Narrative, meaning making and personal development: Teachers' storied experience in Montessori, Steiner and other primary classrooms

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following individuals for assisting in my thesis preparation by contributing their expertise and stories to the research supporting it:

Professor Ann Zubrick, supervisor and mentor, for being a true Renaissance scholar in applying the breadth and depth of her knowledge and experience in guiding me on my multi-disciplinary journey.

Montessori, Steiner, Government and Catholic school primary teachers Vicky Carlton, Shawn Dougherty, Nigel Ipp, Michele Iriks, Lynne Jones, Fran Poole, Ellen Zink, Bernadette Gaskin and the other interviewees who generously shared their time and teaching/learning narratives with me.

The students of the teacher interviewees who welcomed me into their classrooms to observe them and my own primary school and university students who shared their learning journeys with me.

Richard Ward and Caroline Pearce for their editing assistance.

Consulting teacher, Victoria Biggs of Perth Ladies’ College for sharing her integrated curriculum experiences as well as providing insight on the use of narrative to foster spiritual awareness, Barbara Bosich of Christ Church Grammar School and Curtin U. and Jan Phillips of Penrhos College for sharing their Reggio Emilia experiences and ideas for ‘best practice’ in early childhood education, and Elizabeth Peel of Mary MacKillop Primary School for clarifying the application of the religious education curriculum to children’s personal narrative.

Professor Don Watts (Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies) and Professor Tony Ryan (Dean of Education) at The University of Notre Dame Australia for their guidance and supervision.

Dr. John Carrigg, Head of School of Humanities at The University of Notre Dame Australia, for his insight into transformative learning, Dr. Grace Tarpey, formerly of The University of Notre Dame, for her assistance in exploring philosophical questions relating to narrative, and architect, Joy Cuming, for sharing her experience in merging metaphor and logical thinking.

Dr. John Carrigg and Dr. Roger Vallance of The University of Notre Dame Australia for their assistance using QSR NUD*IST software.

Ministers, Geoff Blyth and Kevin Dilks, of the Perth Wesley Church and theologian, Sue Goodwin, for sharing insights into bibliocounseling, narrative therapy and reflection and meditation.

Crystal Dahlmeier, Associate Executive Director of Children, Inc. of Covington, Kentucky, Lesley Payne and Dr. Jan Currie of Murdoch U., Susan Takao and Jody Fitzhardinge of Curtin U., Jennifer Nevard and Clyde Cuming of TAFE, Carmel Bochenek of Notre Dame and Dr. Jane Figgis of AAAJ Consulting Group for providing support through professional dialogue and the sharing of resources.
Abstract

This study explored how narrative was being used to foster meaning-making in Montessori, Steiner, Government and Catholic schools. In-depth interviews of twelve teachers from the four educational settings were used to collect teachers’ stories that comprised the data on narrative use. NUD*IST software was employed to organise data and to focus on emerging concepts through data analysis. A wide spectrum of narrative uses related to meaning making was revealed. These varied understandings support using narrative to foster insight on three levels relating to several theoretical views of narrative and its importance.

Firstly, narrative was recognised by the interviewees as a powerful linguistic structure essential for decoding and encoding oral and literary communications. The importance of oracy was highlighted by several interviewees, and most effectively demonstrated in the Steiner classrooms. From the teachers’ storied data, it became apparent that an integrated or balanced language approach evolving from whole language strategies is widely valued in the Government and Catholic schools to foster the development of literary skills. Montessorians varied in how they have adopted this balanced language approach.

In a second pattern, teachers indicated ways that narrative is used in their schools to deepen children’s understanding of their personal journey in the context of their community and culture. Means of making children aware of the human journey
include exposure to life rhythms, festivals, rituals, and the stories of their communities representing various cultures and generations. Multiple approaches used to nurture an authentic voice in the classroom include collaborative literary explorations, sharing sessions, multi-level questioning, and biographical and autobiographical studies.

On a third level, some interviewees revealed that they used narrative to foster transformation by motivating students through experiences of wonder, encouraging reflection and journalling, and introducing virtue and value education through literary and personal narrative. Montessori, Steiner and some contemporary pedagogies support the view that a strong cultural identity and exposure to archetypes and universal themes contributes to spiritual transformation by celebrating an individual’s uniqueness as well as his/her role in an interdependent universe. There is evidence that ‘big stories’, ‘themes’ or questions presented in narrative form contribute to integrating the disciplines of a curriculum and thus make it more meaningful.
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My quest began one unseasonably rainy day in April, 1989. I was then a mature age student at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, enrolled in a Reading focus module in *English and the Primary Curriculum* taught by lecturers Jo-Anne Reid and Bill Green. It was a pleasant surprise that day to come in out of the dripping weather and note that students were sitting around small tables introducing themselves. I remember thinking what a refreshing change this was from the lecture/tutorial format as I found an empty seat and learned the names of a few people previously known only by sight. By the end of a day of interaction and dialogue we had all learned the value of collaborative learning and formed some friendships as well.

The first activity was to read poems silently, then select one in our group which we later performed. At each step of the lesson we reflected on our learning in our ‘log books’. For me this was the first time that I had used journalling to reflect on my own learning – seizing critical moments to connect my thoughts and experiences. These entries constituted the first chapter of a process that has now extended for twelve years.

For the next activity we were given the title of an adult story, *Aunt Jane*. From the title alone we wrote down our predictions as to the characters, settings and events and then shared our ideas with our group partners. Then we revised our predictions after reading the first few paragraphs and shared an outline of what we thought the plot of the story would be. By now I was totally engaged in the narrative process. I had become part of the story and I felt ownership. I was also fairly accurate in my
prediction of the time and the setting although I never suspected Aunt Jane would have a hidden life!

We next applied these skills to a novel for young people entitled Pinballs by Betsy Byars (1977). I became instantly involved in predicting the conflict and resolution that would surround the three foster children in the story. By the time we got to explore the structure and grammar of the text I was convinced that I was experiencing something that would change my teaching forever. Even identifying parts of speech was interesting against the backdrop of the Pinballs’ plot.

Affirming the temporal power of narrative, I began to revisit past events in my life seeing them from a new perspective in light of this meaningful experience of becoming totally engaged in learning. I recalled how the first time I enjoyed going to school was when I moved to a new town in Grade 2 and Miss Borden greeted me at the door. I now realised that I had such fond memories for this class because Miss Borden was all about story! She was interested in my personal narrative and that of every child in the class. We each felt that we were adding to her day by even appearing in the classroom. She also read stories to us daily – adventure stories, bible stories, fairy tales and varied our reading books whenever possible. This year was such a contrast to other boring primary school years characterised by ‘round-robin’ reading and basal readers\(^1\). I realised decades later that my engagement and

\(^1\) Round Robin reading – refers to taking turns to read the text aloud. Basal reader refers to readers artificially structured to introduce vocabulary in order of level of difficulty of the word structures.
motivation was maintained because Miss Borden used real and meaningful narratives in her teaching.

My other positive memory from primary school was studying ancient civilisations in Miss Oser’s sixth grade class. I became interested in the history of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans as well as their mythologies. I have not forgotten the skills she taught us including taking notes, making outlines and writing reports – possibly because the historical and mythological narrative context of these skills was so engaging. Again, this was a great contrast to the next two years of diagramming random sentences and plodding page by page through the grey grammar book.

So, almost three decades later, I gained insight into the significance of these random childhood experiences in contributing to my teaching narrative. As an adult in a teacher training class, I experienced first-hand the power of using narrative to provide the structure for an integrated or balanced study of language\(^2\) incorporating the skills of encoding and decoding language.

The next significant event in my adult learning journey occurred in July, 1990, when during the school holiday break from teaching my 6-9 year old class, I attended a

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\(^2\) Integrated or balanced approach to language teaching implies teaching decoding (reading and listening) and encoding (speaking and writing) as well as the corresponding phonetic, grammar and comprehension skills in a meaningful text or theme context.
workshop where I heard visiting California-based Montessorian, Ursula Thrush, relate *The Story of the Development of Life.*

I was moved backwards 345,000,000 years to the Paleozoic Era when life was all in the sea and trilobites were the protagonists until they were superceded by the crinoids. The drama became more complex as land emerged from the waters and amphibians and then reptiles evolved. The Mesozoic era was the time of the dinosaurs and huge insects. It was also distinguished by many large plants and the origins of coral reefs. I was astounded to learn that our finite coal and oil resources date back to this time – animal and plant matter pushed underground and under pressure by the evolving geology of the planet. Then 65,000,000 years ago the Cenozoic era began dominated by mammals – haired creatures who usually give birth to live young and then cared for them and modern flowering plants emerged that were interdependent with insects and birds. Human mammals’ arrival is noted by calling the era Neozoic. In listening to this story, one is struck by how short a time humans have populated earth considering the history of the planet. Relating the advent of humans to the preceding narrative, I gained a perspective for the complexity of

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3 *The Story of the Development of Life* is also referred to as *The Timeline of Life.*

This is one of the five great Montessori stories. The others are *The Story of the Creation of the Universe, The Story of the Coming of Human Beings, The Story of Mathematics and The Story of Language.*

4 Trilobite – an ancient marine arthropod with a 3 lobed furrowed body. The trilobites ingested calcium from the sea. This job was taken over later in the era by the crinoids. Also known as sealillies, these are echinoderms resembling plants with feathery arms.
our species. Here is the most advanced creature physically, cognitively and spiritually and yet the most dependent on other creatures and with young who require care for the longest period of time.

Never before had I felt so energised by a narrative or motivated towards productivity. Along with my fellow teachers, I explored zoology, botany, geography and history as a result of this cultural encounter with an eminent Montessorian sharing a megastory with us. This was my introduction to the Cosmic curriculum\(^5\) – an integrated curriculum that starts with a narrative so powerful that it potentially motivates study in a range of other subjects.

Another experience influential in my adult learning journey occurred during 1994-1995 when I travelled to the USA to pursue a Master’s Degree while working as a Montessori teacher. During this time, I had the opportunity to visit many American classrooms. At that point I became aware that the way ‘whole language’\(^6\) was being

\(^5\) Cosmic curriculum – paradigm for guiding the whole child as he/she explores the whole universe and the purpose of all things with the cosmos ultimately gaining a realisation of the importance of his/her own being in the vast plan. Cosmic curriculum designed by Montessori is an integrated curriculum she proposed for primary school with the great stories at the center motivating study in varied disciplines. This has also been referred to as a ‘fusion’ curriculum (Kahn, 1995a, 1995b).

\(^6\) Whole language – The term ‘whole language’ is used to denote meaningful language learning in a whole context. In America it is often equated with its original premise that given an interesting, engaging text, children will learn the skills of decoding and encoding, as they require them to make meaning without having to be taught them explicitly in a carefully sequenced order. Awareness that
realised as an ‘integrated’\textsuperscript{7} language approach in Australia was quite innovative; this is intriguing when one considers that in the 70’s and 80’s whole language practitioners in Australia were greatly influenced by American educators advocating process and genre writing and the reading or real and meaningful texts in lieu of basal readers. Indeed, at the American university where I was studying, a language textbook supplementing the Montessori curriculum for trainee teachers was written by an American who came to Australia for training (Routman, 1991).

Observations that I made over a period of more than a decade in the USA and Australia revealed that, despite the high degree of similarity in Montessori schools worldwide, the approach to language teaching varied enormously. Some schools embraced whole language – an integrated approach offering opportunity for a wide choice of contemporary literature-based activities incorporating big books, Great Books\textsuperscript{8} and stories from many cultures. In other schools, the language curriculum was defined with reference to specific traditional Montessori didactic materials to

\textsuperscript{7} In Australia, ‘whole language’ does not have the negative connotation that it has in North America as it has evolved into an integrated or balanced approach to language teaching. Meaningful engaging texts are used, but they are broken down into parts to ensure that skills are taught and grammar and spelling rules discovered with guidance.

\textsuperscript{8} Great Books refers to classics republished as sets for use in schools.
foster an understanding of grammar including function games, grammar boxes and sentence analysis materials as well as specific activities to reinforce the reading of sentences from simple to complex. In some classrooms literary explorations were minimal and classified nomenclature for the cultural areas provided a main source for reading practice and interpretation. In many classes there was little integration between the traditional Montessori grammar activities and literature. In other words, the sentences students were analysing or constructing were not related to what they were reading. I began to wonder if these variations indicated that Montessori teachers believed the language programme should be reconstructed, but were not sure how to do this most effectively.

These varied language profiles contrasted greatly with the consistency in the Montessori classrooms I visited where a cultural theme was a catalyst for most of the

9 Function Game – Game to introduce or reinforce the concept of the use of a part of speech designed to be a key experience that incites the imagination often using objects and miniature environments or situational drama.

10 Grammar Boxes – Grammar Boxes are viewed as an activity designed to reinforce the parts of speech and to provide a visual presentation of the structure of sentences (Payne, 1997). Corresponding Command Boxes reinforce the classification of the grammar boxes with drama and movement.

11 Sentence Analysis Materials – Sentence analysis materials include activities for reading analysis when arrows with questions and symbolic disks are used to divide the whole of the sentence into its parts according to the questions these parts answer. Sentence analysis also incorporates sentence construction in which the student uses the questions highlighted by the materials to construct a sentence and logical analysis in which the student analyses the parts of the sentence.

12 Classified nomenclature – refers to three part definition cards (picture, label, and definition) for terms used in cultural subjects (history, geography, and biology).
classroom subjects. In some classrooms historical narrative formed the basis for integrated study; the wonderful universal narratives, the five great stories\textsuperscript{ii}, launched both children and teachers into many exciting interdisciplinary explorations similar to those I first experienced in Ursula Thrush’s 1990 workshop. Personally, as a teacher, I experienced great motivation and enthusiasm each time I told one of these great stories in my classroom and guided children in exploring interesting pathways that emerged from the stories. I felt fortunate to be able to share their excitement in discovering the links between disciplines and understood why Montessori referred to this as a “Cosmic Plan” \textsuperscript{iv} (Montessori, 1948/1989). Other Montessori classrooms based their integrated studies on geography – selecting a continent, country or biome\textsuperscript{13} as an investigative base. As children in these classrooms explored the fundamental needs of humans in varying geographic settings, they were often guided into exploring not only geography and history, but also biology, literature, religion, music and art.

In contrast, in the Australian mainstream schools that I visited, the efforts towards integrated learning were primarily in the literature-based or thematic-based language programmes rather than in the social studies area. I witnessed an exciting myriad of activities suitable to the development of the children and catering for listening, speaking, reading and writing. In response to demands for more structural support in

\textsuperscript{13} Biome – A biome in an interdependent community of plants and animals with the composition of the land area affected by climatic conditions (e.g. a savannah biome, a tropical rainforest biome, etc.)
whole language *First Steps* had been introduced and broadly implemented in Western Australia. Using this programme framework, teachers plotted a child’s level of literacy on a developmental continuum and then had guidelines for strategies utilising rich text activities to cater for varied rates of learning in whole class or small group contexts. As a result of this programme, more teachers were demonstrating an ability to cater for individual rates of learning and to offer small group activities at varied levels of difficulty. Previously, I had not seen this type of teaching except in alternative, child-centered schools such as Montessori. At the same time, that wonderful experience of engagement that I had first experienced at Murdoch in 1989 was maintained and fostered with creative activities including, for example, reader’s theatre, changing one genre to another (e.g. turning a story into a poem or a news article), asking questions at varied levels to foster more in-depth thinking, and creating story maps and plot profiles.

In talking to other teachers trained in the 80’s and 90’s and from observing trainee teachers in the 90’s, I learned that my impression of the power of whole-integrated language is not an isolated one. Teachers and students are excited about language learning in ways that those of us schooled in the 50’s and 60’s would never have dreamed possible. Nevertheless, I retained a concern from my otherwise inspiring visits to whole language classrooms that, despite the wonderful integration of the language modalities, there still seemed to be fragmentation in the overall curriculum. The language programme either did not relate to other subjects or a thematic approach

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*First Steps* – an integrated and developmental approach to teaching language in primary school developed by The Ministry of Education, Western Australia, in 1992.
was being followed where teachers went to great effort to relate everything to the
story being studied to create “Circus Week” or “Pirate Week” or “Pet Week”. The
thematic curriculum provided many teacher-designed links that probably helped to
broaden the concepts for the children, but there was still fragmentation from theme to
theme and little evidence of themes being revisited at varied levels as children had
more experience to bring to the subject.

I began to wonder if whole language and Montessori teachers might benefit from an
exchange of ideas on the use of narrative in teaching. I wondered:

Is it possible for Montessori teachers to adopt contemporary whole language
curriculum suggestions without sacrificing some basic tenets of Montessori
such as child-centered learning, integrated subject explorations and choice in
learning activities?

Is it possible for mainstream whole-language teachers to achieve a wholly
integrated curriculum without fundamental changes in their school pedagogies
and to allow children more input and choice in their individual programmes?

Will current curriculum innovations allow the adoption of an integrating force
such as the universal themes portrayed in the Montessori Great Stories?
As I personally explored these questions, it occurred to me that narrative was the common denominator of my two methodology experiences. Whole language explorations are often in the motivating context of story or narrative. The Montessori cosmic curriculum is based on historical narrative. When I had the opportunity to attend a few Waldorf School open-days, I noted that their integrated curriculum is also based on narrative, but in this curriculum mythological narrative is the catalyst. I then realised that different types of narrative could be used to integrate a curriculum. As a result of this experience, the setting for my exploration was broadened as I became curious to know:

How are teachers of other pedagogies using narrative in their primary classrooms?

I was pondering how much each of these educational perspectives could learn from each other through adopting broader views of the use of narrative, when I received a catalyst in the form of an address at a Montessori national conference in Chicago in 1997 by Dr. Margaret Loeffler, Teacher Research Network founder and Montessori teacher educator. She urged Montessori educators to “join the mainstream,” “learn

15 Waldorf School: Steiner Schools are often referred to as Waldorf schools after the first one, which was opened in the Waldorf cigarette factory.

16 The Teachers Research Network was founded in the USA in 1985. Montessori teachers who enroll meet regionally to study research methodology and then to provide support for each other as they conduct action based research in their classrooms.
what others have to offer” and to add “our own ideas.” She asserted that as we reach out, “we must develop a new attitude among ourselves that says it’s all right to reexamine Montessori’s ideas in light of new things that are learned” (Loeffler, 1998).

I was further influenced at the conference by Montessori Principal and teacher, Dr. Judith Scott (1997) who in her address on Evolution as Philosophy noted that “All the greatest teachers were storytellers. Story unites all subjects and gives meaning to life.” These educators inspired me to delve more deeply into the use of narrative in education and to use my experiences both as a whole language, government-trained teacher and as a Montessori-trained teacher to launch an exploration of how a varied use of narrative impacts our classrooms and children’s learning.

Thus, by 1998 when I began my Ph.D. study, a decade had elapsed since I first began to marvel at the power of narrative in teaching. During this decade, qualitative research tools and guidelines had evolved to a point where humanitarian concerns such as meaning making could be effectively explored. I began a qualitative quest hoping through my research to learn about the use of story through stories – the stories of teachers in both Montessori and non-Montessori schools. Specifically, I hoped to examine my own assumptions about the use of narrative based on my own classroom observations and experiences and to be able to competently theorise about the use of narrative as a teaching tool by finding answers to the following:

What is the place of narrative in contemporary classroom teaching and learning?
How do underlying philosophical traditions and beliefs influence the uses of narrative in different schools in Montessori, Steiner, Catholic and Government school settings?

How is narrative used to support learning across the curriculum and in personal development in each educational setting?

How do teachers describe and interpret effects on their own and children’s learning?

These questions emerged from the reconstructing of my own teaching narrative in terms of significant events such as the whole language reading class of 1989, the Ursula Thrush lecture of 1990, and the Loeffler lecture in 1997. As each of these experiences called my previous teaching pedagogy into question, I viewed previous events in my life such as second grade with Miss Borden in a new perspective. My vision of my future teaching was also altered. For me teaching would henceforth comprise more story telling and less knowledge imparting, more meaningful texts and less isolated skill study. I decided that before commencing my research of these questions, it was essential to explore the extraordinary powers of narrative that enable one to make connections that restructure the present as well as the past and future.
Having experienced the effectiveness of using narrative in different ways in my own classroom, my exploration began to focus on what constitutes narrative and what properties make it such a diverse and powerful meaning-making tool. Although my search began by viewing narrative as a powerful linguistic genre, my exploration soon ventured through philosophic portals to marvel at the power of the properties of narrative in shaping our perspective of our worldviews and ourselves. My search led me to resources revealing that prominent philosophers (MacIntyre, 1984; Gaardner, 1996), psychologists (Jung, 1968; Polkinghorne, 1988; Robinson and Hawpe, 1986; Sarbin, 1986), and educators (Bruner, 1988, 1990; Sutton-Smith, 1986; Egan, 1985, 1986, 1997) have each contributed support to the idea that for humans, narrative is the doorway to meaning.

Narrative can be defined by its structure and properties. Structurally, it is an account of events in either a linear, circular, or recapitulationist form. The properties that link narrative to so many disciplines and explain its universality include:

- dramatic engagement,
- temporality,
- conflict and resolution,
- characters and roles,
- voice,
audience perspective,
integrative force,
cultural mediator,
change in perspective – history and reconciliation and
life cycle reflection.

Narrative can also be described as fictional or non-fictional and may have elements of both. To demonstrate this diversity, a contemporary novel, Fortune’s *Rocks* (Shreve, 1999), and a historical narrative, *The History of the Olympics*, will be viewed below in terms of their narrative properties.

The Structure of Narrative

The inherent structure of narrative links this genre form to a specific type of thinking. In literary terms, “a narrative is a story, whether in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do” (Abrams, 1993, p. 123). In other words, narrative thinking gives an account of actions and events and, thereby, has a different communication purpose than the other discourse options of describing, explaining, instructing, and arguing (Knapp and Watkins, 1994, p.22). Although this definition of narrative thinking would include simple recounts without any prioritising of events, the term “narrative” usually implies a genre with some plot structure (Abrams, 1993, p. 124). Stories differ from recounts in that some details are sacrificed in constructing an intelligible order “all in the attempt to discover and reveal what happened in a way that is faithful to reality and at the same time illuminates it” (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986, p. 114).
Primary teachers, versed in teaching the narrative genre to their students, usually define narrative as an account having a beginning, a middle with a complication, a resolution and an ending. The First Steps Genre Guideline (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 18) gives the framework headings of Orientation, Initiating Event, Complication, Resolution, and Coda/Moral/Concluding Statement for narrative planning. In highlighting complications and resolutions, events are prioritised. This cognitive structuring implies that underlying thought processes are forming the link between the actual events and their communication. Egan, an educator, defines narrative “as a basic intellectual tool we use in making sense of the world and experience” (1985, p. 399).

Using the coding of language in its narrative form, we perform the cognitive operation of sequencing in the temporal order of beginning, middle and end to show connectiveness while at the same time prioritising significant events (Gergen and Gergen, 1986, p. 25). In Jerome Bruner’s words, “What gives the story its unity is the manner in which plight, characters and consciousness interact to yield a structure that has a start, a development and ‘a sense of ending’” (1988, p. 106).

Paradoxically, a striking property of narrative is that it can be viewed from both a linear and circular perspective. Narrative is partially defined by its linear properties linking past, present and future. However, it also has the power to philosophically link the ending to new beginnings mirroring not only a unique life, but also the relation of that life to previous and subsequent generations. “The pathway of this life leads into the pathway of the next” (Goble, 1993, p. 22). Acknowledging this
philosophic truth elevates the protagonist – real or imagined – into another plane of meaning, universal rather than individual.

In *Eating Fire and Drinking Water* (Chai, 1996), for example, there is a subnarrative in the book about a stone that passes from leader to leader empowering them for a time in a cyclical pattern that emphasises that aspects of history repeat themselves. Realising this, the protagonist, Luis Bayani says, “It [*the fight against injustice*] doesn’t end … We just see things in a linear fashion. Beginning, middle, and end. But in reality life isn’t linear. Look at our history. It’s filled with cycles” (p. 243).

Another contemporary novel, *Jewel* (Lott, 1991) traces the life of the protagonist in coping with the challenges provided by a large family including a handicapped daughter; we experience the power of the circular narrative through 80 year old Jewel’s realisation:

> And with those eyes on me, I finally knew the truth of why we were here in a house in Saugus: it wasn’t the end of my life we were preparing for, but the beginning of the next life for Brenda Kay. My lives, the long string of them that started with the death of my daddy and went on from there, right up to and including this moment, that long string of lives wasn’t over. My life would never be over, but would be carried on, I saw, in Wilman here at my side, and in James in Texas, in Burton in his big house in Palos Verdes, in Billie Jean in her mobile home in Buena Park, and in Annie in her house in Torrance, and in all the hordes of grandchildren and great-grandchildren to follow after me.  

(Lott, 1991, p. 352)
Circular tales also carry with them the idea of recapitulation. As we return and revisit aspects of cycles, we develop understandings on deeper and deeper levels.

“Repetitions build up energy patterns and strengthen already existing ones in us. Healthy patterns connect us with the flowing regularities out of which our whole earth, the solar system, and the worlds beyond are built and maintained. In a story, a circling journey through exactly the same territory enlivens our sense of place and time” (Mellon, 1992, p. 31).

For the teacher, a focus on circular tales can lead to a study of life cycles of all creatures as well as subgenre literary studies such as “Home is Best” where the protagonist ends where he began, but with an extraordinary depth of wisdom. In John Marsden’s *The Journey* (1988, p. 182) Argus exclaims, "All the time I had a garden at home, but I had to go away to understand it!" He is expressing the realisation that we gain perspective when travelling that enables us to appreciate home. The importance of recapitulation is evident in curriculum in child-centered, constructivist classrooms where children revisit “stories” at deeper and deeper levels as they become capable of more complex understandings.

It is very difficult to separate the genre of linear and circular narrative structures from life experience and from our cultural framework. As our basis of organisation, we use our social and cultural experiences that we recall in narrative form. Thus narrative bridges language and psychology as well as language and philosophy. “For human existence, linguistic forms are paramount, for they filter and organise information from the physical and cultural realms and transform it into the meanings that make up
human knowledge and experience” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 158). Each of the modes of narrative discourse which Polkinghorne (1988, p. 62) identifies as “historical, literature and myth” are “grounded in the actual generalised experiences of a people and are the results of cultural attempts to impose a satisfactory, graspable humanising shape on experience.” Moreover, this tool or “meta-code” is a “human universal” (White, 1987, p. 1). It is used by every culture – both oral and literate (Bruner, 1990) which suggests that it is an essential key to interpreting cultural experiences in a meaningful way no matter what those experiences and cultural parameters may be. Sarbin (1986), a narrative psychologist, noting the tendency of all peoples to use narrative to understand the world, hypothesises that although there is no physiological support for a premise that narrative is part of our nervous system, “it is endemic enough to the human condition to propose the narrative principle: that human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structure” (p. 8). MacIntryre (1984), a philosopher and theologian, believes that we make meaning of our world and purpose through story because man is “essentially a story telling animal” (p. 216). These powerful statements imply that narrative is a connecting force between the branches of the humanities and hence a central tool that humans employ in their quest for meaning – for making sense of their lives. What characteristics or properties of narrative make it such a universal meaning-making tool?

The Properties of Narrative
Dramatic Engagement

One aspect of the narrative is dramatic engagement which Gergen and Gergen (1986) describe as “the capacity to create feelings of drama or emotion” (p. 28). For a reader or listener to engage with a narrative, they must be interested. This interest, which establishes the give and take between storyteller and audience, must be established early on for the recipient to be affected by the story in some manner. Often, appealing to a human condition, feeling or quest with which the audience can identify creates this dramatic engagement. Take, for instance, the very popular Harry Potter books. Readers of all ages are engaged from the beginning pages of *Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 1997) by the genial character of a boy with mysterious gifts who lives a lonely and unappreciated existence with ordinary humans (referred to as Muggles), the Dursleys. Certainly, every human being feels or has felt undervalued and unappreciated – hence, immediate engagement in Harry’s tale.

Or, consider the following words of protagonist, Clara, from the opening pages of *Eating Fire and Drinking Water*:

How was I to know that this dead stranger would appear in my life again? That he had been there right from the beginning, holding the secret to who I was so that the very mysteries of my own life would find their answers at last. How was I to know that this fire in a street I had never been to would somehow eat away at my life’s invisible boundaries so that into it would come rushing names and faces which until then were unknown to me? (Chai, 1996, p. xiii)
We are immediately filled with curiosity to find out what mysterious secrets the protagonist will uncover. This curiosity may be linked to some semiconscious awareness that we too are on a quest to uncover the secrets of our being or we may relate to Clara’s revelation that a single event can change a life in extraordinary ways.

Clearly, an affective link has been forged and the listener is keen to hear the story unfold. As Egan (1986) observes:

…stories are largely about affective matters – they are about how people feel. These feelings can either provide the motives for actions or they can provide the point and result of actions….From this observation we can see the importance of human emotions and intentions in making things meaningful. To present knowledge cut off from human emotions and intentions is to reduce its affective meaning. This affective meaning, also, seems especially important in providing access to knowledge and engaging us in knowledge. (Egan, 1986, pp. 29-30)

It is clearly important for educators to use story to engage their students in a journey of exploration. Engagement, though, need not be at the beginning of a story. We can be effectively engaged in a story by being drawn into the middle and then by moving backwards and forwards until we have ordered
events in some way that makes sense of the cause and effect of actions and
feelings. *Snow Falling on Cedars* (Guterson, 1995), for example, starts with a
murder trial not comprehensible until we know the stories of the accused, the
victim, his wife and the journalist. Once we are committed to understanding
the story, we can use our imaginations to carry us backward and forwards until
we gain an understanding of the sequence of events and of the relationship that
is a metaphor for the blending of two cultures.

**Temporality**

There is no doubt that this property of moving from a beginning towards an ending
through a sequence of events is an essential ingredient in the meaning-making power
of narrative. This movement through time of the narrative structure is a metaphor for
human life itself. Knowledge of our own life narrative can thus help us to understand
stories we read or are told. Stories we hear or read can help us to interpret our own
lives. There is a ready passage from narrative form to life experience.

Without a visualisation of an ending, there is no cognition of the thread that ties
events together as the character, Grace Marks, suggests in *Alias Grace*:

> It is morning, and time to get up; and today I must go on with the story. Or
> the story must go on with me, carrying me inside it, along the track it must
travel, straight to the end, weeping like a train and deaf and single-eyed and
locked tight shut; although I hurl myself against the walls of it and scream and
cry, and beg to God himself to let me out.
When you are in the middle of a story it isn’t a story at all, but only a confusion, a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It’s only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else. (Atwood, 1996, pp. 345-346):

It is the idea of an ending that creates the motivational aspect of narrative. We want to discover why the characters (real or imagined, others or ourselves) are moving towards that conclusion. Motivation both links events to a closure and the participant to a moral judgment. “The closure of the story or ‘how the story ends’ (e.g. as a tragedy, a comedy of errors, a victory, or a defeat) is the passage of moral judgment on the agents of ‘eventhood’ within the narrative and thus provides a framework for meaning production that would not otherwise be possible given a series of disconnected events” (Sandlos, 1998, p. 2). Narrative thus works towards unity and integration of thought and one could hypothesize that the use of narrative in a classroom would work towards unity of concepts and subjects.

The sequenced aspect of temporality makes the narrative an excellent memory-enhancing tool perhaps evidenced by the popularity of historical novels. Stories in a context of meaning are far more memorable than lists of dates (Bruner, 1990). I recall a teacher’s workshop with Glenn Capelli (1996) in which he effectively demonstrated that even random words could be remembered if woven together into a story, especially one of the individual’s own making. After experiencing this workshop, I was confirmed in my belief that children should never be taught isolated dates and
facts or lists of words without a meaningful context. Although I find much support
for this view in narratology today, the seeds for my viewpoint were planted by quite
an innovative teacher in the 1960’s who chose to teach the history of industrial
America including an exploration of entrepreneurs, labour laws, government
lobbying, and even anti-monopoly legislation through studying the story of the
Standard Oil Company. The story of one company became the window to explore a
century of American history. Thus narrative enhances memory not only by providing
a context for linking events, but also by providing a metaphorical framework for
similar stories. My memory of the Standard Oil Company story has given me a
framework for understanding the current Microsoft court battle today.

Conflict and Resolution

Narratives usually have a central conflict or complication and resolution and may
have many small conflicting situations as well. In literary narratives such as
*Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1952), for example, the central problem is that some way
must be found to keep Wilbur, the pig, from being eaten. Other challenges and
conflicts include making friends, changing one’s image, and dealing with death. In
*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 1997), the stone must be located
and trials (not unlike those of Hercules) overcome to keep the treacherous wizard,
Voldemort, from regaining his evil power. However, other conflicts concern dealing
with Muggle relatives, preparing for and adjusting to a new school, making friends,
coping with bullying, and learning about one’s past. Historical narratives follow the
same pattern and thus we might explore the stories of people who face freedom vs.
servitude as a conflict or perhaps nomadic vs. settler life styles (Egan, 1986). One
year, my 9-12 year old class assumed roles as either Aboriginal inhabitants of
Australia or as early settlers. The drama was a court case with a settler accusing an Aboriginal of stealing food from his property. Dramatised in this way, the complexity of conflict and resolution became readily apparent as arguments ensued over such related issues as the private ownership views of the settlers vs. the view of the Aboriginals that they coexisted with the land that could not be “owned”.

Educator Kieran Egan (1985, 1986, 1988) advocated that we view narrative as a tool to construct meaning and implied that it is the adherence of the classroom programme to the conflict and resolution aspect of narrative that provides potential for a meaningful and integrated curriculum. He suggests that there should be an engaging beginning that highlights the conflict to be explored through aspects of the curriculum before arriving at some resolution. The conflict might be good vs. evil or perhaps freedom vs. servitude – something with an emotional, humanistic factor. Explorations to resolve the conflict would require a variety of cognitive skills in potentially all disciplines. Narrative plots offer models often paralleling human conflicts and dilemmas and suggesting possible solutions. The implication is that students who study narrative may amass a repertoire of problem-solving strategies.

Characters and Roles

MacIntyre (1984) compares our life scripts to narratives in that we have certain roles to play and we learn the intricacies of our roles from our culture’s stories. “We enter human society…with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed.” He further cautions that “Deprive children of stories and you leave them anxious
stutterers in their actions as well as in their words” (p. 216). Again, we have the notion that stories are linked equally to words and actions and the implication that society will be fragmented without the cohesion of meaning provided through using narrative in teaching our children. Through modelling, narrative helps to define which characters are permitted on the cultural stage. This fosters a realisation of both expectations and limits simultaneously nurturing a tolerance for a tremendous variety of characters. Narrative plots are also models in that they parallel human conflicts and dilemmas and may suggest possible solutions. In I am David (Holm, 1965), for example, David, separated from his family in war, is freed from a camp and goes on a journey to find his family. On the way he must learn skills of survival and autonomy, but he must also relearn trust. As David deals with the conflict of dependence vs. autonomy, survival vs. perishing and trust vs. distrust, he is a model for any youth on life’s journey who must face some or all of these challenges.

David remembered all the pain and bitterness he had ever known – and how much he could remember in such a short time! He recalled, too, all the good things he had learned about since he had gained his freedom – beauty, laughter, music and kind people, Maria, and a tree smothered in pink blossom, a dog to walk by his side, and a place to aim for… (Holm, 1965, p. 184)

Voice

Persuading someone to adopt our viewpoint means making our story real to them so they adopt it as their own. Connor (1999) emphasises that “one of the most difficult,
but most crucial historiographical lessons to learn, is that there is ‘no such thing as
history, only histories’ – it all depends who is telling the story. Understanding that
the storyteller – wittingly or unwittingly – selects, highlights, obscures, evades and
manipulates ‘the facts’, is also one of the tenets underpinning critical literacy and
informed social action” (p. 4).

Historical novelists intentionally weave fiction with nonfiction to engage the
imagination of the reader and to evoke the details of events that would be lost or
meaningless without a story to tie the events together. In a memorable historical
novel, Haley (1976) reconstructed history in presenting the story of Roots tracing his
family history from the birth of his ancestor Kunte Kinte in Africa in 1750 through
generations of slavery in America to a contemporary family setting of scholars and
professionals. He used fiction to fill in the gaps in the facts to create his narrative.
The fictional aspects of his account make it truer because it lends relevance and
credibility to the reader. Another example is Atwood’s Alias Grace (1996) in which
she fills in a scant outline provided by publicity on the mid nineteenth century murder
trial of Grace Marks and some prison records. This is a work of fiction but so
carefully researched as to portray quite an accurate picture of life in Canada at this
time. An important property of narrative highlighted by the power of such historical
novels is that sometimes more truth can come out of fact and fiction being merged
than in non-fiction.

There is support in this premise for teachers to encourage the links between literature
and cultural studies as they use story to foster the development of critical literacy
skills as well as an understanding of historical events. Furthermore, not only in
listening, but by being granted the opportunity to tell their own stories based on their own histories or in which they assume the voice of a selected character or historical person, children are given a forum for developing cognitive skills.

Throughout the construction process, judgments and references are required at two levels: about discrete items of information and about the adequacy of the unfolding story. Selecting, comparing, inferring, arranging and revising are activities, which we regard as cognitive strategies (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986, p. 116).

This all happens in a humanistic context when facts are merged with feelings. “One’s emotions, imagination and intellect mutually support and enrich one another. Our positive feelings give us the strength to develop our rationality” (Bettleheim, 1997, p. 4).

**Audience Perspective**

Since each teller will create a story based on the same events in a unique way, and each listener will hear the story differently depending on what experiences and feelings they bring to bear, how can we judge the truth in a narrative? Is the story that is believed by a society or by a court representing a society necessarily the one that is
the truest, or is truth always relative? I recall the film *Amistad* 17 (motion picture, 1997) in which John Quincy Adams challenges the young lawyer defending the mutinous slaves with the question, “What is their story?” In fact, the lawyer doesn’t know and Adams advises, “It is the one who tells the best story who wins the case.” The young lawyer then perseveres to learn “their story” and is ultimately successful in his defence. There is an implication here that the most persuasive story is the one most able to incorporate the known facts in weaving a credible tale.

A jury – perhaps more aptly referred to as “the audience” – is always present when we tell our story. This audience might be our own consciousness reflecting and making sense of our actions as we relive them and put them in context, or it might be a parent, a colleague, a friend, a stranger or a group of any of these. If we are telling our stories orally, then the characteristics of the audience might modify our telling. “The story is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener” (Reissman, 1993, p. 11). If the story is written in the form of a personal letter, then the writer probably anticipates the receiver’s response to his/her statements. If the story is written for a public reading, then the audience is imagined and more generalised. In all cases, narrative provides a venue for dramatic engagement from the audience perspective because each and every person will find elements in the story with which he or she can identify.

17 *Amistad* – the story of a slave ship mutiny in 1839 and the subsequent trial of the recaptured slaves in 1841.
Integrative Force

Narrative, not only naturally merges fiction and non-fiction, real and imagined accounts, but it is a naturally integrating force for disciplines. Polkinghorne (1988), a narrative psychologist, delineates the idea that narrative is our tool for constructing the meaning of the world by explaining that “the narrative scheme serves as a lens through which the apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence are seen as parts of a whole” (p. 36). Story is thus a natural integrating force for the classroom. Students are engaged and motivated by story as it lays the groundwork for investigations in language, cultural studies or mathematics. Ideas and facts are integrated, connected to classroom events, and interpreted by story. "Through story, then, teachers transform knowledge of content into a form that plays itself out in the time and space of classrooms" (Carter, 1993,p. 173).

Cultural Mediator

Bruner indicates that one of the properties of narrative is its ability to “forge links between the exceptional and the ordinary” (1990, p. 47). The stories of a culture perpetuate its mores and traditions, but the conflict and resolution structure of a narrative allow for negotiated meaning when there is a conflict, when intent must be considered. Narrative “mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires and hopes” (1990, p. 52). So one of the properties of narrative is a tool for moral decision-making. Narrative engages us to stay with the story until we find a suitable ending to support our cultural values, experiences and feelings, even if the ending might be contrary to traditions and habits. The decision making involves prioritising some values over others to make the preferred ending suit the selected chain of events.
A timely example in Western Australia is the forestry clearing issue. People inhabit or tie themselves to ancient trees to save them. On the one hand, we hear about interdependent life in the forest including narratives of people, animals and the trees themselves, while, on the other hand, the forestry workers relate how they will lose their livelihood if forest clearing is suspended. Each view has strong support with selected past and present events that contribute to a future proposed resolution. Narrative form is used to make people envision an outcome and actual stories are used to engage support. In using narrative to educate children, we give them a cognitive tool with moral and ethical implications through which to identify the nature of conflict, to prioritise values, to predict possible outcomes, and to support a feasible resolution.

Change in Perspective – History and Reconciliation

Sometimes, instead of guiding people forward to imagine different endings, we change views by going backwards and, in effect, change the beginning or create a different beginning by revealing new facts, variables or perspectives. This shows the conflict in a new light and alters the resolution. Presently, in Australia, the history of the Aboriginal relationships with European settlers is being rewritten. Several writers, among them Henry Reynolds, the Queensland historian, have condemned *The Great Silence*.

The more I read, the clearer it became that between 1900 and the 1960’s the Aborigines were virtually written out of Australian history. ‘The Great
Australian Silence’ settled over the new nation soon after Federation and was unbroken for over half a century” (Reynolds, 1999, p. 94).

Reynolds breaks the silence, relating in first person how he became aware of injustices levied on fellow Australians. He listened to oral histories, read colonial journals, correspondence and records. It is difficult for the reader’s views not to alter as one journeys back in history identifying with Henry Reynolds’ first person story.

Reading Why Weren’t We Told? provides a good example of how we use narrative to explain our viewpoint. Historians portrayed a picture of white settlement with little violence. The truth has now been revealed and Reynolds reports that records indicate that, in Australia, while 2500 settlers were killed by Aborigines, over 20,000 Aborigines were “killed as a direct result of conflict with the settlers” (1999, p. 113). With these new facts, history books no longer bear the semblance of truth and need to be updated to be credible to readers and listeners.

In the case of indigenous peoples, reconciliation is about the reweaving of stories to acknowledge the factual basis. The Aboriginal people of Australia “want to have the truth told about numerous things – about the taking of the children, about the exploitation of labour, the systematic abuse of women. But above all is the matter of violence, the long history of frontier conflict. They want white Australia to own, to accept, and to identify with a past that they know only too well. Reconciliation means the reconciling of the two stories about what happened when pioneer settlers met indigenous people all around a vast moving, ragged frontier” (Reynolds, 1999, p. 126).
Reynolds uses the phrase ‘reconciliation of story’. He is acknowledging the powerful attribute of narrative as a tool of negotiation.

He also mentions “the two stories”. Having unearthed the evidence of extraordinary violence towards the Aboriginal people, he needed to answer the question, “Why?” So he continues to investigate to find that the early settlers acted out of a real and desperate fear. The burning of homes, the driving away of cattle and the deaths that occurred in these silent night-time raids threatened the economic viability of many of the settlements (1999, pp. 140-142).

Having read so many accounts of anxiety and anguish, I came both to understand and sympathise with the plight of beleaguered pioneers, their own often violent response to the stress of the frontier notwithstanding. Fear rendered their violence much more explicable and their hatred more understandable. It made the pioneer far less heroic but much more human. In a sense, the image of the heroic frontiersman depended on the existence of the inoffensive Aborigines (Reynolds 1999, p. 142-143).

A parallel denial of history occurred in the USA regarding the Native Americans. Growing up in America, the only image I had of these indigenous people was the “Indians” from Cowboy and Indian pictures where they were portrayed as savages to the civilised cowboys, evil to the good. I recall as an older primary school child that Alvin Josephy, Jr. came to speak to my school with stories and pictures to be used in a book he was publishing, The Patriot Chiefs (1961), on Native Americans. This was my first inkling that “westerns” were pure fabrication. The American Indians were
not “the bad guys” – although they occasionally committed evil acts, they also committed heroic acts. The cowboys were not “the good guys” – although from time to time they were heroic, they also committed many unwarranted violent acts. Rewriting stories that are viewed as ‘history’ takes a long time. It means uncovering details and revisiting stories until we can experience them as truthful representation of what occurred. Prior to my move from the USA to Australia in 1975, cowboy pictures were in the fantasy basket where they belonged, as too many facts had surfaced to allow them to represent history. There was an interest and awareness of the way Indians were being treated on reservations and I participated in concerned discussions with anthropologists and sociologists. Dee Brown’s book published in 1970, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* may have revealed America’s silent history in a similar way to Reynolds’ disclosure of the hidden Australian story. Brown unearthed the facts from oral histories and official records that would enable the American Indians’ story to be told and, in effect, the story was rewritten by delving into the past.

This is not a cheerful book, but history has a way of intruding upon the present, and perhaps those who read it will have a clearer understanding of what the American Indian is, by knowing what he was. They may be surprised to hear words of gentle reasonableness coming from the mouths of Indians stereotyped in the American myth as ruthless savages. They may learn something about their own relationship to the earth from a people who were true conservationists. The Indians knew that life was equated with the earth and its resources, that America was a paradise, and they could not comprehend
why the intruders from the East were determined to destroy all that was Indian
as well as America itself. ” (D.Brown, 1970 p. xvi-xvii)

Nevertheless, there was still little mention of the Native Americans in school
curriculums; their story remained a silent history. I don’t know when the change
occurred but I do know that when I went back with my family for a year in 1994, a
study of Native American culture was an integral part of the primary school
curriculum. History had been rewritten in accordance with fact and, in so doing, the
beauty of the Native American culture was allowed to be shared. As with indigenous
people in Australia, the price of denying their stories was to deprive students of
exposure to a rich culture. American children now study the indigenous stories, crafts
and philosophy of Native Americans. Similarly, Aboriginal mythology, philosophy,
art and bush craft now inspire Australian children. Children can now learn from the
narratives of these oral cultures precisely because the details of their historical
narratives have been revealed.

Although Henry Reynolds contributed significantly to my education about the
Aboriginal people, it began with reading novels about the “stolen generation”, such as
Glenyse Ward’s *Wandering Girl* (1987) and Alice Nannup’s *When the Pelican
Laughed* (1992). In both autobiographies, these courageous women describe being
kidnapped from their families by the government because they were partially white,
being brought up in orphanages and trained to serve Caucasian families. Sally
Dingo’s (1997) book, entitled *Dingo*, also uses first person to share her journey of
learning about Aborigines. In her case, she tells her own story from a Caucasian
viewpoint about getting to know the Aboriginal family into which she married. It is a
gripping tale because we are on the journey with her. It is a powerful story, because
the tale of this family is the tale of many families striving to maintain a purpose, a
dignity and a rich culture in the face of prejudice, antagonism, and limited
opportunities. In all three books narrative bridges the individual message with
historical, communal meaning.

Life Cycle Reflection

MacIntyre suggests that narrative is our pathway to meaning, because our lives are a
narrative. “And to someone who says that in life there are no endings, or that final
partings take place only in stories, one is tempted to reply, ‘But have you never heard
of death?’ ” (1984, p. 212) The power of narrative is that it mirrors our own life space.
This effect is heightened by the overlap of life narratives; the interplay of generations
that gives us clues to interpreting our own life events.

When we enter human life, it is as if we walk on stage into

a play whose enactment is already in process – a play whose
somewhat open plot determines what parts we may play and
toward what denouements we may be heading. Others on stage
already have a sense of what the play is about, enough of a sense to
make negotiation with a newcomer possible (Bruner, 1990, p. 34).

When one begins to view one’s own life as a personal narrative, one can harness its
properties to deepen understanding of our own life journey and to effect change. We
can suppose varied endings to our circumstances and brainstorm a variety of solutions
to our conflicts.
Gergen and Gergen (1986, p. 27) note that narrative becomes a powerful psychotherapy tool when patients feel empowered to identify their conflict and look toward possible positive resolutions. They identify three potential paths and note that most lives are a combination of the three:

1. Progressive — The progression toward the goal is enhanced such as in overcoming shyness;
2. Depressive — the progression toward the goal is impeded (can’t control life); and
3. Stable — no change occurs.

As in the narratives of our lives, classic literary forms are also combinations so that tragedy is a progressive/depressive, comedy is a depressive/progressive and romance is a series of depressive/progressive steps. Changing the ending of our subnarrative demands that we accept that events are connected and move over time (Gergen and Gergen, 1986, p. 25), and that there are times of choice when we can alter the probable ending of our stories by imagining what that might be.

The Italian film, *Life is Beautiful* (1999), is a wonderful example of a character turning a tragedy with a depressive form, into a progressive one. Basically it is the story of a young man who always writes his own story according to a positive script

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\(^{18}\) depressive – The term ‘depressive’ has been used in lieu of the term ‘regressive’ used by Gergen and Gergen as regressive might infer moving backwards or being reduced to simpler forms, whereas the meaning was meant to imply a tragic-like or depressive nature.
no matter what besets him. This practice enables him to entwine his 4-year-old son in a hopeful story that ensures the child’s survival in the midst of the horrors of a concentration camp. The protagonist helps his son to view the holocaust as a survival game with a prize task at the end. The story is one representation of reality. Another story, equally real but told more tragically, might have led to depression and certain death.

Narrative mirrors our lives with a myriad of choices at every turning point. Paradoxically, each individual’s narrative also mirrors the history of mankind. Children’s mythic understandings parallel that of traditional oral cultures. Their move from myth and magic to a world of rationality and reality reflects historical orientations beginning with the ancient Greeks. By early adolescence, their thought processes are more like the philosophic understandings, the search for theoretical truth, particularly characterising seventeenth through nineteenth century orientations. (Finser, 1994; Egan, 1997).

Having delved into the literature of narratology, I became even more convinced that narrative may be the single most powerful educational tool available to us because it is the primary tool of meaning construction. Its extraordinary properties are evident. The properties of narrative discussed above (including dramatic engagement, temporality, conflict and resolution, characters and roles, integration, cultural mediation, perspective change – history and reconciliation, and life cycle reflection) are frequently present within a single narrative work whether fiction or non-fiction. This is apparent when one considers the two narratives that I am reading and reflecting on at the moment: firstly, *Fortune's Rocks* (1999) by Anita Shreve, a
literary narrative set in the early 20th century, and secondly, *The History of the Olympic Games*.

Two Narratives – A Novel and a History

**A Novel**

In *Fortune’s Rocks* dramatic **engagement** begins in the first paragraph when the reader encounters a young woman, who, having shed her boots and stockings, is walking along the beach. Her every movement is noted by male admirers. One’s senses are engaged by a visual scene of the beach combined with the smell of the “ocean air as if it were smelling salts” and the tactile sensation as “she touches the linen brim of her hat” (Shreve, 1999, p. 3). One is drawn in by the senses, but also by the situation – at one time or another, most people dream of being admired.

The **temporality**, the promise of more to come, is also suggested early in the first chapter. “This first brief awareness of desire – and of being the object of desire, a state of which she has had no previous hint – comes to her as a kind of slow seizure, as of air compressing itself all around her, and causes what seems to be the first faint shudder of her adult life” (Shreve, 1999, p.3). One is instantly engaged by this reference to the temporality of human life. As references are made to childhood past and to being on the eve of adulthood, we understandably confront the next phase of Olympia’s life with her. Every young adult or adult reader can relate to this time reference. We are also effortlessly transported back in time by the narrative to when women wore boots and stockings and linen brimmed hats even to the beach.
The central conflict of this story is epitomized by a trial when it is to be decided if Olympia Biddeford can regain the custody of her illegitimate child who was taken from her at birth or whether he will remain in foster care. As is normally the case, the conflict is more involved than this, however – it is also about having a purposeful loving life vs. a miserable lonely one and about experiencing passion vs. a long-term married relationship. The resolution is life-like in its complexity. Although regaining custody, Olympia does not take her child from his foster parents and thus her dream of experiencing conventional motherhood is thwarted. She has in a sense both “lost” and “won”. Nevertheless, she does find a purposeful life by helping other young women to keep their offspring and she does find an enduring loving relationship.

Part of the impact of the novel is in presenting characters whose complexity forces us to move away from judging them as good or bad, intelligent or foolish. Olympia is a dutiful, upper middle class, refined and educated daughter but she is also a very independent person capable of deep and passionate emotions and commitment. This combination creates a humanism with which one can relate parallel to the sympathy evoked for Hester Prynn in The Scarlet Letter (1850/1981). The male protagonist, John Haskell, is a caring physician working for improving conditions for the deprived in society; he is also an essay writer and a caring, sensitive lover. Yet, by falling prey to his emotions, he hurts everyone he loves.

We hear Olympia’s voice from a century ago pleading the case of a woman born in an era where a life could be ruined by actions quite acceptable today. We, the audience, are asked to view past events as a contemporary jury. In a sense, Shreve's use of the
properties of voice and audience underscores the fact that similar human dilemmas reappear in all decades, although, in different guises.

The integrated pathways one can choose for further exploration from this novel are many and varied. Firstly, there is frequent reference to the mill conditions which might lead the reader to want to explore early factory life, the rights of children, or factory related disease. One might wish to review how society’s structure and class structure changed with the growth of factory work. One might choose to further explore the rights of women regarding education, job prospects, finances, property and children which might lead to a study of the suffragette movement. Alternatively, one might explore fashion in the early 20th century, or artistically explore the settings of the beach side vistas or factory towns. This novel could also provide a catalyst for discussions on morality.

For cultural mediation, Fortune’s Rocks presents two stories for one’s consideration. On the one hand, we are asked to believe that a woman who has an affair with a married man is depraved, immoral and in no way a fit person to be mother to a small boy. On the other hand, we are asked to believe that this same person is a courageous, purposeful woman, who would be a nurturing mother. Witnessing many heroic qualities of the character, Olympia, one begins to wonder how she could be so condemned by society. Many readers engaged in this narrative will be persuaded to believe the latter story when the protagonist gives her child up for his own happiness. Through this Solomon archetype action, one cannot help but be persuaded that she is, in fact, a virtuous woman. Having accepted this, the reader can be persuaded that the persecution of single unmarried mothers is grossly unfair.
Hearing stories such as Olympia’s, a history that condemns single unmarried mothers is called into question. Are two parent families always preferable for the child? Likewise, hearing stories such as that of the foster parents, Albertine and Telsphore Bolduc, one wonders if it can be assumed that a child is better off in a home that can offer more material opportunities. Similarly, as the tragic tales of children working in factories are revealed, one can no longer express support for factory labour practices. As the rigidity of viewpoints is dissolved through the telling of stories – in the case of unwed mothers and factory workers, a change in perspective occurs and reconciliation becomes possible.

*Fortune’s Rock* is a linear tale of a young woman’s life from 15-27 and yet it is also a circular tale in many regards. For one thing, the protagonist returns to the scene of her joy and tragedy where her youthful passions are relived at the deeper level of commitment to her cause – having a say in her child’s life and allowing other single mothers to have the same choice. Her lover becomes her partner in her mature life’s work. It is also a circular tale in that it is the story of a person fighting a restrictive society, a tale replayed in various forms in every culture and in every era. In some manner Olympia and John’s lives mirror our own lives in that, despite the difference in time frame, we all mature physically and change emotionally and cognitively as we face life’s challenges and are called upon to make moral decisions.

*A History*

I have also been revisiting Greek history with the Story of the Olympics and, similarly, in historical narrative form, one becomes aware of the same powerful
narrative properties contributing to motivation and understanding. I was engaged by the whole concept of the Olympics – extraordinary to think of different city-states coming together to compete on equal terms over 2000 years ago!

The first Olympic games were held in 776 BC in honor of Zeus, king of the Greek gods. They were held every four years until AD 394 – a period of nearly 1200 years (Purdy and Sandak, 1982, p. 4).

Temporality played a role in my wanting to go back in time to revisit the first Olympics and explains why I carefully viewed a timeline on the Web describing the torch carrying tradition and ceremony throughout the years. The conflict in the modern Olympics is the rivalry between nations and athletes. In Ancient Greece, it was a rivalry between the city-states including the trading Corinthians, the military minded Spartans, the culture minded Athenians and others. My interest focused on the great contrast between the Spartans and the Athenians, with totally contrasting lifestyles and values. The Spartans took the male offspring away from their parents at age 7 to raise them in austere military camps – not to live at home again until the Age of 30. Literacy was not valued but only physical prowess. Women in Sparta, on the other hand, were fairly liberated, being the major landowners. How different from Athens where culture was lauded and artists, philosophers and playwrights respected. Sparta was autocratic, whereas Athens formed the first democracy. In Sparta, the human form was appreciated only for its use as a military machine; in Athens the beauty of the human form was immortalized in sculptures. In fact, a reverence for
beauty and balance led to such breathtaking architecture as the Acropolis. How curious to be at the early Olympics, a forum for these differences!

I find myself imagining my role as a Spartan and then as an Athenian. As a Spartan male, I led “a harsh and often brutal life in the soldiers barracks” (Donn, 2000,p.3). I was hungry; I lived a life of “discipline, self denial and simplicity” (Donn, 2000, p. 9). I didn’t mind lying and cheating if it helped me to win the battle. As a Spartan woman, I felt more fortunate than women in other city states. When I was at school I learned “wrestling, gymnastics and combat skills” (Donn, 2000, p. 10). As an adult, I was a property owner with slaves to do my work.

Role-playing Athenian characters, I found I was more comfortable with the male than the female role. As a boy, I was educated, trained in the arts and prepared for peace and war. As a man, I was away from home a great deal – working in the fields or running the government. In contrast, as a girl, I had very little education and spent most of my time in the courtyard of my home. Even as a woman I had “very limited freedom outside the home” (Donn, 2000, p. 5) My job was to run the household and direct the slaves. I was not allowed to attend the Olympic Games “as the participants in the games did not wear clothes” (Donn, 2000, p. 6).

Exploring ancient Greece in this way, one hears the voice of the Spartans opting for physical superiority and military prowess. One also hears the voice of the Athenians promoting art, theatre, democracy and fair play. Detailed descriptions of life in these city-states allow the audience to interact with these early societies and evaluate aspects of the contrasting cultures for themselves.
Integration occurred for me as, engaged and motivated, I set out to learn more about Ancient Greece. Some of the explorations that have resulted from the story of the Olympics with my own children and in other classes I have visited have included revisiting the history of the alphabet and having a debate over Plato’s concern that writing would have a negative effect on culture in that it is a “mechanical inhuman way of processing knowledge, unresponsive to questions and destructive of memory” (Ong, 1982, p. 24). We have compared our own democracy to that of Athens. We have studied some of the myths – even rewriting some in contemporary terms such as *Theseus and the Minotaur*, *King Midas and the Golden Touch*, *Hercules and the Twelve Labours*. Other stories explored, dramatised and transformed were *Aesop’s Fables* and *The History of the Trojan Horse*. Students studied the philosophers, dressed in Greek dress, built Greek temples and houses and identified Doric, Ionic and Corinthian pillars in an Australian city. They enjoyed participating in a mock Olympics and comparing these games to our own organised for Sydney in 2000. Great Greek mathematicians such as Pythagorus and Euclid gave new meaning to the study of geometry. Personally, we have looked at our own heroes and why we chose them. Are they athletes, artists, or scholars? In short, the richness of the story of the history of the Olympics, which led to an exploration of life in ancient Greece, integrated study in all the disciplines.

Story can be a cultural mediator for many issues arising out of a study of the early Olympics and ancient Greece. As history revealed, the democratic government model was more enduring than the hierarchical Spartan model. One also notes that to be in the early Olympics, one had to be a free Greek male. All the city-states had slavery.
Debating the issue of liberty vs. servitude can lead to many stories throughout history and the world and even an exploration of how our freedom is ensured in Australia. Is everyone free? Are there people in our own country who are denied liberty?

Olympic game politics is another area that one might shed light on through a study of the early games (Classics Dept., 1996). “Politics, nationalism, commercialism and athletics were intimately related in the ancient Greek games.” Sotades in the 99th Olympics of Ancient Greece won the long race for the Cretans. During the next festival he made himself an Ephesian (Classics Dept., 1996). Knowing that political rivalries were a characteristic of games over 2000 years ago changes our perspective. Perhaps it isn’t globalisation or a lack of nationalism that causes athletes to move from one country to another. Perhaps it has always been a question of personal fame and income. Then, as now, winning athletes are viewed as heroes and the politics doesn’t destroy this. This historical narrative can be viewed in its linearity as the games are traced for almost 2500 years as well as cyclically as the issues created when different groups – countries or city-states come together repeat themselves in different forms.

From a perusal of Fortune’s Rocks, a literary narrative, and The History of the Olympics, an historical narrative, one can see that the narrative properties discussed in this chapter are clearly present in some form in these very different stories. In addition, each of these narratives incorporates several substories that also have striking narrative properties that alter our thoughts and ways of perceiving our world.
Humans are storied animals. Story is the primary structure through which humans think, relate and communicate. We invent stories and live stories because they are an integral part of being human (Sillick, 1997, p. 65).

This literature review reveals that narrative is a particularly important tool in helping the child construct herself/himself — to create her/his own story. It is also apparent that there is a broad spectrum of applications of narrative related to its varied properties and characteristics. On one level, narrative can be used as context for linguistic and genre studies and to nurture cognitive skills related to the sequencing and prioritising of events. On another level, there are indications that narrative can assist one’s personal journey by: providing metaphorical and biographical models; fostering self-discovery by forging connections between varied interests and concerns; and enhancing problem solving skills and adaptation to cultural change. Finally, there is some indication that narrative can be viewed in a transformational sense – effecting psychological change and spiritual development. (Refer to Chapters VI and VII).

Why, then, is story not universally recognised and utilised as a critical educational tool? Why are the extraordinary properties of this ancient form of discourse only now being rediscovered? The answer lies in a view of cognition that demanded the civilised worldview story as being unscientific (Bruner, 1990). It is only in recent decades, with the acceptance of qualitative research, that the richness and variability of thought process that narrative entails has re-emerged in educated culture (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986, p. 111). In a postmodern world, with an interest in the individual voice and a place for the coexistence of varied interpretations, constructivist
educational ideas promoted in pockets early in the 20th century have now begun to dominate the educational scene (Larouchelle and Bednarz, 1998). Narrative has an essential place in constructivism and hence in contemporary education. By interviewing teachers from varied educational backgrounds, I wanted to determine the ways narrative is being used in classrooms to promote cognitive, cultural and self-understanding. I wanted to gather stories about using story.
I began searching for an appropriate methodology to guide me in collecting and interpreting teachers’ stories about using story. As demonstrated in Chapter I, the construction of narrative is an active process involving expressing a voice, interacting with an audience and interpreting experiences. Because none of these properties can be measured or directly observed, as is essential for quantitative research, I deduced that I was looking for a qualitative format. While exploring the history of the alternatives, it became apparent that the narratives of educational philosophies and methodologies are interwoven with the history of scientific research. In fact, quantitative and qualitative methodologies are clearly aligned with educational perspectives. Steiner and Montessori, both with scientific backgrounds, could be considered qualitative researchers, as can contemporary educators who have a constructivist view of education.

This research journey thus started with an historical view of these contrasting methodologies. This history provided a rationale for selecting qualitative methods to investigate narrative in primary classrooms representing different cultural milieus. The work of contemporary qualitative researchers led to the choice of in-depth interviewing as the most appropriate mode of data collection. This interview data was supported by observations. Data collection files and a data coding system provided facility in organising the interviewee responses to reveal emerging themes.
Choosing Qualitative Research – A Historic Rationale

Scientific method in the sense of theorising from carefully documented observations and experiments is a Newtonian model dating back almost four hundred years (Helden, 1995). At that time, both education and science were pursuits available only to the elite classes. Although there were numerous significant scientific discoveries in the following two centuries, it was probably the scientific inventions leading to the industrial revolution and the early 20th century scientific investigations resulting from it that most influenced education in the Western world. It was then that two different scientific perspectives created a schism in educational doctrine. Frederick Taylor’s time and motion studies published in the Principles of Scientific Management (1911) were extremely influential in inspiring factory managers to find ways of making workers more productive. Educators were also influenced by Taylorism and sought ways to implement a more efficient educational system. One way to do this was to divide the academic from the vocational students. Educational psychologist, Thorndike (1913; Freedman, 1999) aided this classification process by devising testing instruments to isolate skills, aptitudes and interests of students that would supposedly correlate with job success. Educator, Dewey, reacted strongly against these mental tests and consequent placements, which he viewed as contributing to social class division and being undemocratic. He claimed that testing should be for the purpose of feedback to the learner to encourage new learning. He also argued against the curriculum advocated by Thorndike. Thorndike was a reductionist who tried to clarify “the discrete details of learning” but overlooked the overall aims (Freedman, 1999). Dewey counteracted by demanding that education focus on the whole student. “Democracy will not be democracy until education makes
its chief concern to release distinctive aptitudes in art, thought and companionship” (Dewey, 1922, p. 63; Freedman, 1999).

While Thorndike and Dewey were in opposition in America, Montessori and Steiner in Europe were designing their own unique educational systems (Refer to Appendices A and B). Both were scientists and viewed their work as scientific. In fact, the original title of Montessori’s book, *The Montessori Method* (1912) was *The Method of Scientific Pedagogy as Applied to the Teaching of Children in the Children’s House* (Chattin-McNichols, 1992b, p. 15). Her view of science was certainly Newtonian in that she based her educational premises on careful observations of children’s development. She also viewed herself as a scientific researcher throughout her life in that she was constantly evaluating and modifying ideas.

My experiments,¹⁹ conducted in many different countries, have now been going on for forty years, and as the children grew up parents kept asking me to extend my methods to later ages. (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 7)

However, her science was more aligned to Dewey than Thorndike. She too pleaded that education should not be “separated from biological and social life” (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 9). Likewise, Steiner criticised science that disallowed aspects of the human being that could not be measured.

¹⁹ Emphasis – used by the author to emphasise scientific terms.
Anthroposophy points to the importance of the scientific achievements of the last three to four centuries and, above all, to those of the nineteenth century, all of which it fully recognises. At the same time, however, anthroposophy also has the task of observing how these great scientific successes affect the human soul…Having revealed more and more of outer nature, science has, at the same time, alienated human beings from themselves. (Steiner, 1923/1996, p. 8)

In fact, although it is Dewey’s emphasis on problem-solving that most influenced modern American education, he concurred with Steiner that imagination and art are equally essential (Sloan, 1996). Thus, Steiner, like Montessori, would be considered a qualitative researcher today for acknowledging that there are important variables in education that cannot be measured or considered the truth out of context.

In our current intellectual age we are too preoccupied with whether or not something is correct, whether or not it is logically correct; but we have lost the habit of asking whether it conforms to actual real-life situations. (Steiner, 1923/1996, p. 11)

Despite the convincing arguments of Dewey, Montessori and Steiner among others, Taylorism and Thorndike’s views continued to make inroads and this perspective dominated psychology, research and education during and after World War II. There was a high demand for quantitative research; anything that could not be observed objectively or measured was not worthy of consideration by the social disciplines. Behaviourism came to the fore and many applauded its efforts to explain all actions

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20 Anthroposophy – “Anthroposophy was the term Rudolf Steiner used to characterise the approach to
through stimulus and response. Mass testing introduced in the USA for children was modelled after the testing of soldiers in the war (Polkinghorne, 1988). Children were viewed as milk bottles on an assembly line filled and measured in mass production. The seeds sown by educators such as Steiner and Montessori to heed individual uniqueness and to present curriculums in meaningful ways were cast to the wind or relegated to the fringe. Narrative, as a tool of cultural interpretation, was, for a time, ignored.

Bruner (1990, p. 4) points out that even the cognitive revolution, which set out to counterbalance behaviourism, became fragmented when it shifted its focus “from the construction of meaning to the processing of information.” “Intentional states – beliefs, desires, intentions, commitments” were dismissed by cognitive psychologists in an effort “to explain human action from a point of view that is outside human subjectivity” (Bruner, 1990, p. 14).

A perspective, a sense of wholeness and meaning, was lost; society became materialistic and schools dominated by a fragmented curriculum where behaviour was modified by an external token system of rewards and punishments rather than by cultural expectations communicated through narrative. Grades and competition replaced a cultural bonding and an emphasis on community. ‘See Spot Run’ replaced the “real texts” advocated by Maria Montessori. Positivism removed the context of experience from learning in the classroom. In addition, the means to communicate understanding the whole human being as body, soul, and spirit” (Sloan, 1996, p. xix).
that experience to others was severely compromised (Bowers and Flinders, 1990; Sandlos, 1998).

Fleury (1998) notes that Jean Piaget’s work, which was fundamental in influencing the constructivist approach, was misrepresented by the positivists. There was wide support for the assimilation, accommodation, adaptation model by which knowledge is constructed by a cognising subject. However a second foundational principle was “largely ignored by most American followers of the Piagetian tradition, namely, that the function of cognition is to organize one’s experiential world, not to discover an ontological reality” (pp. 157-158).

The child does not assimilate ‘pure’ objects defined by their physical parameters only. She assimilates the situations in which objects play a specific role. When the system of communication between the child and her social world becomes more complex and enriched, and particularly when language becomes the dominating means of communication, then what we might call direct experience of objects comes to be subordinated, in certain situations, to the system of interpretations attributed to it by the social environment. The problem for genetic epistemology here is how to explain in what way assimilation remains, in such cases, conditioned by a particular social system of meanings, and to what extent the interpretation of each particular experience depends on such meanings. (Piaget and Garcia, 1989, p. 247)

The fact that Montessori and Steiner education incorporated the experiential aspect of constructivism may in part explain their demise in popularity for a time in the Western World where there was support for the notion that knowledge existed as a universal body of truth that was not altered through individual interpretations.
To some degree, the effects of the positivistic scientific surge so prevalent in the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s are still evident. However, the call for acknowledging meaning - making in our classrooms and communities has in the last two decades become louder and more persuasive. Writing in *The Road Less Travelled*, Scott Peck (1978/1983) noted that we were beginning to escape “scientific tunnel vision” (p. 242). He implied that with the increasing sophistication of our information gathering and the increasing complexity of issues, the more acknowledgement there was that paradoxes do exist that can’t be explained objectively or by scientific law. Thomas Berry also comments on the irony that our incredible exploration of science from an objective viewpoint led to “an externalisation of all things natural” (1988, p. 115). “We thought that we were elevating the human when in reality we were alienating ourselves from the only context in which human life has any satisfying meaning.” Bruner noted that, for a time, psychology endeavoured to be scientific by being culture-free; it was felt that this was the only way a set of “transcendent human universals” could be discovered. However, by being “culture-free”, psychology became “meaning-free” as “the very people that are its subject are governed by shared meanings and values” (1990, p. 20).

Polkinghorne (1988) provides a persuasive argument that we need to free ourselves from the bonds of positivistic research:

I find that our traditional research model, adopted from the natural sciences, is limited when applied to the study of human beings. I do not believe that the solutions of
human problems will come from developing even more sophisticated and creative applications of the natural science model, but rather by developing additional, complementary approaches that are especially sensitive to the unique characteristics of human existence. (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.x)

Concurring with Bruner (1990) and Polkinghorne (1988), Minichello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995) emphatically state that “to understand people, we must discover the contents of their minds – their beliefs, wishes, feelings, desires, fears, intentions” (p. 22). Since the “symbolic systems that individuals use in constructing meaning…are deeply entrenched in culture and language” we must look to people’s stories to infer their intentional states and their interpretations of cultural experiences (Bruner, 1990, p.11).

It is indeed a paradox that human universals can only be discovered through the richness of individual narratives, the tool to mediate “between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires and hopes” (Bruner, 1990, p. 52). By listening to these individual stories, one can find shared meanings and shared concepts (Bruner, 1990, p. 13). In other words, the commonalities of these narratives can help us to understand the worldviews of a culture.

Several psychologists recognise that there are two types of thinking and different methodologies are related to each type. Bruner calls these two types of thinking, the Logico-Scientific (or the Paradigmatic) contrasted with Narrative thinking. According to Bruner, in the paradigmatic approach, imagination leads to good theory, analysis, proof and hypothesising or seeing formal connections before they can be put
away. In a narration, imagination leads to a good story, drama, believable (not necessarily true) historical accounts (1988, p. 100). Robinson and Hawpe (1986, p. 114) referred to these two types of thinking as Principle and Story. They contend that in both “cause and effect” and “relations” are factors. “Both are attempts to organise and give meaning to human experience, to explain and guide problem solving.” However, the product of scientific theorising is a principle or law. These principles are general, context-free, usually abstract, and testable only by further formal scientific activity. The product of narrative thought – story – is context-bound, concrete, and testable through ordinary interpersonal checking. Polkinghorne further clarifies the difference between historical narrative and formal science. He claims that formal science is “interested in explanation and prediction of future events” whereas historical narrative is an analysis of the “configuration of past events into a meaningful scheme” (1988, p. 116).

Analysing the language of people’s narratives requires different skills from measuring the physical data in quantitative research. In quantitative work, a hypothesis is put forth and variables isolated and acted upon to determine by measured consequence if a hypothesis is true or not. In qualitative work, the model is inductive in that it begins with a whole context and ends with a greater story. Reissman (1993, p. 13) uses the term “meta–story” to describe this construction by a researcher – one built on the patterns and themes of the component stories. In other words, in qualitative research “the goal of analysis is to uncover the common themes or plots in the data. Analysis is carried out using hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177). Some of the patterns that are
uncovered might reflect a “multiplicity of meanings” rather than the single “abstract rule” or “single proposition” of paradigmatic knowledge (Carter, 1993, p. 173).

Lancy (1999) notes that in quantitative research there “is a clear separation between the issue studied and the methodology used to conduct the study…By contrast, topic, theory and methodology are usually closely interrelated in qualitative research” (p. 3). I wanted to learn about narrative through exploring teachers’ storied experiences using a methodology that equates with narrative thinking. A qualitative narrative inquiry views patterns and deviations revealed in discourse and highlights and sequences in a discovery process until a theory (or meta-story) emerges that endows the individual narratives with new meaning.

This idea of separation also holds true for the researcher and the interviewee or informer. In quantitative research, there is an assumption that the researcher holds more answers than the informer who is an object of a study of cause and effect. By contrast, in qualitative research, there is a “presumption that the informant has the required information which the researcher lacks” (Minichello et al, 1995, p. 133). There is no hierarchical separation in that the interviewer and interviewee are in conversation surrounding the focus issues. In contrast to quantitative data, the interaction is engaging because it is a dynamic process for both parties. The separation of role in this type of methodology is in the purpose of participation. The interviewee’s expressions become the data and new realisations may be made by this subject because of the nature of the questions. The thoughts of the interviewer respond to the expressions of the interviewee, making connections to previous experience and interviews and contributing to the construction of theory. The purpose
of the interview conversation for the researcher is thus to access another’s experience (Riessman, 1993).

In summary, qualitative research was an appropriate methodology for this study because:

- I was concerned with narrative thinking rather than logico-scientific thinking.
- I was concerned with linguistic data rather than physical data.
- I was interested in uncovering thoughts, feelings and perceptions rather than counting and measuring units of data.
- I presumed that my interviewees had required information that I lacked which would be revealed through dialogue.
- My goal was to build a theory rather than to measure or test a hypothesis.

**Data Collection**

**In-Depth Interviewing**

Minichello et al (1995) define In-Depth Interviewing as “conversation with a specific purpose – a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant’s perception of self, life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words” (p. 60). I chose a method of in-depth interviewing because I believed that this method of dialogue would be the most effective means of encouraging primary school teachers to share their storied experiences about what they perceive is happening when they use narrative. In making sense of their stories, I believed a theory would emerge revealing how teachers use narrative to foster meaning-making and understanding in varied primary school settings. My chosen methodology thus reflects
the observation made by Lancy (1999, p. 3) that “topic, theory and methodology are usually closely interrelated in qualitative research.”

