and give today's writing workshop a rating, five being highest and zero being lowest, based on what you've gotten done today or how you feel about what you got done today." Joy looked around the room as the children shared their ratings by holding up the corresponding number of fingers.

"Gosh, wow, today must have been a supersonic day! I've never seen such high ratings! Incredible! Bryan, do you mind telling me why yours was so high today?"
"I think I got five pages done."

"Congratulations, what are you writing about?"

"Like the pirate story but I used different characters."

"And how do you feel about that story?"

"Um."

"Did you enjoy writing it?"

"Yes."

"Good for you. All right, Josh, I was so happy to see a five from you. What happened for you to give it such a high rating?"

"I got a lot done."

"You were really stuck at the beginning. What happened today, Josh, to unstick you?"

"Well, I was just thinking about my last story and I just thought about taking apart pens and stuff and I thought of 'If You're a Pen Please Raise Your Ink.'"

"Josh is very imaginative and Josh was stuck so I sat down with Josh and I said, 'What do you love, Josh? What do you love to do?' and he said, 'I like to take apart pens.' Well, that's a very typical Josh response so I wrote that down and I said, 'See what you can come up with now.' I gave him that idea but he didn't use my idea. No, he came up with completely his own way to approach that story. Very imaginative and that is so Josh. Josh, there is no way I would have thought of that. That's not the way my brain works but your brain sure does think of those ideas. Nicole, how about you?"
"I kind of thought of a new idea and I got my story copied."

"You sure did, you thought of a lot of neat stuff. I visited around today and I got to see a lot of people. Brittany and Hannah have a really neat approach for what they're doing. Don't share your whole story, just tell generally what you're doing, like the way you explained it to me."

Brittany and Hannah stood up as Brittany began, "Well, we were inspired by *Pirates Past Noon* and we decided to start a series together called 'The Magic Friends Club.' Two of the girls in our class are part of our story."

Joy prompted, "Tell them about the writing parts since Mrs. Marks wants you each to do writing. How are you doing that?"

Brittany responded, "Well, Hannah does one book and I do another and she does another and I do another."

"You know a lot of books come in a series like *The Magic Tree House* books and *The Boxcar Children* so they decided to do a series. When do you do your planning?"

Hannah answered, "We talk to each other at snacktime and talk about what we're doing."

"Talking at snacktime is an excellent idea. That's a good idea. What thrilled me the most was that you said you were inspired by the book we read. Can that happen?"

The class responded that it could.
"All the time, all the time. Maybe a book you're reading is inspiring you now. Or maybe Pirate's Promise that we just finished inspired you. Some of you are writing scary stories so some of the Halloween things we are doing inspired you."

"Okay, it's time for gym. We don't want to be late so put everything back into your portfolios and I'll collect those after you go. I need the line leader, please."

Students put away their writing workshop materials. Then Elizabeth, the line leader, called for different groups to line up for gym.
A Family Atmosphere

The family atmosphere comprises one aspect of teaching for meaningfulness. For students to feel comfortable sharing their lives, interests, and beliefs with the classroom community, the environment needs to be caring, nurturing, supportive, trusting, and accepting.

Joy describes a family atmosphere as follows:

I think of our class like a family. We get really close. We do a lot of activities to get to know each other. We really emphasize very strongly caring for each other and about each other. You don't have to love everybody in this classroom but you do have to like them, and you will get along. I have little rules like 'You can't come tattle about someone to me until you tell me something nice about them first.'

Noddings (1992) describes good teaching as beginning "with the construction of trusting relationships" and working "continually to build on the foundation of trust" (p. xii).

Noddings states, "At every stage we need to be cared for in the sense that we need to be understood, received, respected, recognized" (p. xi). Joy continues describing her classroom:

We really play down the negative as much as we can. We just are really caring about each other. I think that is contagious. I certainly don't win them all over but for the most part we get really close and comfortable and open with sharing. I stand at the overhead and share my family stories and
I think that conveys a sense of trust, openness, and not being judgmental of one another.

This is similar to Sergiovanni's (1994) description of school as community as Sergiovanni states,

> Relationships are both close and informal. Individual circumstances count. Acceptance is unconditional. Relationships are cooperative. Concerns of members are unbounded, and thus considered legitimate as long as they reflect needs. Subjectivity is okay. Emotions are legitimate. Sacrificing one's self-interest for the sake of other community members is common. Members associate with each other because doing so is valuable as an end in itself. Knowledge is valued and learned for its own sake, not just as a means to get something or get somewhere. Children are accepted and loved because that's the way one treats community members.

(p. 28)

In describing the relationship between teacher and student in her classroom Joy states,

> It's such a special bond and a closeness. Their opinions are important.

We have yucky days where I fuss and all of that, that happens, too....There's a real sense of respect, mutual respect. If someone is having a bad day we tolerate, we understand that. We have respect for each other.
In describing relationships in communities, Sergiovanni (1994) believes they are characterized by "the kinds of emotions - personalization, authenticity, caring, and unconditional acceptance - found in families, extended families, neighborhoods, and other social organizations" (p. xvi). Joy believes these emotions found in a family atmosphere have to come first as she explains,

In writing workshop, you're asking the kids to open up and share...and the fact that you're going to see that writing, that very often, very private piece of their life. We say that in this writing you are sharing your life. When someone is in the author's chair they're sharing a part of their heart and soul and you never, ever laugh at that. If it's funny you laugh with it, you encourage and support. We do stars and wishes. A star would be 'I really like the way you did such and such in your writing.' A wish is constructive criticism, 'I wish you had told me more about this part.' That way it's real supportive, they're real supportive of each other and not discouraging or breaking each other down.

Because of this belief, Joy begins the school year with the goal of building a family atmosphere. The students work together to develop class rules, and Joy models acceptance, respect, and caring. Students begin to share their lives when they trust that these lives will be accepted and respected.
Joy's one-year experience as a reading specialist influenced her belief in the importance of a family atmosphere. During this year Joy did not have a homeroom and worked with small groups of readers in a pull-out program. Joy states, I became frustrated with the time constraints of my schedule. It was so hard to accomplish all I wanted when I only saw a student for 45 minutes a day. More than anything, I missed the close-knit family atmosphere that I had when I taught my own class.

This teaching situation strengthened Joy's belief in the need for a family atmosphere.

Joy believes the family atmosphere supports risk taking by students. Joy states, Everybody's going to act like a goof someday. We all have bad days and good days but we're all in it together. We support each other. The fact that there's not a wrong answer very often helps. If you ask an open-ended question instead of a yes or no, right or wrong question, then if they have some totally off the wall response you're safer to respond with 'That is a very interesting idea' rather than 'I don't know where you got that.' That kind of responding encourages them to open up and try and to share what they can with the class.

Establishing a Family Atmosphere

Joy uses numerous strategies in working with students to establish this family atmosphere. These include sharing her life with the students, providing opportunities for
students to share their lives, accepting, supporting, and respecting each student, and modeling and supporting an acceptance of each student by other members of the class.

Sharing Her Life With Students

Joy writes about members of her family as well as about herself because of her belief that the likelihood of student sharing increases when the teacher shares her life and interests with them. This sharing by Joy encourages and models sharing by the students. Joy states,

This year I want to write about the baby and about how Robert and I are preparing, about my trips to the doctor, and how I'm eating so much. I think they will get a real charge out of that. Plus it really bonds you, it makes that family atmosphere so much more. When this baby comes they're going to be as excited as me.

Joy describes her topic, the baby, as "real life and important" and the children respond to this sharing of Joy's pregnancy. For example, Amanda discusses why she likes having Joy for a teacher: "I like having Mrs. Marks because she's a great teacher....She uses a lot of expression and she tells us things like what happens to her. She's open and stuff and tells us a lot of things." The children respond to Joy's sharing of herself as a teacher and as a person with rich life stories to tell. This allows for a connection to be made between their lives and hers, a common bond to which all the children have access, and an example for sharing their own stories.
The importance of the teacher sharing herself as a writer and a person motivates Joy to share stories from her own life with her students. Joy states,

I think it's important for a teacher to share herself as a writer and as a person. It builds community in the classroom and establishes that bond and that relationship, a level of trust, where you're [the student] more at ease taking a risk because as a writer you're being asked to take a risk. If you [the student] are willing, if you feel comfortable in that environment, you're more likely to be able to do that and to share your writing with a person.

Through sharing stories from her life, Joy encourages students to share stories from their own lives.

Joy shares her life with students in ways other than writing. In classroom discussions, she shares childhood experiences such as being a student about their age who would rather write about her brother than frogs or George Washington. When they discuss favorite books and series she names some of her childhood favorites. Current experiences such as a picture of her sonogram are shared. Joy initiates "Captain of the Week," a weekly time when one member of the classroom community shares with the class personal interests outside of school by displaying pictures and captions from her life. As Captain of the Week, Joy shares pictures of her family, interests such as horseback riding, and favorite authors like Eve Bunting. This will be followed by the weekly random selection of a student as Captain of the Week who will share similar
information. In another situation, Joy describes for her class how teachers suggest good books to one another. Informal conversations allow additional opportunities for Joy to share her life with them. Through sharing her life, Joy supports and encourages students to share their lives with her and with one another.

**Students' Sharing of Their Own Lives**

While Joy shares her stories with the students, she also provides opportunities for them to share their lives, personal beliefs, and opinions with one another through writing, class and group discussions, informal interactions, and book sharings. Joy believes that the importance of these lives must be seen by the students. Joy states,

> We talk about how important they are as writers, that they all have stories to tell, that the people who write books that we read from the library shelves live ordinary lives just like we do. They have taken their life experiences and made a story out of them. We talk about how even though these children have lived maybe seven or eight years they have incredible life stories. So we emphasize the importance of each child and at that point in the year we've really established a family atmosphere and everybody feels close and comfortable.

At a later date, Joy adds, "When you're sharing parts of yourself you can't share it in an atmosphere where you feel threatened or challenged or that you're going to do something
wrong and be called for that." Throughout this conversation, the centrality of a family atmosphere to sharing by the students is apparent.

Students explore appropriate ways of interacting with those sharing their lives. Joy speaks of Elizabeth, who brought in a book she had written the previous year to share with the class:

It's really a big deal when they publish a book. Elizabeth talked about how long it took her to do it and we used the expression 'heart and soul' all the time last year. She's put her heart and soul into that book. She's put so much of herself into that. We talk a lot about that, when you're sharing your writing you're sharing yourself.... You need to be a very gentle listener when you're listening to someone else's writing because they're sharing themselves and that's a real risk.

Student sharing of their lives with other students can lead to connections between students with similar interests that might not have been made without the forum to share these lives and interests. Book sharing, a time when students share favorite books with the class, provides an example of how this sharing may lead to a connection between students who have similar interests as Brittany explains,

I feel it's a time for me to let people know what kind of books I like and what kinds of books I think really give me an idea about what to write about in writing workshop. I feel like book sharing gives me a chance to know what other people like about their books and for other people to
know a little bit more about me and what kind of books I like....And then I
just feel like if they've read those kinds of books they feel like they sort of
know me better because I like those kinds of books that are exciting or sad
or stuff.

Students also get to know one another through sharing their lives and interests in
writing workshop. Several children relate the importance of sharing their lives. Caroline
describes sharing with the class as meaningful because "maybe people that haven't ever
been in my class before could just get to know me better and just some things that
happened in my life." Jessica comments that sharing your stories is "sharing a part of you
with the class....You share your ideas and if it was a true story you share part of your
life." Kelly enjoys publishing because "you get to make a cover and share your book with
the class or your family. They will give you stars or wishes and complement you on your
story." When people share their stories "you get to hear other wonderful stories,"
maintains Elizabeth. The value of sharing involves getting to know one another and
providing a forum with which to share one's life with the class.

Students observe the importance of book sharing. Hannah asserts,

I think it [book sharing] really teaches and stuff, like the kids in the class
who don't really like to read....I think it really helps them because
somebody might share a book that sounds really interesting to the other
people and they might want to read it.
Jim believes that book sharing can lead to new books and maintains, based partly on personal experience, "If someone shares it [a book] and you haven't seen that you could go to the library and check it out and see how you like it." Caroline describes the bond between two readers as she states,

When I read with Mrs. Marks or if she reads to me, I like sharing a book with Mrs. Marks just so we both get to know the characters and maybe sometimes just get together and talk about the characters and how fun the book is. We talk about the book and how we liked it.

In some cases the children share private things with Joy that they do not want to share with others. Brittany states,

Sometimes I have a really good idea or something happened to me and I don't really want to share it with other people but I know I can share it with Mrs. Marks because she won't share with anyone else unless you want her to. That way I feel sort of secure with showing her my thoughts and my secrets....I think she really cares about what somebody really thinks. She doesn't want to burst their bubble about what they think. She doesn't want to tell anybody unless the other person thinks it's okay. Sometimes she knows what you're feeling and if you want to share it with other people or not.

Caroline adds,
Well, she's just the kind of person that I know I can share all my secrets with and sometimes I just don't like to tell my mom and dad for some reason and I'll talk to Mrs. Marks in my writing and she won't go and tell anybody.

The students share with Joy because they believe that she will not share these secrets with others. Caroline states, "I know I can trust her because she won't pass my secrets to other teachers who I can't trust."

There may be times when Joy suggests a real life topic about which the student may not want to write. When this occurs Joy tells them, "That's fine. You've got a million stories to pull from." Joy describes her decision to give students choice in these stories,

If it's not something you want to write about then obviously it's either a negative experience you don't want to relive or you don't care enough about it. If it's not important to you inside as a person it's not going to be important to anybody to read. So let's go with something that is important. Some children initially find it easy to share, and Joy relates this to a "security factor." Joy states,

They have to feel good about themselves and content with their lives. Most all of them have wonderful home lives....I really do think that makes a difference. They're very secure and happy and they're very much a center of their parents' world. They come to school feeling that I'm
important. I'm the center of the world here and what I have to say and my life is worth writing about which is wonderful. I wish they could all feel that way. But not everyone in here obviously has that situation.

Joy believes that children from this type of home will probably be the ones most willing to share initially. As the other children begin to experience belonging to this in-school family Joy believes they will begin sharing their lives with others.

While some students begin the year feeling comfortable writing about their lives, there will be others who are not comfortable with writing or sharing. Joy describes one student, Matthew, who was having trouble getting started on a story. Seeing that he was having a problem, she pulled him over to the couch so they could discuss possible topics. She began by asking what was important to him. He struggled but named a few things. Then Joy asked what he did when he got home each day. Matthew responded that he played with his hamster. Joy asked him to tell about his hamster, and they spent some time "chatting" about it. Then Joy said, "Matthew, you've got your topic right there. If you care about your hamster, that's an important thing for you." A plan for what to include in his story such as a description of the hamster, how Matthew got the hamster, and tricks the hamster could do was then developed. Joy states, "That helped him. He needed that nurturing to get going. Now he's doing okay but he's not incredibly motivated. At least he's got a topic and some direction." In this case, the time needed for Matthew to feel comfortable writing and sharing his life was more extensive than that needed by most of the other students. As a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness, Joy
continues to provide entry points for Matthew, support him as a writer through conferences, and allow time for his desire to share through his writing to grow.

**Accepting the Distinctness of Individuals**

Students come to school with individually unique backgrounds and characteristics including ethnic, religious, gender, and experiential differences. For each student, the combination of these individual differences make that child distinct.

It is important, in establishing a comfortable, safe classroom environment, that acceptance of the distinctness of individuals in the classroom be promoted, encouraged, and modeled. Ayers (1993) states, "Each youngster comes to us with a specific background, with unique desires, abilities, intentions, and needs. Somehow, we must reach out to each student; we must meet each one" (p. 7). Students, as distinct individuals, come to school with a myriad of lives and interests as well as experiences and need to be accepted for these unique lives and interests. The family atmosphere Joy works with her students to build provides the forum for students to share these differences in a safe, caring environment.

In the story described earlier, Joy models and encourages acceptance of the distinctness of each individual. As the class enters a discussion about the why's of writing workshop, Joy accepts each student's opinions about writing workshop and states, "It's okay if it's [writing workshop] not your favorite time of the day. Don't think you're letting me down if you wrote that down because three of you
wrote "You know, it's really not my favorite time." That's okay.

Everybody's different and it would be a pretty boring world if we all loved
exactly the same stuff, if we were all exactly alike. So it's okay.

Joy listens to their descriptions of why they believe they do writing workshop and
validates these reasons. She provides opportunities for students to set individual goals
based on their needs and desires. Joy makes suggestions about their topics but places the
final decisions in the hands of the students. Joy uses Josh's story to illustrate her
acceptance of student decision-making.

**Accepting Differing Abilities**

Part of the distinctness with which students come to school includes distinct
abilities in different areas. One child might be able to solve math problems involving
three digits but experience difficulty writing a story with a beginning, middle, and end.
Another might be able to write stories that create images for the reader but not
understand how electricity works. As part of the acceptance of the distinctness of each
child, the teacher needs to find and accept the child's current understanding of a certain
subject or topic and then support the child in her growth from this point. Ayers (1993)
believes that we must find an approach to teaching "that builds on strengths, experiences,
skills, and abilities; a way that engages the whole person and guides that person to greater
fulfillment and power" (p. 32). The child who discerns the teacher's support and
acceptance will be more willing to share questions and needs with the teacher. Brittany states,

When we tell her [Mrs. Marks] something she won't laugh at it and think that it's funny even if she does. She acts like you can really trust her. She won't laugh at your things that you say. When you get a problem wrong in math class or something like that she won't say, "No, that's not the right answer" and just laugh at it. She'll encourage you to do that. So that's why I feel like I can trust her.

Caroline adds,

I trust Mrs. Marks. How I can trust Mrs. Marks is that if I do something wrong during the day and stuff she doesn't just start laughing and telling me, "You did it wrong" and stuff. She just says, "Try better next time" and "You can just work on it" and stuff. I'm in her math class and sometimes I get a few answers wrong and she doesn't just go and start to laugh at it and say, "Caroline, you're dumb" and "That's a dumb answer that you put." She says, "Look at that again and just see what you need to do" and "Just check that again" and I do that and that helps me with it.

In both cases the students seem to fear being ridiculed because of a lack of understanding and speak of Joy's acceptance and support. Noddings (1992) states, "All children need to feel safe in their relations with teachers. It must be acceptable to admit error, confusion, or even distaste for the subject at hand" (p. 108). Both girls describe a sense of trust in
Joy. They have the right, as learners, to make mistakes, and they know that Joy will unconditionally accept them.

Supporting One Another

Opportunities for mutual support as readers and writers strengthen the family atmosphere. Maggie's language usage in her story encourages Scott to make his writing more descriptive. Joy quotes Scott's comment:

Remember the time when you [Mrs. Marks] used Maggie's writing as an example and you said in Maggie's writing she said that fear crawled up her back and you talked about how good that was? I decided that I wanted to write like that.

Mary shares her idea of bringing dolls to life with Josh in his search for an idea. In some instances, Joy pairs students who might help one another. Joy speaks of how some teachers allow the students to pair up as needed, but Joy feels more comfortable pairing them herself so their behavior doesn't get off task. In addition, this pairing matches students who might otherwise not interact with one another.

Students often work in collaborative groups. For those students who have never worked in groups, this experience can be difficult; so strategies for working as a group need to be developed. Joy's class develops a list that describes ways of making group work successful. The posted list includes: work together, help each other, everybody participates, share / take turns, listen, stay with the group, and quiet voice. Students also
discuss comments that would be encouraging to other students. They consider ways to support one another in their interactions.

The "We" Classroom

Traditional classrooms tend to be "I" places, places where the teacher says "I want," gives specific constraints for responses, discourages responses that differ from those in the text, and then asks children to respond to her requests. The children are excluded from decision-making, and the teacher loses their input as well as the sharing of their beliefs and opinions. This causes the teacher to lose information about the children's understanding of what they are experiencing in the classroom. As a result, the connection between the teacher and student as well as the teacher's knowledge of the students' understanding weakens.

One way a TFM classroom such as Joy's differs from the traditional classroom is that it becomes a "we" classroom. Sergiovanni (1994) describes the "we" as follows: "When we depend on norms, customs, and mores that are embedded in the social structure itself the 'we' looms large. People are bonded to each other as a result of their mutual binding to shared values, traditions, ideas, and ideals" (p. 61). In Joy's classroom, the "we" focuses on a shared understanding of readers and writers by students in their roles as readers and writers. It includes an emphasis on the acceptance of the distinctness of each individual in the classroom. The "we" is built on an acceptance of the "I," the "I" being that distinctness.
In the "We" Classroom, Joy and the students work together to learn and discover. They embark on adventures into learning that allow for all to enter the activity at points appropriate for them. Joy is not the giver and holder of knowledge but rather a participant with the students and a fellow learner. The class works together to problem solve, help one another, and share. Even their proximity to one another enables this sense of "we" as Jessica states, "I like how she [Mrs. Marks] puts the tables together so you can talk to your neighbors and you're all in one big group. School is wonderful."

The word "we" is often used as common bonds are formed between students. Sergiovanni (1994) speaks of the "we" in classroom communities as follows:

Communities are collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together binded to a set of shared ideas and ideals. This bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of "I's" into a collective "we." As a "we," members are part of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships. This "we" usually shares a common place and over time comes to share common sentiments and traditions that are sustaining. When describing community it is helpful to speak of community by kinship, of mind, of place, and of memory. (p. xvi)

An example of this bonding in Joy's classroom occurs during read aloud time, a time when Joy reads a book to the class. Joy states,

Reading aloud is probably one of my most favorite times of the day. We'll pick funny books and we'll laugh together and we'll be joking about Hank
*the Cowdog* all through the day. It's a bonding, a real bonding thing with
the class. We learn about characters. We meet characters and we do all
of that together so it's a real positive shared experience....It becomes a part
of our day and a part of our life. Like Lafeadio was a lion that Shel
Silverstein tells the story about and it's just hysterical. Anytime anybody
mentions anything about marshmallows which was his favorite food we
all laugh and laugh. It really is a special thing with the kids. They love
it....It's the community kind of concept there, too.

**Conclusion**

In Joy's classroom, one aspect of teaching for meaningfulness is building a family
atmosphere. The importance of this family atmosphere stems from its caring, respectful,
accepting nature which encourages sharing and risk taking on the part of students and the
teacher. To establish the family atmosphere, Joy begins by sharing her life with the
students as well as modeling this caring, accepting, respectful nature. Students share
their lives, interests, experiences, and beliefs in this environment. Members of the
community accept each student as a distinct individual with differing abilities, opinions,
experiences, and beliefs. The classroom becomes a "we" classroom where students are
bonded through common experiences and through the nature of the family atmosphere
itself.
CHAPTER FOUR

Joining the Cultures of Readers and Writers

Cultures. When we hear this word we often think of countries and the things unique to each. Food, clothing, and language might come to mind. Lifestyles and their bases in climatic and geological landforms can be considered. Religious beliefs and their practice often define a culture.

In speaking of academic disciplines as cultures, Brown et al. (1989) state, "To talk about academic disciplines, professions, or even manual trades as communities or cultures will perhaps seems strange" (p. 33). They speak of communities of practitioners as bound by tasks and beliefs and add,

The culture and the use of a tool act together to determine the way practitioners see the world; and the way the world appears to them determines the culture's understanding of the world and of the tools. Unfortunately, students are too often asked to use the tools of a discipline without being able to adopt its culture. To learn to use tools as practitioners use them, a student, like an apprentice, must enter that community and its culture. Thus, in a significant way, learning is, we believe, a process of enculturation. (p. 33)

Cultures can be described as groups of people who use the same language, tools, and activity in specific parts of their lives, and schools can be places that support the joining
of cultures valued by society. These cultures include reader and writer as well as numerous other cultures.

