

Acknowledging the Gap Between Learner and Teacher

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was two fold: a) to examine the gap or mismatch between teaching goals, objectives, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability in a one-on-one tutoring situation focused on developing reading skills; and b) to investigate and use the action research process in an attempt to better understand personal teaching practice. The gap was found to exist under the following circumstances: 1. when the student did not have control of or responsibility for his own learning; 2. when the literacy activity/material was not at the appropriate level to ensure the student's success; 3. when teaching practice did support the student at the level at which he was working; and 4. when motivation to read and write was primarily extrinsic, intended to satisfy the teacher's demands. The use of action research as a methodology proved to be a valuable tool in providing insights into teaching practice and understanding how the teacher shapes the learning context.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to  
John Spencer and Chuck McFarland

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Despite the efforts of teachers and parents, some children find reading difficult, falling significantly behind classmates, experiencing shame, frustration, and failure. While there are many hypotheses concerning why some children struggle with reading, there seems to be no one single answer. The purpose of this study is to examine why one struggling reader continued to have difficulty with reading even though the child participated daily in a small group pull-out session at school and a once-a-week, one-on-one tutoring situation with myself as the tutor. The tutor-child dyad is also explored as the tutor reflects critically on personal teaching practice and assumptions.

The chapter that follows briefly discusses reading deficit theory, and pedagogy and how it assists or hinders reading development in young children. It also offers background information and rationale for this study as well as a brief outline for subsequent chapters.

#### Deficit or Pedagogy

Historically traditional research supports the notion that children have difficulty with reading because they are deficient in skill or ability. There is deemed to be an inherent weakness within the child, either the result of cultural and personal preferences (psychological) or a neurological impairment (physiological) (Cambourne 1988, 1995). The learner is seen as being either unable or unwilling to engage in school learning processes including reading. However, these same children often do not display similar deficits outside of school, successfully participating in sports, music and other general life experiences. Cambourne asks, How is it that the struggling reader

is often able to master complex learning outside of school but not inside?

Perhaps the answer to reading difficulties lies not in deficiency or lack of ability, but in pedagogy, how learning is presented in the school situation and how the child is treated as a learner. Current research is beginning to focus on motivation and the role that the teacher and classroom environment plays in developing successful reading behaviours (Clark, 1996; Guthrie, et al., 1996; Heathington & Alexander, 1984; Turner, 1993, 1995). Instead of adhering to the traditional learning model, where knowledge and expertise are the domain of those in authority who then transmit the required information to those with lesser abilities through a structured step by step process, educators are now basing their teaching on a new model, one that encompasses child thought, action, and inquiry (Wells, et al., 1993).

This new model of teaching is based on the research of constructivist theorists such as Piaget and sociocultural theorists like Vygotsky who firmly believe that knowledge cannot be transmitted, but is constructed by each individual learner as the learner attempts to make sense of new information based on what he or she already knows. The role of the more knowledgeable other (generally the adult, but may also be a peer) is to lead from behind, accepting and valuing the learner's contribution, sustaining their effort. Vygotsky (1978) refers to this form of teaching as working within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Gradually the learner begins to approximate or transform the learning, making it his or her own through a process Vygotsky calls externalisation.

In this new model knowledge and expertise are shared and arise from engagement of all individuals involved. Teachers and texts are no longer assumed to automatically possess superior knowledge. Instead all participants are considered able to offer new and valuable insights to the learning situation. The voices of children are heard as they construct knowledge

within the sociocultural environment of the school. If educators listen carefully, the children can become our most important teachers (Paley, 1981, 1984, 1988, 1992).

### Mismatch or Gap Between Pedagogy and Learner

After reflecting on the research and my own practice and work with young language learners, I have come to the understanding that instead of the learner being deficient in ability, reading difficulties are more likely the result of a mismatch between what the teacher is teaching and what the child is willing and ready to learn. When we as teachers recognise there is a gap between what we are attempting to teach and what children are ready and willing to learn, and work towards reducing that gap, much of the tension and struggle in learning to read will be reduced within the classroom.

### The 'Gap'

Bissex (1980) refers to the gap or area that exists between the teacher's goals and objectives and what it is that the child is interested in, what s/he is able and willing to learn, when she states, "the child can only start where he is. The teacher can, and often does start from other places" (p. 111). While this statement appears simple and self-evident and is therefore, perhaps, undervalued, it has had a profound impact on how I have come to view teaching and learning.

Bissex's (1980) simple statement alerted me to the fact that we teachers often work from our own agenda. We decide what it is the children need to learn to complete curriculum requirements and then plan our lessons accordingly. Unfortunately, children who are unable to move at the pace we

have set, who are unmotivated by the choices we have made, or who simply 'march to the tune of a different drummer' may be left to struggle and flounder. Recognizing this new knowledge led to my reflection on previous teaching experiences. Had I ever failed to recognise this gap, attempting to teach a concept that a child was unready or unmotivated to learn and did this failure of recognition lead to difficulty with learning for the child? My two years with Jilly came quickly to mind.

### Recognizing the 'Gap'

I first met Jilly while conducting a home visit prior to her entering kindergarten. My initial impression was of a sweet shy little girl who enjoyed listening to the story of The Gingerbread Man and creatively decorating the gingerbread cookie I had brought along on my visit. Not long after school started I learned that Jilly loved to paint. Sometimes the pictures Jilly painted related to the stories we read during kindergarten circle time; on other occasions her themes were based on her own or family experiences - bright, bold pictures of herself and her friends playing in fields of flowers under brilliant blue skies and yellow suns. Regardless of her topic, Jilly spent day after day at the easels, producing pictures that her mother and grandmother proudly hung on their refrigerator doors. Her preferred medium of expression was painting, and although she loved to listen to stories, unlike many of her classmates, Jilly rarely visited the writing table or reading corner. From the very beginning of the school year I was concerned with Jilly's literacy development.

Jilly was a member of a truly wonderful class and the year progressed smoothly until late winter when the district language arts consultant visited my room. David had recently been appointed to the position and was full of

enthusiastic ideas for increasing literacy in the kindergarten classroom - in particular, child produced text. After school we ambitiously set a goal to have every child in my kindergarten class writing, using invented spelling to communicate his or her thoughts in journals. But after the first few weeks it became apparent that not all the children were visiting the writing center, and Jilly was one of those who did not.

In an effort to get all the children involved in writing, David suggested that I offer unstructured writing opportunities at other centers. Lined and blank paper, pencils, and markers were placed in the house, block, puppetry and art centers, alleviating the need for the children to change centers, something that David and I felt may have been inhibiting the children's desire to write. The children were enthusiastically encouraged to write down their thoughts, label sketches, and make lists wherever they were in the classroom. Many children wrote, but there remained a few who did not and once again Jilly was among them. At this point I should have been paying closer attention to what it was these few children were trying to tell me. Unfortunately, I was not. Instead I was working from my own and the school board's agenda. Child produced text was the current rage in all the research articles that David had given me to read and I was determined to be successful in getting all the children to write.

I watched Jilly the next time she went to the art center; she didn't go near the pencils other than to print her name in the corner of her painting. As Jilly finished her picture, I stopped casually beside her and asked her to tell me all about it. Jilly's response was enthusiastic and wonderfully descriptive. I suggested that perhaps she should write her story down so that others would be able to read it and enjoy it as I had. Jilly looked at her feet and quietly said that she didn't know how to write yet. "Not to worry," I said, "let me help." Together we painstakingly stretched out words and Jilly wrote down the letters

and symbols that she thought went with the sounds she was hearing.

Although I had been highly supportive and encouraging, by the time Jilly had finished writing, her enthusiasm and smile had faded. But mine hadn't. One of my non-writers had written something that I could proudly show to David!

Jilly didn't go back to the art center the next day, but she seemed happy enough doing other things and I didn't think much of it at the time. Several days later she was finishing a painting as I once again happened by. Again we went through the same process of writing down a description of her picture, but it was obvious that Jilly was finding this process difficult and I tried not to push too hard. I could see tears brimming in her eyes as she struggled to think of letters and sounds. That night I had a difficult time sleeping and when David appeared at my classroom door at the end of the next day, I myself was close to tears. Earlier, during center time I had found Jilly wandering restlessly around the room and suggested she try painting. Jilly responded by declaring that she hated painting. I knew the reason without even asking, I had seen it in Jilly's eyes the day before.

Although I could not have expressed it at the time, upon reflection I now realise that I had made a grave error in teaching. I had tried to take a child from a place that she was not, to a place that she was not yet ready to go - to a place where I thought she should be. Instinctively, when David suggested a new plan, I made a decision - I would not force any child in my class to write unless they were motivated to do so by themselves, regardless of what the literature suggested. David's visits to my classroom became less frequent and gradually Jilly went back to painting happy pictures. She never wrote again while in kindergarten.

At the end of the school year I graduated with my kindergarten children, moving up to teach grade one. Many parents indicated that they wanted me to be their child's grade one teacher and Jilly's mother was among

them. I was being given a second chance. Jilly's year in grade one was relatively happy. She didn't progress quite as quickly as most of the other students, but I had learned my lesson well. I structured my class in such a way that most activities were very open-ended, allowing for a wide range of abilities. There were no reading groups and we did not use basal readers or round robin reading. I made sure that Jilly's reading materials were at or just a bit beyond her independent reading ability, providing some challenge but not too much, keeping frustration to a minimum. Jilly continued to find writing difficult, but we worked slowly. Still, I felt as if I should be doing more, somehow I was failing to help Jilly to progress at the same rate as her peers.

Later that year when the new language arts consultant came to visit (David had returned to teaching junior high) she said I was doing a wonderful job. I remember smiling, and saying, "No, Sandy. The children are doing a wonderful job. I'm the clown who keeps trying to mess it up." I moved to a new city the next year, but I've often wondered about Jilly. She would be in grade eight this year, is she happy, is she a good reader, a writer, did she make it?

So often as teachers we work with the best of intentions, only to have our efforts fall short of what we had hoped to accomplish. One of the hardest professional lessons I have ever learned occurred in that kindergarten classroom - it is a lesson I still struggle to be aware of as I teach. I realise now Jilly is the reason I decided to return to work on my master's degree. She is the impetus for my thesis.

Hopefully I recognised Jilly's struggles and adjusted my agenda and the curriculum before her difficulties became so pronounced that there was a huge impact on her learning. Continuing to reflect on my practice I realise that this may not be the case for some of the other children I have taught. I

have not always been successful in acknowledging the gap, in recognising that I must instruct from where students are in their development, and what they are interested in, taking them to new areas of learning only when they are willing and able. Instead like many of my peers I have felt the pressure to comply with cultural, district, and curriculum agendas that dictated that a child of a certain age should be performing a prescribed set of skills at a certain competency level. The pressure to get children up to speed continues to be alive and well in today's education system, to the detriment of many struggling children.

### Present Study

#### Purpose

The purpose of this research study is twofold. The primary purpose is to study the gap or mismatch between teaching goals and objectives and student interest, need, and ability in a one-on-one tutoring situation that focuses on developing reading skills. Using a four month window while working with a grade three boy, in this study I attempt to observe and examine the gap, analyse why and how it is formed, and how the gap changes or is maintained through learning activities that are initiated by myself and the learner.

As an action researcher, the secondary purpose of this study is to investigate how I can improve my teaching skills, developing a better understanding of my practice and how I can utilise my increased awareness to improve the wider educational situation (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996). It is only through reflection of our own practices that teachers can hope to bring about the changes so necessary for improving children's learning and our own teaching practices.

### Research Questions

There are three research questions that guide this study:

1. How does the gap form, change or maintain itself through learning activities that are initiated by myself and the participant over a four month time frame.
2. How do I adjust my practice to match or encourage the participant's engagement in reading and reading activities?
3. How does the participant's engagement in reading and its corresponding activities affect his learning?

In order to answer the research questions identified, this study uses two research methodologies, case study and action research, which will be discussed in chapter 3.

### Definitions

Several terms are used throughout this document that require definition. The definitions are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

**Control:** Refers to who has physical control of reading materials or control of lesson content - who holds the materials, turns the pages, decides how the lesson will evolve, what the activities will encompass, how they will be accomplished, etc. This definition is based on the work of Sakari (1997) and is further discussed in chapter 4.

**Curriculum goals:** These are grade by grade objectives identified by

local school boards and provincial departments of education.

**Engagement:** The emotional and physical involvement of the reader in the process of reading or responding to a literacy task.

Engagement in the task may be the result of interest in a topic, internal or external motivational factors (i.e., to fulfil a personal goal or a teacher's objective), prior knowledge, and understanding of the purpose or need for such an activity. This definition is based on the work of Cambourne (1988, 1995), Guthrie et al., (1996) and Schiefele (1991).

**Gap:** This is the difference between what the teacher is teaching (based on curriculum, goals, and expectations) and the child's literacy level, interests, and need.

**Literacy ability:** The current literacy level at which the student is functioning.

**Metacognitive awareness:** The awareness or understanding that what one is reading makes sense through the reader's ability to monitor his/her own comprehension of the material. It also includes an awareness of knowing what one knows or does not know and how it is known. Metacognitive awareness is promoted through the use of the explicit teaching of reading strategies.

**Motivation:** The force that prompts the learner to engage in the activity or learning process. Two types of motivation exist. Intrinsic motivation comes from the self, from what the learner finds interesting and leads to deeper understanding and commitment on the part of the learner. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside the learner, often from the desire to please the teacher, satisfy teacher goals, or the possibility of receiving awards.

Learners that are extrinsically motivated are more apt to engage

in surface learning and may not acquire the strategies to attempt more challenging work. This definition is based on the work of several researchers: Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Dewey, 1913; Guthrie et al., 1996.

**Reading strategies:** The techniques or cues employed to determine meaning of an individual word or a passage i.e., semantics, visual, phonemic awareness, pictures, context.

**Scaffolding/supportive instruction:** Instruction that provides support for learning and is modified to reflect the learner's progress. As the student progresses towards competence in the task, the teacher gradually withdraws support. Support may be in the form of modelling, questioning, prompting or direct instruction. This definition is based on the work of Vygotsky (1978).

**Student interest:** Refers to specific topics that arouse, motivate, and direct the course of future learning, generated by individual learners in their pursuit of knowledge.

**Student literacy need:** What the student currently needs to understand to accomplish a literacy task as identified by the student and by the teacher.

**Teaching expectations:** What the teacher expects the student should be able to accomplish independently or will be able to accomplish with appropriate instruction.

**Teaching goals:** The objective or purpose of a prescribed lesson, designed by the teacher - the concept that the teacher has identified that the student needs to learn.

### Confidentiality

The names of all persons mentioned in this study have been changed to protect their identity. This includes the participant and those named in the personal narrative included in the first chapter.

### Limitations of Present Study

Education researchers such as Applebee (1987) frequently describe action research, one of the methodologies used in this study, as a weakened model that does not involve the meticulous observation and methodological practices of more traditional research. Applebee also feels that as action research is context bound it does not yield valid or replicable findings and cannot therefore contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline (Wells et al., 1993). However traditional researchers often fail to recognise that all research methodologies and research studies have inherent limitations. While objectivity and generalisation is held in high esteem by those in education research, no research is truly objective - all studies reflect the bias and values of the researcher (Burton, 1988).

While the findings of this study have been discussed with peers and supporters within the academic community and data have been collected through multiple instruments to ensure their reliability and validity, it is limited in scope by the researcher's knowledge and ability to reflect on personal practice and by the limited duration of the study. Conducting action research is very much a personal journey, determined by who the researcher is, his or her values and assumptions about teaching and the learning situation in which the researcher is personally involved. Consequently the insights arrived at by one researcher may not be the same as those of others.

Through the sharing of teaching experiences and research, where teachers are encouraged to seek and find their own meanings, it is possible to learn of the “immeasurable efforts of will, the frustrations and triumphs of learning” - qualities not always described in quantitative research (Bissex, 1980, p. 135).

### Summary

This study is designed and implemented to address the issue of how one teacher can best assist a child who is struggling with reading. The dual research methods selected, action research and case study, afforded an opportunity for the researcher/teacher to critically reflect on personal practice, in an attempt to enhance learning (thought, action, and inquiry) for both the participant and the researcher/teacher. Upon deep reflection and reading of current literature it was recognised that pedagogy rather than deficiency in the learner is more likely the cause of many reading difficulties. It is felt that when teachers acknowledge there is a gap between what we are attempting to teach and what children are ready, willing, and able to learn, and work toward reducing that gap, much of the tension and struggle in learning to read will be reduced within the classroom.

Chapter two of this study focuses on relevant research pertaining to the existence of the gap between teaching pedagogy and student interest and ability. The third chapter deals with the design and procedure of the present study, restates the research questions and the purpose of the study, and briefly describes the two research methods. It also contains information concerning the pilot study. Research findings and an analysis of the findings are presented in chapter four. This document concludes with a summary and description of the study's relevancy to the child, to myself, and to education in

general in chapter five.

## CHAPTER 2

## Review of the Literature

Supporting children while they gain literacy proficiency is not an exact science or a simple matter. Reading teachers are called upon to be intuitive, resourceful and creative as they attempt to engage students of various abilities and experiences, in authentic, purposeful, literacy activities. Prior to beginning school, children experience a myriad of literacy opportunities. Since home support and encouragement within any given community varies, some children will start school with rich literacy experiences, already viewing themselves as readers and writers. Others may have had few opportunities to engage with written language. Motivation to participate in literacy activities and early achievement in reading is especially crucial for children with limited home support or for those whose support is different from the dominant culture. These children must also see themselves as members of the literate community of school and society in order for them to become successful fluent readers.

As many teachers can testify, one of the most challenging aspects of teaching is assisting the child who is having difficulty learning to read. While most children do have positive and successful early reading experiences, typically there are children in every class who find reading difficult. These are the children that teachers call struggling or challenged readers; the children over which teachers frequently lose sleep as they wonder what it is that inhibits the child's ability to read.

In this chapter, literature on attitude, motivation, engagement, and pedagogy will be reviewed as possible causes for why some children have difficulty with reading. Instances of the gap between teaching goals, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, need, and literacy

development will be highlighted.

### Reasons Behind Reading Difficulties

#### Reading Deficiency Theory

Reading is valued by our society as a tool for solving problems, it opens up new worlds to explore, assists in the formulation of questions and answers, and contributes to feelings of mastering one's environment. It is also a problem or a demand that is imposed upon individuals by our culture; a developmental task that is to be learned at and by a certain age. In the past, educators and society felt that reading difficulties were solely the result of some deficiency within the reader. Children who had difficulty learning to read were missing some skill that successful readers used effectively and intuitively. Struggling readers were tested and re-tested in hopes of determining what it was they were lacking. Frequently the learner was blamed for failing to learn to read, hopelessness set in and both the child and the teacher gave up in frustration (Cambourne, 1988, 1995).

#### Attitude

Recently educators are beginning to understand that the idea of reading deficiency is not likely the reason many children struggle with reading. Researchers such as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggest that illiteracy is a social phenomenon and not a natural one, stating that "the chief impediment to literacy is not cognitive in nature. It is not that students cannot learn; it is that they do not wish to" (p. 115). He suggests that the obstacles to learning to read are attitudinal and motivational instead of cognitive, with the real

problem being in stimulating a desire to learn and in recognizing that literacy affords a greater array of opportunities. For today's youth there is little incentive in learning to read, not even monetary, as our North American system does not seem to reward high school and university graduates as much as it favours athletes, drug dealers, and entertainers. Consequently, many of today's youth do not view reading and learning as the means for opening doors (Csikszentmihalyi).

The importance of attitude and motivation in reading, and learning in general, has largely been ignored, particularly since the advent of behaviourism (Schiefele, 1991) and its reliance on the belief that struggling readers were deficient in ability. Few recognised that it is the affective factors, the desire for information and enjoyment, that propels children into the reading process and helps to sustain them through the often challenging work (Athey, 1970). Athey (1985) suggests this lack of recognition results from the fact that the affective aspects of reading tend to be poorly defined and involve "shadowy variables" (p. 626). How do we measure something which is hidden, difficult to conceptualise, and address instructionally?

As a result, schools and the research community have developed a one sided approach, focusing on cognitive ability and skills, almost to the exclusion of motivation and attitude. After three decades of research in reading, up to 25% of the variance in many reading models and statistical studies continues to remain unexplained by cognitive variables (Athey, 1970). It is therefore possible that motivation and attitude play a much larger role than once suspected in the ability to read successfully. Perhaps we have simply not yet developed a measurement instrument sensitive enough to assess the importance of affective factors in reading (Athey).