The structure of these interviews would most appropriately be viewed as semi-structured with a general interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) I had a set of carefully prepared questions with possible probes. The questions (without prompts) were sent to the interviewees so they could think about them in advance. (Refer to Appendix D.) This would characterise the general interview guide approach as described by Patton in that the interviewees were aware that there was some common information that I wanted to obtain from each person interviewed but I adopted “both the wording and the sequence of questions to specific respondents in the context of the actual interview” (Patton, 1990, p. 280). This semi-structured approach is in contrast to the informal conversational interview where questions are spontaneously generated and the standardised open-ended interview, which follows carefully, worded questions in a specific order. The method selected encouraged some flexibility and spontaneity while still allowing the collection of subjects’ views on specific topics (Patton, 1990, p. 281).

The Questions

The challenge was to construct interview questions that would evoke responses that when analysed could provide answers to the following research questions:

- What is the place of narrative in contemporary classroom teaching and learning? How do underlying philosophical traditions and beliefs influence the uses of narrative in different schools in Montessori, Steiner, Catholic and Government school settings?
How is narrative used to support learning across the curriculum and in personal development in each setting?

How do teachers describe and interpret effects on their own and children’s learning?

My interview questions (with prompts) were as follows:

**Interview Questions:**

1. **How do you use narrative in your classroom?**

   - What subjects? (e.g. language, social studies, science, math, religion, health, other)
   - How do you use narrative as part of an integrated language approach?
   - How do you use story to introduce themes to the classroom?
   - What are some of the activities that you associate with the use of story?
   - What use do you make of ‘told’ stories and ‘read’ stories?
   - What are your favourites to which you return? What do these stories lend to your own learning?
   - Tell me about some stories that you have used that you felt really “worked” as a teaching tool and reflect on the processes at work!
   - Are you conscious of balancing your choices of stories for use in your classroom to counter bias (e.g. gender, cultural, age, etc.)?

   *Are there opportunities for intergenerational story telling in your class or school?*

   *Are there any modifications that you have made to the classroom to more effectively use story?*

2. **Tell me about the children’s own narrative creations** (samples appreciated)

   - How often do they write stories? How do they get their ideas?
• How do the children construct and reconstruct oral narratives of their own?

• What commonalities do you notice in content or format that you associate with the developmental stage of the children you teach?

• If you have taught more than one grade level, do you notice differences in the content or format of their stories?

• What opportunities do the children have to share their own personal narratives?

3. What do you believe is gained by using narrative (stories or poems) in the classroom?

• What are the benefits or disadvantages? Are there times when you don't think using narrative is appropriate?

• How does it help make the subject more meaningful?

• How does it help to motivate the children?

• How does it aid recall?

• How does it help you to cater for multiple learning styles and intelligences?

• How does it help children to focus on life issues?

4. How do you see story as related to your philosophy or to the philosophy or ethos of your school?

• Have you been to workshops or training that has influenced how you use story in your classroom? (e.g. First Steps, ALEA, author workshops, creative-writing workshops, Montessori, Waldorf education?)

• How do you view your use of story in the class as being different from schools that adhere to other philosophies or ethos?

• How do you view your use of narrative in the class as being different from other classrooms in your school?

• Tell me about when you first became interested in using narrative in teaching.
5. **What opportunities do you have to explore your personal narrative in the school setting?**

- How do you make the opportunity to explore your own development in relation to the core values of the school and what would you like to see happen?

- How do you create opportunities to share what is happening in your practice of teaching and what would you like to do in this regard?

- How does your reflection on your classroom experiences with students contribute to your personal narrative?

- Where do you or might you go to find like-minded people who would support your personal narrative?

- *We always hope that the activities in the classroom support our beliefs about learning and teaching and yet all of us have times when some incident calls our beliefs or practices into question. Are there any critical incidents – incidents that occurred in the classroom that have made you alter how you teach? Have you been able to share these incidents with other teachers?*

- Who were some of the teachers who influenced you as a child?

- What do you do for balance in your life?

6. **What are some stories that are meaningful to you as an adult?**

- *Are there stories that you have revisited that you have found meaningful?*

- *Are there stories that were once favourites, but no longer hold the same meaning or stories that did not engage you at one time, that you now find meaningful?*

- *Are there stories that you have presented to children in different ways when you revisited them? Do you view this alteration as being related to your personal development?*

7. **Additional helpful information:**

- When and where did you do your training? What type of training?

- What have you drawn upon that you have found particularly beneficial? Reading? Resources? Models? Mentors? Workshops?
• In what school systems have you taught and what grades have you taught?

• How long have you been teaching?

8. (Question for those who are teacher trainers) How do you or might you use narrative in teacher training?

In what ways are trainee teachers given the opportunity to share their stories or to benefit from hearing the stories of other teachers?

What changes have you seen in teacher education in recent years that you feel are positive? Are there changes that cause you concern?

• If you were in a position to make changes to teacher education, what would you suggest?

9. How did you find this interview process?

Determining the interview questions.

I endeavoured to pose questions that would invite the teachers to share their storied experiences with me. Questions were trialled in a discussion format with primary teacher postgraduate students enrolled in a Research Methodology course at the University of Notre Dame Australia and individually with a primary teacher postgraduate student at Murdoch University. Thus I determined that Question 1, How do you use narrative in your classroom? and Question 2, Tell me about the children’s own narrative creations would reveal the range of uses of narrative in the different settings. Data from Question 3, What do you believe is gained by using narrative in the classroom? and Question 4, How do you see story as related to your own
philosophy or to the philosophy or ethos of your school? asked for reflections that would link narrative use to the individual school traditions and beliefs. Responses to Questions 1-5 all contributed to data on curriculum links, themes and subject integration. The prompt to Question 3 How does it help children to focus on life issues? as well as Questions 5. What opportunities do you have to explore your personal narrative in the school setting? and Question 6, What are some stories that are meaningful to you as an adult? all unearthed storied experience relating to personal development. Question 3, What do you believe is gained by using narrative in the classroom? was included to encourage teachers to reflect on their own and the children’s learning, but all of the initial six question responses elicited relevant data to address this. Prompt questions were also prepared as a guide to clarification, but were used only as necessary depending on the responses of the interviewees.

Posing the Questions.

Frequently I started with Question 7 on personal details if I felt supplying the demographic information first would help to make the interviewee more at ease. Question 1, a structural and descriptive question, was usually addressed next because it fittingly set the parameters for all additional questions, but, at the same time, it asked for some concrete responses. This question fulfilled Barbara and Robert Somner’s (1991) suggestion to start with a general question. They state that one should begin with more general and interesting questions in order to engage the interviewee. Also, generality reduces the likelihood that the respondent can make judgements about what the researcher wants to hear. They also contend that in-depth interviewing should be structured so that a subject is explored at deeper and deeper levels and the order of questions should facilitate this process.
In posing these questions, I was very aware of asking some of them in such a way that the respondent would respond with a story. (Minichello et al, 1995, p. 86) For instance, the probe, *Tell me about stories that really “worked” for you* prompted interviewees to share stories about using story. In response, Sam described his students’ study of St. Francis and Lynne gave a detailed account of her mixed grade creation which was inspired by Mem Fox’s *Guess Who?* (1988).

Generalisations such as in Question 1, *How do you use narrative in your classroom?*, often lead to a story. “The major advantage of the story-telling process for both interviewer and informant is that it allows the informant greater latitude in answering questions ‘rather than having to mould his answers into a format which the question requires. (Askham, 1982, p. 572) Minichello et al refer to this generalisation as a specific example of funnelling. Asking the interviewee to provide such a storied example, is called “the story telling technique” (1995, p. 84).

**Modifications.**

Modifications were later made to the original questions with additional questions added, based on my own interview experience and new avenues of exploration revealed by the initial interviews and the literature review.

My thesis supervisor and experienced interviewer, Dr. Ann Zubrick, interviewed me using my questions as a guide for two purposes: firstly, so that I could access my own storied experiences as part of the data; and secondly, so that I could ascertain if the interview questions effectively elicited storied responses relevant to my research.

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focus. As a result of my own reaction to the interview process, I was able to re-evaluate my questions and alter them to precipitate exploration of areas that I had not been successfully reaching. For example, I had initially included a question on classroom organisation, *Are there any modifications that you have made to the classroom to more effectively use story?* Moving this from a key question to a prompt for Question 1 seemed a good reorganisation. As a distinctly separate question, it seemed to be keeping interviewees on a functional level when I wanted them to reflect on what narrative means to them on a more personal level.

Some of my interviewees seemed to find my questions regarding catering for personal narrative in the school setting unclear. By adding the knowledge question, *Where do you or might you go to find like-minded people who would support your personal narrative?*, I endeavoured to clarify this key question and encourage more reflection. In addition, by inserting the question, *What are some stories that are meaningful to you as an adult?*, I hoped to gain more information on teachers’ personal narratives by querying what stories were meaningful to them including adult stories and stories they used in the classroom. When asked this question by Dr. Zubrick, I found it achieved just what I was seeking – it made me revisit the seeds of literary narrative throughout my life and it moved me out of a superficial comfort zone discussing teaching techniques to a much deeper and more personal level of sharing. As a result of my own interview, I also added the prompt, *Tell me about when you first became interested in using narrative in teaching* to Question 4. Because this prompt was more open-ended than the other prompts and asked the interviewee to review their own teaching narrative, it invited more sharing of story.
Questions were also added to further probe and clarify narrative uses and issues that were revealed in the initial interviews. This spiralling effect is another aspect of qualitative research, which allows that each interview represents an experience from which the next interview can build. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 10) explain this spiralling phenomenon in noting that "because collaboration occurs from beginning to end in narrative inquiry, plot outlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials and as further data are collected to develop points of importance in the revised story." Creswell (1994, p. 47) supports this view noting that “the continuous nature of qualitative interviewing means that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project.” This is partially due to the fact that inductive analysis is occurring simultaneously with the gathering of data through the interview process.

Design in qualitative interviewing is iterative. That means that each time you repeat the basic process of gathering information, analysing it, winnowing it, and testing it, you come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon you are studying. In the early stages of the interviewing, the design emphasises more the gathering of many themes and ideas; toward the middle of the research, you concentrate more on winnowing to limit the number of themes that you explore. In the final stages, you emphasise more the analysis and testing of your understanding as you put them together, begin to form theories, and run them by your interviewees and critical readers in your field. (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 46)

As part of the spiralling effect of my research, questions were added to clarify issues or the effects of narrative use as they emerged. These new focus aspects included
recalling teachers who influenced interviewees as children, querying how they found balance in their lives, the use of intergenerational story telling, and the effects of critical incidents on one’s life narrative.

I added the prompt, *Who were some of the teachers who influenced you as a child?* to elucidate teachers’ experience of personal narrative. Ritchie and Wilson (2000) indicate that these experiences are pertinent to teacher narrative and, indeed, some of my early interviewees mentioned early mentors. The probe *What do you do for balance in your life?* was another late question emerging when the data began revealing a use of narrative for personal transformation.

Both Dan and I shared experiences of inviting grandparents into the school to talk to the students. Having read Vivien Paley’s (1995) description of how powerful it was for parents to share their varied stories with her class, I decided to ask other interviewees if they used this narrative resource by adding the Question 1 prompt, *Are there opportunities for intergenerational story telling in your class or school?*

Through my reading on critical incidents and transformational learning (Carrigg, 1997; Mezirow, 1985a, 1985b) and as a result of my discussions with Dr. Zubrick, I came to the realisation that critical incidents can often add to the conflict in a narrative and the resolution can send one off on new and possibly creative paths. Thus I added the following prompt to the question on personal narrative in the school setting: *We always hope that the activities in the classroom support our beliefs about learning and teaching and yet all of us have times when some incident calls our beliefs or practices into question. Are there any critical incidents – incidents that*
occurred in the classroom that have made you alter how you teach? Have you been able to share these incidents with other teachers?

During the time I was gathering data, I was also teaching a course in interpersonal communication to trainee and graduate teachers. Possibly because it was a class of varied experiences, the dialogue during our many collaborative problem solving and role-play situations was very rich and prompted extensive sharing. This caused me to reflect on how narrative might be used more broadly in training teachers. Since several of my interviewees were involved part-time in teacher training and supervision, I decided to ask them Question 8, *(Question for those who are teacher trainers) How do you or might you use narrative in teacher training?*

Personally, I found the interview process so energising from the point of view of interviewer as well as interviewee, that I felt it was important to ascertain how the interviewees viewed the process and the opportunity to share their stories. This information was elicited through Question 9, *(How did you find the interview process?)*

The Interview Process.

As the interviewing progressed, I became increasingly convinced that in-depth interviewing is dialogue, and that, by sharing some of my own experiences, my interviewees were more inclined to share their stories in response. I gained new insights from each of these sharing sessions. Instead of a survey, it became a joint exploration. My own experience mirrored what Dr. Zubrick voiced after she interviewed me:
Dr. Zubrick: The interesting thing for me was that it started off like an interview and it changed. It became much more like a dialogue. I thought about things I hadn't really reflected on and I got some really helpful insights for myself in the process. I think that's really critical in what you're doing. (Dr. Zubrick’s interview with Gay: 414)

Minchello (1995) notes that the in-depth interview process is, in fact, talking, listening and reflecting which are the components of a dialogue (p. 101). Reissman (1993) notes that the purpose of the dialogue is to “make meaning together” (p. 55).

Being interviewed myself put me in a context to really understand my interviewees. I would suggest that an appreciation for the advantage of a shared dialogue between researcher and subject is a relatively recent evolution in qualitative research methodology. Platt (1981), for instance, clearly described the standard interview format of her time with the researcher being of a superior knowledge and class to the interviewee. She thus had to come to terms with some new dimensions when asked to interview her colleagues about assessment at a university. In Minichello et al's (1995) view this would be an ideal format for in-depth interviewing with interviewer and respondent exploring a situation together:

A primary focus of in-depth interviewing is to understand the significance of human experiences as described from the actor's perspective and interpreted by the researcher. This requires that the researcher has personal interaction with the individuals and their context so that he or she can hear people's language and observe behaviour in situ. (Minchello, 1995, p. 12)
Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that professional experience can heighten ‘theoretical sensitivity’ (p. 42). As part of this sensitivity is derived from the background of the analyst, I felt it important to establish a reflective journal as part of my personal data file to note how my perspective was formed and evolved as a result of the in-depth interviews with others in my profession. My own interview formed a basis for the historic section of this file by outlining the experiences from which my interview questions originated and providing a basis for reflecting on emerging and changing concepts constructed as I interviewed others. In many ways, I have viewed my roles as both a participant and an observer as an advantage because my personal insight helped me to understand the meaning other teachers were ascribing to their experience. I was asking, “What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely” (Patton, 1990, p. 71)? My own experiences were recorded in a historic personal file as well as being incorporated with those of my interviewees in an interview data transcript file. Theory construction involved making connections between these files. Although the reported experiences collected in the interview data file were varied and often very different from my own, my common professional background aided me in partially visualising the context from which my interviewees’ stories emerged.

Research Participants

Sample.

Subjects were selected through purposeful sampling. What were considered to be information-rich cases (Patton, 1990; Neuman, 1997) from varied school milieus were
selected for in-depth studies. My initial criterion for an ‘information-rich case’ was that each teacher was known to purposely use narrative in their classrooms. My approach for finding these subjects was snowball or reputational sampling as one often led to another (Neuman, 1997). Selection was also theoretically based (Patton, 1990) in that I wanted to have a representative sampling of male and female narrative-using teachers with varying lengths of experience in teaching. Also, at the sampling stage of the research, I wanted to ensure that varied school settings were sampled to explore the possibility that narrative use varied according to school ethos or milieu. Personal experience motivated me to want to interview teachers trained in Montessori and more traditional settings because I was aware that training guided the teachers to use narrative in different ways. Some of the Montessori teachers referred me to Steiner teachers due to their reputation as storytellers. I was also eager to interview these teachers after preliminary research revealed that Waldorf (Steiner) teacher trainers presented distinct views on using narrative in teaching. In addition, I followed up leads to narrative use in government and systemic Catholic schools. Since these teachers trained in the same tertiary institutions, I was interested in exploring teachers’ perceptions of the effects of subsequent teaching settings on narrative use. I was aware, however, that the diversity of large populations such as Government and systemic Catholic schools presented some difficulty in definitively categorizing findings. It is thus emphasized that when the term ‘Government school teacher’ or ‘Catholic school teacher’ is employed, it is not to generalize the observed narrative use to the whole population, but merely to identify the setting in which the teacher practises. Twelve primary teachers were ultimately interviewed - five (including the researcher) with experience primarily in Montessori schools, two from Steiner schools, two from government schools and three from Catholic schools.
(although two of these three interviewees had extensive experience in both systemic Catholic\textsuperscript{22} and government systems). Two of the Montessori teachers live in the USA; the other ten teachers are located in Western Australia. (Refer to Table 1.)

**Ethical Considerations.**

Where appropriate, letters were sent to the school principal to seek permission to interview the teacher and to later observe in the classroom. (Refer to Appendix E.) A letter describing the research was given to the teacher (Refer to Appendix F.) as well as a permission form that could be used to gain permission from parents for a student’s work to be shared with the researcher. (Refer to Appendix G.) Although it was originally intended that all interviewees be referred to by pseudonyms, some of the interviewees stated that they preferred to be referred to by their own names. In some instances, this prevented confusion due to their public persona of lecturing or writing in subjects related to the use of narrative in teaching. A form was thus devised for interviewees to indicate how they would like to be designated in the research presentations. (Refer to Appendix H.)

Subjects were interviewed in a quiet location of their choice. Questions were used to launch discussions, but in varied order and with varied prompts depending on the direction the dialogue took. Interviews were taped and later transcribed.

\textsuperscript{22} Catholic schools – refer to the systemic Catholic Schools. It is understood that there are other types of Catholic schools including Montessori Catholic schools, but no teachers were interviewed from any other types of Catholic schools outside the systemic Catholic schools in Western Australia.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Pseudonym</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Teaching Experience$^{23}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>USA Montessori</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn*</td>
<td>USA Montessori</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel*</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen*</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison$^{24}$</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam*</td>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette*</td>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>17 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne*</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate*</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky*</td>
<td>Catholic (Gov)$^{25}$</td>
<td>20+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{23}$ Teaching experience – reflects time teaching primary age children or teachers of primary age children; although some teachers have taught in different types of schools, over 50% of their experience and their most recent experiences are in the type of school indicated.

$^{24}$ Allison – the designated pseudonym for the researcher as interviewee.

$^{25}$ Vicky and Fran – Both teachers have had extensive experience in Government and Catholic schools. Their primary school work was in Catholic schools at the time of the interview.
Informed Others.

The spiralling effect that applied to the evolution of questions was also relevant to participants. When an issue arose that further questioning of interviewees couldn’t clarify, then other expertise was sought. Thus when a literature review linked narrative in curriculum to the project approach of Reggio Emilia (Refer to Appendix C.), I visited two teachers who had been influenced by this approach – Jan Phillips of Penrhos and Barbara Bosich of Christ Church Grammar School. When I needed to understand the Catholic School religious education programme, I approached Elizabeth Peel of Mary MacKillop primary whom I knew had recently completed a religious education course and was enjoying interweaving R.E\textsuperscript{26}. with other classroom subjects. When it became clear that the new Western Australian 

Curriculum Framework (1998) made provision for more integrated learning and ‘value’ education than previous curriculum documents, I visited Presbyterian Ladies’ College, Perth, where the Framework had been implemented for some time. There I interviewed fourth grade teacher, Victoria Biggs and visited her classroom. Thus, four teachers who were not in the original sample were consulted in the latter stages of research. These interviews were not taped. However, notes from these interviews were coded and used alongside literature review notes to aid interpretation of results by clarifying the context of interviewees’ perspectives.

Observations

\textsuperscript{26} R.E. – used as an abbreviation for Religious Education.
Wherever possible, I spent a half/day visiting the classroom of the interviewee. This served several purposes: firstly, it provided a type of triangulation, theoretically providing more data than one could obtain from a single source. On several occasions, I saw narrative being used in additional ways – not mentioned in the interview. Secondly, it enabled me to note any perceived discrepancies between what the interviewee had said and what I saw occurring in the classroom and to ask the interviewee for clarification (Lancy, 1999; Neuman, 1997; Patton, 1990). Thirdly, the visit afforded me an opportunity to reconnect with the interviewee, thus allowing them to share additional thoughts on the use of narrative in the classroom that had occurred to them since the interview meeting.

I devised an observation form to assist me in focusing on observable phenomenon in the classroom that might contribute to an understanding of how narrative was being used. (Refer to Appendix I.) On the form I noted classroom environment factors including displays that might indicate a theme or class focus (e.g. *Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1952) in Kate’s class), the nature of the classroom library (e.g. Folk tales and biography were particularly noticeable in Ellen’s class library), and seating arrangements that were a possible indication of whole class or collaborative work preferences (e.g. Sam’s class were organised in rows and Ellen’s and Lynne’s in small groups). Secondly, I noted details of any lessons I observed including the inclusion of any reference to narrative or theme. (e.g. While I was in Sam’s class, he was telling stories of characters who represented math functions and in Nigel’s class the children were investigating frogs and the narrative was on frogs, *Lester and Clyde* (Reece, 27 **“*” indicates classroom observation.  


I also noted the types of follow-on that children pursued after a lesson – if they worked individually or in groups and the types of activities. (e.g. In Kate’s class, the children created plays in small groups). I was particularly interested in noting if the activities involved a narrative or thematic catalyst and which learning domains were incorporated in the explorations. Finally, I noted other references to narrative in the class. (e.g. In both Kate and Bernadette’s classes, the children had written Aboriginal-like tales). I observed for at least two hours in each classroom and arranged for additional interview time with each teacher immediately following the visit.

Data Collection files

Minichello et al (1995, pp. 224-236) suggests that data files in qualitative research should comprise a transcript file, a personal file and an analytic file. Files for this research took the following form:

- **A transcript file**

  My transcript file included the 12 interview taped transcripts, as well notes from interviews with informed others, literature review notes and the observation forms. Initially, a concept revealed in the transcripts was coded by setting and according to the categories revealed in Index Tree 1 devised after initial interviews. As coding progressed, the school-type branches became further differentiated. (Refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2 and Appendix J.) From each classroom observation, data was obtained for the sub file entitled *Samples and Examples*. Entries were also allocated to a curriculum sub file if the observation added to the information provided in the teacher interview. Observations not related to the use of narrative in the classroom were excluded from the data file. Notes from interviews from informed others and literature review notes were also included in the initial coding branches if they helped to clarify the curriculums of varied methodologies. These notes were often recoded under branches formed to analyse data if information gained helped to clarify emerging concepts. (Refer to Figure 4.)
• **A personal file**

My personal file was comprised of a reflective journal and a historic personal file. The reflective journal entries included reference to an ongoing literature review as well as comments and observations related to the interviews and observations conducted and descriptions of ideas emerging from the corresponding analysis of data. The historic personal file included observations and reflections from my own years teaching in primary schools. These experiences formed the basis for questions on narrative and contributed to the formation of a data coding system and later interpretation when the differences and similarities of my experiences, those of the interviewees and those accessed through a literature review were analysed. The interview in which I was a subject was included both in this file and in the transcript file.

• **An analytic file**

My analytic file consisted of records of the coding conducted using NUD*IST software\(^{28}\) and corresponding memos and reports created through text searches. These memos and reports were organized into further coding categories comprising results and discussion if they contributed to an understanding of how narrative was being employed in primary schools.

Data Coding

During preliminary readings of the transcripts, several “free nodes”\(^{29}\) were devised to note ideas, concepts and terminology that was appearing in responses. Quite early in the coding process, I decided not to use the questions themselves as parent branches of the coding system. Due to the nature of the storied interviews, questions were used in various ways to elicit responses and stories emerging often served to relate to several questions. I thus decided to use the different types of schools as major branches with children codes used to organise the data from each interviewee into major concepts. Thus Montessori was Branch 1, Steiner was Branch 2, and

\(^{28}\) NUD*IST – an acronym meaning Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching Theorising. It refers to a software package developed at La Trobe University, Melbourne, and placed under copyright by Q.S.R. (Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty. Ltd.) The version used as an analytical tool in this study was QSR NUD*IST 4 (1997).

\(^{29}\) Free node – an identified concept not yet in an identified pattern represented by a tree.
Government and Catholic schools were Branch 3. Branch 4 was Base data of the Interviewees and Branch 5 was for observations and reflections on the interview process itself. Refer to Figure 1 for an example of the initial codes for a school-type branch.

Figure 1

Each of these Nodes had “children” nodes. For example, 1.1 had the following sub branches.
1.2 had the following sub branches coded to organise the relevant interview data:

Refer to Appendix J for a sample list of nodes for Tree 1 partially portrayed in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Data Analysis Methodology

Coding for Analysis – Finding patterns

The NUD*IST index system evolved during the analysis process. In an effort to refine the analytic process by having the coding mirror the emerging concepts, more
tree branches were created to organise the data in the personal and analytic files. Additional branches are revealed in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

![Index Tree](image)

Numerous text searches were conducted using union, intersection, collect and inherit properties of the NUD*IST programme as well as extensive searches for significant words and phrases in the nine hundred twenty seven coded nodes in nine trees. In this manner, contexts were created in which, using inductive reasoning, patterns were explored and unique ideas identified. The results of these searches were recoded as patterns and concepts composing the branches displayed in Figure 4 including Further Study, Results and Discussion. The Result section was created by patterns that emerged and discussion was composed of reflection on these patterns. Literature Review (Branch 7) was used to clarify patterns that were revealed and recoded into
Further Studies (Branch 6) was used to store those codes of questions arising from Results.

One of the first patterns to emerge was the recognition amongst linguists, developmental and cognitive psychologists and primary school teachers of the importance of narrative as a context for language development and communication. Other patterns that emerged were the use of narrative to foster historical and cultural understandings, to provide role models, to explore personal development, to convey universal themes and values and to facilitate change or transformation. Implications for primary and trainee teacher curriculums were also revealed as patterns in the coding. These results will be described in more detail in the following chapters.

Reliability and Validity of the Results revealed through Data Analysis

Reliability

Although it seems generally accepted that these are important concepts to be considered in research, they take a different format in qualitative than in quantitative research. Quantitatively, reliability refers to accuracy in measurement and the ability of the research to be replicated. In qualitative research, rather than repeating measures, one wants to identify a repetition of ideas or concepts that can lead to new discoveries (Minichello et al, 1995). “When we are measuring people’s views, this is translated as internal and external consistency. Internal consistency refers to whether the data are plausible given all that is known about a person and an event” (Neuman, 1997, p. 368). In part, I chose to ensure some internal consistency by interviewing teachers recommended by reputable sources. Because the interviewees were recommended, certain assumptions were made allowing their individual narratives to
be included as data to determine more generalized patterns. These assumptions that served to maximise the interpretative potential of each interview included:

(Minichello et al, 1995, pp. 32-36):

- **Rationality**: I assumed that the interviewees used narrative in the way they reported because they believed that this use reflected their pedagogy.
- **Intentionality**: I assumed that teacher interviewees intended the examples they gave of their programs and classroom activities to be representative of their teaching-learning environment and culture.
- **Self-directedness**: I assumed that the interviewees were presenting authentic views of their experiences in the classroom and their views on education.
- **Truth-telling**: I treated the report of the educators’ experiences as a truthful portrayal of their background, classroom experiences and actions.

I also endeavoured to ensure some qualitative reliability by striving for external consistency. Referrals of teachers from reputable resources who viewed the interviewees as being representative of their school cultures seemed an appropriate starting point for ensuring that the parameters of my investigation were appropriate. Constructing a sampling that included more than one teacher from each type of school also contributed to reliability. When marked differences were viewed in terms of the use of narrative in classrooms of the same avowed pedagogy, then more interviews were sought. The wide variation in the use of narrative for language purposes in the Montessori school led to my interviewing more representatives of this methodology than others in order to identify patterns.
Contextual factors were also considered in an effort to achieve reliability. Observations of several of the teacher’s classrooms created a type of triangulation to ensure that the interview fit “into the overall context” (Neuman, 1997, p. 368). In addition, a literature review, which included narratives of teachers’ experiences in the four types of schools represented, helped me to assure that the stories I was hearing were in context. In effect, the process was designed for “pattern matching”, perhaps the qualitative version of replication (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986, p.124).

Minichello et al (1995) suggest that qualitative researchers make certain cultural assumptions in this pattern matching. To contribute to reliability, one assumes that there is an overlap between a person’s beliefs, words, and ideals and his/her culture and that the subject’s particular culture gives meaning to his/her behavior and actions. In the text and index searches of this study - terms, key words and concepts identified from literature about these cultures were identified in each of the interviews supporting the view that the interviewees were reliable representatives of their school cultures and that their beliefs overlapped with those of their culture. For instance, a discussion of the great stories was part of the discussion with all the Montessori teachers, while reference to myths appeared frequently in the Steiner literature and interviews. For the whole language teachers from the systemic Catholic and Government schools, First Steps was an important reference and school culture link.

In narrative form, one might ask if the plot or theme was present and similarly treated in other texts by the same author? If so, one’s conclusions about the author’s writing style and content becomes more reliable.
**Validity**

Validity in qualitative research is “confidence placed in a researcher’s analysis and data as accurately representing the social world in the field” (Neuman, 1997, p. 369). Validity was partially determined by inviting the six subjects who could be contacted 18 months after the initial data collection to read the findings of the research. In each case, the subjects reported that their views were accurately represented and that they felt reading the thesis gave them motivation to continue in their work within their school cultures as well as further ideas for using narrative in their work. This is a particular attribute of qualitative research. Subjects change as a result of their involvement in the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), but if the study did not have validity it could be argued that this growth would not occur. It is anticipated that the remaining subjects will also have the opportunity to determine if the results are representative of their views and helpful in conceptualizing how they use narrative. Validity has also been determined by inviting other non-subject teachers to read this study and by reporting on the results and conclusions in a summary form to broader audiences representative of the four school cultures. This is an ongoing process, but preliminary feedback supports the premise that this study has validity in that audiences have found it accurately portrayed aspects of their particular methodologies. In a metaphorical sense, internal validity is the engagement of the research narrative. Do the reported stories represent the field in valid way so that the audience becomes involved in the unfolding story?

In contrast, external validity can be referred to as generalisability. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 7) propose that the criterion generalisability should be replace in narrative inquiry by the term “transferability”. The methodology which has pursued
the qualitative inductive process of viewing the contextual wholes, finding patterns and creating theories then focuses on discovering if these transfer to a wide audience. Metaphorically, can the conflict and resolution of the story be applied to other stories – in this case, other school cultures? By hearing one unique story, can we gain insight into other stories in other settings? (Merriam, 1998) Considered in terms of this research, can a Montessori, a Steiner or a whole language Catholic or Government school teacher’s experience using narrative alter how teachers in a different educational culture milieu use narrative? It is anticipated that the results of this research will find a wide application through teachers identifying with the commonalities in this record of storied experiences. The foundation for this was laid by interviewing subjects who worked in varied educational settings identifiable as Montessori, Steiner, Government or Catholic whole language classrooms. Following completion of the data collection, I began presenting the substance of all of these interviews to audiences representing each of these cultures. This process will continue, but initial results indicate that many of the uses of narrative associated with one of these studied pedagogies can be applied to other pedagogies. In other words, elements of the narrative of each educational milieu can be transferred to other school cultures.
Chapter III

Narrative – A Context for Language Development and Understanding

The first pattern to emerge from an analysis of coded data was the use of narrative by teachers from all four pedagogies to foster an understanding of linguistic structure and narrative genre. The Catholic and Government teachers, who viewed themselves as whole language practitioners, provided support for an approach that asserts language skills can be learned experientially in natural and meaningful contexts. Although viewing language learning in this way has revolutionised education in the latter quarter of the 20th century, it became apparent from interview data and literature reviews that many whole language premises have been inherent in both the Montessori and Steiner curriculum for far longer than in these more traditional educational models. Indeed, interviewees from all four educational settings expressed an appreciation for the powerful link between concept-formation and narrative structure and in constructing curriculums reflected on varying ways on the following questions based on whole language assumptions:

- Is there a link between language and thought begins early and is developmental?
- How do children use narrative as a tool in constructing their knowledge and understanding?
- How is oracy a prelude to literacy?
- What are the effects of basing reading and writing curriculum activities on whole meaningful texts?
Does effective language education mean heeding certain principles of natural learning including:

- immersion,
- demonstration,
- expectations,
- responsibility,
- use,
- approximation,
- refinement and response?

And

Do children learn most effectively when they are provided with an integrated approach to language exploration?

Each of these questions reflecting whole language assumptions is examined in turn and illustrated with excerpts from the interview data.

Is there a link between language and thought that begins early and is developmental?

The structuralist, Noam Chomsky, believed that there were innate organisational patterns for language which he labelled Language Acquisition Device (Chomsky, 1965, 1968). Bruner claims that this “innate syntactic language” view of language acquisition has been discredited; we are now aware that there are far more gains from social interaction than Chomsky was aware of at the time, and thus the current accepted theory of grammar acquisition is that “rules can only be learned instrumentally” (Bruner, 1990, p. 72). However, he contends that there may be a case for the innate readiness for the meaning of language provided by the ability to form a prelinguistic appreciation of context (Bruner, 1990). His views concur with Polkinghorne who notes that “the more accepted position is that narrative structures,
although dependent on basic human capacities, are acquired by abstraction from experiences” (Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 112-113).

The work of Greenfield and Savage-Rumbaugh (1990) and of Mandler (1992) supports the contention that concept formation begins before language as children experience physical operations and relationships in dealing with the environment. Greenfield and Savage-Rumbaugh base their conclusions on comparative work with primates who show comprehension of words with gesture and action without being able to articulate them. Mandler has made similar conclusions based on her work with human infants. In fact, she believes that concept formation is occurring earlier than Piaget hypothesised – concurrently with sensorimotor schema rather than afterwards. She theorises that the analysis by the infant of perceptual information leads to “image schemas, which in turn form the foundation of the conceptual system, a system that is accessible first via imagery and later via language as well” (p. 588). Among the concepts Mandler sees developing in this way are agency, causality and animacy (Mandler, 1992, p. 592). Since these concepts parallel elements of narrative including character, plot and metaphor, Mandler’s findings support Bruner’s view that early conceptual preverbal development is laying the groundwork for elements of narrative.

Montessori wrote that “language has begun when it is linked up with perception, even though speech itself, in its psycho-motor mechanism is still rudimentary. “Spoken language has its beginning in a child when the word he pronounces represents an idea” (Montessori, 1912/1988b, p. 246). Bruner notes that certain concepts of communication are in place before the child has mastered formal language for
expressing them linguistically including “indicating, labelling, requesting, and misleading.” In some prelinguistic way the function comes first through interpersonal communication. Children grasp the significance of what is being talked about before they can join in (Bruner, 1990, p. 71). Vygotsky (1962, 1978) has also explored this social aspect of language development. In the early years, the child uses gestures and objects in play that represent objects in relationships. Pretend play and drawing is thus the beginning of the literacy trail. Word meaning becomes generalised as children communicate with parents and others and later it serves an inner, personal function as a child starts talking to himself or herself (Loeffler, 1993; Van Groenou, 1995).

Wiltz and Fein (1996) identify Vivian Paley as a contemporary educator whose practice is inspired by the observations of Vygotsky and Bruner.

Play, the natural medium through which children actively express pleasure, curiosity, logic and fear, becomes the integrated curriculum of her preschool classroom. Fantasy play allows children the opportunity to develop a role, think about a subject, follow a theme and make sense of their universe. Play is a way of life in the nursery school. (p. 63)

32 Misleading – By misleading, Bruner is referring to the ability observed in two to three year olds who having hidden something, then proceed to “withhold relevant information form the searcher, and even create and then supply the searcher with false information as misleading footprints that lead away from the hidden treasure” (Bruner, 1990, p. 75).
Bruner (1990) provides evidence to support his view that it is not only the will to communicate but also “the push to construct narrative that determines the order of priority in which grammatical forms are mastered by the young child” (p. 71). He notes that four of the grammatical structures required to create narrative are among the first to appear. These include “agentivity – action directed toward goals controlled by agents”, “sequentiality- that events and states be linearised in a standard way”, “sensitivity to what is canonical and what violates canonicality in human interaction”, and “narrative perspective” or voice (p. 77).

Sutton-Smith like Mandler proposes that Piagetian mental schematic theory is inadequate to explain children’s development in story telling. He asserts that the idea of the “scripts” of every day life does not explain the development either. Rather, he describes the complexity of being able to tell a story as a “theatrical quadrologue” involving director, audience, actor and counteractor. This story process begins at 2-6 months with face games with the parents followed by action games such as peek-a-boo at 8 months when the child is the audience and 15 months when the child is the director. Sutton-Smith concurs with Vygotsky and Paley that “the true source of

33 Schemes – Piaget referred to action patterns as schemes. They were like action patterns without words. Piaget theorised that learning of these schemes occurred through assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the incorporation of new knowledge into existing schemas. Accommodation refers to the modification of the child’s existing schemes to incorporate new knowledge that does not fit the scheme. Adaptation is maintaining a balance between assimilation and accommodation. (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales & Alward, 1999, pp. 24-25)
narrative is play scaffolding, not social-picture-book scaffolding alone” (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 68-71).

Sutton-Smith supplies a timeline for children’s subsequent story construction:

- Very young children “organise repeated behaviour around one or more central actions (or words) which are then varied endlessly in a patterned fashion” (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 75).

- By the age of 3 or 4 years, they have mastered staging. There is a “sense of oneself as storyteller, of the storyteller as an audience, and of the story itself as a stage for the action of characters” (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 79). He also notes constancy in the characters at this age: “After the first few stories and by the age of three years, most of our children have stories in which the characters become constant and the actions take place in a roughly chronological sequence” (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 80).

- Up until the age of about seven there is no real effort displayed to present a resolution or conclusion. “They are stronger on introductions, complications, and endings than they are on development and resolution” (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p.81).

- When children do start to include a conflict and resolution in their narratives, the nature of the resolution evolves in the following stages:
  
  No response to conflict
  Failure to resolve conflict
  Nullification (central character renders threat powerless)
  Transformation (Danger is removed and there is a complete transformation so the protagonist can’t return to original state.) (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 83)
• By the Age of 11 or 12, children are able to embed subplots in their narrative (Sutton-Smith, 1986, p. 83).

Catholic school interviewee, Kate, revealed similar observations in her description of how the attributes of the children’s narratives change as they get older. She commented on the fact that early stories are sequenced recounts whereas the stories of older students have more conflict. She also observed that language becomes more varied and complex.

When they come into Yr. 2, it’s really simple…As they go to Yr. 7, they become much more descriptive, use more adjectives and adverbs rather than (just nouns)…the format of the story changes. [The stories] probably become a bit more conflicting…But it’s mainly the language that changes…Metaphors or similes are [examples of] the types of language they can use. Rather than just “One day I went shopping”[it becomes] “One day when it was windy I went down to the shopping mall and I bought…”… The sentence structure changes more than anything else. (Kate: 100-110)

Carol who had taught all age levels from 3-12 years in the Montessori system also noted that the language became more detailed with age and that scaffolding plays a significant part in this development:

I think more detail as they get older. Maybe because I’ve tried to help them…. I’ll tell them to get a picture in their mind…What do you see? Is she
bent over? To help them. Because your picture in your mind is different from
the picture that I have in my mind. Or you know a chair. Or any object.
Describe what your chair looks like. What colour is it? And things like that
so their stories get more detailed at least in my class because we do that and
when we’re proofreading, we’ll say, “Well, what does that chair look like?
Because you know we’re talking about living in a house. Well, what does that
house look like? To add more detail. (Carol: 79)

Government School teacher, Lynne, noted a change from a preference for fantasy to a
preference for reality in the older primary children:

Yes, well, I suppose the younger one would be more into writing fantasy,
fairies and the older ones get more into reality. Well, I know some of the
children in another class this year. They’ve been writing modern day fairy
tales or twisted fairy tales, writing in modern day using the themes and theirs
were all very much into reality. They bring it into their own lives rather than
the “once upon a time” stories – the here and now, things from television and
their own sort of backgrounds. (Lynne: 156)

To the question, “You have taught every grade; have you noticed how children’s
stories change as they mature as far as developmental differences or topics they
choose or characters?” Sam from a Waldorf school replied:
There are … general trends. Their stories become more complex, but also they start writing more about an inner life. They can’t do that in Class 2, but by Class 5, they can do that. They’re writing more about their thoughts and feelings, which would happen after Class 3. (Sam: 540)

Interviewees thus noted a content focus as children developed from fantasy to reality, from external events to concern with an inner life, as well as an ability to use more complex language and to create more complex plots and characters.

How do children use narrative as a tool in constructing their knowledge and understanding?

Children at a remarkably young age are making sense of their worlds through language. Montessori introduced the word ‘dictorium’ to describe the use of language for intellectual growth. She strove to differentiate clearly between spoken language that “develops through the exercise of its mechanisms and is enriched by perceptions and the dictorium that “develops with the mind and is enriched by intellectual culture” (Montessori, 1912/1988b, pp. 247-248). What is remarkable is that she made this differentiation based on her observations of children in 1912 making a very early claim that educators need to view aspects of narrative as a means for the child to construct knowledge and understanding.

In 1991, Carol Westby (p. 334) made a similar observation noting that it is the narrative form that moves the child along a continuum of “learning to talk” (learning phonology, syntax, and semantics necessary to communicate basic desire and needs)
to “talking to learn” (using language to monitor and reflect on experience, and reason about, plan and predict experience).

Developmentally, narrative is the first language form that requires the speaker to produce an extended monologue rather than an interactive dialogue. In relating or listening to a narrative, the speaker and listener act as spectators rather than as participants. As spectators, the speakers and listeners reflect on experiences, whereas as participants, they use language to get things done and to make changes in the current situation (Westby, 1991, p. 340).

In the eight decades between Montessori’s first writing to the present, evidence that narrative is a central tool in constructivism has mounted. 34 Polkinghorne (1998) states that “for human existence, linguistic forms are paramount, for they filter and organise information from the physical and cultural realms and transform it into the meanings that make up human knowledge and experience. On the basis of this constructed experience, we understand ourselves and the world, and we make decisions and plans regarding how we will act” (p. 158).

34 Constructivism – Pepin (1998, p. 180) states that constructivism “holds that human beings construct their knowledge in the very process of adapting and that knowledge only has meaning to the extent that it resolves problems encountered while attending to various goals or the accomplishment of various projects.” He further emphasises (1998, p. 184) that because there is no such thing as “experienceless knowledge”, the constructivist perspective has “no room for a kind of education that is conceived of in terms of transmitting knowledge, reducing the gap which separates students’ knowledge from established knowledge)
The teachers I interviewed generally acknowledged that the opportunity to share ideas and experiences and to retell and create stories was very important for children’s cognitive development and knowledge acquisition. In every class observation, I noticed narrative form being used in a variety of ways. On the day that I visited Kate’s class, for example, children, as they worked collaboratively several times during the day, were invited to engage in dialogue. One of these was a news sharing time; later in the morning, children worked in groups to write scripts with environmental messages. Although script writing was a culmination of a term of scaffolding the narrative genre form, the plays followed the expected resolution for that stage of nullification of the threat rather than any enduring resolution of the problem (Sutton-Smith, 1986). So, for example, in one of the scripts, boating enthusiasts, who littered the bay with plastic rings that endangered marine life, had their boat capsized and were denied the privilege of boating again by the water police!

An environmental messages was also the focus on a day I was visiting Nigel’s class. In this case, he told half the story of the frog friends, *Lester and Clyde* (1976), who face the problem of a polluted habitat and invited the children to orally suggest possible outcomes and then to write their own endings. As in Kate’s class, the narrative genre format was scaffolded, and children were encouraged to find a solution for the poor frogs’ habitat problem. Again, I noted that the suggested solutions conformed to Sutton-Smith’s timeline (1986). In this multi-age class, the 5 and 6 year olds sequenced events without any clear solution whereas the 7 and 8 year olds suggested immediate solutions of the nullification format without any lasting resolution. They managed to relocate the frogs to another environment, but no
suggestions were made of how the pollution problem might be solved in some long-term way. In this Montessori class, children were designing and creating frog environments so most of them had realistic descriptions of desirable environments for their endings. As in Kate’s class, Nigel invited children to construct stories to explore not only language and social studies, but also to share relevant life events. In this case, they performed some problematic scenes from a recent camp that were suggested by the teacher and then rewrote the scripts for a more satisfactory ending. Perhaps not surprisingly, a “Sorry” or “I’ll be your friend” often was viewed as a quick verbal way to nullify any problem for the younger children whereas groups that included older children brainstormed realistic alternative patterns of behaviour for the situations. One of these mixed groups dealt with the problem of homesickness. They decided to create a family like group to help their friend feel less lonely and to brainstorm special activities to do that one couldn’t do at home. Thus, instead of nullifying the problem by denying it or glossing over it, they transformed the situation. (Observation Nigel’s class: 21/9/99)

How is oral narrative a prelude to literacy?

Both ontologically and phylogenetically, oracy is a prelude to literacy; humans learn to decode and encode through listening and speaking before reading and writing. “Written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language, to yield their meanings” (Ong, 1982, p. 8).
As previously discussed, educators have noted that children begin using oral
narrative from a very early age in rudimentary forms learning structures that will later
be applied to the written word (Barton Booth, 1991). Montessori (1949/1988a)
observed, “How does it happen that these sounds, at first meaningless, suddenly bring
to mind comprehensions and ideas? The child has not only absorbed words and
meanings, he [sic] has actually absorbed sentences and their constructions” (p. 23).
Montessori emphasised that oracy prepares the child for written grammatical
structure. As is noted in *First Steps*\(^{35}\)(1994), oral retells also prepare the child for
reading and writing with a consideration of the elements of character and plot.

Children begin to develop narrative language from an early age. They
fantasise, role-play and practise make-believe continually. Young children
also relate personal experiences. These recounts, which are the earliest form
of oral narrative, have a very simple structure based on a sequence of events.
Later, children begin to produce oral narratives as a product of their
imagination. These attempts are more complex and involve the manipulation
of story characters, plot, time order and thematic relationship.” (Education
Dept. of WA, 1994, p. 78)

\(^{35}\) *First Steps* – literacy program developed by the Educational Department of Western Australia.
Developmental programme for guiding children in all strands of literacy and promoting meaningful
integration of all modes of decoding and encoding.
Viewing oracy as differing from written narrative primarily in its form of expression and in its developmental progression influences teaching approaches. For example, as preparation for literacy, the focus on rhymes such as nursery rhymes or children’s rhyming texts is viewed as a way to practise phonics and focus on key words that will help children decode for reading:

A development of this is the learning of a cumulative song by heart and then learning to read the key words in the song. Whole class choral reading is just a small initial part of the reading process and is suitable for songs and to accompany performances, etc. as you have seen. (Sam: 700)

I also used the nursery rhymes a lot. I think it’s important for children to … learn some of those nursery rhymes. (Carol: 190)

Similarly, orally retelling of a story is practised as preparation for retelling it in writing:

Children must tell many stories before they ever write them. They must also have a great deal of experience with rhythm and rhyme. (Bernadette: 106)

Often, teachers model writing by recording the oral narratives of preschool children. For example, I recorded the following observation from Shawn’s class:
We started in the 3-6 class where she revealed how she is a scribe for children who “sign up” for her to record their stories in written form. She does this faithfully, noting exact pronunciation, so that for the three year old she had recorded “maked” for “made” charting the child exploring the rules of language as well as the communication vehicle. (Shawn: 86)

Likewise the scaffolded who, what, where, when and why or how of morning news provides preparation for reading and writing the news article genre.

This little boy who can't read or write came to school with his face badly grazed. I think his mother called and said he had fallen off his bicycle. And when he came back, he was so anxious to tell us how this happened. He told us he was driving his father's hot rod and he crashed. He described the crash and how he rolled the car into the barrier and he spent about fifteen minutes on this story he made up. He was telling the other kids that that's the way it happened [but] he had actually fallen off the bike. …He made up a fantastic story. Catching fire and the fire engine came. He's very keen to tell us about his dad's hot rod racing all the time and I suppose he just puts himself into that situation. Strange. (Lynne 1: 169)

Some of the teachers interviewed expressed the view that oracy is so important as a precursor to literacy that we need to spend far more time on oral language activities than is allowed for in current recommended practices. Rushton (1996), who works with Australian Aboriginal children, acknowledges that spoken and written language serve different purposes and oral games and activities can be effectively used to
scaffold written language. “Even though they may not be able to read or write, they are quite capable of reproducing orally the structure of a written text and remembering its purpose and structure” (p. 89). Games include description games, instruction games, recount and narrative games. “The topics selected for the oral language games relate to children’s immediate experiences and environment, but playing the games encourages them to speak in a way that resembles written English more closely than their everyday speech” (p. 93).

Lynne, who works in a Government school with many disadvantaged children and has considerable experience using both First Steps and Literacy Net, explained that she feels some children need more oral practice than others. She expressed her concern in an interview follow-up that children were expected to write a persuasive viewpoint when their circumstances had given them no knowledge or practice in debating format. She finds some of the oral discussion advocated by Literacy Net helps to counter this curriculum deficit.

Using Literacy Net talking and Reader’s Circle, we are getting the children to think a little deeper. They are discussing the ins and outs and talking about

36 Literacy Net – name given to Western Australian Education Dept. initiative to combine guided reading (see note viii) and student outcome statements to help create a profile of children with literacy problems and then to scaffold outcomes with appropriate literacy activities such as reader’s circle (see vii).

37 Reader’s Circle – sometimes referred to as a Literature Circle. Small groups of students (5-6) meet to discuss novel they are reading. In preparation, they have noted questions about plot or characters, items of interest, words of interest. “Literature circles offer children the chance to talk about what they
characters in more depth and writing clues…[I realised] I needed to do a lot more work with them orally before getting them to write it down. This year [even] with better readers, we do lots of talking first. I don’t worry too much about writing down. (Lynne 2:10-13)

Bernadette, a Waldorf teacher, also believes in devoting much more time to oracy before writing in the classroom.

I absolutely believe that language must be oral first. Written language is such a late development in culture and it should be for children too. Steiner actually says somewhere that in an ideal world, we wouldn't teach writing until they're twelve, but of course we can't do that in our world, so we compromise and start at seven. But can you imagine what we could do if they weren't writing? They would pick up writing soon enough, but you would be working with all this wonderful oral stuff even more and we keep it going so strongly all the way through. (Bernadette: 52)

One implication of Bernadette’s plea for a longer period of literacy focus is that the more children know about speaking, the more ready they will be for tackling reading have read in the context of a small group where they can ask questions, listen to other interpretations, clear up misunderstandings, voice their opinions and be confronted with other people’s readings of the text – together they can access other meanings.” (Simpson & Wilson, 1993, p. 134
and writing. This belief reflects the natural learning paradigm that is a key foundational belief of whole language theorists.

Also implicit in Bernadette’s comment is a suggestion that, in addition to providing practice for writing, oracy is a unique type of narrative with characteristics and purposes separate and distinct from that of written narrative. As a Steiner teacher, Bernadette has explored how oral narrative characteristics such as rhythm, rhyme and imagery relate to the mythic understanding of young children which parallels the way traditional oral cultures made sense of their worlds. Chapter IV will incorporate an exploration of how this view linking oral narrative to a mythic understanding has been proposed not only by Rudolf Steiner over seventy years ago, but also by contemporary education theorists including Ong (1982), Berry (1988), Egan (1997) and Sandlos (1998).

What are the effects of basing reading and writing curriculum materials on whole meaningful texts?

I am one of a generation of educators who have embraced the whole language approach; I am convinced that the revolutionary rudiments of this movement were sound, even if modifications of practice have resulted from waves of process writing, genre approach, critical literacy, functional grammar and integrated approaches such as First Steps, Guided Reading\textsuperscript{38} and Literacy Net. My commitment and that of many

\textsuperscript{38} Guided Reading – Freebody and Luke (1990) identify four roles of a literacy learner: code breaker, meaning- maker, text user, text critic. Guided reading is the process of scaffolding readers through these four ways to interpret a text.
colleagues to whole language strengthened as our classrooms became the habitats of enthusiastic learners in contrast to the settings of boredom that typified our own early literacy experiences. Nightmarish flashes include a repetitive chorus of “Look, Jane, look. See Spot Run” and the memory of sitting in a circle taking turns to decode the meaningless trivia provided by basal readers. This might be followed by comprehension exercises on the tedious text or perhaps unrelated grammar workbook pages or lists of what seemed to me to be arbitrary spelling words. My nightmares all relate to the traditional language teaching methodology of the time – characterised by the separation of language components, arbitrarily sequenced skills-based exercises, the drilling of skills in abstraction from experience and a curriculum that followed a textbook (McCulla & Walshe, 1979; Goodman, 1986). To this list, I might add that the curriculum was teacher directed and individual needs were neither appreciated nor catered for. Children were taught in a total class group in desks separated into rows.

In the 1970’s, dissatisfaction such as I’ve shared created a general rumbling in expressions of discontent in the teaching of language. This led to a re-evaluation of methodology by a number of theorists and the whole language movement was launched. Australian and New Zealand educators were a prolific and vocal force, joining British and North American language specialists in advocating the critical move away from the traditional Reductionist approach that emphasised pattern matching, discrimination training and a focus on accuracy to Constructivist/Interactivist theories that emphasised teaching in context, meaningful experiences and the empowerment of children (Goodman, 1986; Payne, 1993). Simplistically stated, it was now frowned upon to teach language components in
isolation. It was believed that reading and writing should be based on whole meaningful texts.

Language is language only when it’s whole. Whole text, connected discourse in the context of some speech or literacy event, is really the minimal functional unit, the barest whole that makes sense. When teachers and pupils look at words, phrases, sentences, they do so always in the context of the whole, real language texts that are part of real language experiences of children. (Goodman, 1986, pp. 27-28)

Interviewee, Fran, recalled the exciting times when these ideas were first applied in West Australia.

For the next number of years I was in the education department writing the reading notes, "How to Teach Reading" and I completed that all the while doing this extra study …with this lecturer who had himself studied with Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman. So we were getting that model coming through which was really very exciting times, actually. Really, really exciting. (Fran 1: 29)

Fran went on to describe the joy derived from an experiential literacy model:
Always the quest for making reading interesting and joyful. … Reading should be joyful, you should take joy from reading. And this was all new in a sense, because we'd been plodding through with Dick and Dora and Janet … (Fran 1: 47)

Margaret Meek, a New Zealand educator, wrote and demonstrated extensively on the importance of empowering the reader. “To learn to read a book, as distinct from simply recognising the words on the page, a young reader has to become both the teller (picking up the author’s view and voice) and the told (the recipient of the story, the interpreter.” (Meek, 1988, p. 10) Margaret Meek’s work, with a younger reader focusing on Rosie’s Walk by Hutchins (1968), is demonstrated in How Texts Teach What Readers Learn (Meek, 1988) Over 27 pages of pictures, one reads the text, “Rosie the hen went for a walk across the yard around the pond over the haystack past the mill through the fence under the beehives and got back in time for dinner.” This simple, yet whole meaningful text can engage the child as he/she starts to predict patterns in the text, look for obstacles and second guess the fox who is not in the written text at all.39

Does effective language education means heeding certain principles of natural learning?

39 Grammar context – Although Meek doesn’t write about functional grammar in How Texts Teach What Children Learn (1988), one could certainly use this wonderful 27 word text for the exploration of prepositions.
Smith (DeStefano, 1981) explained that a child decodes because he/she is learning all the time through a combination of demonstration, engagement and sensitivity. We must be shown, be interested in what we are shown and be sensitive to that showing. Australian, Brian Cambourne (1988), expanded on referring to the Parallel Principles of Natural Learning to describe how the literacy process could follow the process of learning to speak. In exploring these Principles, I was struck by how many of them were acknowledged as important in Montessori’s and in Steiner’s writings and curriculum. This may be because the Parallel Principles of Natural Learning lay a foundation for a constructivist approach to teaching language and Montessori and Steiner were early advocates of a constructivist approach. Both stressed a “bottom up” rather than a “top down” approach to learning. The primary role of education in their view was “putting the onus on students to construct personal meanings and interpretations” (Powell, 2000, p. 45). This meant designing a curriculum and an environment that would promote meaning-making. It also meant viewing the teacher’s role as a guide or facilitator rather than the dispenser of knowledge.

Certainly there are differences between Montessori and Steiner classrooms and what is viewed as a Constructivist classroom today. Montessori materials, which support the curriculum, are each designed to teach a single concept and are often self-

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40 Sensitive – Smith describes sensitivity as “the absence of any expectation that learning will not take place or that it will be difficult.” (1981, p. 105)

41 Role of the teacher – Montessori views the role of the teacher as a facilitator throughout the child’s education whereas Steiner sees the teacher’s role as an evolving one – a benevolent authority figure in
correcting, thereby, providing a contrast to the open ended nature of a constructivist curriculum. However, it could also be said that most materials can be explored in several ways and are, in fact, tools the children can draw upon in their self-chosen avenues of exploration. In Montessori schools, explorations – especially in the early years – are often individual and in Steiner schools whole-group lessons are very common. Although collaborative learning occurs in both settings, it is not as predominant as in constructivist classrooms. What should be emphasised, though, is that both Montessori and Steiner believed that the child brought something unique to each learning experience (based on previous experience, level of development, personality and learning style) and further constructed himself or herself in an individual way as a result of this experience (Chattin-McNichols, 1992; Powell, 2000; De Vries & Kohlberg, 1987; De Vries, 2000). Both believed that narrative had a key place in education forming a foundation for engaging the child in the process of self-education. Therefore, there is support for considering both Montessori and Steiner as forerunners of the whole language movement. Some of the similarities and differences of the Montessori and Steiner curriculums – in contrast to the whole language curriculum – can be clarified by considering their views and practices in relation to Cambourne’s *Principles of Natural Learning*.

**Immersion**

Young children are immersed in a world of spoken language. (Cambourne, 1988) To learn to read and write, the natural learning paradigm would imply that we should the early years gradually transforming as the student’s needs require a facilitator and companion in upper primary years.
immerse the children in texts of all kinds including environmental print. Cambourne stated that this would include teacher and learner-controlled “visual and aural immersion” (p. 46). The Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) itemized the varieties of material that contribute to this immersion “including: signs, billboards, notes, messages, memos instructions, reports, newspapers, magazines, CD-Roms, Web pages, essays, text books, fairy stories, picture books, myths legends, fables biographies, autobiographies, novels, stories, poetry and drama” (p. 91).

Certainly, in my class observations, there was a multiplicity of texts in the Government and Catholic schools and also in the Montessori school classrooms. Big Books were mentioned as a key resource by all the Government and Catholic teachers and by Allison and Nigel from the Montessori Schools. Most classrooms also had library corners with additional texts. Kate described the variety of texts in her classroom:

I use Charlotte’s Web, James and the Giant Peach, The BFG, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, Jolly Postman, a lot of fairy tales, the spider stories. When we’re doing a theme, I choose a book everyday. I’ll have a book for each day. Usually we spend at least 15 minutes reading …If I can use a book to demonstrate something I will. (Kate: 26)

42 The Curriculum Framework – the Western Australian framework establishing learning outcomes expected of all students Kindergarten to year 12.
All the Government and Catholic schools had phonics charts and letter charts on the walls and a great deal of displayed children’s work. Lynne had a colour chart and a days of the week chart as well.

Montessori classrooms had far less print on the walls, but they did have language activities on shelves in a designated area of the classroom. One popular language activity to emphasise the function of the noun involved labelling moveable and immovable items in the classroom, although these labels were usually only up for the period of exploration. All the Montessori classrooms I visited had an extensive choice of reading books. Ellen, for instance, had a story corner with beautiful picture books. The stories selected were rich in universal meaning, beautifully illustrated and representative a variety of cultures. They included: *The Piece of Straw* by Morimoto (1985), *St Francis Of Assisi* by Chesterton (1987), *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* by Wojciechowski (1997), *Remaking the Earth: A Creation Story from the Great Plains of North America* by Paul Goble (1996), *Noah’s Ark* by Janisch (1997), *The Story of the Root Children* by Von Olfers (1990) and a book on Greek myths, among others. Ellen also had a shelf of biographies and age appropriate novels including *The Witches* by Roald Dahl (1983) which was reading to her class at the time of my visit. American Montessori teacher, Carol, also had a variety of lovely books representative of varied cultures and narrative genres. She used the Great Books programme as a guide in selecting books for her classroom.

*Junior Great Books* is a series for children. *Great Books* is for adults who are really into literature and sitting and discussing it and so *Junior Great Books* is meant for the children. *What Are? Books* were a collection of shorter stories.
We did *Aesop’s Fables* and *How did the Elephant Get its Trunk?* There was also a Russian story similar to *Cinderella*… (Carol: 170-171)

Steiner also believes in immersing the child in language but is very clear that for the young child this is oral language only. My observations indicated that Waldorf teachers support Steiner’s view that:

If a teacher tries to explain the subjects during the first school years, the children will react by becoming blunted and dull. This approach simply does not work. On the other hand, everything will go smoothly if, rather than explaining the subject matter, one forms the content into a story, if words are painted with mental images, and if rhythm is brought into one’s whole way of teaching. (Steiner, 1996, p. 100)

One does not see a great deal of environmental print in the Waldorf early childhood classroom. On the day that I spent in Class 2, there was one blackboard with coloured chalked rhyming words emphasising phonics work happening in the class that week:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>shack</th>
<th>duck</th>
<th>clock</th>
<th>kick</th>
<th>well</th>
<th>hill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>back</td>
<td>luck</td>
<td>rock</td>
<td>trick</td>
<td>shell</td>
<td>Jill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>track</td>
<td>muck</td>
<td>dock</td>
<td>pick</td>
<td>bell</td>
<td>kill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was also a poem by St. Francis (beautifully written and illustrated in chalk on the blackboard) whom they were studying as part of their Year 2 Curriculum.
Praised be God for sister Moon
and every twinkling star;
They shine on heaven most
bright and clear
All glorious they are.
Praised be God for brother
Wind
That storms across the skies
And then grows still and silent
moves and sweetly sings and
sighs.  Praised be God for
brother fire
Friendly and wild and tame
Tender and warm, mighty and
strong
A flashing, flaring flame.

Praised be God for mother
Earth
Who keeps us safe and well
Whole mother heart all warm
with love
Dark in her depths doth dwell.

Saint Francis
I noted that beautiful storybooks were present in the preschool area. On my observation in a Steiner classroom, it was explained to me that most storybooks are selected for their beauty and realism in terms of presenting the whole human form rather than merely a hand or a head. So, although, occasionally stories are read to children, they are most often told and often presented through puppetry. The same puppet play might be presented for several days allowing the children to immerse themselves in the story and to gather some additional relevance for themselves on each visitation.

When children have reading books in Grade 2, readers are made up of the animal fables that have been told to the children.43

In my class, I made up two readers (with parent help) based on the animal fable stories which the children had heard and written about. The text was more complex than what you would expect from a first reader and so memory played an important part. The children’s motivation to read (even a challenging text) was high because the books were tailor made to suit their interests and because the familiarity with the content was high. (Sam: 705) Sam explained that these main stories, such as the fables and library books that are read to the children, arouse and maintain “initial motivation.” This is supported by simple word – skill readers. (Sam: 709)

43 Animal Fables, Celtic tales and tales of the Saints form the mythical base for the Year 2 curriculum.
In addition, the children in a Steiner class do a great deal of choral recitation and choral reading which Cambourne suggests is a type of immersion (Cambourne, 1988, p. 125). Sam reported that his class often recited the above poem about St. Francis when they were studying saints.

Mem Fox (1997b) adds to this idea of immersion by asserting that “when we develop literacy we should be reading aloud daily, bombarding children with the best texts available” (p. 123). She is really emphasising two points: selecting good literature and daily reading.

Fran, currently teaching in a Catholic school, supported the quest for quality literature:

I really wanted to introduce them to good literature, but also to heighten their engagement, engagement into literature…so what I did initially was to really introduce them to the concept of journey and to show them that good literature often involves a journey. (Fran 1: 77-79)

Ellen and Allison, Montessorians, both read daily to their class and reflected on the power of this immersion into literature:
There is something wonderful about their rapt expectancy. You know the way they’ll sit on the mat and listen to a story and so trustingly and so eagerly. It’s obviously something that they want and need. I think we need it too. At the moment we’re reading Roald Dahl and it’s all I can do to stop because they are so eager to keep going. (Ellen 1: 331)

I would always be reading a novel. I’m talking about the power of story. I know that children are quiet immediately when one reads. I don’t mean because they are quiet but because they are absorbed….It is part of the power of story that it brings them all together. They are all exploring it together but relating to it in individual ways. This is part of the power of story. And I think you need to both tell and read to really tap that. (Allison: 57)

Demonstration

Cambourne (1988) explained that children need “many demonstrations of how texts are constructed and used” (p.33). These demonstrations can be provided by the speaking of other people or by texts themselves which Cambourne referred to as “artifacts” (p. 47). However, demonstrations would not lead to learning unless children are engaged by the demonstration.

The world is filled with demonstrations and if we engage with one of them we internalise some aspect or portion of that particular demonstration. If we engage with repeated demonstrations of the same action and/or artifact we begin to select other aspects of it to internalise and, as a consequence, we begin to interpret, organise and reorganise our developing knowledge until we
can perform and/or produce that demonstration or a variation of it. This is another way of saying we learn. (Cambourne, 1988, p. 47)

Cambourne (1988) also insisted that demonstrations must be presentations of language wholes. He says they need to be “whole enough to provide enough information about the various systems and sub-systems of language so that the learner, if he [sic] decides to engage, will have the data available for working out how all the pieces fit together and interact with each other” (p. 48).

Whole language demonstration doesn’t mean showing an isolated skill, but skills in context. Using an overhead to show writing a letter would be a demonstration, but so would reading a text and asking relevant questions pertaining to prediction, sequencing, plot, character or grammar and spelling. Vicky revealed how she modelled text exploration in her work with children considered at risk.

I go out and find a new book and I write my lessons around it. I know that’s not necessarily the way to go, but it’s the way I go and it works. The kids get excited about the book, we do all our vocab [sic], we do lots of our spelling, lots of our phonics. It’s still pretty structured in that I make sure we’re covering all the phonics we should and all the spelling we should, but we do heaps and heaps of comprehension through that as well. At the moment, we’re leaping off doing some thinking activities as well, but we’re going through a narrative – using that as our vehicle. (Vicky 1: 71)
Bernadette, a Steiner teacher, used a demonstration of oral poetry to lead into writing. She indicated an awareness that such a demonstration would indicate to the children how aspects of language fit together.

This term, we will do some writing. They have written their own verse. Or sometimes I will write out a poem, and they have to fill in the words. Noah and his three sons good made an ark… That, of course, is done orally. You might write it on the board, but I would always do it with them orally, because they have to hear it. You can’t spell if you can’t hear. (Bernadette: 257)

Catholic teacher, Fran emphasised the importance of demonstration using texts:

If you want good endings, show them good endings; if you want good beginnings, show them good beginnings. (Fran 1: 291)

Montessori teacher, Shawn, also provided examples in her interview of modelling writing for children who would tell her their stories to record. Sometimes children would make picture journals and she would write the labels they requested until they could begin to do this for themselves.

It became clear to me that there are key differences between Montessori classrooms who have not adopted whole language approaches and those who have. Engagement
in non-whole language Montessori classrooms is separate from demonstration
whereas in whole language classrooms Cambourne (1988) indicates that immersion
and demonstration contribute directly to engagement. For example, in a traditional
Montessori classroom, the child may hear the story of writing which may be a catalyst
for exploring the alphabet and even parts of speech. However, the story itself is not a
demonstration of the integration of language modalities. Demonstrations are the
modelling of tasks designed to teach a single concept; this is also referred to as
isolating a difficulty. Montessori methodology emphasises that every lesson should
begin with a demonstration. Showing the child has to be the first step toward
understanding a concept. Parts of speech, for example, will first be presented through
function games – little dramas that show how the part of speech works in our spoken
and written language. Montessori indicates that there are indirect demonstrations
happening all the time too. So, for instance, to engage a child in an activity, it should
be presented so that the teacher expresses “a lively interest in what she is doing”
(Montessori, 1988, 154).

**Expectations**

Cambourne (1988) claimed that children would be much more successful if we
expected them to learn to read just as we expected them to learn to talk – naturally.
Meek’s views on how a child learns concur with those of Cambourne. As she
explained:

> Reading is a whole-task learning, right from the start. From first to
last the child should be invited to behave like a reader, and those who want to help him should assume that he can learn, and will learn, just as happened when he began to talk. (Meek, 1982, p. 24)

Acknowledging this principle means focusing on real and whole narratives as contexts for students to learn the parts of language just as they learned about oracy from real stories. It means not cutting up the context to bite sized irrelevant pieces which can impede the child’s reading progress rather than nurture it. Years before Cambourne devised his principles, Montessori (1955/1989b) expressed her fear of this fragmentation:

At the beginning, short words are given, then longer ones. First simple, then complex syllables, and so on, are presented. In other words, obstacles are placed in front of the child at every step. But these difficulties do not actually exist. The children already know short and long words and all kinds of syllables in their mother tongue. All that is necessary is to analyse the sounds and find the corresponding alphabet sign for each. (p. 95)

However, there was still quite a difference between the early Whole Language advocates and Montessori. Loeffler (1993), writing in America, was concerned that the whole language advocates were being overly optimistic.

Their assumption is that once children understand what reading is all about, mapping spoken language onto the written code of the culture, they will figure
out for themselves, with informal help when needed, how the writing system works. It is my opinion that these people are overly optimistic and that most children will need more than this incidental information to become successful independent readers. (Loeffler, 1993, p. 69)

Loeffler confirms that many of the ideas advocated by whole language proponents such as “reading aloud to them from children’s literature, encouraging the memorization of songs, poems and stories while viewing the written words (usually using big books), writing from children’s dictation, and encouraging children to do their own writing using pictures, scribble writing, or invented spelling “ would be congruent with Montessori. The real difference, of course, lies in what one believes is the degree of assistance that the child needs from the environment in order to make the transition to written language” (p. 67). She implies that Montessori language activities promote phonemic awareness to a much greater degree than whole language which focuses only on the beginnings and endings of words. In Australia, if one views the wide acceptance of First Steps, Guided Reading, and the Thrass44 Project, in the past decade, it is apparent that as Whole Language classrooms adopt a more integrated language approach (integrating literature, phonics and grammar) and advocate more scaffolding, they are developing more similarities to Montessori classrooms. The expectation that children will learn to read more effectively if

44 Thrass Project – A WA based phonics awareness programme whereby children are taught to explore the multiple ways of making the same sound at the same time. Montessori equipment including phonics booklets advocates a similar approach.
exposed to a meaningful whole before the parts has been maintained, but there is a greater emphasis on scaffolding those parts.

Loeffler (1993) points out that many whole language specialists focused more on reading than writing. However, she notes that Marie Clay\textsuperscript{45} has written about the importance of children’s writing at this early stage of literacy development which helps the child’s “search-and-correct strategies” (p. 71). The Montessori method similarly encourages children to write as soon as they know two consonants and a vowel. Montessori has pointed out in her work that normally one would expect children to write before they can read. Indeed, it is rare to enter a Montessori class and not see children using a moveable alphabet\textsuperscript{46} to write stories in invented spelling.

The correct use of the alphabet in learning to write should only give the simple signs of the alphabet itself in order to put them in direct relation with the sounds they represent…The alphabet in direct connection with spoken language – that is the way to achieve the art of writing by following an inner path. The ability to write will be acquired as a result of the analysis of the words each one possesses, and of the activity of one’s own mind, which is interested in such a magical conquest. (Montessori, 1955/1989b, pp. 83-84)

\textsuperscript{45} Professor Marie Clay – Professor Clay, a New Zealander, is one of the originators of the whole language approach.

\textsuperscript{46} Moveable alphabet – separate letters constructed of wood or card that can be manipulated by the child to create words. The vowels are a different colour from the consonants in the moveable alphabet.
Shawn made several references to early writers in her Montessori school:

A little boy who has just started writing in the last month and a half. This is his first year with us. He’s four. He really wasn’t comfortable doing it before, but now he is. He’s not only comfortable. He wrote a variation on the Carl and Chloe stories. (Characters invented by an older child). (Shawn 1: 53)

There’s one little boy who for three years now has written about his cats. He’s given them adventurous, mischievous personas. And he writes tales where he puts them in settings all around the world or in different funny situations and sees how they get out of it. (Shawn 1: 43)

In conclusion, one could modify Cambourne’s original statement by saying that we can expect that most children will naturally learn to read and write if the environment provides them with a meaningful whole context for motivation, encouragement, and appropriate scaffolding activities for phonetic and phomemic awareness.

Responsibility

By responsibility, Cambourne implied that children learn best when they decide what to learn. He contended children should be given the opportunity to be problem-solvers by choosing what activity they want to pursue to learn what they feel they need to learn. Since each child will be taking something unique away from each demonstration, “demonstrations must be demonstrations of ‘wholes’ of language
behaviour. If teachers want learners to make decisions about which part of a demonstration they will engage with, teachers must provide demonstrations which contain all the information from which any learner may wish to draw” (Cambourne, 1988, pp. 64-65). He thus advocated that there should be a variety of language activities from which a child can choose in the classroom. Cambourne asserted that we must trust the child to bring all tools of language decoding into play in reading and writing without feeling we must fragment them for him/her. We must trust that the child will consider semantic cues (meaning through text), syntactic cues (knowledge of language patterns and grammatical structure) and graphophonic cues (letter sound knowledge and visual knowledge) when decoding a text just as he/she considers multiple skills and levels in oral language. Cambourne implied that we must view language “as a network of interlocking systems” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 36) and provide a choice of language activities that respect that children develop an understanding of this interlocking system in different ways. Recent literature in language learning reflected in programs such as First Steps and Literacy Net would support this integration of cue systems. These programmes also support Cambourne’s plea that children have frequent “whole language” demonstrations. However, there is more emphasis in these programmes on providing a range of activities that clearly scaffold the use of language cue systems in acknowledgement that individual children require different amounts of assistance in achieving a competency in using these skills and many seem to benefit from more guided, sequential support.

In the Montessori system, one conveys respect for children by affording them the opportunity to be involved in decision-making for their own work. As in a
Cambourne-inspired classroom, the child has great choice of activities to meet his/her language acquisition needs. However, as mentioned above (see Demonstration), in traditional Montessori classrooms, each activity is distinctly linked to a concept. Prepared activities are based on the classroom context – e.g. grammar boxes where students use parts of speech learned to create phrases and sentences that use vocabulary based on a Montessori environment. Command cards⁴⁷ that children read and enact also refer to objects in this environment rather than to a story used for engagement.

Thus, the idea that children are responsible for their own learning is parallel in Montessori and whole language classrooms, but the choices vary. In a whole language class, the choices change depending on the story, whereas in a Montessori class, the activities remain accessible in the classroom to be practiced according to the interest and level of development of the child. In all of the whole language Catholic and Government school classrooms I visited teachers provided choices of activities for the students based on a story or topic discussion that demonstrated a variety of language skills and cue systems. In the Montessori classrooms observed during this study, there was considerable variation in how literature was linked to language exploration activities. In some classrooms that had embraced whole language, a story was often used to provide a whole context and language activities resembled those in the Catholic and Government schools.

⁴⁷ Command cards – cards in sets each focusing on a different part of speech. Verb cards emphasise actions that might occur in the classroom, prepositions ask students to place objects in front of, next to, etc.
Well, so much of what Montessori wrote is so timely even today - the maths, science - it's just so easy to apply it to educational theory today. Language is a bit hard in that Montessori [while] she did believe certainly in whole context, … developed materials that sit on a shelf and have set little cards to look at sentence structure and things like this. I find my whole experience has been that children are not motivated to do that work. At one time, I spent literally weeks finding the most wonderful sentences I could and putting them all in coloured boxes by which parts of speech were in them and putting them on the shelves and the children never took them off ever until I threw all that away and then after I'd read a story I'd make sentence strips. We have computers and photocopies so it was easy to alter the shelf materials depending on what we were studying. If it related to their lives or what we were studying - that might be geology or it might be lizards or it might be a novel we were reading, but if it related to their concerns, they were motivated and they would go and practise these concepts and we fostered this independence – a very big part of child-centred education …So I think I've started to believe that in any type of educational system, we need to ask questions constantly. "Is this still doing what it's supposed to be doing now?" and I think in Montessori I have to say, "No, we need to open our eyes and look at what's happening in the Government system, in the Catholic system. They are using First Steps. The children are reading and making wonderful progress. How can we use some of these wonderful ideas and make them ours?" (Allison: 46)
In other Montessori classrooms, concepts were demonstrated and practised through the standard Montessori equipment, and then concepts reviewed in an experiential way using a story or novel. This was the case in a 6-9 class in Shawn’s school.