In teaching for meaningfulness, the teacher attempts to create opportunities for students to participate in authentic activity. The teacher guides, collaborates with, and supports students as they join these cultures. Acting as a writer, the teacher models for students the activity of the culture while using its language. Students become familiar with cultural tools by observing and discussing what members of the culture do and participating in the authentic activity of the culture as provided in the school setting.

In addition, the teacher attempts to open entry points for students, points that will allow them to make connections between what they are learning in school and their lives, interests, and experiences out of school. The family atmosphere described earlier provides an environment that encourages the sharing and acceptance of these lives and interests.
As the children finished their snacks, Joy began setting up the overhead projector in preparation for writing workshop.

"We need to do a little reviewing first," Joy said and pointed to a poster on the board that held the following information:

Writing Workshop
Thinking Stage
Sloppy Copy
Revising
Editing
Publishing

Joy continued, "We have been doing writing workshop for quite awhile and I'm so totally impressed by what I'm seeing in you guys and your writing. Last night, as I was editing, I had Mr. Marks read them because they were so wonderful."

"When writers go through writing workshop they go through a process all writers go through, these five steps. Think about what you did in our last writing workshop time. Then I'm going to find out who is in what step. How many people are in the thinking step today?"

No students raised their hands.

"Nobody's in the thinking step? Everybody has an idea? How many of you are in the sloppy copy step?"
At least five students raised their hands.

Joy continued, "All right. That one takes awhile. You're into the story but you're still working on it. How many of you are at the revising stage? You're trying to make corrections."

Several students raised their hands.

"How many of you are at the editing stage?" Joy asked. "You're waiting to get something back from me that I have edited?"

More students raised their hands.

"How many of you are at the publishing stage?"

Ten students raised their hands.

"Ten of you. That is amazing! When you get to the publishing stage that is the most fun part of all. You get to do your final copy. But remember," Joy added as she pointed to her head, "that's also your neatest, most perfect work."

Joy then talked with the class about binding their books. "We don't have a lot of choices for our publishing yet because our parents haven't made our wallpaper books. Remember what I told you, where our supplies are and to take your time with publishing your books. When you finish your published piece, let me know. Our share time is going to be on Thursday but if we have a published work finished before then we'll try to squeeze in time to share it because I know how important those are."
The class then returned to a discussion of the revising stage. While pointing to another chart on the chalkboard Joy asked, "When you get to the revising stage you look where?" The chart held the following information:

Questions for Revising

1. Does my story make sense?
2. Does my story create an image for the reader?
3. Did I remember capitals?
4. Did I remember punctuation?
5. Did I check spelling?

"Do all those things that writers do when they revise."

"Some of you are getting an edited paper back from me today. See our editing marks on the poster?" Joy pointed to a chart showing editing marks and their usage. "I made a lot of these funny looking marks on your papers," Joy added. "The chart can help you remember what they mean."

"Well, it's been awhile since you've seen me writing, and I wanted to show you where I am in my story. Remember last time when I talked to you I came up with my plan for my story. It always helps a writer to have a plan at the beginning because it kind of shows you where you're going."

Joy put a copy of her plan on the overhead:
Chapter 1 When we first found out I was pregnant

Chapter 2 My class and its reaction

Chapter 3 The heartbeat

Chapter 4 When I felt the baby move for the first time

Joy then began to talk about her plan. "My first chapter was going to be when I first found out I was pregnant. Then, in Chapter 2, I wanted to include you all and how you reacted. Chapter 3 was the heartbeat. Chapter 4 was when I first felt the baby move. Now I'm going to add Chapter 5 to my plan. What big event can I add now to my baby book?"

Chase responded, "When you saw the baby on TV."

"That's right, when we saw the baby on TV. That's called a sonogram, and that's what I had yesterday. I'll add that to my plan, 'My sonogram.'"

"I started my story last week and I got interrupted a lot so I didn't get too far, but that's okay. When I went back to it, I realized that I didn't like what I had written so I didn't finish it. I write better on paper so I went back and I wrote my story on paper. Does a writer ever go back and say, 'That's not really what I wanted to say' and start over again? You bet."

Joy placed a transparency of her story on the overhead:

"Robert! We're going to be parents!" I screamed. We had been wanting a baby for a long
time. I was so excited when I found out the good news. I could hardly wait to tell everyone I knew. Robert hugged me and just beamed.

"The person who wrote Charlotte's Web, E. B. White, started it lots and lots of times because he didn't like the beginning. I didn't like my beginning so I started again, too. I'm going to share just my new beginning today." Joy showed them a piece of notebook paper with writing on both sides that contained her new beginning. "I was pretty pleased. That's a lot of writing for me because I have to help you guys, too. I didn't have a whole lot of time but once I got to sit down to my private writing time I loved it."

Joy began writing her revised beginning on the overhead.

It was truly the most wonderful news of my life. Robert and I just found out that we were going to be parents. We were thrilled because we had been wanting a baby for a long time. We can hardly wait. We told everyone we knew.

"Okay, that's my first paragraph. Any comments, stars, and wishes for me?"

Katherine commented, "I like how you started out your story, when you first found out."
"Well, thank you, Katherine," Joy responded. No other students made comments so Joy continued, "Okay. Let's go on just a little bit more."

We went first to my parents' house.

"Why did I put that little mark right there?" asked Joy, pointing to the apostrophe after the s in parents.

"Because it's the end," Amanda replied.

"Way before the end," Joy prompted.

"Because it's your parents' house. It shows it belongs to them," said Elizabeth.

"Why did I put it after the s? Why not before?"

Bryan answered, "Because it belongs to more than one person."

"Good. It belongs to more than one person. I have two parents. I'm glad you remember that from second grade."

Joy reread the first line of her story and continued writing.

It was father's day.

"Oops! What did I forget?"

Several students responded, "Capital letters."

"I'll put my editing mark so I'll remember that."
It was father's day so I was delivering my daddy's present. We had gotten him a wheelbarrow.

Joy explained to the children, "That's what he wanted."

Hannah asked, "Does he have a farm?"

"No, he has a garden."

"My dad has a garden," added Scott.

Joy continued with her story.

I put a note on it that said, "You are now the proud owner of one wheelbarrow - large enough for three grandchildren."

The children had been quietly watching Joy write but at this point they began to laugh.

"Oh, you're catching on, Josh," Joy said and smiled at Josh. "Page two, new paragraph."

Daddy knew he only had two grandchildren so far, Benjamin and Megan, so

"Figure it out?" asked Joy.
"The baby," said Jessica.

he figured it out immediately.

"Pretty smart guy, my daddy," Joy pronounced. "He figured it out immediately. Now he already had two grandchildren, but I told him his wheelbarrow was big enough for three."

Amanda said, "So you're going to have a baby."

Joy responded, "You got it. Understand? See, my sister has two, I have one, two plus one is ..."

"Three!"

"Ok, math skills. How about that," praised Joy. "So Daddy figured it out."

He grinned and my mother screamed, "You're pregnant."

Caroline asked, "Weren't you embarrassed?"

Joy responded, "Oh, not at all."

We hugged and laughed and cried at the same time.
"Okay, that's the beginning of my story. Stars and wishes for my beginning so far?"

Katherine stated, "I like how you put that you screamed and yelled and all that."

Joy asked, "Does it help you imagine in your mind what must have happened when we told them?"

The students responded that it did.

Joy continued, "It kind of paints a picture for the reader. That's what I wanted. I'm glad you told me that you could picture it."

Maggie underscored, "That's number two on our questions for revising."

"Exactly. Maggie says that that's number two, 'Does your story create an image?' That's what I wanted to do. I wanted you to be able to see in your mind what was happening with my family."

"I continued writing yesterday and told what happened when we told Robert's family. I'll have to share that with you on Monday because I don't want to take all your writing time. Stars and wishes? Chase?"

Chase said, "You did like a riddle on it."

"Yes, sort of like a riddle. You had to think there for a minute. It was sort of hard. It was probably harder for you all because you may not have known that my daddy already had two grandchildren. Rebecca?"

Rebecca added, "I like how you put how you told them."
"You like the way I told them. Well, you guys make me feel so good about my writing. Thank you so much for listening and for your stars and wishes. Now we're going to have our writing time. We're only going to have twenty-five minutes today, but tomorrow we'll have our full time. I won't interrupt you at all at the beginning so you can immediately get into your writing. Look up here at the chart if you need help remembering where you are. I will need to get with a couple of my folks I edited with that I haven't gotten to yet so I need you to get your materials real quick. Table two, how about if you help me?"

The students from table two collected the writing workshop folders from the crate and distributed these to the students.

"Okay, private writing studios set up. I see private studios where?" Joy looked around. "Korey's ready. Let's see if by the time I count to ten everybody is in their private studio, quiet, and ready to go with writing workshop: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten." Joy counted quietly, her voice getting quieter with each number.

For the next twenty-five minutes the children worked on their writing. During this time, Joy conferenced with several students about pieces of writing they had recently completed.

To close the writing workshop time in preparation for music, Joy stopped the children after twenty-five minutes. "Okay, I know you didn't have a whole lot of time for
writing today and I forgot that tomorrow you have a field trip so we won't get to writing workshop again until Wednesday."

"Aw," groaned some of the students.

Joy then began a discussion of what students had accomplished during writing workshop time. "It was a short time but, hopefully, in that short time you got a lot accomplished. We need to take time to evaluate how things went today so let's put things back into our writing workshop folder. Let me hear from a few of you about your success stories from today. Caroline, what happened really good today that you're proud of?"

Caroline exclaimed, "I almost finished publishing my book!"

Joy responded, "Great! Now a lot of you have gotten to the publishing stage, and you've been saying that you would like to make wallpaper books. I'm sorry but you can't yet because I don't have enough made. I've got to get the moms to come and make a bunch for us. Once they do you can make wallpaper books but right now the only choice you have is a paper cover."

Elizabeth then shared, "I finished editing and I'm publishing."

"Congratulations! Rebecca?"

"I'm on page five."

"Excellent! Amanda?"

"I'm still on page four and I'm thinking of an ending."

"Of an ending. Hannah?"

"I got a chapter written and I finished my sloppy copy."
"Katherine?"

"I finished my sloppy copy."

"All right! You're wrapping things up so you'll be ready to revise. Maggie?"

"I got to revising."

"Congratulations! Lucas?"

"I started a new story."

Joy then prepared the students to evaluate their writing workshop session. "Get ready to do your evaluation of today's session. Let's review. Remember that you give it a five if you thought it was absolutely awesome and if you were so pleased with what you got accomplished today. Five is the best you can give it, then a four if it was pretty good, three if it was about an average one, two if it wasn't so great and if you didn't get a lot done, or one if it was just not a good writing workshop. Put your hand right in front of your chest, make a fist, and then show me your sign for what today was so I can see it." Joy observed the students' responses as they used fingers to indicate their ratings.

"One or two. Can anyone tell me why?"

No one responded.

"Threes, want to share why it was just average today?" Amanda raised her hand.

"What do you think, Amanda?"

"I didn't get much accomplished."

Joy restated, "You didn't get much done. Do you think it is because we just ran out of time or did you have a problem?"
Amanda answered, "I think we ran out of time."

Joy continued, "Yeah, the time was definitely a problem. Jim, what do you think?"

"I ran out of time," Jim said.

"Yeah, I hate that for you, too, and I'm sorry. You just get going and you have to stop. That's very frustrating. I wish we had all day to do writing workshop. Chase?"

"I didn't get as much done as I wanted."

"So you didn't get as much done as you wanted to either. Who gave it a four or a five? Stuart?"

"Because I got to the publishing stage."

"Congratulations! Stuart's in the publishing stage. That feels good, doesn't it? What else?"

Hannah said, "I got a lot accomplished. I got a lot done and I wrote half of a chapter."

"How about you, Tyler?"

"Well, I finished a story that I'm publishing and I almost finished another story."

Joy concluded, "Great, he's on his second story. I wish I could hear all your stories but we're going to be late for music if we don't stop, so real quick, put your things in your writing folders."

The children put their things away and then lined up for music class.
Joining the Culture of Writers

The second aspect of teaching for meaningfulness is joining cultures such as reader and writer. Brown et al. (1989) speak of academic disciplines as cultures and communities of practitioners as bound by beliefs and tasks (p. 33). Smith (1986) describes how children can join "the literacy club" (p. 37). Smith explains that the literacy club is joined "with the implicit act of mutual acceptance: 'You're one of us,' 'I want to be just like you.' There are no special admission requirements, no entry fees" (p. 37). The advantages of joining this club, or culture, are: "The activities of experienced club members are quickly revealed to new members...Newcomers are helped to engage in club activities on the occasions when it is most useful and interesting for them to do so" (p. 37). Smith adds,

Membership in the literacy club adds to the individual's sense of personal identity, of who he or she is. "Hi kid, you're one of us," say the members of the literacy club. From the beginning, the child is a reader or a writer, a member of the guild, who takes learning for granted and who will learn.

(p. 38)

As Joy's students join the culture of writers, Joy's guidance, collaboration, and support are necessary to assist this membership. Joy models using the tools of the culture of writing, and students are given opportunities to participate in a form of the activity of that culture. For example, Joy shares her story with them and models how writers often rewrite sections. Students write for extended periods of time about topics they select.
They have opportunities to use those cultural skills already acquired while new skills are introduced as needed through Joy's modeling, in her editing, and in her conferences with the students. Joy provides time for students to discuss strengths as well as concerns involved in their joining of the culture of writers. Elizabeth expresses excitement about beginning to publish a book. Amanda and Jim share their frustration with time. Amanda tells the class, "I didn't get much accomplished," and Joy questions her concerning the reason. They conclude that time was the issue as Amanda tells Joy, "I think we ran out of time" and Joy validates this with "Yeah, the time was definitely a problem." Hannah comments about her "five" day in writing workshop because "I got a lot accomplished. I got a lot done and I wrote half a chapter." Students discuss with one another their work, providing one another with support based on personal experiences as members joining the culture.

**Authentic Activity**

As part of joining a new culture such as writer, the student needs to participate in some form of the actual activity in which a member of the culture would participate. Harwayne (1992) states,

When I select or design teaching strategies, authenticity is the filter that helps me sift through the dozens of ideas wandering through my mind and coming across my desk. I'm interested in ways of teaching that have authentic, real world, life-long implications. (p. 3)
Joy attempts to do this in her writing workshop classes.

The class discusses what authors do. Scott states, "We can see how professional authors write and then we can make our books like theirs." Jim adds, "Mrs. Marks might read a book and if you like that type of book you can go out and look for that series and get another one of the books. Or you can make your own book like that." For example, the students talk about how writers read a lot and use the literature as a source of ideas. Joy initiated the use of writer's notebooks, a place where students respond to literature. Harwayne (1992) states, "We've not only come to appreciate that responding to literature can help students find their own topics for writing, we've come to value literature as a major resource for generating topics" (p. 61). Harwayne adds,

We now appreciate the fact that individual readers will each have a unique response to a text because of the individual experiences they bring to the act of reading. Readers cannot separate themselves from their reading.

They cannot help but read texts their own way. (p. 61)

The children in Joy's class describe how writer's notebooks help them as writers. For example, Martha states, "When I read the books, they interest me and they help me get more things into my mind so I can write a real book....Reading gives me tons of ideas for my stories." Joy encourages the students to "steal" ideas from books and other stories they hear. Their response to the book Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge (Fox, 1985), a story about a young boy who helps an elderly woman remember past events in her life by using objects to trigger memories, exemplifies this use of literature as a source for
ideas. After hearing the story, the children use their writer's notebooks to reflect upon it, to write about one of their own memories, and to discuss, as Joy explains, "how this author's idea can extend our own ideas - causing us as writers to come up with a multitude of topics."

To understand what it is to be a writer, students need to read the work of authors because, as Joy continues,

If I'm asking them to be an author they need to understand what an author is, what an author does, and that an author has voice. In their own writing I'm asking for their voice to come out. We talk about how an author does that.

Joy speaks with the students about how authors are observers. Joy states,

I want to teach them to be observers of what is happening around them, to be observers of how they feel and just being more aware of what is happening in the world so that they can use all of those things when they are writing. This is what a good author does.

"Wide-awake lives" is what Harwayne (1992) uses to describe what authors live. In living these wide-awake lives, authors constantly look for ideas and Joy builds part of her writing program on this belief. Joy writes, "We discuss how 'real' authors live 'wide-awake' lives and look for ideas constantly." She encourages her students to do what writers do by looking for ideas in all parts of their lives.
Joy considers a writer’s use of space since many writers have special places where they write. In the classroom, students work at their own desks, but these desks are now called a private writing studio, a personal writing area. Rebecca describes how she feels about private writing studios: "I’m glad that Mrs. Marks lets us write because she says 'Make your writing studio' and I feel like I’m a real writer." The desks are also set up in groups of six or eight so that students, if needed, can speak with another student about any problems or questions they might have. Students speak softly to one another when needed. Joy uses space to encourage cooperation among students as well as to give them a sense of personal writing space.

The Nature of Authentic Activity

The nature of the authentic activity in Joy's class is based on her personal practical knowledge, specifically, and the authenticity of the writing activities Joy provides for students is based upon Joy's understanding of writing. Joy's dynamic knowledge of writing has its origins in her personal experiences as a writer such as wanting to write a story about the morning her brother dumped cereal in the floor but having to write about a topic the teacher selected. Prior teaching experiences added new dimensions to this understanding. Joy speaks of writers such as Donald Graves whose work dealing with teaching writing impacted Joy's beliefs as a college student. Collaboratively teaching writing workshop with a college professor provided both with new perspectives. Currently, observing her own students' work as writers adds to this
personal practical knowledge. Published writers visit Joy's classroom to describe their practice as writers which adds another perspective. Joy's work with other teachers, her continuing reading of professional literature related to the teaching of writing, and her association with a local university and its student teachers allow her to continue to search for a clearer understanding of writer as a culture. Joy's relationship with Jane Ross, the language arts coordinator at her school, led to their joint teaching of an inservice about writing workshop. This afforded Joy and Jane the opportunity to share their understanding of and experiences related to writing workshop with other teachers. In addition, both used the experience to re-examine their own understandings of writing workshop.

Joy's knowledge of authentic activity and its manifestation in her classroom is dynamic in nature as Joy seeks to expand this understanding through observing, working with the children, personal experience, reading, and talking with other educators and writers. She never accepts her knowledge of writing as complete, and her search for a better understanding of writing and writers continues.

Although Joy, as a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness, attempts to provide tasks and activities that are authentic, there are things that can impede the authenticity of these tasks. For instance, in Joy's class, time can affect the authenticity of the students' writing. Professional writers often have unlimited amounts of time to write and can choose where and when they write. In this classroom, writing time begins and ends at specific times. Field trips and assemblies periodically pre-empt this writing time.
Scheduling constraints like special area classes and lunch often bring a strict closing time to the writing workshop session. Students working on an important part of their story may have to stop even though they desire to continue writing. Joy realizes these constraints as she states, "Each year I learn new ideas about teaching writing as I struggle with new problems such as time, assessment, and management." Joy continues to search for new ways to negotiate these constraints.

Skills of the Culture

To support the students as they join the culture of writers, Joy observes the students to see what cultural skills are already in place and which need to be introduced. Acquainting them with new or difficult skills of the culture when they are needed by the student provides support for students as writers. These new skills relate to their practice, for example, in writing workshop, they relate to the students' writing.

The teacher needs some means of ascertaining necessary skills. Joy uses the students' writing to assess the need by students for different skills. The introduction of some skills takes place during conferences with Joy. When numerous students exhibit a need for a skill, Joy teaches a mini-lesson which connects the skill to students' work and to the need for the skill in their stories. For example, many of the children were writing stories where characters were talking to one another. As a result, students needed knowledge of the conventions of dialogue. Joy planned a short lesson for the class where she had two students talking with one another while she copied what they said on the
overhead projector. The class talked about the punctuation and paragraphing associated
with dialogue based on a need by students for these skills. As a follow-up, Joy
couraged students to observe how published authors use dialogue in their writing.
When teaching these skills, Joy focuses on how the students will use these skills as
writers, and they discuss the purpose of what they are learning.

Scott describes how writing workshop helps him as a writer. Scott states,

Writing workshop is fun! All the kids love it. It improves skills like
spelling, thinking, English, and problem-solving. It also gives us a taste of
what it's like to be a writer. I think I'm going to be a writer when I grow
up.

Students in Joy's class are exposed to a variety of literature and they discuss the
styles of writing used by authors. They are encouraged to take these ideas and use them
in their own writing, if desired. Harwayne (1992) believes that students "need to feel free
to take the bits and pieces they've learned from others and integrate them into their own
unique ways of writing" (p. 160). Several students described how looking at other pieces
of literature helps them as writers. Scott states, "We can see how professional authors
write and then we can make our books like theirs." Jim adds, "You can bring your own
book and if you're writing kind of like them you can get an idea." Nick describes how he
feels about writing workshop:

I love writing workshop because you get to write what you want and you
can express your feelings. You are also learning about punctuation, how
you can create an image for your reader and you might not even know you are learning. When you are going through the five steps, thinking, sloppy copy, revising, editing, and publishing you are also learning how to use correct English and how to write and read with expression. So I'm glad we don't read in our English books, BORING!

The students use the works of members of the culture to help them in their growth as writers by using similar ideas and styles.

In one particular instance, the students were reading a mystery. As they read the story, they stopped periodically to consider what the author was doing to develop the mystery and to provide clues for the reader. Some of the children then decided to experiment with mystery writing. Joy states,

Scott is writing a mystery. Jessica's writing a mystery. We read a mystery in class. We talked about what makes something a mystery. They loved the mystery because we'd stop every two pages and I'd make them flip their book over. Then I'd ask, 'What do you think is going to happen? Let's collect our clues.' They just loved that. We talked about how to be a mystery writer you've got to be really intelligent because you've got to drop the clues for your readers but in your mind you've got to know how it's going to end. We talked about that and so several of them tackled that challenge. I didn't put it up to them. They wanted to do it.
In this case the students studied strategies mystery writers use and the characteristics of mystery as a genre. Some students then attempted to write their own mysteries using these strategies and characteristics as a guide.

**Modeling by the Teacher**

For students to join a culture or grow as members of that culture, it is important that they see members of the culture modeling the actual practice. In addition, students need to hear the practitioner's description of decision-making as a member of that culture. This is apparent in Joy's class as she models for the children as a writer, sharing with them not only her work, but her thoughts and decision-making as she continues to work on a piece of writing. Joy calls this "writing aloud" which Routman (1991) defines as "a powerful modeling technique at any grade level for getting students' attention and demonstrating various aspects of writing. Writing aloud occurs when the teacher writes in front of students and also verbalizes what he is thinking and writing" (p. 51). Joy writes stories from events in her own life, sharing with students her thinking as a writer.

In telling the Father's Day story, Joy models for the children her own writing. She begins by talking with them about a plan she developed and discusses the development of plans prior to writing. Next, she shares her personal feelings about her first chapter and her decision to rewrite the chapter. Joy talks about her own idiosyncrasies as a writer, for example, she prefers writing on paper as opposed to composing on the computer.
Included in her sharing with the students are comments about the use of such things by writers as punctuation and capitalization.

The story of informing her parents about her pregnancy allows Joy to share with the students a personal experience related to her family. She shares herself as a writer and as a person because of her belief that by sharing her own life with students as well as presenting herself to them as a writer, their writing will be more meaningful to them. Joy states,

I just think it's important for a teacher to share herself as a writer and as a person. It builds community in the classroom and establishes that bond, that relationship, a level of trust, where you're more at ease taking a risk because as a writer you're being asked to take a risk. If you are willing, if you feel comfortable in that environment, you're more likely to be able to do that and to share your writing with a person.