Athey (1970, 1985), Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Schiefele (1991) contend that to become a successful reader, children must believe in their

abilities and have healthy positive attitudes. Successful readers have been found to attribute their success to a combination of ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck, with the emphasis being on ability and effort (Shell, 1995). Ability and effort are viewed as internal, within the individual's control, while luck and task difficulty are external, out of a student's control. Past significant successes were found to contribute to the successful readers' feelings of future success, resulting in expanded efforts and risk taking, with failures and mistakes being viewed as learning outcomes (Clark, 1996).

If fear of failure outweighs a child's hope for success they will be less likely to participate in reading activities (Clark, 1996). Clark asserts that fear of failure builds on the experience of past failures and when challenges prove greater than skills, a sense of frustration, worry, and anxiety may result. He has found that many children who are not experiencing success at reading attribute their failure to their own inability. They do not recognise that the task may have been inappropriate to their needs or ability. The more the child tries and fails, the lower their perception of self-concept, resulting in a learned helplessness, feelings of "I can't". The student comes to believe that success is no longer possible for them and no matter how much effort they put forth, effort is hopeless. Struggling children cope by becoming failure avoiders, they do not complete assigned work, or pay attention in class or they become failure acceptors, emotionally and intellectually drop out, or tune out (Clark).

Children who view themselves as failures have poor attitudes and are no longer motivated to learn and develop unconscious compensatory behaviour (Clark, 1996). They become inattentive because there is no longer reason to attend, possibly disrupting the classroom. These children rationalise that if the teacher is unable to teach, they will not be called upon to demonstrate their skill or answer questions and others will not notice their inability. Clark

argues that when struggling, unmotivated children do experience occasional success, they do not believe their teacher's praise of their ability, instead deciding that the task was too easy or it was just luck. As a result poor readers save face by putting little effort into their reading and they are able to attribute failure to low effort, rather than ability.

### What is Meant by Attitude

Due to the significance attitude seems to play in reading and reading difficulties, it is important for teachers to be aware of what is meant by attitude, the relationship between attitude and interest, and the factors that affect attitude. Several attempts have been made to define the nature of attitude. Good (1973, p. 19) defines attitude as "a predisposition . . . to react specifically towards an object, situation, or values [which is] usually accompanied by feelings and emotions." Smith (1990) suggests that attitude is "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable" (p. 215).

Cothorn and Collins (1992) summarize the work of several researchers in their attempt to define attitude, including Shaw and Wright (1967) who describe attitude as a behavioural response which is learned, determined through social expectations and consequences of behaviour. In the same report by Cothorn and Collins, Liska (1984) sees expectations and consequences as having a great influence on beliefs, and attitudes are the result of beliefs. According to Liska, the home and school environment, student interest, peers, academic achievement, and significant adults all play a role in the development of beliefs and subsequently attitudes. Cothorn and Collins report that Henk and Holmes (1988) build upon Mathewson's reading model (1985). Henk and Holmes suggest that it is the reader's prior experience, combined

with the reading task that determines the degree to which the reader becomes engaged and involved with the text. The reader's involvement will determine their attitude toward the material.

Athey (1970) contends that it is this involvement, attitude or initial kick that motivates the reading and learning process. She suggests that affective influences may be most profound in the early childhood and elementary years, when cognitive style (related to a sense of identity, self-concept, and emotional maturity), the development of coping skills, the ability to solve problems, and flexible use of strategies are all developing within the child. If the school is unresponsive to the needs and potentialities of the child, problems can and will result, as the child is only able to respond in ways they have already learned (Bissex, 1980). Athey supports the premise that attitudes toward reading will be positive if schools are flexible enough to accommodate the many different styles of learning and teach children accordingly.

### Attitude and Interest

While some may feel that motivation and attitude fall on a continuum from negative to neutral to positive, Schiefele (1991) states that attitude and the motivation to learn is the result of interest, related to a specific topic, task or activity. Students' interest and motivation is a directive force, it drives their choices and performance. Interest may be enduring or short lived, general or specific. Wentzel (1991) feels that students possess multiple motivational goals simultaneously, that motivation is in fact domain specific. While a child may have a positive attitude to reading and be highly motivated, that motivation may not predict feelings of competence in math or science and visa versa (Wigfield & Harold, 1992).

Cothorn and Collins (1992) also found that children may have positive

attitudes and be motivated to read but express negativity towards certain types of reading and they caution teachers to not confuse attitude with interest. It is possible to have a good attitude toward reading but not to be interested in all types of reading. Schiefele (1991) agrees, stating that students express preference for certain topics, subject areas and activities, and this attitude will affect whether or not they engage in a particular type of reading. Readers become truly engaged in a topic for its own sake and not for external reasons. A child who is interested in a specific topic will read extensively about that topic, even choosing extremely challenging text, extending their abilities in their quest for information.

Schiefele (1991) examined interest and its relationship with reading in several studies of university and college students. He found that interest motivates the reader to go beyond the text surface, to try and understand the meaning and the main idea. Similar to Schiefele, Csikszentmihalyi (1990), stated that if “intrigued by the opportunities of the domain, most students will make sure to develop the skills they need to operate within it” (p. 126). Schiefele also observed a strong correlation between interest and learning strategies that facilitate deep processing. In his research studies, topic interest was also found to be significantly correlated with involvement, enjoyment, concentration, and activation; interest was correlated with self-esteem and perception of skills; and the quality of experience in the class was influenced by interest in the subject matter.

### Factors that Affect Reading Attitudes

Many factors appear to affect reading attitudes. Children who had positive attitudes in primary grades were not always found to maintain those attitudes in later years, particularly when students had repeated negative

experiences with reading (Alexander & Filler, 1976). In this study children were found to avoid the reading act in later grades through refusal, disinterest or lack of effort. Spiralling occurs both for good and poor readers (Stanovich, 1986). As reading behaviour becomes increasingly extreme, efforts to change the behaviour and attitude are less successful. Good readers increasingly improve while poor readers continue to experience more difficulty. Past experience seems to play a part in reading attitudes, motivation, and competence.

A study by Parker and Paradis (1986), was initiated to determine if attitudes toward reading changed as a child progressed through grades 1-6. Results found that there were no changes in attitude throughout grades 1-3, or between grades 5 and 6. Differences in attitude did occur between grades 4 and 5. Parker and Paradis attributed the change to a more positive attitude toward non-classroom type reading, such as library reading, recreational reading and general reading, that occurred at the grade 5 level. Sex differences in attitude approaching significance were also found in their study, favouring females.

Wallbrown, Brown and Engin (1978) also reported changes in attitude between grades 4 and 5. They found that expressed reading difficulty and reading anxiety increased between these grades, reflecting a negative change toward classroom type reading. Children at this age also expressed an increased preference for silent reading and reading comics, both non-classroom type reading activities. Increasingly negative attitudes to school reading and increasingly positive attitudes toward non-class reading were also found in a study by Neale and Proshek (1967).

In developing and administering an attitude measurement scale for reading, McKenna and Kear (1990) determined that the gap between attitude and ability decreased as children progress through school. Children in primary grades will often describe themselves as having a positive attitude

toward reading, despite their low ability. This was found to change, starting at the grade 4 level, when attitude measured on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear) dropped to reflect the child's low ability and frustration with reading. Askov and Fischbach (1973) also found that attitude toward reading changes as reading ability improves.

In Cothorn and Collins' (1992) examination of reading studies, literacy behaviours in the home were shown to have a profound affect on attitudes. Children whose parents not only read to them, but also interacted with their children about what was being read while reading occurred, were found to have better attitudes toward reading than those children who had simply been provided with the materials (Alexander & Filler, 1976). While teachers had a tendency to see lower income students as having a more negative attitude toward learning, this was not supported by attitude assessments completed by the children of lower socio-economic groups (Heimberger, 1970 April). Athey (1970) also found that highly motivated readers came from homes that fostered growth of independence, that believed in and modelled the democratic process, and promoted environmental activities.

### Motivation

Some children do not learn to read because they do not have the attitude that reading will meet their needs (Glasser, 1986). As Dewey (1913) suggests, when external means or motivation is used to make something interesting, the effect is only temporary and does not result in identification with the material. Learning and reading that is externally or extrinsically motivated comes from outside the learner. It is done to please the teacher, as a response to receiving recognition, grades, or completing a task, and is often dependent on the guidance of others. Guthrie et al. (1996) contends that extrinsically motivated

students are more likely to engage in rote learning, acquire verbatim knowledge rather than a fully integrated conceptualised understanding and have lower literacy enjoyment and engagement. As a result reading ability generally suffers.

Instead of learning by externally motivated means, Dewey (1913) advocates internally motivated learning that is active, based on real objects, and has high personal meaning for the student. Activities that are intrinsically motivating are ones in which pleasure is inherent in the activity itself. The child finds inherent interest in what is being read, enjoys figuring out the meanings for himself/herself. The motivational goal is one of curiosity, involvement, the enjoyment of reading, figuring out the challenge, social interaction and self-efficacy, and results in higher engagement levels in literacy (Guthrie et al., 1996).

Motivation and engagement have been found to be reciprocal and mutually supportive with increases in intrinsic motivation leading to increases in frequency and breadth of reading. Students' expand their reading activities as intrinsic motivation increases (Guthrie et al., 1996). While an activity might begin for extrinsic reasons, because it has been assigned by the teacher, if learning is to become successful, the goal must switch to being intrinsic. Reading must become autotelic, rewarding in itself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Intrinsically motivated students are strategic, persistent and self-regulatory. They believe effort, not ability enhances learning. Students motivated from within welcome challenges, they take charge of situations, change tactics, reassemble resources in the face of adversity, and use a combination of motivated behaviours (Turner, 1993, 1995). Motivated behaviours such as effective strategy use expend the effort utilised in selecting, trying out, evaluating, and discarding tactics while reading (Paris,

Lipson & Wixson, 1983). In persisting with difficult tasks, students must tolerate errors, experiment with new approaches, and maintain concentration while keeping positive expectations that the challenge can be overcome. Motivated students use volitional strategies to control their own and others' intentions and impulses while learning. They show a willingness to take responsibility for their own learning and recognise reading has personal value (Turner, 1995).

Guthrie et al., (1996) assert that intrinsic motivation is associated with higher level strategy use, while lower level strategies are used more often by children who are extrinsically motivated. Children who employ higher strategies increase their reading self-efficacy, believing in their own capabilities and generally read at a higher level than those children who do not. When children are afraid of failure they often employ a strategy of low goal setting, one where there is little challenge, or risk, and only minimal effort is required (Clark, 1996). Unfortunately while this strategy may result in no errors and the child saving face in front of his/her peers, it does not foster a deep understanding or an extension of the reading content.

Intrinsically motivated learners learn because the task is enjoyable, not just because it is useful. Learning is found to be more satisfying, affective, with higher levels of mastery and thoroughness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Intrinsically motivated children are not necessarily interested in the rules of literacy as given by the school, they do not require external rewards such as stickers or book programs. Instead they become involved in the "flow experience", their mind slips into the activity, no longer looking at what they are doing from the outside, but becoming the activity itself (Csikszentmihalyi). When reading is enjoyed for intrinsic reasons, the reading is active. The child chooses a book, identifies with the characters, imagines the places and events described, anticipates and predicts upcoming events, and responds with

emotion and empathy (Enciso, 1996).

### Engagement Theory

Engagement in literacy can be viewed as a subset of attitudinal theory. We live in a literate culture. The more the child engages in reading, the more likely it is that s/he will gain the world knowledge of adults, be able to participate fully in society, be employable and accomplished, using the tools of literacy. Literacy engagement leads to self-actualisation and self-directed learners. If students do not become self-directed learners in elementary school, there is little chance of them becoming self-actualising adolescents and adults (Guthrie, 1996). In our culture, personal growth, as well as literacy growth and fluency in reading, depend upon engaging in the reading process.

The engagement perspective builds on theories of attitude, motivation, knowledge acquisition, cognition, and social development (Gambrell, 1996). Motivation to learn flows out of children's natural curiosities, social inclinations and yearnings for self-determination, to be able to achieve and be successful in their world. It is characterised by intense involvement, curiosity, and search for personal understanding (Thomas & Oldfather, 1995). Children become lost in books, learn about their world and interact with others in an exchange of knowledge formed from the materials they have read.

The term engagement has various interpretations in the literature on learning and literacy. Cambourne (1988, 1995) identifies engagement as the key to literacy. He contends that if students do not engage with oral or written language, no learning can occur. Although immersion in literacy and demonstrations of language use are necessary, they are not in themselves sufficient for learning to occur. Students need to engage in the

demonstrations in which they are immersed - observing the activity is not enough, they must engage physically, mentally and emotionally.

Students decide to engage (or not engage) in demonstrations for a variety of reasons (Cambourne, 1988, 1995). Learners engage with demonstrations when they believe they are potential doers or owners of what is being demonstrated, feel they are capable of mastering what it is that they are being shown. Learners must see or understand how their lives will benefit or be furthered by becoming a doer or owner of the demonstration. They must see the value or purpose of literacy, how being successful at reading and writing will meet their needs. Learners are more likely to engage in literacy if they are free from anxiety. The risk associated with the engagement must be acceptable from an emotional perspective. And the probability of engagement in literacy will increase if demonstrations are given by someone the child has bonded with, someone the child models himself/herself on, whom s/he admires, respects and likes.

Enciso (1996) defines engaged reading as an aesthetic experience, one that includes attention to information, textual structures, and evaluative responses. The reader participates in the lived through nature of reading, using their own feelings and emotions to interpret the text, resulting in a deeper level of understanding (Rosenblatt, 1994). Meaning is constructed in a social context that informs and is informed by literacy practices and interrelationships that surround the reading experience. Consequently, engagement in reading is seen as a complex interplay of personal, emotional, visual, and evaluative experiences and perceptions, expressed either privately or publicly (Enciso). If any one of these components fail, reading is hindered.

Guthrie et al. (1996) define engagement as an integration of motivations and strategies in literacy activities. In Guthrie et al's. view of engagement, motivation for reading is seen as internalising goals that lead to literacy

choices and comprehension strategies. Motivation is required for reading, with the children engaging in text for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons.

Intrinsic motivation refers to activities in which the child finds pleasure, either the result of his/her own curiosity or need for involvement. Guthrie et al. contends that students who have an intrinsic commitment to engage in learning often acquire a deeper understanding of content information.

Extrinsic motivation to learn is from outside of the learner, with the student engaging in the activity to please the teacher, to obtain a reward or incentive. Those who have an extrinsic commitment, are claimed to engage in rote or surface learning, acquire verbatim knowledge, and do not fully integrate conceptual understanding (Guthrie et al.). They are also less likely to continue reading once it becomes challenging.

It is also possible for children to have multiple motivational goals, simultaneously, and for motivation to be domain specific (Wentzel, 1991). Children who may be motivated to read a particular genre may have no desire or interest in reading another (Cothorn & Collins, 1992), slipping to lower levels of reading material when they are not interested in the content. As well, motivation may predict self-perceptions of competence (generally for those children who are intrinsically motivated) or incompetence (for those that are extrinsically motivated) (Guthrie et al., 1996).

Volitional strategies, the second component of Guthrie et al's. (1996) view of literacy engagement, enables students to fulfil their motivational goals. Without volition, intentions may not be realised in action; the child's conscientious effort, independence and willingness to assume responsibility for his/her own learning, influences how strategies are used and regulated. The child who relies on the teacher or a more knowledgeable other to monitor and regulate his/her own reading will not develop the strategies necessary for successful independent reading or become a self-directed learner.

Guthrie (1996) suggests that “the art of educating for literacy engagement is to link students’ intrinsic motivation to classroom activities” (p. 436) through the pursuit of motivational goals, the discovery of concepts, the invention of strategies, and the evolution of social capabilities. If the content of the reading material supports the motivational goals of involvement, curiosity, social interaction, challenge, and enhancement of self-efficacy, then the children will become engaged. If the content suppresses these goals, children are less likely to want to read. Engaging content provides opportunities for the child to observe events, search for information, comprehend what has been read and discussed, collaborate with others, and communicate their new understanding and knowledge. When the content is of interest to the child, there is greater likelihood of engagement and reading ability increases (Schiefele, 1991).

### Pedagogy and Reading

Researchers such as Athey (1970), Clark (1996), Schiefele (1991), and Turner (1993, 1995) believe the teacher and the learning environment play a crucial role in developing successful and unsuccessful readers. When pedagogy, founded on a teacher’s personal theory of learning, is rooted in repetitive drill and practice, children are unable to see the big picture of reading, why reading is important, and how it can contribute to life experiences (Cambourne, 1988). Teachers who subscribe to the pedagogy that reading can be broken down into a sequence of small, less complex parts, to be later reassembled in a graded series of increasing complexity, often have a special status for the errors children make. These teachers spend great amounts of time and energy attempting to decrease errors in childrens’ learning and this becomes the focus of their teaching. Consequently the child

views reading as solely decoding phonemes and words; reading has no connection to real life, is rarely enjoyable, and is thus avoided.

In contrast, Paley (1989) suggests that teachers use a pedagogy that searches for the child's point of view, seeing errors as windows into the inner workings of the child's mind (Clay, 1985). Sensitive attention to student thought has the potential to instigate changes in how instruction is delivered and can be most productive in stimulating childrens' learning. Teachers and students begin to share control and responsibility for learning, with students being encouraged to take active roles in inquiry, planning and implementing classroom practices (Thomas & Oldfather, 1995).

Curriculum needs to be inclusive with emphasis on motivation, social interaction, cognition, and knowledge acquisition, reflecting a more balanced view of learning, one that encompasses both the skill and will to learn. Providing rich classroom environments and opportunities for choice, encouraging social interaction about print with others, building on familiar knowledge, and reflecting the view that books and reading are their own reward, will encourage struggling readers to strive towards fluent reading (Gambrell, 1996).

### Teacher's Role in Increasing Motivation to Read

Much of student motivation is under the control of the teacher who establishes cognitive and motivational demands through the tasks and activities designed for the children (Clark 1996; Guthrie et al., 1996; Heathington & Alexander, 1984; Turner, 1993, 1995). As some children do not make the types of decisions which lead to engagement in literacy, teachers need to set up the conditions and relationships that will increase the probability that such a decision is made (Cambourne, 1988). Building on his

model of literacy and principles of engagement, Cambourne suggests that teachers must avoid giving children the impression that teachers are incapable of doing the work. They must communicate to their students the message that every child is able to learn, and that they have confidence in the child's abilities. Positive expectations of student achievement usually result in the child perceiving him/herself as a worthy individual.

Teachers must also convince children that gaining literacy proficiency is important, relevant, functional, and useful. Cambourne (1988, 1995) contends that children must realise that reading is a worthwhile activity that can contribute significantly to their lives. He suggests that teachers should construct supportive situations in which children feel safe to make attempts. When children are convinced that they are liked and respected they are more likely to engage in challenging activities (Cambourne).

Gambrell (1996) concurs that the role of the teacher is crucial in fostering engagement and motivation in reading, suggesting that engagement is enhanced when: teachers act as reading models; there is access to books in the classroom; there are opportunities for self-selection of reading material; there are opportunities to become familiar with many different types of books; there are opportunities to interact socially with others about print; and there are appropriate reading-related incentives.

Explicit and expressive modelling of the reading process shows children that teachers are avid readers themselves and emphasises how reading enhances and enriches lives (Gambrell, 1996). Book rich classrooms allow children to take home books to share with their families. Opportunities for choice in selection promotes independence and versatility. Literacy engagement increases when children are allowed to make choices about their own learning. Frequently the books children talk about most often and enthusiastically are the ones that they have selected themselves.