The grammar gets kind of dry. By the time you get to the third grade, you can use literature. I have them put symbols over passages from *Charlotte’s Web* or there are passages from history that they have to punctuate or put in cursive so we tie it in that way. (Meg – interviewed with Shawn: 187)

In the Steiner classes I visited, each aspect of language tended to be explored as a whole class although there were times when children were allowed to interpret or explore the story studied through choosing an activity such as poetry, drama, art, etc. Sam indicated that he often selected activities to appeal to different temperaments, but would find that children didn’t choose what one would expect. In a way, this supports Cambourne’s view that children will take responsibility for learning what they need to know.

What I've done is give the four activities. One might be drawing St

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48 Temperaments – Steiner viewed *the temperaments* as being manifested in the human body and character. The Melancholic have an introspective orientation. The Phlegmatic tend toward stability and inertia and are usually pleasant and good-natured. The Sanguine are associated with an extroverted orientation. They are active, dynamic and dominated by feelings. The Choleric are sturdy and energetic, swing between introverted and extroverted. (Marshak, 1997, pp. 37-38)
Francis beside the Pope, his friend who is dying. I want to touch the sadness, melancholic feeling. Another one is to act out the part where St. Francis goes out to meet the wolf so there are all those people there with sticks and everything. And so that was more aimed at the Choleric. There were four activities which I thought would appeal to the four temperaments. Then I said you can choose what you want to do. At the end of the morning, we shared with the class what was done. So in the drama, they rehearsed it and performed it. With the drawings, we put those up. Another girl wrote a poem with my help based on St. Francis' poems. And the others did wax modeling of the great feast. So they can choose …we are a mixture of those temperaments plus other stuff – personal and other experiences that come into it. And I got some lovely surprises. Children I thought were choleric and would love to get in there and act were doing these beautiful pictures of the sad, dying Pope. Others I thought were very shy were out doing drama. Some chose as I would have guessed. (Sam: 204-208)

Whole language, Montessori and Steiner teachers all share the view that children assume the responsibility to construct their own literacy knowledge just as they assumed responsibility for learning to speak. However, there is some difference of opinion as to what conditions nurture this responsibility. Whole language classrooms present a demonstration of the interlocking of language, usually through narrative, and this is followed up by a choice of literacy activities. Some Montessori teachers interviewed have adopted this model, but others present demonstrations and a choice of activities to isolate difficulties before drawing concepts together in an experiential
way with a story. The Steiner teachers interviewed tell a big lesson story from which components of language are selected but, in contrast to the whole language classrooms, the class focuses on each concept together. When a choice of activity is provided, it is more likely a response to temperament variations rather than a response to individual variations in learning language skills including decoding cues.

Use

Cambourne claimed that “learners need time and opportunity to use, employ and practise their developing control in functional, realistic, non-artificial ways” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 33). Use thus relates to providing a real purpose, or need for children to use their literacy skills in the classroom and the provision of time for them to fully address these needs without constant interruption.

All the interviewees agreed that language use should be purposeful. Lynne, a Government school teacher, for instance, indicated that she concurred with Mem Fox who strongly recommended that teachers should not have children write letters unless they were going to get an answer. She stressed that we need to write for someone either to be read silently or aloud. “Writers care about writing which has a purpose and an audience. They care about the organisation and clear meaning, about spelling, grammar and punctuation. Writing without purpose and audience means writing without caring, writing without improvement” (Fox, 1997b, p. 125). These views of Mem Fox influenced Lynne in choosing some of her class literacy projects. One of her projects was a collaborative effort between a Year 1 and a Year 6 to create a book based on Guess What? (Fox, 1988) with the purpose of presenting it to the teacher described and her class.
Yes, my class was grade one and the other class was grade six. The Grade ones went through the text and looked at the character and then chose a character to write the story about. We had a preprimary teacher who was very different and she really stood out from the average teacher in appearance (and she would say that). She likes to be different. She would have bright different–coloured nail polish and very short hair –about one centimetre and tattoos, beautiful face. And so we decided to write our story about her. …The children had to brainstorm all the things about her – her hair, and her nails and the ribbons that she wore and her earrings and basically put it together like the Mem Fox book. We tried to make up little bits of rhyme, more than just a verse. More than "Does she wear rings?" When we had the buddy classes together, the year sixes worked with the year ones and each had one page to illustrate. The year sixes did most of the drawing but the year ones helped to put details in. They basically worked together on it. We stuck it all together and presented it to Miss Green who was absolutely thrilled. (Lynne 1: 101-102)

Lynne also shared a booklet prepared by the “superclass”\(^49\) she was teaching at the time. This booklet was a culmination of a narrative poetry project in which the

\(^{49}\) Superclass – used to describe mixed age class of Grades 4,5,6 who were put in a single class for a year for literacy remediation in 1998. This format was abandoned n 1999 and students were again fully integrated.
children memorized, wrote out and illustrated their poems and then voluntarily presented them to other classes. Lynne claimed that this was one of her most successful projects with this class because the work was purposeful for the students who gained a heightened self-esteem from the experience. (Lynne 1: 309)

In the Steiner school, Bernadette, also expressed an awareness of the importance of authentic purpose for her children. In Class 3, the children learned the language of the bible stories and then dramatised *Noah’s Ark* for their community as well as retelling the story and illustrating it, creating their own book.

We spent a lot of time on *Noah's Ark* which was a play that we did all in verse. And at the end of it, I asked them to rewrite the story in their own words and they were so powerful. They used biblical forms of language. "And God walked in the garden in the cool of the evening." I mean that has a particular type of rhythmic structure. I tried to preserve all of that when I told the stories. They wrote the most powerful stories. One of the lines was "And the flood took everything to the end." That kind of thing. It just wasn't everyday language. They were able to get into this more than real language. (Bernadette: 44)
In the Montessori Schools, the purpose of a language study is often integrated with cultural studies.\textsuperscript{50} The use of language to answer some of the cultural questions gives the language activities authenticity. In addition to relating language to social studies, presentation to other classes and to the parents was also identified as a purpose as in Carol’s classroom.

When we learned story telling, during the year we would present things to the children and the artist would also. …In the end, the children created a whole story tape that we could then present to the parents. It was called a Bread and Butter Theatre and …we had four different Indian tribes. It was from Ohio because we were from Ohio and it was how the great forests of Ohio disappeared. Each tribe would tell its story about how all the woods in our area disappeared and those were the 9-12 children. The 6-9 children helped with that a little bit but mostly they were the chorus in-between because we had four stations …and each one would set up like their camp there. The parents would have their lawn chairs and they would be there and then when it was time for the next one, the parents had to pick up their chairs and move to the next Indian station and the chorus would be the younger children in the 6-9. The younger ones had some chanting they did as the parents moved along. Even the kindergarten were involved in some of this chanting about cutting down the trees as the parents moved along. (Carol: 121)

\textsuperscript{50} Culture and Language – The link between culture and language in Montessori curriculum will be explored more fully in Chapter V.
In some classrooms, purposeful use of language was provided by inviting the children to share in classroom organisational tasks. In my class, for instance, 9-12 year olds prepared, wrote and printed weekly canteen menus. They also periodically wrote a programme for school assemblies, often a forum for sharing original plays and poems. Each week a student (in rotation) would take a turn journalling the class activities and concerns. These are all real purposes far removed from “fillers aimed at drill and practice” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 75).

Cambourne’s words were unfortunately interpreted by some teachers to indicate that practice of skills is not purposeful. In fact, what he was likely stressing was that teachers should strive to eliminate the filler without eliminating the practice. Cambourne seems to be most critical of pages in textbooks or worksheets assigned for the purpose of drill or practice without context. McCulla and Walshe (1979) acknowledged that in veering away from out of context practice was partially due to avoiding anything that could not be integrated into a theme. They indicated that this was a temporary phase in the move away from the fragmented traditional curriculum and that ultimately skills should be “treated specifically as the handling of experiences indicate[d] need for them” (p. 20). Eighteen years later Murdoch and Hornsby (1997) were still urging teachers to acknowledge that provision should be made for the practice of skills unrelated to themes if they were needed to enhance understanding. Viewed in this way, one can conclude that if skills are needed, then practice becomes purposeful with the need to communicate effectively creating the meaningful context.
In addition to purpose, the other important variable of use is the time factor. Cambourne (1988) believed that children should have the time to read and write every day. From my observations, it seems that scheduling still leads to numerous interruptions of this process in the Government and Catholic schools. On a follow-up visit to Lynne’s Government school classroom, she bemoaned the fact that limited time meant that language projects such as poetry or story writing seemed to extend over a period of weeks. She was wishing that she could allow a whole morning for language exploration. However, cross setting\textsuperscript{51} for maths and language meant that it was very difficult to allow more than fifty minutes for any one subject. This experience was in direct contrast to the Montessori and Steiner schools both of which has a long work period of approximately 3 hours at least once per day. In the Montessori classrooms, children might be working on a variety of subjects in this time period, but the provision was there for them to choose to explore a single subject for much of that time-frame when they were not engaged in a lesson. If the lesson was on a language-related concept, most of the children would elect to follow on with an activity related to the demonstration. In the Steiner school, the main lesson would be presented in the morning. If it was the five-week period of term when the main lesson was a story or myth, then the morning might be devoted to teacher guided language activities. If the main lesson was mathematics, then language might be explored for a shorter time frame in the afternoon. Although the time frame varied, there was provision for reading, writing, listening and speaking each and every day in every classroom visited during this study.

\textsuperscript{51} Cross setting – refers to the practice of streaming children by ability from two or more classes for specific subjects such as maths or language.
Approximation

Cambourne (1988) again uses the parallel of oral language to emphasise that making errors is not only normal, it is “absolutely essential to the whole process” of learning to read and write (p. 67). In learning to speak, we go through a series of successive approximations. In learning to read and write, we should be allowed to do this as well in a judgement free, safe and secure environment. Without criticism, the child’s environment including dialogue, environmental print and subsequent demonstrations can put him/her into a state of disequilibrium which will lead the learner to revise his/her hypothesis about language.

Having a go, taking a risk or daring to be wrong in an environment which ensures that your approximation will be warmly and joyously received, is fundamental for learning to occur. Without the freedom to approximate, no progress in learning can be achieved. (Cambourne, 1988, p. 69)

Montessori also viewed making errors as a natural part of learning. In a time when teachers felt that they “must never make a mistake themselves, for fear of setting a bad example,” she endeavoured to re-educate her student teachers “to cultivate a friendly feeling toward error, to treat it as a companion inseparable from our lives, as something having a purpose, which it truly has” (1949/1988a, p. 225). To further this shift in attitude towards making mistakes, Montessori incorporated “the control of error” into her methodology.
So we need this rule as a part of school life: namely, that what matters is not so much correction in itself as that each individual should become aware of his [sic] own errors. Each should have a means of checking, so that he can tell if he is right or not…What we know as a “control of error” is any kind of indicator which tells us whether we are going toward our goal, or away from it. (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 226)

In fact, much of the didactic equipment she designed was self correcting to assist children in checking and revising their hypotheses about concepts without feeling threatened in any way. A young child exploring the sensorial activity of the cylinder blocks is self corrected as he/she fits each block into its space as each must be placed sequentially by height or diameter, or there will be remaining blocks that will not fit in the activity. “So this piece of apparatus meets two requirements: (1) that of improving the child’s perceptions, and (2) that of providing him with a control of error” (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 228). Likewise in matching words or definitions and pictures, there is often a control card for the child to check his/her completed work.

Devries and Kohlberg (1987) were critical of Montessori’s view on approximation. They noted that Montessori’s materials were different from the open-ended constructivist materials in that “self correcting materials present a single problem with one right answer. In contrast, constructivist materials may be used in a wide variety of ways, and problems are more often introduced by children than by the teacher” (p. 287) Chattin-McNichols (1992) called for this view to be modified by pointing out
that many Montessori materials allow for multiple types of explorations and extensions and that there are “scores of different possible activities” available to the Montessori child (1992, p. 159). He also contested DeVries and Kohlberg’s view that Montessori education is dominated by “error-free repetition” rather than “error-filled experimentation”. He interpreted Montessori’s observation that children repeat things when they have mastered them as a testament to their powers of concentration and not necessarily a goal of the teachers (Chattin-McNichols, 1992).

I suggest that Montessori devised self-correcting materials to ensure the safety of children to experiment and take risks and to develop autonomy. Part of this safety net was in allowing materials rather than teachers to supply correction wherever possible. Materials do not vary, but teachers do in terms of experience, preferences and personalities.

Nevertheless, Montessori did recognise that life experiences do not always come with a “control of error”; rather, if one views errors as part of learning, one works steadily towards self improvement. (Montessori, 1988) This view makes Montessori curriculum adaptable to the constructivist approach of open-ended tasks and projects and to the exploration of whole language activities. Admittedly, as soon as one opens oneself to modifying the Montessori curriculum to be more consistent with whole language theory and constructivism, one is paving the way for greater variations between classrooms. Teacher’s corrections on children’s oral and written language in storytelling (without the use of didactic materials) highlights this variation in intervention.
Chattin-McNichols (1992) noted that intervention in a Montessori class underscores the respect the teacher has for approximation as a form of learning. “After a teacher, through careful observation, has decided to intervene, the goal of the intervention is not to punish, but to redirect the child into work that will absorb him” (p. 64). This consistent definition of intervention, does not prevent variations in that teachers differ in their opinion of when redirection is necessary. Chattin-McNichols (1992) mentioned teachers’ reaction to “invented spelling” as an area of variability, depending upon the teacher’s training (p. 64).

Shawn, for instance, recorded a child’s story as follows:

I brang my bathers because I like to swim. I brang my ballet slippers because I love to dance. I brang my werewolf hat because I love to wear it. I brang my hat because when I was born, they put that on my head to keep me warm.

(Shawn: 17)

Shawn has delighted in this 4-year-old’s exploration of language including her attempt to put bring in the same irregular verb compartment as ring. She has decided not to intervene as this child approximates the correct usage of this verb form. She also is showing respect for the child’s concentrated work in not interrupting her story. However, when Shawn is having a conversation with the child, it is likely she will use this verb in its correct form to provide a form of environmental correction.
Refinement

Mem Fox (1997b) recommended that one consider adding refinement as one of the principles of natural learning. She felt that approximation did not sufficiently reflect the importance of striving for some excellence.

Refinement is not being well done. I’m still seeing too many pieces of writing which are marvellous examples of approximation but poor examples of refinement. It’s fine for kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 children to have invented spelling and lack of cohesion their final drafts but beyond that (for most learners) surely we can explain that there are standards of ‘politenesses’ that have been developed to help make meaning clear to our readers; and that we have to meet these standards in any piece that goes public.” (p. 128)

With older children, Montessorian, Carol, scaffolded the children’s choice of words in collaborative sharing sessions in a way that assisted children in approximating a better use of language without showing any disrespect for their efforts.

It's usually a group lesson. We get together and then we start talking about it and then they go off and write their own and then come back and share their stories if they want to. Most of them do because we make it a safe thing for them to do. We try to find things that we like in everybody's story and then go into the nitty gritty of the proofreading if we're going to publish it…Yes, and so then when we're doing … creative writing, then we can go back and somebody has written a sentence. So we might say "How can we add to that sentence by adding an adjective or
an adverb to explain a verb?” Most of the time I tell them it's only worth 95 cents so they keep looking for bigger and better words to get a dollar. I don't give out dollar ones. No dollar words unless they come up with the really big words. So we use a lot of grammar when we're proof reading because it's like, What kind of woman was it? Tall, short, fat, old? (Carol: 47-56)

Both Government school teacher, Dan, and Catholic School teacher, Kate, indicated that children were in the habit of drafting work and then proofreading and editing it for publication or sharing in some form.

We don't actually do story writing once a week or whatever, it's just whenever it's integrated. If we decide we want to do story writing the whole term, then it might be everyday. …They might write their draft for a couple of days and then we'll publish a piece. (Kate: 64-65)

If you're going to do it right, do it properly or don't do it.
I'm old fashioned in that way. …Number one is planning, Let's think about what we're going to do, discuss it. … Some people say you have to keep all their things, drafts. To me they are just working things that you can throw away. You don't always have to keep them. The end product should be something you are proud of and something you've taken a bit of care…proud...You want someone to read it. If it's not presented properly, no one is going to pick it up so you might as well not do it. (Dan: 134-138)
Response

According to Cambourne (1988), response refers to receiving feedback about one’s efforts to control reading and writing from “knowledgeable others” (p. 33). Although, it is difficult to replicate the response to a young child’s first words in feedback sessions in the classroom, Cambourne implies that teachers should endeavour to provide acceptance, celebration\(^{52}\), evaluation, and demonstration when possible (p. 77). Making decisions about how to express these four variables requires that the teacher have an underlying sense of appropriate literary expectations for the individual child. Heeding response as a condition of literacy reminds us that children’s achievements need to be celebrated, future goals outlined, and appropriate skills scaffolded to attain these goals. Response contributes to meaning for the reader or writer, because it is acknowledgement that the message communicated has been received by the audience. It requires careful listening and authentic feedback.

Showing a real interest in the meaning of a piece of writing is the first requirement from any reader to any writer. Criticism of errors in structure\(^{5354}\) should not be forgotten because teaching correct spelling is an essential

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\(^{52}\) Celebration – Fox (1997b) thought celebration important enough to make it a separate principle in addition to response. She wrote, “Celebrations create a willingness to continue learning. Special days lift the spirits, renew ambition and set new goals” (p. 129).

\(^{53}\) I would prefer the phrasing “guidance in structure” rather than “criticism of errors in structure” because it is more in keeping with the principle of approximation.
principle of whole language. It shouldn’t, however, take precedence over meaning. (Fox, 1997b, p. 127)

Although there is some variation in interpretation, my interviews have presented evidence that the *Principles of Natural Learning* are being employed in Montessori, Steiner, Catholic and Government schools to help children to develop an understanding of text through the complimentary processes of construction and deconstruction. The Principles work to empower students to use reading and writing to negotiate meaning in their worlds.

Do children learn most effectively when they are provided with an integrated approach to language exploration?

“Whole language views listening, speaking, reading and writing as integrated, not separate domains” (Wilson, 1997, p. 118) Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the most empowering literary experiences are likely to be those that provide students with the opportunity to decode through listening and reading and to encode through speaking and writing. My journey into the classroom revealed that the teachers using narrative in all four types of schools were providing these integrated language experiences.

In Lynne’s Government school class, I observed a shared book session on *Monkey* by Yvonne Winer (1987). Lynne read the story to the children using a variety of questions and prediction to engender discussion as the story unfolded. So they listened and spoke. Then they reread the story with children taking turns to read the
pages. Afterwards they had a chance to write the key words of the story by creating monkeys and labelling them. Both Nigel and I, in our respective Montessori classes, shared programmes whereby the children’s language work focused on the mythology of a country. In my class, the children read and learned to tell African folk tales which they presented to parents and other children. In Nigel’s class, they studied, retold, and compared the creation stories from different cultures. In both Nigel’s and my class, they then had the opportunity to write their own tales. One of the catalysts that Catholic teacher, Vicky, used was a large egg from China that the children decided was a dragon egg. They listened to stories on dragons and read some themselves. They then wrote a ‘what if’ responding to the question, “What if the dragon egg hatched?” Fran, in her Catholic school class, used fables as a language focus.

[We were] looking at fables and they had to write their own fable.
They had to write their own moral. So it's really being a reader and a writer at the same time. They're both going hand in hand. There's a great empowerment in that. (Fran: 107-109)

Sam, a Steiner teacher, reported on a creative writing lesson he did with a Year 5 class that involved telling and listening to some news that in turn was a catalyst for writing.

I also teach creative writing with Grade 5…As I was preparing the lesson, I happened to be at the library where I live. And I happened to look out and there was a dog tied up at a bicycle rack and it was muzzled. And anytime someone came by, it would look at them angrily. And I felt sad for it. So I
began my lesson with it. I was going to work on this, but I just saw this dog and it got me wondering. How did this dog, who must've once been a happy pup get to this stage. And they started to say, "Oh I think the master must have done this or perhaps it lost its mother..." And I said "Alright, we're going to write about that." Some of them will use their own stories and some of them will use their imagination which I think is fine too. It's like creating their own story. So it leads naturally on from sharing news to doing their own writing. (Sam: 65)

In addition to linking decoding and encoding in these narrative rich classrooms, many of the interviewees indicated that they also occasionally integrated the practice of decoding skills such as phonics and comprehension and encoding skills such as grammar, phonics, spelling and punctuation with narrative. However, there was considerable variation in how this was achieved and the frequency with which it was practised.

The Steiner teachers used narrative characters as metaphor in introducing points of grammar. However, they would not be looking through a text of the orally told myth of their main lesson to search for points of grammar. Bernadette, the Steiner teacher gave the following example of using the class study of Norse mythology to introduce tenses:

We use story to introduce points of grammar. So, for example, this time I'll be introducing tenses. I'll use for that the three Norns, which are like the three fates. And they sit beneath the world tree and they
weave the web of fate, and their names are Urd, Verdandi and Skuld – Past, Present, Future. And Urd knows all the secrets of the past, and Verdandi of the present and Skuld of the future. (Bernadette: 107)

The Montessori schools varied considerably. In a few of the classrooms, grammar was taught separately through the specific Montessori grammar materials. In Shawn’s school, grammar was taught with the traditional Montessori materials although the teachers expressed great interest in linking grammar to literary and historic texts. In Ellen and Nigel’s Montessori schools, Montessori shelf activities were supplemented with practice books and materials provided by Thrass for phonics study. Allison, on the other hand, was quite focused on linking grammar study and literature.

I think it is very, very important that all aspects of grammar are addressed. But, I think they need to be in context and they need to be meaningful and I think to engage children's interest, story - narrative is the most effective thing. So I would tend to have everything in some kind of context. Even, for example, sentence structure. I'm quite happy when we have read a story and enjoyed it to take sentences out of that story and look at subjects and predicates. I don't think it ruins a story if it's been really lived and enjoyed first. I think it makes the interest in the grammar-heightens it tremendously and I think this is why whole language in Australia has been really effective. I think the First Steps Programme is a good guide for this kind of learning. (Allison: 39-42)
I was interested in reading articles written by Claremont\textsuperscript{55} (1993b), a former Montessori teacher trainer in America. Even, if didactic materials were used to teach points of grammar, they were constantly interwoven with literature in her classroom – even as a tool to analyse style. Claremont noted how children "slide into the habit of mentally translating a word to its symbol quite easily. It leads ultimately, though not in this first period of literature, to a study of style." For instance, she noted that many great authors such as Milton have a verbal style whereas Dickens has an adjectival style. "You do a piece of Dickens with this material and you'll see many blue triangles\textsuperscript{56} showing up." (Claremont, 1993b, p. 89) In classrooms I visited, I did not see grammar study linked to style in this way and I wonder if this aspect of the Montessori curriculum has been lost to many training courses.

In all classrooms, spelling seemed to be a combination of word focus from stories as well as list based spelling programmes. When I observed Lynne’s lesson using *Little Brown Monkey*, I noticed that she used the story very effectively to engage the children and then to explore words, sound families, and punctuation. However, to meet the needs of the children she devised practice sessions as well as narrative discussions.

\textsuperscript{55} Claremont – a student of Maria Montessori.

\textsuperscript{56} blue triangle – the navy blue triangle represents an adjective in the Montessori symbolic grammar system.
I tend to do more [spelling words] from a story that they're using, or a theme, or topic words. ...Every week [we also do] some phonics, and some basic spelling from a word list of basic words. (Lynne 1: 151-153)

In other classrooms, I was again exposed to a two-pronged approach of linking grammar to literature, while at the same time providing support material for practicing grammatical concepts. For instance, on one of my visits to Kate’s class, children were given a worksheet on which they were writing various types of questions. These questions were related to *Charlotte’s Web* which they were studying. In my 9-12 year old Montessori class, I used a morpheme-based spelling programme once a week with students, but several times a week would focus on words found in stories the children were reading, nomenclature connected with cultural studies or class novels.

The interviewees in this study were conscious of trying to integrate varied aspects of language study with narrative whenever possible. They perceived that their methods contrasted with those of colleagues who didn’t use story as a teaching vehicle. Dan remarked that one of the upper primary teachers in his school did not read to her class. Lynne noted that one of her co-teachers emphasised non-fiction to the exclusion of fiction.

One of the interesting things I noticed in the classroom observations was the absence of “filler” worksheets - worksheets not related to a currently explored study. There were very few worksheets used in the interviewee classrooms I visited compared to numerous others that I was visiting at the time in conjunction with my student teacher.
supervision duties. I wondered but could not substantiate if this might be because educators who used story extensively in teaching were interested in exploring concepts in a variety of ways – worksheets being only one way. Interestingly, drama was much more frequently used in the classrooms I visited which I had earmarked as narrative classrooms than in classrooms I visited as part of my supervision duties and I wondered if this too might be supported by further research. Kate’s Catholic school class performed dramas about saving sea creatures, Nigel’s Montessori class performed dramas demonstrating behaviour at camp and Ellen’s class transformed the story, *A Piece of Straw* into a drama. In the Steiner classrooms, Sam’s class performed a play of *Joseph and the Coat of Many Colours*, and Bernadette reported on her class performing a play about Noah last year and shared the drafts of a play on Norse mythology that they are creating this year. Writing and acting in plays is a stimulating way not only to integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening, but also to focus on skills such as phonemic awareness and spelling. Surprisingly, among the dozen classes that I visited that were not part of this study, the only drama I viewed concerned Letterland. Narrative-based curriculum appears to foster more varied and creative ways of curriculum exploration.

My own experience has led me to believe that non-narrative-based curriculums do not lead their students toward the same in-depth understanding of their language as do curriculum that use narrative genre as a programme basis. Although, the nature of constructed stories develops with age, the empowering nature of story does not

57 Letterland – a commercial program that introduces each letter as a character and suggests plays that support blends such as “th” based on the character relationships.
diminish. Despite great variations in practice, interviews with teachers from all four designated school systems revealed that they view story as an engaging tool to scaffold literacy based on principles linked to oracy including immersion, demonstration, expectations, responsibility, use, approximation, refinement and response. In addition, they use narrative to provide a holistic base to experience the interweaving of the four modalities: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As I explored the power of narrative in enhancing an understanding of language, I became aware of other understandings that are potentially clarified by using story including the understanding of personal journey and links to communities and culture. Many educators have advised that one can use narrative effectively to promote these other understandings. I decided to further explore my interviews with teachers to determine strategies that they had identified for attaining understandings that run deeper than the structure of language for communication.
Experiencing the Complexity of the Human Journey

Story forms reflect life’s journey in that by affording children and teachers the opportunity to explore their personal narratives in the school setting, we nurture their ability to understand life experiences in a meaningful way. This educative process for deeper understanding introduces a paradox of human identity – every human life cycle contains common elements mirrored by the narrative form. We are born, we grow, we learn, we work and play, we face conflicts and have to make choices, we form relationships and we die. However, despite the repetition of this narrative pattern and the ready identification possible for each of its components, each story is still remarkable in its uniqueness as Marsden (1988) demonstrates in this poem (pp. 182-183).

He walked with his feet on a roadway,
A path that was clearly defined.
But the journey that really had meaning
Was the one that took place in his mind.

Whenever he came to a crossroad
He had his choices to make.
But his legs played no part in the choosing
Which of the roads he must take.
Wisdom lay not in his muscles
Nor in the soles of this feet.
It came from the light of achievement
It came from the mud of defeat.

The further on he walks, the more crossroads.
And the harder the choices become.
In country that's strange or unfriendly
The ignorant soon will succumb.

And there are four different paths to be taken
None can be safely ignored.
Even the one that's been travelled
Needs to be further explored.

For there's always a road to friendship
And there's always a road to fame
And there's always a road to danger
And a road that wants walking again.

This poem indicates that our wisdom – our understanding of the experiences encountered on our life journey – is attained by reflecting on the unique interweaving of our explorations even though the nature of these explorations is common among individuals. We are prepared for our self exploration by being exposed to images and
metaphors that offer symbolic pictures of human life cycle possibilities. Our greatest tool in understanding these images is our ability to process information in at least two distinct ways: logically and narratively. We are further prepared to live the stages of our own narratives by experiencing the patterns and rhythm of our physical, emotional, cognitive and social beings. From in-depth interviews, a literature review and reflection on my own teaching experience, methods were revealed for encouraging students to experience the attributes of the human journey. They included:

- acknowledging the importance of narrative thinking as well as paradigmatic thinking;
- provision for imagery and allegory; and
- provision for rhythm, ritual and memory through
  lessons in narrative format,
  rhythm in classroom explorations and recreation,
  the rhythm of time, traditions, and festivals,
  oral language and memory, and
  the rhythm of human lives,

Acknowledging the importance of narrative thinking as well as paradigmatic thinking

58 Paradigmatic thinking - the term used by Bruner (1988) interchangeably with Logico-Scientific thinking.
A classroom that pays tribute to the power of personal narrative is also one that acknowledges the importance of narrative thinking as separate from paradigmatic thinking. Narrative thinking or – in Bruner’s terms “a good story” – convinces us of the likeliness of the events occurring or the characters existing. This is in contrast to the “well-formed argument” of paradigmatic thinking which aims to convince us of truth (Bruner, 1988, p. 99). Using narrative thinking, we find connections in stories or in life events by using our imagination or intuition and without any proof of actual cause and effect although we sense that one action or situation may be the result of another.

In *The Surgeon of Crowthorne* (Winchester, 1998), for instance, we learn that Dr. W.C. Minor had a significant role in the creation of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Reading his story, one marvels at the fact that his incarceration has resulted in his having spare time and access to books which in turn facilitated his becoming a contributor to the Dictionary. Indeed, the author, Winchester, implies that if Minor had not committed murder, been declared mad and institutionalised, the OED might not have been written. “The circumstances that placed William Chester Minor in the position from where he was able to contribute all his time and energy to the making of the OED began with his horrible and unforgivable commission of a murder” (Winchester, 1998, p. 191). Cause and effect are thus used to create a likely scenario, but there is no proof of the connection. Children need to be able to use this type of thinking to make sense of their lives. “If I share more, will I have more friends?” or “If I practise, will I be a great pianist?” a child might ask. This is clearly cause and effect thinking, but far different than the proof demanded of paradigmatic thinking which might lead to a conclusion such as “Plants need light to be green.”
Robinson and Hawpe (1986) also recognise these two types of thinking, which they refer to as Principle and Story. They claim that one can view an outcome as a result of cause and effect or of a relationship. “Both are attempts to organise and give meaning to human experience, to explain and guide problem solving” (p. 114). The difference is that principles are “general, context-free, usually abstract, and testable only by further formal scientific activity.” In contrast, the product of narrative thought is “context-bound, concrete, and testable through ordinary interpersonal checking” (p. 114).

Gallas (1993) claims that using both these types of thinking can greatly enrich science programs conventionally associated with logico-scientific interpretations.

The cultivation of wonder and its validation in the child (because certainly we know that children come by it naturally) is generally not one of the stated goals of our curricula, but it is one that I believe holds great potential for teachers. By incorporating journals and talks into my curriculum, I hoped to tap into the child’s internal conversations or personal narratives…These conversations with oneself are filled with pondering and surprise; they contain strands of thinking and reasoning rich in association, personification, metaphor and analogy. (Gallas, 1993, p. 13)

Like Gallas, in my 9-12 year old classroom, I discovered the importance of allowing children to use narrative thinking in cultural subjects when the class decided to do a

59 Cultural subjects – Cultural subjects in the Montessori curriculum include history, biology and geology as well as music and arts.
project on The Timeline of Life. Pamela, Sasha, and Catherine decided to write a play about the Paleozic period. They personified the creatures of this early evolutionary period, the Cambrian. The trilobites were the heroes for doing the best job of cleaning calcium from the ocean to prepare it for other creatures. They lived happily amidst the jellyfish, sponges, and bivalves. Then the Sea Lillies (Crinoids) entered the scene and with a most superior attitude, took over this job with the result that the trilobites left the scene. The Crinoids were the rulers of the Ordovician period and their expert leadership prepared the way for the hardshelled creatures such as starfish and horseshoe crabs who paraded onto the stage in their new fashion. As the girls performed their play, I realised that their personification of the situation made their presentation the least factual of the projects that included reports and dioramas. However, in portraying these human like relationships, they revealed that they had a deep understanding of the interdependence of all creatures.

By not being context-bound, story or narrative thinking is variable according to the circumstances of the teller and listener. “The story incorporates the feelings, goals, needs, and values of the people who create it. Thus, each participant may render the same episode in quite different ways. The story is flexible where the principle is rigid” (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986, p. 115). Narrative thinking thus allows for the co-existence of many accounts without one necessarily being right or wrong. Children exposed to stories begin to understand that every story has a voice; every story is somebody’s story. “All ages gain some extension of thought or omnipotence through identifying characters in stories heard, read, dramatised” (Bruner, 1990, p. 54). Story “accommodates ambiguity and dilemma as central figures or themes” (Carter, 1993, p. 173). In contrast, a scientific account aims for a single version and is appropriate
for assessing external physical problems, but not for assessing human dilemmas. Polkinghorne (1988) provides a metaphor attributed to Northrup Frye (1963) in which he suggests that one consider paradigmatic thought as a centrifugal force directed out from words and things. In contrast, narrative thought, exemplified by literature and poetry, “moves inward toward an inner imaginative realm and the structure of language itself” (p. 75).

In her interview, Fran (1:135) described how she asked her students to put themselves in the shoes of Jack of *Jack and the Beanstalk* to consider the goodness or evil of his behaviour. She was asking them to use narrative thinking to deepen their understanding of a moral situation. When students in my class wrote about the day in the life of an Australopithecus, a Homo Erectus, and a Neanderthal person, they also moved into an imaginative realm. In this case by taking the point of view of ancient humans, they merged ancient history and contemporary views and experiences of life. Narrative thinking allows us to transcend both time and facts to experience a deeper reality.

Classrooms that herald narrative thinking are much more likely to be process oriented, rather than product oriented. Story does not lead to a single outcome defined by “rules or logical propositions,” but rather story “emerges from action” with a myriad of possibilities for resolution and ending that can be considered by the imaginative realm (Carter, 1993, p. 173). Story is not about reducing variables, but about considering the interplay of all the variables including characters, setting and plot that contribute to a comprehensible whole. In constructivist early childhood classrooms, a play-based curriculum is encouraged. In these classrooms one can identify several of
the elements of spontaneous play which is “intrinsically motivated”, “freely chosen”, “pleasurable”, “nonliteral” and “actively engaged” (Hughes, 1999, pp. 2-3). As children are learning about their world, play is work and work is play. Much of spontaneous play involves constructing narratives that help the child to make sense of his/her experiences. As Torrence (1994) explains, “The affective and interpretive aspects of play make it something which is uniquely significant to the individual player, providing a rich context for personal self-expression” (p. 26).

In Ellen’s Montessori classroom, several 6-8 year olds were involved in constructing their own cubbies. The cubbies were ‘homes’ at first; they then imagined them to be shops. They determined their ‘roles’ in the shop as shopkeepers and customers and devised a currency from leaves and pebbles.

(Ellen: Class Observation 11/98)

Observing the action and listening to the dialogue of the children, I became aware of the richness of learning when paradigmatic and narrative thinking are used concurrently. The children used logico-scientific reasoning to design a structure that would stand and keep the weather out. They used narrative thinking as they imagined their cubby to be a shop, determined their “adult” roles in the play and devised a symbolic currency. They again displayed their concrete operational reasoning when they made change with their invented money.

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60 Concrete operational – Piaget termed the stage of cognitive development reached at about 5 or 6 years of age as concrete operational. At this stage the child’s reasoning is still tied to concrete objects but “the child’s mental representations of reality are organised into an overall system of related representations” (Hughes, 1999, p. 106).
Alongside of this group, a 5 ½ year old boy was digging furiously. When he finished, he sat in the hole, peering out and observing the 9-12 year old children in the next class. (Ellen: Class Observation 11/98)

The teacher allowed him this time. Perhaps she recognised that he needed solitude on this day and had worked hard to create a peaceful place. It is possible that he was using narrative thinking to come to terms with binary opposites of quiet vs. activity, solitude vs. interpersonal dynamics.

If a teacher accepts that narrative thinking is separate from paradigmatic thinking, she/he will also appreciate that preschool children, not yet capable of the abstract logical thinking to isolate variables, are still quite capable of narrative abstract thinking. Egan (1986, 1997) suggests that we have done a disservice to children by applying Piaget’s cognitive-developmental theory to all curriculum planning. We break knowledge down into sequenced bite-sized pieces because there is much evidence to support the premise proposed by Piaget that concepts are learned in a developmental, sequential way. However, it is important to distinguish that between concepts of the logico-scientific format which explain the relationships of external variables and those that are experiential – providing experience from which

61 Berk (1997) summarises some of the variables that have been researched that have called the Piagetian age framework into question. For example, the very experience of going to school gives children more practice in seriation, ordering, etc. than those who do not. The phrasing of questions, the choice of objects and the number of objects can all affect success in the task. It has also been noted
the individual constructs his/her own story. Piaget himself clearly recognised that narrative thinking is different from paradigmatic thinking. He described how from 18 months children are capable of symbolic play that represents an abstraction of reality. 

In constructive play displayed from around this age, children use one object to represent another. Following closely on this type of play is dramatic play. “Instead of simple object symbols, children use gesture and language to create imaginary roles and situations with complex themes, characters and scripts” (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales and Alward, 1999, p. 29).

Piaget also wrote extensively on the animism present in children’s thought characterised by children endowing natural phenomenon with human feelings and characteristics. Children created images with their language which could only be described as abstract. However, rather than focusing on the remarkable ability of young children to use figurative language so effectively, Piaget underscored the primitivism of these animistic representations. He viewed it as a paradox that the child’s egocentrism made him/her incapable of being conscious of self. It seems that in the primitive stage the whole content of the infant’s consciousness is projected into reality (both into things and into others), which amounts to a complete absence of the consciousness of self…The same thing constantly happens to us in cases of voluntary imitation, when we identify ourselves with what we are imitating without realising how much belonged

That conservation is culturally affected and thus learned later in tribal societies where equal distribution is not practiced (pp. 239-240).
originally to the thing we are imitating and how much we have ourselves endowed it with. (Piaget, 1929/1973, p. 153)

Montessori also recognised that young children’s thinking was characterised by rudimentary paradigmatic thinking as well as narrative thinking. Like Piaget, she viewed animism as an immature, primitive means of understanding the world. She implied that focusing on fantasy with young children might actually be a disservice to them in their development of logical thought processes. For this reason, she encouraged her children’s house teachers of 3-6 year old children to emphasise real stories such as those provided by nature as well as focusing on the child’s own timeline.

People have always thought that to play with bricks and exercise the imagination on fairy tales, were two of the child’s primary needs at this age. The first was supposed to set up a direct relationship between the child’s mind and his environment, so that he could know it and master it, thus achieving much mental development. The second was held to give proof of a wealth of imagery which the child poured out in his games. But by having in his [sic] hands something real on which to exercise this powerful force, one may reasonably suppose that he [sic] is greatly helped, for his mind is then also brought into contact with the outer world. (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 162)

Steiner philosophy too asserts that in the early years the child gets to know his/her world through sensory activity and imitation acknowledging that the child engages in a type of abstract thinking in forming images at this stage. (Montessori, 1949/1988a; Steiner, 1923/1996) However, Steiner warned against emphasising reading, writing
and mathematics too early believing that young children might be deprived of the rich basis of understanding provided by animistic thought.

Children in this epoch often ask ‘why’ questions. What they seek are not abstract explanations but stories and images that can help them to understand on their own terms that which they question. (Marshak, 1997, p. 40)

Egan (1997), like Steiner, notes that mythical understanding is not just a primitive mode of thought to be abandoned as quickly as possible in the preparation for more rational thought. Egan suggests that humans lose something when they move away from mythical thinking just as modern society has lost some of the key skills of oral cultures including metaphor, rhythm, ritual and memory. When young children construct and understand narratives, they also draw upon orally founded and well developed patterns of rhythm and memory. Renewed interest in the uniqueness of traditional oral cultures (e.g. Ong, 1982; Egan, 1993) has thus given us insight into our own language and cognitive development and given support for Egan’s contention that theories of intellectual development “take current adult forms of thinking as a kind of ideal, with children’s development being measured according to the degree that it approximates adult forms…recognise only gains in cognitive competence, not losses” (Egan,1997, p. 57).
Caldwell (1997, pp. 40-41) reports that on her visit to a Reggio Emilia school\textsuperscript{62} where children’s dialogue was treasured, she overheard these animistic statements by children being not only accepted, but encouraged by the teacher:

Ale: They are all plants. They are all the same. They like each other's company.

Marina: Do you think these plants are happier here at school or at your house?

Ale: Mine is happier at home because I give it food. But it is also happy here.

Marina: Why is that?

Ale: Because it's happy when you come near because it thinks you are going to give it water. If you don't come near, it will think that you aren't a friend anymore…

Caldwell reports that she was concerned that children were not being encouraged to pursue ‘scientifically correct’ thinking. However she came to understand the view that “not to attribute feelings to the plants would be unnatural for the children.

I learned that to the educators in Reggio Emilia, animism is not negative, or merely a stage of childhood thought, but rather an approach to the world that offers a way to enter into relationship with that which is considered different than we are. (Caldwell, 1997, p. 41)

\textsuperscript{62} Reggio Emilia – a town in Northern Italy that has adopted a constructivist approach for its 33 preschools. Some of the key features of this evolving approach are projects, the provision of a variety of materials for student’s expression and a great respect of the dialogue of children out of which the curriculum emerges (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993; Caldwell, 1997). (Refer to Appendix C.)
In fact, Caldwell, like Egan, is ultimately persuaded that animism is not an inferior way of looking at things, but a different way that offers a unique understanding of relationships:

Even though Piaget would describe these children's ideas as egocentric because they identify with the leaves' movement and structure through their own bodies, in many ways the sentiments seem to be the opposite of the true meaning of the word egocentric. To identify with the other, to imagine what life must be like for another being, and to see the interconnected nature of all living things – these are among the sentiments and values that we wish to encourage in children and in adults. These sentiments and values are at the root of establishing a deep connection to the natural world and a strong sense of place. (Caldwell, 1997, p.66)

An excerpt from Chief Seattle’s famous speech of 1852, a favourite text of interviewee, Ellen, exemplifies the richness of animism and metaphors in oral culture:

The voice of my ancestors said to me, the shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not simply water, but the blood of your grandfather’s grandfather…The water’s murmur is the voice of your great-great grandmother. The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. (Jeffers, 1991, unnumbered)

63 Chief Seattle’s speech - Many give this the date of 1854. There are many versions of the speech supposedly translated by an H.A. Smith. This version is one retold by Susan Jeffers (1991) in Brother Eagle, Sister Sky. Although the authenticity is sometimes questioned, the metaphor use is characteristic of the images used by the Native Americans.
Steiner, in a lecture originally delivered in 1923, noted the importance of acknowledging the young child’s narrative thinking to provide a meaningful educational experience.

If a teacher tries to explain the subjects during the first school years, the children will react by becoming blunted and dull. This approach simply does not work. On the other hand, everything will go smoothly if, rather than explaining the subject matter, one forms the content into a story, if words are painted with mental images, and if rhythm is brought into one’s whole way of teaching. (Steiner, 1923/1996, p. 100)

The use of imagery\textsuperscript{64} including metaphors, similes and personification in young children’s language, their use of images and rhythm to aid memory and their response to ritual supports the view that humans from preschool age are capable of abstract thought in a narrative sense.

Provision for Imagery and Allegory

Cassirer (1946) sees metaphor as the link between myth and language. Its importance lies not only in the immediacy of the imagery created, and the linking of the symbol of the language with the symbol of the image, but in creating an understanding of wholes and parts. “Whoever has brought any part of a whole into

\textsuperscript{64} Imagery – refers to that which helps evoke images such as figurative language or words that relate to a sensorial experience.
his power has thereby acquired power, in the magical sense, over the whole itself” (Cassirer, 1946, p. 92).

Do we do our children a disservice by discouraging animistic thinking rich in metaphors, similes and personification? Egan believes we do, referencing a study of preschool children by Gardner and Winner (1979) who found that “the highest number of appropriate metaphors was secured from the pre-school children, who even exceeded college students; moreover, these three-and four-year-olds fashioned significantly more appropriate metaphors than did children aged seven to eleven” (p. 130). Cassirer (1946) noted that narrative thinking fueled by metaphors predominates for awhile, and then is pushed aside by logical thinking also related to the language root. The two types of thinking merge in adult thinking apparent in metaphors used in historical explanations and poetry and, according to Desautels (1998), even in science. A student of Desautels explains how metaphor aids logico-scientific thinking:

Metaphors are indispensable because they allow us to create models of things that it would be impossible to discover otherwise. Metaphors provide the real basis of all conversation, hence of all human thinking. The production of scientific knowledge is obviously no exception to this rule. In order to arrive at some conclusion as to what was contained in the black square, we had to compare the deviations of the emissions with material things with which we were more familiar, such as the deviation of a ball of wood when it hits a wall, for example. We linked all the phenomena which we observed on our screen to things we were familiar with: hence, we continually used metaphors in order to understand. (Desautels, 1998, p. 133)
Consulting architect, Joy Cuming, commented that metaphor has a critical role in deepening the understanding of science such as in architecture. When contemplating a new project, she advises architecture students to consider an organic or artistic metaphor for the design that represents the relationships one wants in the building. She herself has used a tapestry as a metaphor on one occasion and an oak leaf on another. The metaphor emerges from a visualisation of the client’s profile of needs and preferences. This image is a constant reminder of the whole vision.

Some writing from a six year old who was in my class a few years ago illustrates that young children can be very adept at using similes and metaphors.

I fille lieck a princess today in a butefel dress with perpel and pinck things on it. [sic] (Emily: Age 6)

Today I feel lieck a butterflye with all cinds of kulers on mey. [sic] (Emily: Age 6)

Shawn shared a transcript of a classroom conversation in her classroom with extensive evidence of personification in young children.

Nora: We could write it on a sign for the birds to read when they fly over here. …

S: Do you know what they eat?

N: Worms. I saw them in my neighbour's yard. The wife bird was out

65 Architect Joy Cuming – a former lecturer at the University of Western Australia. She is currently an Architect with Archstudio in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.
there looking for worms for their kids to eat while the husband bird
took care of their babies in their nest.  (Shawn 3: 104-110)

Egan implies that more young adults would be capable of this facility in thought if educators acknowledged the link between metaphorical thought of early childhood and the logico-scientific thought of formal operations. He notes that although causality as a formal concept does not appear until sixteen years of age, “it grows gradually from the uses we see in earliest stories to the more logical forms we see in history and science. Nor can we call the earlier form simpler than the later; it is rather just less specialised” (1986, p. 23).

The implication from Egan (1986, 1997) is that we will make education more meaningful if we celebrate a child’s metaphorical, animistic thinking rather than belittling it. I observed this occurring in Nigel’s Montessori classroom. He wanted to take the children outside and it was raining off and on. He said to them, “I’ll have to have a talk with the sky” (Nigel 1: 81-82) It is probable that most of the children, ranging in age from 51/2-8, were well aware that Nigel did not have the power to make it rain or stop raining, but they all delighted in the personification of the sky in the image he presented to them. He conveyed the message that processing thought through such creative images is quite acceptable.

Montessorian, Ellen, similarly acknowledged the importance of mythical thinking by selecting texts rich in metaphor. On a follow-up interview, she was excited by a new book she had found entitled Grandad’s Prayers of the Earth (Wood, 1999). A
Grandad responds in metaphor and personification to a primary aged child seeking to know about prayers.

“A bird prays when it sings the first song of the morning, and it prays in that silent moment just before it sings. And the robin’s last song at sunset is an evening prayer.”

“All the beings of the world pray, “ said my Grandad, “as they slip through the forest or sparkle in the water…as they climb mountain-sides or soar into the clouds or burrow into the earth.”

“Each living thing gives its life to the beauty of all life and that gift is prayer.”

(Wood, 1999, p. 12)

Although urging that images be linked to reality, Montessori (1964) understood that one could stimulate the wonder in children by using imagery they understood. Montessorians Allison and Carol both used the charts designed by Montessori in telling stories about geography and botany. One of the geography charts entitled The Cosmic Dance, for example, demonstrates the cooling of the earth by red angels leaving the earth with hot air and blue angels descending with ice. A botany chart entitled The Chemical Factory demonstrates photosynthesis by showing a metaphorical miniature factory where workers use chlorophyll activated by the sun to transform water and carbon dioxide to produce a simple sugar and release oxygen. Montessori herself, in describing the coming of life, uses personification to create vivid images of the earth.

Vegetation has accomplished its adventure with joy, conquering the earth, aspiring to the heavens, gripping the soil with strong roots to support noble
pillars, roofed with interlacing branches and leaves opening millions of hungry mouths to the sunshine for carbon dioxide. (Montessori, 1948/1989a, p. 31)

Steiner teachers have also discovered that acknowledging the type of thinking that characterises a period of a child’s life can lead to deeper meaning in learning experiences. When metaphors are used to teach children about the real world, the human being becomes the reality-based metaphor. This is the basis of anthroposophy. Bernadette explained how the human being is used as a metaphor for understanding both zoology and botany.

Science proper only starts in Class 6, but in the early years, you do nature stories, anthropomorphising. It's always related back to the human being. So in this class, Class 4, we do a lesson on the animals. Again, we look at essentially the three fold nature of the human nature - the head -the intellect, -the feeling based in the mid part of the human being, and the will, the metabolism in the lower part of the human being. We take animals that actually represent those three archetypes. If you look at the sphinx or the four evangelists, those archetypes. The eagle relates to the head that can soar to the heights. You have the cow, the calf which is the metabolic system. The cow is not an awake animal, it's all metabolism. In the middle you have the cats

**Anthroposophy** – For Rudolf Steiner, anthroposophy was the basis of his educational philosophy. As he explained in a 1923 lecture, “The anthroposophical approach begins by looking at the human being as an entity, an organization of body, soul, and spirit. It attempts to comprehend the human being not in an abstract and dead way, but through a living mode of observation that can recognise and comprehend with living concepts the human totality of spirit, soul and body (Steiner, 1996, p. 24).
like the lion with tremendous courage. The cats have this rhythmic nature. They can relax so totally and then the next minute, they can be really awake. The lion is representative of that middle system and the virtue of that, of course, is courage. …Then in Class 5, we do the plant world and we go through simple mosses and ferns and fungi and all of that through to the (flowering)plants. The growth is like the human being. The baby is kind of a mushroom really. There are many ways you can do it. Again the plant has the threefold, - the root nature, the leaf nature and the plant. You don't take it apart. You always look at the plant as a whole and how the different parts of it relate. How it relates to its environment. (Bernadette: 348-352)

Contrary to Montessorians, however, the metaphors used in Steiner education are often fantasy or myth based rather than reality based. The implication is that mythic characters and situations are archetypes.\(^{67}\) Waldorf teacher, Sam, describes how he has used fables and fairy tales to connect with the children in his second grade class who have been in what Steiner (1996) and Egan (1997) would propose is an understanding similar to oral traditional cultures.

Well, the basic principle is that the child will go through the same stages in personal development that humanity has gone through in its development. So

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\(^{67}\) Archetype – “Carl Jung applied the term to ‘primordial images’, the psychic residue’ of repeated patterns of experience.” … The term archetype usually “denotes recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, or images which are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams and even ritualised modes of social behaviour (Abrams, 1993, pp. 223-224).
that the stories will represent sort of a changing consciousness. So we start with fairy tales which are magic and fantasy. Anything can happen. A forest or a stove can suddenly appear and speak to a character… Characterising the first seven years, is the underlying statement that one works with the children (to show) that the world is good. Children in that time will experience that the world is good. The second seven years is that the world is beautiful so that is the primary school years. They are about beauty. The third seven years is that the world is true, or there is truth. So goodness, beauty and truth are the three works that underpin our education. So in Class 1, they are six turning seven so they are still in that phase of life and that ‘the world is good’ is reflected in the fairy tales. The good is just. The evil gets the punishment. That moral quality is really there throughout the years. We won't preach it. "If you are good, this will happen..." It's just a story. The children just pick that up. (Sam: 100-105)

From my interviews and literature overview, it became apparent that the use of imagery in teaching had been more carefully considered by Steiner and Montessori teachers than by other teachers interviewed. However, the whole language teachers in Government and Catholic schools were also very aware of the meaning making provided by parables and allegorical stories.68 Fran (1:51) and Vicky (1:233) both mentioned that Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1964) is a metaphorical story about children’s fears. Egan (2000a) suggests that rather than being frightened by the

68 Allegory (includes parables and fables) – refers to a story that can be interpreted at more than one level. (Abrams, 1993)
monsters, children see them through keen perception as allegories of adults. "What he
does through the book is help the child domesticate the fears caused by these ugly
looming adults. They aren't so bad really; they can be controlled" (p. 14).

On a visit to Kate’s class, I noticed that the children had taken the relationship of
Charlotte and Wilbur in *Charlotte’s Web* (1952) as a parable for friendship.
Likewise, Fran used Biblical parables as an example of stories that could be
interpreted on many levels.

In the stories in the Bible, they were trying …to give a deeper message. A
fable of sheep and shepherds wasn’t just a story about sheep and shepherds. It
was more than that. Yet, you can read it as a story of the shepherd and the
sheep. Then you can read it again…(Fran 1: 189)

Imagery also involves appealing to all the senses of the listener or reader. Story teller,
Paul Matthews (1994) was named by Steiner teachers Sam and Bernadette and by
Montessori teacher, Ellen, as being influential in their thinking about storytelling.
Following is an example of a guided imagery exercise:

In the present moment and place (where, hopefully, there is a window), and
using your senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, name what is
What things and people are doing. Don’t pass too easily over the things you
cannot name. Try to see what nobody else sees. As far as possible stay with
impression rather than expression – i.e. don’t at this stage, interpret what you
experience. (Matthews, 1994, p. 20)
Matthews (1994, p. 21) emphasises that imagery is very individual. It would thus seem that providing times for sharing imagery would be a way of celebrating uniqueness and differences in the classroom or the staffroom.

Although everyone shared the same place and moment and were set the same task, everyone (being different) will surely have either selected different impressions or described the same thing in their individual way…Try to make conscious what these differences are: i.e. sense used; words chosen for their sounds; individual rhythms; vague or detailed; singular or plural; awareness of colour; interest in nature or in manmade objects; verbs, adjectives or the lack of; use of metaphor and personification; static or dynamic etc., and what might have caused these differences: i.e. position in room; nationality; sex, mood; temperament; previous reading; constitution etc. (Matthews, 1964, p. 21)

Sam shared that his Steiner staff had a workshop where, through guided imagery, each staff member envisioned three tables from their past. They were guided in visualising and then drawing the tables and using their senses to hear, see, smell and feel what memories were associated with those tables.

The exercise was to draw. We had to draw three tables from our lives and then over three days take turns giving them a title and sharing. We looked at tables from their childhood, or tables that they worked at once. These tables were the key to look at someone's life, a little window. Family tables, all sorts of things. It was just a little snapshot. (Sam: 44)
In Montessori education, five great stories are told in the primary curriculum. They are told in a manner that evokes images and creates impressions.

Well, I think I’d better start with one of the big stories of Montessori because I really think that although I tell them once a year, they tended to launch many subthemes. For example, the Timeline of Life…And I tell it like a story. It’s impressionistic to a large extent. (Allison: 59)

During this story, for example, Montessori (1989) describes our planet in the Jurassic period of giant reptiles.

In the next, or Jurassic sub-division of the Mesozoic Period, came the reptiles of the Saurian family, like monstrous lizards, so heavy that they needed the support of water to hold them up, and spent most of their time in swamps. They had very small heads in proportion to the size of their bodies and were slow-witted, sluggish creatures, always chewing. (Montessori, 1989, p. 35)

As Montessori describes the planet’s preparation for the coming of humans, she creates vivid images using metaphor and personification.

The earth was trembling with expectancy and glad foreboding. Her heart moved in sympathy with creation’s joy; tremors ran through her frame and emotional tears coursed through her in new streams. Very different was her mood than when of old, in the Permian Epoch, she had waged war on the encroaching waters. Now gentler and quieter, she was moved throughout her

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whole being to feel the near approach of man [sic], her destined lord, and gifts
were brought forth in new abundance for his [sic] use.

(Montessori, 1948/1989a, p. 41)

Oral storytelling was not a part of any of the Government and Catholic teacher
interviewees’ programmes and so it is not surprising that there was not as much
emphasis on the rich images of oral language that were mentioned by the Steiner and
Montessori teachers. In these classes, image creation seemed to be linked for
scaffolding poetry. Lynne, for instance, encouraged imagery brainstorming as she got
her Year Ones to work with Year Sixes in writing a *Guess What?* Mem Fox’s (1988)
patterned book about a colourful teacher. (Lynne 1:101)

An excerpt from their creation:

Does she wear odd earrings that dingle dangle?

Guess.

Yes!

Do her bangles jingle jangle?

Guess.

Yes!

Is her lipstick bright and cheerful?

Guess

Yes!

And her fingernails long and pointy?

Guess.

Yes.
She also used many sensory poems to scaffold image making. Topics included the Royal Show and Christmas. Following is a poem Lynne used as a model of a remembered Northern Hemisphere Christmas. Children were encouraged to write sensory poems of Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere.

Christmas is white like the crisp snow at the North Pole.

It tastes like a candy cane – sticky and sweet.

It smells like a fresh green tree.

It looks like a tree surrounded by presents.

It sounds like Bing Crosby’s White Christmas.

I love Christmas!  (Lynne’s Class Observation: 26/11/98)

“Language development in children leads to the capacity to evoke mental images of what is not present and to feel about them as though they are real and present” (Egan, 1997, p. 61). Children use images to visualise and understand phenomenon in their external worlds such as reptiles moving or trees growing towards the light of nature studies or even colourful teacher characterisations or holiday poetry. Images also help them to visualise and understand relationships as they explore the image of the Biblical sheep and shepherd or the interdependence of Wilbur, the pig, and Charlotte, the spider, or the allegory of good and evil represented by fairy tale characters.

Provision for Rhythm, Ritual and Memory
Egan (1997) notes that oral cultures provide a key to understanding the link between narrative and emotional rhythms by modelling that emotional rhythm “can provide a powerfully engaging access to knowledge of all kinds” (p. 59). Oral cultures have also demonstrated “that ideas or lore put into a rhythmic or rhyming form (are) more easily remembered” (p. 58). Teachers, who have emphasised the importance of noting oral language attributes in teaching, report that the rhythm of life is experienced in the rhythms and rituals of the classroom including lesson explorations in a narrative format, alternating periods of activity and silence, the celebration of the rhythm and ritual of seasons, festivals and life transitions. In addition, children are exposed to rhythmic patterns in movement, music, speech, mathematics and art. Oral language constructions can also be used to connect students to memories, traditions and images.

Lesson Explorations in a Narrative Format

Egan (1985, 1986, 1997) claims that in lesson or unit planning, the method of stating objectives and then listing specific activities towards meeting these objectives (content and method) and finally evaluating or assessing through testing can lead to an absence of meaning in topic exploration. This is due to a multiplicity of factors but includes the absence of a link to individual emotions and interests and an absence of teaching according to the type of understanding of an age group. He uses the

70 Egan views the development of understanding in individuals as paralleling historic development. Thus the first years with physical prelinguistic understandings are somatic, children from 2/3-6/8 years old are in an age of mythical understanding with a keen understanding of fantasy and metaphor, binary structuring (concepts in opposition), and sensitivity to the images and rhythm of language. Most of the
metaphor of a production line for this sequential activity way of teaching and proposes a story model form as far preferable. A story form has the engaging rhythm of life’s narrative with a beginning, conflicts and resolutions and endings. It allows for individual interests and types of understanding and has a whole-part-whole rhythm.

Egan’s (1986, p. 41) story form model involves:

Identifying importance:

What is most important about this topic?
What should it matter to the children?
What is affectively engaging about it?

Finding binary opposites:

What binary opposites best catch the importance of the topic?

Organizing content into story form:

primary and middle school years (approx. 8-15 years old) are characterised by romantic understanding where they have learned to use abstract referencing systems to mediate between opposites, are fascinated by the extremes of reality – great achievements and exotic forms of life, great events and transcendent human qualities. The philosophic understanding (senior high-adulthood) characterised by generalisation, objectivity, connections among things, and an increased understanding of causal chains and networks. Egan adds ironic understanding as a final understanding that may or not be attained by adults. It is characterised by a high degree of metacognition and an understanding that general schemes do not reflect the truth about reality, but, in fact, are merely alternative perspectives. (Egan, 1997)
3.1 What content most dramatically embodies the binary opposites, in order to provide access to the topic

3.2 What content best articulates the topic into a developing story form?

Conclusion:

What is the best way of resolving the dramatic conflict inherent in the binary opposites?

What degree of mediation of those opposites is it appropriate to seek?

Evaluation:

How can one know whether the topic has been understood, its importance grasped and the content learned?

Egan’s storyform clearly has curriculum planning implications which will be discussed further in Chapter VIII. However, I include it here to emphasise that for meaning to be effectively achieved in the classroom, children must realise they have their own ongoing story to construct and this personal narrative is influenced by other stories. Lesson plans in narrative format, of which Egan’s is one type, provide a structure for this important meaning-making process.

Although I have not adhered rigidly to Egan’s story form as a planning model, I believe my thinking about lessons and children was influenced by his work from my first reading of Teaching as Storytelling (1986). My facilitation of in-depth studies in
the Montessori classroom was aided by Egan’s views. When I had determined what explorations children found interesting and identified the relevant binary opposites, I had a guide for deciding what lessons and resources would cater for the children’s understanding. I also had a new sensitivity to the differences of children thinking mythically and those thinking romantically. For instance, on one occasion discussion with 6-9 year old children was focused on the disappearance of dinosaurs. Anna, looking somewhat distressed, commented, “There is never a really happy ending is there? Something is always lost.” Her insight led me to recognise that at age 7, she was abandoning mythic thinking in favour of romantic thinking. She was showing an ability to mediate between the opposites. The same insight led me to encourage children in the romantic period of understanding to share their collections, to explore weird and interesting events and to encourage them in their quests to find the longest, highest, and fastest of some category ranging from rivers and mountains to sport stars.

Other Montessorians have also been influenced by Egan’s work. Van Groenou (1995) has found using story as a lesson basis is the most effective means of catering for the mythic understanding of her 3-6 year olds.

When a story is presented, it carries with it a re-creation of a reality with all the affective forces important at the time. The children experience reality as a whole with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, as well as emotional ambience created with the situation. And then there is the enjoyment of language that the storyteller can convey to the children. The children experience the effective use of language to create images and metaphors, the flexible use of categories instead of restricting these to only one attribute. (Van Groenou, 1995, p. 19)
Interviewee Carol commented that both she and her Montessori teacher husband were greatly influenced by Egan’s work which they have applied to exploring mathematical and historical concepts.

Kieran Egan gave a lecture in Chicago and that made us want (to use story) even more. When my husband does Christopher Columbus, he brings in a tea bag and some spices and says, “This is why we’re here.” Whets the children’s appetite. “What’s he doing with all these things?” And then he tells the story of Marco Polo and all the people going to find the spices and wanting to find a shorter route….It touches more the emotional side – seeing how children get excited when you relate stories. (Carol: 10)

The Montessori lesson format itself has a rhythmic quality to it. The first period lesson “This is” represents the presentation/demonstration which serves as an engagement and the beginning of the narrative. The second period or “Show me” invites recognition from the child and would be parallel to the exploration or development of the narrative. The final period, “What is this?” is a transformation period in which the children show ownership of the information to the extent that they themselves can present the information or transfer the concept to other situations. Also part of this period, the conclusion of the narrative, is the opportunity to reflect upon the work in a purposeful way. The rhythmic pattern is also perpetuated by narrative within narrative. Although each study follows the three steps, the understanding of the child might be linked to a stage. Thus, early childhood would equate to the “This is” demonstration stage. Early primary years would be
characterised by the “Show me” stage whereas application and reflection inherent in Stage 3 to respond to “What is this?” would characterise the older child.

Both Lynne and Allison, in their respective interviews, reflected on the influence of whole language instructors Green and Reid (1988) in helping them to appreciate the narrative like movement possible in meaningful lessons. Green and Reid suggested another narrative-like lesson plan, more delineated than Montessori’s, that included engagement, exploration, transformation, presentation, and reflection. Within each of these five stages, the five stages themselves exist so that there would be constant movement within each stage. Thus engagement would have a beginning, development and ending as would every other segment of the lesson or unit. It is this rhythm of movement that underscores learning as a process of construction rather than a product in both Montessori and whole language classrooms. Allison claimed that realising the rhythm of the lesson format changed her teaching:

Well, I began to use prediction myself and immediately changed how I presented stories to children. I realised engagement was really, really important. …I began to think that way and began to be amazed at how within each stage, there were all the stages again. How very, very important that catalyst was and also the reflection afterwards. I realised that in my reading maybe I had left off the beginning and the end. Even though I was probably doing quite a competent job of presenting a text, I underused it. I didn't engage. And I think how I read things changed. (Allison: 19)

When I visited Sam’s Waldorf class, I noticed that the main lesson (mathematics in this instance) of the morning had a pattern not unlike the whole language engagement,
exploration, transformation, presentation and reflection. The children were told a story about a pixie who was not happy because he didn’t know how many crystals he had when he had so many. Exploring the problem, the class suggested that the pixie use bags and put ten crystals in each bag. In this case there were 3 bags and seven left over or 37 crystals. The work was transformed by the children individually as they worked on putting “bags of crystals on the ten shelf” and leftovers on the unit shelf. Work was presented in the main lesson book in crayon. Sam used rhythmic chanting of a verse to reassemble the group. The children then shared their work and reflected on the mental process they had used to complete the morning lesson. When I asked Sam if Steiner education promoted a specific learning plan, he replied, “Not really, but Rudolf Steiner emphasised that periods of concentration need to be alternated with breathing giving the lesson time a rhythm.” He also commented that as a teacher he keeps in mind that he “must tap the feelings and imagination first” (Sam: 43) which certainly would constitute an “engagement” in whole language terminology.

It is apparent that time is a significant variable in allowing children to experience the rhythmic pattern. Whole language advocates believe that allowing a long period of time for language exploration (rather than a fragmentation into 20 minute lessons) will lead to greater meaning (Cambourne, 1988). Both Montessori and Steiner also advocated large “block” lessons to allow the rhythm of learning to occur. Steiner referred to these large blocks of working time as ‘main lessons’. “These main lessons – much longer than the ordinary lessons, which allow one subject to be studied in

71 Rhythmic pattern – I have also heard this rhythmic pattern referred to as inbreathing and outbreathing by Steiner educators.
depth – do not distract children, as often happens because of too many subject changes” (Steiner, 1996, p. 183). Uhrmacher (1993) points out that there is also a rhythm in “presenting material in blocks interspersed with extended breaks [which] is like situations in which, when working on a particular problem one may have to leave the task entirely in order to return to it with fresh insight” (p. 93).

For Montessori, there was an emphasis on allowing the child long periods of individual exploration. Interruptions to the personal rhythm of exploration were condemned:

> Without being able to give any definite reason, we feel that something precious was lost on our life-journey, that we were defrauded and depreciated. Perhaps at the very moment when we were about to create ourselves, we were interrupted and persecuted, and our spiritual organism was left rickety, weak and inadequate. (Montessori,1917/1964, p. 22)

In all the classes I visited in conjunction with this research, I witnessed a long period of exploration in the mornings. This was often not the case in other classes I had the opportunity to visit during the last few years where there was often a shift in subject as often as every 30 - 45 minutes. I suspect that long periods of work time allow children to benefit from the rhythm of a narrative-like lesson plan pattern in negotiating meaningfully with the material presented.

**Rhythm in classroom explorations and recreation**

Steiner and Montessori both advocated that the rhythm provided by periods of activity alternated by periods of silence is important for a child’s self-construction.
Steiner saw the rhythm of silence and activity as a doorway to meaning because of its direct parallel to the breathing of our respiration and the heart beat of our circulation. He claimed that if we are attuned to this rhythm, then the student will find learning meaningful and will not tire any more than the heart or the lungs tire (Steiner, 1996). As observed in Sam’s class, choral singing and then silence is often part of the morning ritual in the Waldorf class. Marshak (1997) notes that in a Steiner class the day may start with a “ritual of beginning: candle lighting, silence, song” (p. 76).

Montessori trained her teachers to play what she referred to as a “silent game” to enhance the engagement of the senses and children’s awareness of their physical and social environment. Montessori’s silence game underscores the rhythm of silence and sound, movement and stillness, freedom and inhibition:

The game of silence offers us a means of testing the children’s will power. We found that this grew as the game was repeated and the periods of silence became longer. Then we added a kind of “call” in which the child’s name was barely murmured, and each child, on hearing his name, had to come up quietly, while the others stayed motionless as before. Those called moved very slowly in their efforts to make no noise, so one can imagine how long the last child had to keep still, while awaiting his [sic] turn? It was incredible what will power these children developed. The exercise called for an inhibition of impulse as well as for the control of movement…There is, on the

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72 Gender pronouns – As was the practice at the time she was writing, Montessori uses masculine gender pronouns when referring to the child. The reader should add female pronouns to masculine references.
one hand, freedom to choose and to be diligent, and on the other hand there is inhibition. Children under these conditions can use their will power, both for the purposes of action and of restraint of action. (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 239)

Through the rhythms provided by the dichotomies of free movement and control, of activity and silence, the child gains a greater understanding of herself/himself.

“Silence, “ says Montessori, “often brings us the knowledge which we had not fully realized, that we possess within ourselves an interior life” (Standing, 1957, p.226).

Teachers who respect children’s rhythms recognise that there are times when individual children might need a quiet time to observe and reflect. Murphy (1992), in her work on temperaments in children, has suggested that children be allowed to put coloured cards on the corner of their desks – green indicating a need for quiet reflecting time or red indicating that work has ceased because assistance is required. Wolf (1996) has suggested that in open plan classrooms such as Montessori, a quiet corner might serve this purpose. “The child does not speak while in the Quiet Corner; he simply observes and appreciates a few of nature’s wonders” (p. 65). Interviewee, Nigel, had a designated quiet corner in his 6-9 year old class where children could go to work on quiet activities.
You might have noticed that that corner has become a silent corner. From (Aline Wolf’s) book, I took her idea of the sand timer. They go in there and there are one or two activities they can do in silence on their own and they don’t need to be disturbed. That activity is an equal activity to their jobs so if they suddenly have a feeling they want to go and do that, they can. (Nigel: 242)

Ong (1982) commented on the somatic link of oral recitation. “The oral word…never exits in a simply verbal context, as a written word does. Spoken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation which always engages the body” (p. 67). This recognition of the important link between movement and mind was observed by Montessori in 1949:

To give them their right place, man’s [sic] movements must be coordinated with the centre – with the brain. Not only are thought and action two parts of the same occurrence, but it is through movement that the higher life expresses itself….Till now, almost all educators have thought of movement and the muscular system as aids to respiration, or to circulation, or as a means for building up physical strength. But in our new conception the view is taken that movement has great importance in mental development itself, provided that the action which occurs is connected with the mental activity going on. (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 130)

73 Wolf (1996) suggests using an hourglass (one or three minute timer) for an individual silence game as she observed in the class of Joan Gilbert in Altoona, Pa. “The timer provides a definite beginning and closure enabling the child to be independent” (p. 64).
My observations of Montessori preschools revealed that Montessori’s words are generally heeded in The Children’s Houses.\textsuperscript{74} One has only to observe children walking on the line to music\textsuperscript{75} or carrying each of the blocks of the pink tower across the room.\textsuperscript{76} However, I didn’t see any intentional links between rhythmic movement and learning in the Montessori classes of the older children except when rhythm was being intentionally explored in music or syllables were being clapped in language and poetry lessons. It was somewhat of a revelation to thus come across Claremont’s work. Claremont had studied under Montessori and, from her writings, one assumes that primary teachers in her training school are being taught to integrate rhythmic movement with varying activities in the classroom. For example, Claremont (1993b) describes Montessori’s suggestion that students move to the choral part of a story or poem in a form of gymnastic metrics. She gives \textit{The House That Jack Built} as an example of a repetitive rhythmic text. Students can make movements as they speak in chorus to emphasise words being stressed. Claremont goes on to show how the

\textsuperscript{74} Children’s House – refers to a 3-6 year old classroom.

\textsuperscript{75} Walking on the line – In Montessori 3-6 year old classrooms there is a circular line. This is designed to help children practice securing their balance while walking. They might practise walking heel to toe to the rhythm of music or vary the exercise by carrying something such as bells themselves. (Montessori, 1912/1988b, p. 91)

\textsuperscript{76} Pink Tower – This sensorial material consisting of 10 cubed blocks ranging from 1 to 10 centimetres is designed to nurture the child’s observational skills leading him/her to make judgments and comparisons as he/she builds the tower from largest to smallest. By going across the room to obtain the next block, children hold the memory of the sensorial impression in their minds (Montessori, 1965).
bodily rhythmic movement prepared the way for students understanding of patterns in language.

You should start metrics with the children by actually moving, identifying the strong beat with their own movement. If you start them feeling metrics with their bodily movement, they’ll never make the mistake of getting a strong stress on a preposition or a conjunction when they come to do metrics on paper…From that, you can go on to vowel colouration. Vowel colouration is one of the most important things in English poetry, because the beauty of English poetry, as distinct from the poetry of other nations, lies in the use of the vowel…You try to get the children to realise that, in English, the mournful, very serious poetry is using heavy vowels…With light poetry you’re keeping on the lighter vowels. (Claremont, 1993b, pp. 97-98)

I was struck by the similarities of Claremont’s teachings to the eurythmy\textsuperscript{77} and language study of Steiner. However, where this view has seemingly been lost to some Montessori training courses, both Steiner teachers interviewed verbalised their views on the importance of linking rhythmic movement to language and this connection was apparent in my visits to their classrooms. In Sam’s class, the morning started with a prayer with hand gestures followed by the children singing chorally a hymn about Saint Michael against the dragon. As a group the children then played two songs on the recorder. After an interruption for photo taking, the children were refocused by a chain movement around the room as they sang “Among the leaves so green oh.”

\textsuperscript{77} Eurythmy: “a form of artistic movement that integrates spoken poetry and dance” (Marshak, 1997, p. 23).
There was then some clapping and singing in partners and then silence. Next the children again used rhythm and clapping as they reviewed their two times table using gestures and silence for the in between numbers. Steiner would view the child’s eager and capable participation in these rhythmic activities as reflecting a new maturity in the rhythmic system:

There are many other aspects of consciousness that awaken in the school child. Many are related to the maturation of the rhythmic system, for heart and lungs now settle into a regular rhythm, whereas in the younger child they are still quite irregular. With the development of the rhythmic system comes the love of rhythmic games such as jumping rope with verses, rhythmic hand clapping, and throwing balls to the accompaniment of long verses. Moving in a rhythmic way (for example, in counting and recitation) speaks deeply to the school child. (Finser, 1994, p. 231)

In an interview session, Sam pointed out to me that not only is the metric rhythm a key influence in the classroom, but also the rhythm of whole to parts to whole was often realised by moving from large group to small group to individual choral work and back to the large group.

Sam: St. Francis wrote and we've been doing one in class called the Canticle of the Sun.

Gay: Is that done chorally?

Sam: Yes, yes it is.