Joy talks with the students about how writers create an image for the reader. In the Father's Day story Joy models creating an image for the reader through language usage. As they assess her writing, Joy questions if her story creates an image for the reader. Students respond that they could picture the scene from her story and Joy comments, "It kind of paints a picture for the reader. That's what I wanted. I'm glad you told me that you could picture it."
Student/Teacher Writing Conferences

Individual conferences provide Joy with the opportunity to talk with students about their writing. These conferences, held when a student completes and revises a rough draft or a chapter, give Joy the chance to support students as writers by commenting on the strengths of the piece as well as making suggestions. In addition, the students, in this one-on-one conference, share their thoughts, successes, and concerns about their writing with Joy. Joy acts as "a respectful listener, trusting that he [the student] had important things to say" (Harwayne, 1992, p. 223). Amanda describes this from a student's perspective: "Mrs. Marks encourages you a lot like if you're stuck she helps you." Caitlin shares, "She [Mrs. Marks] doesn't do other things while you're reading. She sits there and listens to you and she doesn't get up and walk around the room."

As a writer, Joy calls herself the "editor-in-chief." The class discusses how published writers have editors who double check their work, and Joy describes her job as editor-in-chief to them. Joy observes that, as third graders, the students can fix many things by themselves, but that she will help them with any final changes. They discuss how a published author such as Eve Bunting would be embarrassed if she published a book and then found some mistakes like misspelled words.

In conferencing with students, Joy reads their stories to them because, Joy states, "I think it's important for the kids to hear another person giving their story life." She stops periodically to discuss questions like: "How do you think it [your story] sounded?"
Do you like the way your story is going? Why is this important to you? Where are you going with this next?” The students' problems as writers are not solved by Joy but are approached jointly with the student taking as much control as possible. Joy provides some guidance and makes suggestions about the content of the story but, in each student's role as writer, the student makes the final decision about acting upon these suggestions. Changes in capitalization, punctuation, and grammatical issues are discussed including the "why's" of these changes. The students hear how their writing is perceived by a writer and are given strategies to use in their continued growth as writers.

Making Connections with Other Members of the Culture

While Joy models writing for students, she also attempts to provide opportunities for students to interact with other writers. Joy not only introduces students to works of literature and the writers associated with these pieces but also invites published authors to visit her classroom. A local author spoke to Joy's class about being a writer and brought samples of her rough drafts to share with the students. The students had the opportunity to speak with an author and to hear the writer explain her process.

In beginning writing workshop, Joy emphasizes that published authors, those who have books in the library, have lives similar to our own. She talks with the students about how people who write books often take their own life experiences and make stories out of them. Joy encourages the students to use their own life experiences as ideas for their stories. In addition, this literature provides a source of ideas for students.
E. B. White's experiences are described as Joy shares with the students how White rewrote the beginning of *Charlotte's Web* (1952) "lots of times" because of his dissatisfaction with the start of the story. Joy connects this to her desire to write a new beginning for her own story. As a result, Joy encourages students to consider each part of their story and to feel free to make changes as needed, even when this means rewriting an entire section or story.

Joy also reads a variety of literature to the students and they are exposed to numerous books. They respond to this literature through the use of their writer's notebooks, a place where they make connections between the literature and their own lives. Joy feels that writer's notebooks are meaningful to students because they give students the sense of authorship. In addition, she believes that hearing the work of another author helps them connect with that author which leads to a sense of belonging. Students are provided with the opportunity to hear or read the works of other writers and to take an in-depth look at these pieces of writing.

To expose students to a more in-depth meeting with professional authors, Joy's class features authors such as Shel Silverstein, Beverly Cleary, and Jack Prelutsky. They read books by the author and learn about the author's life. They also discuss the writing style of the author because, as Joy and Jane Ross, the school language arts coordinator, discussed in an inservice they taught on writing workshop, it is important to share powerful passages from literature. Smith (1986) states, "Authors also show children how to write. How else than by reading, or being read to, could children, or anyone else, learn
all the subtle conventions of plot, narrative, characterization, mood, style - or of spelling and punctuation for that matter?" (p. 39). Joy's class discusses the "lightning bolts" of a piece of writing, the passages where the reader feels, touches, smells, and hears very intensely. The students can then experiment with these styles of writing in their own stories.

Assuming the Role of the Writer

To support students as growing writers, Joy provides them with opportunities to participate in activities similar to or reflective of those of writers. In writing workshop, for example, the importance of assuming the role of author is paramount. Joy states, "I think letting them assume the authorship role and talking to them as the author makes writing workshop more meaningful." Harwayne (1992) speaks of the time for students "to take the wheel, to sit in the driver's seat" and describes how the writer will "learn most when the journey is really hers, when she's making all the decisions" (p. 154). In writing workshop, Joy focuses on the students' roles as writers. She sets in place a framework, the five stages of writing, to give the students some structure that reflects that of writers as Joy explains, "I wanted it to just be a structure for them to hang on to, a framework to go with their writing, and it helped them a lot."

Rebecca describes how assuming the role of the writer in writing workshop makes her feel. Rebecca states,
I kind of think I'm a writer because if you're a writer that means that you get to write books and publish them. Most teachers don't do that so Mrs. Marks thinks we're writers and we also think we're writers because we just get a chance to write like real writers do.

The students see themselves as writers participating in the activity of writers.

Using the Language of the Culture

As students move towards membership in a new culture, the language of the culture needs to be shared with the students since lack of knowledge of a language can exclude those desiring membership. Joy speaks with the students as writers. They use specific terms to name the steps a writer goes through like rough draft, revising, editing, and publishing. They discuss the strengths of a piece of writing or a writing experience. The children use Joy's story to talk about punctuation marks such as the apostrophes in parents' and Father's Day. Capitalization of Father's Day is mentioned. Katherine shares with Joy, "I like how you put that you screamed and yelled and all that," and Maggie connects this to one of the suggestions for revising, that of creating an image for the reader in the writer's story. Joy models discussing a piece of writing, both in her direct instruction in front of the class as well as through conferences and in talking with the students as she walks around the room.


Supporting Self and One Another as Writers

It is also important for students to hear the experiences of other students as well as to reflect upon their own progress related to the new culture. In Joy's class, a sharing session at the end of each writing workshop session provides a means for this reflection. Students rate their day's writing workshop experience on a scale of one to five and share this rating with Joy through raising the corresponding number of fingers. Those students who desire relate orally their rating of the session and provide an explanation for this rating. Amanda rates her day as a three because she didn't get much accomplished. Joy then takes this opportunity to find why the day was only average and Amanda states that running out of time was the cause. Due to scheduling issues, the time for writing workshop could not be extended, but Joy acknowledges the frustration a writer feels when "you just get going and you have to stop." Stuart gives writing workshop a five because he reaches the publishing stage. Hannah gives it a high mark for getting a lot accomplished. Students who give the session a high rating explain what made their session successful as a writer. Those giving the session a low rating describe the problems they encountered which made the session less successful than desired. Joy and the other students take this opportunity to make suggestions and offer new perspectives in hopes of helping the student address the problem.

Students are provided with opportunities to share their stories with the class. At the end of a sharing, Joy provides an opportunity for students to offer comments, stars (things they liked about the story) and wishes (things they wish the author had included).
If a problem has arisen, other students as well as the teacher give suggestions for resolving the problem. This is done not only with their work but also when Joy shares her stories. In the Father's Day story Joy asks students to share stars and wishes for her story. Rebecca shares a star, "I like how you put how you told them" and Chase compares the story to a riddle. Through modeling Joy teaches them appropriate responses. In sharing these stories, students also get ideas for their own writing.

The students often see the sharing by other students as helpful to them as writers. Nick describes how hearing others share helps because "sometimes you can steal the ideas and get ideas from that." Katherine relates how "sometimes at the end of class it gives me ideas and then you're allowed to steal them and it helps you." When Scott hears Maggie's phrase, "fear crawled up her back," he decides to use similar language in his own writing.

Some of the students in Joy's class have participated in writing workshop during prior school years. As a means of introducing writing workshop to new participants, Joy has experienced students share some of their experiences. Joy states,

I want the other kids to catch their enthusiasm. I can stand up here and tell them how wonderful it is...but the real proof is when a peer says, 'Yes, this was really great!' That's what I want them to hear, to realize that their peers really do like it. It's not just something the teacher likes, it's something the kids are getting something out of.
Students Who Continue to Struggle with Reading and Writing

For many of the children in this classroom, an excitement about reading and writing is apparent. But for other students, reading or writing continues to be a struggle. Joy describes Chase as a student who continues to struggle as a reader. Joy states, "We're having Chase tested....We think it may be a learning thing."

Heather and Will also struggle with reading as Joy states, I think it's a lack of home support there. Reading is not a part of their lives. It's not important. It's not anything that's done outside the school. I asked Will to share for book sharing and he said, 'We ain't got no books.' Heather will check out a library book and it never gets opened. So I think it's not an important part at home.

Joy describes what she is doing to encourage Will and Heather as readers:

I've gotten Will a Reading Buddy. A mom comes in and reads with him and she's got him hooked on The Boxcar Children book from the book order this month. So I'm so excited....That kind of support system encourages those efforts and gives him a positive role model. I've conferenced with Heather's mother so many times and I'm encouraging Heather to use our computerized reading program in the library. We'll read a book together that's worth half a point, a short easy book, so she can earn points and take the test on that book.

Joy uses other methods to support these students as readers and writers.
I try to give them as much individual support as I can give which is hard with twenty-six kids. I use peer buddying. When they're assigned to read a book that's difficult I let them read with a buddy who can help them. Heather also exhibits difficulty with writing. Joy describes an incident in Heather's writing:

Heather was having a hard time. She was writing about her sister and it was a run-on story. I hooked her up with a book about a sister and a brother and talked with Sarah about the writer's inclusion of specifics, the funny things that her brother did that drove her crazy....Then I asked her to think of something that happened that her sister did that the other kids might think is funny. That helped her, plugging in the literature.

Kelly is also described as a student who struggles with writing. Joy states, "It's just not important to her. And I'm having a hard time getting her inspired....I don't know what will get Kelly going."

Although Joy provides support for students as they join the cultures of readers and writers, some students still struggle with membership. As a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness, Joy continues to search for ways to meet their needs.

Connecting to the Lives and Interests of Students

To make school experiences meaningful, a connection needs to be made between the school experience and the lives, interests, and experiences of students. Writing
workshop provides a forum for this connection. In writing workshop, the students make decisions about their topics. Often they choose to write about experiences in their own lives or to write fictional stories that have their bases in life occurrences. Writing workshop is a time during the school day when students can make a connection between the school activity, that of writing, and their own lives.

Conclusion

Supporting students as they join new cultures through authentic activity and by making connections between school experiences and the lives and interests of each student is a second aspect of teaching for meaningfulness. Joy begins by modeling for students the activity, language, and thinking of a member of the culture. She observes which cultural skills each student already holds and then provides opportunities for students to build upon these skills. Joy provides occasions for students to observe and interact with members of the culture as well as use their skills. Students participate in the activity of the culture and discuss with one another that participation using the language of the culture. These opportunities also allow points where students can make connections between what they are doing in school and their lives, experiences, and interests. The teacher discusses with students their practice in the activity of the culture and provides support for them as they join the desired culture.
CHAPTER FIVE

Teaching for Meaningfulness in School Settings

Teachers who teach for meaningfulness attempt to plan tasks and activities for their students that are authentic in nature. A goal of creating activities similar to those of a member of the desired culture provides focus. Tasks allow for connections between the school activity and the lives, interests, and experiences of the students. A family atmosphere is built and supported.

Another part of teaching for meaningfulness involves the institution in which these aspects occur. The third aspect of TFM places this teaching in a school setting.

Parts of schooling can support this type of teaching. Students gather for regularly scheduled periods of time in set locations. Authentic literature can be found in classrooms and in the school library. Materials are available to the teacher and students. State and local levels emphasize reading and writing. Actions, language, and thinking of a member of a culture as well as actions, thoughts, and explanations that help build and support a family atmosphere can be modeled by the teacher.

In some situations, though, the school can be constraining to the teacher who desires to teach for meaningfulness. Issues connected to materials, assessment, time, curriculum, and space exemplify these constraints. When faced with these issues, the teacher who teaches for meaningfulness searches for ways to negotiate the school setting
while continuing to build a family atmosphere and provide authentic activity for students.
"Table two is getting it together. Table three looks good. Oh, table four, you guys look great. Table one, there's someone there who needs to listen to directions."

Joy prepared to begin book sharing, a part of the literacy program where students share with the class books they have been reading.

"Okay, book sharers, please prepare. Class, when someone is sharing in book sharing, what is the way you can show them that you are interested in what they have to say? We don't want to sit there and say, 'Oh, I'm interested in what you have to say.' We want to show them that. Elizabeth?"

Elizabeth responded, "Just listen. Don't play with anything."

"Exactly. Exactly," said Joy. "Not playing with anything. Definitely. Certainly not reading another book. What could you do to show them that you're listening?" asked Joy as she moved the author's chair, a tall stool, to the front of the room. "How do they know you're listening? What are you doing to show them that you're interested and listening? How do you show them, Brittany?"

"You look at them."

"You look at them, absolutely," Joy restated. "You look at the person who is speaking. Remember when you're book sharing, this is what grown-ups do. We do it in the teacher's lounge all the time. We'll sit around and say, 'Oh, have you read such and such?' Mrs. Schroeder's book that we shared in daily news, the one that was just published, I bought it yesterday at the bookstore and several teachers have already gotten it. They say, 'Oh, it's so good! It's so great!' This is what grown-ups really do."
So when you find a good book it's like finding a treasure. When there are all the books in the world to consider and you find a good one you've found a real treasure, and it's something you do want to share with other people. That's how I found a lot of good books that I love. Mrs. Ross would tell me, Mrs. Linkous would tell me, or Mrs. Hill would tell me about a book and I would say, 'Oh, I have read that book.' That's what grown-ups really do. So book sharing is a real important time."

"This is your second time for book sharing for some of you and for a couple of the others it's still your first. Okay, ready to listen? Matthew, how about if you start us off? Good listeners are not playing with anything at our seat and are looking at the speaker. Remember, you might find a treasure today by finding a book you'd love to read."

Matthew moved to the front of the room and sat in the author's chair. He began, "This book is called Snaggle Doodles and it's about science. There are these girls and some are nice and a lot are not very nice."

"Give us the general idea of what happens in the story," Joy prompted.

"Well, like science," Matthew continued, turning the book over and over. "They work a lot, and they're doing all this science."

"Is there a problem or something that happens in the story? An exciting part?"
Joy asked, smiling at Matthew.

"Well, I really liked the whole book. but it's all exciting."

"Who's the author?"

"Patrick Really Giff."
"Patricia Reilly Giff. What is that? Is that book a series?"

"Yes."

"It's part of a series. What series?"

"Polk Street School."

"The Polk Street School. Yeah, we read one of those. Do you remember which one we read?"

Hands went up across the classroom.

"Yeah, remember the mystery? If you liked that one, if you liked the one we read together, Matthew's book would be a good follow-up. Thank you, Matthew. Would you put it up on our board, please? Let me hear from Caroline."

Caroline moved to the front of the room with her book, The Fairy Rebel, and sat in the chair. "Here's a book that I just got finished reading. It's about this lady, her name is Jane. She loves sweets and she can't exercise because something fell on her and she got sort of fat and stuff. One day she was outside sitting by a tree and this fairy came up and started talking to her and she had pink hair and she had a yellow shirt on with jeans. They were having this conversation and they were saying things and she really made her feel bad because she took a lick of her tears. She started to say that those weren't real tears because they weren't salty or anything but then they became friends and stuff and she had another boy fairy and he was their friend."

"Who was the author?"

"Lynne Reid Banks."
"Thanks for sharing," Joy said. "Does anybody have a question for Caroline?"

No students raised their hands.

"Okay, next sharer. Jessica, are you ready?"

Jessica picked up her book and went to the chair.

"This is a book called Bella Arabella and it's about this girl and she listens to her mother and father's conversation. She lives with them and they're talking about sending her away to boarding school."

"Tell us a little bit about what boarding school is," requested Joy. "Some people may not know." Jessica stared at Joy without responding.

"How is a boarding school different from our school?" prompted Joy.

"You have to live there."

"Exactly, you have to live there. You not only go to school there but you live there, too. You're not with your family."

Jessica then continued to give a detailed description of her book.

At the end of Jessica's book sharing Joy commented, "I don't know about you but I sure want to know how that book ends. Any questions for Jessica? Question, Scott?"

"Did she turn Matt into a girl?" Scott asked, looking at Jessica.

Jessica began to answer, but Joy interrupted, "Oh, don't tell, don't tell. I want to know that, too, Scott, but if we tell the end, we may not want to read it. It may not be as exciting. It's kind of like reading the book after you've seen the movie, you already know
what happened. It takes a lot of the fun out of it. Don't tell, Jessica, even if they ask. They'll just have to read it and find out. Okay, how about Tyler, are you ready?"

Tyler went to the author's chair.

"This is my book I read, Berenstain Bears, No Girls Allowed. And my brother gave it to me because he used to hate girls and stuff but now he likes them."

"How old is your brother, Tyler?" asked Joy.

"Twelve."

"Oh," responded Joy as the children began to laugh.

"It's about Sister Bear. Brother Bear's friends are older than her and they would rather play and have races and she would always come in last. She couldn't climb trees and she'd mess up the marble games and she didn't hit it but she said it slipped. Then when she started growing up she always won. She would win races, climbing the highest and beating them in marbles. And she'd always hit a homerun in baseball. One day Brother Bear and his friends built a clubhouse and she was looking for them and she couldn't find them. She finally found them and right when she came they put up a sign that said 'No Girls Allowed.' She was really sad until she went to tell Papa Bear and they built a tree house for her and her friends. Her brother and his friends came and Sister Bear had put up a sign that said 'No Boys Allowed.' So then they got to go into their clubhouse."

"Tyler, that sounds like a very fun book to read. Okay, Hannah. Remember, good listening."
Hannah sat down in the author's chair.

"I got it at the library. It's called *Claudia and the New Girl* and it's about this girl named Claudia. Then this girl named Ashley moves to her city. Ashley is a real cool girl, like she has three holes in her ear. Claudia's into art and stuff and so is Ashley but Ashley is kind of better than Claudia at art. Ashley finds out that Claudia and her are in the same art class and they have to make a project for a contest. Claudia doesn't think that she can do anything but Ashley thinks Claudia's very good at art so Ashley takes Claudia away from Claudia's club and the girls in the club get really mad at Ashley for taking Claudia away and they feel like Claudia's a traitor. Then Ashley finally gets Claudia into the contest but she doesn't have time to finish her project that she made. I can't tell the end."

"What series was that book in?

Several of the children responded, "*The Babysitters Club.*"

"Yeah, *The Babysitters Club.* Who is the author?"

"Ann M. Martin."

"How many of you read *The Babysitters Club*?"

Some of the students raised their hands.

"Have you read this one? I think these are real popular. Sometimes it's fun to stay with a series once you find one you really like. When I was little I went through the *Trixie Belden* craze. I read all those and then I read all the Beverly Cleary books. Sometimes it's fun to hook up with an author who really appeals to you so you kind of..."
share something with that author when you listen to their voice and you like what it is
they have to say. You can hook up with them and read all their books. We've read a
Clyde Robert Bulla book, Pirate's Promise, and we're going to read another one starting
this week by the same author. We have even another one on the third grade shelf. So
that's an author that you guys can feel like you know pretty well by the time we finish. So
that's sometimes fun if you find an author you like, to search for more of their books.
That's a fun thing to do. Yes, Mary."

"Well, I'm reading one about Nancy Drew."

"Right, I'm sure I have that somewhere in my attic at my mom's house. I used to
have all of those, too. Okay, we'll pick our book sharers for next week now."

A number of students raised their hands, volunteering to share a book.

"We'll go ahead and pick our Captain of the Week for next week, and then we'll
go on with our writing. All right, Nicole, pick us book sharers. These are people who
will be sharing for their second time. Not your third time, it's your second time. You
guys will be up for next Wednesday." Nicole reached into a bowl, drew four names, and
handed them to Joy. "Katherine, you need to find one book to share. Josh. Elizabeth.
Stuart. One, two, three, four book sharers for next week. You've got a week to get ready.
We need a Captain of the Week. All right, Chase, I'll let you pick Captain of the Week
since you are captain this week."

Chase drew a name from a bowl.
"Brittany," announced Joy. "Captain of the Week. Okay, now that we've finished book sharing it's time for writing notebooks. I have something wonderful to share with you today. Table two, would you each take four notebooks and pass them out for me please?"

The students from table two walked to the box where the writer's notebooks were kept and divided the notebooks among the four of them. The notebooks were then distributed to their owners.

"Put your pencils down because I have some wonderful things to share with you."

Joy walked over to Will's desk and helped him find his notebook and his pencil.

"Whoa, looking good table two."

Joy walked around the room, checking to see that all were ready.

"Excellent. Pencils down once you've put your date so you can show me that you're ready. I want to introduce you to an author today that has some great ideas. Every once in awhile I come across an author that has such neat ideas that I think, oh, that would be perfect for writing time. And you can steal ideas from other authors. Rebecca. Remember when you're a writer it gives you a license to steal. We talked about that. You can steal ideas from anybody you want to. There's a difference, though, with stealing an idea and copying what an author wrote. The author we're meeting today is Judith Viorst, and if I sat down and started copying everything that Judith Viorst had written and then wrote at the bottom 'by Joy Marks,' would that be okay?"

"No," some of the students responded.
"No, does anyone know what that is? What's that called? It starts with a p. It's a big, huge word. You'd be in big trouble for it." No hands went up so Joy continued, "It's plagiarism. That would be against the law, very much so."

Rebecca said, "You could get in trouble for that."

"I could, you bet," Joy responded. "I'd certainly get fined for that. Here in school you would certainly get in big, huge trouble for doing that. You cannot steal their ideas in that way but if they have a neat idea about writing and you like it, you can take that idea and add your own to it to make it yours. Okay, show me that you're ready to listen by pencils down, sitting up straight, and looking this way. Right, Chase. You need to get ready. Ready, Mary? Ready, Stuart?"

"Yes," Stuart answered.

"I want to share with you some of her poems. The name of this book is If I Were in Charge of the World and I want to just share a few with you. Then I'm going to give you an idea to take from Judith Viorst and to do a little writing with it. 'Fifteen, Maybe Sixteen, Things to Worry About.'" The children listened as Joy read to them a poem about a child who lists fifteen or sixteen things about which the child might worry. After reading the poem, Joy looked at the students and laughed with them.

"Do you ever sit around like that and just sit around and worry?"

Some students responded that they did.

"Do you know anybody who sits around and worries?"

A number of the children responded that they did.
"Okay, here's one called 'I Wouldn't Be Afraid.'" The poem, which listed things of which the writer wouldn't be afraid, was read to the class.

After reading this poem, Joy turned to a new poem and continued. "This is the one I want you to steal your ideas from. This one's called 'If I Were in Charge of the World.' Listen to what Judith Viorst would do if she was in charge of the world. Put your pencils down and just listen. Just listen." The poem, which lists things the writer would do if in charge of the world, was read by Joy.

"What I'd like you to do," Joy began.

"Read it again," Caroline requested.

"I will. I'll read it one more time. You know, you can tell you've read something good when someone asks you to read it again. I'll read it again, one more time, and this time as you hear her ideas I want you to be thinking what you would do if you were suddenly in charge of the world. What changes would you make? Listen again, 'If I Were in Charge of the World.'" Joy read the poem again.

Joy then described the task she wanted each student to complete. "I want you to start in your notebook today 'If I Were in Charge of the World' and I'll give you about ten minutes. I want you to tell me what changes you would make. What would you take out of the world? What changes would you make if all of a sudden you were in charge of the world?"