Heathington and Alexander (1984) reviewed several studies that looked at how teachers and schools contribute to good attitudes in reading. Fredericks (1982) suggested careful planning, using informational interest inventories, and choosing reading topics based on students' interests as possible strategies. He also proposed the use of creative book reports, student authorship, book parties, student-as-expert discussions, and class newspapers as means of engaging readers. Ransbury (1973) suggested working with parents, encouraging the use of the library, and developing a link between book knowledge and experience to establish good reading attitudes. Johns and Lunt (1975) found that a teacher's enthusiastic and optimistic attitude, reading to students, and modelling appropriate reading behaviour were effective in producing positive attitudes toward reading.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990), agrees that the role of the teacher is central in promoting intrinsic motivation in literacy. The teacher indicates the importance of reading by displaying a high level of involvement, interest, and enjoyment in what they teach, and modelling the enjoyment of reading. The teacher helps keep enjoyment alive by presenting goals that allow for increasingly more complex challenges to match the children's skills. Goals should be clear and teachers should provide immediate feedback. Teacher's need to be sensitive to the children's goals and their interests, ensuring that children are not too overwhelmed or too bored.

In order to influence motivation and attitudes toward reading, the personal rewards of reading must be apparent to the child (Madden, 1988). Teachers must make reading more personally meaningful. This can be accomplished by planning for regular discussion of reading material, with open acceptance of individual interpretations and student validation of ideas. The teacher must also highlight relationships between print and the child's life, helping children to make connections, transfer knowledge learned while

reading to life experiences and to previously held knowledge. In the use of bibliotherapy, teachers assist children in comparing the text characters and the options and choices they selected to those of the students. This comparison leads to new perspectives and problem solving. Increasing student involvement in decisions concerning what is to be learned or read validates the student's self-concept, illustrating that their ideas are important and respected. Teachers who use holistic teaching methods encourage independent interests and positive attitudes.

Turner (1993) suggests that as teachers examine tasks and activities it becomes apparent why some students approach tasks flexibly and strategically, expanding their efforts and persisting in challenging activities. Open ended tasks have been found to promote greater engagement, increased strategy use, persistence, and volitional control. They require higher level, complex thinking rather than no mistake learning. These motivated behaviours lead to greater engagement in literacy.

In Cambourne's (1988, 1994) model of literacy, motivation and reading are fostered when children are: immersed in book-rich environments; provided with numerous demonstrations of how text works; engage in interactions with the text and others; have responsibility for choosing what, when, and how they read; have opportunities to approximate literacy activities; and are supported through interactions with a more knowledgeable other who expects them to be successful.

### Environmental Influences Over Motivation to Read

The literature suggests that the learning environment also plays an influential role in motivating students to engage in reading. Turner (1993) found that open literacy tasks enhance intrinsic motivation to read through

four different means: (a) challenge, (b) student autonomy, (c) pursuit of personal interests, and (d) social collaboration.

Children can not be truly motivated unless challenges are balanced with skills and the ability to respond (Turner, 1993). Motivational theory does not support learning without experiencing errors, or simplifying tasks to minimize discouragement and frustration while equalising the demands on all students (Rohrkemper & Corno, 1988). The key is in moderating the difficulty, providing just the right amount of challenge. Low challenging material reduces motivation. Non-challenging, drill type tasks are often too easy for most students, a poor match for their skill level. Tasks that are too boring, which provide errorless learning, are “robbing students of the opportunity to respond flexibly to tasks, to transform and initiate them, and thereby assume control of their own learning” (Rohrkemper & Corno, p. 297). If challenges are too great, frustration, worry, and anxiety result. When children identify what they can and cannot do, they are able to measure their own progress. The completion of a difficult task is concrete evidence of just how far they have come. The more complex and challenging the task, the greater the student engagement, use of strategic thinking, confidence, and interest. As students learn more, they must take on new challenges, increasing motivation.

Turner (1993) asserts that student choice promotes intrinsic motivation, increasing students' sense of independence and self-control. Students with more autonomy reported more interest in their school work. In promoting student autonomy, the teacher's role is to guide student choice and support their decisions while continuing to address the school curriculum. When children are interested in the subject matter, their enjoyment and involvement increases. Overly controlling learning situations undermines intrinsic motivation by removing self direction.

Personal interest influences motivation in several ways. It has been

found to lead to deeper processing, more elaboration, critical thinking, and information seeking strategies (Schiefele, 1991). Students invest more time, attending to tasks for longer periods, persisting when challenges are great, simply because they are interested. When students are engaged they are more likely to set goals aimed at establishing personal competence and to continue to pursue those goals over time (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993).

Students see literacy as a way to meet their goals, report higher intrinsic motivation, self-esteem and skill when they are personally interested in what they are reading.

Social collaboration, Turner's (1993) fourth means for promoting intrinsic motivation, is helpful for several reasons. Contrary to literacy instruction of the past with its emphasis on individual performance, Vygotsky (1987) determined that literacy is a social endeavour, that it is through transactions with others that meaning is constructed. Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989) view "learning as an apprenticeship [in] which teachers and peers scaffold instruction for learners and use modelling and coaching to teach strategies for thinking and problem solving" (p. 159). Peer comments and ideas encourage interest and self reflection. Students provide models for each other, they see each other making mistakes and making progress which in turn increases their own self-concept. Working with a group of other students encourages persistence, as they work to a common goal. To Turner's list for increasing intrinsic motivation, Lepper (1988) would add two others, the text's, teacher's, and the environment's ability to provoke curiosity in the reader and the need to highlight functional activity.

Guthrie et al. (1996) also believe the learning environment plays a tremendous role in influencing motivation, in particular intrinsic motivation. In an environment that promotes intrinsic motivation there is freedom for the learner to initiate learning and to generate questions, making connections

between classroom activities and everyday tasks. The learner is socially interactive, often working in a project based approach where students are collaborating with each other. There is a social construction of meaning, with many interpretations of text being offered. Numerous opportunities for self expression are available. In groups and pair work, children have opportunities to model and view others using strategic tools for learning. Metacognitive awareness is promoted with some explicit teaching of reading strategies. The focus is on real world literacy tasks, substantive topics of interest to the children rather than on isolated reading skills and fill in the blank work sheets. An environment that is intrinsically motivating encourages self direction.

The mood of the classroom often defines how children attribute success and failure and affects their motivation and behaviour (Clark, 1996). Clark describes three different classroom styles that will affect motivation: (a) competitive, (b) cooperative and, (c) individualistic.

In the competitive classroom only a small group of children can be at the top, identified as being successful, having reached the ultimate goal. The remainder of the class see themselves in varying degrees as failures, contributing to their negative self worth and sense of shame. A competitive classroom is usually characterised by ability grouping, tracking, and besting behaviours where derogatory language, gestures, tattling, and ridicule are often part of the atmosphere. When children are separated into homogeneous reading groups, struggling readers all placed in the same group have similar reading problems and poor self-esteem. They are less likely to hear fluent, expressive reading, something to which they are hopefully aspiring. Labelled as the slow group, their situation is ego deflating, further contributing to their low self esteem (Madden 1988). In this type of classroom a student's ability is the most likely variable that is seen as contributing to success or

failure.

As a result many advocate the use of the cooperative style classroom where competition is kept to a minimum (Clark, 1996; Madden, 1988; Turner 1993). In the cooperative classroom the goal is for lower achieving students to experience success in group participation; as a result more children are seen as being successful, reaching their goals. There is an emphasis on nurturing, interdependence, and shared responsibility. In heterogeneous groups a variety of abilities, skills, and needs contribute to reaching a common goal. For a large majority the experience is positive, competition between group members is kept to a minimum, and input in the group is valued by peers, contributing to high self esteem. Metacommunication is important during group discussions as well, where participants talk about interactions within the group, building skills of sharing, caring, compromising, and problem solving. Although there is some concern that the struggling reader placed in a cooperative reading group will remain passive, steps can be taken to ensure that this is not the case with each person contributing equally to the group in a manner that is suited to their talents and abilities. In the cooperative classroom, effort, cooperation, and teamwork are the attributes for success and failure, not ability. All children are regarded as having the potential of reaching the goal.

The third type of classroom identified by Clark (1996) is individualistic. This teaching situation utilises the task mastery approach. The goal is individual improvement, ultimately proficiency, and control or mastery of the subject. This type of classroom makes use of portfolios, learning logs, and journals, where the children are able to examine their progress over a period of time. Mistakes and failures are treated as a natural part of learning, necessary to understanding. When the task is too difficult the teacher helps the child to understand that their lack of success was not due to ability, and

encourages the child to focus on the use of strategies. Attributions of success and failure in the individualistic classroom center around effort.

### Re-motivating Struggling Readers

Cramer (1996) investigated how to re-motivate struggling readers in a clinical setting when they no longer see themselves as successful. As part of his five step plan, Cramer advocates that the teacher initiate the process by gathering detailed information on the child. This can be accomplished by both informal and formal assessments where the teacher discovers what shared background knowledge the child and the teacher have in common, the conversational ability of the child, the child's sight word vocabulary and vocabulary knowledge, the child's oral reading fluency, comprehension levels, and his/her interests.

Using knowledge of the child's interests the teacher's role is to secure interesting reading material at the present reading level of the child. Cramer (1996) stresses that for struggling readers to be motivated to read, reading must be enjoyable and for it to be enjoyable, it must be easy, within the child's reach. When there is pleasure in reading, they will continue; as the child continues, ability will grow. The only way struggling readers will learn to read is the way that all children do, through continued reading. For every child, Cramer suggests that there is that magic book that will stimulate the child's curiosities and imagination. Cecil (1989) states, "Reading that particular book was often their first enjoyable reading experience and resulted in their reading other similar books. The practice afforded by this recreational reading helped them to naturally overcome their reading difficulty" (p. 67).

Examples from the Literature of the 'Gap' or Mismatch Between Student  
Interest and Ability and Teaching Pedagogy

Using the Language and Interest of the Learner

Ways With Words (1996) The gap or mismatch between teaching goals, expectations, and curriculum, and student interest, need, and literacy development, illustrated in Bissex's (1980) powerful statements "the child can only start from where he is. The teacher can, and often does start from other places" (p. 111) and "the logic by which we teach is not always the logic by which children learn" (p. 199), perfectly describes the situation in Ways With Words (Heath, 1996). In this remarkable ethnographic study, Heath details the transition that children from two unique communities (Trackton and Roadville) make when they enter school, chronicling adjustments to school curriculum that teachers eventually undertake in response to the children's unique home literacy patterns.

By the time the children from each of these communities went to school they knew the sounds, words, and grammatical systems of the language spoken in their home environment. Unfortunately the language patterns they had acquired at home were not the same patterns valued and used in school. In school, reading and writing were approached in a manner that was unfamiliar and inhibited the children's success. Only when teachers acknowledged a gap or mismatch between the children's language experiences and the school's expectations, moving outside the restrictiveness of school language and learning about their students, their backgrounds, and language patterns, did the children of Roadville and Trackton begin to experience success.

Utilising action research procedures, patterns began to emerge as teachers became careful classroom observers, recording the features of their

students' and their own language structures. It became apparent that the teachers and their students brought often radically different habits and expectations from home into the classroom. It was also apparent that the teachers were judging and evaluating their students using their own cultural norms.

With this revelation, teachers were able to make adjustments to their programs that would provide a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Reading workbooks were evaluated for bias, tests were reconstructed, teaching units were written on cultural differences, and dialects were accepted rather than dismissed as errors. The teachers started to instruct from where the students were in their development, rather than from where the curriculum suggested they should be. And the children responded by learning. As Bissex (1980) states " It may not matter so much where a child begins in reading (phonics, sight words, language experience) as that he begins somewhere that works for him and soon moves somewhere else" (p, 168). The key words in this statement are that works for him.

Teacher (1987) Ashton-Warner (1987) believes that early reading experiences are most successful when the teacher facilitates a bridge between school expectations and curriculum and child interest, ability, and need. Children must start reading by using a subject or content that is of interest to the child. She states that while this concept is not new in education - children in Tolstoy's peasant school were free to choose their own reading material and flourished under his ideology of approaching each child individually - it is the education systems' rejection of it that is new. Unfortunately many present day education systems restrict the types of material available for children to read and how and what they are taught. As Ashton- Warner states, not all children have the experience of Dick, Jane, and Spot and should therefore not be

required to read about it.

In her book, Teacher (1987), Ashton-Warner describes the program of organic reading and writing that she used for 24 years while teaching in remote areas of New Zealand. In Ashton-Warner's model of infant classes the school day begins with each individual child verbally volunteering words to the teacher that are deemed personally significant. Ashton-Warner refers to these words as key vocabulary - vocabulary that unlocks the mind, releases the tongue and will eventually open the door to reading. These personally significant words are made of the "stuff of the child itself" (p. 34). They are familiar and secure, having intense meaning for the child. Consequently the key vocabulary varies from one locality to another, from one ethnic group to another, the result of coming from the child rather than being imposed on him or her from the outside.

In Ashton-Warner's (1987) model of organic reading and writing, the teacher copies these words on to strong card and the children practice reading their key vocabulary word cards to each other until they become one-look words, recognised at a glance. The word cards are taken home, practised at night and returned the following day. If the child is unable to remember their word(s), the word is discarded as being not that important to the child. The child transfers their personal words into the back of a notebook and then uses these words to write their own individual sentences and stories. Spelling and composition are not taught as separate subjects, but emerge naturally as the teacher moves about the room assisting individual children as required. Nor does Ashton-Warner advocate criticising the content of the childrens' writing, saying that "it is not what is said, but the freedom to say it that is important" (p. 54).

Instead of using trade books, in the organic reading and writing model, the children learn to read using the sentences/stories they have created from

their own personal words. Each child works at his/her own individual level, working to their own ability. Through the use of key vocabulary words the child realises that reading can have intense personal meaning to self. The more importance that the language of the story holds for the child, the more value it will be to the child. In this manner Ashton-Warner (1987) displays a respect for the language the child already has and helps him or her make the transition to standard classroom literacy. Once children have had much experience reading their own books, when reaching out for a book becomes an instinctive organic action, Ashton-Warner feels they will be able to master commercial books.

#### Using Learning Styles Suited to Individual Children

Gnys at Wrk (1980) This remarkable account of one child's struggle to learn to read and write also illustrates the gap that can be found between teaching goals, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, need, and literacy development. In Gnys at Wrk (Bissex, 1980), Paul is a successful reader and writer prior to entering school. Throughout the account, he is shown as being much more competent at knowing what he needs to learn, selecting the best methods to accomplish his goal and in evaluating his progress, than those planning and delivering prescribed curriculum.

Contrary to traditional thought in the education system, Paul's home learning did not follow a step by step pattern laid out by text and workbooks. Instead, at home Paul's learning progressed naturally, characterised by periods of concentrated activity, plateaus, leaps forward, inactivity, and slides backward. Throughout the home experience the impetus was from Paul to learn to read and write. He decided what he needed to learn, when to learn it, and how to best acquire the skills he needed.

Bissex contrasts Paul's home learning sharply with how the education system treats the development of reading and writing. At school, teachers decided what was best for Paul and the rest of his classmates; what they should be learning, and what methods to use in order to accomplish the learning goal. There was little regard for individual differences and abilities. All children were assumed to be at a similar place in their development, and to use the same strategies to create text and find meaning in print.

When Paul showed a dislike for many of the school reading and writing activities, teachers complained that he relied too heavily on his mother's responsiveness for motivation to work. They did not acknowledge their inability to prepare activities in a manner that would engage Paul in the reading and writing process, building on his own natural abilities and internal motivation to learn and communicate.

### Summary

Literature in the areas of (a) reasons behind reading difficulties, (b) attitude and reading, and (c) pedagogy and reading were examined in this chapter. Deficiency in ability was discounted as the primary reason why most children had difficulty with reading. Instead attitude, motivation, interest, and engagement were examined as reasons why many children struggled with literacy. Lack of the ability to stimulate the desire to read and lack of recognition that literacy affords a wider array of opportunities were identified as reasons why many children fail to engage in reading and literacy activities, and without engagement learning cannot occur. Engagement was found to lead to self-actualisation and self-directed learners.

Natural curiosity, social interaction, and the desire to be successful were identified as motivators for children who are learning to read. Two types of

motivation are distinguished, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from the self, from what the child finds interesting and leads to deeper understanding and deeper commitment on the part of the learner. Children who are intrinsically motivated are generally strategic readers. They have a fundamental understanding of the skills necessary to read, are better able to accept challenge and persist when the text becomes difficult. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside the learner, often from the teacher or from the possibility of receiving rewards. The effects are often temporary, and less likely to result in identification with the reading material. Learners who are extrinsically motivated are more apt to engage in surface learning, and may not acquire the strategies and attitudes to attempt more challenging work.

Many factors were found to influence the development of successful reading attitudes and motivation. The teacher and the environment were identified as playing crucial roles. Teaching pedagogy, the teacher's personal theory about learning and reading, sets the stage in helping children see the big picture of reading, why reading is important, how it will assist and improve the quality of their lives. The need for inclusive classrooms and environments, supportive of all learners was also shown to be extremely important. Environments that provided the appropriate amount of challenge, that provided for student autonomy, that enabled the learner to pursue personal interests and that encouraged social collaboration were deemed the most successful in building positive reading attitudes and motivation.

Examples of the gap or mismatch between teaching goals, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, need, and literacy development were also cited in this chapter. Teachers who actively and sensitively observe their students, making adjustments to provide a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, were found to be successful in engaging children in reading and literacy activities. Instructing from where the students were at

in their development, rather than from where the curriculum suggested the learners should be, was supported by the literature.

## CHAPTER 3

### Design and Procedures

This chapter focuses on the design and procedure of the present study. The discussion begins by restating the research questions and purpose of this study followed by an outline briefly describing the two research methods selected for this study, case study and action research, including a rationale for their use. A pilot study is briefly described, followed by presentation of information pertinent to the present study: (a) the participant, (b) the setting, (c) the tutoring model initially used in the study, (d) data collection procedures, (e) reading assessment, (f) controls for validity, and (g) the nature of the analysis used to interpret the findings of the study. The data from the present study is presented through the use of journal excerpts. These excerpts can be found in chapter four.

#### Purpose and Research Questions

The present study seeks to examine the gap or mismatch between teaching goals, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, literacy ability, and need, in a one-on-one tutoring situation focused on developing reading skills. I attempt to observe and examine the gap, analyze why and how it forms, and how the gap changes or is maintained through learning activities that are initiated by myself and the participant.

The secondary purpose of this study is to investigate how I can improve my teaching skills, developing a better understanding of my practice, and thereby enhancing my learning and that of the participant.

The research questions addressed in the present study were:

1. How is the 'gap' formed, changed or maintained through learning activities that are initiated by myself and the participant over a four month timeframe?
2. How do I adjust my practice to match or encourage the participant's engagement in reading and reading activities?
3. How does the participant's engagement in reading and reading activities affect his learning?

### Selecting Case Study and Action Research

The combination of case study and action research in this study was selected because I wanted a research method that would allow me to reflect on my own practice, teaching assumptions, and ability when working with one particular child who was experiencing challenging difficulties in learning to read. Traditionally, teachers have looked outside of classrooms for answers to questions about teaching and learning, running to the nearest education resource library when problems arose, looking for pertinent books by renowned theorists. Over the last decade there has been a realisation that while large scale research studies are invaluable in their contribution to education in a general sense, these studies do not always help with specific difficulties encountered in the classroom or learning situation (Wells et al., 1993).

### Case Study Methodology

A case study methodology can be invaluable to education researchers

who are attempting to gain an indepth understanding of an issue, behaviour or event and its meaning (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). Problems and issues in education are often illuminated when they are presented in specific and unique cases. While case studies are not sampling units and therefore cannot be statistically generalised to larger populations, they can be related to broader theory and therefore help to increase the body of knowledge surrounding the issue and thus provide insights for practitioners (Yin, 1994).

Each child who is struggling with reading is a unique case; his/her abilities, skills, prior knowledge, strengths, weaknesses, and home environment all contribute to the child's willingness and ability to engage in the reading process, as does the learning situation and the pedagogical stance of the teacher. It is only through observing and critically reflecting on each individual child's learning process that concerns can be addressed and the learning situation improved. Once the practitioner has a clearer understanding of what is happening in the learning situation, she or he can relate the results to theory, thereby enhancing personal and situational knowledge.

Case study research is explanatory, inductive, emphasizing process; there is no predetermined hypothesis, no overt treatments, no manipulation of variables, or expected outcomes. Using case study, education researchers are given the chance to observe, intuit, and sense what is occurring in a natural setting, involving real children. Discovery, rather than confirmation, is the goal. Insights gained in case study can lead to rethinking and adjustment.

In using case study methodology in this study I was able to address the last of the identified research questions: How does the participant's engagement in reading and its corresponding activities affect his learning?