Gay: That's another difference. The choral speaking.
Sam: Also, we'll take that and do it in a group, and then small groups. So really we take it as a whole and then break it down so we have individuals speaking.

Gay: It's really rhythm of life.

Sam: That's right and the teaching principle of going from the whole to the parts. That's a key Steiner teaching principle. We all do it together, and then down to the group and then down to the individual. The whole to the parts is how they experience the whole world. You also have to go back the other way. Go back from the parts and build up to a whole. (Sam: 400-413)

Steiner Year 4 teacher, Bernadette, found establishing a rhythmic pattern helped children to write poetry. Referring to their participation in writing a play, *Noah’s Ark*, in Class 3 she said she invited them to help her write more narrative for the action:

So I started “And then all through the livelong day” and then the children (added) “She went along the wooded way.” They could tell, not because I’ve said it has be this type of rhythm and have so many syllables, but because we’ve done so much working with rhythms of speech. We actually walk out rhythms. So it might be a short poem. It might be an anapest – short, short, long and they will actually step that out in short steps and long steps. So they get very sensitised to rhythm, because, again, it’s being worked through with their whole body. So they were just throwing lines to me. It was just incredible. I would just throw a line out and they would throw a line back.

(Bernadette: 236)
In my own class I recall clapping out the five-seven-five pattern for Haiku and how even this rhythmic scaffolding helped the children to write poetry. More complex types of poetry were tried after repeated modelling and reading samples with varying degrees of success. Many children had difficulty with metre and rhyme. On a recent visit to Lynne’s classroom, she was experiencing similar difficulties as she scaffolded the writing of a class poem for the school newsletter. I wonder if Lynne and I and other whole language and Montessori teachers might benefit from incorporating more rhythmic movement into the classroom. I also wonder if one of the reasons that we have lost touch with this link to the child is due to the removal of music from the life of the classroom. In my case, music was fragmented into a once a week singing session with my class and a once a week optional recorder lesson. In Lynne’s case, music had been placed in the hands of a specialist teacher. Interestingly, I heard no music in any of my school visits except in the Steiner school because I wasn’t at these venues in the once-a-week “music” time. Nevertheless, I watched both Sam and Bernadette teaching music to their students in some form on every occasion that I was in their classrooms. Both admitted that they had very little musical background but were learning as they explored rhythm, sound patterns, singing and instruments with the children. The children in Bernadette’s class were able to demonstrate their ability in Class 4 to read music, to perform complicated ostinati\textsuperscript{78} and to create their own pieces. In both classes children started playing the recorder in Class 1 and the lyre in Class 3. These instruments often accompanied narrative songs, poems and plays.

\textsuperscript{78} Ostinato – a repeated musical pattern.
Along with other whole language advocates including Kate, Lynne, Fran , Nigel and Vicky, I am convinced that rhythmic, rhyming texts assist children in predicting story content and vocabulary. Many of the books provided for emerging readers in all of these classrooms were cumulative\textsuperscript{79} or circular tales\textsuperscript{80} often with repetitive choral parts.

Oh, what a fuss when the king rides by:

Rockets dance in the starry sky,

Mice in their mouse-hole wonder why,

The people throw their hats up high,

The soldiers stamp and the ladies sigh,

The dogs all bark and the babies cry,

The pussy-cat runs and the pigeons fly,

And the drum plays RAT-A-TAT-TAT!

(Mahy, 1986, pp. 14-16)

Thus, children were exposed to the rhythm, rhyme and repetition of language but it was not linked to their physical rhythmic systems by being an integral parts of their

\textsuperscript{79} A cumulative tale – keeps adding a new concept while repeating all previous concepts. Examples are There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly, The House that Jack Built, and contemporary stories such as Mem Fox’s, Shoes From Grandpa (1989), Mahy’s When the King Rides By (1986), Winer’s Little Brown Monkey (1987).

\textsuperscript{80} Circular tales – begin and end in the same place after a series of events. The life cycle is an example of this format. Books of the “Home is Best” subgenre follow the circular tale format. Some contemporary examples are Eastman’s The Best Nest, Sheena Knowles, Edward the Emu (1988), and Gwenda Smyth’s A Pet for Mrs. Arbuckle (1981).
daily movements. In visiting Vicky’s class, I found that she was beginning to explore
the broader possibilities of rhythmic movement in aiding her remedial class to achieve
fluency in reading and writing. She prepared the children for work with rhythmic
exercises. She was playing carefully selected background music to provide a rhythm
for the children’s work. She encouraged the children to clap and stamp out syllables.
Although she herself admits that she has had very little exposure to alternative
philosophies of education, the rhythmic activities that she has discovered to be so
effective in reaching her children are very similar to some advocated by Steiner.

Rhyme, rhythm and ritual are also elements of children’s games such as circle games,
jump rope games and hopscotch games, and small group games with a ritual of
procedure and gesture such as knucklebones (jacks) and marbles. Roberts (1980, p.
132) reported that a Birmingham primary teacher observed in an interview that
traditional games were not being encouraged in schools “in the name of individualism
and creativity.” However, she felt that “the structured form of many games and their
ritual, repetitive elements offer…a security which modern educational philosophy has
rejected.” She recommended that teachers be more sensitive to the needs that these
games respond to in children.

In my own years of primary teaching I remember being astounded that games from
my own childhood could still be so popular including the circle games of *Duck Duck
Goose* and *A Tisket a Tasket*. In each case a rhythmic narrative is played over and
over as one is touched or has a handkerchief dropped. The conflict is represented by
“Who Will it Be?” and the resolution by racing to the vacated place. Jump rope
chants often are narratives characterised by rhythm, rhyme and repetition:
Miss Mary Mac Mac Mac
all dressed in black black black
with silver buttons buttons buttons
all down her back back back
She asked her mother mother mother
for fifty cents cents cents
to see an elephant elephant elephant
jump over the fence fence fence
He jumped so high high high
he reached the sky sky sky
and didn't come back back back
til the fourth of July ly ly

or the following for multi jumpers:

I had a little puppy
His name was Tiny Tim
I put him in the bathtub, to see if he could swim
He drank all the water, he ate a bar of soap
The next thing you know he had a bubble in his throat.
In came the doctor, (person jumps in)
In came the nurse,( person jumps in)
In came the lady with the alligator purse (person jumps in)
Out went the doctor (person jumps out)
Out went the nurse(person jumps out)
Out went the lady with the alligator purse(person jumps out)

Clapping games also have universal popularity. I have observed this type of game in Asia, Europe, America and Australia. In fact, Korean teachers commented to me on the popularity in their primary school English classes of *Who Stole the Chickens and the Hens* shared with them in workshop.

Who stole the chickens and the hens?
Who stole the chickens and the hens?
Who stole the chickens?
Who stole the hens?
Who stole the chickens and the hens?

Egan (1997) observed that these games as well as rhyming nicknames and riddles are part of childhood in most cultures. Children delight in playing with words. “Knock, Knock” jokes have been popular in every early primary class I have visited.

Bernadette expressed her feeling that this wonderful interest of children in oral word play should be acknowledged and used in language study in the classroom.

We often have sort of silly sessions where we just make up poems and I’ll give them a line and they have to give the next line. Of course they love it when I say things like “there was a man who met a bear/He was standing in his underwear.” They all roar with laughter. I think it’s great if they also know that they can be funny….And I love it when children parody verses and so on. I think that’s a real skill. And that ability to play with language which
we did a lot of in Class 1 and 2 with rhyming and things. I would say words and they would have to rhyme them or we would do lots of nonsense rhymes and rhythms. (Bernadette: 240-247)

Attributes of oral narrative including rhythm, rhyme and repetition were apparent in poetry, music, movement and play explorations in all the “narrative” classrooms visited including government, Catholic, Steiner and Montessori. Montessori and Steiner teachers noted the importance of providing times of silence and quiet alternated with periods of activity although this was practised as a whole class in the Waldorf school but both as a class and individually in the Montessori environments. Steiner teachers also stressed the importance of linking patterned movements to sound (as is apparent in their eurythmy) to nurture holistic development. Also in the Steiner school, there was far more poetry recitation and in-class music than in the other environments.

The Rhythm of Time, Traditions and Festivals

Children experience the rhythm of time through daily and weekly patterns, seasonal patterns and by a realisation of a past, present and future existing alongside our life cycles. Traditions and festivals celebrate these human linear and circular tales. Celebrations mark the passage of time in ways which connect to the children’s own pasts (birthdays) and which link us with the rhythms of nature (seasons and solstices). Celebrations repeated over time become traditions. Traditions provide guideposts through a year which reassure children and provide a sense of security. The sense of belonging engendered by their participation in family cultural traditions makes our active support important…Traditions and
In the Steiner preprimary, until the children are seven, there is an emphasis on rhythm and repetition and reverence. (Stedall, 1992) The children experience the rhythm of days so that they might have baking every Tuesday, craft on Wednesday and painting on Friday. They experience the rituals of lighting a candle and saying a poem or a blessing. If they are told a story, it might be told every day for a week as demonstrated in the film, *Time to Learn*, or it might be performed each day as a puppet show as was happening in the kindergarten/pre-primary I visited. Steiner stated that at this age the children learn by imitation. By repeated viewing of the teacher baking bread or repeated opportunities to listen to the same stories, the children absorb the process so they can do these things for themselves. Singing the same songs numerous times, playing ring games and using the fingers in plays to illustrate poems and songs all aid the child in “taking the outside world in through the senses to create an inner world of soul” (Alwyn, 1997, p. 18).

The rhythmic nature of the school day continues into primary school. Henry’s description of a Waldorf primary school day clearly describes what I viewed in Sam and Bernadette’s classrooms.

Each day is seen as having a “rhythm”. The day begins with an opening ritual involving the lighting of a candle and students reciting a verse about nature, followed by a two hour main lesson, then cycling through related and integrated areas of study. Activities of the school day, whether lunch time or a lesson, have a completeness of their own, as well as contributing to the overall...
rhythm of the day. Transitions from one activity to another are signalled by such routines as children saying poems and verses at various points throughout the daily cycle…Unity is achieved through the repetition and harmony that underpins the school day. (Henry, 1991, pp. 5-6)

Uhrmacher (1993, p. 89) noted that in Mr. Stevenson’s 5th grade that he observed, the children presented the morning verse with movements five times – each time getting quieter and quieter:

The earth is firm beneath my feet,
The sun shines bright above,
Here I stand so straight and strong,
All things to know and love.

My observations were also consistent with Uhrmacher’s conclusion that there is a rhythmic pattern to each main lesson block centering around a story. In contrast to the pattern of the younger children, the story is a continuous one, rather than a repeated one. The pattern is as follows:

Students recapitulate the previous day’s story or lesson. The teacher asks leading questions to prepare students for a new story. The teacher tells an imaginative story (lasting from 5 to 15 minutes). The teacher begins a creative activity (e.g. drawing, painting, sculpting), and / or students write and draw in their main lesson books. (Uhrmacher, 1993, p. 94)
Also in contrast to the younger children, the rhythm of time is not defined by repetition of painting, craft, baking according to days, but is a cycle of 4 to 5 weeks defined by the main lesson.

In the Montessori classrooms, there was no set rhythm to the day that all the children followed except for a gathering either first thing in the morning or before lunch. There was recognition that the rhythm of the day varied for individual children. They had a long work period in the morning. Some children might pursue several tasks in this time and some might concentrate on one. The morning might include a story for all or some of the children, but not daily.

There were rituals and traditions apparent in the Montessori classrooms. Children were greeted by the teacher and shook hands as they entered the classroom. Morning tea was a ritual in that children ate it daily but when they were hungry – not at a set time. In the 3-6 year old classes, they prepared their morning tea, sat if a seat was available at the morning tea table, and afterwards washed up. Lunch in the American Montessori schools I visited was also a ritual in that children participated on a rostered basis in preparing the meal and setting the tables. In Australia, lack of space means that picnic style meals are more common, but some of the sense of the ritual of sharing has been lost in the process. For the younger children, lessons were given as the need for them became apparent to the teachers. However, for the older children, key lessons were often scheduled and became a part of the rhythm of the week.

In Kate’s Catholic school classroom, rhythm was established by the variety of activities and the movement of desks to allow whole group work, collaborative work
and individual work. Markings on the floor allowed the children to perform this
furniture movement with ease. During my observation, the desks were moved back
for dramatic portrayals of story, then in a circular formation for a spontaneous
discussion that I had with the children. Following this, we went outside to sketch so
there was a movement indoors and outdoors and indoors again. This contrasted with
Lynne’s class. On my visits to her school, she complained about the cross setting\textsuperscript{81} which meant that the class was kept to a rigid schedule. She expressed frustration that
she could not let them pursue a subject in a concentrated way because of the
switching to banded classes for reading and mathematics. Although the curriculum of
Lynne’s and Kate’s classes was very similar, the fact that Kate was able to make
decisions regarding the timetabling of her day, enabled her to establish a rhythm not
necessarily dictated by the clock.

I also noticed a difference in rhythm according to terms between the West Australian
and American schools. With irregularly spaced holidays in the US (one week in
February and April, two weeks in December/January and ten weeks in summer),
beginnings tended to be associated with the semester starts in September and January.
In contrast, in Western Australia, each of the four ten week terms is followed by a two
week break (six week break at Christmas). There is really a ‘termly’ rhythm in these
classes with new explorations commenced, developed and reflected on during the
course of the ten weeks. Even in the Montessori classroom, where I did see work
continuing on through more than one term, there were always signs of new beginnings

\textsuperscript{81} Cross setting – a term when 2 or more classes are regrouped for lessons in a subject (often maths or
reading) according to their ability and achievement level.
with the new terms. In Kate’s class, she also had a curriculum rhythm over the two semesters which she repeats to different children in subsequent years. This represents her rhythmic pattern of teaching.

The first two terms we concentrate on fiction, and then we move to non-fiction. …They’re doing environment and next week we move on to the rain forest and then the desert. (Kate: 42)

The Government and Catholic school classrooms visited displayed a yearly rhythmic pattern with the beginning of the year designated as a time of getting acquainted and the end of the year as a time for consolidation and reflection. As Kate explained, “Usually in Term 1, we start getting used to each other and in Term 2, we start getting into the nitty gritty” (Kate:5). This was not so pronounced in the Montessori school where only one third of the children were new. Perhaps in Montessori schools it is more like a concerto than the single movement of the government and systemic Catholic schools. In the Steiner school, where the interviewed teachers, Sam and Bernadette, had had their present classes for two and four years respectively and planned to have them for seven years, the rhythm could be described as a sonnet with each couplet corresponding to a new level of understanding of the maturing children. As Sam explained, “We work in seven-year cycles here. Human development goes in seven-year cycles” (Sam: 42).

The passing of time was treated cognitively as well as incidentally in the Montessori schools. Although in all classes, there was a morning announcement of the date and day, in Montessori classes the children have varied activities to underscore their knowledge of the rhythm and passage of time. They begin by representing the
passage of days graphically by putting a tally mark each morning on a long strip of paper with a black line running its width. Children then look at daily calendars. They learn the names of the days and how we got these names. (Saturn was named after the Roman god of farming, etc.) They look at how days are grouped into weeks. They note how weeks are grouped into months and examine many monthly calendars. They investigate the history of the names of months. (January is named after the Roman god Janus, the god of new beginnings, etc.) They note inconsistencies in the names that help us to understand the history of our calendar. For instance, December means tenth month but it is the twelfth month. In the eighth century B.C., the Roman calendar was expanded from ten to twelve months (Montessori Materials Research Foundation, 1994a). Children use timelines to learn about B.C. and A.D. They relate the passage of time to their own lives by making their own timelines. Alongside this study, they experience the passage of time by learning about geography - how the earth revolves around the sun so that we have day and night, seasons and a summer and winter solstice (Montessori Materials Research Foundation, 1994b).

In the Steiner school, the children’s first experience of the summer and winter solstice is through their traditional celebration of these festivals. I attended a winter solstice festival. The excitement in the air was palpable as the families expectantly gathered on chairs in the woods. The night was a cacophony of beautiful sounds – sounds of the children meandering through the woods singing and sounds of the children singing winter tribute songs in several part harmony against a backdrop of nature’s gentle noises. There was visual magic as well – lantern lights through the trees and the shadow puppet show presented by the high school children. The show portrayed an
African creation myth again with beautiful chanting – this time African songs.

Following the shared performance, a bonfire was lit accompanied by more singing.

Festivals in the other schools I visited varied considerably although all schools seemed to have traditions as part of their culture. My Montessori school had a grandparents’ day, a fathers’ night, an end-of-year picnic, an annual bush dance, and an end-of-year concert that coincided with Christmas. Because my school was nonsectarian, we invited children of all faiths to share their festivals and traditions with the rest of the school in some way. We also had activities that became traditions such as the annual wildflower walk and school camp. A weekly tradition was our adaptation of the traditional Aboriginal corroboree for our school community. All the children aged 3-12 and staff gathered for 30 minutes a week. We opened with a song followed by a time of sharing by volunteers of all ages. The main item was performed by the designated class for the week (Ward, 1997). Ellen reported that at her Montessori school they also had a traditional end-of-year concert. In addition, they had adopted the idea of solstice festivals which brought the community together for performances by the children.

We have at our school, twice a year, a whole school event so we used a story for the winter solstice this year. We based it on the different biomes and our group had the jungle. (Ellen: 200)

The Catholic schools I visited celebrated the Christian festivals as did the Steiner School. In addition, First Communion, Saints’ Days and Remembrance Day were

\[82\] Corroboree – a gathering of Aboriginal people for ceremonies and celebrations including some dance and music.

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important occasions for Catholic students in addition to school concerts and assemblies. In both the Catholic and government schools I visited, classes took turns doing assembly items. Mother’s Day and Father’s Day also seemed to be a time when gifts were sent home celebrating the life of the child. In Dan’s class, for example, he described taking photos of each class member and then making picture frames out of recycled materials for Mother’s Day. Sports’ race days were also a firmly established tradition to which many children looked forward with eagerness as they moved through the Catholic and government primary schools. Lynne reported:

Sports Carnival. A very big event! We have a junior and senior carnival as the school is too big to have everything in one day. All children are expected to participate. They are organised in factions and each faction marches around the oval with the captain and vice captain carrying the flag at the head of the procession. The factions sit in bays (tents) and children are called out to participate in events. There are two sections to the carnival. One is the racing on the track and the other is more a tabloid of activities which are really more of a race against the clock. (Lynne 3: 21)

In addition to the Sports Carnival, Lynne suggested that important traditions in her government school included an Easter hat parade, the end of year book awards, the parent open day, and the Anzac service:

The whole school sits in an area adjacent to the flagpole and we have a very short service during which flowers are placed by the flagpole and we observe a minute’s silence. We sing the National Anthem and we have senior students read a non-religious [sic] prayer and recite “We will remember them….”
Sometimes the choir sings a special song. This year my class recited the poem, “The Digger’s Hat”. (Lynne 3: 9-10)

Aside from Anzac Day, I was struck by how many traditional festivals in the government schools incorporated a competitive element and prizes including, in this instance, Sports’ Day, Easter Hat Day, Book Week. This was in marked contrast to the Steiner and Montessori schools visited where festivals never involved a competitive element. Interviews with Catholic school teachers revealed a spectrum between these orientations. They all included competition in the upper primary Sports Day but views on other competitive traditions varied from school to school.  I believe this is an area that needs to be addressed carefully. We need to ascertain the purpose of our festivals. Are they to celebrate the life journey of all participants or are they to celebrate excellence by putting forth a few models? Might it be appropriate to have some of both? Do group competitions such as faction and house races on sports day and performing arts festival (in the systemic Catholic system) allow for both a traditional celebration (in the sense that they are community building) as well as providing venues for defining excellence?

In all the schools I visited, I was also impressed by the great number of festivals and celebrations compared to my own schooling. My own memory is primarily of neighbourhood holiday and traditional celebrations. At school, we had an occasional concert and a Sports Day but very few traditional celebrations compared to today’s schools. It would be interesting to determine if more festivals and traditions are celebrated in schools today and if this might correspond to fewer neighbourhood community activities.
Birthday celebrations are traditions celebrating the life journey of individuals and if competition is involved, it seems to be in home party games rather than at school. I visited a few Montessori schools in America including Shawn’s school where a lovely ritual was practised that I understand with some variations is quite common in Montessori schools around the world.

We celebrate birthdays simply. On that day a child is celebrated at our regular meeting. She brings a gift book for the classroom. She carries the globe and circles a candle, lit to represent the sun. Her journey around the candle signifies the trip the earth makes around the sun each year, and we all count as she circles it. Then she kneels at the small table that holds the candle. She makes her own wish, then blows out the candle. We sing to her and silently send her many good wishes. Then we read her book to the group. Each time we read her story with the class we read the small dedication that she or her parents have written inside the cover. This typically includes her name, age, and a small message to her class. (Shawn 2: 15)

The two Steiner teachers I visited shared the ritual of birthday poems with me. Each year they would write a special poem for each child in the class. The child would learn the poem and share it as an oral presentation with other class members. The poems are a celebration of the uniqueness of each child, but also a testament to the

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83 In my school, the child was invited to show a photo with each circle around “the sun” and to tell a story about herself/himself at that particular age.
close relationship between the teacher and child who are on this seven year journey together.

One of the things we do in the school is write a birthday verse for each child. We tell a story and then give each child a verse which they then say once a week each week for a year... What I try to do is think, “What’s an image that might capture where this child is? Where are they and where do they need to go?” In my verse I try to put a little bit about where they are and suggest where they are going. Now I had a girl who joined my class at the beginning of this year who came from a state school. ..Then we came to her birthday. She was very quiet and shy and didn't want to show herself. So I wrote a verse about a girl who has a garden and it's pretty wild, but she weeds it and looks after it. She would go down to see how things are growing. And in the end is the image that she's blossoming in the same way as the flowers. And I gave her this and I didn't hear anything. About a month or two later, I was talking to her mother and she said "Thank you for the verse. Sandra really loves it.” What Sandra did was she insisted she had to start a garden. In the holidays, she started to make her own garden. She had never had one before and it just came out of that poem. Then she would go and sit in the garden and say the verse in the garden. I said to the mother, "I'm so glad you told me that."

(Sam: 271-276)

Bernadette wove the foundation mythology of the class year into her birthday poems. (See Appendix on Steiner education and Chapter VII) In this case, her 4th year class were studying Norse Mythology. Steiner teachers feel this mythology in which the
gods are destroyed in a great battle is metaphorical for the end of the security of early childhood.

Many of them (the class birthday verses) have that theme that the battle is coming, but at the end, even though Balder dies, there is a new beginning. Even though we haven't got to that part of the story, I have put him in to the verses because they will — through the year — come to that picture. So that they know that, okay, things are going to get rough. Something is lost, but that gives a possibility for something new to come about. And that gives them a deep sense of security that someone knows that they can see in picture form outside of themselves what they are going through [which they] aren't conscious enough to articulate. (Bernadette: 148)

Two samples of Bernadette’s Class 4 birthday poems are as follows:

Through the forest I do ride
With sword and shield both by my side
All around there’s danger here
Yet there’s nothing that I fear
For my heart is brave and true
As on my brave steed I ride through
My shield is strong, my sword is bright
The dark is overcome by light.

There was a princess true, good and fair
For all her kingdom she did care.
She loved the people in the land
And cared for the sick with her own hand.
She cared for animals great and small
For tiny flowers and trees so tall,
And every day to God above
She offered thanks and her pure love.

Birthdays were acknowledged in the government and Catholic schools I visited but not with the emphasis on personal journey. In Lynne’s school, for example, she noted that:

Children’s birthdays are announced with daily messages over the PA and the children are asked to go up to the office where they are given a birthday sticker. Staff birthdays are not really recognised – sometimes a 50th might be celebrated by having a cake. (Lynne 3: 30-31)

All of the schools studied seemed to have special traditions for the graduating class. In America primary school goes through to Year Six. In Shawn’s school, the Year Six did a year long special project on an area of interest (Breiman, 1997). All the written portions of the presentation were published in a book and the researchers presented to the community at large. In my Australian school, the graduating class of Year Sevens prepared a yearbook and had a special camp as well as giving individual speeches and being presented with a book at the end-of-year concert. Lynne described the graduation at her government school as being “quite a formal affair.”

Students march in and take their places at the front of the assembly area. Then one by one they are called out and they walk around the outside of the
audience and down the central aisle whilst their class teacher reads out a short piece about them. They receive a graduation certificate and a photo…The choir always sings a special song and there are speeches from some of the students. (Lynne 3: 17)

Each school marked this life transition in some form. In addition to a ceremony and celebration at the end of the year, the oldest class members were given special jobs and privileges. Ellen, who studied both Montessori and Steiner philosophies felt that the Waldorf educators were particularly aware of the importance of marking this transition as contributing to the meaning of life.

It is not only in the daily rhythm or pattern or even just the seasonal with solstice festivals, but rather the rhythm of life’s transitions. (Ellen 2: 3)

In *School as a Journey*, Finser displays his sensitivity to the needs of his thirteen-year-old seventh graders. They are intensely interested in their personal lives, so they explore human anatomy. They are interested in their place in the world so they look at history; at one point Finser (1994) does an exercise to help the children visualise fifteen generations standing in front of the room. He selects inspirational biographies of people who have explored and changed the world that he thinks will help the students address this current transition in their lives. For instance, St. Joan of Arc reaches a stage in her life where she no longer hears guiding voices and Finser thought this appropriate as a metaphor for “self-development and independence” (p. 182).

With the story of Joan before us, I did not have to verbalize it, but this was the time to say farewell to early childhood and to many of the “safe” structures
that had carried them up to this point. The path of individualization calls for a stepping beyond the protective arms of family and teachers. The students needed to begin the process of letting go – including letting go of me – in order to discover self-guidance. (Finser, 1994, p. 182).

**Oral language and memory**

For traditional oral cultures, thought and memory are related very closely to sound. If something was forgotten by a tribe, it was lost forever. For this reason, oral cultures “have exploited language to aid memory” (Egan, 1997, p. 58). They have discovered that using rhythm and rhyme can help ideas to be more easily remembered. Mnemonic patterns also include repetitions of words and ideas, alliterations and assonances (Ong, 1982; Egan, 1997, Egan, 2000b). Ong (1982) pointed out that in oral cultures, it was important for there to be a lapse in time before a story was retold as this gave the listener time to formulate personal patterns that would enable him/her to remember the tale. Part of this memory process involved identifying “standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the duel, the hero’s helper, and so on), in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form” (p. 34).

Egan believes that knowing that children are in an age of mythic understanding, we could use storytelling much more effectively in education. The power of story can be used for children as it was from oral societies where it was used to aid memory as “lore coded within a story structure…was much easier to preserve. Second, they could orient hearers’ emotions to their contents” (Egan, 1997, p. 62). He further
commented that, in his observations, only the Steiner educators truly understood the
timeless power of oral storytelling in education for memory and meaning making (Egan,
1997). In my interviews and observations, I found that several teachers had
discovered the power of oral narrative, but this experience was only formalised into a
curriculum in the Waldorf school.

Lynne, for instance, discovered to her delight that her remedial class could effectively
memorise and present poems orally. She noticed that the children learned the poems
by listening and then reciting – not by repetitive writing of the verses. They only
wrote them after they could present them orally. These children who had difficulty
retelling stories in a written form apparently readily picked up on rhythmic and
rhyming cues. It would seem that in trying to reach her class of reluctant linguists,
Lynne discovered that she could reach them by catering for what Egan (1997) termed
“mythic understanding” (Lynne: 309).

Allison in her Montessori class discovered that objects could serve as mnemonic
devices for her 6-9 year old class.

What we did was that we had a story vine and we hung it up. We told stories.
…I would tell one. …The children would choose an object that typified that
story for them. It might have been a cat or a lion or for one of these Annecy
stories, it might have been a pan he put on his head. So they had an object on
the story vine. Then they would choose a story to practice. We had the parents
in and the parents could choose an object and the children could tell the story
if they wanted. (Allison: 75)
Bernadette, however, used oral language structure purposely emphasising rhyme and rhythm and relevant images to cater for and to nurture the understanding and memory of her class.

That's right. If you can remember the Iliad, why write it down? You don't need to. As soon as you forget, then writing comes about. So there are different types of memory just as there are different sorts of memory that you see in early childhood. If you go back to the Stone Age, you see that they put up a Stone and that stone reminded them that there was a battle there. And we still do that. We still have obelisks and war memorials and things that are kind of the last vestige of that type of memory. And little children still do that. They'll go to the beach and say, "Remember you fell over here, Daddy? You jumped off that rock and you fell over." But they wouldn't remember that if they weren't there. When they see that rock, the whole thing opens up to them. So little children still have that local memory and you can see why sacred sites can be of great importance. (Bernadette:25)

Bernadette explains that we learn how to cater for children’s memory by looking at works that were intended to be preserved by oral transmission rather than through writing.

And then it develops into this rhythmic memory out of which the Iliad and the other epics [like] the Kalevala come. It wasn't remembered in prose; it was remembered in rhythm. The Iliad and the Odyssey have the hexameter which is very, very strong but an also quite fluid rhythm. And if you're coming to Shakespeare, he uses the iambic pentameter which is a very free rhythm. It still has the structure, but it is the closest to human speech. (Bernadette: 29)
Egan claims that since young children are mythic thinkers, they learn most effectively through story telling and therefore teachers should be storytellers (Egan, 1986, 1997). However, aside from the Steiner teachers who used storytelling daily, and Montessorians – Nigel and myself – who used oral story telling on a fairly regular basis, there were no interviewees who professed to using this oral technique. This intrigued me because all the interviewees were avid story readers. I wonder if, as teachers become convinced of the power of oral story in fostering meaning making, they will become more avid storytellers. There was some indication that this might happen from some of the Catholic primary school teachers consulted who revealed that in their newly revised religious education program, they are being encouraged to tell rather than read bible stories.

The storytellers’ experience, combined with enthusiasm and excitement, can help give a special quality to a story. This is what makes an oral story different from one that is read. A story does not have to be told as precisely as it is written. Word-for-word memorisation is not necessary. Storytelling allows the storyteller to include their interpretation and emphasis, without diminishing the essence of the story. (The Director of Religious Education, 1998, p. 37)

I also wonder if as teachers become more comfortable in oral story telling, they might encourage their students to have more experience with oral story telling as well. I would hope that more teachers would have the transforming experience of Montessorian David Millstone (1997) who, influenced by a Steiner teacher, decided to encourage his class to all become storytellers to tell the Odyssey to other children.
He found that by exposing his class to a variety of storytellers, and by providing them with various exercises, they were able to adopt memory and presentation techniques with which they were comfortable. For instance, after storytellers told him “that they don’t memorise the plot of a story; they work not from words but from a series of images,” Millstone helped his children form images through cartooning, and guided imagery (Millstone, 1997, p. 100). He found that when these budding storytellers could visualise the setting and characters including movement and voice quality, they could bring their stories to life.

The fifth graders’ storytelling styles vary widely. Some tellers rely on singing or dramatic voice characterisations; other concentrate on sights and sounds. Borrowing from Odds Bodkin’s opening, Cyi tells much of this tale in a whisper, Odysseus speaking softly to his men inside the belly of the Trojan Horse. Drawing on Mary Sinclair’s facial contortions, Laurie shows us Polyphemus splattering sailors against cave walls and then stuffing them into his mouth…Molly brings an old piece of cloth to her telling and she dashes back and forth energetically, first acting out Odysseus the bent beggar and, casting off the improvised cloak in one grand gesture, Odysseus the returning hero. (Millstone, 1997, pp. 112-113)

On a recent follow-up visit to Interviewee Vicky’s classroom she demonstrated how she is using guided imagery to help her reluctant readers. We had both noticed in our work with children who have difficulty reading or do not find pleasure in reading, that they often say they can’t “picture” the story in their mind. Vicky responded to this identified problem by trying means – not unlike that tried by Millstone – of guiding children in forming pictures. In the session I viewed, she had the students visualise a
child swimming with an octopus. Afterwards, she asked the students to recall their mind picture through drawing or writing a description or poem. Positive feedback from her remedial students from this exercise has inspired Vicky to stop frequently when reading a story or novel to scaffold children’s image making. I would be interested in knowing if memory is further improved by using rhythmic, rhyming stories with archetypes and classic themes. In other words, is memory enhanced by using more attributes of oral traditional storytelling?

I ponder Plato’s “reservations in the Phaedrus and his Seventh Letter about writing, as a mechanical, inhuman way of processing knowledge, unresponsive to questions and destructive of memory” (Ong, 1982, p. 24) and I wonder if more attention should have been paid to this warning. We needed writing for “philosophic thinking”, but we needed and still need oracy because it is a key to a different type of understanding and a different type of memory.

In a primary oral culture, where the word has its existence only in sound, with no reference whatsoever to any visually perceptible text, and no awareness of even the possibility of such a text, the phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings’ feel for existence, as processed by the spoken word. (Ong, 1982, p. 73)

**Rhythm of Human Lives**

According to Egan (1997), “The elaboration of linguistic rhythms to match the patterns of our lives results in those larger forms we call narratives” (p. 59). He implies that language patterns prepare us to experience the binary opposite patterns of our life journeys. Life brings death; youth is tied to age; joy balances grief,
acceptance is cherished because of the experience of rejection, despair alternates with hope; the tears of tragedy are relieved by the laughter of comedy. The poetry, the rhythm, rhyme and imagery of language is affectively linked to the form our lives take (MacIntryre, 1984; Egan 1997).

Rhythm is a characteristic of our life journeys because we are undergoing a passage of time through transitions. The transitions define life pattern movements and each has its own beat, gestures and rituals. Schools use rhythm in different ways to help children on their journey. In the classrooms of all the teachers interviewed, rhythmic, rhyming texts were used to explore language. There was also rhythm apparent in the lesson plans, and in daily, weekly and term schedules. (Although, in many schools this was an imposed rhythm of organisation rather than one of following the child.)

The Montessori classes were unique in that the teachers seemed to cater for the differences of rhythm in the children. In the Steiner school, there was recognition that the rhythm varied according to the maturation of the child; the small child responded to rhythm, repetition and reverence while the older children responded to rituals such as candle lighting, choral poetry and festival celebrations. Although the rhythm of poetry, music, movement and play explorations were observable in every school visited, only the Steiner school interwove music, poetry and movement into the daily pattern. Both Steiner and Montessori philosophies address the energising effect of allowing for the rhythm of concentration intermixed with physical movement, periods of activity balanced with periods of silence. Montessori and Steiner teachers seemed to try to cater for this consciously while it seemed to be occurring more incidentally in other schools. Every school visited has traditions and festivals celebrated during the
year with varied purposes including celebration of holidays and historical events, celebration of the seasons, celebration of excellence and celebration of life transitions. Rhythm serves to put humans in touch with their personal journeys by making them aware of the extension of time from birth to death through their own participation in repetitive and life transition events. Through this rhythm, one attains an awareness of the temporality of human life with its beginning, middle and end (Polkinghorne, 1988). Finally, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration and assonance along with repetitive themes and images contribute to the memory of those who, having a mythic understanding, respond to the spoken word in an existential way (Ong, 1982; Egan, 1997). The rhythm of language is a bridge to the rhythm of the narrative of human lives with its binary opposite patterns (Egan, 1997).

We are introduced to the complexity of the human life journey through images and rhythms of our physical and cultural worlds mirrored in the metaphors and rhythms of our language. We begin to experience a paradox: the more we know about the images and patterns of the world, the more we appreciate the unique combination of images and patterns in our own lives and those around us. Our uniqueness is partly endowed and partly a result of choice. This self-discovery process can be enhanced by opportunities for authentic dialogue, exposure to biography and auto-biography and by living in an environment where individual differences are clearly catered for and acknowledged.
Chapter V

Constructing and Exploring Personal Narrative

We are on the pathway to self-discovery when we are aware that we are unique beings with an individual voice. Hearing the storied experiences of others with whom we feel a connection can influence the choices that contribute to our uniqueness. These ‘others’ might range from distant or ancient heroes to close friends and community associates. Personal journey choices can also be affected by an awareness of what endowments and interests contribute to a person’s individuality.

A literature review and interviews with teachers revealed some means by which students and their teachers are encouraged to explore their personal narratives and in so doing to discover their own voices and guideposts to assist them in life’s journey.

Approaches revealed included:

- creating opportunities for self-discovery through authentic dialogue including student-teacher dialogue,
  students finding an authentic voice and
teachers finding an authentic voice in the staffroom;

- the use of sharing, autobiography and biography through sharing personal narrative,
  exploring and presenting our autobiography,
  biography, and
  communal and intergenerational sharing; and
• catering for individual differences by
catering for differences in temperament,
for gender differences, and
multiculturalism.

Creating opportunities for Self-Discovery through Authentic Dialogue

Classrooms are socio-constructivist recognising that for individuals to “construct”
themselves, they must be in a community experiencing authentic dialogue. There is
an argument that the term “socio” is redundant, for can one construct oneself without
social interaction? Even if a student were engaged in a solitary constructive cognitive
activity, he/she would clearly be influenced by past interactions with family, teachers
and peers. Vygotsky describes this as moving from an interpersonal process to an
intrapersonal one.

An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every
function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social
level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people
(interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This
applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation
of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between
human individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57)

Relationships are clearly a key influencing factor in the construction of our personal
narratives by which we make meaning of our experiences. LaRouchelle and Bednarz
concur with Vygotsky’s implication that constructivism is only possible in a social milieu.

At issue is the need to move forward from a world of facts and materials to a world of symbols and models which take account not only of the cognitive and deliberative experiences of doers and creators but also of the relationships which encompass experiences of either kind. (LaRouchelle and Bednarz, 1998, p. 7)

Perhaps the term “socio” is added to constructivism to acknowledge this aspect of the learning process. Instead of merely accepting that relationships are variables that affect our perceptions, perhaps we can actively use social factors to promote meaning making. This might be achieved through establishing authentic dialogue between teacher and student, by fostering collaborative learning and purposeful dialogue between and among students and by offering children opportunity to share stories of their own journeys. We can also provide them with models of other peoples’ personal narratives and an exposure to individual and cultural similarities and differences.

**Student-Teacher Dialogue**

In addition to the principles outlined by Cambourne that were discussed in Chapter III, Mem Fox underscores the importance of actively considering relationships as a principle of learning (Cambourne, 1988; Fox, 1997). She emphasises that for efficient learning to occur, children must “feel safe enough to learn without fear; so they won’t be afraid to take risks” (Fox, 1997, p. 123). This sense of safety ensues from genuine interpersonal relationships in the classroom.
Relationships are fundamental to learning. Teachers cannot be aloof, detached, or apolitical. We cannot withhold personal information, keep our first name a secret, pretend to have no emotions, or merely feign interest in children’s worlds. We must interact honestly with our students. Real life literacy is always a social event, so our classrooms need that scaffold of social cohesion. (Fox, 1997, p. 123)

Parker Palmer (1997) expressed the similar view that good teachers “are able to weave a complex web of connections between themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves” (p.2). Like Fox, Palmer (1997) infers that this connectedness cannot be achieved if teachers keep their personal lives totally separate from their teaching lives. “Good teachers join self, subject, and students in the fabric of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self” (p. 2).

A first step towards achieving authentic dialogue in the classroom is for teachers to reveal themselves as multifaceted human beings by revealing some of their own journey to their students. Adult stories – the stories from their teachers and parents – “help children negotiate meaning from the mixed messages that bombard them daily. Stories help children to feel grounded” (Diz-Imbelli, 1998, p. 32). Montessorian, Nigel, shares aspects of his own life with his 6-9 year old class:

So in terms of my own personal narrative, this class is really lovely. I can catch them and bring them in at any time just telling them something about my own personal life. When we had Father’s Day, we had a picture of [Nigel’s
birthplace on another continent]. And I picked it up and showed them that I was going to be there and see that mountain and that beach…And the kids said, “Are you going to visit your father?” and I said, “Yes” and [one child] said, “Why doesn’t he come here and visit you?” I said, “Why don’t you write and tell him?” so she sat down and wrote a Father’s Day letter to my father…Such a wonderful moment. True, I have a father and he is there. They would love to meet him. He is a great storyteller. He brought us up on stories.

(Nigel 1: 47)

Shawn describes how in her Montessori school’s autobiography project – discussed further below – teachers made a concerted effort to reveal aspects of their life stories:

The children got over thinking we ate and slept here and raised our children here. They couldn’t believe we had a husband and a home. What do you mean you live three blocks away? They thought that was so odd. So now they know I have a home and children and that I take a writing class. They have seen me write in my journal because I bring that in to the classroom.

(Shawn 1: 292)

Lynne decided that sharing her own stories would give her class confidence to write their own stories.

I was thinking that what I'll have to do as a motivation for this writing session, because it's separate from our other language…And what I was thinking of
doing was telling my own story on a particular topic and then getting them to
write their own. Say, if it was, "The Funniest Thing that Every Happened to
Me" then I would have to tell the funniest thing that ever happened to me.
(Lynne 1: 81)

Lillian Katz reveals the disheartening observation that most of the time teachers spend
talking to students is concerning classroom routines.

It is my general impression from observations of early childhood settings all
over the U.S. that the content of teacher-child
relationships seems similarly focused on the routines and the rules of
classroom life, especially during informal activity periods; when
children are painting or drawing, teachers seem very reluctant to engage the
children in any kind of conversation at all. (Katz, 1993, p. 28)

Katz believes that the Reggio Emilia approach is a positive and dramatic contrast to
this empty dialogue because the students and teachers are sharing an exploration.
(Refer to Appendix C).

My impression of Reggio Emilia practices is, in contrast, that to a
large extent the content of teacher-child relationships is focused on
the work itself, rather than mainly on routines or the children's
performances on academic tasks. Adults' and children's minds meet on
matters of interest to both of them. Both the children and the teachers
seem to be equally involved in the progress of the work, the ideas being explored, the techniques and materials to be used, and the progress of the projects themselves. The children's rules in the relationships were more as apprentices than as the targets of instruction or objects of praise. (Katz, 1993, p. 29)

Reggio Emilia influenced consulting teacher, Jan Phillips, supports Katz’ views. On a recent visit to her pre-primary class, she shared her belief that it is important that teachers be seen as learners as well as teachers by the students. For this reason, she prefers the term ‘educator’ to ‘teacher’ because she feels it implies that we have flexible roles. She gave an example from that particular week in her class. She used her knowledge of biology to guide the children in their study of the interdependence of insects and plants and they subsequently collected ladybird eggs to study. She shared with them that she is learning to use technology as she set up a microscope to a computer for them to watch the eggs hatching and printed out colour photos of the stages (Phillips, 2000). Steiner teacher, Bernadette, voiced similar sentiments. Her children understood she was learning music alongside them as a fellow learner. They also understood that she had an incredible knowledge of Shakespeare that she could share with them as a teacher.

I am very conscious of giving that picture to the children - that I'm learning new things too. And with the music and things, I am only just one step ahead of them. …They know that I have to go home and practise things too. That I'm preparing something that I'm going to share with them in a couple of weeks. (Bernadette: 200-205)
And they go home and say to their mothers, "Now Bernadette must be sitting on her verandah reading Shakespeare with a cup of tea." That's wonderful that they see that I am a striving human being, that I continue to learn and that I have things that I love. (Bernadette: 326)

Teacher-student dialogue can become a catalyst for learning if there is genuine sharing of personal narrative as well as dialogue regarding the joint exploration of interesting topics.

**Students Finding an Authentic Voice**

*Student-student dialogue.*

Teachers who are oriented toward socio-constructivism view the dialogue that occurs between and among children as an invaluable learning tool and thus the teachers create opportunities for discussion and collaborative learning. The Reggio Emilia approach claims to be influenced by Vygotsky in asserting that “children’s participation in communicative processes is the foundation, on which they build their understanding” (Caldwell, 1997, p. 62). Montessori interviewee, Shawn, began recording children’s dialogue in her classes after a visit to Reggio Emilia in Italy. She commented on the problem-solving skills revealed through the interaction of children and their project work. The children themselves provided the guidelines to help define an emerging curriculum.

I was fortunate enough to travel to Reggio Emilia, Italy, last summer with a study tour of the preschools in this small city. I was drawn there by my interest
in the hugely expressive individual and group project work they support in
their beautiful schools. It has been exciting to witness the process and learn
how to support it without dictating its direction. Starting from a place of ...
trust in children, I have been led by them into these amazing projects.
(Shawn 2: 22)

Following is a transcript of the children’s dialogue on their *Earthbird Project*. Notice
how little input is required or expected of the teacher as the children explore this
subject.

Scene: in the south room study, with a small group of children who have been
working, listening to stories in progress, and discussing the birds. Jay has been
thinking about the outdoors at school and all the reasons he loves it here. He
made a blue clay sphere, the earth, and attached a dozen small golden birds
around it with small toothpicks. They look like they are flying all around the
earth. We are discussing the possibility of making a group (whoever wants to
participate) model of the things we love about our outdoors. He writes...

"I like birds. We'll have lots and lots of birds in the yard [at school]. Everyone
can hold the earth. My dad can hold the earth. We'll make lots of music for the
birds. When they come here they can hear the music."

Shawn (teacher): How will they find the music?

J: They get it from theirself. And if they want to find more music, I will
whistle. I saw a flock of maybe 1000 birds! Maybe they will come here if they
hear my whistle. They'd make a circle all around. They'd follow the leader, like their moms. A lot of baby ones would follow their moms. They learned to fly. We can whistle songs.

S: Can all the children whistle?

J: I tried to whistle but I couldn't. So I learned for a long, long time, like 20,000 years! When I was born on September 21, I couldn't whistle. Now I whistle. Nobody taught me. I taught myself.

M: Kids could be singing!

N: We could write it on a sign for the birds to read when they fly over here. Maybe we could sing or something, a long, loud song. About loving, so they'd know it's safe here. I love birds. I hear them every morning I wake up. "Tweet-tweet!" Know what favorite bird is mine? A robin.

Shawn (teacher): Do you know what they eat?

N: Worms. I saw them in my neighbour's yard. The wife bird was out there looking for worms for their kids to eat while the husband bird took care of their babies in their nest. Maybe we could bring instruments and play them so the birds would hear singing and playing! Someone could play music on a flute. It's high, like tweeting.
J: And a guitar.

A: And horns - a trumpet and a coronet.

N: What about a drum? You could have a strap one and wear it around your neck and play it. Maybe if they were hanging on the trees, up high near the sky, the birds could hear them.

M: If a flute was up high in the trees, where the wind blows, IT could play the flute for the birds to hear.

G: A wind chime would work! We could make some. A bird was out there looking for worms for their kids to eat while the husband bird took care of their babies in their nest. Maybe we could bring instruments and play them so the birds would hear singing and playing!

M: I have one that's diamonds made of metal and when the metal bumps each other it sounds like a pretty whistle. If we made one we could use paper - no, not enough sound. And it would be a mess if it rained.

N: Let's tape something to a tree. What if we made a little house and when the birds came in their home, they'd hear the singing?
Shawn (teacher): I bet we could all find things that would make nice sounds. Would you like to put out a basket to collect things that people find? Then we could make them into wind chimes for the birds.

M: I got a good idea! We'll make a stick house for the birds. You know, glue them all together.

J: What if we blow in a jar and make a whistle sound?

N: Does that work? Do we have whistling jars?

G: And food. We need food, too. We need feeders. I could ask my daddy to bring ours from my house. He could bring some seed, too. Then the birds could eat here.

N: Yeah! Like a round dish. They could come out and eat and hear us singing for them. We could open the window and play all our instruments, and some people could be singing.

Shawn (teacher): We could give a concert for the birds.

N: Yeah! I got a great idea! We'll open the window and play the concert out the window.

Shawn (teacher): Maybe if we played the concert and taped it, then we could play it again.
N: Yeah! Even when we aren't here we could plug it in and play it and the birds could hear us.

J (wearing a yellow beak he just made with paper and tape): We need bird beaks for us. So we can be like the birds. And we can wear the beaks and whistle into them. They could be instruments for the birds. (Several children get paper and Jay shows them how to make a beak. They try them on. A few try to whistle.)

M: We need lights for the birds, too. We could catch fireflies in a jar for them when it's summer. We'll put a lot of fireflies in there.

N: And we could make a little umbrella for when it rains!

J: No, birds like to get wet. They need to have water. They like our birdbath.

(Shawn 2: 78-167)

American kindergarten teacher, Vivian Gussin Paley, has written extensively on how important young children’s dialogue is in helping them to construct a view of themselves. She described her students as “actors on a moving stage, carrying on philosophical debates while borrowing fragments of floating dialogue…A relentless connection-making was going on, the children inventing and explaining their rules and traditions every time they talked and played” (Paley, 1988, p. 12).
Different challenges present themselves to the teachers of primary aged children. Rules and roles are still explored in playground games, but it is often in group dialogue around subject explorations, that children gain confidence in expressing and supporting their own opinions. Interviewee, Fran, described her goal of helping older primary aged children to experience having an authentic voice.

I really wanted them to become independent thinkers and to engage with the text from that personal point of view so they would have authentic comments. That was the challenge for me – have Year 3 children confident enough to express their own personal thought which may be different from someone else’s about a text. (Fran 1: 75)

At an age when peer acceptance can work against independent thought, she found that working with small groups with meaningful engaging texts helped to support risk taking, critical thinking and dialogue that challenged children to reframe their perspectives. Like Shawn, she found that trusting the children to the point where one could suspend one’s own judgement helped to nurture their authentic voices.

I think, too, you need to suspend your own judgement, your own notion of where you think a child will go with an idea. Because, I know a tremendous example that I tell the [university] students. In this particular class, they were looking at good and evil, good and evil with regard to *Jack and the Beanstalk*. They have to list the good characters and the evil characters. Most children did what you would expect. One child came up with the mother was good, the
cow was good, the hen was good, and Jack was bad. Immediately you think, “Well, I didn’t expect that response.” And probably, unless you have enough confidence as a teacher, you might really say, “Well, that’s not right.” But because of this literature class and because of all the work done for children to have all these authentic thoughts, I was delighted because it was different. So I said to him, “Why did you say that?” And he said, “Because he went out of his culture (that was his word – “culture”) and started stealing things.”…The most important thing is how you interact with the text, and reflect on it and think about it. It’s so enriching to have someone with a different thought and to provide another idea. (Fran 1: 135)

Interestingly, Montessori interviewee, Carol, also used *Jack and the Beanstalk* as an example of a story that could be used to precipitate interpretive thought.

I try to pick stories that I think the children will enjoy and that we can discuss in an interpretive way so there's not just one right answer so that the children can share their ideas and support them with the text, but not just with one specific answer. In our Great Books Training, there was one question on *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Was Jack greedy? You can say "Yes. He went back a second and third times.” Or you can say, "No. He only took the one golden hen and he needed it to support his mother.” You can support it in different ways. And it's interesting to see. Some children are very superficial. You know they don't really dig deep. And some of them are great thinkers and can really get down and come up with ideas about the interpretive questions that you ask. (Carol: 62)
In addition to Carol and Fran, several other interviewees indicated that they used levels of questioning to help children get in touch with their inner voices. In Kate’s classroom children were asked to respond to and create questions for Aboriginal myths according to the *First Steps* (Education Department, 1994c) format of Right There, Think and Search, or On my Own. Vicky (1: 75) reported that after working collaboratively with her class to write questions at different levels for the book, *The General*, they were able to apply this skill to discussing other texts in depth. My own whole language training made me conscious of using literal, inferential, evaluative and applied/creative questions in discussing literary works as well as cultural subjects. Dr. Ginger McKenzie (1995) in an American Montessori lecture to teachers on curriculum design, encouraged them to use Bloom’s Taxonomy as a guide to writing questions for each subject that required students to think at increasing depth.

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84 First Steps : 3 Kinds of Questions:
1. Right There–The answer is in the story.
2. Think and Search (inferential) Search for Clues in the story and think about your answer.
3. On my Own (evaluative) The answer won’t be told in the story. Find the answer in your head.

(Department of Education, 1994c)

85 Levels of questioning include:
literal – an understanding of what is stated in text; inferential – making inferences from author’s statements; evaluative – making judgement or having an opinion on text; applied/creative – going beyond text to gain additional insights, make new applications or generalisations.

86 Bloom’s Taxonomy – Levels of Thinking delineated as Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation.
There is a danger in applying these *Levels of Questioning* too mechanically. *Levels of Questioning* becomes a literary skill to analyse stories, but are students using this in-depth questioning to construct and evaluate their own personal narratives? *First Steps* does not include the applied/creative level which is the step at which the text would be related to the student’s own journey. This omission was also apparent in the Guided Reading handout (Hill, 2000) at an Australian Literacy Conference in which “Evaluative” or “On My Own” is replaced with the term “Critical”. Levels of questioning is considered a tool of meaning making for the reader; by leaving out Applied/Creative levels of questioning, we could be failing to scaffold a process that would enable children to make connections to their own journey. In terms of Bloom’s taxonomy this would be ignoring the possibility of attaining the Synthesis or Creative Level of Thinking (Bloom, 1956).

I think I could have gone farther in relating them [stories studied in class] to their own journey. …I think that maybe that empowers children to go that one step further … What might this mean to me? I think I stopped short of that. I kept it objective. When you are with children, particularly for three years, they become like your own in many ways and yet there's no reason you can't sensitively make these stories relate to their own personal narratives. I would do more that way next time round. (Allison: 142)

In addition to employing questions at varying levels, some teachers have also found it effective to structure the environment to encourage collaboration and feedback. Fran, for example, worked with her class to create an environment where individual thought
voiced in discussion sessions was valued. In small groups, her class engaged in some of the interactive, collaborative tasks suggested in *Tribes*\(^{87}\) (Gibbs, 1995). In addition she used an activity to promote authentic talk:

> We do an activity, actually an activity suggested by Glenda Raison who helped write *First Steps* called "What Shuts Out Talk?". And it's a really, really good thing to do with the students. We get up on the white board a whole list of things that shut out talk. But not only does it shut out talk, it shuts out that authentic thought. If I put a thought out there, and it's handled so that I am humiliated, I'm not going to go forward again. Then you get the reverse, if that all shuts out talk, how do you set up the environment to create this authentic talk? (Fran 1: 193)

Working together towards a task has the potential to contribute to an environment for positive dialogue. In Nigel’s Montessori class, collaborative multi-age work was used to encourage children to problem solve and form opinions through dialogue. For instance, on one of my visits he gave each multi-aged student pair a situation that had occurred on camp and asked them to dramatise positive alternatives for dealing with the situation. In Kate’s Catholic School class she also used small group drama to give

\(^{87}\) Janet Gibbs recommends in her book, *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being* (1995) that children be formed into tribes suggested by sociograms. Tribe size varies according to age. Children stay in tribes for a month. Tribes provide support and feedback for each other, work on projects and engage in activities together.
children an opportunity for task focused dialogue and problem solving. In the Steiner classes I visited, all the lessons focused on the whole class.

The lesson was whole group. Peer tutoring was allowed but not facilitated.

Children were seated in three rows and occasionally one got up to help another while the teacher was checking work. (Observation of Sam’s class: 9/99)

Occasionally, there was small group collaboration in follow-on periods. Sam explained to me that there is often choice in these follow-on activities – e.g. one group might explore a subject in drama, one in poetry, one in painting.

In all the Montessori classes visited, children worked in small groups for many lessons throughout primary providing great opportunity for dialogue.

Usually, when we had a lesson, it was a small group. About half the class or one particular age level and we'd work on a specific topic or we would write a story from that or as a follow up from the cultural lessons we did. (Carol: 97)

Shawn explains how these small groups in a Montessori 9-12 year old class helped to provide a safe environment for children to tell their stories:

As they were putting together their stories and poems, they would also read them aloud to each other in small groups. It wasn't a whole class thing, but
just with the group of fourth graders. And that was also really good experience. Just that presentation. …Some of the children who were very shy or were new to the school and didn't know very many people yet would just come alive in that group as they were telling their own stories. It's like magic. It's their own story. Then she [9-12 yr. old teacher] encouraged them to brainstorm on ways they could express some part of themselves. (Shawn 1: 59)

In my own 9-12 year old Montessori class, the group communication process was scaffolded by encouraging children to try different roles such as “manager, encourager, recorder, reporter” (Ed. Dept. of WA, 1994b, pp. 30-31) and to have some explorations in which children rotated as group members. This procedure was adopted after my colleagues and I observed that self-selected groups were not offering the students a chance to work with all their classmates and to try different group roles. The feedback from the students was positive as long as they were still encouraged to select their own work partners for most of the long exploration periods of the week.

Dialogue between children is a key variable in socio-constructivism. From my interviews and observations, I noticed that the potential for children to gain personal and cognitive meaning from the dialogue was enhanced by establishing a secure environment where risk taking could occur through encouraging collaborative groups, small discussion sessions and tribes. Children were more likely to express an authentic voice where individual response and interpretation was valued by the teacher and fellow students and scaffolded through questioning at various levels. At least one interviewee indicated that there should be more questioning that encourages
the student to apply narratives studied to their own personal journeys. In the following example, a lesson on fables is revisited with an implied conclusion that with different questioning, children could be helped to make the connection between the story and their own lives.

I almost think I would give them more ideas, more questions relating to stories from themselves…With fables, we dramatized them and we turned them into news articles. Changing genre was something I did often and I thought that was really a way to get them to think about it. …But …I would make it more their personal journey. I would do more with getting them to identify with a character and choose a setting and a conflict that maybe they can identify with metaphorically… This is what I didn't do enough of. That is what I'm starting to do in working with children. There is no reason not to take that bridge. That's how I would change. And I suspect it might help the writing too. (Allison: 156-160)

**Teachers  Finding an Authentic Voice in the Staff Room**

The interview data suggests that we are far better at nurturing student- student dialogue and teacher-student dialogue than teacher-teacher dialogue. Teachers in many schools meet briefly for “How are you?” conversations in the staff room where they may catch up on major family events, or a moment of sharing on the latest movie. They also meet on designated professional development days in which collaboratively they target and explore issues in education. However, there is rarely a
forum for sharing their personal lives and interests or their personal interpretations of classroom experiences.

Lynne attributed her feeling of isolation to a lack of sharing ideas and events related to daily classroom teaching. At the time of the interview she was teaching in a remedial support class and she felt she would have more sharing if she was in the mainstream.

In the State schools, you are in a classroom and I am left to teach without anyone wanting to know what I’m teaching. …Everyone teaches in a different way…I’m in this room and someone else is in another room and I really wouldn’t know how much they use story compared to what I use in here…I suppose if I was teaching in the mainstream area there’d be more opportunity to be more collaborative, to share, more sharing of programme ideas and so on. (Lynne 1:241-271)

Catholic Schoolteacher, Vicky, also had had varied experiences with opportunity for sharing in schools.

At most of the schools where I’ve worked, we had a small enclave where we’ve done that [shared ideas in teaching] with each other. One particular school where that didn’t happen, I had to leave. It was cold and arid and I couldn’t do it. I am a little like that at ______________ [name of school], but I’m coping. I’m a little lonely for sharing…We don’t get time to talk and to reflect and to really share. Often I see teachers who are desperate to
share…they say, “We need a drama specialist” and down the hall there is one. (Vicky 1: 289-293)

Both Lynne and Vicky mentioned that they felt more effort should be made to create forums where teachers could share. Vicky envisioned a forum within each school.

Quite often you will get someone who will say, “I want to share more; I want to discuss my kids.” Someone else will say that. But they don’t manage to get together as there is no forum. …Sometimes I’ve been saying to teachers when I’ve been doing First Steps [training], “Wouldn’t it be nice if we didn’t do any of this for one or two years, and just gave you time to sit down and share your ideas with each other and talk,” because I don’t think that ever happens. (Vicky 1: 296-298)

Lynne envisioned sharing sessions within school districts. Although she viewed these ‘mega’-sessions as being beneficial for all teachers, she thought they would be particularly helpful for teachers with designated special jobs such as remedial work or special subjects as the forum would be larger than in a single school.

I would think that in a place like ______________ [district name] with four or five schools in the area that those schools would get together. But there isn’t anything. There is something for the preprimary and year one but there isn’t anything for the middle school teachers to get together and share ideas. (Lynne 1: 278)
Interestingly, both Fran and Vicky remembered eras in Australia when sharing forums were part of teaching support. Fran remembered a time twenty years ago when there was enough funding to offer 10 day in-service courses that allowed for dialogue between teachers. (Fran 1: 212) The closest thing she has experienced to that since has been the *First Steps* networking meetings.

Catholic Education got teachers, *First Steps’* teachers, in close proximity to have a network meeting once a term. I don’t think many are still going. …I think they are very, very good, because you have this base connectedness that you are all trying to do something, and you all respect each other’s various points of view. Also, in that network group, we were able to say, “What are you doing about the *Curriculum Framework*? Is that a problem for you?” And they know your situation. So I think that’s a really healthy, positive environment, but I don’t think in the school. In the school, it tends to be for teachers – very insular. I don’t think it was always like that. I think it’s gotten worse. I don’t know why. Pressure, maybe? (Fran 1: 220)

Vicky advocated forums for general sharing in the absence of *First Steps* or *Curriculum Framework* task groups.

When I was working for Catholic Ed in an advisory capacity for one term we did that. Another advisory teacher and I would go to a meeting with teachers from a few schools, sit in a circle with afternoon tea and then we would …jot down every idea that came up and give them a copy. …They all brought something to share. It just worked so well…They let it go. It was partly a
funding thing. But it could be started so easily in a school. Especially in one stream schools. Teachers are stuck in their own little castles. They want to know what other teachers are doing. (Vicky 1: 302-306)

In a subsequent discussion, Vicky reiterated her views on the importance of teacher sharing. She was explaining how, in any workshops she runs for teachers, she now timetables significant sharing time as part of each session.

Being a sharing group, being given a chance to focus on us is transformational. We sometimes forget that we are learners too! (Vicky 2: 6)

Nigel too expressed his fatigue with the enormous pressures from workshops in First Steps and Curriculum Framework. When I mentioned Vicky’s idea to him, he was most enthusiastic.

Gay: One person said we should just have a workshop where teachers just get together to talk and share ideas.

Nigel: That’s it! Come to share your ideas! Create a curriculum based on your knowledge, your experience and your wisdom! (Nigel 1:185-188)
Palmer reports that great success in using critical incident brainstorming as a framework for sharing classroom experiences. He points out that critical moments can be both negative and positive and that sharing rapidly ensues because all teachers relate in some way to the events shared.

As the critical moments brainstorming continues, a simple but vital thing happens: faculty talk openly about events that have perplexed and defeated them, as well as those they have managed with ease. That is, they do what we must do if we are to help each other grow as teachers: speak openly and honestly about our struggles as well as our successes. (Palmer, 1998, p. 146)

Not every teacher was feeling isolated. Some teachers spoke of having the opportunity to discuss their experiences and it was apparent that some principals gave sharing a higher priority than others did. Kate felt that her Catholic school was very positive and supportive. She did feel that there had been efforts to promote sharing in this school and that her experience thus contrasted greatly with a previous teaching experience. She noted that staff meetings in her school had recently been changed to allow more “talk”. (Kate: 216) She was also experiencing a very positive team teaching experience.

88 critical moment – “By critical moment, I mean one in which a learning opportunity for students will open up, or shut down – depending, in part, on how the teacher handles it” (Palmer, 1998, p. 145).

89 “they” refers to attendees at Palmer’s faculty workshops. He implies that critical instant brainstorming could be a tool for other teacher groups (‘we’) as well.
We’re really lucky because we have the open classrooms. D. and I do everything the same. So you do get to share your ideas. Something that she’s taught in the past, maybe I haven’t so we kind of swap. It might be language, it might be art. I take social studies in the other class and D. takes health in here so you swap around a bit. (Kate: 208)

Montessorian, Nigel, experienced a team situation which, while positive for several years, is now not as nurturing. He attributes this to different styles and needs as well as external pressures.

We used to be very close. However the focus shifted. My approach is a dialogue approach. It’s a questioning approach. While for someone who just wants to get on and do something, that is a bit tedious, I think. I think it got to the time when my approach was a bit tedious for her. However, for the first four years we were very close. It was very intense. We planned together. I did certain lessons for both classes. She did certain lessons for both classes. It was a true unity and the best unity I could have hoped for. It really helped me a lot. …We don’t do as much now. I think we should have more unity. There isn’t enough, but there is some and everyone is so busy trying to keep up with what they’re doing. This is another issue. (Nigel 1: 183)

Undeniably, when team teaching works there is a positive energy exchange which Nigel experienced for a time and Kate is experiencing with D. I was a member of a positive team teaching situation for five years in which the energy and sharing of the classroom spilled over to support a friendship outside school. However, I have
witnessed many “teams” that just managed to co-exist without feeling that the sharing was positive – perhaps because differences in perspective couldn’t be reconciled. In many of the Government schools I have visited, there are accordion doors between classrooms – trophies of a time when team teaching was thought to benefit children and teachers. Some of these doors slide back today and there is a positive interchange between classes, but many more remain firmly fixed as a reminder that this cannot work for all teachers.

When we walk into our workplace, the classroom, we close the doors on our colleagues. When we emerge, we rarely talk about what happened or what needs to happen next for we have no shared experience to talk about. Then, instead of calling this the isolationism it is and trying to overcome it, we claim it as a virtue called “academic freedom”: my classroom is my castle and the sovereigns of other fiefdoms are not welcome here. (Palmer, 1998, p. 142)

Although Palmer was referring to tertiary teaching situations, I believe his words above appropriately describe the isolationism occurring in primary schools as well. Clearly, dialogue is critical for a person to construct himself or herself in a meaningful way. This is happening in the classrooms for students but not for teachers. Perhaps schools should look at techniques being successfully used for students and extend them to staff.

If work is to have personal relevance, it is important to find ways other than team teaching for primary teachers to share not just the technical aspects of their work, but the critical moments – involving classroom ideas, classroom relationships, outside
relationships and interests – that provide meaning to their lives (Palmer, 1998; Ritchie and Wilson, 2000). To foster similar essential dialogue for students, teachers must provide opportunities to explore and share both personal and classroom experiences in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. In turn, this environment is needed for teachers too. Whilst there is collaboration for students with a variety of partners, teachers need mentors with whom they can share inside and outside the school. In the interview, Fran expressed how exciting she found the experience of finding someone with whom she could share ideas:

Gay: I was in one situation where I found many like-minded (and by like-minded I mean interested in sharing ideas, not necessarily having the same ideas). I’ve also been in a situation where I had to find people outside school with whom I could talk about my work because the people at work were so insular.

Fran: I used to work at Brentwood Reading Centre with a girl, Sue Henderson, from America. She absolutely loved books and reading education and I think that was a wonderful time for both of us because we could say, “Guess what, there’s this wonderful article written by (someone)” and “You’d really like that” or “You should look at this book; this is a great writer.” I think that was a very exciting time, actually. (Fran 1: 217-220)

Waldorf teachers, Sam and Bernadette, also reported that they had weekly opportunities to share their thoughts on teaching. Steiner viewed this time for
professional sharing as “absolutely fundamental to running a Waldorf school” (Steiner, 1996, p. 172).

According to one of its pedagogical impulses, it is not so much a statistical collection of the teachers’ observations expressed during the meetings that is important, but that a living and individual psychology should be jointly developed from out of the actual experience of teaching lessons. (Steiner, 1996, pp. 172-173)

In addition to sharing interests and reflections related to pedagogy, teachers need the opportunity to share more personal aspects of their narratives. Palmer (1998) emphasises that we lose our integrity, our sense of wholeness, if we construct a barrier between our professional and personal stories. Our teaching becomes richer if we weave these strands of our lives together reflecting on and sharing our experiences, our reactions and our decisions.

We can speak to the teacher within our students, only when we are on speaking terms with the teacher within ourselves. (Palmer, 1998, p. 31)

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) also emphasise the importance of merging personal and professional narratives in teaching and learning communities. They encourage teacher apprentices to share their personal stories in a small writing group. The dialogue facilitated by these stories can be transformative because “personal and professional development [are] not cut off from each other” …Teaching and learning
consist of more complex patterns of interaction than occur within the narrow boundaries of formal, didactic, authoritarian models of teaching and learning.” (pp. 49-50).

Finding the inner teacher involves participating in dialogue with those with whom there are trusting relationships in the workplace or in a friendship group. Without this, identity suffers resulting in feelings of frustration and fragmentation.

Government teacher, Dan, lamented the lack of opportunity for sharing interests with co-staff at his school. Although, he said there are always one or two kindred spirits, they are few and far between. He implies that some of the problem might be gender differences in that most primary school teachers are female.

You don’t know people who are on the staff. I don’t…I think because I’m male, too, and that makes it really hard because there’s only two or at most three males on staff. So you go and sit down at a table and they’re all talking about planning daughter’s weddings and I’m not interested in that…Lots of interesting people, but I don’t know, they don’t seem to have my interests. (Dan: 244-252)

Both Montessori and Steiner stressed that a teacher must know himself/herself before he/she can know the child in his/her care (Steiner 1923/1996; Montessori, 1949/1988a). To do this, one would have to view one’s life as a single narrative with personal and professional experiences merged. Montessori emphasised that the teacher should know himself/herself to be able to guide the child and foster his/her
autonomy. She felt this attitude held a much higher priority than knowledge of the curriculum (Standing, 1957; Montessori, 1949/1988a).

The first step an intending Montessori teacher must take is to prepare herself [sic]. For one thing, she must keep her imagination alive; for while, in the traditional schools, the teacher sees the immediate behaviour of the pupils, knowing that she must look after them and what she has to teach, the Montessori teacher is constantly looking for a child who is not yet there. (Montessori, 1949/1988a, p. 252)

Interviewee, Sam, commented on Steiner’s belief that the teacher as well as the student is evolving and so needs the opportunity to share and reflect on this dynamic process.

A class teacher who goes through for seven years has to be changing in development. Rudolf Steiner did talk about teaching as a pathway of development. He said that teachers need to work on themselves. We’re here primarily to teach the children, but if you think you’ve got it made and you know most of the answers, you won’t last very long. You do have to change. (Sam: 33)

Sam noted that although the teachers met every week to share professionally, he also had to find a support system outside school for personal sharing on a regular basis.
And there are a lot of things to deal with and it impacts on one’s own inner life, personal life. If you don’t have a way to deal with this, it isn’t realistic. You have to have that balance. The way I manage it is to have a few close friends, one friend in particular and we get together and talk not just about teaching issues. And it doesn’t happen as much within the school in meetings and such. We do have sharing from the week and we can share anything, but it is more professional. (Sam: 34)

Sam added, however, that during the annual staff in-school development week, they crossed the barrier between professional and personal narratives and had the opportunity to share their stories through biography work.

We’ve had some biography work with teachers sharing aspects of their own lives. That has been just tremendous. These are people you work with everyday and even though it’s a deep work it can be an isolating work. You can be in your classroom and you know what you’re doing, but you don’t know what someone else is doing or what they’re going through or who they are. And so when we had this biography work…When you see aspects of their lives, you say, Ah, I understand why that person might be like that. (Sam: 37)

We’ve done it in different ways. We’ve done it in life story ways like just taking the first seven years of your life and at another session taking the next seven. We work in seven-year cycles here. Human development goes in seven-year cycles. The one we did recently was really good…The exercise
was to draw. We had to draw three tables from our lives and then over three days take turns giving them a title and sharing. We looked at tables from their childhood or tables that they worked at once. These tables were the key to look at someone’s life, a little window. Family tables all sorts of things. It was just a little snapshot. (Sam: 41-44)

Ellen reported that like the administrator, who instigated the biography work at the Waldorf School, her principal was also responsible for creating a safe environment for story sharing.

I was just thinking that the school I’m at is a community and (name of principal)’s definition of that is that we share our stories. As well as that, his interest in Playback Theatre looks at people’s individual life stories and that’s often used to bring a group together or to help an individual explore some aspect of his or her life further…I think in staff meetings and on PD\textsuperscript{90} days we sometimes use these mechanisms – probably could use them more. There is a flexible attitude and diverse approaches within the class and sometimes in the staff meetings lateral thinking exercises are great fun and they can lead to stories. (Ellen 1:217-221)

\textsuperscript{90} PD = professional development
Sharing stories needs to be punctuated with a time for reflection, decision making and adaptation. Teachers need this quiet time as part of the rhythm of their lives as much as their students do. We encourage children to reflect on their work and their lives at ever-deeper levels through encouraging them to question, to think about thinking, to express a voice that might be different from their peers. Teachers also need a time to reflect and to find their authentic voice. Some have found that meditation and journalling balance dialogue with students and colleagues and provides a regenerating rhythm.

And, even personally, I think journalling for myself is really important. So often, teaching is a very stressful occupation and very political. I would do that in a better way. I would be a bit clearer about just where my story is going. Reflection on teaching – I think that’s very important. That means changing schools sometimes. That means changing the way we teach sometimes. It’s a self-awareness that maybe is put on the back burner too much for teachers because it is so demanding and the pressure and preparation is so intense. (Allison: 325)

Palmer (1998) suggests that part of our reflection might be to create a metaphor that depicts our attitude to teaching. He claims he saw himself as a sheepdog “maintaining a space where the sheep can graze and feed themselves” (p. 148). Hagstrom et al (2000) concur that ‘root’ metaphors are a means of tapping into personal experience to “inform our teaching worlds” (p. 25).
I recently asked a group of education students to create a metaphor representing their image of their chosen career. In this student’s poem the energy, challenges and exhilaration of teaching are apparent:

Teaching is like a yo-yo
Always up and down
Spinning around in endless circles
Taking off in wild escapades of joy
Only to be yanked back by reality.

Teaching is like bunjy jumping
Step off, free falling, touchdown
Touch the ground for a second
Then spring back into ecstasy.

Notre Dame Education Student 1999

We are always learning and constructing ourselves. To do so in an integrated way, without fragmenting their personal and professional lives, teachers need to create an environment parallel to the one advocated for students. Staff rooms need to be safe non-judgmental venues where critical moments about teaching and lives can be shared. Because teachers can learn a great deal from each other, PD days or 

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91 Metaphor poem by UNDA student in Interpersonal Communications in Early Childhood Education course.
afternoons devoted to sharing ideas about teaching are extremely valuable. Teachers, as well as students, can obtain clues from biographies to guide them in constructing their lives. Thus, granting time for staff to share their stories is well spent. The rhythm of the teacher’s life should include a time for dialogue inside and outside school, and a time for reflection. Reflection may take the form of meditation, journalling, or even metaphor writing or drawing. Reflection fuels dialogue and self-construction.

The Use of Sharing, Autobiography and Biography

By sharing events from life journeys, experiences have a context. Stories need to be believable and cohesive for listeners. In creating and presenting them, one makes connections with other life experiences and with the lives of the audience. “Telling the story of one’s life is often a way of stepping back and making it an object of reflection, of spectating on one’s life. Cognitive psychologists call this ‘decentering’; it allows one to step outside the busyness and make of it all some meaning” (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, p. 23). Also, every time a listener is exposed to someone else’s story through oral sharing or autobiographies, he/she has the opportunity to further define his/her voice by noting what is shared with the person and what places existing beliefs into question. In this way, sharing is a vehicle of both self-affirmation and change.

Langer (1997) claims that “a mindful approach to any activity has three characteristics: the continuous creation of new categories; openness to new information; and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective” (p. 4).
sharing stories, people are exposed to multiple perspectives and this makes them appreciative of life’s alternatives and choices within a narrative framework from birth to death.

**Sharing Personal Narrative**

*News and The “ME” Box.*

In my interviews and classroom observations, I was gratified to note that there has been a move away from “show and tell” as the primary vehicle of classroom sharing or “newstime” to a format that invites children to share personalised, coherent narratives.