The children began writing as Joy walked around. Students continued writing for the next ten minutes.
"Excellent ideas," Joy commented. "What we'll do, I know a lot of you are anxious to share this but we'll have to wait. Share time comes tomorrow. We'll have time to share your 'If I Were in Charge of the World' with the class if you choose to do so. Some of yours seem personal and that's fine. Remember that your ideas are right here in your writing notebooks when you get to writing workshop Thursday and Friday and you're anxious for an idea. Maybe you're starting something new. You may want to take Judith Viorst's idea and come up with your own book, what you would do if your were in charge of this world."

"Let's close up writer's notebooks, find a stopping point. I'll get one person from each table to collect these: Brittany, Chase, Matthew, Elizabeth."

The children began turning in their notebooks but some continued to write.

"Okay, tell you what we'll do. We don't have a lot of time so we need to get started real quick."

Some of the children continued to talk. Joy responded to this by saying, "Some of you, I know, are bursting to share, but wait until tomorrow, please. These ideas are captured in that writing. They're there forever when you write it down." The notebooks where then collected.

"Okay, it's reading time." The children had independently been reading one of two books, Bunnicula (Howe, J. & Howe, D., 1979) and Frankenstein Moved in on the Fourth Floor (Levy, 1979) which had been assigned to them by Joy. After completing the book each student was to do a project based on the book. Joy continued, "I need to
check on the status of my groups. *Bunnicula* group, let me have your attention. I want to know where you are when I call your name, still reading or working on your project.

For those of you who finish your projects today, remember this is an important part of your grade. You're showing me what you've understood from the book plus you've got the opportunity to share it with the class so make sure it's something you're really proud of. If you should finish your projects today, listening, it's up to you what you should do with your extra time. What would be some good choices? Think about the choices you make. What would be a good choice? Would a good choice be to go and talk to a friend who is still working on his project?"

Some students responded, "No."

Joy continued, "No, what would be a good choice? Nick?"

"Quiet reading," Nick answered.

"Quiet reading. Read some of those library books you got today or some other books. Another option? That certainly is a good one. Josh?"

"Work on your story."

"Oh, wonderful!" said Joy.

"Draw a picture," said Rebecca.

"Well, if you're doing it quietly. It's your choice. Elizabeth?"

Elizabeth shared, "You could write a letter."
"Okay, that would be a fine thing to do. Or you could go ahead and finish the tracing part of your ocean picture if you have not done this part but your projects come first. We only have thirty minutes."

"Can you start the other book?" Chase asked.

Joy answered, "If there's a spare. That's a good question. If there's a spare of the other title and you want to start reading it you sure can. Okay, status check. When I call your name, tell me where you are and then get your material."

Joy called out the names of all the students and each responded by stating a beginning point for the day. Answers included working on the project, still reading, or finished.

Martha stated that she was finished. Joy responded, "Okay, your project is completely how you want it and ready to be graded? Double check it before you turn it in. Look at how many people are working and how many people are reading. They need quiet so this is not a sharing time."

The children began working on their projects and reading their stories. Joy walked around and helped as needed.
Negotiating the School Setting

Two aspects of teaching for meaningfulness have been described: building a family atmosphere, and providing authentic activities that support students as they join different cultures such as readers and writers. A third aspect of TFM involves negotiating the school setting.

Some parts of schools support teaching for meaningfulness. The school system gathers students for periods of time on a regularly scheduled basis. It emphasizes reading and writing. School materials allow the teacher to provide a variety of reading and writing experiences.

In some instances, though, the structure of schools can be constraining to the authenticity of tasks as well as to the community that teachers who teach for meaningfulness hope to form. Marshall (1992) describes the pressures of content coverage, time and assessment as constraints and states, "Pressures that teachers feel to 'cover' the required curriculum stem from curriculum guides, textbooks, standardized achievement tests, administration, and parents" (p. 19) In working to make school tasks meaningful to students, the teacher constantly looks for ways to teach for meaningfulness within the school setting. To do so, teachers must become therefore teachers, a term I adapted from Henry Joel Cadbury's description of therefore people and however people (Oehmig, 1994, p. 4).
*Therefore and However Teachers*

Oehmig (1994) shares the story of Henry Joel Cadbury (1883-1974), Professor of Divinity at Harvard University, and his description of two types of people: *therefore* people and *however* people. Oehmig\(^2\) recounts,

> Once in a Friends Meeting for Worship, he [Mr. Cadbury] rose and said:

> "There are two kinds of Friends in our Society, and two kinds of people in the world: there are *therefore* people, and there are *however* people.

*Therefore* people say, 'There are children going to bed hungry in our community. *Therefore...'* and they proceed to devise and define the ways in which they can meet the need in their community. *However* people make the same beginning statement - 'There are children going to bed hungry in our community' - but they follow it with, 'However...' and they explain why nothing can be done about it [sic]. (p. 4)

*Therefore* people look at situations and say "This is the situation. *Therefore...*" and explore means of negotiating the situation. *However* people look at situations and say "This is the situation. *However...*" and list reasons why nothing can be done about the situation.

---

The idea of *therefore* and *however* people can be adapted to teachers, resulting in *therefore* and *however* teachers. Both types of teachers consider school constraints. Specific skills required by the state and locality have to be taught. Assessment and accountability issues must be addressed. Schedules structure the school day. Extra activities such as field trips and assemblies consume additional time. A time frame of six to seven hours places limitations on what can be accomplished.

The *however* teacher who looks at these inhibitors might think, for example, "I would like to use writing workshop as part of my literacy program. *However*, I only have two hours per day to teach reading and writing and I have to cover the state and local skills so there is not enough time for the students to have writing workshop." Constraints may cause the *however* teacher to choose not to consider new possibilities and take risks in her teaching.

The *therefore* teacher also considers those things that can inhibit teaching for meaningfulness, but instead of reacting with reasons why teaching for meaningfulness cannot be done, the *therefore* teacher searches for ways in which it can be done within the current structure and curriculum. The *therefore* teacher, for example, might also desire to use writing workshop in her classroom. But instead of responding with a list of reasons why this is not a possibility, the *therefore* teacher would respond: "I would like to use writing workshop as part of my literacy program. *Therefore...*" and then devise ways that writing workshop could be incorporated into this program. Foremost is teaching based upon her belief system as related to teaching for meaningfulness.
As a therefore teacher, Joy describes how problems still arise in her classroom. Joy states, "Each school year I learn new ideas about teaching writing as I struggle with new problems such as time, assessment, and management. No matter how many problems do arise, the children themselves are proof that this type of instruction really does give children wonderful opportunities for growth as life-long learners."

Issues that could possibly constrain teaching for meaningfulness are apparent to Joy as she negotiates the school setting to build a literacy program based on her belief system. Assessment causes frustration when its use does not match this belief system. Decisions about materials and their use must be made. State and local objectives and skills must be covered. Issues of time and space as they relate to readers and writers can be problematic. As a therefore teacher, Joy looks at these possible constraints and then finds ways to negotiate them based upon her belief system as related to teaching and learning.

Curriculum

Covering the curriculum is mandated in most schools. But for Joy, teaching for meaningfulness begins by building a program based on her beliefs about teaching and learning. Joy foregrounds meaningfulness and then checks to see that those parts of the mandated school curriculum are covered. The curriculum she builds reflects this belief system. Then mandated state and local curricular components are developed within her curriculum.
Joy designed much of her literacy program based on Regie Routman's (1991) components of a balanced reading program. Joy states,

Basicallly I worked this up a couple of years ago...It was Regie Routman's book, *Invitations*, that made me really start looking at my schedule....What is it I do in this language arts block and how can I make sure I'm using it like I want to? Am I getting in all those things that I think are important? So the things that she says, the components that she listed as important, I kind of adopted as my own and put them in here.

Joy's reading program now entails reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Joy reads to her students for the reading aloud portion. During shared reading Joy reads a piece of literature to the children, and they respond to the piece orally or in writing. Reading the same book in small groups or with the entire class and then using this book as a focal point for discussion comprises the guided reading portion of the literacy program. The students also have about twenty minutes daily for independent or free reading. In addition, book sharing provides individual students with the opportunity of sharing with the class a book they have read.

The writing program includes writing aloud, shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing. During writing aloud, Joy writes in front of the class while discussing this writing. Periodically, the class participates in shared writing where students write a group story on chart paper. Joy includes guided writing as part of
writing workshop. Writer's notebooks and writing workshop allow students to participate in independent writing.

Writing in other areas of the curriculum such as science and social studies is often completed in learning logs, a notebook where students respond to questions from the teacher. Joy states,

This is how I make the writing connect with the science and everything else we do....In their learning logs they write about whatever we're studying about in here. They take notes in here and I tell them they're like college students because college students keep notebooks and take notes. They write what they know about the subject, what they want to know, and what they learned. I might give them several questions to answer...vocabulary, everything's in here that I feel is necessary and is important for them to learn. Plus, it connects the writing with the other subject areas.

Although the components of Joy's literacy program have been discussed as independent entities, in actuality each part supports the other as the students work to become readers and writers. Joy believes that her program components support one another. Joy states, "That's what makes it, support. It's not an isolated thing." Reading aloud to the children builds community and provides ideas for writing workshop stories. The poem "If I Were in Charge of the World" (Viorst, 1981, pp. 2-3), for example, gave students an opportunity to consider a new idea for their own writing, what they would do
if they were in charge of the world. Joy speaks of how the class laughs when it hears the word *marshmallow* because it reminds them of Lafcadio (Silverstein, 1963). In addition, Jim observes how books Joy reads aloud might encourage him to read other books: "She might read a book and if you like that type of book you can go out and look for that series and get another one of the books, or you can make your own book like that." Martha considers how reading helps her as a writer:

> Reading gives me tons of ideas for my stories, and one of them was *The Berenstain Bears*. There are tons more so I wrote a book I'm publishing now called "You're Getting One." It's about I'm getting a dog. And then I wrote on the back, "If you want to hear more about the dog get this next book, 'Wally the Wonder Dog.'" That's my dog.

Independent reading allows for decision making on the part of the students and gives them stories to share orally in book sharing. Discussing pieces of literature in shared reading provides Joy with an opportunity to talk about the strengths of pieces of literature. Book sharing introduces students to new books they might want to read as Amanda describes, "I found this really good book that Jessica recommended and it was the best book. It's called *Belia Arabella*. It's so good."

Writing aloud gives the students an opportunity to see Joy as a writer and to explore her thoughts as she writes. For example, when Joy shared the Father's Day story with her students she discussed her decision to rewrite the beginning of the story. Joy told the class:
I started my story last week and I got interrupted a lot so I didn't get too far, but that's okay. When I went back to it I realized that I didn't like what I had written so I didn't finish it. I write better on paper so I went back and I wrote my story on paper. Does a writer ever go back and say, "That's not really what I wanted to say" and start over again? You bet. 

Joy then continued writing the story, asking questions as she wrote such as "Why did I put that little mark right there?" when adding an apostrophe to parents' in parents' house. While writing Father's Day, Joy showed the class a revising strategy of drawing lines under a letter to show the word needed to be capitalized. The students observe Joy in the process of writing.

Other components of Joy's writing program provide support for one another. Shared writing gives students the opportunity to cooperatively write a story with the teacher's guidance. Upon their completion, the children have stories to read written in their own language. Guided writing provides the children with time to work with Joy. This increases their opportunities to talk with a writer about writing and provides support for them as writers.

The children can then use similar strategies in their own work as writers. Through responding to literature in their writer's notebooks, they discover new ideas for topics and writing styles. Joy describes her decision to begin using writer's notebooks:

I'm pulling in the literature more than I did before. I did a lot of literature work with the kids but I didn't always correlate it with writing workshop.
The writing workshop is really a personal writing time but I'd love them [the students] to make a connection between their writing and a wonderful story.

Joy's students responded to *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1990), a book about Pee Wee Reese and Jackie Robinson, in their writer's notebooks. Joy read the story to the class and then asked them what thoughts the book brought to mind. Some students mentioned baseball, T-ball, or softball. Others wrote about racial issues as Joy states,

*Jackie Robinson was the first black player in the major league. The book is about racial equality and prejudice and a lot of the students picked that. It was an issue they wanted to write about and it reminded them of Martin Luther King since we talked a lot about that last year....Some of them wrote about going to watch a baseball game. Some of them wrote about the baseball strike. Different things like that came out. Ideas were discovered based on the piece of literature.*

The students also describe how writer's notebooks help them. Martha states, "Whenever you're stuck in writing workshop you can go to your writer's notebook to look up some ideas and then you can just write them down on your idea list. And you can make tons of stories." Chase depicts writer's notebooks as being helpful because "when you're looking in them and you see an idea like where I did 'If I Was [sic] in Charge of the World,' something like that, and you get ideas from it." Elizabeth sees writing workshop as a place where Joy can respond to her writing as she observes, "Sometimes
she [Mrs. Marks] writes back and it just lets me know what she thinks....She can give me ideas. If she writes back I know that might be a good story to write about and I can write about that story." Guided reading also allows Joy the opportunity to discuss writing styles with the students.

**Using a Thematic Approach**

Joy uses a thematic approach her classroom. Joy states,

We're studying San Francisco now. We've journeyed to San Francisco and we're going to Hawaii and then we're going to study the landforms and earthquakes and all of that....It [the theme] deals with what we're writing about and what we're reading about. A lot of times it comes through in some of their writing workshop time. We did a pirate unit and they just were thrilled with the books we read about pirates. So a lot of them were writing pirate stories, the adventures there. Whatever theme we pick goes across the curriculum. We'll do pirate problems in math, we'll do pirate readings for literature time. And then during writing workshop, I don't assign it but it does show up there.

Joy later adds, "Since we teach an integrated curriculum we do science, social studies, everything together. Everything feeds on everything. If we're studying pirates, we're reading about them, we're doing social studies, maps, the whole bit." Joy looks at the
theme and as a *therefore* teacher devises ways to include those components of her literacy program within the theme.

Assessment

Schools require assessment of student progress and growth and expect the teacher to be able to discuss the students' abilities and growth in certain mandated areas. Often standardized tests are required. Periodically, student report cards with letter grades must be completed by the teacher. Joy's school system also encourages portfolio assessment and provides optional methods of assessment such as unit tests and assessment forms.

Camp (1992) states,

*Assessment should be based in meaningful tasks - tasks that are complex and challenging, that are consistent with goals for learning and inherently valuable to learning, that are closely related to real-world skills and challenges, that allow students to use the processes and strategies relevant to genuine performance.* (p. 244)

Johnston (1993) comments,

*In the context of literacy assessment, construct validity involves studying what we think it means to be literate and how that is represented in our assessment practices. Construct validity has moved to center stage highlighting the fact that current tests do not capture the complexity of literate activity as it is now understood.* (p. 12)
In teaching for meaningfulness, the teacher attempts to match the methods of assessment with the activity designed by the teacher. This is often difficult to do, especially when local and state mandates place certain requirements on this assessment.

For Joy, assessment is an extremely frustrating dimension of teaching for meaningfulness. Joy states,

If I had my way I wouldn't give grades at all in elementary school. In second grade we didn't have to give grades for the first half of the year and it was so wonderful. But now that I'm teaching third grade I'm going to have to give them grades in every subject including science and social studies and I've never done that before. So it's going to be a challenge for me.

Joy describes how each year she struggles with new problems, one of them being assessment. When asked how she assesses or evaluates students Joy states,

You can probably imagine how I feel about grading. I wish we could just do narratives and not have to put a letter grade on their papers and report cards. I use informal assessment almost always. That's a daily thing as I observe them. I look at their writing and their published pieces, how much effort went into them, what their writing is like. Formal evaluations for the language arts grade comes in spelling. They get a definite test for that and a definite black and white grade. I use dictation sentences and things like that. But for the most part it's an informal evaluation. I have
some checklists that have skills on them like periods and quotation marks and things. Randomly I will pull out their folders and take a look around report card time and see which are the skills they're using. That also helps me decide which mini-lessons I need to have, what they are ready for, and what they need.

This is similar to Camp's (1992) belief that "the evaluation itself is directed toward revealing what the learner can do and toward focusing attention on possibilities for future learning" (p. 244).

In determining a language arts grade for each student, Joy attempts to use the components of her literacy program to help her determine that final grade. For example, to assess the students in the area of revision, a state and local objective, Joy refers to the stories they have revised in writing workshop and checks this revision as demonstrated through their rough drafts. She also uses their writing workshop stories to assess such skills as writing sentences for various purposes, using appropriate verb forms, and using appropriate ending punctuation which are also state and local objectives.

One dilemma Joy has encountered with using this type of teaching and assessment is explaining to parents how she arrives at a grade. Joy describes explaining her grading to parents:

When parents come for conferences and they ask how I decided that their child got a B instead of an A, for example, I show them their child's folder and where I expect children to be at different levels. I usually set out what
I would consider an A paper, a B paper, and so on. Then I let them see where they think their child fits in....I have found that parents are right exactly where I am or they might even be more critical of their child's work where I might be more accepting.

Joy uses additional methods of assessment, such as weekly documentation of information about individual students in her "kid-watching notebook." Joy describes this notebook's use as providing her with a means to reflect about each child and to document events that she desires to remember. Joy listens to book sharings to check students' understandings of the stories they are reading. For example, Joy describes Matthew, the first child to share a book in the scene at the beginning of the chapter, as having "not as strong a grasp of sense of story" and "difficulty with summarizing." Joy reads their responses in their writer's notebooks to check both their thinking and their writing and shares how the use of writer's notebooks gives her "more insight into what they are thinking as well as writings to evaluate." Learning logs are used by students to respond to specific questions. Their use for assessment purposes is described by Joy:

I might ask them [the students] to answer several questions to check their reading comprehension. After having the students read one book on their own I asked: "What did he [the boy] eat in the first chapter? What do you think of the captain? What do you recommend that the boy in the story do to make the best of the situation?"

Each of these methods is used as a means of assessment.
Self-Assessment

A part of Joy's belief system related to assessment includes the need for students to assess their own work. In writing workshop, for example, each student begins by doing a self-assessment, or what Joy calls a status check. In this self-assessment, the students determine the stage of writing workshop in which they will begin. For example, during the writing workshop session in the scene at the beginning of this chapter, no students were in the think stage, approximately fifteen students were evenly distributed in the sloppy copy, revising, and editing stages, and ten of the children were in the publishing stage. The students begin writing workshop by considering their prior work.

At the end of each writing workshop period, Joy does a group assessment so children can rate their day from one to five, five being the best. Students share their successes or their problems if they desire. When problems are shared, the students help one another consider possible solutions. At the end of one writing workshop session, for example, the students began by sharing some of their successes and problems. Reasons stated for a successful day included almost finishing a book, publishing a book, getting a chapter written, getting a lot accomplished, and finishing a sloppy copy. Some who gave the day a lower rating shared that they didn't get much accomplished or that they ran out of time. Through this type of assessment, Joy hears the children describe their progress as writers. It also gives her the opportunity to congratulate those who are being successful in their writing, to comment upon their strengths and ideas, and to provide support for those who were less successful.
Joy, in some instances, shares her assessment of her day as a teacher. At the end of one writing workshop session, for example, Joy told the students,

I saw a lot of hard-working people. The people I edited with had some excellent ideas. I’m seeing some really super stuff from you guys. I’m really impressed. What I saw today was a definite five. For a teacher I had a five today.

Instances of Incompatibility in School or Parental Expectations and Teaching for Meaningfulness

There are times when, based on parental or school request, the teacher who teaches for meaningfulness may have to use some evaluation method that does not match her beliefs about assessment. Joy describes a specific instance when this occurred in her teaching. In a previous year, a parent questioned Joy concerning the absence of worksheets in the papers her child was bringing home. Joy responded that the children in her class did not do workbooks or worksheets and went on to explain writing workshop, book sharing, and other parts of her literacy program. The parent described what Joy was doing as "whole language" and later in the year stated that she would consider having her son moved out of Joy's room if he wasn't so crazy about Joy. The parent, a teacher, was concerned that her child was not learning the skills that were taught in the basal; so Joy agreed to administer to the child each unit test from the county's basal series. The child did well on each test. In this instance, Joy used an evaluation instrument that did not
match her teaching and beliefs. Joy continued to use her literacy program but administered the test as a means of negotiating a difference in beliefs between the parent and Joy.

The Therefore Teacher and Assessment

Joy comments that assessment continues to be an area of frustration for her as she seeks to match her assessment with teaching for meaningfulness. Although in some instances she is not able to assess in a way that matches her teaching, as a therefore teacher, Joy searches for ways to make her assessment compatible with her belief system.

Materials

Schools often have pre-selected materials available for the teacher's use. These materials can include a basal reading program, trade books, and English and spelling programs. The teacher who teaches for meaningfulness considers these options based on their connection to her beliefs about teaching and learning. In addition, the teacher continues to be aware of the skills related to each program that are required by the locality. In TFM, the selection of materials relates to students' lives and interests and authenticity. The availability of literature provides students with opportunities to read and select their own reading materials. In other tasks, students read specific literature which builds community in the classroom by having common topics to discuss.
Joy chooses not to use the basal reading series, workbooks, and worksheets. Joy states,

I choose not to use the basal reader. I don't like it so I choose not to do that completely. We have workbooks that go with that, I choose not to do that. I choose not to teach the skills in isolation because of all the reasons of what I believe.

Scott's comments relate to Joy's decision. Scott states, "Sometimes it seems like we'll never use our text books which is great. We read other books." At a later date Scott adds, "I feel good about the way she [Mrs. Marks] teaches reading. Reading books are boring. They never really go with what you're learning. Reading books don't really fit in with life. I really like the way she does it." Chase's observations are similar to those of Scott. Chase remarks, "I like the way Mrs. Marks teaches reading. It's fun because you do not have to read those boring books like the reading book." Elizabeth shares,

I do not like the reading books because they're not stories I would want to hear. I would like to hear real storybooks instead of those reading books. They're boring to read in school and at home. I would read the nice books like the books we read together. I like the way Mrs. Marks does it with us.

"When you are reading in textbooks you don't feel like 'Please don't stop here! Read on!'" says Nick. "But when you have a book like Squanto you are hanging on and just waiting for the next reading session."
Materials Joy uses include trade books, pencil and paper. For writing workshop
the children have a folder which houses an idea list, their rough drafts, paper, and any
new stories they might be writing. Questions from all subject areas to which they
respond are kept in a composition book designated as a learning log. When responding
to specific pieces of literature, students write in a composition book called "writer's
notebook." Joy has multiple copies of some trade books as well as individual copies of
numerous pieces of literature.

To help them with their spelling, students keep a copy of a booklet, started in first
grade, where they list words with difficult spellings that they encounter. Correct
spellings for these words are added to their booklet alphabetically by first letter. This
booklet can then be used as a reference when they are writing.

Joy selects the materials she uses based upon her beliefs about teaching and
learning, the children's interests, and their connection to the state and local curriculum.
A grade level theme of water leads to the reading of *Pirate's Promise* (Bulla, 1958) and
*The Magic School Bus on the Ocean Floor* (Cole, 1992). Their writings go in portfolios,
writer's notebooks, or learning logs. To assist with spelling, the students have booklets
where they can keep a list of words that are difficult for them. The materials revolve
around the needs of the students.
Skills and Strategies

In the county where Joy teaches, teachers are required to cover objectives set by both the state and locality. Joy covers these, but in ways that she believes are meaningful to students. Joy describes attending a seminar on planning the school year and then planning her own. First, using Routman's (1991) *Invitations*, she planned her literacy program. Then, Joy looked at a list of the skills mandated by the state to confirm her inclusion of these skills. Through this plan, Joy developed a literacy program that matches her beliefs and covers state and local mandates.