## Action Research

The second component of the methodological strategy I selected for this study was action research. To many, the word research suggests the researcher is proving something, attempting to convince someone else that the researcher's beliefs are true (Bissex, 1988), and that the research is objective, value free, and context independent (Wells et al., 1993). More recently qualitative research is beginning to include searching for personal insights that will assist with the understanding and improving of practice. Consequently action researchers share their new found understanding and meaning in hope that their story will help others seek and find their own meaning. Action researchers recognise that research can be subjective, focused on the lived experience and may not seek closure but be cyclical in nature.

In linking the terms action and research the essential features of this method are suggested (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982). Action research allows the teacher researcher to describe, interpret, and explain his or her own actions while affording opportunities to make adjustments to practice that will benefit both the child and the researcher. Through critical reflection and self-study, and 'doing something about it,' acting on observations and interpretations, becomes a key feature of the research, with the teacher researcher striving to understand how personal practice can be improved (McNiff et al., 1996).

Another of the purposes of action research is to develop reflective practice in order to be clearer about teacher motives (McNiff et al., 1996). Uncovering assumptions discovered through reflection on practice often reveals a contradiction or imbalance within teachers, with teachers experiencing themselves as living contradictions (Whitehead, 1993). This discomfort occurs in knowing they have not acted in accordance with their

values and beliefs about teaching and acts as an incentive to change teacher practice. When teachers realise the values they hold are not always lived in practice, they are much more apt to bring about the necessary changes to ensure that their beliefs match their practice. Newman (1987) states,

Our beliefs about learning and teaching are largely tacit. We operate a good deal of the time from an intuitive sense of what is going on without actively reflecting on what our intentions might be and what our actions could be saying to students. Our beliefs about learning and teaching can only be uncovered by engaging in systematic self-critical analysis of our current instructional practices. (p.727)

Without self-critical reflection it is also quite possible that students' interpret teachers' intentions quite differently than was intended, learning something other than what the teacher thinks they are learning (Smith, 1981).

#### Model of Action Research Used in Present Study

Every teacher who starts down the path of conducting action research asks the same questions: How do I go about finding out?; How do I record what I learn and make sense of it?; and How will I know how to act on what I find? (Strickland, 1988). While these questions are best answered through active participation in the action research process reflecting the personal journey of the researcher, several theorists including Wells (Wells et al., 1993), Green (1987) and McNiff et al., (1996) have proposed models or guides of how to conduct action research.

For the present study I have selected the model proposed by Green (1987) to guide my action research project. Green's model consists of seven

phases to help teachers conduct research: (1) identify the issue, interest or concern, (2) seek knowledge, (3) plan an action, (4) implement an action, (5) observe the action, (6) reflect on the observations, and (7) revise the plan. In the present study Sam's slow progress and lack of interest in reading activities were identified as the issues. The literature was surveyed to determine the causes of nonengagement. Various plans were designed and implemented in an effort to engage Sam in activities. Observations of teacher and child behaviour occurred through the use of videotaping. Journalling enabled critical reflection which in turn led to revising of teaching plans.

Using Green's (1987) model as a guide I attempted to answer research questions number one and two: How does the 'gap' form, change or maintain itself through learning activities that were initiated by myself and the participant over a four month timeframe?; and How do I adjust my practice to match or encourage the participant's engagement in reading and reading activities?

### Research Design

In the following section the research design of the present study will be outlined beginning with a discussion of the pilot project and concluding with a description of the research design used in this study.

#### Pilot Study

Prior to beginning the present study a small pilot study was undertaken involving the study participant, the researcher, and the use of action research. A general unease concerning what was being accomplished in our regular weekly tutoring sessions caused me to audiotape several of our sessions

in an attempt to determine what was not working, why the tutoring sessions were not producing the desired results. My feeling was that the participant was taking far too long to complete the reading component of the tutoring session, leaving little time for other activities such as writing, word construction using plastic magnetic letters and letter/sound work, all activities that have been found to assist in developing reading ability (Clay, 1993).

For the pilot study one audiotape was randomly selected in order to determine why it was taking us so long to complete the reading component of the session. The section of discourse analysed was approximately 37 minutes long, taped while the participant read four short books from the New PM Story Books Series (Nelson Price Melburn, 1994), all at his instructional or independent reading level (determined through the administration of Running Records as advocated by Clay (1993)). After reviewing the transcript of the tape, the discourse was categorised into six separate types: (1) general talk concerning print/reading/authors and illustrations, (2) talk directly related to the story being read, (3) off topic/task talk, (4) teacher re-directing child back to text, (5) child talk while preparing to read, and (6) child reading.

Outcome of the Pilot Study Table 1 indicates the number of minutes recorded for each of the six categories. The largest amount of time was spent on child reading, 13:53 minutes (of 37 minutes total). This was closely followed by off topic/task talk at 9:08 minutes. Talk concerning print etc. in general and talk directly related to the story being read were almost equal at 6:37 and 5:57 minutes respectively. The least amount of discourse time was devoted to the child's talk as he prepared to read and teacher re-directing the child back to the text. The number of occasions each type of discourse occurred was also observed, as was who initiated each of the discourse events.

Table 1 Discourse Analysis

<u>Type of talk</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Teacher Init.</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u># Times</u>
Talk concerning print/author/ illustrations	6:37	6	9	15
Off topic/task talk	9:08	1	19	20
Teacher re-directs to text	1:06	28	-	28
Child talk preparing to read	1:03	-	4	4
Child reading	13:53	-	38	38
Talk directly related to story	5:57	4	11	15

Table 2 Interruptions to Story Once Started

<u>Title</u>	<u>Child initiated</u>	<u>Teacher initiated</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Brave Father Mouse</u>	4	1	5
<u>Where Are the Sun Hats?</u>	8	3	11
<u>Blackberries</u>	5	1	6
<u>Baby Bear Goes Fishing</u>	7	3	10

Table 2 records the number of interruptions, initiated by both the child and the teacher, that take place during the reading of each story once the story has been started. During the course of reading four short stories, the participant initiated 24 interruptions and the teacher initiated 8 for a total of 32 interruptions while reading the text.

Discussion In looking at the analysis of time spent on each type of discourse, it becomes apparent why the reading component of our tutoring session was taking much longer to complete than desired. While some talk must and should surround the reading of text, in this transcript 23:11 minutes were spent engaged in some type of talking activity, with only 13:53 minutes devoted to the actual reading of the texts (which is the purpose of this portion of our tutoring session). Of biggest concern was the amount of time being spent on off topic/task talk compared to that being spent on reading and talk about the book or print. Twenty incidents of off topic/task talk occurred in the space of 37 minutes, almost all initiated by the child, clearly indicating that the participant was not as engaged in the reading process as he should be.

Upon reflection of the results of this pilot study I was able to implement an action during subsequent sessions. The participant was encouraged to read the text through without engaging in discussion. Off topic talk was limited to the beginning of the session. As a result the participant began to read with greater fluency, was less likely to become lost while reading and more time was available for other reading related activities. I also decided that reading four books during one session was too much for this particular reader and in future sessions only one or two books were read at one time. Without the use of reflective action research I may not have been able to implement the necessary changes to bring about these positive results.

### Description of Present Study

Participant The participant in the present study is a grade three boy who is age 8.7 years old. Sam and I met at the local university reading clinic during the summer of 1996 where I was assigned as his tutor. As it was felt that Sam would require extra support and reassurance to grow as a reader, it was recommended by his classroom and learning assistance teachers that he attend the program. Each morning over a period of four weeks Sam and I worked together building reading strategies, word recognition, and reading fluency. Gradually Sam began to trust in himself as a learner and a reader, proudly reading 27 limited vocabulary books during our time together.

However Sam's progress during our reading sessions was slow and upon conclusion of the reading clinic I was approached by Sam's mother to continue tutoring Sam during his grade three year. We resumed our tutoring sessions in mid October 1996. It was during this time together that I became dissatisfied with the way in which our sessions were evolving, deciding to look critically at my practice and how it was affecting Sam's engagement in reading during our sessions together.

At the time of the study it was determined that Sam was in the initial stages of reading (Johns, 1994). His independent reading level was pre-primer. Sam read at the instructional level at the primer level and moved into the frustration range when reading text designed for the end of grade one.

Setting The one-on-one sessions described in this study took place every Thursday afternoon, lasting approximately one hour over a four month period. In order to find a convenient location for both the family and myself it was decided to use a small seminar room in a community center that also contained the local library. Access to the library and its computer catalogue ensured a reliable and constant source of interesting reading material.

The room itself was furnished with a long table upon which we worked, several plastic and metal chairs and a white board attached to the wall at an inappropriate level for children to use. The inside wall was covered with built in waist high cubbies, topped by a shelf that became the home for numerous cardboard boxes being stored by the community center. Decorator glass bricks, which allowed natural light to filter through, formed the connecting wall with the community centre, but contributed to higher noise levels from the adjacent front door. Blinds on the outside door and windows were kept closed to keep out the sun which quickly warmed up the room to overheated levels. While we were on occasion able to open the outside door, it was necessary to have it closed during videotaping.

Tutoring Model The daily format of the tutoring session used in this study was initially based on the Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1993), which I adapted to reflect the fact that I was only seeing Sam once a week. Similar to Reading Recovery (RR) our sessions encompassed the re-reading of a familiar text, reading of the previous day's book, writing and word analysis activities, and introduction of the new text. Unlike RR, as part of our program, Sam took home one or two short reading books to practice each week, graded at his independent and instructional reading levels. Selected by me from my personal collection these books contained graduated reading vocabulary, predictable text, and picture support for the text. Sam was also encouraged to select a text that interested him from home, school, or personal writing to practice reading and share with me.

When Sam returned the following week, he was asked to select the practised text he preferred to read while I took a running record of his reading behaviour, noting Sam's use of reading strategies. The information obtained from the running records enabled me to make decisions about future reading selections and activities.

As writing is viewed as an important component of any reading program, in a collaborative effort, while using the RR model, Sam and I worked together to write a brief message in his journal each week. Listening to the sounds Sam heard in the words, he attempted to write unknown words while I provided assistance as required. After several practice readings of Sam's written work, the message was re-written on sentence strips and then cut into word cards. Sam was asked to reassemble and read the message, providing him with opportunities to search for information, use known information, and check his own work.

On several occasions Sam also received further work in word analysis through the use of plastic magnetic letters as advocated by Clay (1993). Based on words that Sam had found difficult when reading, he was guided to build and re-build words, while looking for word patterns using the letters and a magnetic board. These root words were also practised in written form.

While using Reading Recovery as our model, the final component of the tutoring session involved the introduction and reading of the new books that Sam was to take home and practice during the following week. Prior to reading these books, we spent time looking at their covers and illustrations, and predicting the book's content. In this manner Sam became familiar with some of the language of the story prior to having to read it. As Sam read the book for the first time, I provided support and assisted in the development of reading strategies by asking appropriate questions and modelling.

Reading Assessment An informal reading inventory, the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1994) was used to assess Sam's reading ability prior to initiating the study and upon completion of the study. I received instruction in administering this measurement in sessions held during the summer of 1996 at the local university reading clinic. Several of Clay's (1993) reading assessments were also used prior to starting the study including Concepts

About Print, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words Dictation Task, and the Writing Vocabulary Test.

Changes to Study Design As the study progressed, consistent with action research, the format of the lessons began to vary as I responded to the gap between my goals and expectations and Sam's interests and abilities. Gradually the structure of the RR format was adjusted and then almost completely replaced by lessons that evolved based on student interest and engagement. On some occasions we worked on activities that Sam brought from home.

Data Collection. Typical of case studies, as an action researcher I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988; McNiff et al., 1996). Data collection began in the late winter and continued for approximately four months. Multiple instruments were used in data collection including: informal reading inventories, informal interviews, observation, videotaping, note taking during our tutoring sessions, and personal journal writing.

Upon returning home from each session I wrote my initial impressions of the lesson in a journal. I noted areas where I thought the lesson had been a success and where Sam was engaged. I also indicated where I thought the lesson had not worked, where there appeared to be tension, where Sam had seemed distracted and nonengaged. After writing my initial impressions, I viewed the videotape for the first time, to get an essence of the lesson. During the second viewing of the video I sat with notepaper and pencil in hand, jotting down exactly what I was observing, including Sam's and my own behaviours. These notes were then rewritten long hand in my journal. Upon writing about the behaviours, I attempted to interpret their meanings; why was it that Sam and I acted in a particular manner?

The use of the Control Checklist devised by Sakari (1997) enabled me to

take a closer look at the issue of reader's and teacher's control and engagement during our reading sessions and was another source of data collection. Behaviours such as who chooses the book, picks up/holds the book, who keeps place in the book, turns the pages, initiates questions and discussions about the story, points out details in the text or illustrations, and makes connections to background knowledge are the focus of this inventory.

Internal Validity To ensure construct validity, data were collected using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1994): videotapes, diagnostic reading measurements, a reflective journal, notes taken during sessions, observations, and informal interviews. Several of the videotapes were jointly viewed by myself and my supervisor in an attempt to verify perceptions. Journal entries were also submitted to my supervisor to ensure that I was interpreting the observed behaviours in an appropriate manner.

As teacher researchers observe with an informed eye (Bissex, 1986) the data collected were analysed in the context of developed and researched theories on motivation and engagement in reading. Atwell (1991) states, "As we continue to consider what teacher research is, we should be aware that it is not theory-stripped, method testing" (p. 16). Informal collaborative talk with interested others and colleagues also provided additional knowledge on the topic and support, assisting me in making sense of my experience (Wells et al., 1993).

Analysis Upon completion of the study my journal entries were analysed looking for patterns of tutor and child behaviour and examples of the phenomenon, the perceived gap that exists between teaching objectives and goals and child interest and needs. Categories and patterns for analysis were decided upon after reflecting on the data. As a result of identifying these patterns of behaviour my journal entries were reformatted and grouped under the headings of: (a) restless and unfocussed behaviour, (b) stalling behaviour,

(c) digression and off topic talk, (d) use of inappropriate text material, (e) control over content and material, and (f) engaged behaviour.

Upon further analysis each of these identified behaviours were placed into one of two categories; those that indicated a gap and lack of engagement on the part of the learner, and those that displayed a closing of the gap where the learner was engaged. Each daily entry was further subdivided to describe the event/situation/behaviour, my response to the event, and my reflection, what I thought was occurring and why. Entries were then placed in chronological order to determine if and how the behaviour changed over time. Concluding summaries for each category were written during the final analysis and writing of the thesis document.

### Summary

In the present study action research and case study methodology has been used to investigate the gap or mismatch between teacher goals and expectations and student interest, need, and literacy ability. Action research is used as a means of investigating personal practice and teaching assumptions; specifically I was interested in how my practice and assumptions led to a widening or narrowing of the gap or mismatch that I had observed in tutoring sessions with the participant. Case study methodology in this study affords the teacher researcher the opportunity to explore one child's struggle with reading, what it is that he does or does not do in his attempts to increase his ability to read.

The child selected for this study is a young boy who I had been tutoring for several months after meeting him through my involvement with the local university reading clinic. Consequently a trusting relationship was already in place between the participant and myself prior to initiating the present study.

The child was selected due to his continuing difficulty with reading despite the determined efforts of his parents, his teachers, myself, and the child himself.

Initially a pilot study was undertaken involving an exploration of discord that I had perceived during our tutoring sessions. After taping, transcribing and classifying six different types of discourse noted in one of the audiotapes of our lesson it was determined that much of the tutoring session was not focused on reading or related reading activities. The use of action research to facilitate the present study continued to demand that I look closer at my teaching practice and assumptions, that I examine what it was that I was doing or not doing to assist the participant engage in reading.

In the present study the tutoring sessions were initially modelled on the Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) program, an early intervention program that has had proven success with children who are struggling with reading in grade one (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Consistent with action research the structure and content of the sessions changed during the course of the study to reflect what I was observing in our sessions.

Data in the present study were collected through the use of videotaping, journal writing, informal interviews and informal diagnostic reading assessments. The data were analysed by categorising events/behaviours that transpired in our lessons into two categories: those that indicated a gap and lack of engagement on the part of the learner, and those that displayed a closing of the gap where the learner was engaged. Each of these two categories was further broken down to reflect how and why the gap formed and what assisted in closing the gap. Chapter 4 presents the data collected in this study using the form of re-formatted journal entries and includes my reflections on Sam's and my behaviours.

## CHAPTER 4

## Results and Discussion

Fifteen, one hour lessons conducted over the course of four months have been analysed through the use of journalling and numerous viewings of lesson video tapes. Both verbal and nonverbal responses were noted. The data were analysed looking for patterns of tutor and child behaviour and any examples of the gap thought to exist between teaching objectives, goals, expectations, and curriculum and child interest, ability, and need. The gap was identified by looking for areas of tension, friction or discord within lessons, indications that the participant was not engaged in learning. Upon completion of the study the participant's non-engaged behaviour was categorised, and patterns were identified and analysed. Conversely examples of the participant's engaged literacy behaviours were also identified, categorised, and analysed as indications that the teacher and participant were working harmoniously, that the student's needs were being met.

In the chapter that follows, results and discussions of the data will be presented in four sections including: (a) the teacher/student dyad, (b) participant's reading ability, (c) indications of the gap's existence, and (d) means of closing the gap. The chapter concludes with a summary of the discussion.

#### The Student - Teacher Dyad

Although most lay persons continue to equate literacy with the physical act of reading and writing, there is an increasing movement in the field of education research to consider the social context surrounding literacy (Rosenblatt, 1994). It is now recognised that literacy is not accomplished in a

vacuum. Interaction between the teacher and student, their personalities, what each brings to the learning situation, must be taken into account. In this section the background of the two participants is detailed in order to obtain an accurate understanding of the student-teacher dyad in the present study. The summary at the conclusion of this section discusses how the interaction between the participant and teacher contributes to literacy development.

### Description of Participants

Child Over the last several months I have had the pleasure of tutoring a grade three child, age 8.7 years. Sam comes from a loving home in the rural district surrounding a large city in British Columbia. Books and reading have been an integral part of his daily routine since birth, with both parents reading to Sam at bedtime. Recent favourites include the Hardy Boys, Goosebump books, Pipi Longstocking, Laura Engles Wilder and Robert Munsch books.

Sam lives with his mother, who manages the family farm, his father, who works outside the farm, his six year old sister, and several pets, including a horse that he rides named Cookie. Sam has numerous extended family living in the immediate area and happily does chores at both his own and his uncle's farm. With his immersion in rural life it is not surprising that Sam's dream is to become a farmer. Sam's mother describes him as curious and interested in content books, animals, planets, rocks, and how things work. Sam enjoys watching nature and science shows on television and on video. He loves to play sports, participating in both hockey and baseball. A new interest is working and playing games on the family and school computers.

Unfortunately, Sam has been struggling with school since his first attempts at reading in grade one. Sam's mother describes him as being too

young when he entered kindergarten and in retrospect wishes she had kept him at home for another year. He received speech therapy during his pre-school and kindergarten years and Sam missed many days during his early school years due to reoccurring ear infections. Although a happy and obedient child, Sam found school work difficult and his parents often found it necessary to encourage him to attend school every day. On numerous occasions Sam simply refused to go to school or cried profusely when his mom drove him, only adding to his and his family's sense of frustration and pain.

Mid way through his grade two year Sam was assessed by local school officials who indicated learning delays in language arts and it was deemed he needed extra assistance as a learner. Consequently Sam received daily assistance for a period of 45 minutes, along with one other student. This assistance focused on the areas of reading and writing and helped change Sam's attitude toward school, building his skill level and developing a sense of trust in himself and his abilities. By the end of grade two, under the guidance of a supportive language arts specialist, Sam had worked hard to develop a sight vocabulary of 60 Dolch words. He knew 21 letter sounds and was able to track accurately when memory reading or reading familiar text.

As it was felt Sam would require extra support and reassurance to grow as a reader, it was recommended that he attend the local university reading clinic during the summer of 1996, where I was assigned as his tutor while enrolled in a reading diagnostic class. Each morning over a period of four weeks Sam and I worked together, building reading strategies, word recognition, and reading fluency. Using the Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1993) as a model for our daily sessions, we would spend time reading small pattern books, constructing and re-constructing written sentences, making words using plastic letters, and playing language arts games. Sam's progress was slow, and many times it was necessary to repeat learning

activities of the previous day due to Sam's weak short term memory. Still there was a sense of progress during the course of the four weeks. Sam continued to enjoy reading and was proud of reading 27 books during our time together.