‘Show-and-Tell’ has a very different interaction structure to a situation in which children are encouraged to share a past or projected experience. The patterning of talk in a show-and-tell situation would seem to discourage oral narrative – at least initially – as the ‘shower-and-teller’ is likely to be limited to a set role while the special object is displayed. (Cusworth, 1996, p. 61)

Cusworth (1996) indicates that children who bring in an object for news are limiting the possibilities of their oral language to descriptive and ownership terms rather than benefitting cognitively and emotionally from the properties of narrative. She questions whether newstime with its emphasis on oral language skills is viewed as “a forerunner to public speaking rather than as a venue for storytelling” (p. 60).
Showing an object does not help a child make sense of his/her life or help them to recognise the past, present and future of their own life stories. It does not help the child to reflect on his/her inner experiences. There is an argument for objects being brought in for young children but only as a mnemonic for events when relating personal stories. In my school, children shared objects but they had to be hand-made, collected, or researched so that the object had a story.

In Shawn’s American Montessori school, the entire school is participating in what they refer to as an Autobiography project. Their 3-6 year old children take turns taking home the “Me” heartshaped box which they brought back with mementos – photos and objects that remind them of events in their lives. The objects are a prop rather than a focus of their sharing. As Shawn explained, “We are trying to make it concrete for the children” (Shawn: 10). The child presents his or her story using the “Me” Box items and then a teacher takes dictation from the child for the “Us” book in the classroom (Dougherty, 1999).

On the day I visited Shawn’s school a child had brought back the “Me” box with some assorted items. Her dictation clearly reflected her growing awareness of her own unique combination of interests.

I brang my bathers because I like to swim. I brang my ballet slippers because I love to dance…I brang my hat because when I was born, they put that on my head to keep me warm. Haleigh. (Shawn: 17-21)
A slightly older child, Lisa, weaves her memories into a narrative that is more cohesive:

> I love my Mom and my brother who plays with me in the car. He makes my knees tickle. We colour. He draws Batman and I draw flowers. I can sleep in his room. We get some chocolate in the middle of the night. He gets the chair and stands on it to get the chocolate. He climbs down and he gives me some chocolate. Someone knocks on the door and me and my brother open it. It was just a kitty cat knocking on the door. Then we head downstairs. We watched TV down there. Then we started throwing a ball. I stubbed my toe but it didn’t hurt. Then we jumped off. Then it was morning. We went downstairs and did it all over again. Then it was night and we went downstairs with a football. *Leah.* (Shawn: 33-37)

Cusworth (1996) asserts that children need an audience for stories such as this. “Children need more than just a venue to share their personal narratives; they need to have them accepted, even honoured, by others” (p. 62). In Shawn’s class, children share their stories from the “Me” box. Usually, the teacher gathers the children and invites them to hear the personal narrative. Sometimes the children themselves independently gather a small group who want to hear their story again. The comments and questions from the peer group help to clarify the stories and positively affirm the identity of the teller.
The children just bring and tell each other. And if anyone has questions they can ask them. So if Gina was having her meeting that day and Heidi had a question she would raise her and Gina would call her name and she could ask her question. She’s in charge of it and it really is a celebration. It’s so much fun. (Shawn 1: 31)

Rosen (1986) thought it was critical for children to have the opportunity to tell their stories to others because we need to make events coherent for an audience to understand. This, in turn, makes the events coherent in our own inner reflection. “The internalised, private story is itself an impossibility without a prior sharing, prior discourse, without social memory and social action” (p. 230).

Although Cusworth (1996) is concerned that – in over half the 392 classrooms she surveyed – news is a whole class exercise with the teacher sitting at the front or side of the room, my observations of narrative-rich classrooms revealed that many teachers are using a pattern of small group news sharing. This was certainly the case in Kate’s Catholic school classroom, Lynne’s Government school classroom and Sam’s Steiner class. At least once a week, children in these classes had an opportunity to share their stories, to listen and be listened to. In my Montessori school, “sharing” time was a whole school time Although children had the opportunity of being listened to by a multi-age audience, this venue did not foster the question and answer clarification that Cusworth (1996) and Dougherty (1999) have identified as being instrumental in linking oracy to meaning making. I believe that children in Montessori classes – through working in pairs and small groups all day – have many informal opportunities to share their stories. However, this process can be enhanced by creating more
opportunities for children “to personalise someone else’s story to meet their own needs” by insuring that they participate in story sharing in small interactive groups (Cusworth, 1996, p. 55). Interactive sharing can also give teachers a window into children’s concerns and imagination if they are able to witness or to participate in the small group sharing.

Gay: With the children, how are personal narratives acknowledged in the class? You have some sharing times?

Sam: Well, it depends on the age. In Class 2, it's more like news. We share news. Each child gets the opportunity but doesn't have to take it. I try to stay alert to the fact - oh, this child said something. I think, “Oh this could be a class discussion.” It might be the death of a pet or someone in the family. The death of a pet, I might say, “Who else has had a pet die?” They just want to share…Sometimes I have them share with a partner. Say, we were talking about pets – well then I might tell them to turn to the person beside them and tell their stories. (Sam: 51-56)

Timelines and Family Trees.
In the 6-9 year old class at Shawn’s Montessori school, the format for exploring and sharing their autobiographies moves from “the Me Box” of the 3-6 year old class to illustrated timelines in the 6-9 year old class. Flags representing their countries of ancestry are part of these time lines and children (9-10 year olds) have the opportunity to research these countries. In addition, children create family trees and this provides a platform for exploring their family histories and cultural traditions (Doughterty,
The middle primary teacher in the school described one child’s discovery in this project. 

Yeah, that was a lot of fun. The parents got into it too. I had one girl. Andrea's family is from Boston and are African-American. They did an article in the newspaper in Boston about the history of her family and there are pictures in her book of her great, great, great grandmother that are hanging in the Smithsonian. So that was something very serendipitous that came up when we were doing that… *Mary, 6-9 year old teacher from Shawn’s school* (Shawn 1: 163)

The middle primary teacher went on to emphasise that part of the beauty of the project was that it involved entire families in putting together a portrait of their unique combination of cultural histories.

We certainly did open a lot of discussion at home. We had one child who came in and said he was Chinese, but he looks Caucasian…It turned out his grandfather had remarried a Chinese woman. But that was exciting to come up with that diversity in his family. *Mary* (Shawn 1: 169)

*Sharing and Exploring Names.*

Ellen, a Montessorian, working with this same age group began the celebration of autobiography by looking at the origins of each child’s name. This also drew in the entire families as parents revealed why a name was chosen. Some names revealed
cultural traditions or ancestry. Even stories that revealed names selected from a
namebook resource or simply because the parents liked the sound created meaningful
links for the child because the name for whatever reason was selected especially for
her or him. Sometimes finding the name’s origins was a journey of discovery for the
child and his family. Ellen carefully calligraphied each name and its origin on a
lovely card and placed them in a basket on the language shelf for children to read,
share, and ponder.

Ellen’s classroom exploration is linking a child into a process that connects us with all
cultures, all generations and all mythologies. Cassirer (1946) viewed naming as an
eexample of the merging of word and essence.

For even a person’s ego, his very self and personality, is indissolubly linked,
in mythic thinking, with his name. Here the name is never a mere symbol, but
is part of the personal property of the bearer…In other ways, too, the unity and
uniqueness of the name is not only a mark of the unity and uniqueness of the
person, but actually constitutes it; the name is what first makes man [sic] and
individual. (pp. 49-51)

Lively, in her novel, *Spiderweb*, based on the life of an anthropologist also pays
tribute to the importance of names – not only personal names, but family names and
place names.

Names, names…she thought. The ultimate signifier for those of us who like
to ferret away at such things. Inside the cottage were card indexes and

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notebooks in which she had diligently recorded hundreds upon hundreds of names. These harvests could then be assembled into patterns – clusters of similar sounds which make kinship groupings and lineage structures. We all of us bear witness to our genes and are labelled accordingly.” (Lively, 1998, p. 93)

Lineage connections are dramatically highlighted through the naming ceremony of his grandfather described by Alex Haley (1976) in *Roots*:

Omoro then walked out before all of the assembled people of the village. Moving to his wife’s side, he lifted up the infant and, as all watched, whispered three times into his son’s ear the name he had chosen for him. It was the first time the name had ever been spoken as this child’s name, for Omoro’s people felt that each human being should be the first to know who he was…One by one, the arafang recited the names of the Mauretanian forefathers of whom the baby’s grandfather, old Kairaba Kinte, had often told. The names, which were great and many, went back more than two hundred rains. (p. 3)

Just as personal names are a link to our lineage, place names reflect the cultural history of our habitat. Even in a mobile world, these place names are a clue to the unique combination of our heritage and experiences. Daily I hear Aboriginal place names such as Coogee, Kojonup, Narrogin, and the Porongurups. Aboriginal names are part of the landscape and the history of our country. I remember the native American names dotting the landscape where I spent my childhood: Connecticut and
Massachusetts – the states, Ildewild – the airport, Cos Cob, Narragansett and Willimantic – the villages, Lake Winnepasaki – site of a summer camp. I grew up with these special names but never contemplated their link to history until I returned as an adult. Now I see my own story as linked to the indigenous names of America and Australia.

Helping children to realise the significance of the names of places in their region is thus another means of linking them into their own story. Some of my former students were recently involved in a reconciliation art project in our city. They carried lanterns with individual art motifs celebrating our multiculturalism in the naming ceremony of Booyeembara Park. During the project, children were told stories about the Aboriginal naming of places in our state. On their lanterns, they placed symbols representing some of these place and names as well as motifs representing other cultures in their own heritage. In this instance the naming of Booyeembara Park was the ritual of applying a name to a newly recreated recreational place just as personal names mark the beginning of a life journey. Because of the context in which it was named, it is likely that the name Booyeembara Park will signify the hope of reconciliation for the participants just as the naming of a person signifies hope for a meaningful life journey.

**Exploring and Presenting Autobiography**

In the 9-12 year old class at Shawn’s school, during the first year, children research their autobiographies by interviewing family members. Their final presentation might include essays, poetry, interviews, dioramas and even game boards noting significant life events. The next year they do in-depth research of American culture and the
cultures represented in their family trees. It is a year of celebrating diversity as they become aware of customs and social concerns linked to the cultures represented in their community. The bookshelves in the room have a wide assortment of biographies and stories that children used to explore their roots in Africa, Asia, Europe and America and the teacher in this class is an accomplished storyteller who draws children in through “symbolism and connections…She sees that part of community building as really important. People who know where they come from just have a different level of confidence…” (Shawn 1:137-145) In the final year, they present their lives through pen pal letters and exchange visits to children in a more diverse public school.

As a follow-up to the more in-depth self-study, this provides opportunities to discuss their lives, values, families, attitudes, and goals with others whose experience is different from their own and to have fun together. The goal is to break stereotypes on both sides and allow students to come to a greater mutual understanding and respect. This is basic peace education at a personal and age-appropriate level. (Dougherty, 1999, p. 41)

At Shawn’s school they continually link the autobiography project with the concept of peace education. The staff feel that the more children know and celebrate their own uniqueness as well as their shared experience, the more they will tolerate and celebrate diversity. “We have talked about the importance of knowing who your ancestors were and where they came from and having that really strong identity. We
were talking not even a week ago about Littleton, Colorado\(^2\), and how hard it is if you don’t have that strong sense…It is that village sense that you have other people you can count on and that’s really this place” (Shawn 1: 145).

**Biography**

Studying the lives of others can help to clarify our own journeys as we find pathways to emulate and pathways to repudiate. The wonder of the personal journey is enhanced by realising that every human being finds some common ground in every other human’s story, whether it be revealed in stories of heroes or heroines or in a story shared by a grandparent visiting the classroom. Because life’s passages share common attributes in all cultures, we can marvel in noting what is shared. At the same time, we can find fascination in recognising what is different in lives lived in other cultures or times or settings. Both children and adults, as they go through passages in their lives, clarify their identities by being exposed to biographies that provide clues for their personal journeys. American academic, Mary Catherine Bateson, has discovered that her audiences are more moved and more challenged by hearing narratives uncluttered with generalities and jargon.

People learn from stories in a different way from the way they learn from generalities. When I’m writing I often start out with abstractions and

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\(^2\) Littleton, Colorado was the site of a mass shooting of high school students ending with the suicide of the student murderers in April, 1999. Much debate and speculation among the public and especially educators resulted from this incident prompting varied demands including greater gun control, smaller schools with more mentoring, better mental health facilities, etc.
academic jargon, and purge it. The red pencil goes through page after page, while I try to make sure that the stories and examples remain to carry the kernel of the ideas, and in the process the ideas become more nuanced, less cut and dried (Bateson, 2000, p.1).

Similarly, Australian businesswoman and feminist, Wendy McCarthy, has learned that narrative is a far more powerful teaching tool than sequenced manuals.

I worried sometimes that I was not providing them with the ‘how to’ manual, which I knew some of them wanted, but I persuaded myself that that’s training, not education, and manuals can be found on the internet. I prefer learning through narrative, and women’s stories are a powerful and reaffirming format for such learning. They help provide a script for the documentary we are making as we challenge old ideas and old ways of doing business. (McCarthy, 2000, p. 253)

Many of the teachers interviewed have discovered the power of using biography in the classroom. Collectively, they have noted the effectiveness of studying famous lives in engaging students’ interests in a variety of subjects including literature, mathematics, social studies and value education. The study of these lives should be detailed enough that students become aware of the real person they are studying from the thinker’s “psyche, body, relationships, passions, political and social context. Objectivism tries to protect its fantasy of detached truth by presenting ideas as cut flowers, uprooted from their earthy origins. But good teachers help students see the
persons behind the ideas, persons whose ideas often arose in response to some great suffering or hope that is with us still today” (Palmer, 1999, p. 4).

In her interview, Carol mentioned that she was greatly influenced in her use of biography in the teaching of mathematics by a workshop with Kieran Egan who inspired this direction in her work by emphasizing how meaning is created by humanness.

Mathematics is not an inhuman activity. People made it for human purposes. The key to humanising it, or, better, rehumanising it for children is to tie the computational tasks back to the human intentions, hopes, fears, etc. that generated them in the first place. If children can see a particular mathematical computation not simply as a dehumanised skill to be mastered but rather as a particular solution to a particular human hope, intention, fear, or whatever, then we can embed the skill in a context that is meaningful. (Egan, 1986, p. 77)

Carol introduces new concepts by telling the story of the mathematician’s life. Children explore Napier’s bones, for instance, after learning what an extraordinary problem solver he was. John Napier lived in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth

93 John Napier devised a system referred to as Napier’s Bones, an arithmetic multiplication tool. He also devised logarithms and explored the binary system.
century Scotland at a time when Protestants and Catholics were feuding. He was known for speaking his mind and being a problem solver.

I think it’s interesting to find out more behind the mathematician. …I tell them about Napier. He was a farmer and planting his seeds, but every morning the birds were out eating his seeds and he tried to talk to the king because he knew they were the king's birds to keep his birds at home. The king said,"Oh, they're not mine; they're not mine!" So Napier put whiskey on bread and put it out amongst the seeds. The birds ate it and were a little inebriated and lay on the ground. So, he picked them up. Of course, they were the king's birds and he wouldn't give them back to the king until the king paid him for the birds. (Carol: 17; 240)

The other story we share with the children is that Napier believed that one of the servants was stealing from him and he pondered …and he decided he would use his rooster to discover who this servant was who was stealing. So, he told all his servants that the rooster would tell him. And they all had to go into the basement and pat the rooster. One servant chose not to pat the rooster. When he came out of the basement, Napier looked at him and said, "Why are you stealing from me?" And he said, "Well, how did you know? I didn't pat the rooster." Napier said, "Yes, your hands give you away. Your hands are clean." He had coated the rooster with lampblack or soot from the fireplace and so all the other ones had patted the rooster, but this guy was afraid because he was afraid that the rooster would crow. Children laugh and they enjoy hearing about it and thinking about it. (Carol: 242)
Carol also credits her interest in motivating children through story to her training with Montessorian, Harvey Hallenberg, who is famed for enacting historic events for his 9-12 year old students and teacher trainees in Florida. For instance, he delights in recounting (and partially enacting) the story of Archimedes shouting "Eureka" and running naked through the streets after rising from his bath when he figured out how to measure the gold in the king's crown. The Law of Hydrostatics was discovered (Hallenberg and Turner, 1997).

I was turned on a lot by Harvey Hallenberg who was my trainer in the math and culture areas. You know he really uses story and has the children acting out a lot of these stories. When he does slavery he has the children lying on the floor with chains over them. He tells the story of how they were transported from Africa to America on the boats and the children have to lay there while he’s telling the story so they can kind of experience what it might be like…Yes, it motivates them. They want to come and hear what you are going to do next or they want to do it. So yes, motivation and appreciation for how people lived before, experienced. (Carol: 222)

Telling children biographies of historical persons can help them to understand periods of history while at the same time underscoring character traits that appear throughout history and universal needs that must be met on every life journey. Montessorian, Kathleen Allen reminds teachers to “make history come alive by putting it into a
social context. History is about the lives of people, not just a record to be memorised” (Allen, 1999, p. 228). She also reminds us that as we tell the stories of historic personages, we are modelling biographical storytelling techniques and highlighting elements that are important in a biography. For example, she tells the story of Queen Elanor of Aquitaine who became the Queen of two countries in her lifetime and the mother of two kings in the 12th century.

This biographical piece also serves as modelling, showing the children how a story of someone’s life can be told, not just when the person was born and died and what she was famous for, but some hints of her character and the world she lived in. (Allen, 1999, p. 231)

Catholic school teacher, Fran, selects biographical stories to help children explore journeys and quests and relate them to their own journey. She emphasises that if children only hear an outline of the story and the journey including birthdate, where he went and on which islands he stopped, they have no hooks to relate it to their journey of self.

Captain Cook's journey…What I want them to think about it is “What sort of a man was he? And why do you think he did that? And how old was he?” It's quite a long journey for an old man. His life is interesting. He got married quite late [for the 18th century], and he was a farm labourer and a grocer’s assistant [before] he went on these boats. …I think that would reflect more truth of the journey. The hardships. (Fran 1: 240-244)
Biographies can become life metaphors for students, models to be remembered in times of crisis, adversity or enormous challenge.

About that time I presented Helen Keller’s story to children and …none of them have forgotten. These children are now of university age and many refer to Helen Keller when I see them…We really looked at the setting too. Prediction, and then the setting, putting ourselves in her shoes. What was it like not to be able to speak or see or hear? We tried to put ourselves in that situation and consider how one could be educated. We brought in Braille books and not until I really felt that they knew what she was facing, did we proceed with her story. It was a really powerful experience for all of us.

(Allison: 25)

By exploring biographies, students begin to appreciate the complexities of the human condition and to develop an awareness of the number of roles a single person plays in a lifetime.

You realise the people have other sides. It’s important for children to …realise that…we’re not just a mathematician, or we’re not just an historian, or a banker, but we have other sides to our lives. I think [biography] helps children realise…there are other sides to people that they might want to know.

(Carol: 29)

Montessorian, Ellen had a large selection of biographies in her 6-9 year old classroom including *Alexander the Great, Henry Ford, Eric the Red, William Shakespeare, Hans*
Christian Anderson, Galileo, Captain Cook and St. Francis of Assisi. Both she and Nigel indicated that they choose biographies and other literature to demonstrate virtues.

Study the characters in terms of which virtues were and weren’t there and then consider how this affected relationships. (Nigel 1: 292)

Some stories are told to work in with the virtues and to incite, inspire moral development, I suppose. I also like to use a lot of biographies that way. They have uplifting examples. (Ellen 1: 16)

Sam in his Year 2 Steiner class was studying stories of the saints so the children heard many biographies in that year’s curriculum. An effort was made to tell many events in the lives of saints so that children could appreciate their varied strengths and challenges. During my visit, the children were studying St. Francis of Assisi and had heard a story of how he ministered to the dying Pope and another on how he went out to meet the wolves.

Hallenberg implies that learning about people’s lives can have a transcending effect by expanding the boundaries we impose on our own life journey. Learning about people’s lives seems to free children by providing evidence of a multiplicity of pathways one can choose to have a meaningful life. Biographies are models of life choices and problem solving.
Often a child may struggle with the chains of classroom bondage until he or she begins reading biographies at about the age of 9. Reading biographies seems to begin the liberation process. There is something about the biography of a famous person that allows a reader to achieve some objectivity with respect to his or her own life. The reader naturally compares it to the life of the famous person. Many consciously change their behaviour or their goals in life as soon as they begin reading biographies. (Hallenberg, 1997, p. 33)

I believe that Steiner teacher, Bernadette, observed a similar phenomenon in the changing consciousness of the 9-10 year old students. She explained that Steiner carefully chose mythological biographies of Vikings to address the insecurities of this age group.

The reason why we do that - the reason we use Norse Mythology at that age is quite prophetic too. Because this is the age in the 9th and 10th year that children go through a real change in their consciousness, in their relationship to the world. In the years between seven and nine, they are living in that Golden Age where they very much live in that fairy tale world and they still feel a kind of oneness. They still operate very much as one whole class and they are still very connected to their family. At the time of 9 or 10, Class 4 or beginning in Class 3, they really begin to experience themselves as separate from the world and they really begin to experience this loss of the Gods. That kind of golden aura of childhood fades away. They begin to experience themselves as individuals which of course can lead to feelings of isolation and fears and uncertainties, insecurity - all of
those things. And so the things they need to develop are first of all
the security - they are going through something, but it will be okay at
the end. (Bernadette: 142-143)

Kieran Egan (1997) would concur with the Steiner view that we need to choose the
stories we tell according to the child’s level of understanding. He would agree with
Hallenberg that for children from the age of 9 or 10 years, biography caters for their
Romantic way of understanding. Egan (1997) emphasises that historically,
Romanticists were concerned with the margins of reality. Thus, historians like
Herodotus who used dramatic narrative to portray history, used extreme examples of
heroes and events to define the reality of history. “The Romantic Movement shares
the commitment to the extremes of reality, the limits of experience, the fascination
with the mysterious…” (p. 96).

Romanticism explains cause and effect through the emotions and actions of heroes.
“The archetypical romantic figure is the hero. The hero lives, like the rest of us,
within the constraints of the everyday world but, unlike the rest of us, manages
somehow to transcend the constraints that hem us in” (p. 88). Children from nine or
ten to fifteen might feel insecure and that they are at the mercy of a world of “rules
and regulations- parental, society and, and not least, natural” (p. 90). These romantic
heroes provide examples of heroic qualities – strength, compassion, endurance,
courage, etc. – that give the student fuel to spiritually transcend life’s limitations and
constrictions.
I think it is reasonable to see the ability to form “romantic” associations with human qualities in transcendent degree as one aspect of what has traditionally been called “spiritual development.” (Egan, 1997, p. 92)

Egan insists that ideally old understandings of the world merge with new understandings. As teachers, we might well be at a philosophic or even ironic level of understanding, but it is apparent from my interviews, that adults are still influenced by biography and by heroes.

I think of books that always stay with me as part of me are books or writers that have given to me what I try to do with children – an authentic journey that tells you about your landscape, the people in your life. I don't have a lot of time for books that have that fake touch to it, that someone's crafted a great story and it may be listed as a best seller. (Fran 1: 278)

Steiner teacher, Sam, claimed he found the most meaning in religious and mythical biographical stories and poems:

Well the greatest story that always touches me is the Easter passion.

That is really - every time I hear that, that's probably my key story,

94 Egan (1997) describes five levels of understanding possible for the human being that parallel historic development: Somatic, Mythic, Romantic, Philosophic and Ironic.
the death and resurrection. Other ones - certainly The Odyssey, the
great journey about the fate of the gods and doing your own thing. All
those episodes with the Cyclops and everything. I love songs and I do
love poetry. But one song that I've really listened to is called
Spencer, the Rover which is a traditional English ballad, and it's about a man
who … leaves home and goes roving. And while he is roving, he gets insight
and goes back home to his wife and children. He's like a stranger. It's like the
prodigal son. That image of leaving something and going to the wilderness
and coming back. It's a journey story. (Sam: 352-258)

Dan selects biographies that clarify historical themes he is exploring. While he was
personally reading adult biographies and other works on World War II, children in his
class were reading I Am David and When Hitler Stole My Pink Rabbit.

I've been looking at war. I've been revisiting that section for a
number of reasons … It might be that I start off with The German Hitler
Youth Movement and then about the doctor in a German concentration camp,
The War Diaries of Children - a wonderful American woman edited that.
These are adult ones. They are just so sad. Why can't I go to school? Where
has Heinz gone? Then I might read about Chinese Dynasty, you know The
Last Emperor or the one before that The Dowager Empress. Then I might be
reading the history of Opium…Then Wild Swans and Fallen Leaves. (Dan:
349-360)
My own interview prompted me to journal books that I viewed as meaningful in my life journey. A number of these works were biographical. Clearly different works were influential depending upon how they related to my own life stages and passages.

I grew up in the very positive America of the 50's and 60's. The message I got was that if I were to be well-educated, I would get a good job, have a good marriage and live happily ever after. It was also a time of emerging individualism - community consciousness was not emphasized. In my early teens I enjoyed reading about women who made successful lives despite odds against them such as Helen Keller, Madame Curie. Thus readings in my late teens and early twenties that defied this formula really struck me. I remember reading a book whose title escapes me where a very successful man lost everything in the depression and ended up as a street beggar. I have never forgotten the effect this had on me. To be good and to work hard and to end up as a beggar was shocking to consider. This was the beginning of a literary journey of texts that included that aspect of fate or circumstance that could so alter what should have been charmed lives. …The Diary of Anne Frank must surely be a text that has always returned to my consciousness. In this case her enemy wasn't "fate" but something much more evil. It was text such as this concerning the holocaust that set me pondering the nature of good and evil. …Also in my late teens, I remember being struck that people could devote their lives to a cause even if it meant losing their lives. This was in such contradiction of the individualistic society in which I lived.
Certainly reading *Exodus* by Leon Uris influenced me at that time. I was also still interested in the narratives of women but now in context of other women. I was still reading about women who overcame odds to create a successful life such as Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. I was listening to feminists such as Kate Millett, Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan - fascinated by their personal narratives but up to that time I had never experienced prejudice for being a woman. I could see that there were many miserable "rich" housewives in my community and began to understand the conflict they experienced in abandoning careers. It wasn't until I lived in Alabama and then Australia that I experienced what I had read - segregation of women on pedestals, lower salaries, and physical appearance as a chief hiring criterion. It also wasn't until I tried to raise a family that I understood that women would always feel "schizophrenic" if they wanted a career and family. So...I did revisit women's literature and women's narratives with new eyes. Now I am drawn to what might be stories of ordinary lives such as Margaret Forster's *Hidden Lives* (1995) and *Precious Lives* (1998) and Bonnie Burnard's *A Good House* (1999). These three books epitomise a genre that highlights the heroic qualities in each individual as he/she copes with inevitable conflicts and tragedies of the human journey. (Journal 12: 12-18)

The more we can relate to human variables in a biography, the more the story will influence our own life journey. Realising this has prompted teachers to integrate biography study with many subject areas. It has also prompted many educators to invite communal and intergenerational sharing of oral autobiographies in the classroom.

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Communal and Intergenerational Sharing

Bateson: Famous people are interesting, but there’s a kind of distancing phenomenon there. I’m interested in the creativity that we all put into our lives. Picasso’s life story is not empowering to the creativity of ordinary people. What is empowering is looking at someone that they can identify with. And becoming aware of what they’re already doing. (Bateson, 2000, p. 1)

Montessorians Allison and Ellen, Government schoolteacher, Dan, and Steiner teacher, Sam, all brought community members into the classroom to tell their stories. Sam used these visits to encourage children to reflect on a variety of occupations.

One thing I did when I had Class 3 was to invite the parents in once a week to talk about their lives, because in Class 3 we do building and farming and things of practical living like the farmer’s life. (Sam: 532)

Dan invited the grandparents to join his class for a simulated “old-fashioned” school class and The Childhood Museum and then to share their memories.

It was really interesting. The kids were sitting at the desks. And the guy was beating the cane and raising mayhem. And all the grandparents were at the back. Even if they weren’t very old, they said they remembered being taught like that. And the kids couldn’t believe it. When [comments] were coming
from the grandparents, it was so good. Mary used to go to school on horseback...We went and had a picnic after that...and we had old-fashioned games like skipping. Some of the ‘grands’ were playing. (Dan: 231)

Allison invited grandparents to tell their stories when her upper primary class were studying Australian history including World War II experiences.

One of the most interesting times I had was when I had grandparents in to talk about war years or early life in Australia. The war came into it. It was suggested that they interview someone who lived through the war. One of my students interviewed her Japanese grandfather who wrote a long sensitive letter about his view of the war for her to share with the class...I also had a grandfather visit the class who talked about what it was like to be one of the “boat” children95, and how he made his way. The kids were open-mouthed. He also talked about things like the first traffic lights in Perth. (Allison: 224;233)

Ellen expressed her view that elders should be invited into the classroom to share their personal narratives and stories written by wise elders should be read to children.

95 The “boat children” refers to orphaned and otherwise disadvantaged children who were sent out to Australia from the United Kingdom in the 1930’s-1950’s to be raised and educated in-group homes. There has been considerable publicity and lawsuits recently related to abuses that these children suffered. Some had living parents and siblings in the UK whom they have been able to trace.
“The elders in the community have the responsibility to turn the lights on for the young ones” (Ellen 1: 11).

Ann Zubrick revealed what a powerful experience her Psychology 100 students had interviewing an “older person”.

It was amazing how many said, “This is the first time I have talked to anyone who is older than my parents.” That is terribly sad. Terribly, terribly sad. It gave them a really genuine respect for the knowledge and life experiences of people. …It was a very powerful experience for them to have to sit down and seriously talk to someone about their life and the kinds of things that have shaped that life and the ways they had viewed life 80 years down the road.

(Dr. Zubrick’s interview with Gay: 288-289)

A program that acknowledges the power of celebrating our heroes who emerge from our own communities is The Giraffe Heroes Program for Kids (Giraffe, 1996) which is now in schools in 47 American states and lauded especially for its positive effects in inner city schools. Advocates of this programme believe that by hearing the stories of local heroes who, like giraffes, stick their necks out, students will be inspired to work for change in their own towns. From a bank of hero stories including many ‘ordinary’ people who stuck their necks out, the teacher selects stories to tell her class. She/he might relate the story of Rosa Parks who, by refusing to give up her rightful seat on the bus, made a huge contribution to integration in the USA or someone who drove drug dealers out of a neighbourhood. Secondly, the children are encouraged to find their own heroes with their families and to report back to the class. Thirdly, the
children determine how they can ‘stick their necks out’ to make a positive change in their community. Children study the story of a hero. Children become the story. In this way biography bridges individual narrative and community.

The opportunity to interview parents and grandparents and other people working in our communities and to hear their personal narratives is an invaluable educational resource. Students are made aware of the sorrows and joys, the challenges and successes of the personal journey – often beginning to understand that heroism and fame are not synonyms. They also have an opportunity to follow the threads of a life from childhood through adolescence and adulthood and to put these stages in a historic setting. Because these examined lives are close to them and they can therefore relate to the journeys, they are particularly poignant guideposts for their own life decision-making. By studying heroic qualities in the stories of people living near them or in similar situations, students can feel empowered to make a difference in their own communities.

Good teachers help students see the persons behind the ideas, persons whose ideas often arose in response to some great suffering or hope that is with us still today. (Palmer, 1999, p. 4)

**Catering for Individual Differences**

By acknowledging individual differences in the classroom, teachers help their students to recognise that despite apparently common attributes and similar passages,
each person’s journey is unique, a whole composed of parts arranged differently in some way from every other person in the universe. Treating all children the same results in reaching only a few children in the imaginary median. However, changing this outlook has meant shifting from a teacher-centered orientation to a student-centered one. To heed personal relevance, the curriculum must be bottom-up rather than top-down (Eisner, 1985).

Traditional educational programmes are developed out of principles that identify educational value within particular subject matters or disciplines. Becoming educated means learning how to use the ideas within these disciplines. This approach it is argued, has two educationally devastating consequences. First, it is often irrelevant to the child. Second, it fails to cultivate the child’s idiosyncrasy by providing few opportunities that are of particular importance to the individual child. (Eisner, 1985, p. 70)

Eisner (1985) and Grumet (1988) imply that by acknowledging personal narrative, individual learning journeys, we invite commitment to education. This commitment is enhanced by:

- catering for differences in temperament and learning style,
- catering for gender differences, and
- multiculturalism.

Catering for Differences in Temperament and Learning Style
There is a growing awareness among schoolteachers that in order to achieve learning outcomes, we need to cater for individual differences in how children develop understandings. In recent years, theories about temperament and personality types as well as learning styles and multi-intelligences have added to our knowledge base of learning differences which previously was viewed primarily in the context of special education. This has led to dramatic changes in some classrooms where teachers, having experienced these new approaches, have varied their teaching style, assignments and classroom environments to cater for the learning differences of their students.

Temperaments and Personality Types.

Personality type or temperament theories endeavour to explain how we behave and process information. The Steiner philosophy encourages teachers to know their own temperament and that of the children that they guide for seven years. The temperaments are the Melancholic, Phlegmatic, Sanguine and Choleric. These are related respectively to the four elements earth, water, air and fire (Wilkinson, 1993, p.61). “Many people are dominated by a single temperament, but others clearly manifest two or more. Also a person’s temperamental orientation can change during

96 Steiner viewed the temperaments as being manifested in the human body and character. The Melancholic has an introspective orientation. The Phlegmatic tends toward stability and inertia and are usually pleasant and good-natured. The Sanguine is associated with an extroverted orientation. They are active, dynamic and dominated by feelings. The Choleric are sturdy and energetic, swing between introverted and extroverted (Marshak, 1997, pp. 37-38).
the course of his [sic] life (Marshak, 1997, p. 37). Matthews believes that part of the
human journey is to work for a balance.

First, it needs to be said that ‘temperament’ does not refer to the deepest
individuality of a person, but rather to the given instrument through which
they express themselves in life. As such, it can be experienced as both a gift
and a limitation. Ideally, the temperaments are balanced within the adult
person, or a balance can be worked for. (Matthews, 1996, p. 11)

Bernadette implies that modern day complexities have possibly altered how one can
use temperament in teaching.

It’s not something that I’ve worked with strongly. Steiner often talks about
feeding the children according to temperament. I find that this doesn’t always
work. There are so many more variables today. They are so much more
awake and awakened earlier than they were in Steiner’s time. I haven’t had
great success with that although some teachers have. I do use the
temperaments in various ways. When you tell stories, different types of things
appeal to different temperaments. Of course, the cholerics love the dangerous
parts. (Bernadette: 356)

Sam also expressed an awareness that children of different temperaments would
respond to different parts of a story.
And with the temperaments, and Rudolf Steiner brought this up too, that in every story we find some aspect of the temperament. So when St. Francis died, it's the melancholic or when the Pope died, everyone deserted him because they thought he had the plague, but St. Francis stayed with him. When you get to the part, where the villagers went out and they had their sticks, the choleric children want to jump up. Or the phlegmatics who love their home comforts, their food and being comfortable and they had a wonderful big feast and then you describe the food. So when there are those parts, you make contact with those children. (Sam: 227)

Sam explained that he also uses his knowledge of the different temperaments to design appropriate choices in follow-on activities.

What I've aimed to do is that once or twice every main lesson block, I have a lesson based on the temperaments and what I do is that I give the children a choice of four activities and I try to have the activities that I feel will appeal to the different temperaments… One might be drawing St Francis beside the Pope, his friend who is dying. I want to touch the sadness, melancholic feeling. Another one is to act out the part where St. Francis goes out to meet the wolf so there are all those people there with sticks and everything. And so that was more aimed at the Choleric. There were four activities which I thought would appeal to the four temperaments. Then I said, “You can choose what you want to do.” At the end of the morning, we shared with the class what was done. So in the drama, they rehearsed it and performed it. With the
drawings, we put those up. Another girl wrote a poem with my help based on
St. Francis' poems. And the others did wax modelling of the great feast. So
they can choose. (Sam: 200-204)

Sam and I discussed the importance of allowing for choice but refraining from putting
students into categories that might limit their development.

Gay: In any system, it can be used in two ways. One is, "Oh, what a
relief. I can now put them into categories." The other way is to
recognise that we all have a little bit of each (temperament). I get the
impression that that is more of the Steiner philosophy.

Sam: Yes, but I do believe that there has been a lot of the former, myself
included. I've got a child who is this. What can I do to suit that? This other
way I'm working is much better. As we are a mixture of those temperaments
plus … personal and other experiences that come into it. And I got some
lovely surprises. Children I thought were choleric and would love to get in
there and act were doing these
beautiful pictures of the sad, dying Pope. Others I thought were very
shy were out doing drama. Some chose as I would have guessed.

Gay: Knowledge of temperament is probably important in helping children to
understand themselves. …Knowing what they are can be a key, but making
them stay there is not really fair, either.
Sam: I agree with that 100%. It's the positive. You acknowledge the child or some aspect of him. There may be a sanguine child that has sanguine qualities. They jump out of the seat and all day long you're saying, "Sit down" but then once or twice in four weeks you can choose, it might be to form a dance and a sanguine would love to do that. (Sam: 206-214)

Relating other curriculum aspects to the temperaments also fosters an appreciation and tolerance for varied temperaments. Matthews explains how they can be related to types of sentence expressions, which reflect ways of relating to the world. The strongly persevering Choleric is the Command; the easily aroused and not persevering Sanguine is the Exclamation; the strongly persevering and not easily aroused Melancholic is the Question and the Phlegmatic whose attention is the least easily aroused and is the least strongly persevering is the Statement (Matthews, 1996, pp. 12-13).

Interviewee Sam created characters for the math functions based on the temperaments. In addition to subtly making children aware that four temperaments exist, the stories engage them because they can relate to at least one of the temperaments.

Each of the names has a particular temperament. So I’ve got a fiery Great Divide. The choleric likes to be in charge and give out jobs. She likes to give out and be sure each one has the same number. In those stories, the children like them because they relate to them. (Sam: 184)
Consideration of the temperaments is an aspect of Steiner education that is quite well known. However, although the terms of choleric, sanguine, melancholic and phlegmatic are unique to that philosophy, consideration of personality orientations is not limited to Waldorf educators. The Jungian influence of the 20th century was instrumental in promoting an awareness of personality types and influencing the emergence of a variety of assessment paradigms.

Jung distinguished two major attitudes or orientations of personality. The attitude of extraversion describes a person who gets his/her energy from the external world. The attitude of introversion describes a person who gets his/her energy from the inner, subjective world (Jung, 1933; Zubrick, 1998). Jung (1968, p. 49) identified four functions by which consciousness receives its input:

Sensation: Tells you something exists
Thinking: Tells you what it is
Feeling: Tells you whether it is agreeable or not
Intuition: Tells you when it comes and where it is going.

Thinking and feeling are called rational functions because they make use of reason, judgment, abstraction, and generalization...Sensation and intuition are considered to be irrational functions because they are based upon the perception of the concrete, particular, and accidental. (Hall and Lindzey, 1957, p.87)

Many personality and learning style quadrant paradigms are based on Jung’s work.
In my school, at a staff workshop in 1994, appreciation for different ways of functioning was fostered by administering an inventory designed by Honey and Mumford (1983, 1998) by which we were identified as Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists.  Although this proved helpful for staff dynamics, it was difficult to apply it to an understanding of children in the classroom. However, I readily applied Patricia Princiotti’s Thrust, Shape, Swing and Hang patterns introduced at an American Montessori Society Regional Conference in 1994. This workshop particularly helped me to appreciate the learning style of the Hangers – those who wandered around the room getting into other’s spaces. I began to ask myself what they were learning on these journeys to the pencil sharpener and sometimes surprised myself when I realised how many creative connections they were making.

In the 1940’s Myers and Briggs devised a personality inventory based on Jung to help assess personality types. In addition to the orientations of Introversion and Extroversion and the functions of Sensing/iNtuition and Feeling/Thinking, they added Judgment /Perception. Although this instrument has been widely used to diagnose adult personality types and the effects in the workplace, it is relatively recently that educators have realised its potential for assessing and catering for

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97 *Activists* like to leap on a bike and have a go. They learn by doing. *Reflectors* like to think about things before having a go, and to learn by watching other people try to ride bikes. *Theorists* like to understand the theory and to have a clear grasp of the concept before having a go. *Pragmatists* like to have some practical tips and techniques from someone with experience before having a go.

98 Thrust-visual,sensating, part in light of whole, hands-on, functional, setting – security

Shape – auditory, thinking, part to whole sequencing, theoretical and sequencing, setting – recognition

Swing – mixed mode, feeling, weigh value, creates images, practical and playful, setting – interaction

Hang – kinetic, intuiting, whole to part, experiential, aesthetic, setting – risk. (Princottoi, 1994)
variations in type among staff and students (Murphy, 1992; Zubrick, 1998). None of
the interviewees specifically mentioned applying knowledge of Myers-Briggs to their
classroom teaching. However, feedback from teachers enrolled in the Interpersonal
Communications course at my university indicates that this could be an important,
presently underutilised tool for meeting individual needs in the classroom. These
students, who are practising teachers, indicated that knowledge of children’s types has
helped them to facilitate more appropriate and varied choices in the classroom. It has
also helped them to facilitate communication with staff, children and parents.

My personal experience is that awareness of personality types has increased my
tolerance of differences and my effectiveness in fostering better communication
between different personality types. Recently I counselled a parent who complained
to me that her child’s very creative teacher did not understand her serious and
motivated child who needed feedback and was not into taking risks. After our
discussion, she was able to explain the needs of what appeared to be her ISFJ child to
ENTP\textsuperscript{99} teacher. She explained to the teacher that her child needed structure and

\textsuperscript{99} Preferences: (We use all eight preferences although they are not equally preferred.)

- **E or I** (Where we draw energy): E represents Extraverted people who get their energy from without –
  from other people and the activities in the environment. They are sociable and enjoy active
  participation. I represents Introverted people who get their energy from within and focus on ideas,
  concepts, and impressions. They work well alone or in small groups.

- **S or N** (Ways of attending to information): S represents people with a sensing preference who receive
  information primarily through the five senses and are pragmatic and realistic.
  N represents people with an intuitive preference; they have a ‘sixth’ sense and tend to be imaginative,
  creative, and visionary.
feedback and time to work alone. The teacher ceased to equate this child’s lack of risk-taking to be a lack of motivation and their relationship improved. Although, philosophically, she believed children should not require feedback other than work satisfaction, she began to provide more verbal feedback. The child enjoyed going to school for the rest of the year and the parent began to appreciate the energy of this classroom with its multitude of choices and project-based curriculum.

I have also applied my knowledge of personality types to my university work. I had to design and present a university course with a very sensate person. We finally decided that on her days, she would present the parts first or as she put it “isolate the difficulties” before the experiential component of the lesson. On my days, in my intuitive way, I presented the whole picture experientially and then dealt with the parts. Both approaches seemed effective – possibly because the students rotated between classes and so had the benefit of both styles. I am now much more patient with sensate university students who require detailed instructions including exact length of an assignment. In one of my classes last year, I welcomed the single extravert who energised the whole class with her enthusiasm. I noticed how she

T or F (How judgements or decisions are made): T represents the thinking orientation of those who readily apply logic and objectivity to decision-making. F people are those with a preference for feeling make decisions based on personal values and consider the impact on others of these decisions.

J or P (How one is oriented to the outer world): J represents people with a preference for an organised, planned approach to life who tend to complete projects. P represents people with a preference for perceiving who take a spontaneous, flexible approach to life. They are curious and open to new experiences.

(Adapted from Zubrick, 1998)
enjoyed role playing and collaborative lessons, but I was careful to have reflective, individual work times as well. Although as a ‘J’, I usually work to a plan and take pride in completion, I have learned to appreciate my colleagues and students with a Perception orientation. They are able to brainstorm numerous projects at once and, in exchange, need some help working backwards from a deadline to complete any of these projects. Acknowledging variations in the way students learn and express that knowledge has helped me to counteract the tendency noted by Elizabeth Murphy (1992) for teaching lessons to be “designed in the style of the teacher” (p. 80).

Teachers interviewed have also been assisted in appreciating the individual learning styles of children in their classes by exposure to other learning style theories including the visual, kinesthetic aural triad (Center for Discoveries in Learning, 1996) and Gardner’s multi-intelligence theory (Gardner, 1983, 1993; Gibbs, 1995), which will be discussed further in Chapter VIII, for its curriculum implications.

Visual learners think in images or pictures. They can see the written word and efficiently process it through images. Visual learners tend to be very successful at school.

In a classroom the visual learner performs very well because all testing is conducted in a written “visual” format. This requires that visual images be made when recalling information. Good readers read the black and white text and then convert the information into pictures. (Center for Discoveries in Learning, 1996a, p. 1)
The Kinesthetic learner learns through body or feelings, needing to touch or feel whatever they are learning about. These children respond well to learning situations that require building and acting. The Auditory learner learns best by hearing or listening. They “filter incoming information through their listening and repeating skills” and “solve problems by talking about them” (Center for New Discovery, 1996a, p. 2).

A report by the Oklahoma State Dept of Education (1983) suggests that aware teachers can teach children of any style providing they recognise the importance of “finding the activities and resources which would present the material in the style of the learner” (p. 27). Furthermore they note that “research has shown that approximately 30% of elementary school children have visual modality strength, 25% have an auditory strength and 15% are kinesthetically oriented. The remaining 30% have mixed modality strength” (p. 28).

To help children to feel successful at school, it would seem important to help them recognise how they learn and to teach in a multi-sensory way. In Montessori classrooms, for example, equipment provides a multi-sensory way to learn concepts. A kinesthetic child may want to physically manipulate material to practice a concept whereas a visual child may only have to watch it once to make a mental picture that he/she can readily access. Auditory children probably benefit from dialogue and oral sequencing involving the task.
In my experience, it helps children to understand their own learning style. I recall explaining to a child, who was frustrated because he never understood the math lesson the first time, that he seemed to be an auditory learner and thus might need to hear things twice unlike visual learners. I carefully explained that this had nothing to do with mathematical intelligence and invited him to participate in two lessons (we had small group lessons) on the same concept. He went home and shared this interchange with his father who responded, “That’s how I learn too.” After that, the student voluntarily attended the lesson twice knowing that it did not mean he was “stupid”.

The Centre for Discovery Learning (1996b) suggests that understanding their own learning style helps students, but that they should be taught the strategies of visual learners to ensure more success in the classroom. Interviewee, Vicky, concurs with this view. She shared how children in her remedial class complained that they could not readily visualise. This was not their learning style.

I’ve got kids that can’t visualize when you’re reading and they’ve complained about it. They’ve said that they can’t see what is happening so they can’t actually comprehend the story… Yes, that's where we need to stop and say, think about this or draw or paint. I always say to parents who have children who are non-visual, “Get that TV off.” (Vicky 1: 176-179)

Vicky scaffolds the image creating process so that the children experience the visual learning style. Uhrmacher (1993) reports a similar process of teaching images in the Steiner schools. He describes a workshop conducted by Waldorf teacher Gary
Solomon that he attended where teachers were taught how to build on the teaching of images. The story he heard was of Hannibal trying to cross the Alps to conquer Rome.

At one point, obstructed by a boulder blocking a small passageway through the mountains, Hannibal commanded that everything the army had be burned – even spears and saddles. The fire heated the boulder, and then the boulder was red hot, Hannibal poured wine on it and it cracked. “You can carry this over into geology class next year,” Solomon noted, reminding teachers that the image of Hannibal cracking the boulder would be useful in teaching about limestone. (Uhrmacher, 1993, pp. 91-92)

Uhrmacher (1993) concludes that “attaching images to the learning of new words, ideas, and concepts is an important pedagogical approach. One could go so far as to say, if one cannot see it (using ‘seeing’ metaphorically), one may not know it” (p. 92). He notes that educator, John Dewey, also acclaimed the importance of image creation for students.

I believe that the image is the great instrument of instruction. What a child gets out of any subject presented to him is simply the images which he himself forms with regard to it. (Dewey, 1972, p.92)
Griss (1998) proposes an equal emphasis on teaching with movement. She suggests that younger children learn kinesthetically and we can enhance their comprehension by teaching with movement. In fact, she feels a kinesthetic orientation can benefit children throughout primary and high school because this understanding is a rudimentary part of their personal narrative.

Even as children move on to the next stage of development, at which thought can precede action, they are still secure in their active/physical relations in the world. Introducing or reinforcing lessons through kinesthetic experience can therefore greatly assist their understanding of material that is being taught. (Griss, 1998, p. 28)

Griss (1998) uses dance to teach direction and sequence of math. The children physically experience the main ideas of stories and lives of characters through dramatic movement. They even learn punctuation marks through movement. Students are encouraged to make “whole body shapes symbolising the punctuation marks” and then “walked” through unpunctuated sentences. Even with a high school class, she found their vocabulary test scores dramatically increased after acting out words in class (p.31). Langer (1997) in *Mindful Learning* suggests that this might be achieved by variation of normal activity. However, the Steiner educators, who have always linked movement with cognitive activities, also believe that this is a proven, effective way to learn. In my observation of Sam’s class, I watched the children reviewing number skills with hand claps and movement around the room. (Observation 2/9/99) In an interview, Sam explained that children also use
movements to interpret sounds and thus experience them in a multi-sensory way.

“There are movements for the sounds, but they are not tied to the form of the letter in writing” (Sam: 172). For instance, the hard sound of K might be interpreted with hard movements. (Sam: 173-176). Steiner suggests that the “air-gestures” of sound can be transformed into movement as well as into speech.

We know that, in speaking, air is moved…These air movements are studied carefully. But instead of letting the larynx and the other speech organs transform the air-gestures into speech or song, they are turned into gestures performed by the arms, the hands, or the entire human figure, and also by groups of eurythmists moving in specific patterns. (Steiner, 1996, pp. 191-192)

The physical aspect of the wholeness of learning is certainly abandoned early in the traditional educational process when evidence such as presented by Steiner educators and Griss (1998) indicates that a physical, sensorial component can be part of a lifelong orientation even if a kinesthetic orientation is not identified as a person’s primary learning style.

In the Waldorf classes, I observed oral story telling and recapitulation of stories, and regular and repeated choral recitations of poems. According to learning style theory, these methods should help the auditory learner to grasp new concepts. In the

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100 eurythmy: “a form of artistic movement that integrates spoken poetry and dance” (Marshak, 1997, p. 23).
Montessori classes where children had opportunity to explain what they had learned to other children the auditory learner was also being catered for. The Catholic and Government school classrooms that were using collaborative learning, Tribes and discussion sessions were also demonstrating an understanding of this learning style preference.

In her interview, Lynne noted that story-based lessons were the best way to cater for varied learning styles.

*I think story gives them (what they need) whether they’re oral or visual or whatever. I think there’s an opportunity for all of them to have something to do. With a story, you can include a variety of activities to follow on such as art and craft.* (Lynne 1: 218)

Fran also expressed a view that in literacy based programmes all children’s learning styles can be engaged.

*Certainly one needs to be conscious of different learning styles as a teacher. However, when looking at literature, you’re actually engaging the inner person in a sense, aren’t you? I think if you know the children well enough and if you select the text accordingly, engagement follows.* (Fran: 127)

By recognising their own and their students individual temperaments and learning styles, teachers create a positive learning culture in which it is acknowledged that there
are many ways that an individual can reach his/her potential. Narrative, because it appeals to all students and can be explored in such a multitude of ways is viewed by interviewees as being an appropriate format for meeting the spectrum of individual needs and interests.

*Catering for Gender Differences*

Primary school experiences help to reinforce a child’s sense of identity. The child goes through a three-phase process of gender development. First, the child acquires a sense of basic gender identity that involves recognition that she is a girl or he is a boy. Secondly there is a phase of gender stability during which the girl appreciates that she will grow up to be a woman and the boy that he will be a man. Finally, there is a stage of gender constancy when “the young person recognises that gender remains the same despite dress, hairstyle, occupation, and so on. It is a more biological conception of gender” (Elkind, 1992, p. 192).

Elkind (1992) further suggests that the girls and boys will organise their experiences according to their gender orientation. He claims that boys will remember masculine toys and objects better and girls will remember feminine toys and objects better. Following from this, it would seem that girls may find literature with feminine characters more meaningful than boys and boys may become more engaged with male characters. “Children’s books play a significant part in transmitting a society’s culture to children. Gender roles are an important part of this culture. How genders are portrayed in children's books thus contributes to the image children develop of their own role and that of their gender in society” (Singh, 1998, p. 1).
Everything we read…constructs us, makes us who we are, by presenting our image of ourselves as girls and women, as boys and men. We who write children’s books, and we who teach through literature, need to be sure we are opening the doors to full human potential, not closing them (Fox, 1993, p. 84).

Current research has revealed that male characters dominate children’s literature (Singh, 1998; Davis and McDaniel, 1999). The teacher education students of Davis and McDaniel analysed the Caldecott winners from 1972 through 1997 and found that males made up 60% of instances of characters portrayed through pictures and females only 40%. Text references were 61% male compared to 39% female.

Also of concern is the stereotypical portrayal of roles in literature. Girls are frequently portrayed as acted upon rather than active (Fox, 1993, Singh, 1998). Girls are more often conforming and dependent while boys are more adventurous and independent (Singh, 1998). Children’s exposure to these narratives are influencing their view of gender norms and their vision of their place in society (Fox, 1993; Singh, 1998).

Because they are in a position to select literature and guide students in interpreting it, teachers can work to perpetuate or counteract gender bias. All the teachers interviewed instructed co-educational classes and so were in a position to consider gender differences. Montessorian Ellen who had taught children aged 3-12, clearly was trying to decide what aspects of gender were nature vs. nurture although she felt she countered bias by presenting a “mixed medley” of stories (Ellen 1: 166).
What is it with girls and fairies? I know that generation after generation it reappears and the boys have had the good/bad archetypes – the cowboys and Indians and the pirates. They need their heroes, don’t they? (Ellen 1: 322)

Allison and Bernadette also observed gender differences in the children’s writing.

They rewrote fairy tales. The boys and the girls treated this so differently. The boys – even quite gentle children – all have violence. They are all shooting each other. The girls got into relationships much more…I found this gender difference. I suspect other teachers would find the same. Boys are going through different phases in life at different times…. (Allison:184-188)

They write wonderful stories. If they are writing their own text, I usually give them something to start with because some children find it very hard to start. So I might give them a couple of lines to start like

"My name is ..." and they have to make up a Viking Name "Harold Hairy Legs or something" and "I come from Norway or wherever" “Long ago I made a dangerous journey.” That was their beginning. And they wrote wonderful stories about heading out on the high seas. Some met sea monsters. The girls’ ones seemed to be much more fantasy oriented about meeting sea monsters and coming to strange lands and things like that. (Bernadette: 84)
Allison expressed an awareness of the predominance of male characters in children’s literature, and reflected on how this might affect the children. She makes the observation that girls don’t object to reading books about boys, but doubts if boys would choose books with all female protagonists.

I have thought about what would appeal to both genders in my mixed classes. I also think about providing books that will appeal to one or the other and there are obviously some. I think this is really important. I remember reading a story about going to camp in Canada and the children loved it. Then it occurred to me that all the main characters were boys and I thought that this was interesting that the girls did enjoy it very much. We did an incredible study on it and I tried to relate it to girls at camp as well, but I wondered if boys would have enjoyed it if it had had all girl characters. I really spent a lot of time thinking about this. Now, is that our society? Or is it just that teachers like me persist in reading "boys" books to girls? The same thing with Indian in the Cupboard. They all loved that, but again the main characters are male. Coming back from that, Charlotte's Web is fine. They're both in that. I consciously want models of both male and female characters in their reading but it is very hard to achieve. (Allison: 126)

Because males dominate so many mythologies, I was interested in how the Steiner teachers dealt with the issue of gender bias.
Gay: Are you conscious with the younger children of choosing stories that cater for different gender…?

Sam: Well, with gender, we aim for a balance. With saints, there are female saints. So I choose, maybe not [quite] half and half. We spent a long time on Saint Francis as he was so rich and interesting. The children were almost in tears on the last day when he died. But, I told the story of Saint Brigid and other saints to get a balance.

Gay: Sometimes it must be hard to choose a gender balance as some of the mythologies are very male dominated.

Sam: That's true, but you just have to search. There's Joan of Arc.

Gay: I remember seeing a film on a Steiner School and the older girls were asked which stories they liked best and it was the ones on powerful Egyptian women. Gender may have something to do with it. (Sam: 227-233)

Although like Sam, Bernadette noted the many female characters in myths, she was also aware of the male dominance in Norse Mythology which was the focus of her curriculum with Class 4.

Gay: Are there any female Vikings in these stories?
Bernadette: It is very male. One of the things we did in connection with that was that we wrote stories and we wrote it from the male point of view, but I told them we will do one from the female point of view. But, of course, the Viking culture is very male dominated in that sense.

Gay: I just wasn't sure, because in opera there are some powerful women. I didn't know if that was just an interpretation.

Bernadette: Well, in the myths, there are lots of female characters, although probably most of the characters in Norse mythology much more so than in Greek mythology are men. The women in Greek mythology are very integrated and very integral to all the action, even to the battles and things.

Gay: That's next year?

Bernadette: That's next year. You don't get that so strongly in the Norse mythology. It is very male. (Bernadette: 71-82)

Research indicates that gender stereotypes can limit children in making choices and in expressing themselves (Fox 1993). “At the same time, however, books containing images that conflict with gender stereotypes provide children with the opportunity to re-examine their gender beliefs and assumptions. Thus texts can provide children with alternative role models and inspire them to adopt more egalitarian gender attitudes” (Singh, 1998, p. 2). For example, the strong Greek women that Bernadette mentioned might help to counter gender stereotyping.
Montessorian, Nigel, mentioned in one meeting that *Tough Boris* (Mem Fox, 1994) was a text he liked to use to counter male stereotypes.\(^{101}\)

> Once upon a time, there lived a pirate named Boris von der Borch.
> He was tough. All pirates are tough. He was massive. All pirates are massive.
> He was scruffy. All pirates are scruffy. He was greedy. All pirates are greedy.
> He was fearless. All pirates are fearless. He was scary. All pirates are scary.
> But when his pirate died, he cried and cried. All pirates cry. (Mem Fox, 1994, text of *Tough Boris*)

When I examined some of Montessorian Ellen’s favourite books, I realised that several of her selections also helped to counter gender stereotyping. *Miss Rumphius* (Cooney, 1981) describes a woman living in the early 20\(^{th}\) century who has vision and ambition. She travels the world and meets the challenge of finding a way to make the world more beautiful. She doesn’t marry or have children or assume the role of a housekeeper; she does find personal satisfaction. Another favourite of Ellen’s is *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* (Wojciechowski, 1995). This story takes place at about the same time as *Miss Rumphius*. The characters have traditional roles,

\(^{101}\) Mem Fox reports that in addition to *Tough Boris*, she has embedded counter-sexist attitudes in *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge, The Secret World of Leo Kipinski* and *Ben Again*. (Fox, 1993, p. 85)
but stereotyping is challenged because it is a book about feelings and relationships. Seven year old Thomas helps the carpenter, Jonathan Toomey, to overcome his grief and to find a reason to live once again.

There is evidence that in helping children to realise their identities, they need to be provided with literature that offers a range of male and female characters as well as stories that exemplify a range of masculine and feminine choices not limited by stereotyping. If this is to occur, teachers’ awareness of these issues needs to be maintained through teacher education. Although choice of literary texts indicated some acknowledgement of this issue by all interviewees, only the Steiner and Montessori teachers wanted to further explore this issue during the interview situation. This contrasted with the eager response to my question on catering for multiculturalism and may have been because the latter has been a priority focus for Government and Catholic teachers in recent years.

**Multiculturalism**

A child is getting a multicultural experience when he/she has the opportunity to affirm an identity with a specific cultural group and at the same time develop an awareness of other cultural groups. In *Kwanzaa and Me* \(^2\) (1995), early childhood teacher, Vivian Paley describes her disturbing realisation that some African American parents

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\(^2\) *Kwanzaa* is an African American holiday celebrated for seven days from 26 December to 1 January. 7 Candles are lit, one each day, representing unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, collective economics, purpose, creativity, faith, self-motivation, and sharing. Symbols and terms link the African Americans with their African ancestry.
were moving their children to all black schools to elicit more pride in culture and eliminate that feeling of being on the fringe. These views contrasted with other black parents who sought out a multicultural school because they thought there was a gap in a child's life if not exposed to multicultural society. Paley believed there must be a way to achieve cultural identity in a multicultural setting. She was supported by a parent who in response to a query of whether white people could be a role model for her children said, "You bet…as long as they respect and encourage my children to express their differences, their particular culture and knowledge" (1995, p.19). To achieve these dual aims, Paley used story in a sociodramatic way. She had an ongoing fantasy story she created with the children, but it integrated the different customs of the different ethnic groups represented in her classroom. She also had parents in to share their real experiences related to their cultural backgrounds. Children's own stories were modelled on those of the parents and revealed their own particular concerns. Thus each child's personal narrative was modified by the input from real and imaginary stories about cultural identity. The issue of segregation vs. integration was transformed to a focus on cultural identity and multicultural awareness.

Sturm (1997) concurs that inviting parents to tell their stories is a window to understanding the individuality of children in her care. She reports the difficult lesson of realising that one’s own cultural values can create a defensive wall preventing appreciation of values that challenge long held beliefs. She suggests that getting parents to tell their stories can help to break down these barriers.
Bicultural parents often shared more about their cultural perspectives when the teacher asked direct but sensitive questions about culture of ethnicity. (e.g. “How do you think your ethnic background influenced your experience growing up?”) (Sturm, 1997, p. 37)

Children experiencing cultural conflict may become confused and insecure. They gain confidence when the values learned at home are affirmed. This occurs when the classroom nurtures intercultural competence (Sturm, 1997).

Dan made frequent mention of the importance of multiculturalism in his classroom. Firstly, he tried to awaken students to appreciate the culture of each child in the class.

Gay: Are you conscious of balancing your choices of story according to gender or learning styles or cultures?

Dan: Well, mainly cultures. I think because Australia is so diverse and because I'm a New Zealander, I know where they are coming from and what it's like for them. They may not have any relatives of things like that. It's just like you coming from America. You're still proud of where you came from. American and Australian at the same time. It's really difficult you know. That's important and M's Mum suggested that we go to the Japanese Prefecture for an excursion. So I do try to tie that in. And if it's an English person, I might suggest that we have "a nice cup of tea". It's good. Because I've travelled quite a bit too, so you know quite a few idiosyncrasies say if
someone comes from Ireland so you can discuss that sort of thing. (Dan: 110-113)

Sometimes a child’s nationality can lead to class discussion that fosters an awareness that we can be of an ethnic group without living in the country of origin for that group.

Dan: Someone's Dad's in Kosovo at the moment.

Another girl's family moved here. So we discuss why Sonia's mum and dad might have made the decision to come here and why Stephanie's dad might have decided to go there and help out. (Dan: 222)

Dan proceeds to explain how at the same time that he is acknowledging the cultures represented in his class, he is nurturing their identity as Australians. He describes sending a numbat to a pen pal class in America with Australian memorabilia.

When we sent that parcel, there are so many things that are uniquely Australian, and uniquely WA. We put in The Deep by Tim Winton. And one of the Mother's last year sent off the story of the Duyfken\(^{103}\) and that kind of thing. So, and kids are bringing in paper flags and stamps and money. And we are putting in gum leaves and we're classifying them - shapes and no that's not

\(^{103}\) The Duyfken – a Dutch spice trading ship that sailed to Australia in the early 17\(^{th}\) century. A replica was recently built in Fremantle, Western Australia and launched in 2000.
Montessorians Ellen and Nigel both studied various cultures in conjunction with continent studies. They brought in folktales as part of their studies. Government school teacher, Lynne, used Aboriginal tales as a classroom resource to introduce the class to the Aboriginal culture and to affirm the cultural identity of Aboriginal children.

I’ve used a lot of Aboriginal stories when I’ve had Aboriginal children in the class so that has been a way of making sure that their culture is recognised. In fact, I still use Aboriginal stories this year and I don’t have any Aboriginal children… I like to look at different cultures. (Lynne 1: 115)

As discussed above (see Timelines and Family Trees), in Shawn’s Montessori school, primary children explored their family trees and researched cultures represented on their tree. This gave them a sense of their uniqueness in the combination of their ancestral cultures. It also involved children’s families in telling stories of their cultures.

At the holidays we have a multicultural feast and families bring dishes that represent their cultures and the children have a chance to share their research on their origins. (Shawn 4: 8)
In the upper primary class, as mentioned above (see Exploring and Presenting Autobiography), there was considerable evidence of multicultural study. Children’s own stories with reference to their cultural heritage were artistically presented. The class was studying American history and varied groups were represented in biographies and folklore including European, Scandinavian, Asian and African stories. In still another area of the classroom, students were creating personal Buddhist based Wheels of life inspired by the sharing of Asian children (Observation of Shawn’s’ school: 26/4/99).

In the Steiner school, each mythology study also entailed understanding the culture of origin. In Sam’s class, when the children were studying the Celtic Saint stories, they studied the landscape and culture of Ireland. In Bernadette’s Class 4, the students studied the countries of Scandinavia as part of their focus on Norse Mythology. They also studied their own country and there was evidence of an in-depth exploration of Aboriginal myths and art as part of this.

None of the teachers interviewed was working primarily with indigenous people. However, Fran had previously worked with Aboriginal children. She explained that you have to take down the barriers and help children find their authentic voice wherever they are. She provided the example of a poem written by a 13-year-old Apache girl for her teacher (Martin, 1972, p.199):

**In Memoriam**

He is gone, friend of the Apache.

He sailed away on the deep blue waters of the wide, wide river.
The low notes of the soft green wind called him.
The song singing of the deep blue waters put him to sleep.
I saw him, this friend of the Apache, across the big wide desk.
He said to me, “Do you like school, little Apache girl?”
My tongue stuck and would not say “Yes.”
He smiled at me, and I heard him go home
with the leaves sounding as he walked.
Now he is gone, friend of my people.
He sailed away with a soft green wind
on the deep blue waters of the wide, wide river.
-Lucille Victor, Age 13
San Carlos, Arizona Indian School

Published with this poem is a letter by Lucille to her real teacher, Mrs. C. who encouraged her to write her own thoughts in English. She encouraged her to express herself in the poetry of her culture, but introduced her to the wider culture of their country too. “She knows we are Apache Indians, but she wants us to understand we are American citizens, too” (Martin, 1972, p. 198).

Fran: Why would he (Bill Martin, Jr.) choose that unless he knew that girl was marginalised and vulnerable but valuable? Why did that teacher help her unless she knew that this girl was valuable? Why did this girl write this letter unless she knew this teacher was a good teacher? All the stuff that gets in the way of our classrooms. "I don't like you because you're making a noise." "I don't like you because you're giving me the wrong answers." "All day I'm
sitting there and nobody likes me." There's none of that here. You feel that value.

Gay: It's the unconditional message, the joint exploration.

Fran: Well, it provides for growth. What comes out of here is authentic. This poem - these are her words. The teacher wouldn't talk like that.

Gay: No, because she isn't Apache.

Fran: Exactly, and that's the same with the Aboriginal children at Gogo station. Everything that probably interests me in a sense is that inner person and it grows off that. You know why? Because it's right, it's justice. It's wrong not to do it. (Fran 1: 292-299)

Multicultural education helps fight prejudice and stereotyping by teaching children to appreciate difference.

As educators and parents, we can help to assure that our children are accepting of difference – whether they be racial, religious, ethnic, generational, or due to disability. We do this by not accepting prejudice when it occurs, by living in multicultural, multigenerational communities, by reading stories about different countries, by having friends and associates who share their various backgrounds, and by the simple act of accepting and spending time with people who are different from ourselves. (Korngold, 1994, p. 21)
Furthermore, multicultural education encourages children to appreciate the influence of their unique cultural past on their journey. It also fosters wonder in the amazing customs and traditions that exist in the world and helps children to identify the idiosyncrasies that define their own culture.

When teachers view a principal educational goal as helping children to recognise that they are on a personal and unique journey, aspects of their teaching are revolutionised. British schoolteacher, Jonathan Smith in *The Learning Game* (2000) advises new teachers, “Get to know your pupils as individuals not as units in a class” (p. 89). Jo Karolis, Principal of St. Catherine’s in Sydney, has found the same key to effective teaching. She attributes a dramatic change in her success as a teacher to realising that she had to consider her students as individuals. She notes that a student once said to her, "You don't teach us as people. You only teach us as a class." She reflects that, "It was true. When I returned, I made a point of visualising each student in my difficult Year 9 class, and focusing on them as I spoke or listened, not as a recipient of my lesson, but as a person with a hundred concerns, interests and preoccupations. I no longer focused on what I had to say but on what they were thinking, where they were at" (Karolis, 2000, p 13).

Being effective in helping children to appreciate their own uniqueness is working towards self and community awareness at the same time. For children or adults to be able to reflect on their individuality in an intrapersonal way, they require the dialogue
of interpersonal relationships. This takes many forms: collaborative learning in which children join forces to achieve an outcome, sharing of personal stories by children and their teachers and discovering an authentic voice by having an opinion recognised in group discussion. For students to determine the course of their own journey, it is critical to study the lives of others through biography and autobiography. This might take the form of literary works or it might involve the sharing of oral histories. The more a student relates to the life story studied, the more influence it can have on choices in his/her life. Teachers can also help students to acknowledge their uniqueness through providing opportunities to explore and appreciate individual differences in temperament and learning styles. To help children to realise their identity, it is also important that they have opportunities to explore the human potential of being a man or woman by being in a class where models of both without gender stereotyping are provided in literature and other curriculum explorations. Multiculturalism is another doorway to celebrate individual uniqueness, tolerance of difference and communal sharing. The critical literacy movement has assisted in fostering an awareness of gender, racial and cultural bias and consequently highlighting the potential for positively defining individual uniqueness in terms of these variables (Fox, 2000).

The approaches identified in this chapter help children and teachers to understand the nature of a personal journey and what represents the unique characteristics of their own pathway. Fostering this self-awareness and authentic voice in a caring community is the first step towards establishing goals and achieving them through personal transformation the topic to which I now turn.
Chapter VI

Using Narrative for Personal Transformation

Used as a reflective and integrating force, narrative can assist the teacher or student who has found an inner authentic voice to experience transformation through effecting psychological change or spiritual development. In appropriate situations, the individual, who has learned to recognise and cherish the uniqueness of his/her journey and to respect other individuals in the context of their lives, becomes open to finding deeper meaning in life. This quest entails envisioning a goal related to personal change and coping with obstacles on the pathway to its achievement. It entails experiencing creativity as an outward expression of inner balance. It involves being empowered by discovering universal truths and values and relating these to one’s life through interweaving archetypes that transcend cultural limitations.

How educators mentor students and each other in this quest for spiritual meaning largely depends on how they view the potential of an individual to transform and how they view the role of education in facilitating spiritual experiences. All four types of educational methodologies explored are developmental in that curriculum content and learning expectations become more complex as the student gets older. As discussed in Chapter V, all four methodologies also recognise individual variability within developmental parameters. “Students develop and learn at different rates and in different ways, constructing new knowledge and understandings in ways which link their learning to their previous experiences” (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 17). For
children, the disequilibrium encountered as constructs change developmentally can precipitate new directions in learning. Carrigg (1997) who researched adult transformational learning concluded that, for adults, change results from disorientation, discourse and reflection. Langer (1997) demonstrated that change in context or circumstances can lead to greater mindfulness and consequent change in learning and attitudes for children and adults.

Recent research by Gad Yair (2000) supports the premise that, for students, change might be either cumulative or precipitous. This research implies that if we adhere too rigidly only to a cumulative paradigm we deny the impact of short-term intervention or the profound influence that some teachers can have on students’ lives. He adds that “the cumulative approach to the assessment of educational effects is unable to explain non-linear and rapid changes in students’ knowledge, values, and behaviour” (Yair, 2000, p. 2). He thus recommends that we consider a “big-bang” approach “sensitive to abrupt, strong, and transformative educational experiences and effects” (Yair, 2000, p. 3). Changes ensuing from these intense educational episodes include pragmatic decisions on life choices, self-empowerment, reevaluation of values and beliefs and behavioural changes (Yair, 2000). In my own experience, my introduction to a ‘whole language’ approach at Murdoch University and my participation in a Montessori culture workshop both resulted in precipitous change to my beliefs about education. (Refer to Prologue.)

For both children and adults, change results from making connections that inspire us to view or do things in a new way. Transformation is more than the predictable change one might expect along an individual’s learning journey. Whether the change
is cumulative or episodic, when it reflects a new connection that deepens the meaning of our journey, it is transformational.

Transformation can be termed “spiritual” when the connections that have been formed are beyond sensory and intellectual experiences. It is a oneness or flow that is greater than the sum of the observable parts (Wolf, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997)

From the interview data, educators from all four of the educational traditions represented concurred with the words of Eldon Katter:

If the goal of our educational system is to help people become fully integrated and whose physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual natures are in harmony and balance, we cannot leave the development of our inner being to chance and accidental self-discovery. We all have the power to integrate, to make associations, and to form unlimited connections. Left to chance, the integration of our inner and outer worlds goes on recklessly like a car without a driver. We blindly grope for the meaning of life. (Kattner, 1997, p. 4)

Kattner (1997) goes on to say that to act we must make choices, have values, know our inner world and understand the nature of the universe. To this one can add Wolf’s (1996, 1998) suggestion that educators must counter the influences of a consumerist society by helping students realise that their inner being is defined by what they are, not what they have. The interview data of storied experience and a literature review reveal a range of beliefs and practices for helping students and teachers to find deeper meaning in their life journeys through making connections. Significantly, narrative
can prepare an individual to make connections that lead to transformation by providing:

- engagement and orientation – providing a focus for reflection and self – discovery through
  - meditation, reflection, wonder and values,
  - journalling and
  - creativity and balance

and

- the plot – exploring the possibilities of personal change through
  - personal goals and
  - models of transformation including
    - *influential teachers*
    - *analogies and bibliocounselling and*
    - *archetypes.*

### Engagement - Providing a Focus for Reflection and Self-Discovery

As explored in Chapters IV and V, awareness of personal narrative can be fostered by the rhythm of silence and activity, by rituals and traditions, by sharing our own stories
in authentic dialogue and by exposure to stories and autobiographies. For these experiences to precipitate personal change, they must be reflected upon to enhance self-awareness and precipitate responsible decision-making. Palmer (1997) recommends that some ways of finding that pathway to the ‘inner teacher’ are “solitude and silence, meditative reading and walking in the woods, keeping a journal, finding a friend who will simply listen” (p. 9). Palmer also observes that “we can speak to the teacher within our students, only when we are on speaking terms with the teacher within ourselves” (p. 9). So, to scaffold the process of inner reflection with children, it is important for teachers themselves to explore their identities through meditation and reflection, journalling, meaningful discourse, and creative endeavours (Palmer, 1997, 1998; Popov, 1999).

**Meditation, Reflection and Wonder**

What does one meditate for? Adams (2000) suggests that we meditate to determine what we value. Perhaps this is another way of saying that we meditate to determine the highlights and meaningful patterns of our personal journey and perhaps to discover universal truths through connecting our experiences. The terms meditation and reflection were often used together in the literature and teacher interviews. Both use the narrative qualities of temporality – moving us from past to future as we make the present relevant. Both use the narrative quality of prioritising what is important to us. Meditation also connotes disciplined focus on life’s meaning that may or may not be based on personal events. By contrast, reflection entails internally exploring connections discovered while examining and reconstructing one’s own experiences.
The Catholic teachers embraced the idea of reflection and meditation. Built into their RE curriculum\textsuperscript{104} are reflection topics for students and teachers. For example, in a unit entitled “I Am Special”, a reflection suggestion for teachers is:

What are some of the things I usually do which help me feel refreshed and renewed? What changes within me when I do one of these? When was the last time I did one of these? How can I make room in my life to do one of these things that refresh and renew me more frequently? (The Director of Religious Education, 1998, p. 4)

A reflection suggested for Year One is:

Each of us is different from every other person. Take some time now to think about how you are special, then you might like to say a spontaneous prayer of thanks to God for making you special.