Greene (1988) describes teachers as "constrained by state action plans and testing mechanisms" (p. 14). Joy describes covering state mandates in writing workshop. Joy states, "'Write legibly in cursive.' 'Revise written work.' We cover those. 'Find the main idea.' Well, these kids are writing the main idea. 'Recreate sensory experiences.' Writing workshop blankets almost all of the SOL's." Joy builds her literacy program around her belief system and sees her teaching as covering and extending beyond those skills required by the locality and the state. (See Appendix B for a list of Virginia Standards of Learning, Grade 3. See Appendix C for a list of local objectives.)

Joy discusses with the children how teachers have certain things they are required to teach. Joy tells the children, "Believe it or not, they give us these lists of things we have to teach. I've got a list of things I have to teach in third grade." On another date Joy shares with the students,
I have certain things I have to teach. There's a book and it has a list of things that I have to teach when I teach third grade and I have to do those things but I can decide how I want to do those.

Through sharing these expectations, Joy helps the students gain a better understanding of their introduction to certain subject matter.

Joy chooses not to teach skills in isolation and believes that the language arts skills can be taught through her literacy program. For example, one reading skill emphasizes finding the main idea. Joy states that students write the main idea in writing workshop. The skill required by the state is covered, but in a way that Joy believes is meaningful to the students. Another example of a state and local objective to be covered is genre. When the students share their stories from writing workshop Joy often uses these to do a brief exploration of a genre. During one writing workshop session, Joy referred to Laura's story as "definitely a fiction story." On another occasion, they described Rebecca's book as realistic fiction. Rebecca shares her book topic, a fight between Rebecca and her brother. Although the fight is made-up, Rebecca comments that sometimes they really do get in fights. Joy explains, "This particular fight is made-up. That's what we call realistic fiction. This is made-up, but it could be real."

The students' work reinforces the skills required by the county and state.

In one of the writing workshop inservice sessions, Joy was asked how she decides which skills to teach. Joy referred the teacher to the state Standards of Learning manual and the adopted language arts materials. During the year, Joy periodically refers to these
state and local objectives to ensure their incorporation, but the skills are taught when they occur in the children's writing. Once Joy realized the children were having problems with the use of a and an. Joy had them go to some of their rough drafts and circle their uses of a and an. Then the class looked at how a and an were used and wrote these uses on the board until a pattern became apparent. Joy believes this increased their retention of the skill through its base in their language and through their discovery of the pattern.

Joy believes that her teaching goes beyond what the state and county require. Many of the decisions about materials to be covered are based on the needs of the children.

Mandated Skills and SOL's Covered in the Scene

The following skills from the state objectives were covered in the scene at the beginning of this chapter:

SOL 3.3 - The student will read independently with comprehension.

SOL 3.4 - The student will find the main idea when it is stated in a reading selection.

SOL 3.5 - The student will choose to read various types of materials on a variety of subjects.

The following local objectives were covered in the same lesson:

- word meaning
- main idea / details
- sequence
- drawing conclusions
- predicting outcomes
- summarizing
- recall
• characterization
• story elements
• genres
• listening
• speaking: retelling a story, oral presentation
• creative writing
• charts

As Joy continues to teach for meaningfulness, she plans activities based upon her belief system. She then checks to see which mandated skills have been covered through the activity. Joy contends that the activities she uses teach and go beyond those skills required by the locality and state.

Space

Issues of space can constrain teaching for meaningfulness. The amount of space available in a classroom is determined by the classroom to which the teacher is assigned. Furniture may be limited to what is already in the classroom although the teacher may be able to request pieces that meet classroom needs. The school system and community determine class enrollment size. Teachers who teach for meaningfulness consider utilization of space that makes its usage most meaningful.

In Joy's class, desks are arranged in four groups of about six students. This is done to allow students close proximity to other students. Greene (1988) states, "Nor is much done to empower students to create spaces of dialogue in their classrooms, spaces where they can take initiatives and uncover humanizing possibilities" (p. 13). The arrangement of Joy's class promotes cooperation among students. Joy states,
I like the groups because it encourages them [students] to work together, to go to each other for support. During writing workshop I used to have peer conferences and they could conference with someone at their table. I don't do that anymore because I found a lot took advantage of it. We call their desks their private writing studios so during writing workshop, if you use that technique even working in rows probably would be okay. But this helps, with so many kids it helps the mobility, the flow of traffic. We have a quiet area called the reading corner and the couch area for when a student needs to meet with a buddy or work with me. And I just think it facilitates group work when we need it. There are quiet places, too, when we need that.

Jessica describes her feelings about the organization of the room. "I like the room. It's filled with really cool things and I like how she [Mrs. Marks] puts the tables together so you can talk to your neighbors and you're all in one big group. And school is wonderful."

An example of occurrences that are enabled by this use of space is the story of Brittany and Hannah. Joy describes the two as students who would not necessarily work together. Brittany is described as a strong writer while Hannah experiences some difficulty with writing. After Joy moved the two of them to the same group, they began talking and decided to write a book series of their own. Joy states,

It's so neat that they paired up because Hannah is one of my weaker writers and I would have never thought those two would pair up. Of
course they're sitting next to each other so location assisted that decision but the fact that Brittany would want to do that excited me. Brittany doesn't need the support system where that's going to help Hannah. She is writing pages and pages because she's so excited about it. I thought that was wonderful.

When students write in writing workshop, they write in what Joy calls their private writing studios. Joy describes this area as follows: "You'll have a private writing studio at your desk. All writers have one. This is your private thinking space. You can close it off in your mind." Rebecca describes her feelings about the private writing studio: "I feel great that we have a chance to write and I'm glad Mrs. Marks lets us write because she says make your writing studio and I feel like I'm a writer and that's how I want to feel."

Joy uses space to encourage cooperation among students and to resemble its use by readers and writers. This use of space enables students to share their work as readers and writers with other students.

Time

Time is another school issue. Teachers have a set number of hours to work with students. Special area classes, special education classes, and lunch take the children out of the classroom. Schedules allow little flexibility in extending a school activity. In
addition, all subject areas must be covered which limits time for each area. Canady and Rettig (1995) state,

> Fragmented instructional time is an issue at all levels. In elementary school, a variety of practices contribute to this problem. For example, haphazardly scheduled pullout programs (for ESL or special education, for example) disrupt classroom instruction; and because the schedules of specialists (for music and art, for example) are created for periods of varying length, core teachers must plan instruction around the remaining chopped-up time. In addition, when special programs classes meet just once a week for a short period, students receive piecemeal instruction. (pp. 4-5)

Marshall (1992) comments,

> The customary 40-50-minute period and mandates about the number of minutes per day that must be spent on particular content domains limit the opportunities that teachers can provide for exploration, problem solving, and in-depth study of meaningful and interrelated topics. These types of learning require larger blocks of time. (p. 20)

Joy describes her frustration with issues of time. This relates to Marshall's (1992) discussion of the need for time as Marshall states, "Deeper understanding requires time and freedom to delve into and discuss a single topic" (p. 19).
Time constraints can affect the authenticity of an activity, for example, in writing workshop students have scheduled periods of time to write. Joy, as a therefore teacher, seeks to provide students with extended, uninterrupted writing times while negotiating time constraints.

Joy describes building her schedule as it relates to time issues:

I'm still struggling with putting everything I want to do into my schedule.
I feel they need their uninterrupted free reading time every single day.
That's in there. I have to find uninterrupted blocks for writing workshop so I found three of those. I think three is good for third grade, we're not going to do any more than that. Then I look at my day and I think 'There's not time to read. When are we going to read?' Modeled writing is something I like to do...so I think 'I've got to find time to do that' and there's not time. That's my biggest problem this year, finding the time to do all that I want to do. We regroup for math this year and I hate that because I'm losing them first thing in the morning and we all go different ways. Then I get them back and they're mine for the rest of the day. I don't like to regroup. I want them all day so that if something big happens we can write about it first thing in the morning. We can do math later. It's part of moving up in school. I'll have to get used to that.

To build her schedule, Joy considers the importance of each part of her literacy program, the time needed, as well as the availability of this time. Although she continually works
to include those things she believes to be important in her program, Joy expresses frustration with not being able to find time for everything she wants to include. In addition, grade level decisions about time use and regrouping affect Joy's schedule. For example, although the decision to group for math is not one Joy would personally make she accepts it as she states, "I'll have to get used to that."

**Time and Writing Workshop**

Joy believes that students need extended periods of time to write and plans this as part of writing workshop through scheduling three weekly writing workshop periods. Joy attempts to keep this scheduled time free from interruptions and limits her infringement on this time with mini-lessons. During one lesson, Joy wrote in front of the class leaving students with about 25 minutes of writing time. Joy told them, "We're only going to have about 25 minutes but tomorrow we'll have our full time. I won't interrupt you at all at the beginning so you can get into your stuff right away." Later that period she realized that their next writing workshop time would be preempted by a field trip postponing writing workshop to another day. School related events infringe upon scheduled uninterrupted periods of time.

On a later date, Joy spoke about her decision not to do a mini-lesson at the beginning of one writing workshop session: "I didn't want to get into a mini-lesson because they were so into their writing yesterday that they just died when I stopped it. I
didn't want to take up too much time with it." Her awareness of students' need for time to write dictates her decisions about the use of writing workshop time.

At the end of writing workshop, the students evaluate their use of their allotted writing time. In some instances, students give writing workshop a low rating because time constraints did not allow them to complete the amount of writing desired. Joy sympathizes with them and speaks of the frustration involved with limited writing time.

Joy encourages students to take time with their revising and cites Scott as a success story. Scott worked on the same story for about two months as Joy explains, He's quite an exception. He's my success story on revising. We discuss that revising is much more than fixing spelling. We've had lesson after lesson about making the story have an image for the reader and I've shown them some of my writing or we'll put a paragraph on the overhead and I'll say, "Okay, let's make it show a better image." Oh, they're so good at it! Scott would say, "Oh, I'm going to change this" and he would go back and change something in his writing. That's why his story has taken him so long to write and it's so good.

The children are very aware of the need for time by writers. Scott and Jim discuss the need for longer periods of writing time. Jim states, "Sometimes you need more than a few minutes, you just get going and you have to stop." Scott adds, "You need more than a couple of minutes to write. If I was a writer and I only wrote fifteen
minutes every day I wouldn't get much accomplished." The students realize the importance of extended periods of writing time to a writer.

Joy encourages students to use the time that they need as writers. Caroline states, "She [Mrs. Marks] says, 'Don't rush' or anything, just like take your time and it doesn't matter if you're the last one to finish." Caroline adds that Joy tells them that writing takes time and to use that time instead of writing "Hi. My name is Caroline." Jessica shares that she likes writing workshop because: "You can write about anything you like and you get a lot of time to write what you want." Jessica adds, "You can accomplish a lot if you have a lot of time." Hannah reiterates, "I like it because we get to write whatever we want and that she [Mrs. Marks] gives us a lot of time to write it." Amanda states, "I like writing workshop because you get your own time to write about things you want to write about." The students emphasize their need for extended periods of time to write.

Students also describe their free reading time. Elizabeth states, "If you didn't have free reading you wouldn't have any time to read. You'd have to be like when you're going to the library, that's your only time to read." Scott comments, "It's [free reading] good because you don't have to read a certain thing. And we get a lot of time, like twenty minutes." Lucas describes free reading as the reading he likes best in Joy's class because "they give you a lot of time to read." Students speak of enjoying the extended periods of reading time Joy provides.
Time is another constraint negotiated by Joy. Although some issues such as finding time to include all parts of the literacy program frustrate Joy, as a therefore teacher she continues to search for ways to address these issues.

**Schools That Empower**

For teachers to teach for meaningfulness, the school system and its administration must empower teachers to make decisions that best meet the learning needs of their students. Firestone (1992) states, "Teachers often see parallels between the way they are treated by higher authorities and the way they treat their students" (p. 265). Marshall (1992) describes Firestone's work on organizational design. Marshall states,

> Similar to visions of work-oriented classrooms, bureaucratic organizations see teachers as workers who carry out decisions made by supervisory authorities toward the goal of turning out a standard product. In contrast, organizations that encourage teachers to see themselves as professionals with special knowledge of students and of learning processes allow them to reflect on their practice and share in the decision making. Such organizations are more likely to be supportive of learning for understanding. (p. xv)

Evertson and Murphy (1992) claim, "Learning opportunities for teachers and administrators are limited or extended by the culture of the school and what is valued
there" (p. 312). Joy speaks of how the administration at her school empowers her as a teacher. In describing Lynn Dennis, the principal of the school, Joy states,

Lynn has goals for us and things that she really likes to see us do. She is so supportive. If I had told her that I really wanted to use the basal completely and totally she would have supported me on that decision. If I told her I didn't want to use it at all, which I finally got brave enough to do a few years ago, she would support that. I said, 'I don't want to use it at all. Do you think I can get away with that or will the parents be upset?'

She supported me one hundred percent but she said, 'Be ready to back up what you do. And that's when I really made sure I had those SOL's and I even put them in my handwriting. I keep them in that notebook with all my plans in it where I can consult them. But she would support me. As far as school goals she very much lets us decide.

Administrators who empower teachers enable teachers to teach for meaningfulness.

**The Proof Is in the Kids**

As Joy considers the work her children do, she is convinced that teaching for meaningfulness, teaching the way that she teaches in her classroom, helps students become readers and writers. Joy quotes a colleague, a college professor with whom she worked in her classroom, as saying, "The proof is in the kids." Joy uses her observations
of the children's participation in the activities, their comments, and their work as "proof" that the way she builds her program is one that allows her to teach for meaningfulness.

Conclusion

The third aspect of teaching for meaningfulness is the school setting. At times schools can promote TFM, but in other cases they can be constraining to this type of teaching. Joy negotiates the school setting in order to teach for meaningfulness. She builds her own literacy program including its use of time, space, and materials based on her belief system while covering state and local objectives. Matching assessment to her teaching and belief system continues to be an area of frustration for Joy.

Teachers who teach for meaningfulness tend to be therefore teachers, teachers who look at school situations including constraints related to curriculum, assessment, time, space, and materials and then find ways to teach for meaningfulness by negotiating these constraints. Schools that empower teachers allow this negotiation to occur and, as Joy explains it, the proof that this type of teaching works is in the kids.
CHAPTER SIX

Pulling It All Together for Meaningfulness

In the last three chapters, the aspects of teaching for meaningfulness have been described individually: building a family atmosphere, providing authentic activity that connects to that of a member of the culture and to the lives and interests of students, and negotiating the school setting. Events from Joy's classroom illustrated these aspects of TFM. Although the three aspects have been described individually for the purpose of explanation, these aspects are not independent entities. In teaching for meaningfulness, all three aspects must occur to some degree. This degree of involvement for each aspect differs based on such issues as the task, the time of year, the teacher's purpose, as well as the teacher's understanding and knowledge of her students.

How do the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness: building a family atmosphere, providing authentic activity that relates to the lives and interests of students, and negotiating the school setting, coalesce to promote teaching for meaningfulness? The next scene shows the integration of the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness.
"Okay. We're ready for something fun, even more fun than making snowmen. Let's see. I'm going to give you a piece of paper. What you will need is a pencil and a very quiet snowman." Members of the class, who had been talking and laughing during snack time, got quiet as Joy began handing out the paper.

"I'm going to be giving you some instructions." Joy, now seven months pregnant, sat down on a stool in front of the class.

"All right, does everybody have a paper? What I'd like for you to do is turn it upside down, please, so the white side is facing up. We've been talking so much about the holiday customs from other countries. We've talked about customs in England, customs in France, customs in Italy, customs for Hanukkah, customs for Kwanza. We've talked about so much. What I want, pencils should be down, no busy pencils." Joy waited a few seconds and then continued. "We've talked about these customs. Now what we're going to talk about today are customs that happen in your home. Customs are a way of life or a tradition or something that people do. We wrote in writing notebooks on Monday about some of the things your family is doing to get ready for the holidays. Well, I started thinking about this yesterday and I made a list. I made a list of my favorite holiday customs from the Charles family. Charles was my maiden name, that's my last name before I got married. I started thinking back to when I was growing up, when I was probably a third grader, and all the things we did every holiday season to make it more special. Now it doesn't matter if your family celebrates Hanukkah or if you celebrate Christmas or if you go to church or if you don't go to church, all of the things
that your family does do during the holidays makes that important for your family. So we're going to think about some of the things that go on."

"What I did is I started making a list as I was sitting. I did this yesterday when it was quiet. All the students were gone and I shut my door and I was all by myself and I started thinking about what I used to do that made the holidays special. These things are the things I came up with. I remember the time every holiday, we couldn't wait, we'd go to this tree farm and we'd cut down a tree. Daddy would take his hand saw and we would always go to find the tree. My sister and I would find a big, big, fat white pine tree, a huge fat one. It was always a little too fat to get through the house, but Daddy was a real sport about it and he'd find some way to get those trees in and cut branches and prune them and all of that. So that was one of the things I remember, when we would go looking for the tree to cut down."

"Another thing I remember would be decorating the tree and how we would get all the decorations out. It was so exciting to unwrap the tissue paper and open the boxes and see what was in them. There were things we had not seen in a whole year, and how exciting they were, things we had made in Kindergarten or in Bible School or Sunday School. All those little old things were reminders of things we did together."

"Then I started thinking about how we baked cookies each holiday season and how much fun that was. I thought about how we'd make applesauce cakes. My mom was teaching me how to make cakes, and we would use a flour sifter that you put your flour through to sift. I would love that part, the sifting was always my job."
"I thought about the night that Mom would take me shopping. I have a sister and a brother, but she always made a point to give us one night when it was just us. So when it was my night it would be just Mom and me and we'd go to the mall. We'd eat dinner out and we'd shop for each other and she'd help me pick out presents for my brother and my sister and my father that I had been saving money for all year. It was so fun to have that special time."

"I thought about visiting my grandparents, how we always went at Christmas time and how my granny had a tiny white artificial Christmas tree on the table. I hadn't thought of that in years. I remember her little white Christmas tree and what we would do at Granny's house. We also visited my other granny."

"I thought about the Christmas Eve candlelight service that my family would go to every Christmas Eve where the whole church would light candles and turn off the lights. I couldn't wait for that service because it really meant it was finally time for Christmas. So I thought of a lot of things."

"What I want to do right now, don't tell about it in long detail, but make a list on the back of your paper of some of the things your family does during the holidays that are kind of customs for your family. Tell some of the things you do at holiday time. Take about four quiet minutes and make as long of a list as you can, just a list of the things your family does for whatever holiday it is your family celebrates."

The children began writing as Joy watched them.
"They don't have to be even complete sentences, just a list." Joy began walking around the room, looking over the children's shoulders. She spoke quietly to several of the students. After about five minutes she continued, "Raise your hand if you were able to think of at least two things your family does to get ready for the holidays." Most of the children raised their hands. A few continued to write.

"What I want you to do, now that you've got your list your mind is thinking about your customs and what you get to do during the holidays, is I want you to think of one that's on your list and listen to the job I'm going to have you do. That might help you decide which one you pick. We're going to use our five senses that we've learned about, and we're going to describe that event from your household using those five senses. Who can help me name those five senses so we won't forget any? Lucas?"

"Touch," Lucas responded.

"Touch. We'll put touch and feel there." Joy began writing touch and feel on the board. "You can describe how something feels or what it would be like to touch something. Give me another one."

"Taste," answered another student.

"Taste, definitely. Taste is a fun one to incorporate if you're doing a Christmas story. Josh?"

"Smell," said Josh.

"Smell, definitely," acknowledged Joy. "Smell, we've got two more. Elizabeth?"

"Hearing," shared Elizabeth.
"Hearing or how things sound. Which one are we leaving out? Martha?"

"Looking."

"What it's like to see something or how things look. When you think of your five senses try to think of your face: See," Joy said as she pointed to her eye. "Smell." Joy pointed to her nose. "Taste." Joy pointed to her mouth. "Hear." Joy pointed to her ear. "And then touch." Joy rubbed her cheek.

"So you've got them all right there. Using your five senses is what makes the story come alive when you read it. It makes you feel that you're there."

"I decided that the one I would write about was making cookies." Joy showed them a piece of paper with a story written on it. "I could have said, 'Every Christmas, my mom, my brother, my sister, and sometimes my dad, would get in the kitchen and make Christmas cookies. It was a lot of fun. They were good.' But that's kind of hard for you to get an image of what it looked like in my kitchen, what exactly was going on and why was that such a special memory for Mrs. Marks, what's the big deal about making cookies unless I describe it for you. So I want you to listen especially for the way I do the five senses. I'm just going to read it the first time, and I want you to listen. You're going to get your chance in a moment, so rest your pencils now and be a good audience for me. please, because I'm sharing a part of myself with you and it would hurt my feelings if I didn't think you cared enough to listen." Joy waited a moment for the students to get ready. "Thank you. Listen the first time and then I'm going to give you a job to do so no busy pencils right now. Just listen to my story."
One of my favorite memories of Christmas is baking cookies in Mom's kitchen. The sweet smells of butter, chocolate, and brown sugar would waft through the house. Mom's usually tidy kitchen would be strewn with flour, cookie trays, and tiny candies all over the table, the floor, and my face. From the den, the sweet sounds of Christmas carols would fill the air. Sometimes all we heard were giggles and happy voices since my brother, my sister, and I would happily create cookie masterpieces. I loved to feel the cold cookie dough in my hands. I would roll out the dough into a ball and smash it out flat on my wooden cutting board. Then, with careful consideration, I would select a cookie cutter to make the perfect shape, sometimes a star, sometimes a bell, and sometimes a Santa. The best part of all was, of course, eating those delicious, warm, soft, sweet cookies fresh from the oven. For some reason, though, I loved the unbaked cookie dough the best. I loved the feel of the sweet sugar crunch in my mouth. Even to this day, when I bake cookies, I have to make extra dough in my recipes to allow for what I'll probably eat.

Joy finished reading her story and smiled at the students. "This time I want to read you my story again and I want table one to be in charge of touch and feel. Your job
is to listen for when I describe how things feel to touch them or how things feel. Don't worry about anything but feel." Joy then pointed to table two. "You guys are going to listen for taste, how I describe taste. I'll ask you to report to me in a minute. Okay, table three, your job is to listen for smell. When I describe smell that's the part you're looking for. Table four, since you're so big I'm going to cut you guys in half. The first four of you, Scott, Will, Nicole, and Amanda, are going to listen for sounds that I describe, okay? Sounds. Tyler, Bryan, Jessica, and Laura, you're to listen for how I describe how things look. Okay, I'm going to ask you to report so be ready. Everybody know their job? I'm going to read it again so listen for your part." Joy then reread her story so the students could listen for her use of the five senses.

"All right, did Mrs. Marks remember all five senses to make her story more exciting? Table one, did you find some times when I talked about how something felt? Martha, give me an example."

Martha said, "Feeling the dough and smashing it down."

"Feeling the dough and smashing it down," repeated Joy. "Another one?" Joy asked and pointed to Scott who had his hand raised.

Scott said, "When you could feel it crunch in your mouth."

"Yeah, feel the sugar crunch in your mouth. The dough hadn't been cooked yet. The sugar hadn't dissolved. Anybody ever eat cookie dough?"

Lots of hands were raised as many of the students responded that they had.

"You probably know what I mean. Elizabeth?"
"Warm and soft," said Elizabeth. 
Joy reiterated, "It felt warm and soft. Good listening table one. Table two, did I describe any tastes for you?" Joy pointed to Maggie.

"Warm and sugary," said Maggie.

"They tasted warm and sugary," Joy repeated and then pointed to Stuart.

"You liked how they tasted," said Stuart.

All right, they tasted crunchy," Joy said and then called on Caroline.

"Sweet and delicious," said Caroline.

"Okay, I described them as sweet and delicious. Good listening, taste group. Smell group, did anything smell in my story that I described for you? Chase?"