Upon conclusion of the reading clinic I was approached by Sam's mother to continue tutoring Sam during his grade three year and we resumed our tutoring sessions in mid October. Sam's mother felt these sessions were an important part of her son's education. Consequently she decided to take Sam out of the regular school program for part of one afternoon each week instead of trying to arrange time in their already busy weekend schedule. Working with Sam during regular school hours also proved to be beneficial in other ways. Sam did not see the extra work as punitive, as something he had to do because he was not successful at reading, but rather as extra time being spent on reading while his classmates were also engaged in school work.

During the autumn of his grade three year Sam continued to struggle with reading falling significantly behind his classmates. Due to a change in school staff there was little or no follow through on the language arts program that had been implemented during Sam's grade two year. As a result, Sam's pullout school assistance dropped to only one or two short sessions per week despite the recommendation of myself and his former learning assistance teacher that a daily intervention program be implemented. Although Sam's classroom teacher tried to modify her program and expectations to meet his needs, with 22 other children in the classroom she found it difficult to give Sam the attention he required. The classroom use of a basal series at the grade three level made it difficult for Sam to participate in classroom reading and complete the assigned language arts work. In response to my questions about his classroom reading, Sam was rarely able to discuss the stories, an indication that he simply was unable to read the material offered.

Sam's mother continually lobbied the school for more assistance for

Sam. In December of 1996 another school based assessment was conducted which labelled Sam severely delayed, at least two grade levels behind his peers in language development as well as displaying moderate delays in mathematical operations. As a result of this assessment and continued strong advocacy on his behalf by his mother, Sam began to receive two hours of small group, pullout assistance, four mornings per week in late January 1997. This continued throughout the remainder of the present study.

The school pullout assistance received by Sam during his grade three year is difficult to comment upon without having been in attendance myself. Information gained in two interviews with the language art's specialist suggests Sam was working on a variety of activities to assist in developing: sight words, structural/phonemic awareness, strategies for decoding unknown words, and content driven writing. Time was spent on developing word banks, looking for root words within larger words, recording responses in journals, and the occasional use of a technique similar to Elkonin boxes that assisted with hearing and recording letter sounds.

Sam also participated in both small group and individual reading during these pullout sessions. Attempts were made to offer books of interest to Sam during individual reading time and some of the language arts activities were centered around these books. Unfortunately Sam did not enjoy the pullout sessions and often complained to his mother that the work was boring and other members of the group were teasing him. He was unresponsive when I tried to discuss the pullout sessions with him.

Through the years Sam's mother has become increasingly frustrated with a school system that does not seem to be helping her child gain reading proficiency and be successful in school. She has agonised over allowing Sam to be labelled severely learning disabled, which the school system required in order to offer Sam extensive pullout assistance. At times she feels the system

and the teachers have given up on her child, viewing her son only in terms of what he is unable to do rather than the progress he has made. The psycho-educational report recognised that Sam has a diverse set of cognitive abilities, ranging from below the six year old level to around the 12 year old level, indicating he is quite capable of learning. In this report Sam's academic scores were stated as being almost uniformly below what one would expect for a boy of his age, grade, and cognitive ability. Sam's mother wants to understand why it is that he is having so much difficulty learning.

At present although Sam continues to enjoy and benefit from parents who read to him on a nightly basis, his mother reports that it has become increasingly more difficult to encourage Sam to read himself. He rarely chooses to read a book independently of a supervising adult but will become engaged in content books, carefully examining the pictures. Sam continues to need guidance to see the importance of reading and the fulfilment it can bring to his life. He missed a total of 35 school days during his grade three year. At the conclusion of this study Sam had his enlarged adenoids removed in an attempt to improve his continuing difficulty with ear infections and speech pronunciation and hopefully improve his school attendance.

Teacher Researcher I have always been confident in my ability to read. Although I did not start to read until I entered grade one, reading came easily to me. By the end of first grade I was reading grade four level text. By grade three, four and five I was writing short stories to entertain my friends modelled on the huge volume of text I had already consumed. Today reading continues to play an important role in my life. As a teacher, I am constantly looking for new information on curriculum subjects, improved methods of teaching, a new scientific discovery to discuss with students, or a great book of fiction to discuss with and recommend to peers. It is not unusual for me to read

several books each month, depending on their length and difficulty, and the events happening in my life. I cannot imagine a life without books or the pleasures attained from reading.

My love for reading probably came from my parents, both ardent fiction readers. My love for teaching no doubt came from my father. There was many a Saturday afternoon that I would spend at the chalkboard in his physics lab, handing out paper to imaginary students, pretending to teach concepts that I had only just begun to understand. My teacher training began much later, in the early 1980s, after the birth of my second child. In response to a new job instructing playschool at the local community center I decided to return to school, first to night school for my early childhood diploma and then full time for my Bachelor of Education.

My training in early childhood education was filled with the teachings of Piaget and his insistence that young children be given the opportunity to discover and explore learning concepts in their own time without pressure from adults. Piaget stated, "Children have real understanding only of that which they invent themselves, and each time we try to teach them something too quickly, we keep them from reinventing it for themselves" (quoted by Chomsky, 1974, pp. 13-14). This philosophy was the foundation on which I based my own initial theory of learning and pedagogy.

Kindergarten and playschool were well suited to the teaching of Piaget, the concept of learning through play, and what became my theory about learning. My role was one of facilitator, rather than instructor/teacher. I encouraged my children to actively seek out what interested them in the world around them, to ask questions, and make their own discoveries. Most of the children flourished in an open atmosphere, in the many opportunities that the establishment of learning centers facilitated. I provided the materials and support necessary for the children to make their own discoveries. My time

was spent gathering materials, wandering around the classroom, chatting with the children as they learned through play, monitoring for problems, keeping anecdotal records, and looking for and enacting upon teachable moments.

In those early years of my teaching experience I rarely took steps to teach a child who had not first shown an interest in the learning concept. Although we came together as a whole group for story time, singing, and games, children were rarely instructed en masse. I placed the onus to learn solely on the child. I had read Summerhill (1962) and Emile (1979). Opportunities were presented; children either chose to engage or did not. They were evaluated using Piaget's stages of development. When a child did not progress at a similar rate to his or her peers, I felt s/he was not yet ready, had not yet reached that stage in their development, had not had a sufficient amount of experience with the concept. I advocated a wait and see ideology - that given more time and exploration the child would eventually catch-up.

While teaching I continued to read educational journals. During the fourth and final year of my bachelor's degree I had been briefly introduced to the concept of scaffolding and the work of Vygotsky and I found that his ideas were now becoming more evident in my readings. Piaget and his theories that had been so valued only a few years ago were being challenged by the view that teachers needed to take a more active role in educating children. During my final year of teaching kindergarten, before making the switch to a grade one class, my teaching became more interventionist. I began selecting and teaching what it was that I thought the children needed to learn to find success in grade one. My kindergarten class changed from one where children explored their own interests to one where they prepared for further grades. My classroom was not unique. Learning through play and the Piagetian perspective were being abandoned throughout our school district.

The switch to a grade one class introduced me to a curriculum that was clearly defined by the ministry of education and the school district in which I taught. I was expected to teach certain concepts within a required amount of time to an incredibly varied student population. While these institutions professed to wanting individual program plans for each student based on student need and ability, the new buzz word in the provincial government, ministry, and school district was accountability. Standards and expectations were defined, teachers were accountable for their students' learning. All children were expected to succeed at similar rates and times; provincial testing was introduced into grade one curriculum and the expectation was that all children would complete the grade requirements within the year. I became convinced that the wait and see attitude I had once so strongly believed was not in the best interests of the children or myself. My children could not be seen as being universally behind others in the district. They must learn at a rate similar to their peers.

Consequently how I viewed my role as a teacher changed. I consciously made the decision to teach concepts to everyone - even when I knew instinctively that not all children were ready to learn or interested in learning, the concepts I was teaching. Instead of the child, the curriculum, the ministry, and school district's agenda became the driving force in my classroom. I felt a real pressure to conform to their expectations and lost sight of many of the teachings of Piaget and of my early childhood training.

In defiance of teaching to one standard I continued to read more literature on scaffolding and Vygotsky. Although the research on scaffolding and the writing of Vygotsky did not advocate a wait and see ideology, the learner and his or her individual needs and ability did remain at the center of the literacy process. This view related to my earlier belief in Piaget's theories and I felt comforted. After several years I had convinced myself that I was

using this new teaching methodology, now supported by the school district; one where children are guided and supported in their quest for learning, where the more knowledgeable other modelled new learning and then gradually handed over the reins to the less knowledgeable.

### Student - Teacher Dyad

Upon first glance Sam and I have several experiences and characteristics in common. Both of us had birthdays late in the school year, were shy as young children, so unsettled and anxious about starting kindergarten before our fifth birthdays our families had to constantly encourage our attendance throughout the school year. We came from homes where books and learning were valued. As young children each of us was given books as gifts and loved to be read to as part of a bed time ritual. Although surrounded by a world of books, neither of us started to read prior to grade one, content to let others read for us. In fact it was not until we reached grade one that our similar experiences became significantly different. In grade one I became a successful and enthusiastic reader, engaged in school life; Sam did not.

In trying to determine the reason why Sam has had such difficulty with literacy, lack of intelligence is not a plausible explanation. Psychological reports indicate that Sam has the cognitive ability to learn. Indeed in some areas he is several years beyond his peers. Nor is Sam lazy or uninterested in the world around him. Outside of school he displays a great deal of curiosity and is able to speak on a wide variety of subjects. Sam simply appears to be one of those children who function well outside of school, but not inside. Sam's continual difficulty with learning in the school context suggests that in some way the school learning situation is not meeting his needs, resulting in Sam

being a non-engaged learner.

Sam's non-engagement in school literacy has been evident from his first introduction to reading and writing in grade one. It is possible to hypothesize that early in his school career Sam became a passive, non-engaged learner, coasting along, not willing to take risks, or assume responsibility for or control over his own learning. Undoubtedly well intentioned teachers, anxious that Sam should begin to read, were happy to assist Sam. Perhaps they thought that by assuming total responsibility of the learning context, they would show Sam the way, model the reading and writing process for him. As the teachers became the doers (Sakari, 1997), Sam became convinced by their actions that he was not capable of learning. Or perhaps Sam simply did not need to work as others would do the work for him. Having not had much actual physical practice with reading and writing, Sam rarely experienced success on the occasions that he did try. Lack of success decreased his already low self-esteem and confidence.

It is only possible to hypothesize about this scenario because I have discovered that I am one of those well intentioned teachers. When I first began working with struggling readers, I was sure there was a simple solution for helping them that I had somehow failed to learn during my undergraduate teacher training. I was looking for a quick fix; as a teacher I would be able to make it all better. I would show my students what they were doing wrong and how to do it correctly. Unfortunately in thinking this way I assumed total control of the learning situation. When children did not improve as a result of my assistance it was easy to blame the learner, the home environment or the context in which learning was occurring. I had done my best, they were failing to learn.

I now realise in rushing to bring struggling readers up to the level of their peers, I failed to meet their needs, to adequately address their abilities,

leaving them without a voice in their own learning. It is only through actively reflecting on my practice with Sam that I have discovered my inadequacies and how to truly help struggling readers.

### Summary

Both teachers and students bring a myriad of skills, interests, perceptions, and abilities to the learning situation. The attributes of both do not hold constant, but interact, play off each other to bring new dimensions to the learning context. Although Sam loved being read to and interacted with books at a young age, his passive, laid back nature did not lead him to actively pursue the reading process. In response to Sam's lack of engagement in literacy, his parents and teachers, including myself, have been willing to do the physical and mental work of literacy for Sam. Being in a position of authority and having more knowledge, we assumed control of the learning situation.

As a result of our actions Sam was rarely made to feel that he was in control of his own learning. Lack of ownership no doubt contributed to further lack of engagement. As Sam was not doing the work, his mind was free to wander and it is likely that he missed valuable instruction in literacy strategies and skills. In not physically and mentally doing the work, Sam also did not receive the numerous practises that many require when learning new concepts.

After working with Sam over the course of this study I have come to understand that wait and see is not the best methodological approach for children who are struggling with reading. Sam required my support to become a successful reader, support that unfortunately was not always there. Although teachers have the responsibility to support and perhaps intervene

as children work towards becoming successful, fluent readers, the children themselves must lead the way. The challenge for teachers is to provide the atmosphere in which children will engage and take on the responsibility of learning. It is in this difficult area of matching pedagogy to student ability, interest, and need where I found the gap most apparent.

### Child's Reading Ability

#### Summer 1996

When I first met Sam during the summer of 1996 he was struggling to read early primary text and word lists. Sam felt most comfortable and experienced higher levels of success while reading very short, restricted vocabulary, picture supported, pattern books such as The Farm (Ginn Series 2000, 1989) and What Can You See? (McCracken Tiger Clubs Books, 1989). Much of the vocabulary in these books can be predicted using picture, rhyming, and patterning clues. Many pages contained only one or two words or short repetitious sentences. Longer pattern books such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear (Martin, 1983) caused Sam considerable difficulty and required adult support.

Reading Levels Sam was capable of reading pre-pre-primer level material (word lists and passages) at the instructional and independent reading levels (Johns, 1994). Both pre-primer word recognition lists and passages proved very frustrating for Sam. He was able to independently read only a few words in these passages and as a result could answer few of the comprehension questions. Consequently primer and grade one word lists and passages were not attempted.

Word Recognition Sam was able to recognise many of the one syllable function words in pre-pre-primer word recognition lists (Johns 1994),

restricted vocabulary passages (Johns), and in little pattern reading books including such words as: at, to, the, in, and. Content words and those that had more than one syllable were more of a challenge for Sam. Part of his difficulty appeared to be in hearing and recognising middle sounds in words. When Sam was able to hear the sound, he often did not know to what letter it belonged. This was true particularly for vowels, which Sam himself told me he found very hard. According to Clay (1993) both of these concepts, of hearing sounds buried in words and being able to link single sound symbols and clusters of symbols with the sounds they represent, are necessary for reading. Sam's inability to do so made reading very difficult.

The Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words Test (Dictation Task) (Clay, 1993) that Sam completed indicated many middle sounds missing. Sam experienced more success with hearing beginning and final consonant sounds (although inconsistently) as evidenced in writing samples and when he was trying to sound out words while reading stories. Many of the words that Sam spelled correctly in the prescribed passage were ones that were in his sight vocabulary and he did not need to listen for the sounds, ie., big, mom, I, at, has.

On the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation (Yopp, 1995) Sam also had difficulty with hearing the individual sounds, often blending sounds together, scoring not much above the mean kindergarten score. Very rarely was Sam able to recognise patterns within words or root families and needed to be reminded of the strategy to read on and finish the sentence if unfamiliar with a word. He occasionally employed the strategy of evaluating whether or not his reading made sense, going back and rereading a word if he was uncertain. Sam also relied heavily on picture clues to determine an unknown word.

Comprehension As an initial test for comprehension and book knowledge, Concepts About Print (Clay, 1993) was administered to Sam. He

scored quite high on this test - in the 8th stanine for six - seven year olds, missing only two items (one change in letter order and the meaning of the comma). In one instance Sam even noticed when I inadvertently said the word 'and' at the beginning of a sentence.

In passages where Sam was able to decode the majority of words, he had excellent comprehension, answering main topic questions, factual, elaboration, and inference questions. Where word recognition was at a minimum, comprehension suffered. While listening to stories read by myself, Sam was also able to answer comprehension and prediction questions without any difficulty.

Although Sam appeared to know much about print and books, often he failed to use that knowledge. When trying to put together cardboard word puzzles, he frequently did not consider the placement of the letter and tried to fit pieces together even when the letter would be upside down or not in alignment with the remaining letters. In an exercise where Sam was asked to switch word cards in a sentence so that the instructor could try to figure out which words were out of sequence, Sam crumpled up the word cards so they could not be read. When asked how the instructor would be able to know the words, Sam answered that he would have to guess. I began to wonder if this was how Sam felt about reading - that reading printed text is similar to blind guessing?

Attitude The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was used to assist in determining Sam's attitude toward reading. Sam circled all Garfields either happiest, slightly smiling or both. On those occasions when two Garfields were circled for a single item, the lowest score was used. Sam's placement at the 90th percentile indicated an excellent attitude toward reading prior to starting grade three.

Although it is important to have a formal assessment, it is also important

to observe children's behaviour. It is my opinion that Sam displayed very positive emotions when being read to, became excited about new stories, stayed engaged while the story was being read to him and genuinely worked hard to figure out the meaning of unknown words.

Interest Inventory In an effort to understand Sam's preferences he was asked to complete an interest inventory identifying his favourite T.V. shows (Robin Hood), foods ('seefoods' - added an s because he likes all kinds), songs (Rolling Stones), friends (Darrell), colours (green), sports (football and soccer) , and toys (spaceman). Although not mentioned in the formal survey, Sam was also extremely interested in all aspects related to the farm, including his pony which he has shown at local fairs, winning several ribbons.

### Winter 1997

Prior to beginning the study presented in this thesis Sam participated in a diagnostic assessment conducted by myself in late January of 1997. At this point Sam was reading from the red and yellow levels of the New PM Story Books (1994). While these little books contain restricted, graduated vocabulary, and are picture supported, they are an advancement from the pattern books we used during the past summer. Their use of sentences and short paragraph structure, limited dialogue, and varying types of punctuation, including question marks and exclamation points require stronger monitoring and analytical skills on the part of the reader.

Reading Levels Administration of graded word lists and passages from Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1994) determined that Sam continued to be in the initial stages of reading and could read short, restricted vocabulary passages with success. His independent reading level was pre-primer, he read at the instructional level while reading passages at the primer level and

moved into the frustration level when reading text designed for the end of grade one. While this assessment of Sam's reading ability reflects only slight gains in reading levels from the summer 96, Sam actually made fewer miscues, read with more fluency and monitored for and selfcorrected errors with more success in this evaluation.

Word Recognition On graded word lists Sam's instructional level was at the pre-primer stage and approached frustration level while reading the primer word list. Sam scored 100% on the pre-pre-primer word list. Grade one word lists were not attempted.

Sam knew some strategies to determine a word thereby increasing his comprehension of the text, although he didn't always apply them. Using the Oral Reading Miscues Response Record found in Diagnostic Reading Program (Alberta Education, 1986), it was determined that Sam generally used singular letters rather than clusters to figure out unknown words, with beginning and ending letters playing a larger role in his analysis than middle letters. When Sam substituted words for passage words, he used words that maintained the author's meaning less than 50% of the time. The substituted words would generally be corrected once Sam determined they did not make sense in the context of further reading, indicating that Sam was self monitoring for meaning and comprehension. If the substituted words maintained the author's meaning, they were rarely corrected. Fifty percent of the time Sam would substitute words where one half of the letters in the passage words were also in the miscue words, indicating he was attempting to match letters with sounds.

On the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (Dictation Task) (Clay, 1993), Sam scored in the 4th stanine (for 6:0 - 7:3), the same level scored in the summer 1997, indicating that he continued to have severe difficulties linking letter sounds with symbols.

Comprehension Sam had good comprehension and recall of text at all levels tested. Only when passages moved well into his frustration level (i.e. grade one) where he was unable to decode many of the content words, did Sam experience difficulty with understanding the passage.

Attitude and Interest Although no formal or informal inventories were administered at this time, it was observed by both Sam's mother and myself that it was becoming more difficult to engage Sam in reading, indicating a change in attitude was occurring. Often Sam would find the means to interrupt reading, engaging the adult in conversation.

### Present Study

The video tapes of the present study provide an excellent means of identifying the changes in Sam's reading and writing ability. By mid way through the study many improvements were identified. Early in April Sam began using beginning and final clusters to assist in decoding unknown words. This is an improvement over his earlier almost exclusive use of individual letters in sounding out words and perhaps can be attributed to a change in the technique I employed when using Elkonin boxes (Clay, 1993) to help Sam determine letter placement within words. Until this point in our lessons I constructed the boxes in such a manner that each letter was given their own box, erroneously suggesting to Sam that the letter sounds needed to be separated. After discussion with my supervisor and further reading (Clay, 1993), I changed the procedure placing consonant clusters and diagraphs together in one box. Sam immediately commented on the new procedure and almost simultaneously made the transition, starting to use clusters while decoding unknown words.