(The Director of Religious Education, 1998, p. 42)

Within the Catholic tradition, meditation is viewed as a way to pray and so involves a religious pathway to spirituality. Catholic educators are taught to scaffold meditation for children. “It is suggested that meditation is introduced slowly to younger children. They need to be introduced gradually into the art of sitting still. The teacher

\textsuperscript{104} RE curriculum = Religious Education curriculum
can be a great model for the children in this prayer form” (The Director of Religious Education, 1998, p. 39). Initially through careful prompting, children are taught to use their imaginations to visualise biblical stories and their personal stories in detail.

The RE programme underpins values that are related to and explored in other curriculum areas. For instance, in Kate’s classroom, the value focus was on friendship. Children reflected on friendship and then related what it meant to the characters in Charlotte’s Web and to their own personal life stories. When the children went outside to sketch, the teacher encouraged them to reflect on the unique way each child approached the problem reinforcing the “I am special” value focus. One of the teachers I consulted for clarification on the RE programme in Catholic schools commented “I could build the entire curriculum around the RE themes. They flow into every subject” (Peel, 2001).

Interviewee Kate indicated that, in addition to having RE weaving throughout the curriculum, she found it helpful to have a time in the morning for children to participate in the ritual of prayer and song. She has discovered that establishing meditation as part of the rhythm of the day can help children to focus on the relevance of spirituality to their own lives.

Well, otherwise, like today, we had a prayer circle, where we sat down and sang a couple songs and thanked God for our friends. We didn't have to do some work to do it, it's just that realisation. (Kate: 60)
Vicky uses meditation and yoga in her remedial classes that cater for children who attend Government, Catholic and Independent schools.

With kids, I like to do a little bit of meditation – not necessarily God-centered because kids all have their own path or their parents do, but just something where they quieten down and listen to themselves and the universe. I like to do Yoga with the kids…I suspect it has powerful effects on kids. Yoga is a spiritual thing to me. All the movements are spiritual. (Vicky 4: 70)

Interestingly, the two interviewees who specifically practised meditation as a means of reflection had both studied both Eastern and Western religions in their personal quests for meaning. Vicky has participated in Catholic and Anglican churches. However she has travelled frequently in Asia and has been greatly influenced by Eastern guides to meditation and views this as an important means of clarifying her personal journey.

My path, I think, is in an Eastern way. I know it isn't anti-Christianity, but it has an Eastern slant to it. I'm just letting it happen. But I'm getting back into meditation and feeling like I want to be part of a fellowship. I wouldn't mind occasionally going on a withdrawal thing - perhaps going to India and going to a meditation thing. That's always been a part of me. (Vicky 4: 68)
Montessori teacher, Nigel, grew up in a family practising Judaism but he too has turned to an Eastern influenced philosophy to guide his personal reflection. This incorporates meditation.

The philosophy I follow has at its core the idea of meditation and that meditation being an overall awareness in one's life, 24 hour sense of being part of the whole creation and the whole creation has as its source and essence – a unifying energy which one could call God. And therefore being a part of God's creation and, in a sense, bring reverence and respect in the day to day living. And then there is the separate drawing back meditation. (Nigel 2: 17)

Kate and Vicky create context for meditation for children through providing quiet reflective times and visualisation. Nigel views meditative reflection as having two aspects applicable to both his personal life and his teaching. He thus provides a quiet place in the classroom (Refer to Chapter IV) to prepare the way for the “drawing back meditation” and following Montessori philosophy, nourishes a sense of wonder in the children in his care to pave the way for them to experience the cosmic “unifying energy” linked to an awareness of all of life.

Interestingly many educators now support the shared view of Montessori and Steiner that nurturing wonder is an important purpose of early childhood education.
In order to perceive the genius and developmental potential of childhood, one must quite simply give the universe back to the child, in as rich and dramatic a form as possible. (Houston, 1996, pp. 93-94)

Montessori educators do this by introducing children to the wonder of the natural world – the plants, the animals and the stars of our amazing universe. It is difficult, however, to foster wonder in children if this is not part of our inner teacher, our personal journey as well. (Palmer, 1998) I participated in a professional development workshop for teachers where naturalist Eric McCrum walked us around the Montessori school where most of us had worked for more than a decade. We only got to the front gate when I learned for the first time that the tree guarding the pathway was a sheoak and must have a partner in the grounds which I found after years of blindly walking by without appreciating this ‘tree-family’ connection. We spent another hour remarking on the pattern of five repeated over and over in one plant. We learned which plants chose to live here on the sandy soil by the ocean. With my inner teacher thus awakened I could share in the children’s wonder. I never ventured into the schoolyard again without a sense of amazement in the biological patterns of our environment. Wonder paves the way for transformation in that it makes us put everything in a new perspective. In interacting with nature, I became convinced of the accuracy of Montessori’s observation that one could not equate classroom learning with the opportunity to interact with real biological species.

There is no description, no image in any book, that is capable of replacing the sight of real trees, and all the life to be found around them, in a real forest.
Something emanates from those trees that speaks to the soul, something no
book, no museum is capable of giving…and which no one can bring into the
school.

(Montessori, 1948/1976, p. 35)

Steiner teachers concur that the child’s first spiritual experience is wonder and for this
to be fully realised, students must be able to appreciate the wonder of the natural
world.

First of all for the very young child, the religious aspect in our school would
be wonder, just wonder, just nature. (Sam: 488)

For children up to the age of seven, Waldorf teachers are aware of providing
experiences that will “awaken and preserve the child’s innate sense of wonder, awe
and reverence for life.” Inward activity is viewed as being of equal importance to
outward activity and the study of nature and is nourished by such environmental
preparations as soft colours, a candle on the table and perhaps a pentatonic scale.
Rhythm, ritual and routine support the child in finding inner calm (Wishart, 2000).
In the Steiner school these are the seeds of a reflective life.

Wonder can also be experienced for an adult figure. Steiner educators believe that
being someone worthy to be imitated is part of the teacher role in the child’s early
years. It is acknowledging that “the imitative faculty of the young child betokens an
unconscious attitude of deep devotion to life” (Edmunds, 1992, p. 27).
Rudolf Steiner taught that in the primary school years the key quality that the teacher should embody is authority. … But, we believe that if children at a young age can really accept and love an authority figure, that's something that later transforms into themselves…Steiner [said] that if a child can't feel reverence for a human being, when you are almost shaking when you are going to see this person, not out of fear, but out of real wonder for someone. …There is a respect, a respect of authority. If a child can't do that, they won't be able to bless anyone as an adult. There would be no sense of that wonder that you can bless or be blessed. (Sam: 628-641)

According to Steiner’s anthroposophy, as the children mature, they are encouraged to reflect on how their observations of nature are related to their own unfolding. The wonder generated for the external world is thus linked to the wonder of the interior world.

You could say using the outside world as a key to understanding yourself. Using the inside world as a key to understanding the outside. … They might study the kangaroo paw. How could you be like that? How could you be like a prickly bush or a soft mossy bed? Reflecting back how we can find that parallel within ourselves. The human being is spread out – out there in the universe. (Sam: 332)
In contrast to the Catholic schools, the process of meditation and praying is not scaffolded in Steiner schools. Rather, the environment is created that will support a self-discovery of spirituality. In Waldorf schools the teacher keeps in mind that, for the first seven years, goodness is the ideal striven for followed by beauty for seven years and then truth (Demanett, 1988).

Going back to the seven year cycles, I talked about, characterising the first seven years, is the underlying statement that one works with the children that the world is good. Children in that time will experience that the world is good. The second seven years is that the world is beautiful so that the primary school years are about beauty. The third seven years is that The World is true, or there is truth. So goodness, beauty and truth are the three works that underpin our education. So in class one, they are six turning seven so they are still in that phase of life and that the world is good is reflected in the fairy tales. The good is just. The evil gets the punishment. That moral quality is really there throughout the years. We won't preach it. "If you be good, this will happen..." It's just a story. The children just pick that up. (Sam: 104)

I asked Fran who had taught in both Government and Catholic schools how she viewed the difference between the two pedagogies in terms of laying a foundation for spirituality. She replied that she thought Religious Education influenced teaching in all areas in the Catholic schools.

The underlying position on religion, the ethos of Christian values, in the Catholic Schools gives a certain freedom. The teacher knows that the parent
has accepted that in enrolling the child. This was very different from my experience in the Government schools. I had to be very careful as I was very aware that I shouldn’t influence children to my way of thinking. (Fran 2: 3)

As in Catholic schools, the Steiner teachers feel free to explore aspects of Christianity with the children because that is a philosophical foundation.

Gay: Do parents accept the Christian orientation of the school?

Sam: When parents come here to enter the school, we let them know that this is our philosophy and what we are doing and if they feel comfortable, because at Easter time we will be telling Easter stories and singing Easter songs and at Christmas time we will be singing Christmas songs although everyone basically does in schools. This time of year, Springtime, we sing about St. Michael which is the image of overcoming the dragon. The children love it. They draw pictures of the dragon. For an adult, it's overcoming inner dragons, if you like. (Sam: 466-468)

Also, like the Catholic Schools, many Christian festivals are celebrated.

Then we try through the festivals that we have each term to try to find an expression of spiritual reality as we understand it and we understand it on a Christian base but Rudolf Steiner wasn't just mainstream Christian church but
brings a new understanding to it too. That doesn't go to the children in any
preached or direct way. It's experienced. (Sam: 492)

In contrast to the Catholic Schools, children in the Steiner school also explore the
pathways that others have chosen to find spirituality.

They'll hear stories about St. Michael and the dragon or a similar problem.
One year we did Indira from India because here is a counterpart for St.
Michael in Indian mythology, the sort of thunder god. So we sometimes find
different cultures as a way for expressing it. Certainly as we get to the high
school, they look at studies of religion. Certainly in the stories we study each
year, Rome, Greece, Egypt, they get lots of gods of mythology in that. (Sam:
506)

In Montessori elementary classrooms, children are also afforded the opportunity to
explore different religions. Part of the curriculum is to study how fundamental needs
are met in civilisations. Montessorians incorporate both physical and spiritual needs
in the framework for this study.

The Government school teachers differed from the other three educational
perspectives in that while acknowledging the importance of the core values in the
curriculum, they did not indicate a specific plan of how to approach this other than a
literary based one. Both Dan and Lynne spoke of discussing values in terms of stories
studied in class. After reading a book by Sid Fleishman on a family swindled in Iowa, Dan’s class would “talk about honesty. That sort of thing. Being honest with people. You know how you deceive” (Dan: 89). While reading *Little Brown Monkey*, Lynne’s class focused primarily on language structure, but there was some discussion on feelings of acceptance and rejection (Lynne’s Class Observation: 10/98).

In a follow-up interview a few years later, Lynne indicated that value focus was taking a more central place in her curriculum planning. This was partially influenced by the core values in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) that has been adopted in the interim, but also based on her years of experience with disadvantaged children.

My intention at the beginning of the year was to try to get a curriculum and focus on the child and make the child feel respected and show respect. We did a display board to do with respect, showing what it looks like and talked about it. Again, respect is a word that the children don't know the meaning of unless you get down and actually explain it to them…For those children, it's more important that they learn to feel good about themselves. Until they do, they're not going to learn anything. In fact, there's the hierarchy of needs…Maslow's needs. they need to feel that they are special and that they are successful and that they are respected…That was the idea of the programme – to make them feel special. (Lynne 4: 83-90)

Montessorians Nigel, Ellen and I have been using the Virtues Programme (Popov, 1990, 1999) as a basis for engaging students in exploring values. The Popovs use the
term ‘virtues’ to indicate universal values. It is significant that all three of us independently were attracted to aspects of this programme to give us a specific way of nurturing the spirit of the child in the Montessori classroom. I have also seen it being used in Independent (Uniting Church) schools in Australia (Biggs, 2000). To help children to discover the goodness in themselves and others, they need a vocabulary of goodness and *The Virtues Guide* (Popov, 1990) identifies 52 virtues ranging from assertiveness to unity and including the prayerfulness, scaffolded in the Catholic curriculum, as well as the respect that Lynne was exploring with her class. Before children can strive to make a virtue part of their being, they need to know what it is. I found that with my upper elementary class drama and discussion were excellent ways to introduce the virtues. We also used the vocabulary by providing feedback to each other in class meetings. Thus, compliments such as “You’re nice.” or “You’re fun.” were replaced with tributes on taking responsibility, generosity, joyfulness, etc.

MacIntyre (1984) noted that virtues are hooks that help move us on our spiritual quest and that stories help us find these virtues. Ellen and Nigel both found it helpful to discuss the virtues of story characters with their 6-9 year olds to help them identify the nature of virtues and the scope of goodness.

Some stories are told to work in with the virtues and to incite, inspire moral development. (Ellen 1: 16)

On a visit to Nigel’s class, he described how virtues were clarified for the children by identifying virtues in the Aboriginal story, *Dabu the Dugong* (Dhangal, 1992) and comparing animal and human virtues.
I must tell you a wonderful thing in class today in this whole area again. We're doing a story as a whole class. It's called *Dabu the Dugong* … So we've read the story and we've talked about it. And what came up in discussion this morning was the difference between animals and humans in terms of the virtues. I spoke to them about lions and lion cubs and how they have the virtues of strength and courage and love for the lion cub, but no consideration. No sharing out. The strongest lion cub survives, and if there isn't enough food, then the weak one dies. But human beings are different. And we talked about the virtues of consideration and care and empathy. In human families, if there's not enough food, it's shared evenly so everyone gets enough to survive. And that helped them see that strong difference. (Nigel 2: 57)

According to Steiner and Montessori, young children’s first experience of spirituality is wonder – wonder for the natural world and in the Waldorf view, wonder for their teachers or significant adults. Narrative also serves to engage children in their spiritual journey by serving as a means for scaffolding the processes of reflection and meditation. Utilising the narrative properties of temporality and setting, students can view experience from different perspectives. Catholic programmes suggest scaffolding reflective and meditative practice by regular and ritualistic devotion and contemplation times with specified topics. Teachers from all four educational approaches demonstrate a belief that children should learn to identify values and
virtues as a platform for their unique spiritual journey. Drama, discussion and story are some ways these values are introduced.

**Journalling**

Journalling is the tool used to record personal narratives. Just as prayer is a form of meditation, journalling is an avenue for reflection. According to Carol LaChapelle (1997), it lies on the left end of a spectrum of creative writing where the recording is just for the writer, the self is the only audience. She views the writing as having three levels – what we think about an experience, what we feel about an experience, and what we learned from an experience. Somehow in this process of writing reflections, our perspective can change. This is due to the power of narrative to weave past, present and future and to highlight important events. Part of the power of journalling is caused by placing the writer firmly in the centre of his/her experience. “I am the one thinking these thoughts. I am the one having this response” (La Chapelle, 1997). In a safe venue, free to make mistakes, journalling can be used not only to record thoughts, but to “think thoughts…. figure things out, learn something, focus thoughts” (La Chapelle, 1997).

We have experienced firsthand and have witnessed in others the “conversion” teachers and students experience when they are given permission and the opportunity to write what is important to them, when writing becomes a means of naming, interpreting, and revising one’s life. (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, p. 25)
In the interviews, those teachers who use journalling endorsed it as a powerful tool. Vicky uses it creatively to merge the past and present with her future plans and dreams.

I’ve journalled for years and years. I don’t always write much, but it does help. I write my dreams, my feelings and I write notebooks. I have daybooks. This is Daybook #3 for the year and they get filled up with everything I do – ideas, jottings. (Vicky 4: 48)

Allison feels journalling has a role in maintaining life direction despite stresses.

And even personally – I think journalling for myself is really important. So often, teaching is a very stressful occupation and very political. …Keeping track of one’s own plot is very important. I would like to do that in a better way. I would be a bit clearer about just where my story is going. Reflection on teaching – I think that’s very important. (Allison: 325)

Palmer confirms that many find journalling a process of thought clarification. He states that “people often report that the first step toward clearness comes with putting the problem on paper. Doing so forces us to winnow our feelings and facts, allowing the chaff to blow away and getting the issue outside of our heads, into the light of day, where problems often look different than when we recycle them endlessly through our fears and doubts” (Palmer, 1998, p. 152).
During the last several years, I have used journalling in the tertiary courses I have taught. I am convinced that this medium empowers student teachers to make connections between their reading, experience and discussions. It also precipitates a process of revisiting and later reflection and allowing for these revisits should be part of the journalling process. Using their writing to connect the various sources of input into their lives produces a unique understanding. No one can tie input together with preexisting experience in the same way and so every authentic journal is a creativeendeavour. I have been teaching intensive courses to Korean teachers during the past three years and have encouraged participants to explore their thoughts and feelings in journal form. One of the experienced participating teachers shared that journalling was the most important thing she learned in the communication course. Recording significant experiences from the course and her reflections on how resulting realisations affected her in her personal life was a profound experience. Perhaps the empowerment of journalling results from the writer realising that she/he is the one holding all these diverse experiences together and journalling serves to highlight the meaning of these connections.

Journalling is a mature process where thought and literacy are inseparably interwoven. Like meditation, reflection and virtue recognition, it is a process that needs to be scaffolded. From my interviews and literature review, it became apparent that teachers value the process of journalling and approach the task of nurturing this personal form of expression differently.
Firstly, it is unlikely that teachers, who do not use journalling themselves, will prioritise it as a reflective tool in their elementary classrooms. La Chapelle (1997) suggests that teachers themselves need to practise strategies for facing that blank page until they are comfortable writing about experiments in their classrooms, what happened and what new understandings they have gained. Some of the strategies she suggests for facilitating this process are writing a list, a monologue, a dialogue, an imaginative visualisation, a description or engaging in free or continuous writing. Once the teacher has writing on the page, he/she can focus on what is important to him/her and begin a reflective process. Through journalling, the writer gains new insights and thus can solve problems and move on.

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) also note the transformation possible through the journalling process by teachers and student teachers.

We have experienced firsthand and have witnessed in others the “conversion” teachers and students experience when they are given permission and the opportunity to write what is important to them, when writing becomes a means of naming, interpreting, and revising one’s life. (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, p. 25)

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) had their students keep an in-class journal to explore issues in pedagogy and experience. La Chapelle would argue that this is not a journal as the audience is the lecturer. One of Ritchie and Wilson’s students suggested that keeping two journals – an in-class as well as an out-of-class personal journal – was
worthwhile in that this maintained a venue for exploring personal thought but also allowed a dialogue with the lecturer provided through the in-class journal.

Interviewee Fran, who teaches trainee teachers as well as elementary students, feels the personal aspect of journalling is critical. Her student teachers submit a journal but it is marked only pass/fail so that individual entries are not read beyond viewing that the student teacher has reflected on certain issues. She explains, “I only look at the headings because if I assess it with a mark or percentage, then they’ll write for me.” (Fran 2: 29) During classes, she will often stop to ask students to reflect on an issue that has arisen. In this way, she scaffolds their use of their journals as a tool for reflection – not an assessment item.

I use it with students at ______________. My own theory about learning is that you remember your own thoughts. You don’t remember other people’s thoughts. Your own thoughts are powerful. So if during a lecture, they listen or get involved in an activity, I then want them to capture the moment and write it down. (Fran 2: 19)

Understandably, if teachers need the journalling process demonstrated and scaffolded, primary children require an even more active support program. Government teachers, Lynne and Dan, both expressed their frustration with a process that became tedious in their classrooms. Dan described the process as “boring”.

Dan: We write journals, not daily journals because I find that boring at school. Once or twice a week. (Dan: 222)
Lynne had abandoned the idea of keeping a personal journal as part of the classroom expectations.

I haven't had that many children who were capable of that level of thinking. …I know it was suggested this year and so we tried it but we just gave up. It wasn't very productive at all. (Lynne 1: 134)

However, in an effort to foster a practice of metacognition, Lynne did continue to try to get children to keep a learning journal.

Lynne: Reflecting is something very difficult for the Grade 4’s…. All that seems to come out is “It was fun” or “I like drawing pictures”. They are not reflecting on how well they used the plan that was given to them…. (Lynne 4: 50)

In an interview dialogue with Vicky we discussed possible strategies for scaffolding the journalling process.

Gay: I’m wondering if they are not ready to explore their thoughts in a journal in that way or maybe they’re being pressured to recount which is not really about reflecting. It can be a sentence – just write a thought. Maybe that
would be a better way to scaffold journalling and maybe they would write something everyday besides, “This is what I had for breakfast.”

Vicky: I know. I get sick of it. “I put on my clothes, got the bus, went to school.” When I’ve introduced reading journals with kids, I read a page of a book and then we stop and reflect. “How would you feel if you were that character?” I’m really fascinated with what Frank Smith talked about regarding journalling. Writing is a way of getting to know yourself. It’s a way of knowing…He was really on to something there. (Vicky 4: 54-56)

Fran concurred with Vicky in implying that by scaffolding the learning journal process, one could encourage the reflective thought that is the substance of personal journals. She describes stopping a class to have children write down their individual thoughts just as she does in a university lecture or workshop.

There are points where I would get them to write down a thought at the moment …I do it for their own learning – their journey through that unit to track their thoughts. …So in that Year 6 class, I might ask them to write their personal thought about the water cycle before they go out, or any thought they have about Captain Cook’s journey. We could share that later… So with journalling, I like to use it as an aid to thought. But personal thought - not what the teacher wants you to think of Captain Cook. (Fran 2: 21)
Fran does not assess the journal, but she does invite the sharing of ideas that indicates if journalling is supporting a reflective process.

Fran indicated that by Grade 6, with some prompting, students could put their reflective thoughts in writing. Vicky recommended that getting upper primary students to write journals from a character’s point of view could help scaffold a personal reflective process. What would be appropriate scaffolding of journalling in the earlier primary grades? From the experiences of my interviewees I am led to conclude that journalling – putting our reflections in writing – is a developmental process that is often poorly scaffolded. Sam noted that children in Class 5 “start writing more about an inner life. They can’t do that in Class 2, but by Class 5, they can do that. They’re writing more about their thought and feelings.” (Sam: 542)

In my own 6-9 year old class, I thought I could scaffold reflective writing and discourage daily recounts in journals by reminding children that their journal might include:

- plans I have,
- thoughts or ideas I have,
- feelings I have,
- things that happened to me.

My observation is similar to that of Steiner teacher, Sam. I found that even children who eagerly engaged in the writing process did not display what might be termed
reflective writing until they were close to moving from the middle primary to the upper primary area. Samples from Emily (age 7 ½) are as follows:

*Plans I have*: “Today we are going to go and have swimming.”

*Thoughts or ideas I have*: “Today I am going to the moon after school in a rocket. I have been there before and last time the rocket fell off the moon and we had to jump off the moon. We landed on earth in a country called Turkey. I thought it was a funny name for a country. I had to go. I found a new rocket and I flew to the planet Saturn. It was lovely there until we fell through the ring. …”

*Feelings I have*: “Today I feel really very happy.”

*Things that happened to me*: “Today we went to Underwater World and it was very fun.”

The seed was planted in this classroom to use the journal for a variety of types of reflection including ideas that might become stories. In that sense it fits the description of journalling by La Chapelle (1997). However, the vocabulary was often stilted and lacked the descriptive language that this child used orally. I suspect that this constricting effect was partially caused by the awareness that the teacher was going to be reading this and providing some feedback (to the journalling process – not editing). However, I also believe that the child was not yet developmentally ready to engage in reflective dialogue with a written text.

If this is true, Shawn’s “oral journalling” is probably a much more effective scaffolding for the reflective, transformative process than daily written recounts.
Children, not limited by the conventions of written vocabulary and punctuation, are able to use the narrative process to tell their stories in a much richer way. They can tell experiences and tell why it is important to them in terms of their feelings and thoughts. They are using oral journalling to find meaning in their life journeys. Oral language has become equated with thought but literacy is a later development.

Shawn’s students “journalled” the following stories orally:

One day my dad was walking up the stairs carrying my sister and me. The stairs were slippery because it snowed. Daddy slipped and Camille rolled down the steps. I didn’t hurt myself but Camille hurt her whole leg. I felt scared because I thought my sister was hurt. (Isabelle, Age 6)

I like to do things in the trees. I like to climb up them. Birds like to sit on the branches. They build their nests on there. One time I made a nest and put it in a very tight spot, so if a bird doesn’t know how to make a nest, they can be in my nest. It was grass and Papa carried it and put it in the tree. We went where we made it and it was still in the tree! Birds will come. I have real sticks for my nest. I think about my tree all the time. This is the nest for baby birds. Like when birds come in and want a nest, they can find my nest.

(excerpt from Silas, Age 3)

In both of these oral journals, the children are clearly reflecting – making sense of the event by reference to feelings, knowledge and past events and using descriptive language impossible if they are limited by writing. In both cases children have been
influenced by past dialogue – Isabelle by family dialogue and Silas by classroom dialogue (Refer to Chapter IV for dialogue on birds in Silas’ preschool class). As in written journals, the narrator places himself/herself in the center of the experience. (La Chapelle, 1997)

La Chapelle (1997) emphasises that journal writing is private writing with the writer as the only audience. If we are to use journal writing in teacher education classrooms, it is thus important to minimise the lecturer as audience. This might be achieved by having a journal as a pass/fail exercise or writing a learning journal that is separate from a private journal. It might be achieved by never requiring that the journal is submitted but ideas developed from it for later presentation and assessment. In this case, student teachers should be invited to write their own thoughts down at frequent intervals during class time or practice. In whatever way possible, authentic reflective writing should be encouraged.

Since journalling is a process that needs to be scaffolded, totally private journals are not realistic in early elementary years although recognition of private authentic thought is critical. Demonstration is important and perhaps predictably, it was the teachers who used journalling themselves who persisted in using it with children. These same teachers sought ways other than the daily recount book to scaffold journalling. It seems clear that when we have children write a daily recount, we are scaffolding a single written genre rather than a reflective process. More success has been reported by affording children the opportunity to journal orally in the early years and later to encourage them to have a nonassessable booklet for recording assorted ideas and feelings – an idea book separate from a recount book or a draft book.
Regular reflection writing points in a lesson has also proved effective for children as well as adult students. This is encouraging them to record ideas that they may want to revisit and reconsider. To effectively journal, we need to be able to transform our stories as we write them. It is a vehicle for having a dialogue with ourselves about our journey. Teachers need to scaffold the reflective process. There are other occasions to scaffold punctuation, comprehension and writing style.

Creativity and Balance

Before the many potential pathways on life’s journey can be contemplated, they must be discovered by exposure to a multitude of disciplines explored through varied forms of expression. Experiencing the world in a variety of ways lays a fertile foundation for the multitude of meaningful connections that can lead to personal transformation. The pedagogies of the four educational traditions explored all emphasise the importance of creating an environment and curriculum that supports the child’s construction in all domains including physical, cognitive, linguistic, social/emotional and creative. All the domains overlap and the creative domain makes new connections integrating the other domains. In the classroom teachers can provide an environment conducive to creativity by providing a balanced curriculum and acknowledging varied learning style preferences and multiple intelligences that are used to make connections. It is important to note that personal transformation, the resolution of our own conflicts, does not occur effectively without establishing a setting rich in alternatives through which individuals can make a selection that contributes to a balanced life. Two of the implications are that schools should support a rich and varied curriculum (Refer to Chapter VIII) and that teachers themselves should be models of balance by exploring their own journeys in a variety of ways.
I assumed that for teachers to find balance, they would pursue varied interests in addition to their classroom based elementary school focus. Csikszentmihayalyi (1997) notes that “when people do a hobby, get involved in exercise, play a musical instrument, or go out to a movie or restaurant, they tend to be more happy, motivated, concentrated, and more often in flow than in any other part of the day” (p. 39). Yair (2000) stresses that exploring interests and abilities leads to self-discovery which is fundamental to motivation and thus change. These ideas prompted me to ask interviewee teachers how they found balance in their lives.

Government teacher, Lynne, sings in a choir and volunteers at a hospital.

I went to a workshop on administration last year and one of the days they spoke about how we should try to have balance in our lives by doing something for ourselves, something for our family, and something for our community. I do ample for my family, but I began singing in a choir and I volunteer at the kiosk at Charlie Gardiner Hospital. There is some balance, although there will never be balance as long as I am a classroom teacher because of the nature of the job. (Lynne 4: 95)

As mentioned in Chapter V, Government teacher, Dan, uses thematic reading for self discovery and has recently focused on World War II and Chinese history (Dan: 349-353). He also refinishes antique furniture as a hobby.

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Catholic teacher, Vicky, reads, draws and travels.

I put Bach on. I put lavender oil all over my clothes, and I grab a really, really good book and I just sort of sink and bathe myself with fiction. Or sometimes I look at a tree or fly away somewhere. I don’t think I’ve felt more balanced than sitting in an airplane, looking at the pattern of the land below. I always want to draw it. It seems that you are away from all the little problems when you are looking at the big picture. I often sit and look down at the land and write in my journal. Sometimes I even cry when I look at clouds. It’s rather expansive. (Vicky 4: 44)

Catholic teacher, Fran, sees finding balance as allowing equal attention to work and family.

Practically, I really don’t do anything. Other than I think it’s being purpose driven. In my life, my top value is my family. Absolutely top, non-negotiable top priority…The biggest thing I learned was to be confident that going to a child’s swimming carnival was like a meeting. That’s in my timetable so I can’t fit anything else in there. (Fran 3: 9-15)

Many educators have observed that for those who do find “flow” in their lives, there is not a distinct separation between outside pursuits and teaching and they do feed each other and overlap. Rather the teacher-learner model is a flexible one. Effective teachers are also on a journey of self-discovery (Steiner, 1923/1996; Montessori, 1948/1988a; Palmer, 1998; Smith, 2000; Ritchie and Wilson, 2000)
In term-time you married the school and in the holidays you had a brief affair with The Real World. This unnaturally neat division may work for some but it did not then, and does not now, work for me. Quite apart from anything else, it makes for bad teaching. (Smith, 2000, p. 94)

Interviewees Steiner teacher, Bernadette, and Montessorians, Ellen and Shawn, most clearly embody this creative “flow” between their classroom and personal explorations.

Bernadette enjoys reading Shakespeare and mythologies and listening to music when she has time to herself. However, these interests and knowledge overflow into the classroom. In this way her journey of self-discovery is constantly regenerating her work as a classroom teacher.

If I get some time off, that’s the first thing I do – is go back to my stories and my music and that sort of thing. Even people like Jung say that people that have art and music in their lives are much healthier in their soul life and I want to model that for the children. I want them to always know that they have music and I’ve encouraged lots of them to learn musical instruments.

(Bernadette: 319)

Ellen enjoys studying other cultures through travel, attending multicultural festivals and theatre and by exploring folktales and art forms. This knowledge and enthusiasm is transmitted to her classroom where children also have the opportunity to explore
the stories, music and art of varied cultures. For example, they studied a Ukranian Easter story and decorated eggs according to that tradition.

This is a Ukranian Easter one. *Rechenka's Eggs*. The old woman cares for a wounded goose and then the magic element comes in and the goose has to return to the wild but it leaves a gift which is a little gosling which will stay with her forever. The care between human and animal and also the beauty of the illustrations just is captivating. (Ellen 1: 101)

Shawn’s interest in creative writing connects her own passion, her community outreach teaching of adolescent girls, and her work in pre-elementary and elementary school.

*Women Writing for (a) Change* is a huge part of this. I continue to take classes once a week and to teach various workshops and the Girls' Camp in the summer. I find the reflective aspect, as well as the community aspect, of my participation there feeds me in many spiritual ways. The opportunity to hear so many different voices, to focus in depth on listening, giving feedback, reading, and working on my own writing, of course, all contribute to a rich and stimulating experience. I find that I need to write to center myself, to brainstorm, to grieve, to acknowledge, to plan and elaborate on plans. …There is something about putting pen to paper that frees me from intruding thoughts and allows me to stay focused. It is different from other written activity, as if a different part of my brain is engaged. It is energizing. Reserving time for writing is reassuring – something important I do for myself. I disappoint myself when I fail to keep
those appointments with myself. Because much of my work of the past few years has been personal, life writing, recording events and impressions that I want to remember and share, it feels like meditation, celebration, discovery, and gratitude much of the time. Giving voice to feelings, dreams, a multitude of ideas continues to feed me. And I am constantly inspired by work of other women and readings in class. And I read a lot. (Shawn 4: 10)

In 1999 I participated in a workshop My Muse and Me given by Montessorians Lisa Kilcran and Julie Meridan at the American Montessori Society National Conference. They recommended that teachers and students should journey together to find their individual muses. Their programme incorporated creative writing and art activities including describing their judge whom they have dramatically put in a box, writing poems and stories and producing art works centered around the muse and elements that helped to identify that muse and its name including lists of favourites – words, quotes, colours, sounds, etc. Muse booklets became a reflection of children’s and teachers’ personal creative beings. In the past two years, I have replicated aspects of this workshop with great success with reluctant writers, student teachers and experienced teachers. The tentativeness with which all of these groups begin to participate in these activities and the enthusiasm with which they share their muse stories at the close, supports the view that too often we separate our pathways of self-discovery from classroom activities.

Teachers who are on a pathway of self-discovery are more likely to experience the balance and creativity that comes from making meaningful connections between their work and private lives. As their explorations spill over into the classroom, they
provide windows for the creative explorations of their students and the consequent spiritual experience that comes from connectedness beyond the immediate and concrete.

Creativity is an experience – to my eye, a spiritual experience. It does not matter which way you think of it: creativity leading to spirituality or spirituality leading to creativity. In fact, I do not make a distinction between the two. In the fact of such experience, the whole question of belief is rendered obsolete. As Carl Jung answered the question of belief late in his life, ‘I don’t believe; I know.’ (Cameron, 1992, p. 2)

As preparation for personal change, for the evolution of our stories, values are defined through reflection on experiences. These experiences should include wonder – a first spiritual experience that motivates the child to explore the meaningful connections in his/her world. The individual makes sense of these experiences through journalling and it is suggested that oral journalling might effectively precede written journalling. The stage for transformation is further set by having a variety of creative experiences that contribute to a balanced life characterised by a flow between classroom and leisure pursuits.

**The Plot – Exploring the Possibilities of Personal Change**

Through wonder, meditation, reflection, and creative experiences, we are given a window into our own potential. If our experiences represent a broad spectrum, then
each pane in our window might reflect a different facet of our lives that we want to
develop – taking care to keep a congruence in the image.

Montessori teacher, Nigel, indicates the first step to opening ourselves to
transformation is to recognise all the different roles that we assume in our lives and to
try to integrate them in a meaningful way.

At any moment, there’s a multiplicity of forces hingeing. As a conscious
being, you only really notice one at any given moment. Actually there’s a lot
going on in your life. Coming to terms with that and trying to integrate that
into my narrative that I am a multi-faceted being, with different things pulling
me in different ways, different roles. To use my differences to make a life that
is harmonious, joyful and leads to flow. (Nigel 1: 45)

Gradual personal transformation is scaffolded by determining the desirable
denouement of a person’s story and then identifying intermediary goals to achieve this
envisioned outcome. Models of transformation in the form of archetypes and other
people’s relevant stories and new ideas encountered in discourse can contribute to this
gradual progression in self-development or, as discussed above, may lead to more
precipitous life changes.

Personal Goals

The temporal property of narrative facilitates the ability to envision oneself in the
future, farther down the pathway on one’s journey. If a person is able to respond in
detail to the question, “What do you want to do with your life?”, or “Where do you
see yourself in ten years?”, then they are probably adept at using this narrative technique as part of their internal monologue. One of my sons decided at 13 that he wanted to be a yacht designer. This dream led to goals of moving to another continent, training in naval architecture and marine engineering until he ultimately assumed his dream job. A younger son aspires to be a figure skater. His personal narrative that allows him to envision himself as a competent skater has motivated him to practise diligently. Our personal narratives can thus be motivating, driving forces in our journey. These narratives can also serve to help us make choices. As a child, I constantly revised my personal narrative as I envisioned potential pathways of my journey. I considered being a golf professional, a concert violinist, an anthropologist before ultimately focusing on psychology and education. These mini narratives continue to be threads in my story in the form of maintained interests.

What about those people who don’t have an envisioned narrative? Some people view themselves as having a pathway, a future, but some of the details are vague and need to be filled in. They may need to experience more precipitating events until dealing with a challenge that focuses their lives. Others, however, may not have a sense of story at all. Kevin Dilks (2000), Minister for the Wesley Mission Church in Perth, reported that the staff addiction counsellors had noted that addicts did not have an ongoing internal monologue making sense of their journey through connecting their experiences. Part of their treatment is to scaffold their story construction - helping them to go back to their roots and identify their family trees before looking at the present and potential future events of their lives. A key strategy of counselling was to employ narrative therapy to help each of these patients view his/her life journey
with a past, a future and a choice of pathways leading from the present to the future (Journal 29: 91).

For story to be a motivating force, one must have a sense not only of its existence, but also of its importance. South Australian educator, Elizabeth Mansutti (2000) shared her experiences working with troubled illiterate youths. She asked them to tell their stories and was met with the response, “You wouldn’t want to know about our lives.” By sharing interesting stories she had heard at the local pub, she convinced them that there stories would be interesting to her and they voice recorded them. These were printed out and used for reading motivation, but they also provided emotional motivation by allowing these youths to sense the importance of ownership of personal stories (Journal 28: 5).

There is no doubt that cognitive and even value goals are prescribed in school for children. For them to take these on board as part of their story, they must participate in creating and meeting them. Current interest in metacognition acknowledges this need. Children are asked to reflect on their own learning through collaborative group sharing and journalling. A focus on authentic thought as described in Chapter V encourages the process of students reflecting on their own thinking and the purpose or goals of that thinking. Interviewee Fran effectively helps students to set their own learning goals within the context of class explorations.

So, let's say I'm doing a relief in a Year Six and I happen to do water cycle. Before I even do that, I'll say, "Okay, write down four thoughts you have on water cycle." Then I'll number them off and get them to discuss with a partner...
those four things so they should end up with more because they listen to their partner. Then I get them to rank those thoughts and they should come with a top thought. The top thought they share around the room. I whiteboard it. I can then say, "Year Sixes, this is what is important to you about the water cycle." So in that way, they've thought and written and they've talked and listened. Then they've shared. So they should have some powerful beginning to the whole topic of the water cycle. This is what we know. Then we need to go to what they need to know. I use this process a lot. I call it List-Rank-Discuss. (Fran 3:19)

In Western Australia, where the new Curriculum Framework has been introduced during the course of this study, teachers are focusing on outcomes as descriptive learning goals. The Framework encourages finding varied pathways suitable for individual children to reach these goals, rather than prescribing a set curriculum. My Government and systemic Catholic school interviewees are all in the process of making this transition. Consulting interviewee, Uniting Church independent schoolteacher, Victoria Biggs (2001a), has thoroughly implemented the Framework in her classroom. The work of her fourth grade students reflects personal goal setting and personal assessment for every piece of work completed and incorporates both cognitive task goals as well as social relationship and affective goals (Cole and Garrett, 1995). Reading a student’s portfolio reveals the shared class journey, but also the individual narrative.

105 Outcomes – outcomes refers to learning goals in the Curriculum Framework. This is in contrast to the frequent use of the term outcomes to mean standards in American educational literature.
In Montessori schools choice is traditionally afforded to the child in meeting learning goals and the teacher is trained to facilitate the cognitive goal setting process in varied ways according to the needs of the child. In my upper primary class, we would decide on class focus areas for a term and children would be invited to add their individual focus areas to the plan as well. Weekly or daily, depending on their needs and preferences, they would record their plan of action to achieve subgoals. Although interpersonal and intrapersonal goals were discussed orally, I had no format for helping children to systematically address these goals as part of their personal life narrative.

Montessori teacher, Nigel, also felt this was a neglected area in his classroom and introduced what he called the Virtue Quads. This was his own extension of the Virtues Project (Popov, 1990). He believes that virtues complement each other. When a child has displayed one such as enthusiasm he/she may need to focus as a personal goal on the complementary virtue of patience. For this child the virtue quad is diagrammed with enthusiasm, patience and moderation in a triangle and respect as a hub.

That's a very powerful one. That one sits at the top, because one of the kids in my class is enthusiastic. He is such a positive person. He does hassle other kids a bit. He doesn't have the respect he should have for other children, but his enthusiasm completely overwhelms everything else so he's always got a joke, he's always playful, he's basically hyper. But instead of telling him negatively all the time, I'm able to say to him, "I appreciate your
enthusiasm, but it's a little too much. You need to tone it down. You need to find patience. You need moderation and you need to be respectful." (Nigel 1: 14)

I like to think that we are constantly weaving our own story. We are having the story of our own life woven by the relationships we have. So for someone like that, I’ve woven a thread for him which shows the connection between joyfulness and enthusiasm, but patience and moderation. (Nigel 1: 18)

Nigel uses story to reinforce the child’s awareness of his/her own virtue goals and achievements and his/her life threads. Once a term, each child has a turn to stand up and select a gemstone from the virtue stone basket. The teacher tells the child which of the 52 virtues (Popov, 1990) he believes he/she has attained this term and tells a true story involving the child that demonstrates this. Then the other children (aged 5-8) take turns nominating other virtues he/she might want to consider as a special virtue attained this term and they relate other incidents involving the child that support this. After listening to all the stories that feed into his/her experiences and sense of goodness and achievement, the child selects the nominated virtue that he/she wants the special stone to represent. This introduced classroom ritual celebrates the child’s moral journey. Since observing this ritual in Nigel’s class, I have tried the stones with a class of trainee teachers and one of experienced teachers. In both cases, the groups welcomed the opportunity to tell positive stories about their associates. They supported my belief that introducing such rituals into the staff room could contribute to a positive culture.
Cole and Garrett (1995) state that *personal agency beliefs* are important in attaining one’s goals once they are in place. Personal agency beliefs are based on the person’s perception of capability (evaluations of one’s ability to effectively accomplish ones’ goal) and context (evaluations of the responsiveness of the environment needed to support effective functioning). Allowing children to have an authentic voice in the classroom can help the teacher to understand how students perceive their learning journeys and they can then help them to identify appropriate goals to help them on the way. Inviting children to participate in setting these goals and providing feedback by sharing positive stories helps them to interweave value threads in their lives. Interviewees Fran and Nigel and consulting teacher, Victoria Biggs, have all found ways to help children in their classrooms to identify realistic goals and recognise their own *capability* of achieving these goals in a *context* that offers support, stimulation and choice. Teachers also influence the journey of their students by being adult models with attributes that children in their care emulate or repudiate.

**Models of transformation**

*Influential teachers.*

The connectedness students have with their teachers, their mentors, contributes to personal transformation. The power of our mentors is not necessarily in the models of good teaching they give us, models that may turn out to have little to do with who we are as teachers. Their power is in their capacity to awaken a truth within us, a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling their impact on our lives. If we discovered a teacher’s heart in ourselves by meeting a great teacher, recalling...
that meeting may help us take heart in teaching once more.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 21)

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) emphasise that teachers need to be encouraged to go beyond recall as suggested by Palmer and to critically analyse the stories of teachers who influenced them. In this way, teachers can appreciate how experience is constructed as they begin to understand how they have formed their own ideologies. When, through this reflection, they discover conflicts in their own narratives of learning and teaching, positive growth is promoted. “Change is made possible and becomes sustainable when teachers gain critical perspective on how their identities have been constructed by/in the culture and how the cultural narratives of teaching have shaped their personal and professional subjectivities” (p. 24).

In the following case study of Theodore Stoddard, M.D. (Ballard, 2000), the teacher Mrs. Thompson changes her teaching strategies after identifying her own ideological inconsistencies as well as the conflicting narratives describing this student.

Her name was Mrs. Thompson. As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn’t play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he
constantly needed a bath. And Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.

At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise.

Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners...he is a joy to be around."

His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle."

His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken."

Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn’t show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class."

By now, Mrs. Thompson realised the problem and she was ashamed of
herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one quarter-full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mother used to."

After the children left she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, and writing, and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then
wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was
still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while
things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it,
and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured
Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favourite teacher he ever had in
his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he
explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a
little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and
favourite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little
longer-------------the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that
Spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was going to be married. He
explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was
wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the place at the wedding
that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs.
Thompson did.

And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones
missing. And she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy
remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.
They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference."

Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

For Mrs. Thompson there was a conflict between a curriculum-based approach and a child-centred approach to learning. To reach children like Thomas, she needed to adopt the latter and she grew in positive ways from critically analysing this conflict. She also had an inbuilt script that said she should treat all children the same, but felt anxiety because she knew that she liked the children who were succeeding more than those who weren’t. Minimising comparisons and responding to each child’s uniqueness as she helped each one to achieve his/her potential was a way of resolving this conflict. Perhaps she still liked children who were succeeding, but they were all succeeding when the expectations were in keeping with their own interests, abilities, and personal narratives. I believe that in resolving these conflicts, Mrs. Thompson, would have reflected on her own teaching and learning experiences. If so, she may have reflected on the teachers who made a difference in her life and what qualities they displayed towards her.

I tried to ascertain if there were common qualities – either positive or negative – in teachers’ memorable mentors by asking my interviewees to share their reflections.
Shawn reported two primary teachers as being especially significant in her life. Her fifth grade teacher listened to her and not only acknowledged her unique gift, but found a way for her to share it with her class.

My teacher, Miss Contos, had limited resources and a tiny library in our classroom closet! I told her about the books I was reading and she offered to let me set up a lending library of my own books. I kept track of who had what and kept everything dusted and in good order. I loved it, and when she would let me stay in from recess to organise and communicate, I thought I was in heaven. I was an early reader and couldn’t imagine how awful it would be not to have new stories to read on a regular basis. So, at 10, I felt important. I also felt listened to, since it was my passion and she allowed me to build on it. Powerful acknowledgement. (Shawn 3: 17-19)

Her other influential teacher is recalled for having really listened to her and for being interested in her personal narrative.

Another teacher, Sister Margaret Catherine, used to talk with me when I was 11. I loved her. She listened intently to every anecdote, dream, wish and plan I made that year. I have to wonder if that was the root of my own passion for personal stories. She listened without judging, acknowledged quietly and one-on-one. The girls’ classes I now teach are models of what she lived and breathed. (Shawn 3: 19-20)
Vicky explains how contrasting experiences have influenced her to value fairness and respect for differences in interacting with students.

When I was about 9 there was this skinny teacher with black hair called Miss Blake. I was actually never very naughty but this day I was talking to somebody and I had to go up to the front and get smacked on my hand six times. I can still remember being determined not to cry - just standing there. I've always remembered that terrible feeling of unfairness. I get so irritated and angry with teachers who won't let kids have normal everyday conversations in classes. There are times when they have to be very quiet. I tell all my students about that. Poor Miss Blake has been immortalised. (Vicky 4: 10)

There was another teacher called Mrs. Gamming when I was only in Infants in England when I was about seven. She was very kind. She understood that I wasn't quite comfortable with a lot of the kids. I was never very popular. I was always stuck out somewhere by myself thinking my own thoughts. Somehow she made it a bit easier. The teachers who meant something to me - more than the actual learning - were teachers who helped me because I didn't actually fit. She could see that I didn't fit even though there wasn't anything wrong with me.

(Vicky 4: 12)

In talking about teachers who influenced her, Lynne (Lynne 4: 24-26) noted that they “talked to us as people” and “would talk about issues rather than sticking to the
sylabus.” In other words, she identified effective teachers as those who changed the focus of the class in response to the ideas and needs of the students.

Nigel also recalled the influence of teachers who listened to and responded to the students genuinely and added that genuine emotion was important including anger and humour.

One I remember the most actually came to my Bar Mitzvah. He just had this vitality about him. You could talk to him and know he was really listening to you. That was a key. He used to always ask me general knowledge questions which I used to love. He had a sense of humour and a laughter and an anger. You would always know by the pulse he had in his forehead. (Nigel 2: 70)

A positive quality of influential high school teachers was again cited as viewing each students as a whole person rather than merely a student of language or maths.

Another teacher was Mr. Hathaway, my high school maths teacher. I remember how he came in to the office one day when I was tutoring a blind student. He sat and watched for a time and then began asking me about other interests. He was interested in my writing and work on the literary magazine. When, in Year 12, I had to drop maths to take history to satisfy College requirements, he was still supportive and interested in my journey. (Gay: Journal 31: 115-119)
Added to the high school profile of positive teacher qualities by interviewees was the ability to make subjects interesting and to invite their active participation as readers, writers and thinkers.

I had an English teacher in high school who inspired me, told me what I could do. He made me see myself as a writer. I had this amazing biology teacher in high school …Her lessons were the most creative, brilliantly interesting lessons that I've ever seen. (Vicky 2: 12)

Vicky also mentions that valued high school teachers made her feel safe. She implies that learning was exciting for her when she felt valued and safe.

Actually, there was a teacher named Len Watkins and I think he's still alive. He was a teacher of mine at Narambeen Jr. High and he really helped me believe in myself. He loved learning. Loved teaching. Absolutely adored teaching. Every single day in his classroom was fun, it was fair. I was never bullied or hurt in his classroom. That was important because I was bullied a hell of a lot at school. His classroom was always a safe place. That's very important. He probably had the most emotionally intelligent, safe classroom. (Vicky 4: 38)

Nigel values the qualities of communication, and comradeship with respect that he experienced with a high school teacher.

His name was Dankin. He was a very young man. He also had that
sense of being able to communicate. You could talk to him. You also used to be able to call him by his first name. Everyone else was "Sir". He was able to do the first name basis and he had the respect of everybody. (Nigel 2: 70)

Interestingly, the idea of responding to a teacher who is a friend at high school level reflects the Steiner view of the changing role of the teacher. Sam explained that whereas the teacher should be viewed as a venerable wise model by young children, older children would value teachers who were companions in their journey.

Just this idea that things metamorphosise. This respect for authority born out of not fear, but of love and knowledge. The teacher loves and tries to understand the child and the child has a sense of authority. As they get older, that tapers off as they have their own authority to fall onto. (Sam: 648)

Teaching approaches valued and later emulated by interviewees included listening, acknowledging the uniqueness and individual interests of each student, viewing them as “whole” people, teaching to the students – not to the curriculum, making the subject interesting and inviting the active participation of students including encouraging student dialogue where appropriate. In addition, interviewees valued high school teachers who could act as companions on their journey and still command respect. These approaches were valued in teachers in all four explored educational traditions.

**Analogies and Bibliocounselling.**
Using analogies and stories to model alternative or goal oriented behaviour can be effective in guiding “a person resolving some predicament.” Narrative analogy makes the problem more “explicit and gives it definite structure, provides a natural basis for raising questions about causal relations and for modelling goal-oriented action; and distances the listener emotionally to a sufficient degree to sidestep that person’s defensiveness and anxiety” (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986, p. 122).

In guiding a child to cope with a difficult situation or to alter ineffective behaviour, one might draw analogies from personal experience stories, or the known stories of family or community.

When you commiserate with a child over the difficulty of succeeding at a new task by telling an anecdote about the time you thought you'd never learn to ride a bicycle, you are sharing a story. (Diz-Imbelli, 1998, p. 32)

Dan uses analogies to help a child put his abilities in perspective. The child he describes here demonstrates great gifts in creative arts but requires extra tutoring for language arts.

He doesn't want to go to after school lessons and his father is pushing him… “Imagine if someone is not good at art, and they wanted to be as good as you, just imagine how many hours they would have to spend in tutoring on Saturday mornings to get up to your standard.” Or I might say, “It's like the difference between driving a Rolls Royce or a VW. You want to be fine...
tuned. You're running around like one of these VW vans that you see putting around. It's going fine, but you want to be more like the Rolls Royce that's just purring along.” (Dan: 214)

Often using the characters in a story known to the child will help him/her to develop insight into his/her own handling of a situation. Hughes (1991) employs this term to describe the phenomenon whereby a person identifies so clearly with a character or a dilemma in a story that he/she is comforted to discover that he/she is not so unusual after all. “In fact, reading about the experiences of others often helps one gain insights into one's own life” (Hughes, 1991, p. 227). Data revealed that teachers representing varied pedagogies appreciated that bibliocounselling could comfort children and provide guidelines for their lives.

I think the thing about children, the most wonderful thing about them is they know and are grateful for something that takes them forward either in their thinking or maybe an example - one day a child might think, "I remember in Charlotte's Web they had this problem and..." Just that dawning of that idea. (Fran 1: 166)

Data from Montessori and Steiner interviewees revealed an intent to select stories that would aid children in solving dilemmas.

This story is one of my favourites [indicates John Brown, Rose, and the Midnight Cat (Wagner, 1977)]… The profound relationship between this trio and I have used this in talking to children about trios. I had three girls and two
of the three could be friends, but they made each other miserable as a trio and this book came to me as an example that we could talk about. (Allison: 236)

Here, Catholic schoolteacher, Fran, and Montessorian, Allison, both cited examples of the occasional use of story to focus on specific problems in the classroom. By contrast, the Steiner teachers used story consistently as a technique to help children to gain insight into their behaviour and to promote change in behaviour through the modelling of these examples. When I observed Sam’s classroom, he helped children arguing over a ball on the playground to reexamine their situation by telling them a story about two creatures meeting on a bridge – neither allowing the other to pass. He then allowed them to reflect on their own situation. Ultimately, they arrived at a method of sharing – each had a turn at the ball. (Sam’s Class Observation: 9/99) In an interview, Sam explained that he might later allude to characteristics apparent in the fables or mythological stories studied.

So we use those stories, again without the moral. We won't say, “Slow and steady wins the race,” but we just tell the story and that's enough. We don't have to hammer it home. Then we might allude to that. You're being a little bit foxy today or a bit like that hare trying to dash your work off. (Sam: 108)

You can do that in many ways. You might do it in many small ways to just give a picture – that point out like the fables. If you always rush ahead, you might not be the one who gets there first as you have to be steadfast, keep your path. You can't be just rushing about everywhere.
So you might just give a little picture. Or you might tell a story, "When I was a child, my best friend..." Even if it's just a made up story to illustrate how someone did something and what the outcome of that is. Again, not in a moralistic sense, but to say if you run down that track, you'll keep running into a brick wall...You're not nagging at the child. You are just saying that, after all, if that happens, then that might happen. So they can see it externalised and laid out in picture form in front of them. They can see that it's kind of a sensible thing to go down that track. (Bernadette: 154-161)

The use of story is a primary mode of discipline in the Steiner School and was also frequently used in the Montessori and some of the Catholic classrooms observed. Their method of dealing with discipline problems contrasted greatly with the classrooms I observed where behavioural reward systems were firmly in place. It seemed to me that the classroom energy was more focused without the distraction of points, smiley faces or stickers being awarded at regular intervals. Teachers comments were more subject connected and less behaviour directed. Kohn’s (1993) assessment that allowing for collaboration, content and choice removes the need for token systems. Narrative rich classrooms tend to welcome collaboration and provide meaningful content and a choice of pathways for the students. Addressing specific behavioural problems with story is in keeping with this alternative triad. The children discuss and explore the stories together rather than competing with each other for rewards; the children are interested in the stories because they provide relevant images and guidelines for coping with problems and they are respected by having a choice as to how to proceed in using this new perspective. Kohn cites classroom research studies by Lepper and Greene (1975, 1978) and by Deci (1971, 1978) to
support his view that extrinsic rewards kill intrinsic motivation in pursuing an interest or a task.

Montessori and Steiner pedagogies emphasise that teachers need to guide children as they unfold and experience their will (Finser, 1994; Steiner, 1923/1996, Montessori, 1948/1988a)

Of course I am not referring to any kind of enforced authority here; the authority I am speaking of must never be imposed externally. And if, in some cases, an authoritarian approach is necessary for the sake of general society, the child should not be aware of it. (Steiner, 1923/1996, 98-99)

But if a child has to be rewarded or punished, it means he [sic] lacks the capacity to guide himself; so this has to be supplied by the teacher. But supposing he sets himself to work; then the addition of prizes and punishments is superfluous; they only offend the freedom of his spirit. (Montessori, 1948/1988a, p. 224)

Extrinsic rewards are at odds with fostering this autonomy. Using narrative in guiding children to reflect on their own behaviour, on the other hand, is in keeping with intrinsic motivation goals and explains why interviewees from these traditions were more comfortable using bibliocounselling as a tool. The Catholic teachers I interviewed had the same training as the Government teachers, but with an added religious education component. In this component teachers experience using biblical
and other stories to provide analogies to behaviour. There is scope for further teacher education research here, but one could hypothesise that as there is an increased use of bibliocounselling, there would be a decrease in the use of extrinsic reward systems. It would also be interesting to explore to what degree an increased emphasis on collaborative learning, meaningful content, and choice in Government school classrooms will result in a decrease in extrinsic reward systems. A student teacher I observed recently in a Government school complained:

I hate giving out and taking back points and smiley faces; it makes me feel like I’m supposed to play God and I’m not there to be God; I’m there to guide the students. (Sharon: Student post-observation interview 5/2000)

Later in the practice, the same student exclaimed,

That lesson went so well. The students were so interested that I didn’t even have to worry about giving out rewards! (Sharon: Student post-observation interview, 5/2000)

In the lesson to which Sharon referred, the children had choice in how they collaboratively explored a lesson with meaningful content. Certainly, teachers like Sharon prefer using meaningful stories to giving tokens for behaviour modification.

Analogies and bibliocounselling drawn from real and fictitious stories are used as one alternative in guiding children in intrinsic rather than extrinsic ways. Such stories
can also help people to view their own concerns and discoveries in a global context. When narrative images serve to explain a universal human truth, they are termed archetypes.

**Archetypes.**

Jung termed human patterns of emotional and mental behaviour ‘archetypes’ (von Franz, 1968b). Archetypes are the universal type patterns that appear in mythologies. However, the term archetype might also apply to characters who assume these same universal type patterns in other narratives including fairy tales, biblical stories, classic and contemporary literature and real-life heroes who embody universal qualities. By studying archetypes appropriate to their situations or predispositions, people gain insight and instruction into how a relevant life pathway might eventuate (Jung, 1968; Bettleheim, 1977; Campbell and Moyers, 1988; Bolen, 1989; Estes, 1992; Houston, 1996).

Myths have such power because they are full of archetypes. Archetypes are many things--primal forms, codings of the deep unconscious, constellations of psychic energy, patterns of relationship. Our ancestors saw them in the heavens, prayed to them as Mother Earth, Father Ocean, Sister Wind. They were the great relatives from whom we derived, and they gave us not only our existence, but also prompted our stories, elicited our moral order. Later, they became personified in mythic characters and their stories--the contending brothers, the holy child, the search for the beloved, the heroic journey. As major organs of the psyche, archetypes give us our essential connections, and without them we would lose the gossamer bridge that joins spirit with nature,
mind with body, and self with the metabody of the universe. (Houston, 1996, p. 99)

By relating to archetypes we amplify and transform our lives. “Myth leads us from the personal-particular concerns and frustrations of our everyday lives to the broader perspective of the personal-universal... Gradually we discover that these stories are our own stories, that they bear the amplified rhythms of our own lives” (Houston, 1996, p. 98).

Mythologies are studied in each of the four educational traditions visited in this research. In the Government and Catholic schools, reference was made to Greek, Roman, and Aboriginal mythologies primarily in either a literary or a historical context. In the Montessori schools, numerous mythologies are studied, but again in a literary or historical context. For example, in every Montessori school visited, the origin of the universe is explored in the primary school. Often, the imagination of the children is incited by the “Big Story” of *The God With No Hands*, which provides scientific experimentation against a backdrop of spiritual mystery. The God With No Hands is an archetype, a spiritual metaphor. I have noticed that in many Montessori schools, the story has been rewritten in purely scientific terms. (Refer to Appendices K and L for both versions) Those using the redrafted version support a view that science and spirituality should be viewed separately.

I never found comfort with the stories of creation. There was a certain emotion that I received it from that I didn't feel comfortable with. My approach is just to get down to the nuts and bolts. Here we are. This is what
the scientists are saying. I actually bring in the wonder and the mystery by saying that "No one really understands this." Maybe they lose something from it because I don't try to create the fairy tale or myth of it. I do try to talk about what we know and what we don't know - the wonder. (Nigel 1: 98)

Others would question if by eliminating the archetype, the spiritual doorway to the mystery of the universe is removed. Whatever story version is presented to describe the origins of the universe, various creation stories are also explored. These stories are used to demonstrate how humans create narratives to understand phenomena. They are also used to exemplify how humans meet their fundamental spiritual needs. Nigel explains how he uses the story to demonstrate how different cultures explained “the truth” in different ways.

As part of our three-year cycle, we do one session where we take cultures from across the world and look at their creation stories. So, take a Maori one and an Aboriginal one. We read the stories and we show the pictures or we tell the story and show the pictures, depending. And we try to get them to work on their own myths. Then, it's the same thing, but it's a genre instead of - the danger I find in telling a story in a mythical way is that it sounds like it's true. Now I'm going to tell you the story of creation. One day, one God got the spirit ... and then you leave it. A lot of it's true. A lot of it's grey area. …And I say, this is the scientist's version. Today, we believe that this is true. But for those Aborigines, that was true and for those Maoris, that was true. That's like saying to them "These different cultures had a version of truth
which worked for them in their eyes and I think it's…” That's how you affirm multiculturalism. … I'm more interested in it as in comparative religion.

(Nigel 1: 96-98)

The implication is that although cultures define truth mythologically in different ways, scientifically we have been moving closer to the truth. In contrast, for Steiner educators, the universal patterns that are discovered when one looks at varied mythologies reveal truths about humans, relationships and spirituality – not disproved truths, but rather enduring archetypal truths. An archetypal truth is not a fact, but a metaphor for a spiritual experience.

If you have a mythology in which the metaphor for the mystery is the father, you are going to have a different set of signals from what you would have if the metaphor for the wisdom and mystery of the world were the mother. And they are two perfectly good metaphors. Neither one is a fact. (Campbell and Moyers, 1988, p. 20)

Steiner teachers explain that by carefully selecting mythologies as a basis for the curriculum, children will be helped in their self-understanding and expansion of consciousness through their exposure to appropriate archetypes. Of the four pedagogies explored through interviews, only the Steiner method consciously uses a knowledge of archetypes to foster each child’s personal insight and spiritual understanding. The sequence of mythologies that form the basis of curriculum are carefully selected so that children’s concerns at each age will be addressed by relevant archetypes.
Well, the basic principle is that the child will go through the same stages in personal development that humanity has gone through in its development. So that the stories will represent sort of a changing consciousness. So we start with fairy tales which are magic and fantasy. Anything can happen. (Sam: 100)

The primary curriculum reflects the child’s growing consciousness by moving to fables and Saints in Class 2, biblical stories in Class 3, Norse mythology and Aboriginal myths in Class 4, Greek mythology in Class 5, Roman mythology in Class 6 and the Renaissance in Class 7 (Carlgren, 1986; Finser, 1994).

I guess the whole thing is based on the fact that the individual development is a recapitulation of the development of the whole of humanity. So one of Steiner’s tenets of philosophy is this evolution of the human consciousness. …The Ancient Greek didn’t have the same perception and didn’t have the same type of thinking that we do now and the further back you go, the more different it is. If you look at mythologies, you will always have this picture of a Golden Age and there is some kind of fall away from the Gods…As soon as you get this fall everything is kind of a duality…there’s good and evil and there’s heaven and earth, and life and death. (Bernadette: 141)
The child has to work to educate himself and part of this quest is to regain a sense of the spiritual world. The range of archetypes from Year 1 through high school is thought to provide direction for this quest.

Even in the archetypal figures, we start with the fairy stories. They are so purely archetypal. There’s nothing individual. Children know they’re not real people and they’re not real events. Then we move to Class 11 to Percival and the Grail Story….That really is about the individual path. Percival has a universality as well, but it’s about the individual path to obtain the grail through the path of adventure, the path through life. (Bernadette: 8)

The distinct difference between the Montessori and Steiner use of archetypes is exemplified by their use of fairy tales. Montessori did not recommend fairy tales for use with preschool children because they were frightening and detracted from the beauty and wonder of reality (Montessori, 1917/1964; Leith, 1989). For the primary aged child, fairy stories were viewed for their literary and historical value rather than any spiritual message (Claremont, 1993a). In contrast, Steiner viewed them as reflecting the mythical thinking and wonder of the early primary child and saw them as tools to minister to the psychological needs of young people. Steiner would have predated Bettelheim in noting that fairy tales give guidance for life predicaments for the young child facing the huge challenges of life in the face of older models.

The message that fairy tales get across to the child in manifold form: that a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable is an intrinsic part of human existence – but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets
unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious. Modern stories written for young children mainly avoid these existential problems, although they are crucial issues for all of us (Bettleheim, 1977, p. 8)

Fairy tales thus subconsciously give a message of guidance and hope in a way that the child thinks – in polarities of good vs. evil, ugly vs. beautiful without the ambiguities on the spectrum representing the complexity of people that the child has not yet discovered (Egan, 2000a). For example, *Cinderella* contains a grain of truth for children reflecting how badly they are made to feel by other family members. It also contains the grain of hope that they will triumph over the misery experienced from being “ravaged by sibling rivalry” (Bettleheim, 1977, p. 238). Fairy tales thus suggest that transformation is clearly possible.

On a visit to Sam’s class I observed the children, now Year 3, performing a play centred on the biblical tale of *Joseph and the Coat of Many Colours*. I was struck by how appropriate this content was for an age when children were beginning to understand the nuances between good and evil. Joseph was not entirely good and nor were his brothers or his fellow prisoners entirely evil. Forgiveness became a mediating force. (Sam’s class observation: September, 2000)

I also visited Bernadette’s Year 4 class and they shared some of their stories on the Norse Gods. Bernadette explained how the metaphor of the Nordic Gods provided an appropriate metaphor for this age group. (Bernadette’s class observation: July, 2000)
They can also begin to feel a bit depressed, a bit out on their own. Social things can become a real issue if they get excluded. Often the girls begin to band together and form little groups and boys do it in a different way. And of course, there always has to be someone who is out of the group so they can be in it, if you know what I mean. That one who doesn't dress properly, or whatever. All that stuff starts to go on as they sort out their own identity. And they can feel very isolated and insecure. And it's also the age when they start worrying about death. They can actually not want their mother to go out in case she gets run over. They can be quite clingy to their parents. They often think they're adopted or start to ask, "Am I really your child? Are you really my parents? And if they do lose a parent at this stage, they can be devastated. The thing with the Norse philosophy in a very dramatic style, it plays out those events in an archetypal, mythological sense what they are going through. You have this figure, Balder, whose the shining one, this radiant being, and of course he's killed and that brings on this whole day of destruction which Steiner talks about as this twilight of the Gods. Loss of the Gods. Death of the gods that comes out of the German folk tradition. And the death of Balder is an image of that. It is the death of their childhood. After this great battle which is where they are at. They are pretty full on. Nine and ten-year-olds start getting really naughty, you know. In Class 1 and 2, they all pretty much sit there and do what they're told, or they try to, they want to. They have a great respect for authority and they believe in their teacher and in their parents and everything they
say. But, this is the age where they question authority as that all
falls away. So you have to be able to give them the certainty that after
this great battle of Ragnarok, a new dawn will come. (Bernadette: 146)

Catholic teacher interviewees referred to biblical story archetypes as guiding images
for life. Fran noted that good literature including but not limited to biblical stories
could be archetypes for children’s reflections.

You have the example of the Prodigal Son which demonstrates an
interesting story that reflects our lives as often good literature does.
Again, you have a sense of journey, and you have different
interpretations of what is good and what is not good in it and people's
reactions, one to the other. Through that, you still have the child
relating to the story hopefully in an individual and critical way having
a thought to reflect on that has moved them forward. (Fran 1: 144)

Montessorian interviewees admitted to what may be termed archetypal experiences
themselves through relating to novel characters. Although there is no reference to a
clear sequence for the introduction of varied archetypal experiences for their students,
they do indicate that an awareness of universal qualities influences their selection of
classroom stories.

Nigel: I'll tell you what I've been thinking about story and storytelling. How it
very much shapes the characters of all of this. I was thinking that probably I
try to model myself on a mixture of Robinson Crusoe and Robin Hood. These
are the character traits that I value: courage and independence and gentleness, adventure in the context of nature. I always think of Robinson Crusoe. When I was growing up I had this book on Robinson Crusoe that my mother used to read me. I used to look at the pictures and the pictures still affect me today.

Gay: Is Robinson Crusoe an archetype for you?

Nigel: Yes, Robinson Crusoe and also Robin Hood. I remember my mother reading me that story and there is no doubt that many of those stories of those early years shaped me enormously to the kinds of the values and choices that you make in your day to day about "Are you going to do something or not?" in terms of loyalties, responsibilities - all of those moments that make an enormous difference in how you interact with other people and just with the overall environment - one's life. (Nigel 2: 5-9)

Nigel himself might also have been moved by stories of Hermes, the mythological god who like Robin Hood and Robinson Crusoe, was a traveller who did nothing by the book. For students with similar qualities, the copy of Robin Hood on the classroom shelf may help them gain insight. Personally, I recall being greatly influenced by women overcoming great odds to achieve goals such as Madame Curie, Maya Angelou and Helen Keller. Perhaps the Goddess Artemis would have been a classical Greek archetype (Bolen, 1984) for one who responds to focusing on a goal in the distance. During my child rearing years, I was more interested in heroines who managed complex relationships rather like the female protagonists in contemporary
books mentioned in Chapter I – *Jewel* (Lott, 1991), *Snow Falling on Cedars* (Guterson, 1995), *Alias Grace* (Atwood, 1996) or *Fortune’s Rock* (Shreve, 1999). It could be said that my self-understanding was enhanced by female archetypes in the mould of Demeter and Hera (Bolen, 1984). In my primary classroom we explored the heroic qualities of a range of figures from Australian explorers to famous scientists and including fictional heroes in myths and contemporary stories. In retrospect, I realise that children at this stage of Romantic understanding were indeed interested in heroic archetypes and readily responded to Greek and Roman myths which portrayed heroic tasks such as those portrayed in the *Labours of Hercules* or *Theseus and the Minotaur* (Finser, 1994; Egan, 1997).

On reflection, there is evidence to support a theory that self-understanding can be enhanced by focusing on universal patterns. These archetypes will change depending on stages of life. Nevertheless, only the Steiner curriculum prescribes which mythological narratives will be the focus of an age group depending on the general needs and challenges of that age. They also insist that the development of the consciousness of the individual mirrors the development of civilisation. Although there is some indication that Montessori herself also believed certain archetypes could enhance the spiritual experience, many teachers choose to separate fictional archetypes from scientific fact and explore heroes and heroines primarily from an historic or literary point of view. Catholic teachers are very aware of biblical archetypes and these are presented through bible stories in the RE programme. Most archetypal figures from myths and literary works are explored in terms of character analysis or thematic comparisons in the non-Steiner schools. There is no evidence
that universal themes and patterns are consistently or regularly related to the individual challenges facing class members in these other traditions.

The first step toward transformation is to have a goal, a sense of direction for change. Influential teachers, bibliocounselling and archetypes can serve as models for this transformation by helping the student view personal change against a backdrop of universal meaning. Teachers from all four pedagogies agreed on the profound influence that teachers can have on student’s self-assessment and goal formation. Nevertheless, there were variations in the use of bibliocounselling and archetypes with the Steiner teachers displaying the most consistency in using narrative to influence behaviour as well as in using age-related mythologies and archetypes to foster the development of consciousness. Government schools represented the other end of the spectrum with frequent use of extrinsic reward systems and no mention of age-appropriate archetypes.

The stage for personal transformation is set by experiencing a sense of wonder in the world and engaging in meditation and reflection. Living a life that is balanced with complementary personal and professional interests and oral and written journalling can aid in this process of self-discovery. In addition to providing this reflective environment, evidence provided through literature and interview data suggests that for personal transformation to occur, goals and purposes must be established supported by a sense of the potential outcomes of one’s personal narrative. Stories can also be used effectively in the form of analogies to alter behaviour in contrast to external
methods of control. Models including past teachers and heroic archetypes from stories and mythologies are particularly influential in inspiring change and providing direction for meaning-making in a spiritual sense. However, for any change to occur, obstacles must be confronted and conflicts resolved. In fact, conflicts or the experience of disequilibrium created by exposure to new perspectives and knowledge is essential for self-construction and personal transformation.
Chapter VII

Transformation – Making Connections

For events in the plot of one’s life to contribute to meaning-making and personal transformation, they need to be prioritised. To do this, one must not only reflect upon and evaluate the experiences, but often one must make choices to resolve conflicts. In fact, some conflict in discourse or experience usually precipitates change. When positive change is embraced and viewed in terms of bettering the life of the individual as well as his/her world, then it can lead to the transformative experience of cosmic interdependence. The literature and interview data provide suggested means for aiding students and teachers in obtaining:

- conflict and resolution strategies - overcoming obstacles to achieve change through transformative learning and emerging from woundedness,

  empowering children to resolve their conflicts by

  using peer mediation,

  retelling and redrafting the story,

  developing self-understanding through archetypal story construction, and

  acknowledging binary opposites and the existence of ‘the trickster’
and

- a narrative conclusion – the realisation of connectedness through

  connecting with others and communal responsibility, and

  connecting with the cosmos and environmental responsibility.

Conflict and Resolution – Overcoming Obstacles to Achieve Change

The mouse, Haw, in Spencer Johnson’s (1998) modern fable of *Who Moved My Cheese?* initially resisted change to his lifestyle with the result that his existence became meaningless. Then, in danger of starvation, he began to change his perspective. Employing the narrative property of temporality, “he reflected on the mistakes he had made in the past and used them to plan for his future. He knew that you could learn to deal with change.” He also “envisioned himself – in realistic detail – finding something better – much better” (p. 71). Having found his direction, he was then ready to confront obstacles, make decisions and resolve conflicts to enable him to find a new world or ample cheese. He was motivated to face these challenges because he had freed himself to embrace change.

As demonstrated in this fable, change entails some type of conflict and resolution. Mentors, new knowledge gained in discourse, critical incidents or woundedness can all precipitate a sense of disorientation that requires strategies of resolution.
Constructing or reconstructing stories can help to define possible resolutions. When the conflict is philosophically based and the resolution involves experiencing a paradox, then the transformation is a spiritual one implying connections beyond the logical and observable.

**Transformative Learning and Emerging from Woundedness**

Mesirow (1985a, 1985b) and Carrigg (1997) claim that the element of discourse is necessary for adult learning to occur because through verbal or written communication, frames of reference are altered. This can lead to a personal disorientation and the beginning of a reflective process that often results in transformation in thinking. My experience interviewing teachers has led me to believe that those teachers who are constantly striving to learn, to make new connections themselves, are also the ones concerned about empowering children and helping them to find their own uniqueness. It is those who are on a learning journey themselves who can help others to find the signposts.

For Fran and Vicky, mentors precipitated an emancipatory process (Mezirow, 1981) by helping them to resolve conflicts that had troubled them for several years. Fran described her conflict as a frustration she experienced as a young teacher.

> One little boy stays in my mind with my first year of teaching. At my desk, trying to get him to blend. And he couldn’t do it so I would try again. And really, I should have known more to know how to help that boy. I was unable to assist him at that point with what I knew. (Fran 3: 60)
At a reading conference in 1979, she was influenced by presentations based on the work of educators, Frank Smith, Kenneth Goodman and Bill Martin, Jr., whose words gave her insight into dealing with literacy problems (Fran 1: 8). She went on to pursue a graduate diploma and through exploring the ideas from this conference with mentor Ross Latham and reflecting on her own ideas, she gained confidence in her ability to resolve her conflict.

Ross Latham had studied in Canada or America under Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith and set out this graduate diploma based on what he had learned over there. It was powerful. For me, it was extremely powerful….I started to understand that I had my own thoughts and that my own thoughts were valid. I was sort of working on what I had been taught but not free enough to apply what I knew. (Fran 3: 60)

Ultimately, she felt she knew how to help that child whom she hadn’t been able to help as a young teacher and her teaching was transformed.

Frank Smith said, “Let’s look at successful readers. What do they do?” and then guide children to do what they do….Looking at that process, I was just overwhelmed with being able to find solutions. Because I have such a strong belief that all children matter and that all children are capable…You are only a successful teacher if all children in your class progress so really the challenge is to assist the children experiencing difficulties. So that’s my transformation. (Fran 3: 64)
For both Fran and Vicky, the solution to helping children with literacy problems involved using rich narrative as a base, acknowledging their individual capabilities and scaffolding the reading and writing process according to their individual needs and strengths but always in the context of the whole. Both Fran and Vicky’s perceived transformation involved altering how they viewed children’s potential, the learning process, and their own capabilities.