Chase responded, "You said when you were cooking with your mom it smelled so sweet, the brown sugar and cinnamon."


"You would hear music," said Amanda.

"I always had Christmas music going from the den. What else did I describe? Scott?"

"You heard giggling and laughter," answered Scott.

"Yes, giggling. We would always get kind of silly when we made our Christmas cookies. What about the way things looked? Did I describe any of that for you? Tyler?"
"Well, you described the kitchen, how it looked."

"And how did it look?" asked Joy.

"Well, it was kind of ..." Tyler paused for a moment.

Joy waited a moment and then continued, "Someone else in the look group help him remember how the kitchen looked. Bryan?"

"Flour all over the table," said Bryan.

"Where else? Do you remember?"

"On your face," said Bryan.

Joy began laughing and continued, "On my face. That's right. I used to eat as many of them as I would put on the cookie sheet. Laura?"

"There was flour on the floor," said Laura.

"So you could picture the powdered flour all over the floor. Did what I did on this help you in number two on questions for revising, the question about creating an image for you? Could you see this happening in your mind? Kind of picture it?"

"Yes," responded some of the students.

"Little Mrs. Marks with the pink stuff all over her face and the flour all over the table. Could you picture it? Okay, Maggie?"

"Could you bring a picture of you?" asked Maggie.

"I don't even know if I have a photograph. The pictures are in my mind," Joy answered and then pointed to Rebecca.

"How many brothers and sisters do you have?" questioned Rebecca.
"One sister and one brother. Older sister and younger brother. Okay, so I used the five senses to describe that event for you. Hopefully that helps you picture it. Notice how that story sounds better than if I said, 'I love to bake Christmas cookies and we used to bake lots of them and they tasted good.' That's kind of like a first grade story, maybe, we're way beyond that."

"So what I want you to do is pick one of the things from your list. It does not have to be baking cookies. It could be picking out a tree. Boy, don't Christmas trees have wonderful smells? It could be going somewhere special, to the mall or any of the things that I've seen you've written down. A lot of you have written down dinners, inviting special people over, decorating your room, or going someplace special that you always go during the holidays. It has to be yours. I don't want a Mrs. Marks story because I've already shared mine with you. I want a Christmas custom from the Simmons house from Scott, or from the Via house if you're Elizabeth, or from the Clarke house if you're Brittany, or from the Greer house if you're Katherine. So whatever your custom is. Write on the front side, in your nicest holiday handwriting, please. We just may display these if they turn out really nice so if you run out of room get a piece of notebook paper. Look up at the board and try to incorporate all of the five senses. If you don't incorporate every single one, that's okay. But try to get as many as you can. Nicole, do you have a question?"

"Yeah, do you know if your brother or sister are older than you are?"
"Yeah, I do know, my sister is older than me and my brother is younger.

Katherine?"

Katherine asked, "Do you have any older brothers and sisters?"

"I just answered that question. What was my answer to that question? Chase?"

"One older sister," answered Chase.

"Of course." Joy then continued the discussion of the five senses. "Sometimes it doesn't fit right to put one of the five senses in. Baking cookies would lend itself very well to all five but some of them may not. Any other questions? Elizabeth?"

"We're just writing about something that would happen at Christmas."

"Right," said Joy. "All righty, yes, Maggie?"

"Is it okay if we talk about two things? They're the same thing."

"If you think they're together, if they happen together then you could. I want you to pick one and really describe it using your senses. Yes, Nicole?"

"Can you color that?" Nicole asked as she pointed to the front of the sheet.

"When you finish but do the finishing first. All right. Let's have some quiet time to write." Joy walked around as some of the students began to write. "You don't have to skip a line on this. If you run out of room we'll get you another sheet of paper."

After giving them time to write, Joy stopped the students by saying, "What I'd like you to do is stop where you are. I know by the busy hands that most of you are not done and that's okay. We'll get back to that this afternoon. We'll save them so you can finish. What I want you to have the chance to do is I'm going to put you with someone at your
table. Even if you're not finished tell your partner, 'I didn't get the chance to finish.'

That's okay. I want you to read your story to your partner. Your partner's job is to listen for those things." Joy said as she pointed to the list of the five senses. "Then when you finish your partner is going to be able to tell you, 'Brittany, I love the way you describe how such and such felt and you said such and such smelled this way' or 'You described how something tastes.' If they don't have a particular one in, that's okay because it may not have fit in their story. If they only have one or two senses in their story then maybe you could give them suggestions such as 'Oh, I wish you would have told me what it sounded like in your house that day' or 'I wish you had told me what it felt like when you pressed your nose against the glass window' or whatever it is that they're writing about. So give them some suggestions and help them as well. When I give you your partner just take your writing, just explain that you haven't finished. Is there anybody that did finish?" Some hands went up. "Anybody who did not finish?" Different hands were raised. "Okay, that's fine. We'll get back to them. Find a quiet spot. Just scoot your chairs or a couple of you can get up and find a quiet spot. Not in the boat because it's about to capsize or on the couch because that's where our snowmen are but somewhere where we can put our heads together. Read in a soft voice because there are twenty-six of you which means thirteen voices will be reading at one time. Remember one of you reads first and the other one will tell what you heard as far as how they painted their image for you. Then switch. Let's see." Joy paired all students with a partner.

"Okay, find another spot. Some of you stay where you are."
The children moved to different spots around the room and began reading their stories. After about ten minutes Joy said, "Okay, back to your seats. Give me five: one, two, three, four, five. I'd like to know from just a few of you, not about your writing, but about what you heard your partner do. How many of you thought your partner did a wonderful job creating an image for you?"

Some hands went up.

"Were you able to report to them some of the senses that they used?"

Some students responded that they had.

"You should be able to have that picture in your mind and be able to tell them what you heard them do in their story. Okay, would anyone like to share one particular sense that your partner, not you, that your partner used really really well and tell just that particular part that your partner did well? Caroline, what did Stuart do that was particularly wonderful?"

Well, whenever he described when he made the cookies and how it felt."

"Which sense did you think he used particularly well?"

"Well, he would feel the dough."

"Did he tell about this in his story?"

"Yes," answered Caroline.

"Okay, good. Chase, what did Hannah do well?"

"Hannah, like in one part, went into a lot of detail about how it felt sticky and soft."
"Sticky and soft, that must be a treat. Were they making cookies?" asked Joy.

"Yes," said Chase.

"Good memory there, too, Chase," commented Joy. "Good listening, Katherine, what did Nicole do particularly well?"

"Well, they went to pick the tree."

"Which sense and what did she say?"

"The smell, hearing."

"Pick one and tell me specifically what she said," guided Joy.

"Um, hearing. She could hear little children."

"Could she hear their voices?"

"Yeah."

"Specifically, what did Nick do, Mary?" asked Joy.

"Well, he said on Christmas when they were decorating the tree they laid bunches of Christmas tree branches on their fireplace and he got to help. Then they turned on the tape player and they started playing and it sounded like a bunch of angels trumpeting."

"It sounded like angels trumpeting. Ooh, nice. Okay, what did Josh do that was particularly wonderful, Maggie?"

"Well, he said he liked to touch the tree and smell it."

"Okay, Josh?"

"Feeling. Like she liked feeling the wind on her face when riding her sled and she liked to feel the hot chocolate because it's hot," commented Josh.
"Okay," continued Joy. "Thanks. Remember when you describe these senses don't just say I like or I like to feel or I like to hear. Describe how it sounds. What is it you like to hear? Don't just say 'I like to hear music.' Say 'The music sounds like' and then describe it that way because we can hear what you're liking to hear. I know you like to hear it because you're putting it in your stories. We want to hear it, too, so you've got to describe it for us so we can feel like we get to participate in the event with you.

Elizabeth, what did your partner do especially well?"

"Well, she's telling about her mother and she said she was putting cookies in the oven."

"Oh. Martha, what did your partner do well?"

"Well, my partner said the snow was falling," said Martha.

"Could you see it snowing?" asked Joy. "Good, that makes a big difference, doesn't it? You guys get the idea of what I mean when I say 'Create an image for the reader?' Do you get that idea? Okay. When we do writing workshop, when we do any writing, try to remember it's important to create that image for your reader. You want them to feel what you felt, to see what you saw, and smell what you smelled. I wanted you to feel like you were a fly on the wall, watching me and my sister and brother and mom making those cookies. I wanted you to smell it and picture it and even hear what it was like in that kitchen. So using the five senses was a good way to do that. What trick did I tell you to remember the five senses? Remember?"

"Your face," answered Brittany.
"Yes, your face. See, smell, hear, taste, and touch," Joy reminded as she pointed to the corresponding parts of her face. "It doesn't have to be all five because sometimes all five don't work. Okay, thank you for doing such a good job with the sharing part. I was really impressed with that. Down at the bottom you'll see a little spot that says name. Make sure your name is there. If you have not finished, that's okay. I'm going to collect them and read them, then I'm going to put them in your portfolios. This would be a piece that you may want to publish. Remember if I wrote a published piece on all of those things that I told you about that I thought about, going to my grandma's, picking out the tree, baking the cookies, making applesauce cake, I could have a novel if I described them all the way I wanted to. You could have a book about one particular event, every small event, about the whole Christmas season. You can definitely do that, but put lots of description in there. Yes, Nicole?"

"Well, I liked how Katherine put how she was happy when her grandma touched her cheek and kissed her."

"She did a good job describing that. Nicely done. Okay, we'll have to stop the sharing what our partners did. Do you have a question, Katherine?"

"Yes," said Katherine.

"Okay."

"Can we redo this on regular paper and then we could make a book?"
"Absolutely. Absolutely. The possibilities for writing workshop are endless. Okay, we're going to let someone selected from each table, I know you're not done, Lucas. It doesn't matter. Could you finish this tomorrow in writing workshop?"

"Yes," answered the students.

"Of course you could. All right, Stuart, could you collect them at your table, please? Lucas, please? Nick, please? Tyler, please?"

The students began collecting the papers as the activity ended.
Teaching for Meaningfulness

In classrooms, the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness might be found in different configurations. In one classroom a teacher might build a family atmosphere but exclude activities that relate to the culture to which the students desire membership and local and state school mandates (see Figure 5).

![Figure 5](image)

Figure 5. Classrooms that provide only a family atmosphere.

In another classroom, the teacher, in a non-supportive or overly competitive environment, might provide authentic activities for students but omit those skills required by the state or local school system (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6](image)

Figure 6. Classrooms that provide only authentic activity.
Other teachers might follow the school curriculum but in a nonsupportive environment where authentic activities are lacking (see Figure 7).

![Diagram of Classroom, authentic activity, school, family atmosphere]

Figure 7. Classrooms that provide only the school curriculum.

A combination of any two of the three aspects might be found in other classrooms (see Figure 8). In Classroom A the teacher might attempt to provide authentic activity in a supportive, caring atmosphere but neglect those state and local skills mandated by the locality. In Classroom B the teacher might provide authentic activity and cover state and locally mandated skills but in a nonsupportive environment. In Classroom C mandated skills might be taught in a supportive, caring environment, but in this class the activity in which the students participate may lack authenticity.
The TFM teacher includes all three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness in her classroom, for the strength of TFM lies in the integration of building a family atmosphere, providing authentic activities, and negotiating the school setting (see Figure 9). In teaching for meaningfulness, the teacher works to increase this area of intersection thereby increasing the meaningfulness of the activity.
Teaching for meaningfulness is dynamic in nature. At times more emphasis is placed on the family atmosphere: for example, at the beginning of the school year the teacher may spend more time building community and learning about the lives and interests of the children while sharing her life and interests with them. Writing workshop might emphasize the authentic nature of the activity. Towards the end of the school year the teacher might realize that a mandated skill has not been assessed so that aspect of teaching for meaningfulness would take precedence. In any of these situations, though, for teaching for meaningfulness to occur all aspects are in place in some form.

Joy, as a teacher who teaches for meaningfulness, integrates the three aspects of TFM in her classroom. The three aspects work together in the scene at the beginning of this chapter as Joy creates and implements a task that teaches for meaningfulness.

Three Aspects of Teaching for Meaningfulness

Three aspects are apparent in a TFM classroom: building a family atmosphere, providing authentic activity that supports students as they join new cultures, and negotiating the school setting. As a TFM teacher, Joy includes these three aspects in her classroom.

A central aspect of teaching for meaningfulness in Joy's classroom is the family atmosphere. Joy explains, "I think of our class like a family. We get really close. We do a lot of activities to get to know each other and we really emphasize very strongly caring for each other and about each other." Joy's modeling as well as the students' participation
in activities that allow them to learn about each other provide a foundation for this family atmosphere at the beginning of the school year. For the remainder of the school year Joy builds upon this foundation. Joy shares her life with her students, provides students with opportunities to share their lives with other members of the community, and models respectful and accepting interaction with one another. As a result of her acceptance the children feel comfortable, safe, secure, and accepted. Elizabeth describes how Joy's personal attention makes her feel "so comfortable about what you're doing." Brittany shares, "I know I can trust her [Mrs. Marks] because she won't pass my secrets to other teachers that I can't trust....When we tell her something she won't laugh at it." Support for students is provided through all aspects of TFM. Joy uses tasks to help her learn more about the students. The distinctness of each family member continues to be unconditionally accepted as Joy embraces and values the students as individuals and as part of the classroom family.

To support students in their journey into the culture of writers, Joy provides an opportunity for students to practice using the writing strategy of incorporating the five senses to create an image for the reader. The students use a personal experience as source for an idea which allows for a connection between their writing and this personal experience. This task is used not to match that of writers but rather to provide students with strategies that writers can use and the opportunity to practice the use of these strategies through writing about a personal experience.
As Joy creates this task and involves the students through their writing, she also considers the school's role in teaching for meaningfulness. The state and local school systems mandate a writing program. They provide materials that allow students to explore holiday customs of different cultures. Through this activity Joy covers mandated state and local skills. Members assess the work of other members. Issues of time and space are apparent.

Joy, as a therefore teacher, constantly looks for ways to help students make connections between the activity in which they participate in school and its use by practitioners in real life. A first connection is made through writing about a family holiday custom. While the task involves making writing more descriptive by using the five senses, the writing is connected to the individual life of each student. School constraints such as time, space, and curricular requirements can be inhibiting to TFM, but Joy reflects upon these constraints and considers ways to teach for meaningfulness within the structure of the school day.

Teaching for Meaningfulness in Joy's Classroom

In the scene described at the beginning of this chapter, Joy integrates the three aspects of TFM to provide an activity that teaches for meaningfulness. The family atmosphere is apparent. Joy negotiates the school curriculum and gives students the opportunity to cover mandated skills in a supportive environment through activity that is authentic in nature. The scene provides an example of the integration of the family
atmosphere, authentic activity, and the school setting in order to teach for meaningfulness. It has been divided into four sections of the lesson: considering family holiday customs, teacher sharing of a personal story, student writing of family stories, and sharing by students.

Considering Family Holiday Customs

In the scene introducing this chapter, Joy begins by making a connection between a current area of study, holiday customs from around the world, and students' individual lives. They review their study of Hanukkah and Kwanza. Customs of countries such as France, England, and Italy are mentioned. Holiday customs of each student's family then become the focal point of the classroom discussion.

Sharing by the teacher, both to build the family atmosphere and as a writer modeling for students, appears next as Joy begins to list customs from her own family. Joy shares incidents from her life with her students which bonds the class through common knowledge of an event in Joy's life.

The unique backgrounds and experiences that students bring to school include individual family customs. As part of celebrating and accepting these unique lives, Joy next involves students in the task of reflecting upon their own family holiday customs. Joy asks students to list holiday customs from their own families and tells them, "Now it doesn't matter if your family celebrates Hanukkah or if you celebrate Christmas or if you go to church or if you don't go to church, all of the things that your family does do during
the holidays makes that important for your family." The children select events from their own lives to share. Individual differences in how students celebrate the holidays are accepted and valued.

Students then list personal holiday customs as Joy directs, "Make a list on the back of your paper of some of the things your family does during the holidays that are kind of customs for your family. Tell some of the things you do at holiday time."

Through this list, Joy adds to her knowledge of all students and their out-of-school lives. The connection continues to be made between each child's out-of-school life and the school activity. Through their lists, students share a different part of their lives with Joy. As Joy strolls around and looks at the lists being developed by the students, she learns more about the children, their families, and things that they do together during the holidays. This activity gives her a unique opportunity to learn about the out-of-school lives of the children and their relationships with their families.

By this point in the lesson Joy has already begun to integrate the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness. Joy begins sharing short synopses of events in her life and asks the students to consider their own holiday customs. The acceptance of each custom is encouraged by Joy, and their family customs are placed in the same context as holiday customs from other countries. Authenticity is introduced as Joy models for them as a writer. In addition, the students begin with their own experiences as possible topics about which to write. The related personal writing connects to the school objective of introducing students to other cultures and their practices.
Teacher Sharing of a Personal Story

Upon completing their lists, the students are introduced to a new part of the activity, that of using the five senses to write about an event on their list. Joy explains, "We're going to use our five senses that we've learned about and we're going to describe that event in your household using those five senses." State mandated skill SOL 3.14: *The student will re-create sensory experiences* is introduced. For Joy, teaching this skill meaningfully involves connecting it to the lives, interests, and experiences of students, modeling for them how a writer might use this tool, and allowing them to practice the use of this tool in their work as writers. Through asking students to write about a holiday custom in their family or household and then using the five senses to help describe that event, Joy helps students make a connection between their lives and school skills. The students write about an event in their lives which allows them to bring their life outside of school to school. Through this writing, the students are encouraged to use the five senses to make their writing more descriptive.

As she prepares to begin reading her story to the children, Joy models and discusses how to positively interact with a writer. In describing how she would feel if the children did not listen, Joy models how students might feel when sharing their writing. Joy states, "...and be a good audience for me, please, because I'm sharing a part of myself with you and it would hurt my feelings if I didn't think you cared enough to listen." Joy shares her feelings as a writer in hopes that this will transfer to the children and their understanding of one another's feelings as writers.
By December the students are very knowledgeable about many parts of Joy's life through her sharing of numerous stories from her own experiences. At this point Joy has already shared a number of short descriptions of holiday events from her past such as selecting a Christmas tree and visiting her grandmother. Joy now selects one event to share in detail with the group, the story of cooking Christmas cookies with her family. Through sharing her personal story, Joy models acceptance of each person's distinct family customs and encourages the sharing of stories by students through sharing one of her own.

Joy shares the story from a past experience in her life which allow the students a glimpse into Joy's life outside of school. These stories tend to be evocative, inspiring students to share stories from their own lives with one another. This also continues to strengthen the bond between members of this community based upon their common topic of an event in Joy's life.

In sharing her story with the class, Joy, as a writer, models the activity of writers. In her story she introduces the students to one strategy a writer can use to create for the reader an image of an event that occurred in her life. Joy models sharing a personal story. She uses the five senses as a tool to describe for the reader what occurred as her family baked holiday cookies. Joy explains to students why she chose to use the five senses to help tell this story as she states in the scene,

   But that's kind of hard for you to get an image of what it looked like in my kitchen, what exactly was going on and why was that such a special
memory for Mrs. Marks, what's the big deal about making cookies unless I describe it for you. So I want you to listen especially for the way I do the five senses.

Assessment is required by the state and locality, but it is also something the teacher who teaches for meaningfulness uses to increase her knowledge of each child. What the teacher learns from her assessment can assist her in making future plans for students that support them as learners. The assessment process based upon Joy's sharing of her story involves the students' assessment of Joy's use of the five senses in her writing. Scott describes how Joy could feel the sugar crunch in her mouth. Warm and sugary tasting cookies are remembered by Maggie. Chase mentions the sweet smell. Flour on the floor and on Joy's face are added by Bryan and Laura. The children assess Joy's use of a writing tool, that of using the five senses to create an image for the reader.

As Joy shares her story with her students, she continues to integrate the three aspect of teaching for meaningfulness. She shares a story from her own life. Students observe Joy sharing a story she has written. The story emphasizes using the five senses to create an image for the reader. Then the students are provided with the opportunity to assess Joy's use of this strategy.

**Students' Writing of Family Stories**

Next, the students write stories based on their own family holiday customs. Stories about making cookies, selecting a tree, decorating the house, sleigh riding, and
visiting grandparents are shared with a partner. Joy provides options for publishing the story and sharing it with the class, and students decide which story to share.

The stories and lists about individual family holiday customs give Joy a new source of information about students and their lives outside of school. It provides Joy with a picture of the students' families and their interactions with one another.

Through the task of writing about a personal holiday custom the children are involved in the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness. They are writing about their own lives, and acceptance of the distinctness of each life is apparent. The students are using tools that writers use such as using the five senses to make their writing more descriptive. A state mandated skill, that of re-creating sensory experiences through writing, is emphasized. The integration of the three aspects provides an experience where TFM is evident.

Sharing by Students

As time for writing ends, the students share their work with a partner. Before this work with a partner begins, Joy speaks with the students about ways they can support one another as writers who are attempting to use the five senses to create an image for their readers. Earlier Joy asked the students to look at her use of the five senses in her story. An opportunity to write in this style was then provided as the children wrote stories about their own holiday experiences. Now Joy gives the students an opportunity to share and assess with a partner individual use of the five senses in their writing. First, suggestions
about ways to interact with and support one another as writers such as "I love the way you describe how such and such felt....You described how something tastes....Oh, I wish you had told me what it felt like when you pressed your nose against the glass window" are provided by Joy. Then, through discussing their writing with a partner, students hear new perspectives related to their writing. Each pair of students reflects upon their individual use of the five senses to create an image for the reader.

Students support one another as writers by sharing and reviewing stories with a partner. Next, the students share with the class the strengths of their classmates' work. Chase observes that Hannah depicted the cookies as feeling sticky and hard. Mary comments that Nick described how "It sounded like a bunch of angels trumpeting" when his family decorated the tree. Joy provides an opportunity for students to assess one another's work and to practice the positive interactions she has modeled. Katherine tells how Nicole could hear little children. Josh shares how Maggie "liked feeling the wind on her face when riding her sled and she liked to feel the hot chocolate because it's hot."

The assessment focuses on one strategy that writers can use, that of using the five senses to help create an image for the reader.

The Therefore Teacher

As in any activity, there are certain constraints that affect this lesson. As a therefore teacher Joy continues to attempt to negotiate these constraints in a manner that supports teaching for meaningfulness.
Time is one example of a constraint encountered in this lesson. In anticipation of time issues, Joy had to consider which of the following to include in her lesson: to write in front of the students, to have them look for the five senses in her writing, and/or to write and share their stories. Decisions about how best to use the time were made by Joy, and she elected to write her story prior to the lesson. Even with this decision, the children are limited in the amount of time they have to write, and some do not finish in time to share their entire story with a partner. As a means of addressing this shortage of time, Joy gives students the option of completing the story during writing workshop.

Joy utilizes the space in the classroom to provide students with the opportunity to interact with one another. Desks are placed in groups that allow students to confer with one another, if necessary. When sharing their writing, students are encouraged to find a space to talk with one another and move around the room in search of such a space. The boat and the couch are off limits, but students are informed of the reasons for these restrictions. Joy requests that students "read in a soft voice" and discusses the necessity of this in a classroom with twenty-six children.

Mandated state and local skills can also be constraining, but Joy integrates them into this activity in a manner that allows students to see them useful as writers. Joy's use of the five senses to re-create sensory experiences introduces a strategy writers use to make their writing more descriptive. In addition, Joy teaches the skill by connecting it to the students' lives in a way that accepts the distinctness of each life.
It's important to note that free choice of a writing topic is not a goal for this task. Joy's purpose in having students participate in this activity involves several things: connecting to the theme of Christmas Around the World, teaching the writing strategy of re-creating sensory experiences with the use of the five senses, and celebrating individual family traditions. To provide students with free choice of topic would diminish these three purposes. As always in teaching for meaningfulness, the purpose of the task influences which aspects of teaching for meaningfulness are emphasized and which are not. To reach the three purposes listed earlier, Joy de-emphasizes total student choice while emphasizing partial student choice and learning about strategies that writers might use.