After some initial modelling of research skills while working on the

topic of monkeys, Sam initiated and followed many of the modelled techniques when later researching the self-selected topic of ants. Reading a content book at his grade level (supposedly well above his independent/instructional reading level), Sam displayed confidence and ability in looking up information in response to personal questions he had concerning ants. He used an index to locate required information, synthesized large chunks of information and reconstructed it into smaller more manageable pieces which Sam recorded in written form. Sam also employed the often modelled technique of Elkonin boxes to help determine letter placement in unknown words while writing his report.

Sam's final report on the topic of ants included eight lines of text and two labelled diagrams, substantially more literacy work than he had ever been involved in in the past. Throughout the self initiated activity Sam remained highly engaged, assumed total control of the materials and content of the lesson, and effectively balanced his time between reading and writing activities. Contrary to past experiences, Sam was the one doing the doing (Sakari, 1997) and I was placed in the role of providing support when necessary.

Sam's skill in the area of writing progressively increased throughout the course of the present study. After his work on ants, later writing showed that Sam was using more and varied words while writing continuous text, although vowels continued to present a challenge up to the conclusion of the study. Sam became a frequent user of Elkonin boxes, initiating this technique when he needed to write an unknown word. He also began employing the technique of writing a word several ways and then deciding which way "looked right." By the conclusion of the study Sam was showing a beginning interest in writing chapter stories rather than simply labelling diagrams which he was happy to do at the start of the study.

Although Sam seemed to progress slowly through the New PM Story Books (1994), his reading behaviours continued to show improvement. Sam's monitoring skills, his ability to make self corrections, re-read the material when the content did not seem to make sense, and use of voice expression and intonation all improved. Near the conclusion of the study Sam displayed that he was able to handle more challenging text when it was of genuine interest to him or when he had had an opportunity to select the text himself.

### July 1997

At the conclusion of the present study Sam had finished reading the blue and green levels of the New PM Story Books (1994). The text of these last two levels in this series utilises the past tenses of verbs, contractions, large segments of dialogue, commas, and several sentences per page, all of which proved more challenging for Sam. While pictures continue to support the text at these levels, with numerous words per page it is more difficult for the reader to guess at individual words using pictures as cues. Consequently reading at this level demands more monitoring and analysing and Sam will require more practise at this level before continuing with more difficult material.

At the conclusion of the present study Sam was expressing some interest in reading content books that he had selected. Often these books were one or two grade levels above his reading ability. Because of Sam's interest in the content he showed greater persistence at decoding unknown words and was able to read enough of the passages to comprehend the author's intent.

Due to time constraints, reading level and word recognition were the only areas assessed at this time. On the day of the assessment Sam appeared very tired due to a late night the previous evening. He had been asleep in the

car just prior to testing and repeatedly yawned throughout the evaluation, often losing his concentration. Several times it was necessary to help him refocus, particularly while reading the grade one passage.

Reading Levels Administration of graded word lists and passages from Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1994) determined that Sam had progressed to reading the primer reading material independently. His instructional reading level was grade one and his frustration level was grade two material.

Word Recognition On graded word lists Sam's performance was slightly askew. On the pre-primer word list Sam scored in the instructional range. Both the primer and the grade one list proved to be at Sam's independent level. The grade two list was attempted and abandoned when Sam miscued on the first seven words. Although Sam's attempts at the grade two words were incorrect, he did employ the strategy of matching beginning sounds to initial letters, indicating some monitoring was taking place and that he was not just blindly guessing at the words. On three of Sam's attempts initial clusters were used rather than singular letter sounds and on another word the final sound was also used.

### Summary of Change in Reading Performance

Through the course of a year the reading level of most children will naturally progress, due to maturity and experience. As previously shown in the literature (Clark, 1996; Guthrie, 1996; Turner, 1993, 1995), teachers have the ability to enhance student progress by offering supportive instruction and appropriate learning situations. Although it is difficult to assess how much of Sam's improvement in reading ability is the direct result of myself and the instruction I provided, careful observation and reflection gave valuable insights into the inner workings of Sam's literacy processes and behaviours.

These insights will provide an excellent resource upon which to base future assistance.

When the study began Sam was able to read independently at the pre-primer level. Reading material was exclusively small, vocabulary restricted, and picture supported text. By completion of the study Sam was reading independently at the primer level and had just completed a series of books designed for children at the end of grade one. This material, which Sam was able to read at his instructional level, offered a greater array of vocabulary, text structure, and punctuation. Not all of the content was picture supported; Sam was required to use more strategies for determining unknown words. At the conclusion of the study Sam was also expressing an interest in reading easy reading content books in an effort to gain information of personal interest.

Sam's writing skills also progressed throughout the course of the study. At the beginning of the study, with support and encouragement, Sam was able to write one or two sentences of continuous text. He was most happy when he was able to list information or label sketches. Upon completion of the study Sam had been involved in several writing activities where he had written numerous lines of text. Most of this writing was the result of self-initiated projects of interest to Sam.

Although Sam's actual progress may have been small in terms of gaining reading levels, moving from reading passages and word lists designed for pre-primer levels to those intended for the end of grade one, Sam became much more competent at reading and writing. When Sam was engaged in the task, fluency, expressiveness, and increased strategy use characterised Sam's later reading. Most importantly Sam had begun to assume some responsibility for his own learning, initiating and completing several projects to his own satisfaction.

Indications of the Gap Between Teacher Goals, Objectives, and Curriculum and  
Student Interest, Need, and Ability

Examples of the Gap Early in Child's School Career

Sam's difficulties with school learning started early. Although not a disobedient child, attending to directions and instruction proved a challenge for Sam. With little interest in what was occurring in the classroom, his concentration would frequently wander. It is also possible that his frequent ear infections caused Sam to have temporary hearing losses, making it difficult to hear what teachers were saying. (Hearing specialists have indicated that Sam's hearing levels are normal.) Sitting quietly Sam would appear to become lost in his own thoughts and ideas. The farm and its animals and a rich array of family events perhaps preoccupied his mind. Shy by nature, Sam would rarely discuss his thoughts with others. Not being a risk taker and afraid of making a mistake, Sam rarely volunteered information or answered questions. His teachers naturally thought he was a quiet and passive learner. And as he rarely presented a behaviour problem, Sam was allowed to slide along. It was not until mid way through grade two that teachers began to realise that Sam had not learned the material presented.

When asked, Sam remembers little of the concepts that were introduced and taught during his early school years. He does not recall being introduced to the literacy and mathematical foundations that are generally presented in kindergarten and grade one, including nursery rhymes, fairy tales, chants, letters, beginning sounds, rhyming, colours, shapes, and numerical concepts. Sam does however enthusiastically remember a grade one unit on snakes. He still proudly retells information learned on boa constrictors.

### Present Day Indications of the Gap

This pattern of inattention continues into Sam's present experiences with formal learning. During the present study, his grade three classroom teacher and the school language specialist frequently complained of Sam's inability to concentrate and stay focused on the task at hand. As in past grades his lack of concentration was passive; Sam was rarely distracted by those around him nor did he distract others. He simply slipped off, his eyes straying away from the task, glazed over and for several moments Sam would stare off into space. This behaviour was observed on many occasions throughout our tutoring sessions. I now view it as a symptom of the gap between teacher goals, objectives, expectations, and curriculum and child interest, ability, and need. Sam's lack of engagement in reading tasks is related to his lack of progress in the reading process.

Literature has shown that engagement is a crucial component of literacy learning (Cambourne, 1988, 1993). During the present study it was frequently apparent that Sam was not engaged in the content of the tutoring lessons. His non-engagement in literacy was shown in many ways: through restlessness and unfocussed behaviour, through the use of stalling tactics, and digressions or off topic talk. Non-engagement was also apparent when the reading material was not at an appropriate level for Sam, either too easy or too challenging, or when the material was of little interest to him. Who was in control of the lesson and initiated activities was also found to have a significant impact on Sam's literacy engagement.

Upon careful reflection through the use of journalling and viewing of 15 hours of video tape, I came to understand that Sam's non-engagement in literacy was an indication of the gap between teacher objectives, goals, and curriculum and the student's needs, ability, and interest. When Sam was least

engaged in the literacy task, the gap was at its widest; my goals and objectives did not meet or match Sam's needs, ability or interests. When Sam displayed a high level of literacy engagement, I was generally following Sam's agenda, allowing his needs and interest to override my own and to lead the lesson. It was at these times that Sam appeared to experience the highest degree of success, independence, and enjoyment with literacy activities.

### Specific Examples of the Gap in the Present Study

In this study, attempts have been made to categorise examples of the gap's contribution to non-engagement in literacy using the following terms: restlessness and unfocussed behaviour, stalling tactics, digression or off topic talk, inappropriate material, and control of content and material. Many examples of the gap were difficult to classify into one single category as they overlapped into several, particularly that of control issues which were found throughout the examples. The data have been compiled using my journal and 15 hours of lesson video tapes. Selected examples of the gap are identified by the date on which they occurred and further subtitled to describe the event, my immediate reaction to the event and later reflection. Examples are presented in chronological order to show how perceptions changed over the course of the study. Themes or patterns that run throughout the present study are summarised upon the conclusion of each example type.

### Restless and Unfocussed Behaviour

Feb. 7 Sam was quite restless and unfocussed, squirming in his chair, swinging and kicking his feet, tipping his chair, standing up, moving his arms and hands back and forth across the table surface, fiddling with other

books on the table, looking and waving at the camera, and on several occasions, yawning loudly.

My Reaction Having worked with young children for several years I am quite accustomed to active children who find it difficult to sit for long periods of time. Consequently for the most part it does not bother me too much when Sam stands up or moves about. I understand his need to do so, particularly since we are working in the afternoon. Clearly Sam is not going to be at his best after a long morning of working in the learning assistance room.

Upon Reflection Attributing Sam's restless behaviour to a long day may be taking the easy way out. Perhaps I need to consider that it might also indicate that Sam is bored, that the material is too easy or perhaps too difficult, or that the setting is not comfortable or aesthetically pleasing. On viewing the video tape I noticed that Sam became increasingly restless while we were working on constructing words with magnetic letters. In retrospect I see that this portion of the lesson went on too long. When Sam became more interested in printing the words in his notebook, I persisted with trying to have him make the words first using the plastic letters.

I understand why I tried to encourage Sam's use of the magnetic letters. I wanted to give Sam the concrete experience of the word prior to using the more abstract letter symbols. My Piagetian background and experience in early childhood education has always suggested that it is important to give children the opportunity to learn something in the concrete, physical world prior to moving to the more abstract. Sometimes I find it difficult to remember to back off when the child is showing signs of making the transition from concrete to abstract. In not following Sam's lead, I prolonged the activity, created tension and did not respond to his needs. Sam's constant shifting and moving made it difficult for him to remain focused and I am left wondering

how much of this information he will retain in future work.

March 2 Restlessness was once again very apparent in our lesson today. Sam often rested his head on his hands and on the table, almost lying his upper body across the table surface. He yawned frequently, leaned way back in his chair, putting as much distance between himself and his work as possible. During the lesson I asked Sam questions about reading, how often he practised at home throughout the week, whether or not he read a book more than once. Sam's response was minimal.

My Reaction I feel so frustrated with the fact that Sam does not engage in what we are doing during our lessons. Sam's restlessness has begun to get on my nerves. I try to find things of interest to Sam, but even then I cannot seem to arouse his engagement in literacy. It's as if Sam simply has no motivation or interest in learning. And yet I know that this is not the case. He is a very bright and articulate boy who has a good solid knowledge base. Why can't I assist him in understanding how reading can further his knowledge and add pleasure to his experiences and life in general?

Upon Reflection Sam appeared annoyed when I asked him questions about reading today. Perhaps he thinks I am nagging him, or possibly this was just a bad day - he has a cold once again. Like most people who have a bad cold, Sam would naturally be tired and cranky. In retrospect the questions I asked were primarily yes or no questions. Why should I have expected him to answer in any other way? In forming my questions I need to consider what type of information I want to receive and ask the appropriate type of question.

May 1 When Sam obtained his hamster several months ago, he and several of his friends started a hamster club, meeting at each others' houses and sharing information about their pets. Today Sam brought his club book to our session. Working from my new determination to follow Sam's interest, his lead, his agenda, I decided to use the hamster material as the focus of today's

lesson. At home Sam had dictated a story about the club to his mom and he had begun the process of re-copying it into his notebook. It was this work, one page in length, that Sam had brought to share with me. When I asked Sam to read it to me, he commented that he was unable to, that he had not yet practised the words. I read Sam's written work to him, some of which he seemed to remember and he chimed in on those sections.

Despite coming to our session with a budding interest Sam had difficulty staying focused while adding to his writing in his hamster club book. Instead of the busy and productive worker of the last two weeks, during the lesson it was my sense there was a lot of dead time - time when Sam was staring off into space, lost in thought, or perhaps dazed would be a better word to describe his behaviour. He seemed unable to concentrate, losing his place while writing or reading and in developing his train of thought. Yet several times when Sam was given the opportunity to break off the activity, he refused. When he was given the choice to continue or discontinue, he chose to stick with the activity - perhaps because he remembered the success of the previous week and wanted to experience it once again? Or perhaps it was because Sam had a predetermined goal - early in the lesson he drew a small line part way down the paper, explaining that he wanted to get to that spot before quitting.

My Reaction Although I could have made the writing activity easier for Sam by following his mother's example and acting as scribe, after reading the work of Sakari (1997) I felt it was important for Sam to take more ownership in the words and write them down himself. In this way the words and story would truly be his own and Sam would be better prepared to read them when finished. Sam also needs the extra practise in listening for the sounds in words and in trying to determine and record their order within words that personally writing the words on paper affords. Otherwise the exercise simply becomes one of copying and I don't think this challenges Sam

or stretches his learning, nor does it require that Sam maintain a high concentration level. If I had acted as scribe, once again I would be the one doing and Sam would be little more than onlooker.

I was disappointed Sam appeared to have extrinsic purposes for writing - not to create a story, to be an author, but to produce a set of predetermined words on a page. While we painstakingly plugged along I was pleased to notice how Sam's overall word knowledge has improved greatly in the last few months. He is now capable of spelling many more words. New words are generally spelt correctly except for the vowels. Their placement within words continues to challenge Sam. I was interested in the new technique that Sam mentioned using, one his teacher had shown him at school - writing down a word in one or two different ways and then deciding what looks right based on his previous experience with the word. I thought it was a great technique, explaining that I also used it on occasion.

Upon Reflection I thought Sam's comment that he was unable to read the words in his story strange and was struck once again by the thought that it was important that Sam take ownership in and responsibility for his own work. When a well intentioned adult does the work for him, Sam does not feel in control and responds by not concentrating and engaging fully in the activity. Copying the words, even ones that he himself had dictated, does not allow Sam real ownership in the writing and reading process - Sam needs to work out the spellings for himself to make the words his own.

Watching the video several times has given me a new perspective on our session. The lesson does not appear as non-productive as I had originally thought. I now realise that Sam worked 42 minutes on the writing portion of the lesson, one that was instigated and sustained by him even though he was given opportunities by me to curtail its length. If he had been bored by the activity or over or under challenged he would have stopped. All the pauses

that I so painfully recalled were not dead time as I had first felt, but time when Sam was thinking and reflecting on what he was attempting to say and how to formulate the necessary words.

It is important for me to remember that writing is still difficult for Sam. Although he had no difficulty expressing himself verbally, thinking of what to write is not as easy, nor is figuring out the letter sound combinations. Watching Sam persist and struggle for 42 minutes is strong evidence of his engagement in something he sees as valuable and interesting. I should not have been disappointed in the fact that Sam had set himself a goal of filling a specified space on the paper rather than writing for more altruistic purpose such as being an author or creating a story. Although I initially felt that he was extrinsically motivated it is possible that Sam was actually responding like many beginning readers and writers, finding real fulfilment in being able to fill a page. I understand now that this is another example of the gap, where I imposed my perceptions and expectations for writing on that of my student. Thinking back to only a couple of months ago, the same child who was only willing to label diagrams is now interested in making chapter stories - what a change!! Even though his writing progress remains slow, it is hard not to ignore the very real progress that Sam is making in his own way.

One of the things I was very aware of in our lesson was how much Sam kept control of the materials and the content of what was to be written. Never once did he relinquish control of the content, always choosing what to say and how to say it. In fact this was one of the frustrating things of the lesson for me. For the most part, Sam kept his thoughts and words in his head, divulging only one word at a time as he printed it on the paper. I never knew where his thoughts were going, what the next word would be, how I could be better assisting him. I found this very disconcerting, not having some control over what we were doing. Perhaps this is why I had originally thought the pauses

were dead time - I didn't know what was happening, and not being able to visualise what Sam was thinking, I couldn't see the purpose or the direction and thought we were going nowhere on a very slow boat.

This makes me wonder - how do children feel when we as adults hold all the cards and only divulge one piece of information at a time? It must be very frustrating for children in direct instruction classrooms, to never know where they are going beyond figuring out this sound or this letter or this word. In effect when we teach children in this manner we must contribute to the gap. Our lessons are less likely to match the needs, interests, and abilities of our students, resulting in children who are less than engaged in the learning process. Children who are taught in such a way are kept from seeing the big picture, a concept many researchers have written about but I did not truly appreciate until today when Sam turned the tables on me and I felt the uncertainty and lack of direction and control. I had no control over what Sam was doing and felt no ownership in what he was writing - I was simply along for the ride, something he must have felt on numerous occasions when I controlled the agenda. My lack of engagement was also apparent in my concealed feelings of impatience when Sam appeared to be taking too long to think. I even offered him opportunities to curtail the activity, perhaps in an unconscious effort to speed up the process and resume control.

For the most part the writing materials were also in Sam's control. The book was always placed in front of his body (although a couple of times I did move it a bit closer to me so I too could see what was being written). Sam wrote all the words and erased when necessary. The paper and the pencil he used were brought from home, and I am truly wondering if this does not have some psychological effect on Sam - 'it's mine, so I don't have to wait or ask for permission to use this. And because it's mine I can use it to write what I want'. Certainly Sam assumed real ownership of this work.

It was interesting to watch my posture throughout the lesson. Although I wasn't conscious of it at the time, for the most part I sat with my hands clasped together. At times I even sat on my hands as though I was trying to keep them from taking over the material or interfering in any way. On occasion I did move to touch the book, to point out something in Sam's writing, but I would quickly retreat back to my position off to the side and slightly behind Sam. I wonder if Sam sensed this, that he was in control and I was taking a back seat to his interests and if this further empowered him?

Many times throughout the lesson, Sam appeared to lose his way, pausing for several seconds, fiddling and moving restlessly in his chair. Initially I thought during these times that Sam was daydreaming or losing interest in what it was he was doing. I waited and then eventually would break in with a comment that I thought of as re-focusing him on what he was doing. In fact initially I thought that I spent a great deal of time re-focusing him and wondered why Sam seemed to want to persist in an activity in which he was unable to concentrate. In retrospect, I am beginning to see his actions and my comments in a different light. Perhaps my comments didn't so much re-focus Sam, - I no longer think he was ever dazed or lost in space - but they helped him clarify his thinking. Writing continues to be a new process for Sam; I suspect he is still trying to figure out what comes next, how to organize his thoughts and in asking pertinent questions and making comments, I may have in fact helped him to clarify what it was he wanted to say.

I recall Sam's teacher saying that he seems to have difficulty with putting his thoughts down on paper - this is what I witnessed in this lesson, not a child who was behaving in an inappropriate manner!!! I would have missed this if not for the power of video and reflection - a strong rationale for the need for self-reflection during the teaching process and the use of action research. If we do not take the time to monitor our behaviour along with our

students, much is lost and we are likely to do what I have just done, attribute the wrong meaning to a set of behaviours.

May 8 For the last two weeks we have been working on activities that were initiated by Sam. Today he did not bring any work or interests from home so we reverted to the format established in previous lessons, one where we followed my lesson plan. I sensed an immediate difference in Sam's attitude and in the level at which he was participating, not just while he was reading the little books, but also while we were researching the topic of monkeys. Sam spent much of today's lesson with his head resting on his hand or on arms that he had stretched across the table. Several times Sam yawned or sighed while we worked and he made several references to the time, wondering when the lesson would be over.