For those teachers who have elected to teach in the philosophically based alternative Montessori and Steiner systems, this choice represented part of their transformation and quest. Nigel seeks to be a successful human being and is drawn to a philosophically based child-centred school to help them feel successful too. To him
the *virtues* programme, a reading of *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman 1996) and a narrative workshop were all instrumental topics of discourse contributing to his realisation of what makes a successful human being. Other keys he identifies are achievements, role models and stories and the practice and skills to honour nature, name emotions, and engage in optimistic problem solving and conflict resolution (Ipp, 1998).

Nigel explains that receptivity to mentors is important in moving him towards his goal of being a balanced, “successful” human being.

I do want to say, though, that I do believe and I do try to practice the philosophy that every moment is a teachable moment and each moment is your teacher and everyone who comes in to your life is a teacher in a very cosmic sense and part of that journey that one is on. I do try to, in a sense, have that kind of respect for people and life. My awareness and my receptivity to my awareness of the moment - that sense of being receptive to the present.

(Nigel 2: 55)

Nigel’s own mentor is a leader in the philosophic movement he supports and embodies the qualities that Nigel himself feels are the ultimate realisation of the human journey. In a sense, he represents a real archetype for this teacher.

This particular teacher whose life I’ve examined carefully through a variety of sources over the years … and so far he’s lived up to my expectations of someone who is at that highest level of human endeavour, highest level of
human ability. If I try to apply some kind of rational scientific approach to it I consider it to be ideals of human behaviour and relationship under extreme examples like extreme stresses and pressures and those sorts of things. He’s a model I can use for all the virtues I look at and that’s just the physical aspect of his life. (Nigel 2: 41)

For some, positive transformation and a sense of resolution comes out of a reorganisation of our lives after woundedness. This rebirth requires a reconnecting of experiences. The same components that made us wounded can be reconfigured to make us regard the human journey as meaningful.

I think it's interesting if you relate to a story like *A Fortunate Life* (1985) where there's enormous hardship and suffering and you look at the whole series of broken relationships that Facey has with his family except with his grandmother, the hardship he experiences from the people into whose homes he goes and then the enormously awful experiences of Gallipoli and getting wounded and losing his brother. But the ability to cast all of that into a framework that says, "This has made me who I am," and not see it as negative but to see it as things that have offered their own opportunities. I think that is just a remarkable characteristic. (A. Zubrick and Gay discussion: 276)

Interestingly, several interviewees shared an experience of “woundedness” that had helped them to subsequently find meaning in their teaching. Bernadette found Steiner
when the training responded to her needs after experiencing acute disappointment at how little stimulation or inspiration she received at university.

I went to university straight out of school. I was seventeen. I was so disappointed in university. I was so disappointed in the strictures of it. I had gone to university wanting wisdom and instead, I was just so disappointed in the narrow definition of what was admissible and what wasn't. And very soon after that I discovered Steiner through my brother who was studying art and his teacher was an anthroposophist and gave him painting lessons at home. And he went along and told me about it and so I went along. And we would through that group do puppet shows and things like that. And that was how I got into it. I went to training in England when I was about 23. I would never have become a teacher, I don't think, in the State system. I don't think it would have given me what I wanted. And the possibilities to be creative in the Steiner system, and to have this whole integrated philosophy so you can always go deeper and always discover more. (Bernadette: 292)

Bernadette was attracted to the Steiner alternative by discovering a forum for some of her own creative gifts. It is part of the Steiner training course that they go back as children to rediscover their own capabilities and aesthetic responses to art, music, movement, and drama. Similarly, Sam found a resolution for what he viewed as the dichotomy of Teaching vs. Creativity in the Steiner philosophy.

I worked at a school centre. I didn't really feel that that
was enough. I enjoyed that work but I wanted something that had more
direction. I felt the lack of focus and direction in what I was doing and some
sort of philosophy. I was looking around in the paper for positions and one
that caught my eye said "Creative Teacher Required" at Rudolf Steiner
method.. And I had never linked those two words together - Creative and
Teaching as that wasn't a feature in my experience as a student. I didn't see a
lot of creativity. So I liked both of those things. I wanted to teach. (Sam: 5)

For Government school teacher, Dan, the primary teaching provided a creative way
out of woundedness for him to help children have a positive schooling experience.

Well, all the things I teach them are all the things that I was
hopeless at. …People are different. I know all those things because I
experienced them all myself. Bullies. I used to be beaten up and picked on …
So I try to put it in perspective for them. And, we've had a lot of bullying in
the class between two boys. So we sit down and we discuss it. (Dan: 214)

In my own reflections, I have two episodes of woundedness that were instrumental in
helping me make meaningful positive choices in my life. My choice of Montessori
teaching resulted from a sadness that my own children were experiencing the same
boredom and fragmentation that I had as a child. Re-evaluating what my educational
goals were helped me to make completely new educational choices for them and for
myself. On another occasion, I suffered harassment as a result of a political and
philosophic schism in a school community. I was so determined to stand my ground
that, for a time, I failed to see that my family and supportive colleagues were
suffering as acutely as I was. One doesn’t lose the grief caused by a situation like that…but one does come out wiser and rebirth can result. In my case, my creativity was nurtured in two ways: I developed improved conflict resolution skills and I assumed a different educational position having realised that my mission was down a different pathway (Journal 12: 38).

This rebirth after woundedness would be viewed by some as a spiritual or emancipatory experience (Mezirow, 1981; Houston, 1996). Interviewees from all four educational contexts indicated that in teaching they found a pathway out of a negative experience and were in someway transformed. This type of resolution doesn’t seem to be more characteristic of one type of methodology than another. Dan found he could help children feel good about themselves in the Government system. Fran found a venue for reaching children through meaningful language in both Government and Catholic schools. Vicky found that starting her own support school was a venue for her creativity. Nigel and I both found Montessori a place to practise our child-centred education direction. Bernadette and Sam overcame their despair in education in discovering the Steiner emphasis on aesthetics and philosophy. What all these teachers had in common was extensive experience in teaching and evidence that they engaged in educational discourse and reflective practice. Some also had supportive mentors. In some way, each of these teachers felt they improved their teaching practice and their lives by reconnecting the components of their lives in new formations.
Rebuilding

Stick by stick
I take the house of myself
apart, pull nails, strip shingles,
melt the mortar in the chimney,
the side walls, the foundation itself.
Carry it all away, brick by brick,
block by block, carry it
down one hill and up another,
and another, till the spot's just right
and the sun shines just the way I want it.
Then I take those sticks and bricks and blocks
and start rebuilding,
putting it all back together, new,
something I can live with -
crawlspace turned basement,
two story turned one,
set down solid on the ground,
tied down tight to bedrock
standing there sure and still against the sky,
and I nail it, and I glue it,
and I paint it bright as a child's eyes,
and I find a tiny rainbow from the gutter,
hold tight to hope and to the promise
Empowering Children to Resolve their Conflicts

Peer Mediation.

There is increasing interest in peer mediation in primary schools. It can foster a sense of responsibility and community in the schools and reduce bullying. It can be a genuine forum for discourse and mentoring. Peer mediation is about effectively communicating stories in a safe, non-judgmental environment and giving children responsibility for helping each other solve problems. In my upper primary class, all class members practised techniques to generate and evaluate problem solutions including brainstorming and DeBono’s (1986) techniques of PMI (Plus Minus Interesting) and The Six Hats. In addition, peer mediators met regularly to practise reflective listening skills and assertiveness. The mother of one of my former students confided that being a peer mediator had really helped her daughter in relationships because she could listen objectively and had the courage to assertively state her own views. Nigel also placed a high priority on fostering peer mediation and

106 DeBono’s Six Hats: A parallel thinking strategy where each member of the group considers the problem from the perspective of each designated hat: blue hat – process control; white hat – information; yellow hat – benefits; black hat – caution, critical judgment; green hat – creativity, new ideas; red hat – feelings. (DeBono, 1986)
conflict resolution skills and reflected on his own challenge in this area as a motivating force.

I find that when in communication there's breakdown and I put a lot of care in trying to say what I really mean, I get very easily frustrated. ...I usually try two or three times to talk very pleasantly. When I get responses that are unfair, unreasonable, unkind, I can go from a very peaceful, fun loving person to a very frustrated one. …So that's a big challenge for me. (Nigel 2: 11-12)

During my first observation of Nigel’s class, he was scaffolding the process of peer mediation and conflict resolution without mediation by getting children to practise listening to each story in a non-judgmental way and brainstorming solutions. In a later visit, these 5-8 year old children were handling problems in a very mature way. I observed two boys and a girl resolving a disagreement that had arisen over one of the boys taking a girl’s hat. They each told their story, brainstormed the solution and then came to Nigel with a summation.

Nigel: They've learned the skills in the school in general - how to sort out their problems, so to speak and almost always, I can sit them down together and say, "Sort it out" and they'll come back and give me the summation, and I'll say, "Is it all sorted out?" and I don't even need to hear the detail, and they'll walk away feeling okay.
Gay: That's really progress.

Nigel: I find it very useful. I've worked hard for that and I do it on a daily basis. We work hard for them to take that responsibility. It involves assertiveness and safety. It's a key element that each child feels safe. They know that if they are assertive in a way, that they do have recourse - they can come back for support. (Nigel 2: 35-40)

Retelling and redrafting the story.
In her Waldorf class Bernadette acted as the mediator, but she also scaffolded the process of each person telling their story in a nonjudgmental, safe environment and then collectively reconstructing it so that the conflict was resolved.

I try to go over exactly what happened and everyone can have a turn. If there's been a big bust-up in the playground or something. They all have to sit down. They know they are not going to get into trouble and they have to tell me what happened. So they all have a say and I write it down and I retell it. I say, "Then this happened and then that happened and then that one did this..." It's amazing how accurate it is if everyone has a chance to have a say. They will tell you and it does make sense. You can form a coherent narrative out of it, actually. I'll go to a point and then I'll say, "Well, do you think there is something else that you could have done there? If he punched you and you kicked him back. Is there something else you could have done?" Without saying, "Now that was a silly thing to have done." or "Would you like it if someone did that to you?" and all that sort of ridiculous stuff and you can just
see their eyes sort of glaze over. Try and get them to work out, well first of all to see what they've done and then what the consequences of that are. And then to sort of retell the story as if something else had happened. So in a way, that's even in narratives. (Bernadette: 176-177)

While visiting Nigel’s class, I observed him employing a similar technique. He had recorded all the conflicts he had observed at camp for his early primary class. Now he asked them in small groups to recreate the eleven situations so that they had positive outcomes without any participant feeling hurt. Some of the situations were as follows:

You are about to play spotlight and your friend really wants to be a spotter. Unfortunately he or she is not picked. Write some words for each of you and act out how you help him or her to handle the situation and go out and hide together.

Your friend is very upset because they [sic] wanted to be in the other bicycle group. They think they are a good enough rider. Write some words for each of you and act out how you help them sort it out.

You and your friend are eating at the camp table. Your friend is showing off and you don’t like it. Write some words for each of you and act out how you sort it out so that your friend stops. (Nigel Class observation: 21/9/1999)
In this way, Nigel encourages children to reflect on emotions and virtues as well as the nature of the responsibility that they have for each other.

**Self-understanding through Archetypal Story Construction.**

Creative Writing can also be a means of getting children to gain insight into their lives. As discussed above in Journalling (Refer to Chapter VI), it is important to realise that most children do not explore their inner thoughts through writing until upper primary. However, as one moves towards adolescence, it is timely to help students develop “a whole language for inner things” (Matthews, 1994, p. 55).

Mellon (1992) has written a manual for teachers to encourage the meaningful construction of stories. She reflects a strong Steiner and Jungian influence in using archetypes in the situations presented. These scenarios represent universal themes and help the storywriter or storyteller explore the unique aspects and the universal aspects of the conflicts they are experiencing. She suggests moving the protagonists through earth, air, water and fire as they face trials necessary to find fulfillment. For a challenge through air, she might ask her students to “create a story in which a courageous hero or heroine is unable to breathe, live and move according to human design. Think of an important way in which you yourself are immobilised – perhaps through many generations your family had been held under an ‘enchantment’ ” (p.74). When she asks the writer to picture himself/herself moving through water she will advise that “the resistance of the waves, winds and undercurrents are like aspects of yourself that you cannot control until a penetrating and balanced force is found within you, which when it is awakened, knows the best way forward” (p. 71). In addition to nature’s archetypal symbols, she uses human construction symbols such as doorways.
and towers. “Create a story about someone locked in a dark tower who needs to be set free. It is probably best to focus on yourself at first in order to experience directly the benefits of an imaginative leap to freedom” (p. 49).

Although there is much evidence of students being given interesting situations to stimulate creative writing in primary schools, only the Steiner teachers in my sample were exploring archetype situational creative writing. In Bernadette’s class they wrote first person stories about facing danger and uncertainty on the oceans.

Well, this is the first time we have done a first person account and it seemed an appropriate thing to bring in with Vikings and for them to imagine themselves out in those circumstances with all that danger and uncertainty. (Bernadette: 100)

Evidence from people who have experienced this type of archetypal scenario work suggests that helping teachers and students create conflict resolution images is an area for further exploration. Three different educators mentioned how moved they were following the Presbyterian Ladies’ College staff millenium service. The Chaplain had them visualise being on a mountain peak in a range of mountains that acted as a divide between the contrasting landscapes of past and future. Participants were asked to examine the landscape of the past and consider what mattered to them about what they were leaving behind. When they looked at the landscape of the future, they had to envision what they wanted to do. I believe this story creation exercise was so powerful because it used a universal metaphor to individually engage each person who supplied the details of his/her story.
Another powerful example of using archetypal story construction for self-understanding was provided by Consultant Richard Durgin, a middle and high school teacher at Nauset Regional High in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. He used mythological archetypes relating to students’ observed conflicts to integrate language skills, literature, and creative writing.

After studying *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, the students commenced writing their own seven chapter journey story. The three problems encountered on their travels to maturity were self-doubt, peer pressure and laziness. Each of these problems is dealt with in two chapters – one ends when the trait is epitomized and the experience of conflict is the greatest and the next resolves it.

In the first chapter, the protagonist is in the swamp of self doubt and in the second he/she gains the strength to conquer the problem. To do so he/she discovers a symbol (simile or metaphor) of freedom. For peer pressure island, the students read *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954) and then design their own islands where they are engulfed by peer pressure and later have to break away. For laziness, they are in the desert where they create their own utopia. There is evil in the landscape, however, and the protagonist has to escape. In the conclusion, they meet a wise person and have to relate three things they have learned in their journey. Their conclusion is a reflection on the journey. One of the students told me this was one of the most exciting classes he had ever taken and he would never forget what he had learned. The students are empowered by exploring universal predicaments and finding that each solution is in someway unique reflecting their own individuality.
Author and former Steiner teacher, Paul Matthews (1994), also attests that helping young people to link their feelings to natural archetypes can help them gain insight into their inner beings and human journey. He quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson in saying that “Every natural fact is the symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of mind that can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture…the whole of nature is a metaphor for the human mind” (Emerson, 1962).

One suggested activity is to write these metaphors as “I am” (e.g. *I am the green hill that rolls down to the sea*) or as “I have been” (e.g. *I have been the sunflower stretching towards the light*) poems (p. 56). Matthews further suggests that some of these “I am” images might be made into names. Naming helps define our uniqueness. (See Chapter V). One of my undergraduate students wrote the following:

I am fluid because I am ever-changing; I am changing form to mould to whatever confines I am in. In a way, I am a fantasy figure…

(Female student, Age 20, 1999)

These insightful lines led to a discussion about how we change ourselves to meet other’s expectations. That class made me realise that more can be done with upper primary and high school children’s creative writing to help them to understand themselves.
Encouraging the writing of self or situational metaphor poems and stories, as Matthews and Mellon recommend, would be part of this initiative. Finding time to individually discuss a child’s work whom I know is in pain would be another priority. Sometimes the choice of images invites a discussion that might be healing for them. This might be with peers, the teacher, or another qualified professional depending on the nature of the experienced conflict.

Jessica, one of my 11 year-old students, wrote a story with an uncharacteristic theme of anger. I was aware that this child had reason to be experiencing strong emotions. She was growing up in what the world viewed as ‘the perfect family’ with three siblings and devoted parents. However, recently and suddenly, her parents had separated. Jessica refused to discuss her feelings about the situation and both parents were extremely concerned and asked that I try to communicate with her about the situation. Clearly, her story was a metaphor for her feelings of anger. In retrospect, I realise that I probably could have helped this child sooner if I had discussed her story individually with her. Alternatively, I might have created a archetypal setting for story writing that might have helped her create a metaphor of healing – asking the child how it felt to be abandoned on an island and how she might get back to being with family and friends.

On another occasion, I had an eleven year old male student, John, who just after the death of his father ended a story about a surfer in the following manner:
He was gone and the wave knew it.

It tossed his helpless body onto the rocks like broken glass.

Gashes were on every part of his body.

He had been taken by the sea,

Taken to his bloody doom. (John, Age 11, 1996)

As identified by the Steiner educators, students of this age often experience a vulnerability and concern with the transience of life. To lose a parent at ten or eleven years old might well contribute to a child’s feeling of powerlessness. Through his story, John was showing that he was musing on death and finality. In retrospect, I believe he had created an opening for caring mentors to help him in this aspect of his spiritual journey.

**Binary Opposites and The Trickster.**
The Trickster is another archetype that may aid students in resolving personal, communal, and philosophic conflicts. The following poem was written by Tania, age 12, who had been the victim of personal violence. I shared this poem with her therapist. At the time I thought the verse might be a suicidal message but later realised that it was a metaphor for her emerging hope after months of deep depression. It also reflects a mature understanding of the paradox of the interdependence of life and death.
Yesterday when the world began,
The land was rich and full.
Death rides on its back.
We see it as a burden, but it isn’t.
It’s a part of life.
Life goes on after death.

(Tania, Age 12, 1995)

At a very young age, Tania is displaying the ironic understanding that life and death exist together and in fact depend upon each other. The archetype for this understanding is the trickster present in all mythologies. The raven of the Northwest Canadian indigenous people was part of creation but also helped to destroy what he created. The trickster of the Plains people is the coyote (Boa, 1989). Mercury and Hermes are also “lords of the in-between” (Hyde, 1998, p. 6)

In short, Trickster is a boundary crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends the internal boundaries of which groups articulate their social life. We constantly distinguish – right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead – and in every case trickster will cross the line and confuse the distinction. (Hyde, 1998, p. 7)
The trickster is the metaphor for a realisation that solutions don’t fall easily into the dichotomies of the good vs. evil of fairy tales studied by a Steiner Class One. In fact, we would not have an appreciation for goodness without evil, and life without death would not have value. In Jungian terms the trickster mediates between our shadow self – the challenge we carry within – and our realised selves. “When these shadow qualities are recognised and reconciled, a person often experiences a movement to greater maturity and depth of personality (Houston, 1996, p. 104).

The members of one’s family are the ones that press one’s buttons and they are the ones that make one most aware of one’s stuckness, or perceptions or one’s shadow….My son has been the most difficult for me to live with in the last five years. …But then, he has been a teacher in a way. Trying to be aware what it is inside me of him, try to grow in me that which can bring back harmony. (Nigel 2: 63)

Essentially, an understanding of the trickster is an understanding that conflicts aren’t to be avoided, but to be resolved. They are inevitable and drive humans forward on their life journey.

Heraclitus said strife is the creator of all great things. Something like that may be implicit in this symbolic trickster idea. In our tradition, the serpent in the Garden did the job. Just when everything was fixed and fine, he threw an apple into the picture. No matter what the system of thought you may have, it can’t possibly include boundless life. When you think everything is just that
way, the trickster arrives, and it all blows, and you get change and becoming again. (Campbell and Moyers, 1998, pp. 219-220)

Kieran Egan’s (1986) story form for curriculum recommends that programming begin with a definition of binary opposites involving universal themes. Curriculum choices in every discipline will be those which can help children find a resolution to the conflict created by the existence of these opposing forces. As children mature in understanding, they will discover more details on the spectrum between the binary opposites – they will begin to appreciate the metaphorical trickster. As mentioned in Chapter V, Montessori interviewee Carol was influenced by Harvey Hallenberg who dramatised slavery so vividly in the classroom. Hallenberg demonstrates how studying this binary/opposite can speak to the inner needs of a child from a very young age by noting that children entering school begin to experience slavery vs. liberty as soon as they have to take orders from teachers or experience playground bullying (Hallenberg, 1997). Every film, story and discussion on this binary opposite thus has personal relevance for the student as he/she begins to understand the complexity of freedom with a possible realisation that there is no freedom without responsibility.

That’s the important thing to realise in life. You don’t have to be quit of your bondage in order to experience the release. The two go together. (Boa, 1994, p. 122)

Influenced by Egan (1986) I launched my class on an exploration of order vs. chaos with the Montessori great story of The Formation of the Universe. As we enacted the
order and chaos in the universe, children began discussing what creates order and chaos in the classroom, the community and their lives. A focus on rules, governance and community values resulted. One could say that the trickster was present in this upper primary class where children began to accept that the resolution to this conflict was not clear-cut; order emerges from chaos and coexists with chaos. This philosophic understanding also applied to their social interaction. Conflicts did not necessarily have to result in win/lose or a compromise. Sometimes solutions could be found that answered both parties’ needs (Bolton, 1986). With this realisation, creative solutions started being found for playground problems. For instance, students proposed that rather than dividing the playground into age-related areas, they try interest areas.

Conflict resolution is a developmental process that can be scaffolded. Peer mediation encourages students to listen non-judgmentally and to brainstorm and evaluate solutions. Redrafting troublesome situations with new outcomes or constructing stories based on archetypal scenarios can also help to resolve personal uncertainties and contribute to positive transformation. As students mature and are able to comprehend the nuances between binary opposites, they are able to be more creative problem solvers. When they are able to understand the archetypal trickster, they discover that the boundaries between opposites are blurred and in fact each orientation depends on its opposite for existence.

A Narrative Conclusion – Realisation of Connectedness
Experiencing conflict and resolutions drives a person forward to deeper transformation. Understanding that our unique conflicts are played out against a universal backdrop helps to give transcendental meaning to a person’s struggles. This is a powerful paradox – to be one in a vast universe and yet to be unique. Corresponding realisations include understanding that freedom demands responsibility, and that individuality requires working for the well-being of a community. For some these spiritual connections that defy cause and effect are fostered by religious experience. For others they are realised by cosmic\textsuperscript{107} education.

**Connecting to Others and Communal Responsibility**

To think in terms of individualism is to fragment human life. To be truly fulfilled one must realise human connections. These connections provide humans with their history and social identity (MacIntyre, 1984; Bellah et al, 1985).

Communities, in the sense in which we are using the term, have a history – in an important sense they are constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a “community of memory,” one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative, and in so doing, it offers examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community.

\textsuperscript{107} Cosmic- Montessori referred to the primary curriculum as a Cosmic Plan (Montessori 1948/1989a). In this integrated curriculum plan the great stories of man and the universe are central to the child’s explorations in all disciplines.
The human journey in its narrative form has the power to transcend the limitations of our immediate body, mind and space but this entails assuming responsibility for our fellow beings with whom we are connected as well as for our communal history.

For the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from the past in the individualist mode is to deform my present relationships. The possession of a historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide. (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 221)

Rudolf Steiner poetically describes this same interdependence:

The healthy social life is found 
When, in the mirror of each human soul 
The whole community finds its reflection
And when, in the community, 
The virtue of each one is living.

Rudolf Steiner (2000)\(^{108}\)

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\(^{108}\) Rudolf Steiner quote - original date unknown.
Scott Fratnowna, lecturer in Multiculturalism at Curtin University in Western Australia, suggested in an ALEA keynote address (2001) that Aboriginal students had a much better chance of integrating with a multicultural community if a knowledge of their historic identity and traditions was part of their identity. Change is not about eliminating the past, but about remembering and celebrating what has made us unique as a community. Amalgamation occurs when rich histories are interwoven, not obliterated. Scott demonstrated his respect for his own traditions by thanking the elders of the local tribes for supporting his work in Western Australia – in a sense, allowing him to work for change outside his tribal area. He also shared a song created in a school in Arnheim land for an Aboriginal version of *Home Among the Gum Trees* – a song that celebrates a very different life that the inland Aboriginal children had experienced before. A song that opened their eyes to a different Australia was able to create a transformation in understanding because it was linked to their own history, language and art. Interviewee Fran’s experience at an Aboriginal Mission school supports Fratnowna’s experience and the words of Bansel (1998) that “teachers are dealing with more than the child before them – they are dealing with their history and their history of personal relationships” (p. 15).

Fran: Also, I was seeing children at Gigalong Mission. The teachers there were teaching the children in a very formal way that didn't link to what those children knew already. I went on this tour with one of the Aboriginal education advisory teachers. We drove to Gigalong Mission through the back lot. I don't know how we knew where we were. There was a group of teachers. The little children would come one day and not the next day. I suppose the idea I was trying to get across was that they should
understand the children's prior knowledge and teach to that so we went down to the creek and took the lesson down on the creek using a language experience. What they saw, what they knew. Gathered that language for them to read, making booklets, taking photos to dictate the sentence that should go under that. It was language experience strategy. Teaching out in the children's environment and also valuing each of them. (Fran 3: 65-67)

It is somewhat of a paradox that to prepare for change, one must have a firm sense of cultural identity. This can be fostered by the rituals and traditions discussed in Chapter IV, the intergenerational and multiculturalism discussed in Chapter V and the acknowledgement of unique history suggested by Fatnowna and Interviewee Fran Poole. Their views are reminiscent of MacIntyre (1984) who suggested that we revisit the idea of individuality and view it as a unity. Each of us has a unique history. Our actions make sense in the context of our lives and our lives make sense in the context of our communal histories. Our narratives histories support a moral accountability that fights against a hedonist individualism. This is a complex view of morality implying that we incorporate our histories into our present moral decision making. It is also a narrative view supporting Fatnowna’s insistence that future change depends on an acknowledged past. As suggested in Chapter I, perspective can be changed and reconciliation achieved through revealing an accurate history. The history of Aborigines and early Australian settlers and that of the Native Americans and early American settlers are examples of perspective altered through increased awareness of historical narrative.
It is also ironic that for one to feel personally fulfilled or in flow, one must be connected and take responsibility for one’s community. The discovery of this ironic truth has been a key to teaching, not only in Christianity, but in most other philosophies of spiritual transcendence. In a current guide to meaning in life, Bill Adams (2000) describes the lessons of his Indian spiritual mentor, Sangratan. The fifth lesson is to live harmoniously with other people by developing self-knowledge, understanding of one’s own value, respect for others, conscious giving to others and openness to others. If the ultimate meaning in our journey quest is fostered through respect and giving to others, what is being done in schools for our children to discover this meaning?

Montessori and Steiner curriculums that will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter VIII respond to the developing social consciousness of the child. Historical narrative in Montessori helps create the wonder in early childhood that leads to the desire for experimentation in middle primary. The upper primary child has the cognitive skills to analyse the cause and effect of relationships and environment and, as mentioned above, is also able to appreciate the nuances of conflict. The middle school age child, empowered by his/her knowledge of community and history is motivated to participate in positive changes to the community.

Steiner curriculum reflects a similar belief that the child’s view of himself/herself as an agent of change is developmental. The mythologies studied reflect this expanding consciousness. In Year 5, for example, children study Indian philosophy; through studying the myth of Prince Sidhartha, who became Buddha, they are exposed to the
paradox that a person may need to make great sacrifices to achieve his/her life purpose.

Because Sidhartha’s heart was full of pity and compassion for all the suffering people in the world, he wanted to find a way of bringing some comfort and help to all those people. But in order to do that he had to give up his own happiness; he had to give up his family and his life of pleasure at the palace. And this is something you will find again and again in history; that great men and women, who have helped thousands of others, often had to give up or sacrifice their own happiness. (Kovacs, 1990, pp. 83-84)

Also, in this mythology, they are again exposed to the message that a person’s fulfillment depends on caring for others.

When Sidhartha saw the glory of love and kindness that is the soul of all mankind, it was as if his mind was flooded with light. At last he knew that answer to his question: the soul becomes free of evil through love, kindness, compassion and pity; by caring more and more for others. (Kovacs, 1990, p. 87)

In the Steiner curriculum, biblical stories are viewed along with many other philosophies. In the Catholic system, the Christian message is revisited at increasing depth using biblical stories and parables. The paradox of becoming through giving is
embodied in the stories of Jesus Christ. Like Montessori and Steiner, there is a recapitulationist assumption that at each hearing, the child will have deeper understanding of his/her own spirituality and a greater understanding of the paradox of becoming through giving. Stories such as the Good Samaritan are visited first with a message of friendship and kindness. Later “love your neighbour as yourself” becomes a message of personal transcendence (Luke 10: 28)

Both Steiner and Montessori educators profess the view that narrative is the most effective way to scaffold social awareness and communal responsibility. Both traditions consider that in expanding social consciousness, one should carefully heed developmental indicators (Wilkinson, 1993; Scott, 1997). Montessorian Judith Scott (1997) influenced by Berry (1988) emphasised that children need to be engaged by the world, before they are ready to take on the problems. She outlined the development of social and environmental responsibility according to the following three phases:

3-8 years: story should incite wonder or empathy.
9-12 years: story should inspire experimentation
12-15 years: story should incite community activism and responsibility.

Montessori teacher, Ellen, who has also completed some Steiner training concurs with the view that children should engage in some social activism, but should not be disempowered by exposure to difficult problems too early.

I like to introduce them to humane people through story. Also, we do respond to crises in the news. Recently, we had a car wash to raise money for New
Guinea and we participated in the Walk Against Want. However, I agree with Steiner and Montessori that students shouldn’t feel too early that they have to solve the earth’s problems. It just makes them feel powerless. (Ellen 3: 5)

Shawn felt that the classroom for the primary child should be a microcosm for expressing communal values.

The atmosphere in the classroom, the freedom to create, respectful communication, a strong sense of community, and an absolute intolerance for punishment/pressure/stereotyping – these are some of the essentials. (Shawn 4: 26)

In the Montessori school where I taught, social consciousness was scaffolded by dealing with issues close to home. Having special needs children integrated into the classroom was a wonderful learning experience and helped the students to experience empathy. I have had positive feedback from three separate high schools regarding children formerly in the Montessori primary school where I taught complimenting their ready acceptance of children with differences. One deaf student commented, that “Joe treats me just like everyone else. He’s the only one.”

Similarly, a selectively mute student in Sam’s Waldorf class, was fully accepted by his peers who delighted when he made some progress in class participation.

I have this boy in my class who isn’t speaking. Oh, he speaks to other children but he doesn’t speak to me. He’s never spoken to a teacher, ever.
Anyway, in the eighteen months that I’ve had the class, he’s made tremendous progress. At first, he wouldn’t join in anything, wouldn’t move. But now he does just about all the movement we do in the class. The children will say, “Oh look, he wouldn’t do that before and now he’s doing it.” (Sam: 78)

In Lynne’s Government school class, I observed an autistic child receive the respectful attention of a class of fourth graders as he carefully explained the greenhouse effect. (Lynne’s class observation 4/2000). With a move to integrate children with disabilities, it is likely that in the Government schools more and more children will develop this appreciation through concrete experience for the Curriculum Council value to “have respect and concern for others and their rights” including:

3.1 Compassion and care: Each person has a right to receive care and compassion and have a life of dignity, free from harassment and discrimination. (Curriculum Council, 1998)

The Catholic schools observed were also following the *Curriculum Framework*. However the value of care for others is a strand throughout the RE curriculum which is being used as a tool in achieving the curriculum outcomes.

With our literature programming – always the first link is to R.E. because the thing about men and women is that we are social beings; we use language as a tool because we are social….We do need to communicate with each other for our health because of our nature. (Fran 3: 89)
All four traditions would agree with Martin Luther King that “in order to live creatively and meaningfully, our self-concern must be wedded to other concern.” Montessori, Steiner and the Catholic tradition use narrative extensively in this aspect of guiding children in finding meaning in their journeys – historical narrative in Montessori, mythologies in Steiner and biblical literature in Catholicism. In the Government schools, values of caring for others are demonstrated, but not usually explored through any specific narrative literature.

**Connecting to the Cosmos and Environmental Responsibility**

Transformation in a spiritual sense requires that education promote a merging of scientific and philosophic narratives to help Earth inhabitants realise their connectedness to the planet and responsibility for other life forms. By fostering an educational climate in which these connections can be made, students are provided an opportunity to explore meaning-making in a cosmic non-material sense. Some critical variables in creating this climate for interconnectedness are revealed by reviewing the challenge that is faced and the means in which Montessori and Steiner teachers are responding. A focus on religious and other spiritual pathways is also relevant in understanding how personal narrative can be linked to universal patterns of meaning.

**The Challenge.**

The expanding social consciousness of students and consequent communal responsibility is paralleled by a realisation of connectedness with the universe and environmental responsibility. Here the context of narrative is important; it “summons
us to participate in a moral universe” because “the demand for closure in the historical store is a demand…for moral meaning” (White, 1987, p. 21). White (1987), Berry (1988), Sandlos (1998) and Swimme and Turner (1999) suggest that taking responsibility for our planet and its inhabitants requires a merging of the scientific and spiritual perspectives. They support Steiner’s statement that scientific positivism divorced us from our own experience.

Having revealed more and more of outer nature, science has, at the same time, alienated human beings from themselves. (Steiner, 1996, p. 8)

We lost sight of where our human narrative was headed in the fragmentation of isolated economic decisions and a search for objective truth. “Most contemporary narratives reinforce the decontextualised, anthropocentric construct of Western individuals by depicting them as participants in an endless antinarrative of economic growth and progress” (Sandlos, 1998, p. 3). This disengagement is reflected in classrooms where “the context of experience” has been removed from learning in the classroom (Sandlos, 1998, p. 3). What is required is that spirituality in the form of an appreciation and value of the interdependence of life replace consumerism as a motivating force of existence.

As more and more people regain spirituality based on an appreciation for the divine presence in nature, a sense of moral responsibility for the universe will increase…This spirituality is grounded in the basic characteristics of the universe as manifested from the beginning: the unique and irreplaceable
qualities of the individual and the inseparable bonding with every other being in the universe. (Berry, 1988, p. 120)

Sandlos rues the fact that “gone are the rich, metaphor-laden narratives that connected traditional societies to the place/spirit/ecology that provided them with sustenance” (Sandlos, 1998, p. 1). To reconnect students with the universe, Berry (1988), Gough and Kesson (1992) and Sandlos (1998) suggest revisiting our history beginning with the myths and metaphors of traditional oral cultures that particularly highlight our relationship with the universe. This is also what Egan (1997) is advocating when he says we must not lose our mythic understanding and Steiner educators when they emphasise that each human life parallels historic human understandings and thus traditional oral narrative is an important base for our spiritual consciousness.

Although narratives of all kinds (written or oral) are fundamentally moral in nature, it is the traditional, oral, and local narrative that tends to frame ethical principles within a wide, ecocentric web of relationships. These narratives are embedded in their place of origin so deeply that they are themselves an embodiment of a ‘man plus environment’ ecology of ideas. (Sandlos, 1998, p. 3)

None of these educators is suggesting that we regress to a time of animism. Rather, they are advocating that we incorporate all of our history into a new understanding of spiritual interconnectedness with the planet. From oral cultures, we will regain our metaphors for connecting to the planet as well as the aesthetics of art, music and drama that provide multiple avenues of relating to the universe (Berry, 1988; Swimme
& Turner, 1999). Once again, humans will experience the connectedness with the planet expressed in this recent article by Vega (1991):

I was born in the Andes, in the colonial city of Cuenca, Ecuador. The mountains have been my lifelong companions, and I still make my home at their feet. To those of us who are their children, they are alive. We listen to them, learn to read their moods, and respect their power. Sometimes they welcome us with their solid embrace. Other times they shake with fury, and we know to stay away. Still sacred to some, they speak to the souls of all, reminding us how vulnerable we are. (Vega, 2001, p. 6)

The oral traditional times taught humans to connect to the universe and the classical eras celebrated our human power. Humanity requires empowerment to solve problems discovered in relating to our planet. From the scientific-technological era of the last few years we gained the knowledge to understand how our actions affect our planet. “We have discovered the dynamics governing the Earth and the cosmos…Now the human species moves into the fourth era, what we might call The Age of the Earth” (Swimme & Turner, 1999, p. 26). To understand The Age of the Earth, one needs to incorporate the story of the last three eras of understanding. We have come so far in our scientific explorations that we have discovered the miracles and paradoxes that can only be explained by philosophy. When science and philosophy are united, we will once again acknowledge responsibility for the results of our discoveries. (Berry, 1998; Swimme & Turner, 1999). This is an educational challenge actually articulated by Steiner in a 1923 lecture.
Yet today a new insight into human nature is called for, insight based on a scientific mode of thinking, and one that will also shed light on the nature of the entire universe. (Steiner, 1923/1996, p. 9)

Montessori teacher, Nigel, also views spiritual realisation as connecting two forces which might be termed scientific truth and narratives of connectedness.

I really do believe that there is like a twin parallel set of forces. One is the focus on the truth and the exactness - one is this almost scientific approach to truth. Truth that can be verified without any question. Then there is the other side which is compassion and love and forgiveness and all of those sides, those things in which often the forgiveness of it all is much more important than worrying about the details of the truth….Finding a way in your life in which you can work with both and in a way merge those two things - that's my aim, that would be my life path in a way - the ability to merge those two extremes. The Hindus call it Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. You have truth on the one hand and bliss on the other and you have consciousness unifying them. That's quite a powerful ancient image. (Nigel 2: 45-49)

The Montessori Response to Interconnectedness.

Both Montessori and Steiner professed that their methodologies would encourage the unfolding of the child towards a spiritual realisation of his/her interconnectedness with the universe. Both make frequent references to spirituality as an aim to be fostered by education. In Education and Peace (1949/1992), Montessori rued what
she viewed as “the emptiness of men’s [sic] souls” which resulted in wars and inequities plaguing our world. Her challenge to educators was to “cure humanity” (p.46).

This human being who has harnessed every kind of physical power must now tame and tap his [sic] own inner powers, become the master of himself and the ruler of his own period of history. In order to do so, the value of individuality must be released and put to good use. Its power must be experienced. Man must be taught to see the world in all its grandeur, to extend the limits of his life, to make his individual personality reach out and touch those of others” (Montessori, 1949/1992, p. 46).

Montessori (1949/1992) identified a connection between educational methodology and spiritual growth. She referred to the child as a “spiritual embryo”(p. 30) whose intrinsic value was not recognised in the competitive and suppressive educational systems of her time. She lamented that “in traditional systems of education…the child bows to the cruel necessity of hiding himself, burying in his subconscious a life force that cries out to express itself and that is fatally frustrated” (p. 17).

Montessori expressed her view that spirituality and world peace could be enhanced by drastic educational reform. “The child is richly endowed with powers, sensitivities, and constructive instincts that as yet, have neither been recognised nor put to use. In order to develop, he needs much broader opportunities than he has been offered thus far” (p. 27). The environment she designed to nurture this spirituality had
opportunities for autonomy and decision-making as children selected concrete work in keeping with their developmental needs. They were encouraged to explore the beauty and order of their natural world. Relationships with teachers and other students reflected a spirit of working together rather than competition or domination of one over the other (Montessori, 1949/1992; Wolf, 1997).

For the elementary children Montessori (1948/1989a) devised what she termed ‘cosmic education’ to help them discover their spirituality through a realisation of the connectedness of everything in the universe.

His [sic] intelligence becomes whole and complete because of the vision of the whole that has been presented to him, and his interest spreads to all, for all are linked and have their place in the universe on which his [sic] mind is centred. The stars, earth, stones, life of all kinds form a whole in relation to each other, and so close is this relation that we cannot understand a stone without some understanding of the sun!…The laws governing the universe can be made interesting and wonderful to the child, more interesting even than things in themselves, and he [sic] begins to ask: What am I? What is the task of man [sic] in this wonderful universe? Do we merely live here for ourselves, or is there something more for us to do? (Montessori, 1948/1989a, p. 6)

One of the central stories in Montessori is the Time Line of Life. A Montessori interviewee describes how it can assist the child in forming meaningful connections on the learning journey by touching on universal themes. The scientific study of species is not separated from the story of interdependent relationships.
For example, the *Timeline of Life*… it might get into not only ecology and our responsibility for ecology, but also our responsibility for each other. Sometimes we talk about what it's like to feel that you're a loner, that your world is changing very quickly. In this way, although we're looking at the Timeline of Life, we're looking at one species or organism. Look at this creature and everything around it. (Allison: 59)

In the Montessori curriculum the young child’s explorations centre on the wonder of the universe and then the interdependence of the universe. In upper primary, students begin to appreciate “the interrelated geosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, biosphere and neosphere that make up the living organism of the earth” (Berry, 1988, pp. 18-19). As discussed above, when students get to middle school age armed with a knowledge and appreciation for the interrelationship of planetary life, they are ready to act. Judith Scott (1997) reported on the success of one school class in getting McDonald’s to stop using styrofoam packaging. In a community I visited a few years ago, Montessori middle school children transformed a wasteland into a park. These incidents illustrate how education can turn a consumer-focused society into one that values the interdependence of life.

**The Steiner Response to Interconnectedness.**

Like Montessori, Steiner believed in the possibility of transformation through education which he described as a process of human ‘unfoldment’ (Marshak, 1997).
He viewed the “human being as an entity, an organisation of body soul and mind” (Steiner, 1996, p. 23). He recognised a human energy that was capable of moving towards the divine (Marshak, 1997). Like Montessori, he did not believe in indoctrinating children, but felt that education should nurture self-discovery (Wilkinson, 1992; DeManett, 1988; Montessori, 1992). The teacher could best prepare for this by developing his/her own spirit. (Montessori, 1992; Wilkinson, 1992; Marshak, 1997). His views differed from Montessori in that he drew clear parallels between individual unfolding and the evolving of the human species.

Another key element in Steiner’s vision is the belief that each human life embodies a dual process of personal unfoldment [sic] and species evolution. Unfoldment is the growth of the individual toward the manifestation of full potential. Evolution is the same kind of growth for the human species. Humans as a species are evolving, even within historical time, not so much physically as energetically. Each individual unfolds according to his own personal path, and the sum of all personal unfoldment comprises the ongoing evolution of the species, toward divinity. (Marshak, 1997, p. 36)

Steiner interviewee, Bernadette, explained how each mythology studied guides the child in his/her self and world understanding. These mythologies roughly equate to the ages of understanding outlined above by Swimme (Swimme & Turner, 1999).

So one of Steiner's tenets of philosophy is this evolution of the human consciousness … The Ancient Greeks didn't have the same perception and didn't have the same type of thinking that we do now and the
further back you go, the more different it is. If you look at mythologies, you will always have this picture of a Golden Age and there is some kind of fall away from the Gods. In Christian, or Judeo-Christian philosophy, there's the Fall. We have the state of paradise and then there's this intervention of this being and then the fall from grace. As soon as you get this fall, everything is kind of a duality. In paradise, it's all kind of a oneness. They are living at one with God. And the Gods walked among men as they would say in theological terms. And then there's this fall and suddenly there's good and evil and there's heaven and earth, and life and death. They fall into a material sense of existence and [in] lots of other mythologies you have this. Ovid talks about a Golden Age, a Silver Age, a Bronze Age. The Golden Age was the time when human beings were at one with the Gods. But in more modern terminology, in Steiner's terminology, we would say that human beings at that time had a faculty of perception where they could perceive directly the spiritual world, spiritual beings. (Bernadette : 13-14)

Steiner interviewee, Sam, emphasised that this is the philosophic basis for the Waldorf school curriculum. However, the children come to these understandings through experiencing mythologies that address where they are in terms of historical consciousness.

In Class 4, the Norse Gods. You look at some of the behaviours of the Gods and the mind boggles. Gods are fading away as the human being stands up and has to take some responsibility. That leads to the Renaissance and the
Sam also identified reincarnation as a key Steiner spiritual tenet. He suggests that children subconsciously grasp this difficult concept by observing metamorphosis in the natural world. This is reminiscent of Montessori’s suggestion that children can best learn about the cosmos by observing their external world.

I think it was there in the early understanding of Christianity. It's something that’s being refreshed. However, Rudolf Steiner certainly brought that in. We see ourselves and ourselves as incarnating and we are trying to help them find their place on the earth and their task in life. But we don't know what karma they use or what karma they bring with them, what they've got to work on. So I mentioned that in conjunction with stories of flying and living forever. Because that is an aspect you could explore even in a spiritual way. Could we live forever? How could we live forever? …the soul could live forever. The children here are very open to that. We don't say to them "We believe in reincarnation" But they've had stories. In kindergarten Rudolf Steiner gave them the picture of the butterfly, the caterpillar that dies…and he talks about it like the soul being reborn. (Sam: 556-564)
Religious and Other Spiritual Pathways.
Interestingly, Marshak in *The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness* (1997) includes Steiner as a visionary but leaves out Montessori explaining that she did not sufficiently consider the elements of spirituality. He felt that she did not deal with the realms of emotions and feelings or explore the interrelationships of the subsystems of the child including “physical, vital, mental and spiritual” (Marshak, 1997, p. 225). Steiner (1996; Marshak, 1997) describes four bodies in the human person: physical or sensorial related to a body of matter; the etheric – life force energy that shapes the body and moral development; the astral body which is energy of the soul and contains the thinking, willing and feeling of the inner life and finally the body of the spirit. Other creatures can have an astral body but only humans can have the body of the spirit which is divine. Montessori also focuses on the qualities that are special about humans but her presentation of evolution is a horizontal one whereas Steiner’s also incorporates a strong vertical view of spiritual evolution. Montessori expresses a hope that humans can evolve to achieve peace in the world whereas Steiner speaks of divinity. In studying the historic narratives of civilisations, Montessori encourages children to explore how each culture caters for its spiritual needs as well as physical needs whereas Steiner views the order of study as extremely important as it mirrors the evolution of human consciousness (Demanett, 1988; Montessori, 1992; Marshak, 1997).

Steiner made a considerable effort to explicitly describe how the human’s spiritual potential could be reached in each seven year developmental period and devised a curriculum accordingly. (Refer to Chapter VIII and Appendix B on Steiner Education)

Marshak commends Steiner because he provides a clearly guided pathway to
expanding spiritual consciousness but it is for this same reason that Steiner education was condemned by some US magnet and charter schools as being too religious. They objected to the anthroposophic pathway leading to understandings including spiritual understandings as well as to the celebration of Christian festivals (Boston, 1996; Mealey, 1997). Montessori did not provide explicit procedures for spiritual development and this partially explains why there is such variation in how Montessori teachers interpret catering for the development of the spiritual embryo. It may also be that the formative work of her methodology occurred in countries with strong religious traditions—first Italy, and later India so there was a strong religious component in the environment of the children. There is less structure for nurturing spiritual development in secular schools and communities.

Montessorian, Aline Wolf, has made it her life mission to help teachers find ways of catering for spirituality in their non-sectarian classrooms. She claims that a misunderstanding of the nature of spirituality led to this aspect of the human journey being severely curtailed with the clear separation of church and state in American Government schools. She explains that religion is a pathway to spirituality, but not the only one.

Spirituality is a basic human energy that gives meaning to our lives. The practice of a particular religion is the way that many people choose to give voice to their spirituality. (Wolf, 1998, p. 20)
Wolf (1998) further elucidates the difference between religion and spirituality by explaining that religion provides answers to the universal questions while spirituality “honours the questions themselves and encourages us to ponder them personally” (p. 20). In encouraging children to explore these questions, we are offering them a vision that “there is something more to life than what they perceive with their senses” (Wolf, 1996, p. 37). Wolf believes that by helping teachers to understand this difference, spirituality will become less elusive (Wolf, 1996, 1998).

Wolf’s care to distinguish religion from spirituality helps to explain some of the differences observed in the Catholic and Government schools visited. The Catholic school has a curriculum of religion and values that interweaves all school explorations. Connections to spirituality are also highlighted by a journey of sacraments. In contrast, there was no explicit reference to spirituality in my Government school visits or interviews. Nevertheless, with the new Curriculum Framework, the issue of spirituality in non-sectarian schools in Western Australia is being addressed. Underpinning the curriculum are shared core values in the areas of commitment to pursuit of knowledge and achievement of potential, self-acceptance and self-respect, respect and concern for others, social and civic-responsibility and environmental responsibility. Each person’s potential is described in terms of the following domains: “physical, emotional, aesthetic, spiritual, intellectual, moral and social” (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 16). This represents a considerable broadening of the view of educational domains and implies that there are pathways to realise spirituality that may or may not be religious. Vicky – experienced in both

109 Spiritual – Emphasis added by author.
Catholic and Government schools – stated that a focus on values can help to fill a spiritual void.

I'm interested in that whole thing too- of values. I think the whole business of Curriculum Framework having to have values is that there is this huge deficit, this huge arid land within us. We haven't got faith to the extent that we did. I'm interested in how teachers actually use them. I'm wanting to take one a fortnight and explore it with the kids through literature. It reminds me of the Catholic school where there was a wheel and each week we examined one particular value. I like the whole value movement, to be honest. (Vicky 3: 68)

In the Curriculum Framework, there is no clear suggestion of how one caters for spiritual needs except for interweaving values with the curriculum. Spirituality is thus still elusive. Included in the Principles of the Curriculum Framework is a statement that students “need experience in building patterns of interconnectedness which help them to make sense of their own lives and the world” (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 17). Means of fostering this interconnectedness are not defined. However, with a focus on universal values and an opportunity for students to reflect on how core values affect their lives, one might suppose that chances of students experiencing an interconnectedness beyond immediate experience become more likely.
Each incarnation has a potentiality and the mission of life is to live that potentiality. (Campbell and Moyers, 1988, p. 229)

Citing Campbell’s words above, Aline Wolf (1998) reflects the view that a goal of education is to help children to discover and realise their potential. To realise one’s ultimate potential or bliss is to experience a spiritual transformation – a connectedness that goes beyond concrete, observable, logical experience.

Humans spend most of their time before maturity in classrooms. Thus, educational experiences potentially have a huge effect on a person’s experience of self-realisation on his/her life journey. These experiences can lead to gradual or precipitous change in how one perceives one’s life. Whether or not these changes contribute to spiritual transformation depends on how the individual interconnects them in his/her narrative.

Education can facilitate the connecting process in two ways: firstly, by helping the student to realise his/her power in creating a unique narrative; and secondly, by exposing him/her to universal truths that, when discovered by the individual, lead to making his/her journey meaningful.

Children need a story that will bring personal meaning together with the grandeur and meaning of the universe. (Berry, 1988, p. 131)

This meaning-making process is scaffolded according to developmental guidelines. This is most clearly articulated by Steiner and Montessori educators who counsel that children up to the age of eight should be exploring the wonder of life. In upper
primary, they are ready to experiment with reality. However, it is not until middle school or high school that this wonder and knowledge can effectively be transformed into community action and responsibility (Wilkinson, 1992; Scott, 1997).

Personal transformation entails resolving conflicts and reconstructing our narratives. Conflict resolution skills, archetypes and mentors can facilitate this process. Spiritual transformation is making ultimate connections including experiencing the uniqueness of one’s own journey against the backdrop of archetypal patterns. This transformation entails appreciating the irony that one can only fulfill a unique mission by realising one’s interdependence with and moral responsibility for other creatures and the planet.

Berry (1988), MacIntyre (1994), Sandlos (1998) and Swimme (1999) explain that we are now in an era where the merging of science and philosophy integrates human experience of the past millennium. Catholic religious education, Montessori cosmic education, and the Steiner model of the evolution of consciousness all attempt to prepare the child to experience this interconnection between ‘bliss’ and ‘science’ (Nigel: 2) in ‘The Age of The Earth’ (Swimme and Turner, 1999).

Tools are required to foster the process by which children can experience being the author of their own narratives – making connections of experiences and being open to transformation along the way. These tools come in the form of evolving, integrated curriculums and nurtured imaginations relevant for both student education and teacher training. Such tools are used by educators who recognise that meaning-making is holistic.
If we start with the whole – the universe as a whole, the earth as a whole – then there’s a real chance for a human to find her or his place.

(Swimme and Turner, 1999)

Evidence from the literature review and data suggest that curriculums that foster meaning making encourage connection-making and a holistic understanding by being integrated and narrative-based. Montessori and Steiner curriculums can be viewed as historic integrated curriculum models with many similar attributes to contemporary curriculum designs.
Chapter IX

The Denouement

My research journey and my professional and personal narratives are interwoven and have developed dynamically and concurrently. To conclude the research project, it is instructive to view the findings of this narrative inquiry in terms of the research focus questions posed. It is also helpful to consider directions for future research arising out of the limitations of the current study as well as out of the rich data that was revealed. Lastly, to further demonstrate how qualitative research can change the participants personally and professionally, an epilogue is provided describing my own immersion in this work that has altered my educational views and practices.

Conclusion

Humans are storytelling organisms who individually and collectively lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2)

In this qualitative study, narrative was both the ‘method’ and the ‘phenomenon’ researched (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). This was an exploration with the purpose of revealing a theory regarding the relationship of narrative use to the theoretical base of teaching practice. The data collected from the in-depth interviews
with twelve teachers was composed of stories of their experiences using narrative in their particular classrooms and schools representative of four different ethos. A range of theoretical perspectives was employed to interpret the data which, due to its complexity, could not be adequately addressed in terms of any single pedagogy; rather, the data was viewed in the framework of the philosophy and practice of each school culture and interpreted with reference to the theories of prominent educators, psychologists and philosophers. Through this analysis the teachers’ stories provided insight into the complexity of narrative use in primary education by foregrounding its use in curriculum and classroom practice for linguistic and literacy understanding, as an aid to understanding the human journey and personal narrative, and for personal transformation in cognitive, emotional and spiritual domains. These levels of understanding emerged in generating responses from the data to each of the research questions:

- What is the place of narrative in contemporary classroom teaching and learning? How do underlying philosophical traditions and beliefs influence the uses of narrative in different schools in Montessori, Steiner, Catholic and Government school settings?
- How is narrative used to support learning across the curriculum and in personal development in each setting?
- How do teachers describe and interpret effects on their own and children’s learning?

**Narrative in a Linguistic and Literacy Context**

All four methodologies support the findings of educators, including developmental and cognitive psychologists, linguists, whole language theorists and constructivists, who note the development of narrative structure is age-related and its increasing complexity parallels children’s cognitive and social development. Narrative is viewed as vital for reconstructing experiences into a meaningful and integrated form.
Further, narrative is considered to be the most appropriate context for observing the principles of natural learning and creating an integrated language experience (McCulla & Walshe, 1979; Cambourne, 1988; Fox, 1997b; Loeffler, 1993). There is also an acknowledgement that oral narrative prepares the child for subsequent communication through written narrative. It is accepted that oral retelling prepares children for reading and writing and that rhythm, rhyme and repetition of songs and poems help them to develop phonetic awareness and decoding skills (Ong, 1982; Egan, 1997). Although only the Steiner teachers emphasised the importance of supporting an extensive oracy period, Government educators voiced the belief that more focus needs to be made on oral skills as a prelude to literacy.

From the teachers’ storied data, it became apparent that an integrated or balanced language approach evolving from whole language strategies is widely valued in the Government and Catholic schools to foster the development of literacy skills. Children are introduced to a whole context in the form of a narrative poem or story from which comprehension, vocabulary, phonetic, and grammatical exercises are derived. Montessorians vary in how they have adopted the balanced language approach. Meaningful whole contexts have always been emphasised by adherents to this educational philosophy and some teachers have readily adopted a model by which a narrative is used to demonstrate an exploration of the language modalities and then followed up by a choice of literary activities. Other Montessorians place a greater emphasis on skill exploration using concrete materials to help isolate difficulties. These literacy activities are brought together afterwards with an experiential narrative.
In the Steiner classroom the main lesson story of the day is often used as a context for exploration of language skills and concepts. At other times, mini-narratives are employed to demonstrate letters, parts of speech and types of sentences. One distinct difference between Montessori and Steiner classrooms was that Montessori students have a choice of activities based on their interest and level of development whereas, in Steiner classes, children explore skills in a whole class situation with some choice of related artistic exploration later. Observations in Government and Catholic schools revealed a combination of whole class explorations and small group activities often based on diagnosed needs or assessed skill levels.

All four approaches value purposeful language learning. In the Government and Catholic schools children write letters that will be answered and learn poems or write stories to share with other classes in their school and overseas. In the Steiner school, children create their own books and dramatise scenes based on the mythology explored in their big lesson. In the Montessori school, the purpose of language explorations is often linked to culture with plays, stories and reports written about indigenous people, world cultures, ancient animal species, or the universe. All four approaches value narrative as the meaningful context in which a child actively constructs an understanding of language and enhances encoding and decoding communication skills.

**Narrative in the Context of the Human Journey**

Teachers in relating their experiences indicated various ways that narrative is used in their schools to deepen children’s understanding of their personal journey in the context of their community and culture. The use of narrative acknowledges that even
though young children are in a very concrete stage in terms of logico-scientific thinking, they are indeed capable of abstract thought in a narrative sense (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986; Bruner, 1988, 1990). They can apply images to their own lives and further their understanding of the world through creating imaginary roles and situations. They use metaphors, similes and personification in their language to express understanding of their world; they use images and rhythm to aid memory. In fact, they demonstrate many of the attributes of rich oral language displayed by traditional preliterate cultures (Piaget, 1929/1973, Cassirer, 1946; Montessori 1949/1988a; Steiner 1923/1996; Gardner & Winner, 1979; Bruner, 1990; Caldwell, 1997; Egan, 1997).

More than other methodologies, Steiner teachers believe these language characteristics give us insight into children’s understandings. They thus view the value of oral narrative as far more than literary scaffolding. They believe that rhythm, rhyme and imagery relate to the mythic understanding of the child and thus these attributes of oracy are a basis of their early childhood curriculum. Steiner classrooms and those influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach tend to celebrate the animism in children’s stories that helps them to make sense of their worlds rather than minimising its importance or treating these expressions as naïve or inferior. Each Steiner educator is also an adept oral storyteller. Oral storytelling is valued throughout the educational process for its power to create a meaningful interaction with a specific audience as well as using rhythm and image to enhance memory skills and vividly connect the listener to another time, place or culture (Bettleheim, 1977; Ong, 1982; Mellon, 1992; Edwards et al, 1993; Matthews, 1994, Egan, 1997, 2000a).
Montessori also placed great importance on imagination as a tool to abstraction. However she believed in fostering this imagination through images linked consistently to the real and natural world. Thus, an appropriate story for seven year olds would be *The Story of the Universe* in a Montessori school whereas in the Steiner school, fairy tales are chosen as appropriately corresponding to the challenges of that age group. Government and Catholic teachers are primarily concerned that children have a blend of fiction and non-fiction stories as a basis to their curriculum. As in the Steiner curriculum, fairy tales are frequently used with young primary school children along with a wide assortment of contemporary storybooks. Non-fiction works are also used to reinforce understandings about the natural world but this emphasis is in great contrast to Montessori where the children start with a “big story” of the origins of the universe, rather than starting with their immediate environment.

In addition to image creation, rhythm and ritual also help to define the complexity of the human journey for students. The rhythm of life is experienced in the rhythms and rituals of the classroom. Observations in all the schools revealed a rhythm in lesson plans that mirrored a narrative format. Steiner and Montessori classroom teachers are also attuned to the importance of altering periods of activity with periods of silence to aid a child’s self-construction. Steiner educators view this rhythm as connected to human breathing. In contrast to the other methodologies, they have found using rhythmic patterns to be an effective tool of classroom management. In the Steiner school, rhythm is a pulse in the class as a whole. Thus, collectively the children might engage in a choral verse preceding a time of quiet concentration. Steiner teachers also stress the importance of linking patterned movements to sound in order to nurture holistic development.
In Montessori, allowance is made for individual rhythms as children make guided selections of the day’s activities. For Government and Catholic teachers, there is a rhythm to the scheduling of the day and the terms and rhythmic and rhyming texts are used frequently to aid language acquisition. However, the Steiner approach is unique in using music, movement and oral poetry recitation on a regular daily basis to consciously aid the student in gaining insight into the rhythm of his/her own being and journey.

The universal appeal of childhood games including chants and repetitions of narratives popular throughout history certainly supports the view that rhythms and rituals link us to our culture. Rituals, Traditions and festivals also celebrate human linear and circular tales. All of the schools visited have some nominated festivals and times for community gatherings that supported our journey in the community context. The Steiner and Montessori teachers also practise rituals connected with birthdays. Steiner teachers write birthday verses for their students. Montessori children reenact their yearly movement around the sun recalling significant moments on their journey. All the schools also have special celebrations for the graduating class, marking an end and a beginning in the human journey.

These communal experiences highlighting the patterns of life prepare the student to incorporate experiences that help him/her find an authentic voice and recognise the elements of their unique journey (Vygotsky, 1978; Fox, 1997; Diz-Imbelli, 1998; LaRouchelle & Bednarz, 1998). In a respectful environment, they hear stories of their peers, teachers, and members of the community (Paley, 1988; Edwards et al,
Government, Catholic and Montessori teachers cite collaboration and questioning at various levels of interpretation as particularly important in this process. In the Steiner school, the teachers and students are on a seven-year journey together and part of each individual’s journey is reflecting on the individual challenges and achievements of classmates and colleagues of varied temperaments.

More than the other schools, the Steiner ethos emphasises the importance of the teacher/learner community (Eisner, 1985; Grumet, 1988; Pinar, Lattery & Taubman, 1994; Fels, 1995; Houston, 1996; Langer, 1997; Palmer, 1998; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Teachers view education as a lifelong process. Interestingly, particularly in the primary school, the teachers are viewed as being the knowledgeable ones with the stories to impart. Also, the classrooms are more traditionally structured with infrequent use of the collaborative learning model compared to the Government, Catholic and Montessori schools. However, there is still a sense of a shared journey as they learn to work together in exploring the great lessons and as they use experiences of classroom interaction to gain greater personal insight. In Montessori classrooms, the opportunity for the teacher to be on a shared journey with small groups of students as they explore concepts in varied chosen ways is fundamental to the philosophy. As teachers have students for three years, there is a similar sense of sharing an ongoing journey that exists in the Waldorf classrooms.

The teachers interviewed frequently create collaborative learning situations in their Catholic and Government school classrooms. However, the sense of shared journey is absent except in the English lessons when students are encouraged to develop an authentic voice in evaluating the text, the plot and the characters. In these schools, the
power of story or big theme to provide a centre for genuine exchange is not apparent in other subjects which were more fragmented than in the alternative schools. Interviews and observations in schools where the new *Curriculum Framework* has been adopted indicate that a teacher/learner community model may become more prevalent with the opportunity to explore big themes or stories in an integrated subject manner. There is also indication that themes may become interclass or interschool so that teachers have more opportunity to collaborate in designing and implementing outcome-based activities. This is a movement away from the isolated classroom approach or the banded cross-setting that was contributing to fragmentation during my initial interviews and observations.

Studying the lives of others through autobiography and biography can also aid students in making sense of their life experiences thus far and in making choices aided by projecting into the future (Egan, 1986; Cusworth, 1996; Dougherty, 1999; Bateson, 2000). This process helps them appreciate the perspectives from different times, cultures and genders as they develop an understanding of their own unique combination of interests and attributes derived from these collective experiences. Steiner teachers, believing that children’s understandings parallel the development of historical consciousness, focus on the lives of fantasy figures in fairy tales and fables in the first few years. Subsequently, they study mythological figures with each selected myth responding to the challenges and needs of children of a designated age. In contrast, Montessori, Government and Catholic teachers use a spectrum of biographical tools but with an emphasis on exposing children to real people in history and in the community. Catholic teacher Fran and Montessorian Carol both emphasise the importance of students experiencing the complex lives and interests of people who
contribute to our society. Biographies and autobiographies become life metaphors for students as they acquire models for problem solving and dealing with life crises. Opportunities for students to hear the life stories of people in their communities from other cultures and other generations can provide rich cultural learning experiences (Paley, 1997; Holmes, 1997; Fatowna, 2001). Constructing their own autobiographies is also an effective means of helping children to make connections between multiple life experiences as was demonstrated in Shawn’s Montessori school’s autobiography project (Dougherty, 1999).

In Shawn’s school teachers were also encouraged to share their autobiographies with the class. However, as in the other Montessori schools, Government and Catholic schools, there was little opportunity to share personal narrative with other staff members aside from prestaff meeting pleasantries. The Steiner teachers also identified this as an untapped support area for furthering the sense of community. However, both the Steiner teachers had recently had the opportunity to share their autobiographies with other members of staff in a weeklong workshop and they indicated that this had lessened the personal isolation that is prevalent in most teaching communities. There is thus indication that the positive effect of sharing personal narrative is undervalued in most school settings.

**Narrative in the Context of Transformation**

Data and literature reviews indicate that if students and teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on the influence of models and significant events in their lives, it can lead to personal transformation (Wolf, 1996, 1998; Kattner, 1997; Palmer, 1997; Fox, 1997b; Marshak, 1997). Transformation reflects a significant change in
how a person views his/her personal journey or how they view their part in the vast scheme of interdependent life (MacIntyre, 1984). Change can be precipitous prompted by a positive or negative critical incident or a positive or negative model. Alternatively, transformation can be gradual (Yair, 2000). Montessori, Steiner and Catholic curriculums support a view that curriculum can support transformation of a spiritual nature. All specifically endorse the importance of giving young children the experience of wonder in their world – the wonder of being part of a vast, intricate and ordered cosmos. Orientation for a spiritual journey includes exposure to values and virtues (MacIntyre, 1984; Popov, 1990,1999). Data indicates that this is occurring with some regularity in Catholic, Montessori and Steiner schools all of whom use story to support value education. There also seems to be an increased focus on value education in Government schools responding to the challenges of the new *Curriculum Framework* (1998). Supporting a reflective process also helps children focus on an inward journey. Catholic schools provide practice in meditation and reflection as part of their religious education programme. To assist students in the process of thought clarification through prioritising values and making sense of their experiences, journalling has been tried by several interviewed teachers. Those who report the most success are those who have scaffolded the process through teacher modelling, oral journalling, and guided reflections at moments of significant experience (La Chapelle, 1997). Experiencing balance in one’s life can also contribute to a realisation of connectedness or flow (Cameron, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Smith, 2000; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Interviewed teachers all commented on the importance of balance and the challenge of trying to achieve it for themselves and in the classroom where the provision of a variety of learning pathways need to be provided in consideration of multi-learning domains and varied learning styles.
In a second stage of transformation the individual begins to plot his/her own journey coded by an internal monologue. Setting goals and adopting personal agency beliefs scaffolds this process (Garrett & Cole, 1993). Teachers’ storied experiences reveal that life changes can be dramatically influenced by how one processes models – influential teachers and archetypes (Jung, 1933, 1968; Bettelheim, 1977; Bolen, 1984, 1989; Campbell & Moyers, 1998; Palmer, 1998; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Steiner educators used mythological archetypes in accordance with the age-related challenges of children. Other teachers used ancient and modern archetypes in a more random way.

Personal transformation also entails resolving conflicts and reconstructing our narratives. Teachers report that new life directions – transformative learning – often result from discourse or woundedness leading to reconfiguration of life’s priorities and values (Mezirow, 1985a, 1985b; Houston, 1996; Carrigg, 1997; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Teachers have explored ways of scaffolding the conflict resolution process with children including peer mediation in a Montessori school, redrafting their stories in Waldorf and Montessori classes and archetypal story construction in Steiner and other mainstream settings. There is indication that as children mature, they are capable of more complex problem resolution as they begin to appreciate the nuances between binary opposites.

Spiritual transformation is making ultimate connections including experiencing the uniqueness of one’s own journey against the backdrop of archetypal patterns. Indications are that a strong cultural identity also makes one more open to new
connections of change. Transformation entails realising the irony that one can only fulfill a unique mission by realising one's interdependence with and moral responsibility for other creatures and the planet (Berry, 1988; MacIntyre, 1994; Sandlos, 1998; Swimme & Turner, 1999). We are now in an era where the merging of science and philosophy integrate human experience of the past millennium. Catholic religious education, Montessori cosmic education, and the Steiner model of the evolution of consciousness all attempt to prepare the child to experience this interconnection between ‘bliss’ and ‘science’ (Nigel: 2) in ‘The Age of The Earth’ (Turner and Swimme, 1999).

Each of these narrative understandings composes an aspect of the meta-narrative of meaningful connections. Language forms the basis of engagement with life and is the means by which we amass our experiences. Narrative can provide a context for learning about language but when this language vehicle is internalised, it becomes the vehicle by which one orders his/her experiences and finds an authentic voice (Garvie, 1990; Westby, 1991). A sense of personal journey is experienced as one prioritises each of these experiences into a unique pathway aided by viewing our own journey in terms of our community and culture. It is at this juncture that one is sometimes faced with the conflict or opposing expectations of the individual journey vs. the communal journey while at the same time realising that each can only be fulfilled in terms of the other. Resolution of this paradox is realised through transformation when meaning of self becomes interrelated with a sense of cosmic purpose and an appreciation for the interdependence of all life forms.
Implications are that for narrative to be fully utilised as a tool to make these multi-level connections in their lives, students need to experience an integrated or balanced curriculum (Montessori, 1948/1989a; McCulla & Walshe, 1979; Kahn, 1992, 1995; Gardner, 1993; Loeffler, 1994; Langer, 1997; Murdoch & Hornsby, 1997; McGuire, 1997; Curriculum Council, 1998). Steiner and Montessori provide long-established models of constructivist-like education. In these methodologies, the child is viewed as being in the centre making connections motivated by a ‘big story’ catering for his/her level of understanding. Learning is facilitated by a rich environment and a mentor.

To assist the student in making connections, there is recognition that fictional narrative and metaphors can serve to clarify reality; thus, the interweaving of varied types of narrative is encouraged. If one accepts that such an integrated or balanced curriculum is the most effective model for meaning-making then there is scope for significant change in teacher education so that student teachers can make more connections between curriculum areas and between pedagogies and their own experiences (Steiner, 1923/1996; Montessori, 1949, 1988a; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Eisner, 1991; Weber, 1993; Palmer, 1998).

As in any life journey, narratives overlap and often the ending of one story marks the beginning of another. Interview data from twelve teachers has created a profile of the use of narrative in four types of schools with differing ethos. Collectively, their experiences have unearthed many guidelines for using narrative as an agent for meaning in the classroom and in life. The interview data and literature review have also identified new areas for exploration. Referring to the property of narrative, Changing Perspective, one might predict that as the following areas implicated for further research are explored, new information will shed light on the past and help
educators plan for further application of narrative to linguistic, cognitive, cultural, social and spiritual learning domains.

**Implications for Further Research**

As discussed in the conclusion, the qualitative research model using in-depth interviewing was an appropriate means of gathering data to theorise on the use and effects of using narrative in primary school classrooms. There were, however, certain limitations in the study which along with the interviewee data provide direction for future related research studies.

**Research in Response to Limitations**

**Sampling.**

The first area to be addressed is sampling. Because of the immense amount of data generated in in-depth interviews, the sample was, by necessity, limited. An effort was made to gather storied experiences of teachers who followed varying educational pedagogies, and, indeed, there was sufficient data in which to detect emerging patterns. However, representatives from other ethos, as informed others, provided important input during the course of the study. I would thus invite the Reggio Emilia experienced teachers to participate in a future study focusing on narrative in early childhood education because of the unique insights into the importance of dialogue and project work provided by these consulting educators. The contributions of a Presbyterian Ladies’ College teacher in the area of virtue education and the
Curriculum Framework made me aware that there are other educational milieus that should be included in any future study of narrative in primary schools. I would want the sampling to include representatives of other Independent schools such as the Uniting Church schools in Western Australia as well as other religious and non-sectarian schools. Multiple interviews and observations at systemic Catholic and Government schools would help to construct a more accurate profile of the range of narrative use within the framework of the pedagogy of these school systems catering for diverse populations and employing teachers from a variety of teacher training backgrounds.

Another future study defined by varying the sample would be to view the data from the point of view of an intercountry comparison. In this current project, two of the interviewees were Montessorians from the USA. Although their stories greatly enriched the storied data, cross cultural patterns could not be detected or explored because there were no representatives of the other pedagogies from the USA. A future study could be designed for such comparative purposes. A comparative study could also be designed with a split sample between those, as in this purposeful sample study, who are committed to using narrative and those teachers who do not see this as part of a deliberately applied pedagogy. What are the comparative effects?

The sample was also limited in that it only included teachers’ storied experiences. A complementary study gathering student experiences might also contribute significantly to educators’ insight on the use of narrative in teaching.

Voice and Audience.
Another identified limitation that could lead to further research actually emerged from the results. It became very apparent that the teachers and teacher education students perceive that they gain enormous benefit from sharing and reflecting upon teachers’ stories. As a result of this insight, suggestions have been made to make alterations to schools and higher education to enable more sharing of personal and professional narratives. In this research model, however, I was the connector between the interviewees who never had the opportunity to engage directly with each other. They were therefore deprived of the benefit of assimilating and benefitting from each other’s experience other than from my second hand reports. Carter (1993) states that the latter type of story sharing is usually neglected in favour of a model in which teachers tell anecdotes to researchers. To remedy this imbalance, an effective model for research of teachers’ storied experience that would be relevant to all participants might be a weekend retreat for the express purpose of sharing stories about using narrative. A follow-up retreat might be used to share stories on how participants have used the ideas they gained from the first gathering. This new model would ensure a greater transferability of data than was possible in the current study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

**Evolving Teacher Narratives.**

What could be considered a third limitation to this research model is its evolving nature. It is impossible to present defined, finite results when the teachers’ personal and professional narratives and their teaching circumstances are always evolving. An example is the collaboration which some previously isolated teachers experienced as a result of the introduction of the *Curriculum Framework* in Western Australia during the course of this study. Another example was that of Shawn’s visit to Reggio Emilia
which prompted her to incorporate more opportunity for dialogue and project work in her classroom. This ongoing transformation presents difficulty in regards to definitive reporting, but it also highlights a benefit of qualitative research – it is participatory research with the purpose of highlighting new directions being as essential to teaching pedagogy as recording the present or the journey thus far.

**Implications for Further Research Emerging from the Storied Experiences**

Through collecting stories from teachers, an array of ideas for using narrative has been recorded to help children understand the structure of their language and the narrative genre, to foster an understanding of the human journey, and to assist them in experiencing transformation in cognitive, emotional, behavioural and spiritual ways. The range of narrative applications revealed is so vast, in fact, that one can’t help but feel that researching several of these suggestions is important to determine the potential benefits for improving primary school education for students and teachers.

**Narrative as a Language Genre and a Literacy Tool**

As reported in this thesis, teachers believe that oral language skill acquisition prepares their students for literacy and concept formation as well as aiding interpersonal communication. This belief is supported by researchers who have explored language development including Vygotsky (1962,1978), Sutton-Smith (1986), Bruner (1990), Westby (1991), Mandler (1992). Some of the teachers interviewed representing both Government and Montessori schools expressed their opinion that educational pedagogy should acknowledge these developmental findings and incorporate far more
oral work than is currently being emphasised. To offer support for these curriculum strategy modifications, it is important to research the effects of emphasising oracy as a preparation for literacy in early childhood classrooms\textsuperscript{110}. The Steiner classroom might be used as a comparative point because the Waldorf teachers emphasise the importance of a lengthy period of oral literacy and do not introduce written symbols until age 7.

Montessori pedagogy also offers several ideas that might be trialled in other school settings. The Montessori classrooms are multi-aged. What language skills are fostered in a multi-age setting? How could this setting be used to model the construction and deconstruction of narrative? Montessori also has a comprehensive system of teaching grammar in a multisensory way using concrete symbols for parts of speech and symbols and arrows for sentence parts. If the whole from which the parts are to be analysed is related to the big themes or stories being explored in the class or to the children’s own narratives, will motivation be enhanced? If similar concrete systems are introduced in non-Montessori settings, will grammar rules be applied more successfully and consistently than they are presently?