**Conclusion**

In the scene, Joy integrates the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness: building the family atmosphere, providing authentic activity that connects to the lives and interests of students, and negotiating the school setting. Joy shares a story from her life and models the use of a writer's tool. The children share stories about their past holiday experiences, and Joy encourages acceptance of these varied experiences. Their writing connects to their lives through writing about real life events they have experienced. Students learn about strategies that writers use to make their writing more descriptive. State and local skills are covered. As a *therefore* teacher, Joy looks at constraints such as
time, mandated skills, space, and assessment and finds ways to negotiate them within the classroom experience.

Joy integrates all aspects of TFM to provide students with the opportunity to participate in an activity that connects to their lives in a manner that respects and accepts these lives. The activity is authentic in its focus on strategies that writers might use. Required state and local skills are covered. The strength of the activity lies in the strength of teaching for meaningfulness: the integration of the three aspects of TFM.
CHAPTER SEVEN
The Graceful Teacher

Throughout my work with Joy, I searched for a word that describes her. Descriptors the children used like fair, funny, understanding, open, someone who can be trusted, welcoming, and enthusiastic came to mind. Jane Ross's portrayal of Joy added safe, humorous, organized, and accepting to this picture. I thought of Joy's knowledge of students, learning and teaching, her sense of teaching as a "calling," and her desire to have a TFM classroom. Even some of the words Joy used to describe herself such as mothery, not a yellor or a fussler, and a respect for students were part of my consideration.

I believe I was looking for a word to describe what Fenstermacher and Soltis (1992) would call Joy's "manner" (p. 40). Fenstermacher and Soltis use "manner" to describe the "way of acting as a teacher" (p. 40). They add,

A manner is a relatively stable disposition to act in a given way under circumstances that call for such action. We speak of persons who are gentle, humorous, affectionate, secretive, ambitious. These words describe their manner. Under appropriate circumstances, an affectionate person will smile, touch, hug, offer support, and ask questions, while the same circumstances might lead a person of shy manner to become quiet, frown, and pull away. (pp. 40-41)
Each characterization of Joy was a part of Joy's manner, but I continued to search for one word that might describe her.

Finally, it came to me: graceful. Libby (1994) describes grace as a gift and speaks of graceful lives as "lives of commitment and service" (p. 6). Grace describes Joy's manner and her commitment to teaching for meaningfulness. Negotiating whatever constraints she encounters, Joy continues to search for ways to provide a TFM classroom for her students. Through Joy's acceptance of each student as distinct, they feel secure, welcomed, and safe. Through the activities she provides for them they see her respect for them as students who desire to join cultures such as writer and reader. The students seek her support and encouragement as they continue their journey into these cultures. Joy's attempts to negotiate constraints as a therefore teacher enable her to teach the school curriculum in ways that are based on her belief system. For Joy, grace is that ability to make children feel comfortable, safe, secure, and accepted in a school setting. It is a goal of providing activities for students that show a respect for them and that relate to the way the activity is used by members of the culture the students want to join. Through her actions and through her words, Joy's grace is apparent in her classroom and felt by the students.

There are a number of things I observed that illustrate Joy's grace. Joy willingly shares herself with the students. She describes for them events from her life. Amanda, one of Joy's students, comments about this sharing: "She [Mrs. Marks] uses a lot of
expression and she tells us things like what happens to her. She's open and stuff and tells us a lot of things." The children value Joy's sharing of her life with them.

Trust is another word some of the children use in their descriptions of Joy. Hannah comments, "It feels great because I know that I can trust Mrs. Marks and my friends." Brittany explains, "Mrs. Marks usually makes things fun to learn. I feel secure being with Mrs. Marks because I know I can trust her." Brittany speaks of Joy's respect for their privacy:

Sometimes I have a really good idea or something that happened to me and I don't really want to share it with other people but I know I can share it with Mrs. Marks because she won't share with anyone unless you want her to. I feel sort of secure with showing her my thoughts and my secrets.

Brittany expresses, "I know I can trust her because she won't pass my secrets to other teachers that I can't trust." Trust is another important part of Joy's grace.

Joy's respect for the children and their decisions encourages her to provide opportunities for them to make choices. Rebecca writes, "It feels great [being in Mrs. Marks's class] because she lets us write about anything that we want. She's the best."

Lucas shares, "It feels great to be in her class. She is a nice and good third grade teacher. The best thing about her is that she lets us write our own stories." Jim says, "Writing workshop is a lot more fun than writing some report because you can write about anything you want to. I like writing workshop because Mrs. Marks makes it fun. I used
to not like writing but now it's fun." Giving children the opportunity to make choices and respecting these choices is another facet of Joy's grace.

Jane Ross characterizes Joy as follows:

Joy has that unique personality of humor combined with her gift of organizing. Those two things really do help her other gifts, that she's so terribly organized, she sees the humor in everything, and she's always there with a humorous thing to say. That always releases the stress that anyone feels in learning, and it always makes people value that in her.

Joy's sense of humor and her gift for organization add another dimension to this grace.

Several students describe Joy's classroom as safe. Jane Ross also comments about the safe nature of Joy's classroom: "I guess if I had to prioritize everything I would say that she is one that you can be really safe with. You trust her." When asked what Joy does that makes people feel safe with her Jane responded,

Her enthusiasm. Her warmth. The way she gives an invitation. She issues the invitation of learning to kids with the idea that 'I value.' And I think that's it, they pick up on that she greatly values what they are and who they are as children. I think that's a quality we all need.

Joy's sharing of her grace invites a sense of trust and security in those who encounter her grace.
A part of Joy's valuing is the attention she gives each child. When Joy is conferencing with a child or working with a child, that child receives Joy's complete attention. Elizabeth describes Joy's personal attention:

She doesn't do other things while you're reading. She sits there and listens to you read and she doesn't get up and walk around the room. She stays in one place and just looks at the person that's reading and it just makes you feel so comfortable about what you're doing.

The sense of valuing by Joy is felt by her students.

These are all powerful facets of Joy's grace, but what I see as the most important aspect of Joy as a graceful teacher is her acceptance of each child as distinct. Joy's classroom holds what Joy describes as "a sincere sense of love, caring, and security."

Much of this atmosphere builds on her acceptance of each child as distinct for whatever it is they bring to class. For example, in some students this may be a gift as a writer or a reader. In another it might be the student's struggle to become a writer or a reader. Whatever the situation, Joy accepts each child as distinct and supports the child based on that distinctness. Jane Ross describes this as follows: "Joy assures you that she values what you're going to say and what you're going to share. She does that for teachers and she does that for kids." Brittany describes part of this acceptance: "Mrs. Marks really cares what you think." Laura relates, "It feels good to be in Mrs. Marks's class because she is a good teacher and she helps me learn more. She is very understanding." Amanda
describes Joy's class as follows: "It feels great to be in Mrs. Marks's class. She makes you feel welcome and secure and if you do not understand she will help you understand."

Part of this acceptance is described by students in Joy's manner of negotiating their struggles with concepts or activities they encounter in school. Several describe their feeling of security when sharing a problem with Joy, her acceptance of them when they do not understand, and her support of them as they work to gain a better understanding of a concept. Brittany relates,

When we tell her something she won't laugh at it and think that it's funny even if she does. She acts like you can really trust her. She won't laugh at the things that you say and when you get a problem wrong in math class or something like that she won't say, 'No, that's not the right answer' and laugh at it. She'll encourage you to do that. So that's why I feel like I can trust her.

Brittany writes, "She [Mrs. Marks] helps us when we don't understand. That helps me be a better reader." Caroline also comments that Joy will help them when they do not understand something. Caroline explains,

If I do something wrong during the day she doesn't just go start laughing and telling me 'You did it wrong.' She just says 'Try better next time' and 'You can just work on it' and stuff. I'm in her math class and sometimes I get a few answers wrong and she doesn't just go and start to laugh at it and say, 'Caroline, you're dumb and that's a dumb answer you put.' She says,
'Look at that again' and 'Just see what you need to do' and 'Just check that again' and I do that and that helps me with it.

Amanda observes, "She encourages you if you're stuck and she helps you....I like it because she helps you. Like some teachers if you don't understand it they sometimes don't really get you to understand but Mrs. Marks makes you understand." Amanda writes, "It feels great to be in Mrs. Marks's class because she makes you feel welcome and secure and if you do not understand she will make you understand." Nick reflects, "I think it feels wonderful [to be in Mrs. Marks's class] because Mrs. Marks helps us understand everything and she tries to make everything fun."

Joy speaks of teaching as a calling. In describing her beginnings as a teacher, Joy writes, "I felt then, as I do now, that being a teacher is indeed a 'calling.' I know with every ounce of my being that I was meant to be a teacher." Ayers (1993), who describes teaching as "world changing work," states,

This, I believe, is finally the reason to teach. People are called to teaching because they love children and youth, or because they love being with them, watching them open up and grow and become more able, more competent, more powerful in the world. They may love what happens to themselves when they are with children, the ways in which they become their best selves. Or they become teachers because they love the world, or some piece of the world enough that they want to show that love to others.
In either case, people teach as an act of construction and reconstruction and as a gift of oneself to others. (p. 8)

Joy's graceful nature is captured in Ayers's description of the reason to teach.

**Conclusion**

Joy is a portrait of a graceful teacher. Through her acceptance of each child as distinct they find a teacher they can trust. Joy provides for students a safe place where they can take risks, share their problems, and participate in activities that allow them to join new cultures. Joy's gracefulness manifests itself in her sharing of herself with the children and through the authentic activity that she provides for them. Her acceptance of students as distinct, her support of them as learners, and her respect for them as individuals are parts of Joy's graceful nature.

Must grace manifest itself in each teacher in the way it is manifested by Joy? I believe that grace can manifest itself in limitless ways. For any teacher, the manifestation of this grace must be based on the students. That acceptance of each child as distinct carries with it numerous dimensions. We must look at the children we teach, observe that distinctness, and then provide atmospheres and activities that encourage students to step into that grace.

Can only certain people be graceful teachers? I believe it is a gift that each of us carries. Our question to ourselves must be: "Do I want to share this grace with others?"

For any teacher who desires to teach for meaningfulness the answer must be yes. It is a
gift we can give to each child. When given it may reach beyond our wildest
imaginations. It is a gift that can truly make a difference.
As I look back over the past year, there is much to consider relating to my exploration of teaching for meaningfulness in a school setting. In undertaking this adventure, my hope was that both Joy and I could explore our understandings of this type of teaching. In talking with Joy, I believe this was the case. My personal understanding has grown based on my consideration of Joy's classroom and my consideration of my own teaching.

When I began this study, I was also beginning a new phase in my life as a teacher. After spending two years away from the classroom while continuing my studies, I accepted a position as a language arts coordinator in a school where everything, the children, the faculty, the building, the population, and the location, was new to me. I wondered what this new experience would hold, and what I encountered inspired me as an educator. In my school, the distinctness of each child is accepted. Students are supported as learners. The school is a safe, caring, nurturing place for children.

The need for authentic activity I observed in Joy's class was underscored by the responses to that type of activity exhibited by my students. One example of the children's response to this type of activity is their love of writing workshop. Sam, for example, asks me every Wednesday if we are going to have writing workshop. When I answer that we are he responds, "Yes!!!" In one class, students cheer when they realize that it is writing workshop time. Their stories provide me with insight into the lives of some of our students. I think about Sally who writes about wanting to be a dog groomer like her mom. Wayne wants to be an astronaut and writes realistic and imaginative stories about this topic. Cindy tells about her uncle's death. I think of
Drew's first encounters with writing workshop. He complained about a lack of ideas for writing workshop and wrote stories that were, at most, three or four sentences long. Now, a year later, he is working on a chapter book about his adventures in motorcycle riding. Drew is one who cheers when he realizes we are going to have writing workshop.

In another class, we have reading workshop. The children select the books they are going to read, and the classroom teacher or I conference with each about their books. In one conference with Jon, a student in this class, Jon asked, "Ms. Earp, do you know what my favorite part of reading workshop is?"

I responded, "No, but I would love to know. What is it?"

Jon continued, "The conference."

"Why is the conference your favorite part?" I asked.

"Because you get to talk to the teacher," he answered.

The importance of the relationship between the teacher and the student really hit home. I realized that the conferences Joy holds with her students are more than just a time to talk about their work as writers. It is a time for the student and the teacher to become acquainted and to share themselves with one another. It makes me treasure my time with each student more than ever.

There are still school constraints to negotiate, some that are similar to those Joy encountered and others that relate to my position as a language arts coordinator. In my work I can see the importance of some of the connections Joy makes in her literacy program because of my inability to make these connections based on my schedule. My daily time with a group of students never exceeds an hour, so building a family atmosphere is not as easy. Also, the
connections Joy makes in her literacy program are difficult to make unless you have a class for much or all of the day. Since I am not with the students all day, it is difficult to suggest topics from other school discussions. Also, due to time constraints, the classroom teacher and I have to make tough decisions about which things to cover and which things to omit during our time together.

Even though there are constraints related to my position, I do think this is a trade-off. My schedule changes daily, and I have opportunities to work with most of the children in the school. I think of Joy's belief in the importance of having a colleague with whom you can discuss what you are doing in your classroom, share suggestions and problems, and consider new ideas. A number of the teachers in my school have invited me into their classrooms to team teach reading and writing. Every week I have the opportunity to talk with other educators in my school as we plan activities for our students. It is a cooperative effort, and I learn a great deal from my work with them. I see teachers in my school, as I said earlier, who are accepting of each student. They continually negotiate not only the school setting but also some of the issues the students bring to school. They work to teach for meaningfulness.

Upon entering this study, I think I valued authentic activity in the classroom and believed in the importance of making connections between the in-school and out-of-school experiences of students. I saw constraints of the school setting and considered how to negotiate them while building a caring environment. In working with Joy, I was able to take a deeper look at these three aspects of TFM. But out of everything I learned while doing this study, two things impacted me most: the importance of accepting the distinctness of each student, and the need to be a therefore teacher. As teachers we meet students from such varied lives. Some come from
nurturing and caring homes, but others daily encounter instances of alcoholism, drugs, abuse, and neglect in their homes. Our job as teachers is to support each child, to validate and accept them as distinct, and to make decisions that support them as learners and as children.

Each day there are constraints that we, as teachers, face. We have numerous state and local mandates that must be covered. Issues of time, space, and assessment can be problematic. Students bring problems from home to school. As a therefore teacher, we can look at each constraint and then consider how to negotiate it. Our schools are filled with therefore teachers and however teachers. But I believe the type of teacher we are is a decision we make, and to teach for meaningfulness we must choose to be a therefore teacher.

Working with Joy has caused me to consider additional questions related to teacher practice: Can a teacher who chooses not to share her life with her students have a TFM classroom? How do teachers negotiate differences in meaningfulness between themselves and their students? What is the nature of the teacher's knowledge of each student's life and interests? Would teaching for meaningfulness change in a low income area? Would teaching for meaningfulness change in a class with a high minority population? How do educators negotiate the school setting? What is the nature of the therefore teacher? Why do some teachers decide to become therefore teachers? These are issues I will continue to consider.

Working with Joy and her students provided me with a wonderful learning experience as I considered not only Joy's teaching but also my own. An experience like this forced me to take what Schön (1991) calls "the reflective turn." This opportunity to look at Joy's practice and beliefs helped me to better understand my own.
I now realize that teaching for meaningfulness must include all aspects of TFM: building the family atmosphere, providing authentic activity that supports students as they join new cultures, and negotiating the school setting. Teaching for meaningfulness isn't easy. It takes much time, thought, and caring. But the look in a child's eyes or the excitement in a child's voice who is in a TFM classroom makes the whole thing worth the effort.
References


211


212


Viorst, J. (1981). Fifteen, maybe sixteen, things to worry about. In *If I were in charge of the world and other worries* (pp. 6-7). New York: Atheneum.


Viorst, J. (1981). If I were in charge of the world. In *If I were in charge of the world and other worries* (pp. 2-3). New York: Atheneum.


Children's Book Series


Erickson, J. R. *Hank the cowdog*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.


APPENDIX A

Purpose, Research Questions, and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore meaningfulness in a school setting. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) state, "For each of us, the more we understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do, and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be" (p. 11). In this study, one teacher was observed and interviewed to explore her past experiences and their effect on her as a teacher, her choices as a teacher, and her future direction as a teacher related to teaching for meaningfulness. In addition, my own ideas about teaching for meaningfulness, which have their roots in experiences, interactions with educators and students, and the literature, were challenged and explored.

In studying meaningfulness, my hope was to extend my understanding of how teachers help their students make connections between school experiences and their lives and experiences outside of school. Derry (1992) states, "Important questions are being raised about the extent and nature of the relationship between formal schooling and life experiences outside of school" (p. 414). Resnick (1987) comments, "As long as school focuses mainly on individual forms of competence, on tool-free performance, and on decontextualized skills, educating people to be good learners in school settings alone may not be sufficient to help them become strong out-of-school learners" (p. 18). This study
focused on the activities and relationships built in one classroom as the teacher worked to teach for meaningfulness.

It is my hope that the results of this study will encourage other educators to reflect upon their own practice, consider new possibilities, and provide meaningful experiences in their classrooms. As students participate in meaningful experiences within environments that are supportive of meaningfulness I hope they will view the things they do and learn in school as useful in their lives both in and outside of school.

Shor (1992) states, "Some scholars have done very important work teachers can benefit from; some researchers are careful to stay grounded in the realities of teaching; others make efforts to reach teacher audiences" (p. 170). I would like to see the results of this study reach teacher and researcher audiences and be beneficial to them, their students, and their continued research.

In considering what the teacher informant gained from being a participant in this study, I believe it provided her with an opportunity to reflect upon her own teaching and her decision-making as a teacher while observing the students in her class and considering their growth and development as learners. Through our discussions as well as her reading of my findings as presented in this book, I believe the teacher considered the aspects of TFM, sees her work as validated, and has been encouraged to continue teaching for meaningfulness. Shor (1992) states, "Effective teachers are those who examine their students' learning process, to discover what is being learned and not learned, so as to increase the learning already under way" (p. 171). Joy, through this
study, was provided with an opportunity to examine student meaningfulness, to extend her understanding of meaningfulness, to reassess her current beliefs, and to articulate her beliefs about the how and why of her own teaching and decision-making as a teacher.

Research Questions

In researching teaching for meaningfulness and student meaningfulness, the following questions provided focus:

1. How do teachers reflect upon and understand meaningfulness of school experiences?

2. How do teachers support meaningfulness in school settings?

3. How is meaningfulness supported through the tasks and relationships of the classroom experience?

4. What are the factors that support the existence of meaningfulness in everyday school experiences? How?

5. What are the factors that constrain the existence of meaningfulness in everyday school experiences? How?

6. How do teachers assess student meaningfulness? What student actions, artifacts, and comments do teachers perceive as indicators of student meaningfulness?

7. How do students describe meaningfulness relating to school experiences?
8. How do teachers learn about their students' lives, interests, experiences, and communities?

9. What support systems encourage teachers in their exploration of meaningfulness and their attempts to provide meaningful experiences for students in their classrooms?

Methodology

Qualitative Research and Ethnography

I elected to do a case study using qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman (1989) state their intent in writing *Designing Qualitative Research* as follows:

To describe the process of designing mainstream qualitative research that entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, that values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives, that views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, and that is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as the primary data. (p. 11)

This study included observations of a teacher and her students as they participated in a variety of school experiences. Interviews that followed each observation focused upon the meaningfulness of these experiences. From those interviews different perspectives were obtained. These perspectives were shared throughout the book.
Delamont (1992) also speaks of qualitative research as a term that implies "the researcher values the views, perspectives, opinions, prejudices and beliefs of the informants, actors or respondents she is studying" (p. 7). Delamont stresses that "this does not mean being naïve or credulous" but "paying attention to the outlook of the people in the setting or culture you are studying" (p. 7). Delamont states, "Your job is to find out how the people you are researching understand their world" (p. 7). In my research I studied how the teacher and her students understand meaningfulness in the classroom.

A Case of Teaching for Meaningfulness

The teacher participant in this study was, I believe, a case of a teacher teaching for meaningfulness and an exemplary example of the type of teaching I wanted to study. Weade (1992) describes documentation of exemplary situations as important because "exemplary situations are defined as outliers, and when prescriptions for practice or policy are needed, the lessons that could be learned from them are lost to a law of averages" (p. 89). Abbott (1992) uses cases as "instances" and describes one type of instance as follows: "A particular entity may also be an instance (case) of a conceptual class. Here, we have 'case' as exemplar; the conceptual class has some property (e.g., it is a structural type like bureaucracy), and the cases exemplify that property" (p. 53). I see the teacher I studied as a case, instance, or exemplar of teaching for meaningfulness.
Participants

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) describe the use of participants, or informants, "both to get information about activities that for one reason or another cannot be directly observed, and to check inferences made from observations" (p. 106). Delamont (1992) states, "The researcher not only observes, but also talks with participants" (p. 8). Participants in this study included the teacher, nineteen students, and the language arts coordinator for the school.

The Teacher

The teacher, an exemplar of teaching for meaningfulness, was selected based on descriptions of her by administrative personnel, student teachers, a college professor, other educators, and my own perceptions of her from past interactions. My personal observations of the teacher prior to the study led me to conclude that she was a case of teaching for meaningfulness based upon several indicators: The writing workshop program implemented by the teacher allowed students to write about their personal experiences and provided them with the opportunity to make decisions about their own work. A positive relationship existed between students and the teacher. An interest in being involved in research and furthering her own education had been expressed by the teacher.

The teacher was beginning her eighth year of teaching for the school system and had spent her entire teaching career at the school where she was currently working. Her
prior experience involved one year as a second grade teacher, one year as a language arts coordinator, and then five additional years as a second grade teacher. Due to enrollment issues the teacher had transferred to a third grade position for the period during which data were gathered for the study.

**Students**

Students, as participants, provided perspectives on meaningfulness as related to experiences in which they participated in school. Each student participant was interviewed one to three times. Parental and personal permission to be interviewed was obtained prior to these interviews.

**The Language Arts Coordinator**

The participating teacher spoke, on several occasions, of her relationship with the school language arts coordinator and the language arts coordinator’s role as mentor to the teacher. Also, the two teachers collaborated to offer an inservice on writing workshop for county educators. As a participant, the language arts coordinator provided the perspective of a colleague.
The Literature

Literature I read prior to and during the study offered another view. This literature, in its role as participant, suggested new ideas or possibilities to consider. In other instances, the literature provided support for my current understanding of TFM.

The Researcher

As the researcher, I was also a participant.

Study Site

A school located in a county school system provided the site for the study. This site was selected because the teacher participant was a member of the faculty at this school. Also, my status as an employee of the school system supported the county's approval of the study.

The school was located in a largely middle income section of a suburban county. The school housed Kindergarten through fifth grade with four sections of each grade level. The administrative staff included a principal and an assistant principal.

Setting

Each observation occurred in the teacher's classroom. Brophy (1989) speaks of the current emphasis on studying teaching as it occurs in classroom settings (p. ix). The Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (1992) states, "To understand what literacy is
and how students learn to be literate in a particular classroom, we must examine how members of a particular social group (a culture)\textsuperscript{3} construct and reconstruct literacy as part of everyday life" (p. 121).