Sam appeared very restless throughout the lesson, standing up, sitting down, at one point even crawling under the table to retrieve a dropped article. On different occasions Sam initiated discussion on such diverse topics as ink spots that look like periods, the use of white out to conceal unwanted marks, people who dispose of their unwanted gum under table tops, and a research project on cobras Sam completed in grade one. Other off task behaviour included making pencil lines on his paper and then spending excessive amounts of time erasing, and folding small scraps of paper into accordion strips. Clearly Sam was not engaged in or interested in what I was asking him to do. Although he was given opportunities to make choices throughout the lesson, I was once again the one in control, setting the agenda.

Reading fluency was at a minimum while Sam was reading the two little books he had taken home to practise during the preceding week. The first book, Cows in the garden, was a topic with which Sam was familiar and he was able to draw on past experience in our discussion of the book. Sam read this book making only a few errors. He monitored his reading, making self-

corrections and re-reading when something appeared not to make sense. In some places Sam was able to put expression into his voice.

At first glance, judging from the amount of miscues and re-reading of text that occurred while reading the second book, it appears as if this book might have been too difficult for Sam. He lost his place on numerous occasions. The difficulty Sam experienced with this book was not helped by his almost nonexistent handling of the book. Instead of holding the book within his hands or laying it on the table, Sam propped the book upright on the table surface, only occasionally touching it with his hands. Little effort was expended on keeping the pages open and this made it difficult to see the words and keep track of what was being read. While behaving in this manner Sam's reading was choppy and very much word by word driven. Only on occasion did Sam point to the text in an effort to keep track, using an unusual method of framing each word with his forefinger and thumb.

During the last portion of our lesson we resumed our investigation of monkeys. For the past few weeks while we worked on the activities Sam had brought from home, I had shelved our research on monkeys, instead following Sam's lead and agenda. I'm not sure if the delay put a damper on Sam's interest in this topic, or if it was generally just a bad day, but Sam appeared not to be too interested in continuing our investigation of monkeys. We first reviewed the questions that Sam had developed and the information we had previously recorded and then set out to find more answers to Sam's questions. Sam selected a new book on monkeys for me to read and then sat back and passively listened. There was little engagement with the words, evidenced by the fact that Sam did not discuss the text or volunteer information relating it to past knowledge or experience as he has done in the past. Also when asked to summarise information, Sam had difficulty recalling details, indicating that he was not truly paying attention. It took several attempts to clarify information

on monkey habitat before Sam was able to mentally formulate a sentence and write it down in his notebook.

The only spark of interest in this activity appeared when I suggested using the index to narrow our scope of reading and when Sam discovered a map at the back of the book. I read several of the headings and Sam asked to hear about how humans and monkeys were related. At this point Sam took the book out of my hands and turned it to the appropriate page. We then reverted to my reading and he listening. Sam also seemed quite intrigued by the map showing the location of monkey habitats, making comments and asking questions concerning place names.

My Reaction I felt like I was pulling teeth to get any work or effort out of Sam. This was so disappointing after the mostly successful lessons of the last two weeks where Sam eagerly and productively engaged in literacy activities. Again I was placed in the position of constantly having to prompt Sam, to bring him back from his own private world. Although I tried to make Sam responsible for the materials and his reading, it seemed impossible. He did not respond to my suggestions that he hold the book or place it on the table while reading to prevent the pages of the book from closing while he was reading. Instead I was forced to change the position of the book or hold the pages open. Several times during his unfocused periods I attempted to wait him out, to see if he could eventually bring himself back and attend to the task at hand without my prompting. This was not possible. I'm sure we would have sat there all day without doing a single shred of work if I had not assumed responsibility. While continuing to behave in a very pleasant manner, Sam was simply not going to do the work I was suggesting. I wonder if he would have responded in the same manner if the work had been initiated by Sam.

Upon conclusion of the lesson I had an opportunity to talk with Sam's mom about the difficulty he experienced while reading the second book. She

indicated that Sam had not had much time to practise the book but had made many errors during that brief time. Perhaps Sam's lack of interest was really apprehension and discouragement over his past experience. But this does not explain the fact that many of the words that caused him difficulties were ones he has seen and read successfully on many occasions.

While researching monkeys I sensed Sam's passivity for most of the lesson then failed to follow up on the one area that seemed to spark his interest, the map. Instead of allowing Sam's questions to lead our lesson, I viewed them as stalling tactics. Consequently I missed a great opportunity for developing his interest and in using this interest to facilitate language arts activities.

Upon Reflection Sam had such a difficult time focusing on the work we were doing in this lesson, which only reinforced in my mind how important it is for genuine interest to lead the way to engagement in literacy. Without genuine interest, Sam appears to have no direction, no purpose and stumbles over words that I know he is quite familiar with.

My overall impression of this lesson is of restlessness. Initially when it came time to write down the information we needed to record about monkeys, Sam wanted to list it and had to be encouraged to write in complete sentences. Why didn't I allow him to list the information? I seem to think literacy activities must be more formal, with an impressive end product to be of merit. A list simply does not meet my criteria of being enough or complete. Which is of course ridiculous. But it's a variation of that old pressure I feel, that more is better. And it is also an example of the gap that I am investigating.

When composing sentences, Sam tried to keep them short and I had to persuade him to use more detail. This attitude and behaviour can be attributed to lack of engagement in the task, but can it also be attributed to something else? On occasion Sam's mother has voiced the concern that Sam is being lazy.

I've never believed in the concept of laziness, instead seeing children as being bored or under challenged by the activities they are presented. But when given the opportunity to select his own topic for study, to select and formulate the questions to be asked and answered, and the materials to be used, why is it that Sam is unmotivated to do the work? Even though I have tried to make reading more enjoyable and interesting for Sam by having him select an interest topic to investigate, I now realise the impetus for this activity comes from me. It is part of my curriculum and agenda and not Sam's.

I worry about this lack of engagement, Sam's frequent inability to motivate from within, to always need external motivation and reinforcement. So little seems to motivate Sam and he rarely appears to motivate himself. At the end of this lesson Sam asked if he could take home some of the books he had already read for extra practice. At first I was elated and a bit surprised as he seems to have difficulty finding the time to read the two books he already takes home each week. But then I remembered a comment I had made during our lesson when frustrated with Sam's choppy and lacklustre reading. I had indicated that Sam would need to have more practice with the blue level books, to be able to read them with less errors, before starting on the green level books. Since discovering the colour coded levels on the back of the little books, Sam's goal has been to reach the green level. Once again Sam was using external motivation to drive his reading. He had heard my comment and was determined to improve his reading so that he could begin reading the green level books. How do I break Sam of this behaviour? Perhaps I should be happy that Sam is willing to spend extra time reading and wants to do better, even if for what I perceive as the wrong reasons. Once reading becomes easier, when decoding no longer becomes the focus of his reading, Sam will hopefully make the switch from reading for extrinsic reasons to intrinsic.

Upon further reflection I am beginning to realise that the difference

in how Sam and I view motivation for reading and writing is another example of the gap that I am investigating. Sam is motivated internally to read, but in a different way than I am. Sam reads as if he is in competition with himself and for practical reasons. He writes to fill a space and takes pride and is fulfilled in being able to do so. I, on the other hand, write to create, to inform, and for personal enjoyment. I rarely take into account how long a piece is and was quite offended by a professor who once suggested longer is better. (Which is in fact a contradiction as I seem to impose this criteria on Sam.) Sam reads to get to the next level, to fulfil the challenge that he has set for himself while I read for information, to broaden understanding, for pleasure and entertainment. Being a non competitive person I suspect my more altruistic sensibilities are slightly offended by Sam's more competitive nature and I let this colour my perceptions concerning motivation. I strengthen the gap by imposing my beliefs and ideals on Sam and in not viewing his reasons for engaging in reading as being valid. To be successful in literacy Sam's reasons for writing and reading must be his own.

My failure to use Sam's interest in the map is a classic case of the gap between teacher's goals, objectives, and curriculum and student interest, ability, and need. I was so intent on following my agenda, I did not take advantage of an opportunity that might have lead to further literacy engagement on behalf of the student. The result was that we shifted back into our old roles where I assumed total responsibility for the lesson and Sam became a passive, uninvolved learner. Without his engagement it was unlikely that Sam really benefited from the activities that he was doing.

May 29 In response to previous observations that Sam becomes increasingly restless after reading the first of his two weekly reading books, I decided to delay reading the second book until later in today's session. I thought perhaps that reading two books back to back might be contributing to

Sam's restless and unfocussed behaviour. This tactic of delaying the reading of the second book did not appear to work. If anything Sam appeared less able to concentrate while reading later in the lesson than he was generally able to while reading earlier in the lesson. Many times he paused for long periods of time, lost his place, stared off into space and didn't know where to begin again. At least on eight occasions Sam interrupted the story to discuss either an aspect of the story or some unrelated topic. Sam yawned, stretched, tried to read squinting up his eyes and played with his shoes and the pencil eraser throughout the entire time. It was only towards the end of several very painful minutes that Sam finally picked up the book in both hands, pointed to the words with his fingers and read with fluency. For the most part the words in the story were ones that Sam knows well; the book was not beyond his reading level. The story about dinosaurs was engaging and a topic that Sam is interested in and studying at school. He was capable of doing the work, physically reading the words, but was choosing not to.

My Reaction While I did everything possible to ensure that Sam took responsibility for reading, he displayed very little true engagement. Although I made Sam do the physical work of holding the pages (or not, choosing to leave the book balanced upright on the table) and pointing to the words, I was still put in the position of monitoring. Several times while reading this second book I found it necessary to tell Sam to sit properly in his chair and to help him focus on the print by stating such things as 'okay, let's see what happens next', 'where are you in the story', and 'let's get back to the story.' I felt if I did not intervene, Sam would not ever finish reading the story.

Upon Reflection I have been thinking about Sam's behaviour of balancing the book on the table surface instead of holding it in his hands or resting it flat on the table. I had thought that perhaps Sam was trying to put

as much distance between himself and the book as possible, to show his disinterest in reading. I think to some extent that is still likely true. But Sam may also be using this behaviour as a means of saving face. Reading in this manner is very difficult; frequently the pages flip or they do not remain open enough, making it difficult for both Sam or myself to see the words. If Sam cannot see the words, then it is not his fault when he makes a mistake. And if I cannot see the words, then I can't see when he makes an error. Although I do not remember Sam asking me about my use of running records to monitor his reading, he is aware of them and once in a while I catch him looking to see what I am recording. If I cannot see when he makes a mistake, then I cannot record his errors. If this is true, how can I assure Sam that the amount of errors, while important, are not all I am interested in? It occurs to me that I am fairly knowledgeable about Sam's reading level. I am able to determine whether or not a book has been too difficult for him without the use of running records. Perhaps I should not take running records each time Sam reads a book. But I still will need to use running records on occasion as they do provide valuable insight into the strategies Sam is using to decode unknown words, whether he is using meaning, structure or visual information. It might be possible to complete running records using the video tape.

### Summary of Restless and Unfocussed Behaviour

In the present study Sam's restless and unfocussed behaviours were observed and analysed. Restlessness occurred when lessons were poorly paced in regards to Sam's ability and need, particularly if segments continued past when he appeared engaged. Not following Sam's lead, not responding to his needs, frequently resulted in fidgety behaviour as did challenging activities that were not properly supported or scaffolded by myself. Sam would often

become restless when I failed to offer the direction required for him to achieve success. Restlessness also was noted when reading material was inappropriate, not meeting Sam's need or ability, either by being too difficult or too easy.

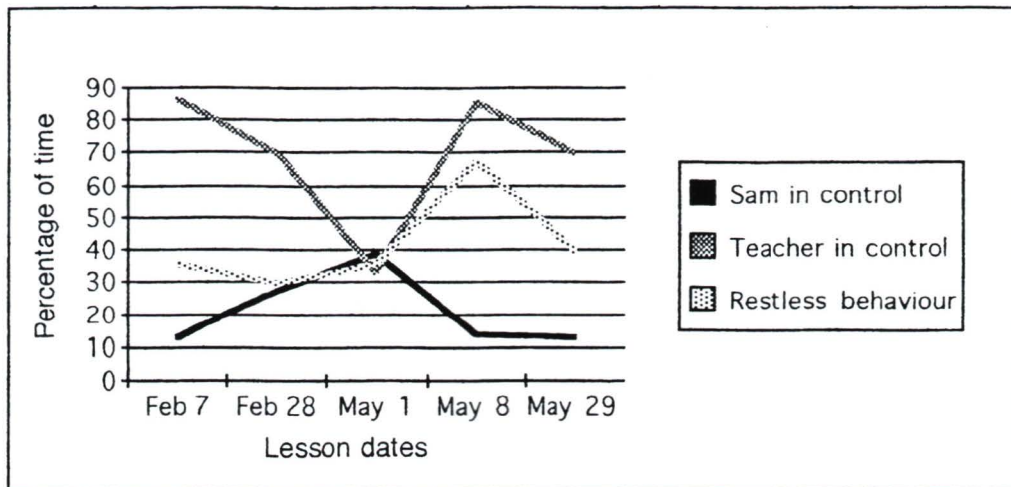
Sam's restless behaviour made it extremely difficult for him to remain focussed on the task at hand, to complete activities satisfactorily and gain the skills necessary to be successful in literacy activities. It is questionable how much information and skill was retained by Sam when engaged in restless behaviour.

Although restlessness was found to be primarily the result of the gap between teacher goals, objectives, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability, it was also observed in one other situation - when Sam was thinking through a difficult and challenging activity that was being properly supported through scaffolding techniques. Even though Sam appeared highly restless while thinking of what to write on hamsters, when offered the choice he persisted with the activity, completing it to his satisfaction.

A graphed analysis of five minute windows in some of the lessons described in this section, reveals high levels of restlessness were observed in Sam's behaviour when the activity had been planned by myself and when I controlled the material. As indicated in Figure 1, the percentage of time that Sam was restless or unfocussed in activities that were planned by myself was high, from an extreme of 68% of the time on May 8 to a low of 30% on Feb. 28. On May 8 when Sam was extremely restless I had control of the material 86% of the time indicating that for this child there is a relationship between who is in control of the material and content and restless behaviour. A similar relationship was also observed in the other five minute windows.

Figure 1

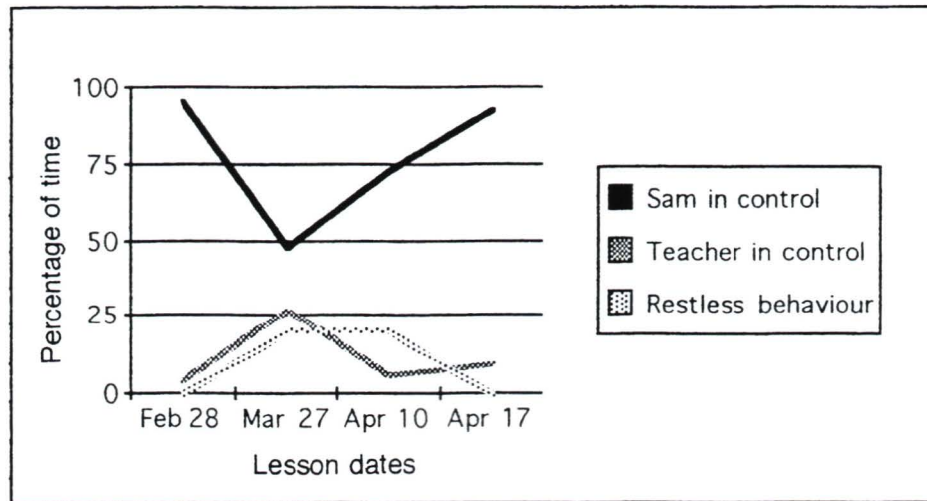
Restless Behaviour During Activities Planned by Researcher



## Raw Scores For Figure 1

Feb 7:	Sam in control	= 40 sec.	= 13.3% of 5 minute window
	Teacher in control	= 260 sec.	= 86.7%
	Restless behaviour	= 107 sec.	= 35.7%
Feb 28:	Sam in control	= 84 sec.	= 28%
	Teacher in control	= 210 sec.	= 70%
	Restless behaviour	= 90 sec.	= 30%
May 1:	Sam in control	= 118 sec.	= 39.3%
	Teacher in control	= 101 sec.	= 33.7%
	Restless behaviour	= 108 sec.	= 36%
May 8:	Sam in control	= 41 sec.	= 13.7%
	Teacher in control	= 258 sec.	= 86%
	Restless behaviour	= 204 sec.	= 68%
May 29:	Sam in control	= 38 sec.	= 12.7%
	Teacher in control	= 212 sec.	= 70.7%
	Restless behaviour	= 120 sec.	= 40%

Figure 2  
Restless Behaviour During Activities Initiated by Child



#### Raw Scores for Figure 2

Feb 28:	Sam in control	= 287 sec. = 95.7% of 5 minute window
	Teacher in control	= 12 sec. = 4%
	Restless behaviour	= 0 sec. = 0%
Mar 27:	Sam in control	= 143 sec. = 47.7%
	Teacher in control	= 68 sec. = 26.7%
	Restless behaviour	= 60 sec. = 20%
Apr 10:	Sam in control	= 220 sec. = 73.3%
	Teacher in control	= 19 sec. = 6.3%
	Restless behaviour	= 61 sec. = 20.3%
Apr 17:	Sam in control	= 278 sec. = 92.7%
	Teacher in control	= 22 sec. = 9.3%
	Restless behaviour	= 0 sec. = 0%

Through the use of a second graph analysis, Sam was observed to be less restless when he initiated the activity, took ownership in physically and mentally doing the work. A comparison between the incidences reported in Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicates that restless behaviour was much lower in all the examples where Sam had initiated the activity. This is most likely because during these lessons Sam was able to set the pace, the task, and purpose of the lesson, according to his own interests and needs. He was also able to control the difficulty of the activity and adjust it to meet his ability. Figure 2 indicates the percentage of time that restless or unfocussed behaviour occurred in relation to when Sam initiated the activity and maintained a high degree of control over the materials. On two separate occasions (Feb. 28 and Apr. 17) where Sam controlled the lesson a majority of the time, no restless or unfocussed behaviour occurred.

#### Examples of Stalling Behaviours

Feb. 7 While using the magnetic letters to make words with similar roots, Sam fiddled with the letters, throwing and dropping them into their boxes or onto the magnetic board when he was asked to participate.

My Reaction While Sam fiddled with the letters I felt frustrated over lost time; we have only one hour to complete the work I had planned and taking too much time on this segment of the lesson meant that something else was left uncompleted. Sam's mother frequently asks if Sam is improving and I feel a constant pressure to compress as much information and learning into our lessons as possible, to bring Sam up to the level of his peers.

Upon Reflection After viewing the video tape of this lesson I notice that Sam is selecting letters and placing them on the magnetic board while his eyes are closed. Why is he doing this? I wonder if Sam is using this behaviour

to gain control or power. Has Sam determined that if he stalls our lesson, we will not have time for writing activities or further reading? Or is there another reason for this behaviour?

This pressure I feel to accelerate students' ability is burdensome. The current reading literature more than suggests the need to bring students quickly back up to the level of their peers. How do I do this when we can't seem to stick to the lesson or curriculum plan. When my supervisor and I first started discussing this project I outlined the type of lesson I hoped to provide for Sam. The types of experiences would be modelled on the Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1993), while making small adjustments to meet Sam's needs. The Reading Recovery program has proven very successful with young children and I am assuming that it will also be of benefit to Sam even though he is currently in grade three. But I am beginning to realise that if I stick to this model it will not be possible to go with the flow of the lesson, to follow the student's interest, a concept that I feel is important if the student is to be truly engaged in literacy. Perhaps the small adjustments I had envisioned will be greater than anticipated. But what form will they take? Will these adjustments facilitate literacy engagement and progress in reading ability? And knowing that I must quickly get Sam back on track, can we afford the time, playing around with the curriculum, trying to fine tune it, to make it more reader friendly?

Feb. 21 This week we worked on the /ay/ sound with the magnetic letters. Sam appeared disengaged in the task for most of the time, fidgeting with the letters and the board. In response to the word jay Sam began a long discussion about Long Beach and the blue jays that he and his family once saw there when visiting. Clay found on his property was also the subject of a long discourse. He did not appear to be unhappy when the activity was concluded.