\textsuperscript{110} Early Childhood – Early childhood encompasses 8 years (0-8), but the years designated for inclusion in early childhood teacher education depend on practices within states. For example, five years (3 years – 8 years) form the focus of early childhood teacher education in Western Australia; however, theoretical and practical work in NSW is provided at universities responding to the demand creating by the necessity of having a certified teacher in large childcare centres.
The teachers interviewed for this thesis all advocated using narrative as a backdrop for teaching language. Garvie (1990) also asserts that story is a more effective stimulus in teaching language than other choices.

The advantage of story as a stimulus over topics introduced through chart, poster, picture, model, etc. or simply discussion, is that it is structured. It is going somewhere and the learner wants to reach the end of the journey.

(Garvie, 1990, p. 31)

There is scope here for researching the effectiveness of different wholes that provide the basis for studying language parts. It would also be interesting to investigate whether the selection of stories used to support language learning related to a central story or theme would also enhance language skill acquisition as well as the ability to apply the narrative genre.

Narrative for an Understanding of the Human Journey
Both Steiner teachers interviewed presented very convincing support for a strong emphasis on oracy in early childhood. Steiner’s belief that oracy not only prepares the student for literacy but also represents a distinct type of understanding that underlies later developed ways of interpreting experience is supported by contemporary educators and linguists including Ong (1982), Bruner (1990) and Egan (1997). Aiding children in interpreting their worlds through oracy attributes involves defining a difference between logico-scientific and narrative thinking processes and thereby acknowledging that early childhood students are capable of abstract thinking.
in the narrative form (Robinson and Hawpe, 1986; Bruner, 1988). Some contemporary approaches to early childhood education have used these insights to invite students to explore big stories and big projects. In Reggio Emilia classes and those influenced by this approach children’s dialogue is key in defining how big questions are to be answered (Katz, 1993; Hendrick, 1997). In her preprimary classes, Vivian Paley (1992, 1995, 1997) used oral narrative including stories shared from the community, Leo Lionni’s (1997) contemporary fables, children’s own story constructions and a class construction to jointly explore major themes such as inclusion vs. exclusion, multiculturalism and identity. Research focused specifically on exploring the expression of abstract concepts through oral and written narrative from a developmental perspective could help guide teachers in promoting a more meaningful engagement with literature and life themes by appealing to the tools of a child’s understanding.

It would be interesting, for example, to examine the nature of image representation used by preschool and primary children. Why do preschool children create metaphors with such facility and what function are they serving for them conceptually? Why does metaphoric expression diminish with the onset of literacy (Gardner and Winner, 1979; Egan, 1997)? Will more practice with image creation and aesthetic expression during story telling help children’s comprehension especially reluctant readers as is hypothesised by Interviewee Victoria? Would more storytelling without visual props aid image formation?

In the Waldorf schools, a primary role of the teachers is to be a storyteller. Currently, this is not an assumed role in any other methodology despite an increasing interest in
revisiting this oral tradition apparent in other educational circles (Egan, 1986; Van Groenou, 1995; Sillick, 1997; Diaz-Imbelli, 1998; Kelly, 2000). If teachers are taught to be story tellers as occurs in Steiner training and begin to do more story telling, will this strengthen children’s ability to create images and how will this affect their ability to structure their own narratives? If they become storytellers, will teachers use story as a focus for integrated explorations? How would this new skill change their perception of themselves as teachers?

What if not only the teachers, but also the students are taught to be story tellers? Dougherty’s oral journalling (1999) and Millstone’s class sharing of the Odyssey (1997) in Montessori classrooms indicates the extraordinary insight children can gain from telling their own or classic tales. Not only is it a means of fostering linguistic and memory skills and learning the elements of narrative, but it provides links to the culture and community. All of these potential effects could be researched to ascertain the potential effective uses of oral narrative in the primary classrooms.

In addition to exploring how teachers and children can be successfully guided in oral storytelling skills, it would also be relevant to determine which stories are most meaningful for them to learn. Steiner and Montessori philosophies both emphasise using big stories as a basis for classroom exploration. Steiner emphasises the mythologies and Montessori the historical narratives, but each can lead into a study of the other in the upper primary grades where mythologies reflect historical truth. Despite similar focuses in the upper grades, the focus on fantasy in the early grades in Steiner directly contrasts with the Montessori focus on reality. A longitudinal study
could help to ascertain how these contrasting beginnings affect the way young adults view their worlds and their role in it.

Steiner, Montessori, Catholic and Government teachers interviewed all indicated that it was important to include tales of indigenous people in their curriculum. In this they concurred with Holmes (1997) who asserted that teachers and students learning these stories was essential to multicultural understandings.

Practicing teachers in indigenous communities, in all communities, need to bring elders and their stories into their classrooms, helping students to find bridges between orality and written text, indigenous and non-indigenous experience. These narratives must not be merely appropriated as peripheral add-ons or entertainment – these lessons must be learned. (Holmes, 1997, p. 6)

As well as bringing cultural stories into the curriculum, there is scope for researching the potential contribution of ritual and tradition in creating a positive culture in the school community. Celebrations may be of a universal nature such as Solstice festivals, historic such as national holidays or specific to the ethnic or religious groups represented at the school. Alternatively, they may emerge from the school community itself. Rituals may reflect the cultures of the school, but might also be instituted as part of the rhythm of the school day such as the candle lighting and verses of the Steiner school or the meditation and reflection at the Catholic schools. It would be worthwhile to explore how introducing more rituals and noncompetitive celebrations might contribute to the positive culture of Government schools.
Alongside community festivals and rituals it is important to celebrate the uniqueness of the human journey as well. Birthday rituals such as the Steiner verses or the Montessori sharing of significant events while moving around the sun can contribute to this sense of individual journey. Such rituals might be tried in other types of schools in preference to a public address system announcement.

Interview data also reflects the acknowledgement by teachers that it is important for children to have the opportunity to share something about their lives, their personal narratives at school. However, very few teachers have the opportunity to share their personal and professional narratives with other staff on a consistent basis. Through implementing a regular sharing programme in schools that have not previously had this avenue for dialogue one might ascertain the effects on collaborative teaching and resource sharing and the application of new teaching practice ideas. From an affective viewpoint, would such sharing result in a greater appreciation of individual talents as well as an experience of colleague support in this shared journey? Would more professional development in communication skills enrich the opportunity for sharing? Will the adoption of integrated curriculums naturally lead to more sharing and collaboration?

With the introduction of the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 1998) in Western Australia and the *Integrated Curriculum* (Murdoch and Hornsby, 1997) in Victoria, varied “big themes” have been trialled. The implication in these curriculums and in Egan’s proposed story curriculum (1986, 1997) is that big stories will make the curriculum more meaningful by integrating ideas and thereby aiding the child in making connections. There is no doubt that it would aid schools and teachers if case
studies were prepared that followed the journey of students and teachers exploring these themes through varied subjects. Not only would these case studies highlight big stories that are effective connecting catalysts, but they would also help teachers who require more structured guidelines in curriculum planning (Carlton, 2001).

Research as to how the introduction of integrated curriculums affects the traditional methods of introducing children to the concepts of society and environment could address such questions as:

- Will they become more like the Montessori primary schools where children start with the story of the universe? This is a total reversal of the traditional curriculum which moves from family to neighbourhood, to community, to country, to world before exploring the universe.

- Will children be more engaged if we acknowledge their narrative abstract thinking and offer them the universe much earlier (Montessori, 1948/1989, 1949/1988; Egan, 1986, 1997; Turner and Swimme, 1999)? If students are introduced to the wonder and magnificence of the planet at a young age, will this help to result in an attitude of community responsibility when they are faced with local problems in adolescence (Scott, 1997)?

- Will teaching children the ecologically centered stories of oral cultures help them to feel an emotional and moral link to their planet (Ong, 1982; Berry, 1988, 1991; Sandlos, 1998)?

**Using Narrative for Personal Transformation**
Emerging from the new curricula is a focus on individual pathways to the achievement of outcomes which is fundamental to constructivist methodology. What
are the best means of empowering students to be responsible for their own learning journey? There is scope here for researching types of portfolios. What types most adequately portray the individual’s learning experiences? Is the child involved in setting his own goals by envisioning the future of his/her narrative? Is the child encouraged to reflect on his/her journey?

It has been suggested in this thesis that, although journalling is potentially a tool for the individual’s reflection, it has often been used for other purposes such as practising recount genre. How can the journal process be implemented so that students use it to clarify their thoughts and make connections rather than viewing it as a recount for a public audience? Would guiding teachers in using journalling result in more effective journal use in the classrooms?

Greater emphasis on personal narrative invites greater awareness of personal behaviour tendencies and consequently a greater emphasis on internal rather than external control. Observations of Montessori and Steiner school classrooms reveal such alternatives to behaviour management that could be trialled in other schools. In Montessori classrooms, much management is achieved by providing meaningful content, choice and collaboration – three alternatives suggested by Kohn (1993) for fostering internal motivation. A research project could assess the change in behavioural concerns as a result of providing more open-ended tasks in classrooms organised around an inspiring central theme or story. In Steiner schools, stories are told to children in response to specific situations to model alternative appropriate choices of behaviour. Research could trial using bibliocounselling in lieu of tokens in schools that have previously relied on these systems. Narrative therapy
(Polkinghorne, 1988; Hughes, 1991) might also be trialled for effectiveness in school counselling with children assisted in identifying choices of possible pathways and then implementing new endings for their envisioned life scripts.

Interview data and a literature review revealed an increasing concern with value education and peace education in non-sectarian schools. Interviewees and consultants have reported trying to address this in varied ways. All classrooms were trying to foster an appreciation for diversity through exposure to multiculturalism. A few classes were encouraging a respect for generations through grandparents’ days. The acknowledgement of varied temperaments in Steiner classes and multi-intelligences in other classes is possibly nurturing an appreciation for individual uniqueness. Interviewee Nigel used a vocabulary of virtues in redrafting difficult classroom situations and in having children retell stories of virtuous actions by their peers. Consultant Victoria B. used terms of virtues to analyse characters in stories and to have children assess their own work and classroom interactions. Each of these ideas has been tried on a very limited basis. If they could be trialled in a more defined and systematic way, guidelines might result that would aid teachers in nurturing spirituality in non-sectarian ways using story as a vehicle.

However, narrative is a complex phenomenon. “Children need experience to acquire and develop language: children need language to cope with new experience” (Gardie, 1990, p. 31). It is narrative that links language to experience. Personal stories celebrate our uniqueness, but are meaningless unless revealed in a communal context. Narrative links personal and cultural experiences. Although an appreciation for narrative’s complex and multiple uses in the classroom is apparent, there are many
areas indicated where further research would aid teachers in applying this powerful tool to linguistic, cognitive, cultural, social and spiritual domains.

She placed at my feet the treasures of the Orient, the moon, and beyond. She reduced me to the size of an ant so I could experience the universe from that smallness; she gave me wings to see it from the heavens; she gave me the tail of a fish so I would know the depths of the sea. When she was telling a story, her characters peopled my world… (Allende, 1987, p. 21)

The Epilogue

On my journey I have learned that all great educators are storytellers and all great storytellers borrow narratives, synthesise them and make them their own. I aspire to be a great educator and a great storyteller. On the way to this aspiration, I have borrowed the stories of my interviewees and integrated them into my own journey. I believe my interviewees have also taken ‘on board’ my shared offerings to interweave with their own teaching narratives. To me this merging is the essence of qualitative research in the form of narrative inquiry. One starts with individual stories that, when shared, are interwoven in myriad ways to create not one meta-story, but a meta-story for each person who participated. My meta-narrative now incorporates meaning-making strategies at varied levels of understanding. Each strategy is a thread linking an interviewee’s storied experience to my own. My teaching methods, my philosophy, and my personal narrative have changed and will continue to transform as reflections
on the stories I have heard lead me to view my own and my students’ potential in new ways.

**My Understanding of Narrative and Language Arts**
Waldorf teachers, Sam and Bernadette, and Montessorians, Nigel and Ellen, have taught me that storytelling is a learned art in which one gains competency with practice. It is not a replacement for story reading which is a different genre. Oral storytelling is unique in that it relies on rhythm and patterns rather than rote learned words to preserve the essence of the narrative. It also differs from written stories in that the engagement with a specific audience becomes part of the telling. I find I am telling more and more stories and reading fewer. I am now comfortable relating stories to primary students, parents, teacher education students and colleagues. I have realised that oral narratives invite stories in response and am no longer surprised when I leave such a gathering with more storied experiences than I have shared. These new stories become part of my own at the next telling. In the future, I would like to teach my student teachers to be story tellers and to invite others including their own primary students to rekindle an art which links them to their audience and their cultures in a profound way.

As a result of dialogue with the Waldorf teachers and with Government teacher, Lynne, I am much more aware of the importance of oracy as a preparation for literacy. Lynne had tremendous success with scaffolding literacy skills by using more oral poetry and rhyme as was the accustomed practice in the Steiner classrooms of Sam and Bernadette. In the work I have done with children since these interviews, I have been conscious of focusing on the sounds revealed through rhyme, rhythm and
repetition without rushing the children to commit these sounds to written symbols. I now place more value on inviting discussion and I advocate encouraging children to try varying genres in oral form before written expression including descriptions, instructions, recounts, narratives and expositions. Although I don’t believe I would ever discourage any child from reading and learning these symbols when ready, I do know that, like the Waldorf teachers, I will advocate much more oral language work in early childhood classrooms. I have now experienced that oral proficiency is as important an outcome as reading and writing in communication.

I find too that I am encouraging much more oral language work in the form of drama and role-playing in my work with teachers and primary students. I attribute my increased appreciation of the dramatic arts to the inspiration of Bernadette and Sam’s classes where I became aware that all students and teachers can benefit from drama despite variations in temperaments. The plays in the Steiner classes were based on mythologies and gave students the opportunity to face conflicts in the shoes of mythical heroes. I was also inspired by the use of drama in other schools. The play I witnessed in Kate’s class was a situational drama based on sea creatures. In Victoria’s class, students were writing their own skit depicting crises faced by Australians in the eras of Federation. In all these instances, students benefitted enormously from constructing their own dialogues and from having an opportunity to try different identities and interaction patterns than they normally experienced. I now view drama as an essential focus of oral work that should be experienced regularly rather than occasionally employed as an assembly item.
In selecting texts as a basis for encoding and decoding activities, I have been strongly influenced by Catholic school teacher, Vicky, and Montessorian, Ellen. Both of these teachers have acquired collections of beautiful story books. Each of them looks for a story that sympathetically portrays a human dilemma and is artistically presented. Both include folk tales in their collection which link to a specific culture and yet portray concerns of all cultures. I have also been influenced by Montessorian, Carol, who includes great classics in her selection of classroom novels and Steiner teacher, Bernadette, who enjoys sharing Shakespeare with her Year 4 class. As a result of these encounters, I have viewed my own collection of children’s literature in a new way identifying why I treasure each book. In every teacher training language class or conference workshop that I have conducted recently in Australia, Korea, and the United States, I have shared some of my collection and the rationale for acquiring them. I am now urging all teachers to have a broad knowledge of available resources in children’s literature. I believe to link one book to a specific skill can greatly reduce the potential of achieving a meaningful curriculum. Depending on the “big theme” and current interests of the children in the class, the teacher should have a number of beautiful and engaging fiction and non-fiction resources in mind for the students’ explorations.

My views on the broad applicability of children’s literature resources were strengthened by noting the contrast between my interviewees who value the extensive use of narrative and other teachers I have visited in connection with my supervision work who view it only as a language tool so that certain stories are for “Year 1” and certain stories for “Year 2”. Beautiful stories that support ‘big thoughts’ should not
be relegated to a specified year or time. They can be visited and revisited at any time, any age and still be meaningful.

Noting the similarity in Vicky and Ellen’s book collections, I began to revisit the possibilities of sharing between the Montessori language initiatives and the integrated language approach. I have reflected on Catholic teachers, Fran, Vicky and Kate and Government teachers, Lynne and Dan’s use of literary based integrated language strategies and I am increasingly convinced that they can be readily implemented in Montessori classrooms. I now believe that this can occur without sacrificing fundamentals of the Montessori pedagogy including multi-sensory concrete materials, multi-age groupings and autonomy in learning expressed through activity choice. When I expressed my concerns about potential conflicts in combining these approaches in the prologue of my journey (Refer to Prologue, p. viii), I had made the assumption that ‘integrated language’ usually implied that every student would be focusing on the same literary text or genre at the same time. This procedure is rarely the context of learning in a Montessori class where children may be exploring multiple subjects in the class at the same time. I was also worried that worksheets linking the text to language exploration might have to replace concrete equipment and children creating their own textbooks. The alternative, which I myself had tried, seemed to be that the teacher repeatedly prepared materials related to multiple texts being explored in the class that could be used with the didactic equipment. However, my interviews and observations helped to resolve this conflict for me. As I watched the older and younger pairs working on constructing stories in Nigel’s class and when Carol mentioned that her students meet in small groups to help edit each other’s work, I realised that I was forgetting some of the fundamentals of Montessori that could help
the contemporary integrated language curriculum work in these environments. Montessori did not only emphasise taking a whole and breaking it down to view its parts, but she also claimed that the parts need to be reconstructed to create the whole. She did not only mean that the teachers apply this dual approach in modelling, but that the students also deconstruct and construct as they explored concepts. One way for students to practise this is to teach others and prepare materials for others. Thus, for example, students in small groups could study a literary work and prepare materials for peers who might subsequently select this book. This might include providing sentences to be analysed using sentence analysis materials or symbolised with parts of speech symbols or making word cards for the grammar boxes. (Refer to Prologue endnotes.) It might also mean that in vocabulary focus, students might create sequencing exercises, word sleuths or clozes\textsuperscript{111} for each other. In each of these cases the child who prepares the context for deconstruction is reinforcing concepts as much as the child who elects to do this work. Other integrated language activity suggestions can be placed in a basket on the language shelf. Once a child has experienced making a story map, a story grammar, a plot graph, a character grid or

\textsuperscript{111} Sequencing Exercises, Word Sleuths and Clozes – A Sequencing exercise would have the student organise pictures or sentences to depict the sequence of story. A word sleuth hides key words in a maze of letters and is considered an appropriate activity to practice decoding in reading. A Cloze is an extract from the text with words missing that need to be filled in to create meaning. It is thus an activity to reinforce the function of parts of speech and sentence construction as well as comprehension of the original text.
converted a text from one genre to another\textsuperscript{112}, these skills can be applied to stories of the child’s choice.

The shared experiences of Vicky and Victoria also helped me to revitalise my language programme applicable to a Montessori school. They have found using multi-intelligence activities insures that children have experience exploring texts in a variety of ways allowing them to build on their challenge areas through their strengths. For example, a child with spatial ability might choose to create a diorama of a story, which will help build his/her language comprehension skills. This type of activity choice is readily applied in Montessori settings where children traditionally have work choice and collaborative learning opportunities. Victoria’s story of her students’ success in applying Bloom’s Taxonomy to language studies has also expanded my application of this process. (Refer to endnotes Chapter V). Although, I had previously placed suggested topics of exploration based on these levels in the classroom cultural area, I had never used it to encourage children to explore literary texts at deeper levels. This is an alternative to asking them literal, inferential and

\textsuperscript{112} These are some commonly used ‘integrated language’ activities. The term story map and story grammar are often used interchangeably, but I prefer to use the term story map for a visual portrayal of the plot or form of the story through pictures, pictures and labels, or sentences sequenced with arrows to portray the movement of the story. I use the term story grammar to mean an analysis of the components of the narrative including characters, significant events, conflict and resolution, ending as well as the author’s purpose. A plot graph uses events as one axis and an affective measure of excitement or incident as the other access. A character grid would necessitate matching characters and descriptive adjectives. Genre conversion means putting the ideas of the text into a different format, e.g. from a literary text to a play, poem, or news article, etc.
applied/evaluative questions. Again, I have been reminded that students can learn as much from creating activities and questions as from responding to them. I have also started practising some wider applications of Montessori activities. The *Who Am I?* game is often a choice of activity in zoology or geography where the child is given increasingly specific classification clues as required to guess the identity of a place or creature. I had previously noticed that children gain a great deal from creating these quiz cards for each other. Influenced by the stories of non-Montessori teachers, I realised that this activity is very appropriate for literary exploration as well and I have included it as an idea in both my Montessori and non-Montessori teacher training language classes.

I believe one of the reasons I have found so much applicability of integrated language approach ideas to the Montessori setting recently is that with the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) implementation, teachers are encouraged to view children’s progress on an individual basis in providing lessons and activities related to outcome goals. I have witnessed more and more classrooms trialling small group and collaborative learning models as a way of meeting a spectrum of needs. One can no longer distinguish a Montessori classroom from a Government or Catholic classroom based on how the children are grouped or whether the teacher is standing at the front of the classroom. For this reason, classroom organisation strategies that I used to discuss with Montessori teacher students are now very relevant to non-Montessori teacher training as well.

Although recent classroom observations have helped me appreciate the benefit of small group and collaborative learning in all educational settings, I have also been
reminded that it is still important to create occasions when the whole class is exploring the same narrative. This affirms the class identity as they make predictions, identify with the characters, and experience the conflict and resolution collectively. Class narratives become part of class memories of shared experiences. My interviewee teachers from all four educational cultural milieus referred to the peace that descends on the class as they collectively listen to a story. Sam and Bernadette also made me realise that although it is a group experience, listening to the same narrative highlights the individuality of the listeners as well. They identify with different characters, experience emotion, excitement or curiosity at different places in the narrative. Thus, reading or telling a story to the class as an audience helps the teacher and the student listeners to appreciate that their class is a unique interweaving of individual personalities. In my own primary class I used to read to the students as a group on some afternoons. Now I think group reading or story telling should be a daily occurrence in all classrooms – children’s and adults’. For Montessori teachers who prepare shelf activities and integrated language teachers who might create learning stations, whole class stories – literary or historically based – can provide an engaging basis for language tasks that can later be pursued independently or in small groups. I have also learned that meaningful text for use with language activities can be created from the real narrative of the class and might relate to excursions, themes, and “big stories” as well as individual interests. I now believe that material based on actual experience is engaging as a context for language study because it relates to the children’s own journey.
**My Understanding of the Human Journey**

I have long valued the extended work periods available in the Montessori classroom in which children can explore interests at their own pace. I noticed in the Reggio Emilia influenced classrooms that there was a similar acknowledgement that some children benefit from spending long periods of time exploring a single subject, while others may change more frequently. By the end of my study, I was gratified to see some of the more traditional classrooms having language mornings or maths mornings more like Bernadette and Sam’s main lesson in the Steiner class and in great contrast to the previously fragmented curriculum. Not only did my research uphold the importance of long work periods, but I became more conscious of catering for the rhythm of the individuals and the class. It occurred to me in interviewing the Steiner teachers in particular that a narrative format of lesson plan within the narrative pattern of the day reflects the rhythm of the human journey. In my own classes I am now much more conscious of beginning each day with a catalyst of engagement and ending each day with a time for reflection as well as each lesson along the way. Without these rhythmic patterns, the learning experience is disjointed. The Steiner teachers also made me aware that the group rhythm can be catered for as well as individual rhythms which are particularly respected in the Montessori environment. Many Montessori teachers have reported the period of restlessness mid-morning in the classroom which Montessori termed ‘false-fatigue’ (Montessori, 1917/1964). I always believed this was something to be tolerated especially when I noted that children consistently become refocused in their work, often concentrating intensely following this time of inattentiveness. Steiner teachers, Sam and Bernadette, made me realise that despite the varied rhythms of the individual children, there is a class rhythm. This inattentive time, rather than a time to “get through” might be a time to
sing a song, say a verse or otherwise refocus students in a rhythmic pattern. Through my study, I have also been reminded by Montessori and Steiner teachers of the importance of alternating periods of activity with periods of quiet or even silence. The implementation of such a rhythmic pattern has enabled me to teach 3 hour and even 8 hour intensive university classes without complaints of fatigue.

Related to the rhythms of the classroom are the rituals and traditions that contribute to the cultural milieu of the school. Aside from celebrating birthdays Montessori style, with a pantomime around the globe, I had not considered the importance of ritual and tradition in school settings prior to this research. Perhaps, like others educated during positivistic eras, I viewed most rituals as belonging to unscientific, antiquated cultures and times. My views on this subject have changed dramatically. Some of the experiences that altered my views were: sharing a time of meditation and watching children preparing for their first Communion in the Catholic classroom and viewing candles being lit and hearing birthday poems and choral poetry in the Steiner class. Also, I had long enjoyed the demonstration of the summer and winter solstices using a globe and torch in Montessori geography studies. Seeing the solstices celebrated through festivals at Ellen’s Montessori school and Sam and Bernadette’s Waldorf school added a depth and appreciation for the seasonal rhythm of our journey. Part of the magic of these festivals was provided by merging logico-scientific and narrative thought in the celebration. Lantern parades, puppetry portraying creation tales and rhythmic songs all contributed to a narrative appreciation of the scientific phenomenon.
In a way, my new appreciation for these rituals also reinforced my awareness that it is extremely important to merge paradigmatic and narrative thinking. I began to really listen to young children’s animistic explanations that aided them in understanding their worlds and to marvel at this evidence of abstract thinking. I stopped viewing these stories as evidence of immature thought processing and began to view them as characteristic of a different type of understanding. These experiences have motivated me to use more metaphor in my teaching including inviting student and practicing teachers to have a ‘root’ metaphor in mind for their work that can change as their own perceptions and goals evolve. My own ‘root’ metaphor at the commencement of my journey was a roller coaster. To me this accurately reflected the highs and lows of primary school teaching, the complex emotions of fear, hope and exhilaration and the lack of directness or clarity in the curriculum pathway. My ‘root’ metaphor now is an entirely different image:

I am in a circle with my class of 20+ students dressed in a variety of colours and representing multi-cultural origins. Their expressions display a variety of temperaments. Nevertheless, they all watch intently as I share a narrative with them portrayed through dance. Varied students begin to join in until the whole group are performing the choreography with joy, skill and concentration. Then the students move off – some alone and some into small groups. After a time of practice, they take turns sharing their dances with the group. Each dance is unique and yet each incorporates some of the steps we performed as a class. Then we all dance together again but each person has added a few new steps that they have observed from the performances of their peers.
Communally, we share the music, the rhythm and the enjoyment of the activity but each choreography is unique.

I believe my ‘root’ metaphor reflects my new awareness of the importance of education in listening for the voice of each child. Due to my Montessori background, I have long viewed the primary role of a teacher to be that of a ‘facilitator’. Although this term implies that the teacher respects the child and his/her job of self-construction, I no longer believe that this adequately describes the dynamic relationship that can occur in a classroom where the learning process is viewed as a shared journey. This altered view was partially influenced by my interviews with Steiner teachers Bernadette and Sam who teach the same class of children for seven years and reflect on their own evolvement as they participate in the children’s ‘unfolding’. I was also inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach educators including Montessori teacher, Shawn. They value the dialogue of children out of which project interests are identified to be explored individually and as a community. If the curriculum is a fluid evolving interaction based on a subject (Grumet, 1988; Pinar et al, 1994; Palmer, 1998), then a teaching/learning community is established in which teachers and students explore a subject together and acknowledge that each can learn from the other.

This positive and safe milieu where dialogue is valued can lead to fostering what interviewee, Fran, termed ‘an authentic voice’. Through small group discussions and careful sensitive questioning, children can learn to value their own opinions and tolerate different views. Fran, Vicky, Nigel and Victoria were models for me in
getting children to find their own authentic voice through discussing characters in literary works and in biographies. Children who can identify motivations and virtues in characters can find these characteristics in themselves and others.

From Carol and Ellen, I learned to use biography more effectively to motivate children. Just as in my ‘dance’ metaphor, children can begin to absorb ideas and attitudes from these life stories that provide them with a multiplicity of potential pathways. As a result, my recent lectures on primary school education to teachers and parents have included biographical descriptions as models of life choices and problem solving. Egan’s work (1986,1997) on understandings and the Steiner view on human development paralleling historic development has reinforced my curriculum choices for primary school children. It seems highly appropriate to motivate children with stories of heroes and phenomena when they are interested in viewing the extremes of reality. Likewise, I have found support for my view that, contrary to a common misconception by many Montessori teachers, selected fairy tales and fantasy stories are not harmful for young children providing that their image formation is not dictated and that they are also exposed to the wonders of the natural world. In fact, the Steiner teachers and Bettelheim (1977) provide a convincing argument that there are many universal themes in folk and fairy tales that help children understand life’s journey at a time when their thinking is mythical and animistic.

My views on sharing news have also evolved. I think it is important to encourage children to share what they are, rather than what they have (Wolf, 1996). The autobiography project of Shawn’s class was an excellent model in how to do this. For young children, objects in the “Me Box” are reminders of events, not the focus of the
sharing. I also felt that the news sharing in small groups that I observed in Kate’s class was important in providing a small safe group for sharing and practising listening skills. For the middle primary children in Shawn, Dan and Ellen’s classes, researching the countries and cultures of the students’ origins as well as name origins seemed a very appropriate way to celebrate each child’s uniqueness as well as cultural identities. In Shawn’s school this culminated in a study of American society with a focus on its common ideals as well as cultural diversity. I would like to encourage a similar study in Australian classrooms which in my experience are very culturally diverse.

In the year prior to commencing this research, I invited older generations into my upper primary classroom to share their stories about their childhoods in Australia and their memories of the war and depression. I would continue to encourage this intergenerational sharing or sharing by the elders also endorsed by Dan and Ellen. In addition, I would ensure that representatives of various cultures in the community came to my classroom to share their stories. A literature review (Paley, 1997; Holmes, 1997), a workshop (Fatowna, 2001) and interview data from Dan and Fran convinced me of the effectiveness of multicultural sharing with students from preprimary to adulthood. Like Holmes (1997) and Fatowna (2001), I would recommend that student teachers and new teachers interview elders of the indigenous people in their communities so that they are in a position to benefit from the richness of the diversity in their classrooms as well as encouraging an understanding of the values, concerns and protocol of these cultures.
I have realised from my interviewees that the opportunity to share our stories with other adults working in education should be realised more often. All the teachers interviewed indicated that they would welcome more opportunity to share their ideas with other teachers. As my study progressed, I noted more collaboration between teachers in programme planning in the Government and Catholic schools usually as a result of the *Curriculum Framework* implementation. However, there was little evidence of personal narrative sharing except for Playback Theatre in Ellen’s Montessori school and the autobiography workshop noted by both Steiner teachers. In that particular workshop, teachers drew three tables from their lives and then described the memories and experiences associated with those table images. I have tried this exercise with student teachers on a few occasions resulting in meaningful sharing. In the future, I will implement this type of exercise early in the course rather than for closure. Sharing at the beginning helps to establish networks. In the last intensive course I co-ordinated, I devoted the first six hours to sharing between the teachers. It amazed me that I was able to cover the entire course in the shortened time period because so many liaisons had been formed as a result of the sharing. The consequent networking of students made the workshop portions of the class much more efficient in cooperative problem solving. From now on the first day of any course I implement will be devoted to sharing personal narrative.

As a Montessori teacher, I have always had a great appreciation for the benefits of multi-sensory experiences in learning concepts. Before commencing this research, I also had a knowledge of learning styles which I tried to address by offering a wide choice of learning activities to cater for visual, kinesthetic and auditory orientations. Through reading and interview data I have become much more aware of the
application of MI (Gardner, 1983, 1993; Biggs, 2001b), Myers Briggs type (Murphy, 1992) and Steiner temperament theories to understanding personal narrative as well as programme planning. All of these models have made me aware of the tendency of teachers to invite students to explore concepts in their own preferred style or orientation. As a visual learner, I had to learn to appreciate the inclination to learn through movement and the necessity of hearing instructions several times for other types of learners. Aware that I favour linguistic, musical, logico-mathematical and intrapersonal intelligence, I am working to incorporate more spatial, kinesthetic and nature activities and more opportunities for collaboration and interpersonal dialogue in my classrooms. Like Vicky and Victoria, I am encouraging my students to recognise their own intelligences so that they can develop others as well as working on their strengths through their weaknesses. For example, I believe I am meeting the needs of more student teachers by inviting more role playing and artistic activities in workshops.

After interviewing Sam and Bernadette, I began to appreciate that temperament theory is not about limiting people by putting them in boxes. Rather it is about helping people to understand their natural tendencies of interacting with the world and appreciating how they are different from others. Being aware of one’s orientations also helps to define challenges for the self. I would probably be a melancholic in Steiner terms, although Phlegmatic traits are also probably strong. However, I have come to appreciate the extroversion of the Sanguine and the energy of the Choleric. (Refer to Chapter V endnotes). This Steiner introduction to temperament theory and interviewee Vicky’s interest in Jung’s work led me to eagerly explore the Jungian based Myers Briggs when it was presented as part of a communications course I was
teaching for teacher education. I found the multiple personality combinations acknowledged through this theory more applicable to my self-understanding and teaching practices than the quadrant models such as Steiner. This past year in my Interpersonal Communication course for teachers, I had one Extrovert. In previous years, I might have been irritated by tendency to socialise at the beginning of each class and to call out responses at will. As a result of appreciating varied temperaments, I found myself grateful for the fun she injected into the class and for her eagerness to role play which inspired her more introverted peers. Likewise in my Early Childhood Play-based Curriculum class, I had three Sensate students who requested very specific details of assignment expectations. Previously, I would have felt impatient with these requests when I felt I had issued clear instructions. Now I recognised their need for these details. I also recognised that for the Intuitive students this review of assignment specifications was tedious, so the sessions for this purpose were at the end of class and voluntary. I thus found applicability of my new found knowledge that temperaments are an important variable of our personal narrative – not to be treated positively or negatively, but to be understood as varied approaches to processing interactions with the external world on the human journey.

My Understanding of the Use of Narrative for Transformation
In my view, one of the fundamentals of the Montessori philosophy is the view that wonder should be nourished in the young child. This view was reinforced by my interview encounters with all the Montessori teachers who were committed to nurturing a sense of wonder which they linked strongly to a love of learning and a sense of purpose. Waldorf teacher, Sam, also identified wonder as a key learning goal of early childhood and Catholic school teacher, Liz Peel, explained that it is
viewed as essential to spiritual development in R.E. Just as those who have done extensive work on oracy (Ong, 1982; Egan, 1997) caution that we should try to maintain some of the important attributes of this way of thinking, so too should a sense of wonder be nourished throughout life. It was naturalist, Eric McCrum, who helped me start to see nature with amazement once again. However, I realise that listening to the observations of children such as exemplified in Shawn’s bird conversation, can also reawaken teachers’ sense of wonder. This can only happen in a teacher/learner community where each participant is open to learning from every other one – regardless of age or experience.

Catholic teachers Vicky, Fran and Kate and Montessori teacher, Nigel, along with educators, Wolf (1996) and Palmer (1998), made me realise that when wonder is experienced, it can contribute to personal transformation if it is reflected upon. I have tried to prioritise quiet, reflective or meditative times into my own day and encourage this in my students. This represents a significant change from my previous frantic pace of living and teaching. For me journalling has long been a critical tool for reflection and I have experienced that writing for me can precipitate change as I connect ideas and experiences. However, prior to this research journey, I had not been effective in scaffolding the journalling process with most of my primary or tertiary students. Interview dialogue with Fran, Shawn and Vicky as well as the influence of La Chapelle (1997) have provided me with insight that has changed how I facilitate the journalling process. From La Chapelle (1997), Vicky and Fran, I was reminded that the purpose of journalling should be clear – it is a safe place to use writing to explore one’s thoughts and the audience is only the writer. They also made me aware that journalling time should be flexible – used when something has
occurred in class that can precipitate reflection. Written work of a reflective nature can result from the journal, but the journal should never be assessed as a genre of writing. From Shawn, I became aware of the potential of scaffolding journalling with children by inviting them to journal orally with a scribe – always reinforcing that the scribe is a tool, not an audience. It is important to remember that in early primary years, most children do not use their writing to engage with their thoughts. Journalling can be scaffolded by inviting these children to reflect at appropriate moments during the class day so that they begin to associate writing with thought clarification and personal change. Although tertiary students have the capability of reflecting through writing, I believe utilising some creative journalling ideas such as dialogues, continuous writing and imaginative visualisations can help them to recognise the versatility of this reflection method (La Chapelle, 1997). I will thus continue to use journalling in my tertiary teaching courses, but I will place more emphasis on the personal empowerment of exploring thoughts and ideas on paper.

Striving for virtues is another focus area that I had implemented in my upper primary classroom and used in parent education. Nigel, Fran, and Victoria demonstrated how fictional narrative could help children to identify and understand the importance of virtues. From Nigel, I also obtained the idea of combining a virtue focus with rituals celebrating personal change in the form of “virtue stones”. My teacher education students reported that they were very moved by the opportunity to hear stories about their own virtues and to provide feedback on positive qualities and changes observed in their peers. This acknowledgement of positive personal attributes will become a tradition in my teaching of all age groups.
Using the virtues to define personal goals is one way to explore the possibility of personal change and it readily complements the individual goal setting that has long been a part of Montessori classrooms. Victoria made me realise that self-evaluation as an important aspect of the learning journey is now being recognised as important in more traditional school settings. Outcome based goal setting such as that incorporated in the *Curriculum Framework* helps teachers and students define both class and individual goals. In my future teaching, I will make more effort to involve students of whatever age in selecting and self-assessing outcomes and goals; I am now convinced that life cannot be experienced as meaningful and purposeful unless one has a sense of past, present and future events in the personal journey (Dilks, 2000).

I know (Refer to Prologue) that teachers in my life have influenced my choice of goals and my perception of education. As Ritchie and Wilson, (2000), I plan to consistently afford student teachers the opportunity to revisit their own teaching/learning experiences and to use these personal experiences as a foundation to formulating their own pedagogies. There is definitely a place for personal narrative in the university classroom and that place should be acknowledged during the first day (Refer Chapter VIII). Also for university teacher education students, I will continue to do what has worked successfully for me in the past year – arranging meetings between teacher education students and committed teachers who are passionate about their work and elected pedagogy.

Mentors can clearly influence one’s goal setting and that can begin early in life. In future, I will advocate inviting people into the classroom, who might be considered
community heroes, as mentors for children. For younger children, these mentors provide models of hope. For older children, they can inspire them to perform their own community ‘heroic’ works (Giraffe, 1996).

Although prior to this research, I was conscious of sharing hero stories and mythologies with my primary classes, activities and discussion were primarily linked to literature exploration. My interviews with Sam and Bernadette made me aware that studying archetypes is a way to gain insight into universal human tendencies and universal conflicts and resolutions. Nigel’s literary archetypes and Kate and Fran’s biblical archetypes seemed to be viewed in a similar way. I am now very aware that personal transformation entails gaining insight into one’s uniqueness, but in a context of universal patterns of meaning. In future teaching, I will encourage students to go beyond a superficial exploration of character, to detect these universal patterns and find the relevance to their own life decisions.

Story can also provide models of conflict resolution. Prior to my research, I considered myself a peacemaker with adequate conflict resolution skills. My investigation of narrative applications has given me a new perspective on this narrative property. Conflict is not something to be endured or avoided; it is inherent in all narratives including personal ones. I am now viewing it as an essential ingredient for change. This has put a different slant on my teaching of mediation skills to primary students and communication skills to teacher education students. Learning to listen to and value the stories of others in a non-judgmental way is easier if one views a difference of opinion as a stepping stone to greater meaning in life.
Using ‘third party’ stories of allegories can also help alter behaviour in a non-judgmental way. In fact, as I became exposed to the effective use of bibliocounselling by Sam, Bernadette and Nigel, I became more adept at using story to promote reflection on behaviour and better able to support my previously held view that behaviour modification token reward system is a tool that should be used only as a last resort. As noted by Kohn (1999) and experienced by my student teacher, Sharon, such systems, if used extensively, destroy the rhythm of the class, distort the teacher/learner relationship and detract from the important lesson that each child is responsible for his/her own narrative.

Conflicts can also be created by a critical incident in one’s life, often experienced as a wounding or a disorientation (Mezirow, 1985a, 1985b; Carrigg, 1997; Houston 1996). Interview data revealed that many of the interviewees had had experiences that launched them on new pathways as they endeavoured to resolve the conflict and find new meaning in their lives. For me, my journey began with two profound experiences involving narrative (See Prologue) which made me dissatisfied with the fragmentation I was observing in many classrooms including my own. These experiences led to transformative learning. I now feel that narrative and meaning are inextricably linked and using narrative to integrate and connect experience can lead to cognitive, personal and even spiritual change.

I am indebted to Csikszentmihalyi (1997) and Aline Wolf (1998) for clarifying that religion is one guided pathway to spirituality, but not the only one. Their work and the reflections of Vicky and Nigel helped me to address my concern that as a result of the separation of church and state in school systems, we are unable to give children a
means of finding purpose in their lives. Wonder, an awareness of values and virtues, and reflection can be nurtured in varied educational settings, Christian or non-sectarian. When humans begin to make universal connections that are beyond their immediate experience, they can be transformed spiritually. I now realise that the reason I am profoundly moved when listening or relating the ‘big stories’ in Montessori is that they lead to connection making by celebrating the magnificence of a purposeful, meaningful interdependent universe in which I have a role to play. This journey has helped me to understand the paradox described by MacIntyre (1984) that to fully realise the potential of our own journey, we must assume communal responsibility.

 Narrative helps people to make connections by bridging all disciplines and learning domains as well as all cultures. Whether the engaging narrative is mythological as in Steiner education, historical as in Montessori, literary as in many Government schools or Biblical as in many Catholic schools, it still has the power to foster meaning-making. As a result of this realisation, I find that I am now quite comfortable in using fictional stories to explain scientific phenomenon and make scientific and social studies non-fiction resources available to help students better understand stories and novels. Likewise, I am finding imaginary and real archetype figures that make my life meaningful. I am thus able to encourage my students to seek theirs in mythology, literature, and biography. Interwoven through any curriculum I design is an opportunity to share personal narrative. I now recognise that these varied curriculum domains and types of thinking are all tools for understanding universal questions of the human journey – a quest for meaning that begins with the emergence of abstract thinking in early childhood and continues throughout the human life cycle.
For me, the completion of this research marks the beginning of many more journeys. As I have reflected on what I have learned, many new questions have arisen to which I hope to find answers in explorations with my education students and in the community schools at my next educational milieu, The University of Wisconsin at River Falls. What I want to teach is how to use narrative to make connections that lead to meaningful communication, understanding oneself and one’s community, and experiencing transformation. I want to convey the excitement of participating in creating a meta-story which continuously unfolds with each new connection marking another chapter.

I was writing a new episode each day, totally immersed in the world I was creating with the all-encompassing power of words, transformed into a multifaceted being, reproduced to infinity, seeing my own reflection in multiple mirrors, living countless lives, speaking with many voices. (Allende, 1987, p. 263)
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Appendix A

Maria Montessori and the Montessori Method

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was the first woman to earn a doctor of medicine degree in Italy. She decided to apply her knowledge of scientific method to learning environments and effectively revolutionised education. Her ideas for schooling were formulated during her directorship of a day care centre at the San Lorenzo Housing project where she created a school called Casa di Bambini for 3-7 year olds in 1907. From observing children working quietly with concrete educational materials, she developed a methodology in total contrast to the teacher-directed, rote learning method of the day. By 1909 she had opened four schools and started her first teacher-training programme. In the next few decades, schools were opened in the U.K., the United States, and throughout Europe. When Mussolini closed her Italian school in 1934, Maria moved to Holland which became her base until her death. However, she continued to lecture and teach worldwide including a stay of two years in India in the 1940’s where she formulated many of her ideas for a cosmic or integrated curriculum for the primary school. Today there are thousands of schools and teacher-training programmes worldwide.

Montessori taught modern educators that the school environment must be especially prepared for children and modified according to the developmental stages of physical, intellectual and social growth. She viewed learning as a developmental and constructive process with nature and nurture interacting in the child’s process of fulfilling potential. She also believed that recognising and responding to a child’s sensitive periods for learning would help the child to develop skills in language, movement, sense perception, order and social relations in early childhood. Montessori visualised a child-centered triad with the child at the peak making choices about his/her own learning while supported by an environment that included self-correcting, multi-sensory materials and child-sized furniture. The teacher assumed the role of a guide or facilitator. Rewards and punishments did not have a role in this triad which was based on the respect of the teacher and child for each other, the environment, and the learning process. Montessori viewed children’s development in 6 year cycles: three years of active
and rapid development including dramatic physical development followed by three years of consolidation of skills and less dramatic changes. The Montessori curriculum is based on three-year cycles, which allows for benefits of multi-age grouping including lesson presentations that cater for a wide spectrum of development. In addition, the three-year age span means older children have the opportunity to be models for younger children as well as having the opportunity to consolidate skills by teaching others.

It could be said that Montessori’s method supported her philosophy that science could be applied to education to encourage autonomy and responsibility. She believed that if these qualities of self-construction are nurtured in children, then peace could result. In contrast, she claimed that the authoritarian model of education disempowered people and thus contributed to the emergence of dictatorships and consequent wars.

The aim of Montessori education is to develop each person’s ability to the fullest extent while celebrating and enhancing his or her own uniqueness and cultural background. The goal of education is the development of autonomous, competent, responsible (to themselves, other humans, and the environment), adaptive citizens – lifelong learners and problem solvers. Respect, competency, responsibility, self-initiative, and self-management are valued. (Barron, 1992, p. 268)

Appendix B

Rudolf Steiner and The Waldorf Schools

Rudolf Steiner (1961-1925) was an Austrian born scientist, philosopher and educator who earned his doctorate in mathematics and science in 1891. Like Montessori, he believed that by changing the fundamental ways in which children were educated, spiritual insight would be attained and peace ensured. He was influenced both by Western science and by Germanic Christianity and the modern spiritual movement that found its primary sources in Hinduism.

The first Waldorf school, sponsored by industrialist Emil Molt, was opened in 1919 in the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany. It was co-ed, tuition-free and “a radical departure from contemporary educational norms” (Lemmo, 1997). The movement spread and the first USA Waldorf School opened in Manhattan in 1928. Today there are over 700 Waldorf schools in 40 countries.

Steiner based his pedagogy on Anthroposophy – a philosophy supporting the understanding of the whole human being as body (thinking), soul (feeling), and spirit (willing) (Childs, 1991; Sloan, 1996). He believed that the purpose of education should be to support the student’s unfolding towards his/her full potential in all these dimensions. He drew a parallel between the individual’s development of consciousness and historic development of civilisations. For this reason, the curriculum was based on fables, fairy tales and mythologies that paralleled this development and thus would cater to the child’s level of understanding. Subjects are taught imaginatively and artistically and the curriculum is viewed as an ascending spiral with regards to knowledge and spiritual insight.

The curriculum is designed to respond to various phases of child development. The first seven years, the child experiences that the world is good through imitation, repetition, ritual and fantasy. In great contrast to the Montessori movement, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of oral tradition in these early years and thus reading and writing are not introduced until after age seven. The teacher is like a ‘traditional’ parent whom the child can both imitate and assist in experiencing whole processes such as bread baking or jam making (Wishart, 2000).

In the second seven-year cycle, from ages 7-13, through his/her imagination, the child experiences that the world is beautiful. Steiner views development in terms of energy in the thought system, feeling system and will. At this age the student continues the growth of the rhythmic system through motion, language and music which Steiner viewed as also helping to create a balance between will and thought. Steiner placed a great emphasis on the imagination at this age and artistic activities including experience with music, shape, and form help him/her to form images. He believed that “it is this vital picture-making capacity that gives life and insight to
logical and conceptual thinking” (Sloan, 1996, p. xv). Art, movement and music are thus interwoven with studies in all subjects. The teacher who ideally teaches the children for the entire seven-year cycle is a benevolent leader whom the child can emulate.

The third cycle, ages 14-21 is characterised by rational judgement and an experience that the world is true. As the student of this age becomes a complete being, he/she no longer needs the external teacher, and the role of teacher becomes that of guide or facilitator. The student of this age is encouraged to make decisions and explore the world in which he/she lives.

(Childs, 1991; Edmunds, 1992; Wilkinson, 1993; Finser, 1994; Marshak, 1997; Sloan 1996; Lemmo, 1997).
Appendix C

The Reggio Emilia Approach

Reggio Emilia is a city of 130,000 people in northern Italy. It is home to an innovative early childhood education programme. Here, in 1945, at the end of the Fascist dictatorship and WWII, the women joined with the men left after the war and founded and built schools for their children. The teachers wanted to develop new ways of teaching in tune with democratic society and looked to Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky for inspiration. Educator, Loris Malguzzi, became the director of the schools and defined the characteristics of the socioconstructivist pedagogy that would become known as the Reggio Emilia approach. In 1963 the city government took over running the peoples’ schools. By the end of the 70’s, the schools for young children in Reggio Emilia had grown to 19 in number and the building of infant-toddler centres had begun. In the 80’s the international scene became interested in Reggio. Children’s work was sent around the world in an exhibit and international teachers began visiting Reggio to learn how to implement this approach.

The Reggio Emilia environment is beautiful and highly personal. It is arranged to encourage interaction and choice. Relationships are valued and children often work in small groups. Multi-media are used for symbolic expression as children explore a project area. Languages – or modes of expression – include words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play and music. The emergent curriculum often results in long-term projects based on interests determined in dialogue with the children. The children’s work is carefully documented by transcripts of discussions, photographs and portfolios. The work is valued, shared with the parents and the community and used for professional growth and communication.

Loris Malguzzi emphasises three key points of the Reggio Emilia approach: socioconstructivism, careful reflection in the program that is constantly evolving and “to do nothing without joy”.

(Edwards, Gandini, Forman, 1993; Hendrick, 1997)
Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. How do you use narrative in your classroom?

2. Tell me about the children’s own narrative creations (samples appreciated)

3. What do you believe is gained by using narrative (stories or poems) in the classroom?

1. How do you see story as related to your philosophy or the philosophy or ethos of your school?

7. What opportunities do you have to explore your personal narrative in the school setting?
8. What are some stories that are meaningful to you as an adult?

Additional helpful information:

- When and where did you do your training? What type of training?

- What have you drawn upon that you have found particularly beneficial? Reading? Resources? Models? Mentors? Workshops?

- In what school systems have you taught and what grades have you taught?

- How long have you been teaching?

Gay Ward '98-'99
Dear Name of Principal,

I am a former primary school teacher and have taught several grade levels in the past eight years. I am currently engaged in PhD research at The University of Notre Dame Australia exploring the use of narrative across the curriculum in primary schools. I am collecting data through observations and in-depth interviews with teachers working in schools representative of various methodologies and curriculum formats. (eg. Government, Montessori, Steiner, Catholic, etc.) I am interested in noting the similarities and differences in the use of narrative in different classrooms.

I seek your permission to ask ____________________________ if I might interview her/him out of school time as I feel her/his ideas regarding the use of story will provide valuable insight for my study. If___________________________ is willing and it can be arranged without disruption to the students, I would also be interested in observing the class on a prearranged morning or afternoon that is convenient for her/him.
Because this is a non-funded study, I am not able to provide remuneration but I would be delighted to share my findings with you or any of your staff who are interested. I feel that a compilation and sharing of ideas for using narrative to create meaning in primary education is potentially interesting for all educators of this age group. I also assure you that requests for anonymity will be respected in any presentation or publication of my work. Unless otherwise specified, designated pseudonyms will identify the teachers and the schools will only be identified by type and location. (eg. Catholic Primary School #3, Western Australia or Montessori School #2, Ohio, USA, etc.)

If the teachers interviewed wish to provide samples of children’s work to clarify points, I would ask that children be identified only by age and gender and that parental permission be gained for sharing this work in an anonymous way.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would give the attached letter to ________________ if you have no objection to her/his participation in my study so that I might arrange a suitable interview time. I will phone in a few days to follow up this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Gay Ward
Appendix F

Interviewer’s address
Interviewer’s email
Interviewer’s phone number
Date

Teacher
Name of Primary School
Address

Dear Name of Teacher,

I am a former primary school teacher and have taught several grade levels during the last eight years. I am currently engaged in PhD research at The University of Notre Dame Australia exploring the use of narrative across the curriculum in primary schools. I am collecting data through observations and in-depth interviews with teachers working in schools representative of various methodologies and curriculum formats. (e.g. Government, catholic, Montessori, Steiner, other independent, etc.) I am interested in noting the similarities and differences in the use of narrative in different classrooms.

I seek your permission to interview you for a few hours out of school time as I feel your ideas regarding the use of story will provide valuable insight for my study. I am attaching some of the questions that I will pose to you. If you are willing and it can be arranged without disruption to the students, I would also be interested in observing your class on a prearranged morning or afternoon that is convenient for you.
Because this is a non-funded study, I am not able to provide remuneration but I would be delighted to share my findings with you or any of your associates who are interested. I feel that a compilation and sharing of ideas for using narrative to create meaning in primary education is potentially interesting for all educators of this age group. I also assure you that requests for anonymity will be respected in any presentation or publication of my work. Unless otherwise specified, pseudonyms rather than actual names will identify the teachers and the schools will only be identified by a number, type and location (e.g. Catholic Primary School #3, Western Australia or Montessori School #2, Ohio, USA, etc.).

If you wish to provide samples of children’s work to clarify points, I would ask that children be identified only by age and gender and that parental permission be gained for sharing this work in an anonymous way. I am attaching a sample permission form for this purpose.

If you are willing to be interviewed, I would greatly appreciate it if you would contact me to arrange a mutually convenient time. Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Gay Ward
Appendix G

Parental Permission Form

Date _____________________________

Dear ___________________________,

I have agreed to assist Mrs. Gay Ward, a primary teacher and a Notre Dame Ph.D. student, in her research on the varied uses of narrative in the primary school classroom. In explaining how we use story in our class, it will be helpful to me to share some of the students' work.

I ask your permission and that of your child, ____________________________, to share some of his/her work with Mrs. Ward. I will provide a copy identified only by age and gender so anonymity will be preserved. If you have any
concerns regarding the use of your child's work in this way, please let me know by the end of next week.

Yours sincerely,
Appendix H

I understand that my interview responses are being used in conjunction with Gay Ward’s research on

Title: *Narrative, meaning making and personal development: Teachers’ storied experience in Montessori, Steiner and other primary classrooms.*

In the thesis and any related publications I would like to be referred to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis</th>
<th>Related Publications</th>
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<tr>
<td>by my own name</td>
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<tr>
<td>by a pseudonym</td>
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<td>by either my own name or a pseudonym</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In the thesis forward, I understand that Gay will be thanking participants who will be listed by name, not school or type of school. In this instance, I would like to be referred to by

☐ my own name

☐ the pseudonym

☐ used in the text

______________________________  __________________
Signature                          Date
Appendix I

Observation Sheet

School ___________________________       Grade___________

Type of School: _________________________________________

Adults and roles: _________________________________________

Classroom Environment:

Seating arrangement:

Displays:

Other:

Lesson:
Subject: _________________________  Topic: _______________________

Story used or reference to narrative? _______________________________________

Means of delivery of lesson ________________________________________________

How children arranged during lesson ________________________________________

Evidence of theme? _______________________________________________________

**Follow - on:**

Type of activity __________________________________________________________

Grouping (individual, paired, small group) ___________________________________

Evidence of peer tutoring? _________________________________________________

Teacher role during follow - on ___________________________________________

**Additional Information:**
Evidence of use of narrative in the class?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Indication that narrative used across subjects? ________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Additonal Comments:
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Observer: __________________________________

Date:_________________
Time:_______________
Appendix J

Sample Coding – Montessori

Q.S.R. NUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.
Licensee: Gay Ward.

PROJECT: Narrative, User Gay Ward,
(1) /Montessori
(11) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story
(11 3) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)
(11 3 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning
(11 3 1 5) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning/Approximation
(11 3 1 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning/Engagement
(11 3 1 1 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning/Engagement/Demonstration
(11 3 1 1 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning/Engagement/Immersion
(11 3 1 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning/Expectation
(11 3 1 4) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Cambourne -Natural Learning/Responsibility
(11 3 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Conditions for Learning (learning principles)/Engagement
(11 5) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Grouping
(11 5 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Grouping/individual
(11 5 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Grouping/Small group
(11 5 3) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Grouping/Whole class
(11 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process
(11 2 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Cross Subject Themes
(11 2 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Fiction and Non-Fiction
(11 2 4) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Narrative Base
(11 2 4 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Narrative Base/historical narrative
(11 2 4 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Narrative Base/myth base
(11 2 6) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/rituals and traditions
(11 2 5) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Story Path
(11 2 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Integrative Process/Universal Themes
(11 4) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson
(11 4 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Montessori stages
(11 4 2 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Montessori stages/"Show Me"
(11 4 2 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Montessori stages/"This is"
(11 4 2 3) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Montessori stages/"What Is"
(11 4 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Whole Language Stages (e.g. Reid and Green)
(11 4 1 1) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Whole Language Stages (e.g. Reid and Green)/Engagement
(11 4 1 2) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Whole Language Stages (e.g. Reid and Green)/Exploration
(11 4 1 4) /Montessori/Curriculum and Story/Stages of Lesson/Whole Language Stages (e.g. Reid and Green)/Presentation

570
Montessori/Integration-Aspects of language curric. and language modalities/Told and Read Stories/Told
Montessori/Integration-Aspects of language curric. and language modalities/Told and Read Stories/Told/student
Montessori/Integration-Aspects of language curric. and language modalities/Told and Read Stories/Told/Teacher
Montessori/Personal Narrative
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Student
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Student/ Mont and life issues
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Student/journalising
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Teacher
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Teacher/journalising
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Teacher/Life Events
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Teacher/ Sharing teaching
Montessori/Personal Narrative/Teacher/Stories
Montessori/Philosophy and Story
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/Fostering Collaborative learning
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Authentic Voice
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Dev. concepts - Mont.
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Emot. Intell.
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Gender differences and cultural differences
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Learning Style
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Memory
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Multiage
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Special Needs
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Emotional intelligence
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Memory
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Special Needs
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Special Needs
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Meaning/Cognitive/Universal themes
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Indiv. School Philosophy
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Montessori Philosophy
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Montessori Philosophy/Cosmic Curriculum
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Montessori Philosophy/Critique
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Montessori Philosophy/envir.
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Montessori Philosophy/Imagination
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative and School Philosophy/Montessori Philosophy/Relig. Phil.
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative as Part of Teaching
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative as Part of Teaching/Contrast others in school
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences
Montessori/Philosophy and Story/ Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Children's authors

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Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Children's authors/L. Hathorn
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Children's authors/Mem Fox
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Collaborative Learning and Teaching
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Colleagues and Principal
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/First Steps
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Kieran Egan (trainers, etc.)
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Other phil./Csikszentmihalyi
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Other phil./Emot. Intell.
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Other phil./Reggio Emilia
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Virtues and Nurt. Spirit
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Narrative as Part of Teaching/Influences/Whole language
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Assessment
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Dealing with child's personal problems
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Facilitator of learning
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Finding resource to match where child is
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Foster collaborative learning
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Impart info
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Impart values
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Material maker
Montessori Philosophy and Story/Role of Teacher/Parent Education
Montessori Samples and Examples/Student's work
Montessori Samples and Examples/Creative story
Montessori Samples and Examples/Description
Montessori Samples and Examples/Group Book
Montessori Samples and Examples/pers. narr.
Montessori Samples and Examples/Retell
Montessori Samples and Examples/Whole language activities
Montessori Samples and Examples/Teacher's Programmes/Religious stories
Montessori Samples and Examples/Teacher's Programmes
Montessori Samples and Examples/Religious stories

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Appendix K

God Who Has No Hands

From the beginning people have been aware of God. They could feel Him [sic] though they could not see Him, and they were always asking in their different languages who He was and where He was to be found. “Who is God?” they asked their wise men. “He is the most perfect of beings” was the answer. “But what does He look like? Has He a body like us?” “No, He has not got a body. He has no eyes to see with, no hands to work with and no feet to walk with, but He sees everything and knows everything, even our most secret thoughts.” “And where is He?” “He is in Heaven and on this Earth. He is everywhere. What can He do?” “Whatever He wishes.” “But what has God actually done?”

“What He has done is all that has every happened. He is the Creator and Master who has made everything; and all the things He has made obey His will. He cares and provides for them all and keeps the whole of His creation in the most wonderful harmony and order.

In the beginning there was only God. Since He was completely perfect and completely happy, there was nothing He needed. Yet out of His goodness He chose to create and all that He willed came into being: the heavens and the Earth, all that is visible; and all that is invisible. One after another He made the light, the stars, the sky, and the Earth with its plants and animals. Last of all He made man. Man like the animals was made out of particles of the earth; but God made him different from the animals and like Himself, for into his body which would die He breathed a soul which would never die.”

Many people thought this was just a tale. How could someone with no hands and no eyes make things? If God is a spirit who cannot be seen or touched or heard, how could He have made the stars that sparkle overhead, the sea which is always astir, the sun, the mountains, and the winds? How could a spirit make the birds and fishes and trees, the flowers and the scent they shed around them? Perhaps He could make invisible things, but how could He make the invisible world? It is all very well, they thought, to say that God is everywhere, but who has ever set eyes on Him? How can we be sure He is anywhere? They tell us He is the Master whom everybody and everything obeys, but why on earth should we believe that?
And really it does seem impossible. We who have hands could not do these things, so how could someone who has no hands do them? And can we imagine animals and plants and rocks obeying God? The animals do not understand when we talk to them, so could they be obedient? Or the winds and the sea and the mountains? You can shout and scream and wave your arms at them, but they cannot hear you for they are not even alive, and they certainly won’t obey you.

Yes, that is how it seems to us. But, as you shall see, everything that exists, whether it has life or not, in all that it does and by the very fact of being there, actually obeys the will of God.

God’s creatures do not know that they are obeying. Those that are inanimate just go on existing; those that have life move and go on living. Yet every time a cool wind brushes your cheek, its voice, if we could hear it, is saying: “Lord, I obey.” When the sun rises in the morning and colours the glittering sea, the sun and the sunbeams and the water are also whispering, “My Lord, I obey.” And when you can see birds on the wing, or fruit falling from a tree, or a butterfly hovering over a flower, the birds and their flight, the tree and the fruit and its fall to the ground, the butterfly and the flower and its fragrance are all repeating the same words: “I hear, my Lord, and I obey.”

At first there was chaos, and darkness was on the face of the deep. God said: “Let there be light,” and there was light. Before that there was only the deep: an immensity of space with no beginning and no end, indescribably dark and cold. Who can imagine that immensity, that darkness and coldness?

When we think of the dark, we think of night; but our night would be like brilliant sunshine in comparison with that darkness. When we think of cold, we think of ice. but ice is positively hot if you compare it with the coldness of space, the space that separates the stars; as hot, you might say, as a blazing furnace from which no heat can escape. In this measureless void of cold and darkness light was created. There appeared something like a vast fiery cloud which included all the stars that are in the sky; the whole universe was in that cloud, and among the tiniest of stars was our own world. But they were not stars then; as yet there was nothing except light and heat. So intense was the heat that in the substances we know – iron,
gold, earth, rocks, water – were gases, as insubstantial as the air. All those substances, all the materials of which the Earth and the stars are composed were fused together in one vast, flaming intensity of light and heat – a heat which would make our sun today feel like a piece of ice. this raging fiery cloud of nothingness, too huge to imagine, moved in the immensity of freezing space, which was also nothingness but too huge to imagine, moved in the immensity of freezing space, which was also nothingness but infinitely vaster. The fiery mass was no bigger than a drop of water in the ocean of space; but that drop contained the Earth and all the stars, which are really blazing suns millions of times bigger than the Earth.

As this cloud of light and heat moved through empty space, little drops fell from it. If you swing the water out of a glass, some of it holds together as it falls and the rest breaks up into separate drops. The countless hosts of stars are like those drops. Only instead of falling they are moving round in space, in such a way that they can never collide or meet again. They are millions of miles form each other.

Some stars are so far away from us that it takes millions of years for their light to reach us, even though light travels 186,000 miles in one second. God gave them special laws which they have always obeyed. They seem free, whirling dizzily through space with nothing to stop them, but they are all tied to their courses by an invisible string which is the will of God.

Two of these drops were our world and our sun, which move on their own course through space. The Earth moves round the sun, but it travels like a spinning ball, ceaselessly revolving round itself and always revolving at the same speed.

When God’s will called the stars into being, there was no detail He had not planned. Every scrap of the universe, every speck which we might think too tiny to matter, was bound to behave according to the rules He had made. For the drop of the blazing cloud which became our world He decided that there should no longer be chaos. Instead of a burning confusion of gases, there was to be air and water and rocks.

God’s arrangement was wonderfully simple. The blazing mass of the Earth was made up of infinitesimal particles and it was they
themselves that would be transformed into rocks and water and air. The shape they took depended upon how hot or cold they were. Those particles, inconceivably small and all merged together, were whirling at a fantastic speed. As they cooled, they moved more and more slowly, clinging closer and closer to each other and occupying less and less space. It is this law of God’s which has given us what we call the three physical states of matter; everything we know is either a gas or a liquid or a solid, and which of the three it is at a given moment depends on how hot or cold it is. Why then, we may ask, are there such millions and millions of different types of particles, each with its special dislike for others. Just like human beings, they are attracted to some individuals, and refuse to have anything to do with others. So they form themselves into different groups.

In the solid state, God has made the particles cling so tightly together that they are almost impossible to separate. They form a body which will not alter its shape unless great force is applied to it. If a piece is broken off – if, for instance, you start chipping a flint – the particles still cling together; the flint and the chips remain solid pieces of stone.

When it came to liquids, God said to the particles, “You shall hold together while you are inside a vessel and take the shape of the vessel you are in. Outside, you shall flow and spread filling every hollow and crevice in your path. You will be able to move and roll over each other, you will push downwards and sideways, but not upwards. (That is why, though we can put our hands in water, we could not plunge them into a rock) And, since you do not cling so tightly to each other, you take up more room than the particles of a solid. And to the gases God said, “Your particles shall not cling together at all. They can move freely in all directions.”

This was the simple plan God devised for the particles, and so it is that they form themselves into solids and liquids and gases. But He added certain conditions. Unless, He said, the temperature is very, very hot – hotter than the heat of the sun – or very, very cold – like the cold of outer space – you shall not be gases, or liquids, or solids all at the same time. But as a certain degree of heat some of you shall be solid, some liquid and some gaseous. And if the heat increases, solids will become liquid, and the liquids will turn into gases which will mix with the other gases, but not all the solids will become liquid at the same degree of heat.
And He gave another law: All of you shall have weight, but you will not all have the same weight. And those that are heavier will attract those that are light.

These were the laws God gave. And in obedience to those laws the little drop of nothingness which has made our world when on turning and turning and moving round and round the sun. The Earth and the sun and the stars were balls of gas – gas which contained in itself all the elements of which our world, the Earth, is made up – and they moved on their courses through space, which is so cold that ice is hot by comparison. If you put your hand into ice-cold water, it becomes cold. For the same reason, the stars and the sun and the Earth gradually grew colder as time went on, and the smaller balls cooled more quickly than the latter. The Earth, which is tiny compared with the sun, has become quite cold outside, while the sun is still blazing in the heavens.

As the gases of which the Earth was formed cooled down, they obeyed the laws God had given them. One after another, at the appointed temperature, they became first liquid and then solid; and as they became liquid or solid, their particles would join the other particles to which they were attracted and form new compound substances; and the heavier substances attracted those which were lighter. When you throw a stone into a pond, it sinks to the bottom. Similarly, the heavier liquids sank toward the center of the Earth’s ball, and those that were lighter floated above them like oil floating on water. Thus, they arranged themselves in layers according to their weight; but all of them were attracted to the heaviest in the center and to this day each layer is still pushing on the layer below it. While this was going on and each group of elements that had joined together was obeying the special laws God had given it, the whole Earth which they formed was also obeying His laws and continuing to spin on its course round the sun.

As the surrounding gases cooled slightly, the boiling liquid also began to cool and thicken into a paste. The liquid at the center remained intensely hot, but it was pushed on all sides by the enormous weight that lay over it, one compound on top of another. It was nothing like cool enough to turn into a solid, but all the same, it began to solidify because of the sheer pressure from above. Some of the upper layers were semi-solid pastes, others remained liquid, all pushing against
one another with all their might. Sometimes a mass that was pushed on two sides found itself squeezed on top of its neighbours, and in this bending process hollows might be formed, which were immediately filled with liquid. And above them all stretched a sea of flaming gases.

Can you imagine the dance of the elements?

By the law God had given them, as they cooled their bulk grew smaller and their weight increased. So when they soared up to meet the utter coldness of enveloping space, they shrank in size and back they fell into the raging fire they had left.

Here they grew hot and light again, light enough to rise up once more, carrying with them part of the heat from below which was taken off into space, and when they returned Earthwards, they carried down some of the ice from outer space into the heart of the fire. This process, which went on endlessly, is still happening in the sun today. The heat that the sun gives us from all those millions of kilometres away is heat that it cannot keep for itself. The surface particles of the sun, like those of the Earth when it too was a flaming mass, are doing the double task of carrying away heat and bringing cold. How marvelous it is, and how simple is the law God has made! If you become hot you expand, and as you expand, you become lighter and soar upwards, like a bubble of air in water. But, if you become cold, you shrink and fall downwards, as a grain of sand sinks to the bottom of a tank. Because of this law, the Earth gradually changed from a band of fire to the Earth we know. This was the law that the tiny radiant particles obeyed as they danced their exultant dance; particles too minute to be seen or even imagined, yet numerous enough to have produced the world.

For hundreds, thousands, millions of years the dance went on. More and more gases became liquid, more and more liquids solidified, and with the continuous assault of cold from outer space, the Earth shrank in size and became wrinkled like an apple that has been left in a cupboard. The wrinkles are the mountains and the hollows between them are the oceans; and above them is the air we breathe.

Rocks, water, air – solids, liquids, gases: each is what it is because of its degree of temperature. Today, as it was yesterday and a million years ago, God’s laws are obeyed in the self-same way. The world
spins round and round itself and round and round the sun, and today, as it was a million years ago, the Earth and all the elements and compounds of which it is composed, as they fulfill their task, whisper with one voice:

“Lord, thy will be done; we obey.”

Maria M. Montessori
Appendix L

The Coming of the Universe: The Big Bang

How beautiful the flowers are, and the trees, the blue sky, the stars and the sea! How beautiful are our great cities! How beautiful things are!

But a long time ago, there was nothing. Nothing. No stars, no mountains, no Earth. Nothing. There was only a great space which had no beginning and no end. There was darkness and cold, and nothing more. We think that the night is dark, but our night is like daylight compared to the darkness then. When we think of ice, we think of cold, but ice is warm compared to the coldness then.

But there was something in the midst of this darkness – something that was not seen. There were little particles of dust – hydrogen particles – drifting in the loneliness and emptiness of space.

At a certain moment, we don’t know why or how, the particles united. At that moment, when the particles untied, there appeared a great light. (Pop balloon and flash camera.) There was a cloud of light greater than we can imagine, and it contained all the light in our universe. Everything was contained in this cloud, even the sun. This cloud was luminous and radiant, full of heat and light. The heat was so hot that everything was a gas. Iron was a gas; gold was a gas. The luminous cloud, larger than we can imagine, moved through the cold and darkness, and as it moved, it left great drops of light. (Start spinning stars on the walls). These great drops were to become stars. One of these drops was our sun.

These future stars moved in two ways: they spun like a top, and they moved along a path. As they moved, they seemed free, but they were not free. They had to obey certain laws.

When the fiery cloud that was to become our sun was born, it was a million times larger than it is now, and though it was a fiery gas, it was not so hot as it was to become. Our future sun moved in two directions. It too spun like a top and it moved along a path. It seemed free, but it was not free. It too had to obey certain laws.

At a certain moment, the turbulent cloud that was to become our sun, drew in many particles of dust, and gradually it made itself into a centre of gravity. As a result, it drew in even more particles, and at the center, it began to grow. As it grew heavier, it spun even faster, and it became hotter, until it glowed, as we now see the sun. It has glowed like that for 5 billion years at least, and will continue to glow at least another 5 billion years.

The sun was just one star among all the other stars moving in space, and the Earth was just a speck, compared to the size of the sun.

The sun doesn’t look so big to us, but that’s because it is so far away. The sun is 93 million miles away from the Earth. The light from it takes about 8 minutes to reach
us. Do you know how fast light travels? Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. If you click your fingertips, light has gone around the Earth 7 times already. If we were to travel to the sun at 55 miles per hour it would take us about 220 years to reach the sun. The sun is, in fact, 1 million times larger than the Earth.

One of the swirling spinning circles of glowing particles flung off from the sun was the planet Earth. There was a difference among the particles that formed the Earth; some were attracted to one another and united, and others moved away from one another. The particles assumed three states which we call solid, liquid, and gas. Everything we know is either a solid, a liquid, or a gas depending on how hot or cold it is. Each state has a different law. In the solid state, the particles cling so tightly together that they are almost impossible to separate. They form a body which will not change shape unless great force is used. And even then the chips remain solid pieces.

There is another law for liquids. The particles will hold together while inside a container and take its shape. Outside they will flow and spread, filling every crevice in the path. They will not cling closely to each other as the particles of a solid, but will be able to moved and roll over each other. That is why, thought we can put our hands in water, we cannot plunge them into a rock. The particles of liquid will push downwards and sideways, but not upwards. Since they do not cling so tightly to each other, they take up more room than the particles of a solid.

The gases have another law. The particles will not cling together at all. They can move freely in all directions.

And so it was, the particles formed themselves into solids, liquids, and gases. But there are certain conditions. Not all solids become liquids, or liquids become gases at the same degree of heat.

Since the Earth was small, it cooled more quickly. The stars and the sun and the Earth gradually grew colder as time went on. The stars, being larger, are still today, balls of fire. The Earth cooled and became viscous and solid.

Can you imagine the dance of the elements?

The elements, as they were heated, soared up to the coldness of space. They shrank in size and fell back into the raging fired they had left. Here they grew hot and light again, light enough to rise up once more, carrying with them part of the heat below, which was taken off into space. When they returned Earthwards, they carried down some of the ice from outer space into the heart of the fire.

For hundreds, thousands, millions of years the dance went on. Finally the particles settled down like tired dancers, and one after another, they became first liquid, then solid. As they changed to liquid or solid, some of them joined with others to form new substances. The heavier ones went nearer to the heart of the Earth and the lighter ones floated above them like oil floating on water. With continuous attack of cold from outer space, the Earth shrank in size and became wrinkled like an apple that has been left in a cupboard.
Gradually the crust of the Earth was formed. As the surface of the Earth cooled, many gases and molten liquids felt trapped beneath this thin crust. The churning molten mass underneath constantly wanted to get out. It burst through the weak points, outpouring lava with smoke and flames. It was a terrible fight. These eruptions are called volcanoes and occasionally still happen in various parts of the world. From these volcanoes, wave upon wave of lava spread across the original crust.

There was no water in liquid form at that time, so there were no rivers, lakes, or seas, only hot rock everywhere. The Earth gradually became wrapped in a thick cloud of smoke which the sun’s rays no longer could come through. After a long period of time, water in the upper part of this cloud blanket was able to condense and rain began to fall, only to be changed back into steaming clouds before it could reach the sizzling surface of the Earth. Eventually, the first raindrops splashed on the warm rocks, only to be boiled away again. The Earth began to cook quicker now, so at last, rain began to trickle down the slopes and collect in little pools. The rains continued for thousands of years. Storms of great fury raged over the land. Water flowed across the rocky land and filled the hollows.

As more and more water poured down, the clouds thinned, and the sun finally broke through and smiled down on its daughter Earth, lighting a landscape of rocky landmasses and shallow seas. Upon the whole Earth, there was not living thing, but everything was beautiful, and thus life could begin.
Appendix M

Montessori Elementary Education
Fusion Curriculum

Courtesy Jean Miller