Access

Access was gained by first speaking with the administrator responsible for granting formal permission to do research within the school system. A written copy of the protocol for the study was sent to the administrator’s office including attachments of the letter requesting permission to do research in a county school as well as copies of the teacher, student, and parent consent forms. I received permission to conduct the research in the county via written notice and with the stipulation that the principal of the school also grant permission.

The next person contacted was the principal of the school. The principal granted conditional consent to conduct research in her school based on gaining the teacher’s consent to be a participant in the study.

The teacher was then contacted by phone concerning the study. I provided a brief overview of the study and scheduled a meeting with the teacher. At this meeting we discussed the study. A copy of the protocol for the study as well as copies of possible interview questions were given to the teacher. The teacher gave written consent and agreed to be a participant in the study. Upon receiving a copy of this, the principal granted written permission to do research in the school.
On the first day of school, parental consent forms were sent home with each student. Twenty-three parents consented to their child's participation in the study.

I first visited the classroom during the second full week of school to describe the study to the students and to request their consent to be participants in the study. Nineteen students consented to be participants.

Data Collection

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes provided one means of recording the occurrences during each interview or observation. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), "Fieldnotes consist of relatively concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts" (p. 145). In describing fieldnotes Bond (1990) states,

Fieldnotes have at least two sets of qualities; they possess attributes of both written texts and discourses. They appear to have the security and concreteness that writing lends to observations, and as written texts they would seem to be permanent, immutable records of some past occurrence, possessing the stamp of authority of an expected professional procedure. But there is that personal, parochial, subjective, indefinable quality about them. They are shorthand statements, aides-mémoire that stimulate the re-creation, the renewal, of things past. (pp. 273-4)
Sanjek (1990) adds, "Fieldnotes are meant to be read by the ethnographer and to produce meaning through interaction with the ethnographer's headnotes" (p. 92).

Fieldnotes were used as a means of reconstructing occurrences related to this study. Sanjek (1990) describes the production of fieldnotes as requiring "local collaboration; their use, conversely, is mainly private, restricted to the ethnographer" (p. 41). Delamont (1992) describes two types of fieldnotes: a "real time version" (p. 52) and an "out-of-field version" (p. 53). A real time version, notes taken by the researcher during observations, was used during classroom observations. An out-of-field version was written the afternoon or evening of each interview or observation, when possible, because as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state, "The longer the time between observation and recording, the more troublesome will be the recall and recording of adequately detailed and concrete descriptions" (p. 48). These notes described, using my words, what I remembered and what occurred.

Fieldnotes were based on all observations, interviews, and contact with the participants.

Journal

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) describe journaling as a tool or method that may be useful in helping one reflect upon past experiences and personal practical knowledge for the purpose of better understanding oneself (pp. 33-34). They state, "One of the tools we have found useful is to keep an ongoing journal account of our daily actions and our
thoughts about those actions. The journals are ongoing records of practices and reflections on those practices" (pp. 34-35). Connelly and Clandinin add, "This ongoing reflection-on-action on a daily basis begins to provide insight into personal knowledge when you reread entries over several days and weeks. What connecting threads are apparent over time? Are there events or ideas that recur?" (p. 35). I used a personal journal to record my consideration of meaningfulness throughout the duration of the data collection period as well as during my analysis and writing. These entries were read to consider themes or patterns. Connelly and Clandinin suggest the following: "Look for things that suggest ideas and patterns to you. Make notes in the margins about those ideas. In research we call these notes "theoretical memos," but they are really just thoughts that you have about the text" (p. 37). My personal journal provided me with a method of recording thoughts about meaningfulness as well as changes and growth in understanding of this idea. Included were "personal reactions, frustrations, and assessments of life and work in the field" (Sanjek, 1990, p. 108). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) describe a journal as including "not only a record of the fieldwork, but also of the ethnographer's own personal feelings and involvement" (p. 165). The journal recorded my path throughout fieldwork and my thinking and decision-making while in the field. In addition, it held responses to literature that related to teaching for meaningfulness.

Initially, the teacher kept a journal but was unable to continue this practice due to a family illness and time constraints.
Students were asked, on specific occasions stipulated by the teacher, to write about the meaningfulness of school experiences and "the experience of being a student" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, p. 36). Both the teacher and I had access to these writings.

Delamont (1992) speaks of written records, such as diaries and other records, as being socially produced. Delamont states,

It is clear that if a researcher persuades twenty primary teachers to keep diaries for her, those documents are produced for the researcher. Harder to recognize is that all documents are written in a social context, with some audience in mind, even if the audience is only the author. Just as the good researcher is sceptical [sic] of what is said to her, so too documents must be sceptically [sic] read and examined in their social context."

(p. 105).

This was considered when reading journal entries by students and the teacher; and in their analysis.

Autobiography

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) describe autobiographies as "the telling of our own history" (p. 37). They state, "Our interest here is mostly in the reconstructing and telling of our own past, although we often find reading the biography of another person useful in helping us to understand ourselves differently" (p. 37). The teacher was asked
to write an autobiography of her own history as a means of reflecting upon her belief system and past experiences.

Observation

Observation was used as a means of exploring classroom implementation of the teacher's beliefs about meaningfulness and to observe the actions of the teacher and the students as participants in school experiences. This also provided me with a focal point when discussing the experience with the teacher or students and allowed for questions based on the observation.

Delamont (1992) speaks of "four aspects of gathering observational data: what to look at; how to look; where and when to look and listen; and finally what to record" (p. 112). In discussing "what to look at" Delamont states, "Following an initial period of relatively unfocused watching, it is essential to start paying close attention to a selective set of phenomena" (p. 112). Tasks designed by the teacher were observed as well as the interrelationships between the students and between students and the teacher as they participated in the tasks. Student reactions to the tasks and contexts were noted and recorded as well as actions that were indicators of the relationships within the classroom. In addition, connections between in-school and out-of-school aspects of the students' lives were noted.

All recording was done in composition notebooks like those used by students as learning logs in my attempt to "record as unobtrusively as possible" (Delamont, 1992, p. 229)
Notes about occurrences and emerging ideas were written. My abbreviations and shorthand were used as needed.

Observation plans I developed prior to each observation suggested things to observe. All observations were videotaped.

**Inservice Taught By the Teacher**

Data were also collected through my participation in an inservice taught by the teacher participant and her school language arts coordinator. This inservice focused on their personal uses of writing workshop in their classrooms, their beliefs related to this type of writing program, and their work with one another.

**Interviews**

In addition to observation, interviews were used to explore ideas, clarify the teacher's understanding of TFM, and to extend my understanding of teaching for meaningfulness. This provided another perspective because, as Delamont (1992) states, "Observation alone is rarely desirable, and most studies benefit from multiple data collection strategies" (p. 6). Briggs (1986) defines several characteristics of an interview, "The collection of data must occur in a face-to-face situation. The interaction must also occur in a research context and involve the posing of questions by the investigator" (pp. 6-7). Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face situation except when this was not
possible due to time constraints. In these instances the interviews were conducted by phone.

Interviews with the teacher and students focused on the meaningfulness of the observed experience, especially as related to the teacher's literacy program. Students were requested to talk about the meaningfulness of the literacy activities in which they participated as well as their perceptions of the teacher. The teacher described her perception of student meaningfulness related to the activity. Post-interviews were held with the teacher and, when possible, with the students.

Student interviews were held in both group and individual situations. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state,

Group interviews are quite common in ethnography. Apart from the fact that they allow a greater number of people to be interviewed in the same time, group interviews also have the advantage that they may make the interview situation less 'strange' for interviewees and thus less of a strain.

(p. 121)

In some instances, group interviews of two or three students were held to encourage them to consider additional ideas or possibilities. In other instances, interviews with individuals encouraged these students to "express opinions that they would not in front of others" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 120) because of the confidential nature of these interviews. Interviews were held at the school. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state, "With many people, interviewing them on their own territory is the best strategy
since it allows them to relax much more than they would in either a university office or a public place like a restaurant" (p. 125).

In some interviews, the teacher was asked to share stories of meaningful school experiences. Delamont (1992) states, "Most people like to tell stories, and collecting these can be as worthwhile as research" (p. 111).

Occasionally, some interviewing occurred during the course of an observation. This type of interviewing was used when it could be done unobtrusively and without interrupting the lesson. As a guide for recording information from this type of interview, Delamont (1992) states, "Equally important is to write everything down as soon as possible: what you asked (in the exact words), where, when, how, and who was listening/watching, as well as what the answers were" (p. 109). This information was recorded as quickly as possible.

All interviews, with the exception of those that occurred during observations or phone interviews, were audio-taped and transcribed. Interview plans explaining the purpose of the interview, issues to be covered, and possible questions to be asked were written prior to each interview.

Document Analysis

Document analysis (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, p. 41) was used as a means of discussing state and local objectives and how they were taught in the classroom. This analysis allowed me to consider those objectives required through the Virginia Standards
of Learning (1989) and the county's basal reading series, Silver Burdett & Ginn's *The World of Reading* (1989).

**Analysis Memos**

Analysis memos were written for all collected data. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state, "While reading documents, making fieldnotes, or transcribing audio or video tapes, promising theoretical ideas often arise. It is important to make note of these because they may prove useful when analysing [sic] the data" (p. 164). Analysis memos were based on interview transcripts, fieldnotes, teacher and student journal entries, the teacher's autobiography, and video-tapes.

**Factors Affecting the Data**

The data were affected first by the community from which the school draws its students. There is a small minority population within the community so the study did not allow for that type of diversity to be explored.

At times, my position as a full-time teacher affected the scheduling of observations and interviews. In addition, conflicts in teacher, student, and researcher schedules inhibited times the students and teacher could be interviewed.

Although initially the teacher had agreed to keep a journal, due to events in her personal life, journaling was discontinued.
Procedures

Two weeks prior to the opening of school the teacher participant was interviewed concerning her beliefs about teaching and learning, how she implemented those beliefs, and how they related to her beliefs about teaching for meaningfulness. The teacher was asked to recall an experience in which her students participated that she felt was meaningful to them. The following questions guided this portion of the interview:

1. What things did you consider prior to the described experience as you planned and prepared for it? How did those things make it more or less meaningful?

2. During the lesson, what was the reaction of the students?

3. What specific actions or comments by the children led you to believe that the lesson was meaningful to them?

4. Did the lesson cover objectives required by the school or state? Would you tell me about that?

5. What things promoted the meaningfulness of the lesson?

6. What things constrained the meaningfulness of the lesson?

7. Did you make any changes during the lesson to make it more meaningful to the students? What were these changes? Why did you make them?

8. Are there things about the lesson that you would change in order to make it more meaningful to the students?

9. How will the children use what they learned in their out-of-school lives?

A second set of questions focused on the teacher's belief system:
1. What do you believe is needed to make a school experience meaningful to students?

2. Is it important for school experiences to be meaningful to students? Why or why not?

3. How do students learn?

4. What does a teacher need to consider when planning an experience that will lead to meaningfulness on the part of the student?

5. What state objectives do you cover in your grade level?

6. What county objectives do you cover in your grade level?

7. How do you make these meaningful to students?

8. How do you see your role as teacher?

9. What literature have you read, professional or other, that has strongly affected your teaching and beliefs? Why?

10. What experiences have you had with other educators that have made the greatest impact on your beliefs about teaching and learning?

11. What type of learners do you want?

12. As a teacher, what are your main goals?

13. How do you learn about the interests and lives of your students? How do you use this information?

14. How do you learn about the community in which your students live? How do you use this information?
15. Do you have the support of parents? How do you know? How do you get their support?

16. Do you have the support of the community? How do you know? How do you get its support?

The teacher was given a copy of these questions several days prior to the interview so she could consider an incident from her classroom as well as the other questions.

On the first day of school, parental consent forms were sent home with students. These were returned to and collected by the teacher. Those students with parental permission were considered potential participants. Twenty-three of twenty-five parents consented to their child's participation. One consent form was never returned and one was returned denying consent for the child to be a participant.

During the second full week of school, I met with students and spoke with them about the study. Nineteen students agreed to be participants.

The first observation began that day. It was scheduled early in the school year because, as Delamont (1992) states,

Initial encounters are particularly valuable periods for researchers. In schools, the opening days of a new academic year are especially productive for researchers, because rules are explicitly discussed, procedures explained and justified, social relationships are established, and the negotiations leading to a working partnership are begun. (p. 86)
This study's focus on student-teacher and student-student relationships as well as teacher knowledge of students and their lives, needs, and interests made initiating the study at the beginning of the year especially important since this is when relationships begin to be established. Also, any new policies on the part of the school, district, or state are usually presented during the week prior to the opening of school.

A total of eight lessons were observed:

Observation 1  Writing Workshop
Observation 2  Writing Workshop
Observation 3  Writing Workshop
Observation 4  Writing Workshop
Observation 5  Book Sharing / Writing Notebooks
Observation 6  Writing Workshop
Observation 7  Modeled Writing
Observation 8  Guided Reading

Pre-interviews and post-interviews with the teacher were held when possible.

Pre-observation interviews focused on the teacher's description of the activity to be observed, a discussion of her thinking concerning the activity, and her beliefs about the meaningfulness of the upcoming activity. The post-interview allowed the teacher to consider the meaningfulness of the lesson and the teacher's decisions concerning the lesson. Students were also interviewed when time and scheduling permitted. These interviews focused on their reactions to classroom activities as related to their
meaningfulness and included descriptions of the teacher. Each student participant was interviewed one to three times.

Each lesson was observed and video-taped. While observing I considered tasks, relationships, and contexts related to the lesson. Children were observed to view their reactions to each lesson. Interview and observation plans developed prior to each lesson reflected my continued growth in understanding of teaching for meaningfulness in this classroom, the teacher's comments in previous interviews, the children's comments, and any questions or areas that arose as the study progressed.

Following each lesson, two or more children were interviewed if time permitted. Students were interviewed individually or in small groups of two or three.

A post-observation interview with the teacher was held after those lessons where time and schedules permitted. The teacher shared her thoughts about the lesson and its meaningfulness. Also, the teacher shared with me any additional information that was felt relevant to discussions.

Data collection began on August 16, 1994 and was completed by January 17, 1995.

Data Analysis

All interviews and videotapes were transcribed by the researcher and fieldnotes were written that recorded the events of each observation, interview, and inservice. Coding, or assigning data to a category (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 169), was

238
done by making identifying marks directly on the transcript using letters to represent the coded data. Based on this, an analytic index (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 170) was produced listing the identifying marks and their corresponding categories. Categories such as family atmosphere, time, and student decision-making emerged.

Initially, the next step was to write an analysis memo based on sequential occurrences of the coded information. The data were then manually sorted by code, using folders to house instances of each category. After transcribing and coding eight sets of interviews this analysis changed as follows: Instead of writing the analysis memo based upon the sequential occurrences of the coded information, existing ideas were sorted by code. Analysis memos then discussed data by code rather than sequentially. This change was made as a means of chunking similar ideas for their consideration. This method of analysis was used in the analysis of later interviews, all fieldnotes, all student and teacher journal entries, the autobiography, and all videotapes.

The codes relevant to existing ideas, emerging ideas, and any research reviewed were used to look for emerging patterns in the data. Also, this analysis provided me, as the researcher, with an opportunity to see that interview questions generated data about the ideas being explored. Pieces of data were assigned to categories as they emerged since "the identification of categories is a central element of the process of analysis" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 169).

Respondent validation (Delamont, 1992, p. 158) was used to gain the teacher's perceptions about the validity of the analysis. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state,
"Some ethnographers have argued that a crucial test for their accounts is whether the actors whose beliefs and behaviour [sic] they purport to describe recognize the validity of those accounts" (p. 195).

Analyzing Transcripts: An Example

The August 18 interview with the teacher was transcribed. The data were then read and coded. Theoretical memos about the data were written in the margins of the transcripts.

An analysis memo based on this interview was completed. Once again the transcripts were read, but in this instance they were discussed by the researcher in the analysis memo. Additional codes were added as found in this reading. Questions to clarify statements made by the teacher were also included and written in italics.

The data were then reread, cut apart, manually sorted by code, and filed in folders by category. At this point, the following categories emerged: family atmosphere, joining the cultures of readers and writers, teacher as expert/modeling, prior knowledge and experiences of students, sharing by the teacher, teaching for meaningfulness, growing as a teacher, mentors, out-of-school lives of students, learning about the students, challenges/the therefore teacher, description of the teacher, professional literature, community, and parents.

This method of analysis changed slightly after analyzing eight sets of interviews as described earlier.
Triangulation

Triangulation, "having two or more 'fixed' or 'sightings' of a finding from different angles" (Delamont, 1992, p. 159), provided a systematic means of collecting respondents' reactions to the analysis. Between method triangulation, data gathered by more than one method, included observations, interviews, an autobiography, and a limited amount of journaling by the teacher and students to explore teacher and student beliefs. In addition, the researcher attended a four day, ten hour workshop presented by the teacher and a colleague to gain further perspectives about the teacher's teaching and beliefs.

During analysis, triangulation involved returning to transcripts and fieldnotes when developing ideas emerged to see if any of the existing data had some relationship to those ideas (Delamont, 1992, p. 160). In addition, respondent validation was another type of triangulation used (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 198).

Once all data were transcribed and coded, the generated categories were used to find themes, or aspects, of TFM. Three aspects emerged from this process: building the family atmosphere, providing authentic activity that supports the joining of cultures of readers and writers, and negotiating the school setting. All categories fell under one or more of these aspects.

Organizing of the Text

Scenes were used to provide the reader with a glimpse of the classroom and were selected based on their relationship to the aspect being discussed. A short description of
the chapter's subject precedes each scene and can be used as a guide by the reader. The chapters were organized as follows: Chapter 1 provides the reader with a description of the researcher's background in teaching for meaningfulness. Chapter 2 provides an overview of teaching for meaningfulness. Although the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness are apparent in each scene, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 discuss, in detail, each of the three aspects of teaching for meaningfulness independently to offer the reader a clear picture of each aspect. Chapter 6 shows the teacher's integration of the three aspects in order to teach for meaningfulness. Chapter 7 describes the teacher. An epilogue then describes my current understanding of teaching for meaningfulness as related to my personal practice.
3.1 The student will participate in storytelling and choral reading.

3.2 The student will paraphrase oral communication.

3.3 The student will read independently with comprehension.

3.4 The student will find the main idea when it is stated in a reading selection.

3.5 The student will choose to read various types of material on a variety of subjects.

3.6 The student will use word attack skills to read and understand the meanings of words.

3.7 The student will write legibly and correctly in cursive style when appropriate.

3.8 The student will revise written work.

3.9 The student will write brief fictional and nonfictional narratives.

3.10 The student will use textbook aids and reference sources to locate information.

3.11 The student will begin using revision and editing skills by experimenting with sentences.

3.12 The student will draw conclusions from information obtained from oral or written material.

3.13 The student will develop basic sentences into interrogative, imperative, and declarative forms.

3.14 The student will re-create sensory experiences.
3.15 The student will comprehend the meaning of story critical words.

3.16 The student will read orally his own written compositions.
## APPENDIX C

**World of Reading Skills List**

**Levels 8 and 9**

### Decoding and Word Study
- **Phonics**
  - Consonant clusters
  - Vowel digraphs, variant vowels
- **Structural Analysis**
  - Compound words
  - Spelling changes
  - Language word decoding strategies
  - Suffixes/Prefixes
- **Context clues**

### Vocabulary
- **Word meaning**
- **Synonyms/antonyms**
- **Multiple meanings, homographs**
- **Homophones**
- **Classification**
- **Analogies**
- **Semantic mapping**
- **Semantic feature analysis**

### Comprehension
- **Getting Information from Text**
  - Picture details
  - Main ideas/details
  - Sequence
  - Word referents
- **Constructing and Organizing Meaning**
  - Comparison
  - Drawing conclusions
  - Predicting outcomes
  - Cause/effect
  - Inference
- **Summarizing**
- **Story mapping**

### Evaluating Text
- **Author’s purpose**

### Thinking
- **Strategies**
  - Recall
  - Analyze
  - Infer
  - Synthesize
  - Evaluate
- **Metacognition**
  - Visualizing
  - Rating understanding
  - Summarizing and predicting
  - Comprehension monitoring

### Literature
- **Story Structure**
  - Characterization
  - Story elements
- **Author's Craft**
  - Figurative language
  - Description
  - Repetition, rhythm, rhyme
  - Narrative point of view
  - Exaggeration, humor, pun
  - Mood, tone
  - Flashback, foreshadowing
  - Dialogue
  - Alliteration, onomatopoeia
  - Formal/informal language
- **Genres**
  - Reality/fantasy
  - Play
  - Myth, legend, fable
Folk tale, tall tale  
Realistic fiction  
Biography, autobiography  
Journal, diary  
Nonfiction  
Historical fiction  
Interview  
News article, editorial  
Poetry  

Captions, titles, subtitles  
Advertisements  
Note-taking, outlining  
Test-taking  

Learning from Graphic Aids  
Time lines  
Maps, diagrams, symbols, signs  
Charts, tables, schedules  
Graphs,  
Forms  

Using Resources  
Alphabetical order  
Encyclopedia, atlas  
Newspaper  
Telephone directory  
Dictionary, glossary, thesaurus  

Language  
Language Study  
Rhyming words, question words  
Word play  
Punctuation  

Listening  
Attentive  
Critical  
Appreciative  
Informational  

Speaking  
Choral speaking, choral reading  
Retelling a story  
Oral presentation  
Group discussion  
Dramatization  

Oral Rereading  
Fluency  
Specific information  
Enjoyment  
Expression  

Writing  
Process writing  
Writing to learn  
Expository writing  
Creative writing  
Functional/personal  

Study and Life Skills  
Learning from Text  
Following directions  
Content area reading  
Book parts
APPENDIX D

Permission to Quote

# Synthesis #
A Weekly Resource for Preaching and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition

Lisa -

You have my permission to quote Postscript from May 8, 1994.

The Rev. H. King Oehmig, D.Min., Editor & Publisher
Post Office Box 11428 † Chattanooga, Tennessee 37401-2428
(615) 265-7673 1-800-356-9391

247
VITA

MARY LISA EARP
SALEM, VA

EDUCATION


1986-1987  Radford University, Radford, VA. Courses towards mathematics endorsement and preschool-grade 3 endorsement

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Higher Education:

Graduate Assistant (supervised elementary education students in field-based student teaching program). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1992-1994.

Adjunct Instructor (reading methods course). Roanoke College, 1993.

Graduate Assistant (supervised elementary education students in field-based student teaching program). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1983-1984.
Public Schools:


Chapter I Teacher, Roanoke County Schools, Salem, VA (1984-1987).

Classroom Teacher (taught 4th grade), Roanoke County Schools, Salem, VA (1980-1983).

ENDORSEMENTS

Reading Specialist
Preschool - Grade 4
Grade 4 - Grade 7
Mathematics
General Mathematics

AWARDS AND MEMBERSHIPS IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Roanoke Valley Reading Teacher of the Year, 1990
    Roanoke Valley Reading Association
Outstanding Educator, 1990
    Roanoke County Council PTA
Graduated With Honors: Radford University.
    Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
International Reading Association
Virginia State Reading Association
Roanoke Valley Reading Association
National Education Association
Virginia Education Association
Roanoke Valley Education Association
Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development
Phi Delta Kappa

249
PRESENTATIONS


Earp, L. (1994, February). *Reading and writing nonfiction.* Presented to elementary school teachers of Salem City Schools, Salem, VA.


Earp, L. (1992, February). *Whole language ideas for the classroom.* Presented to educators of Roanoke County Schools, Roanoke, VA.
Earp, L. (1991, December). *Whole language ideas for the classroom.* Presented to educators of Roanoke County Schools, Roanoke, VA.

Earp, L., & Bryant, S. (1990, March). *Setting the stage for school success.* Presented at the Virginia State Reading Conference, Richmond, VA.

**PUBLICATIONS**


Mary Lisa Earp