My Reaction In response to a sense that Sam was not paying attention

and learning the information that I was hoping he was getting from the lesson, I prolonged the lesson asking Sam to produce more examples. My logic was that if Sam is given more opportunities to practice, at some point he will begin to retain the information. My motive for buying into the discussions Sam initiated on jays and clay, was different. I keep hoping that mentioning such things as the other famous jay - the Blue Jay's baseball team of Toronto, will be of interest to Sam. Somehow I will be able to spark an interest or curiosity that will be carried over into the literacy activity.

Upon Reflection My satisfaction with the magnetic letter activity grows less and less. When we first started working with magnetic letters last summer, Sam quite enjoyed the activity. Now he seems to continuously stall and engage in off topic talk throughout this activity. Similar to the incidence of off topic talk discovered in the pilot study I am beginning to recognise my part in Sam's behaviour.

Why is it I continue to buy into Sam's off topic talk? Is it that I sense his need for a break during the activity. If I feel this need in him, why do I not respond by putting away the activity and trying something totally different? I know why - it is that constant pressure to quickly improve Sam's reading ability. Making root words is a proven activity for building decoding skill. If it has been successful with other children, it should also be successful in assisting Sam. But is it? As Cambourne (1988, 1995) suggests, if Sam is not engaged in the task then it is unlikely that real learning is occurring. Sam is not showing much engagement in the magnetic letter task; chances are that the intended learning is not occurring. I have been observing this in Sam's reading. When decoding unknown words, Sam rarely looks for roots within words, preferring to sound out words letter by letter.

I think another reason I might be encouraging the talk is to give Sam a say in the direction of the lesson. Everything that I have been reading

indicates that the learner must feel some responsibility for the lesson. The learner must lead the way. By providing the time for Sam to talk, I think I am giving him this opportunity. But am I?

Feb. 21 During the writing segment of our lesson, Sam took great care in erasing work that was incorrect or in some way unsatisfactory. This proved to be a great stalling tactic.

My Reaction While it is important to encourage accurate and neat work, I do find it annoying when Sam takes so long in erasing work. With such a short time to work each week, every minute counts and I grow impatient with the amount of time we spend off task.

Upon Reflection I had forgotten my supervisor's suggestion of having Sam use felts instead of a pencil. The idea is that the ability to erase is eliminated and the writing focus moves away from errors and the necessity for everything to be perfect to that of getting one's ideas down on paper. Instead of erasing the child simply crosses out unwanted responses and tries again. My supervisor also suggested that the felt has a much smoother feel while writing, there is less tension on the hands. I must remember to put felts into my bag for the next lesson and see what Sam's response will be.

Feb. 28 Once again Sam used stalling tactics during the activity of magnetic letters. In starting this activity I had decided to reinforce the work we had started previously with the /ay/ sound, by adding endings to the root word. While working with the letters Sam displayed a variety of stalling tactics; moving the letter tray around the table, wanting to take all the vowels out of the tray when asked to do something else, playing basketball (tossing the letters back into appropriate cube in the tray), trying to take the cube partitions out of the tray, closing his eyes to find the asked for letters, dropping letters on the floor, and looking for apostrophes and period marks.

My Reaction Frustration and impatience do not adequately describe

how I feel when Sam fiddles around while we are working on building words with magnetic letters. I don't understand why this activity is no longer holding Sam's interest and am beginning to think I should abandon it's use altogether.

Upon Reflection I have watched the videos carefully trying to decide why Sam is acting in such a manner when we are using magnetic letters. Why does he stall or close his eyes when trying to choose and place letters on the magnetic board? I set him a task, ask him to make another word in the same pattern that we have been working on, but he does not. Instead he spends his time fiddling with the letters or the container itself and selects letters with his eyes closed. I am beginning to suspect that Sam is doing this because he simply does not know which letters to choose. Is Sam's behaviour saying his chances of selecting the correct letter are just as great with his eyes closed as with them open? If this is the case, unfortunately my response is not helpful. Instead of assisting Sam I generally wait, thinking I need to give him more time to come up with the appropriate response or that I must not interfere so that Sam will assume responsibility for the lesson. I see now that Sam doesn't need more time, what he needs from me in this situation is more direction and I am failing to provide him with this. I am relying once again on my early childhood background which suggests that children need to make discoveries themselves rather than teachers intervening. I need to learn how to better scaffold this activity, providing the background support Sam requires to be successful.

March 7 Responding to Sam's interest in a previous lesson concerning how the illustrator used playdough in The new baby calf (1984), I brought several different colours of home made playdough for Sam to experiment with in our lesson today. The idea was for Sam to create a farm picture similar to that in the book. Upon completion of his picture, we would brainstorm for

farm words and then Sam would use these words to build a farm story to supplement his picture. Instead Sam decided to use the playdough to make an Easter egg, a subject that many of his classmates were currently drawing at school. Sam spent most of the lesson drawing his egg in intricate detail and then applying the coloured playdough on top of his pencilled design.

Toward the end of the session, in an effort to have some literary merit incorporated into the lesson, I suggested Sam write a title for his picture, stating that all artists title their work. At this point the stalling tactics began. Sam reorganised the arrangement of playdough on the table, talked about a goat that he hoped to show at the fall fair, continued patting and pressing the playdough on his paper, and trimmed the edges of his egg trying to make it rounder. Sam even asked ‘when is my mom coming?,’ something he has rarely asked in our sessions. It was as if I could hear him thinking; if he could just work at it a little longer he would not have time to print his title. Sam eventually chose a safe short title, The Easter Egg. I helped him listen for the sounds in each of the words, and he had very little difficulty writing down the appropriate letters. Sam seemed surprised that the word egg contained only three letters and had wanted to add an ‘o’ to the end to make it ‘eggo’ having seen this on a T.V. commercial.

My Reaction I was greatly disappointed that Sam did not chose to take up my suggestion of making a playdough picture of a farm setting. We had spent a large amount of time discussing his uncle’s farm during a previous lesson. Sam had drawn a sketch of the milking barns and labelled the different apparatus, of which he was very proud. This sketch and Sam’s interest in cows and farms had in fact been the impetus for selecting the book The new baby calf (1984) from which the playdough activity evolved. I had carefully crafted and planned this lesson. The previous evening I had made several batches of playdough, anticipating the colours Sam would need to make

a farm picture, including brown for soil, tree trunks, and cows; green for grass; blue for sky; white for cows and clouds; yellow for sun and flowers; and pink, red, purple and orange for other details. Making the playdough picture and writing about the farm was to be the culminating activity, one that would involve Sam in creative writing while listening for sounds in words and reading. I even envisioned him presenting this wonderful product to his mother and perhaps taking it to school to show his teacher and classmates.

Instead of forcing my agenda, goals and objectives on Sam when he showed no interest in making a farm picture, and in an attempt to hand over more responsibility for learning to Sam, I decided to respond to his lead and let him choose his own agenda. Although carefully hidden from Sam, in making this decision I ended up feeling powerless, impatient, and resentful. He had turned my plans upside down. I had no control over where the lesson was going, or whether or not it was of literacy value. All the goals and objectives I had set out were no longer going to be accomplished. I could see no educational value in what we were spending an entire lesson on. Our precious time together was being wasted, we had no time for art. For me the lesson did not have a satisfactory outcome.

When Sam began the stalling tactics after I had asked him to write a title, I almost laughed out loud. I was reminded of the things I do when I should be writing a school paper - ironing clothes, reorganising books on a shelf, etc... Sam was simply acting in the same manner as most of us when faced with a challenging, daunting or even boring task. He was practising avoidance. Or perhaps he was just buying time while considering what to write, mulling titles over in his head, as I sometimes do before starting to write.

Upon Reflection I understand now that this is a prime example of the gap between the teacher's goals and objectives and the child's interest,

ability, and need. It is an example of the tug of war that is in continuous play within the classroom. Sam was not interested in my agenda and wanted to set his own. In turning this control over to Sam, I sent him a strong message that his ideas had value and merit. In suggesting that Sam write a title for his picture, I now understand that I was trying to regain control. Sam's reluctance to decide upon a title indicated that he did not want to relinquish control and perhaps resented my interference.

Even though I was dissatisfied with the outcome of this lesson, Sam was not. He was extremely excited about his work and later proudly explained to his mother how he had selected the subject of his picture, how he had drawn the details first and then selected and applied the colours. Sam left that day wanting to convince his classroom teacher to let them try the same technique at school.

Although I was unhappy with the outcome, this lesson set the precedent for future sessions, upon further reflection it was a turning point. I had taken the first step towards relinquishing control and responsibility. I had signalled Sam his ideas were valid and would be enacted upon. Even though making playdough Easter eggs was not of particular literary merit I saw Sam truly engaged in an activity for which he had selected the topic. There was no indication of restless, no yawns, no fidgeting, no resting of heads on tables or arms. There was true engagement. This was the type of behaviour that I wanted to capture and see when Sam was involved in reading and writing. But how to do it? Trying to get Sam engaged in literacy activities is like trying to pull teeth. He seems able to read the little books well enough after a couple of practises. When I complete running records on Sam's reading, the books are at his independent and instructional level, but there really is very little interest. I sense his restlessness, his lack of engagement and it seems to be increasing. Each week Sam eagerly takes home two or three little books to

read, but rarely is interested in reading any of them when he returns the following week.

May 15 With little time left in our lesson and trying to jam in every little thing, I suggested we continue to read about monkeys. While making the transition from the previous activity to our research on monkeys Sam quickly launched into off topic talk and stalling tactics, attempting four different types of digressions: he used his pencil to show me how he and his sister play Tic Tac Toe on paper at home; he looked at and discussed the pictures on the back of the game package; he dropped pencils and retrieved them from under the table, and; he drew a diagram of and discussed an accident that almost happened to his uncle on the farm. When I asked Sam to get out the monkey books so we could get started on our research, he pointed out the time, indicating his mom would soon arrive to pick him up. Throughout the reading of the book, Sam continued to stall and digress. This last portion of our lesson became a constant replay of Sam's stalling attempts and my refocussing his behaviour.

My Reaction Instead of choosing one of the factual books on monkeys, Sam suggested that we read Curious George learns the alphabet (1963). Sam had been carrying this book home in his box for the last few weeks and had not yet had an opportunity to read it with his mom. I was disappointed in his choice in that I knew it would not provide the necessary information to further our research and answer the questions formulated earlier by Sam. Once again we seemed to be moving in opposite directions. I had an agenda and Sam was making choices that made following that agenda impossible.

I tried to keep Sam engaged and actively participating by suggesting he read the story along with me. My objective now changed from doing research to wanting Sam to see that he was able to read large sections of this book on his own, that many of the words were known to him. I felt it might enhance his

confidence if Sam experienced success at reading a library book. We tried a variety of techniques including echo reading, cloze, and alternate reading but after having already worked for 50 minutes in a warm room Sam became increasingly restless. While Sam remained somewhat engaged commenting on what was happening in the pictures, as soon as I got him involved in some type of reading, he would physically and mentally back away from the book. Several times I had to help him refocus and I think little was accomplished in this last ten minutes. After mentioning the time on several occasions, Sam seemed relieved when his mom finally arrived.

Upon Reflection I am beginning to see a clear pattern of when and why Sam uses discussion or behaviour to stall what we are doing in our lessons. These behaviours often occur when we are switching to a new activity. Perhaps Sam is worried that the activity may be one that he does not like or one that will be difficult causing him frustration. Or perhaps Sam simply dislikes his lack of control over what is happening and attempts to get control by launching into a discussion. Sam also slips into digression and stalling behaviours when he is unable to figure out a word that he is trying to read. When he becomes blocked he simply starts talking about something else, using these behaviours as a means of saving face, perhaps thinking 'if I stall long enough, we'll run out of time, or maybe she'll forget, or she'll give me the answer.' Now I know what Sam is doing I am less apt to get frustrated with his behaviour and figure out a way to curb all the digressions.

Often the digressions or stalls start when Sam is blocked, he is unable to determine a word. This suggests that Sam does not have the strategies necessary to decode unknown words. Although we have discussed on numerous occasions such strategies as reading on, the use of beginning and final consonant cues, picture cues, context cues, root analysis, and semantic cues, Sam only rarely employs them. He continues to decode mostly through

the use of guesses, memorisation, and sounding out words letter by letter.

I should have been paying more attention to what it was Sam was trying to communicate when he mentioned the lack of time as I asked him to take out the books on monkeys. Sam was not interested in pursuing this activity which clearly became evident as we started reading. Instead of letting him off the hook I continued with my new agenda, hoping he would motivate himself and take responsibility for the reading. While the philosophy of encouraging children to use and practice their literacy skills while investigating research topics is an excellent one, Sam's increasing lack of interest in the topic of monkeys suggests to me that perhaps we should shelve this project. We do not see each other frequently enough to sustain his interest and there have been several days when we are unable to get to the topic due to an interest or activity that Sam had brought from home.

May 23 Sam was quite interested in the planting project that we were to start in this lesson, so much so that he had difficulty concentrating while reading the little weekly books that he had practised at home. While reading these little books, Sam would read one or two lines and then make a comment before going on to read the next sentence. Some of the comments concerned our upcoming planting project.

When Sam heard that we were to begin the project by reading a book on planting, he began once again to stall, commenting on the cover of the book, how the pictures were made, the growth charts that appear in the book and his own personal experience involving white carrots and potatoes. It was as if Sam had anticipated that I would ask him to read and was doing everything in his power to stave off the inevitable. When Sam indicated some reluctance at reading this book, I agreed to share the reading with him suggesting we read the first section together. I agreed to read the last section on my own. Sam assumed some responsibility for reading the first section, frequently pointing

to words, leaning close to the book, and beginning text passages without my asking or without my lead. He did not attempt to read any of the second section on carrots, even though it contained similar vocabulary and followed the same structural pattern as the text we had read together.

After reading the plant book and planting bean seeds we followed up the activity by recording the planting procedure in a record book specifically designed for the activity. The watering can shaped booklet intrigued Sam, as did the idea of recording the growth of his plants. However while writing Sam employed many stalling techniques including dropping pencils, excessive erasing, and the re-arranging of materials on the table surface. Several times Sam put his head down on his arms, his signal for indicating when he finds something difficult. At times he wrote with his head laying on outstretched arms.

My Reaction I worked hard to try and get Sam to take responsibility while reading the book on planting seeds. Occasionally I delayed starting to read after one of our discussions, hoping that Sam would take the initiative and begin on his own, which he did several times. I was concerned with the frequent interruptions during the reading of the text, afraid that we would not have time for the actual planting of the seeds and written record keeping. This lack of time was one of the reasons I agreed to read the last section on carrots to Sam rather than have him read by himself.

Many times during the writing activity I found it necessary to help Sam refocus his attention, even though he had expressed interest in keeping a record of the growth of his plants. Refocus occurred most frequently through prompts such as 'what did you do next?.'

Upon Reflection Sam's behaviour of reading a line or two in the little reading books and then stopping to talk, was very reminiscent of what was occurring in the fall, where most of our time was spent on talk, rather than in

reading or in completing activities. The only difference on this occasion was that most of the talk was related to the text or illustrations and was not off topic. Perhaps my behaviour of engaging with Sam, has sent a signal that it is okay to talk as long as we are discussing the book. Which of course is correct as long as we are not losing comprehension and fluency in the process.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine if all the questions and comments Sam initiates while reading are indeed stalling tactics (as I frequently suspect) or if they are genuine attempts to clarify information. Often when Sam comments on such things as the cover, illustrations, and special diagrams (such as growth charts) of a book, and relates his personal experiences to the text, I feel he is stalling, trying to delay reading. Yet these behaviours are all positive ways to engage with books and text. In fact these activities are things that all good teachers use as part of their repertoire to engage students in reading. Why do I think that comments such as these are an indication of engagement in one context and disengagement and stalling in another? Why don't I see value in these types of behaviours when Sam initiates them? Is it because I am not in control? I am not leading the activity, establishing how our time is to be spent? When I am not in control I am always concerned about time, particularly when I am wanting us to follow my agenda.

As Sam did appear highly engaged in reading the plant book despite the more challenging text, I think perhaps all the breaks while reading were the result of genuine interest. When I solo read the section on carrots, Sam continued to make comments, ask questions, and lean in close to the book, looking at the pictures. Sam was not stalling or delaying reading, as he himself was not the reader. He was displaying the same behaviours that he had while we were earlier sharing the reading of the text. It is therefore unlikely that he was stalling or delaying reading when asking questions while we were reading together. He was simply displaying interest and looking for

further clarification.

Sam found writing the procedures for planting seeds difficult, frequently attempting to write while resting his head on outstretched arms resting on the table. He often became unfocussed and needed prompts to formulate his next written response. I remember an earlier writing activity which Sam also found challenging, when he was writing about ants. Sam had initiated this activity bringing work he had started at home. In that situation Sam remained very focused and engaged; he sat upright in his chair and maintained his train of thought while copying from a factual book on ants. Perhaps the added stress of having to think up his own words and figure out how to spell them contributed to Sam's writing behaviours today. Or perhaps, because the writing activity on planting seeds was not of his own design or interest, Sam simply was not willing to expend as much effort in its completion.

#### Summary of Stalling in Lessons

Initially I viewed Sam's stalling tactics as a means of control, where he believed that if he stalled for time long enough he wouldn't be able to attempt or complete an activity. Believing this to be the case I often felt frustrated over Sam's behaviour, compounded by our limited time together and the pressure to get him working at grade level. While in some instances Sam may have deliberately stalled for time, upon analysis I was able to see a pattern in Sam's stalling tactics suggesting this behaviour was another manifestation of the gap between teacher goals, objectives, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability.

Sam often engaged in stalling behaviours when the learning context was unsupported by myself, when he didn't know where to go next and I did

not offer him the direction he required to be successful. In short I was not meeting his needs, not providing the scaffolding when work became too challenging. This resulted in Sam engaging in inappropriate behaviour in an effort to buy time, to organise his thoughts and come up with an idea or solution to the problem.

Stalling also occurred during transition times, when we were moving from one activity to another. It is possible that Sam was worried over his lack of control of lesson content at these times. He may have been concerned that the upcoming task would be too difficult or one that was of little interest and stalled to buy time.

On at least one occasion I felt that Sam was stalling only to discover upon reflection that this was not the case. Sam had engaged in topic related talk, making appropriate comments and asking genuine questions concerning the content of a book that was to be read. I felt Sam was delaying the reading but later realised he was initiating the discussion, attempting to take responsibility for the content and direction of the lesson. Because this discussion was not initiated by myself at first I failed to see it's importance and instead viewed it as one more example of Sam's ability to stall a lesson, preventing me from being in control.

### Examples of Digression and Off Topic Talk

Feb. 7 We spent several minutes prior to starting our lesson talking about swimming and hockey, two sports that Sam particularly enjoys. These topics were initiated by Sam who also later reintroduced them while working on something unrelated.

My Reaction Often at the beginning of our sessions I allow Sam to talk about matters that interest him. I have several reasons for doing so; our

conversation helps both of us to ease into the learning situation - in some ways it functions similarly to the sharing of news that teachers often encourage when children first arrive in the morning. This discussion time also helps me to understand Sam better, to know his interests which may in turn help me to select appropriate reading materials for him. I also hope the topics we discuss will serve as an inspiration to future writing.

Upon Reflection I am frustrated that our long discussion on hockey and swimming did not provide the impetus for Sam's writing today. It is difficult to justify the time spent on talking if we do not use our discussions in some way to further Sam's reading and writing skills. Instead Sam chose to write on the topic of Chinese New Year, one that I was not prepared for and consequently felt I had little to contribute to. If I had known Sam wanted to use Chinese New Year as his writing topic I would have brought in a newspaper article and picture that appeared on the front page of the daily paper. This certainly would have helped in providing background for Sam's writing. Instead he produced only one short sentence on this subject.

Feb. 21 Several times while reading the e-mail message that I sent Sam this week, he switched from reading the text to discussing other topics. Sam has the habit of verbally answering the questions I have asked in my e-mail message outloud incorporating it into the reading process. His verbal answers to my written questions often lead to talk, once again stalling our lesson.

My Reaction I find the timing of Sam's answers to be disconcerting and have suggested that he wait until after finishing reading the text before speaking, consistent with our rule concerning off topic talk while reading. Often Sam does not remember to do so, resulting in frequent interruptions which I find annoying.

Upon Reflection Perhaps in answering these questions as he does, Sam is indicating that he understands one of the purposes of written

communication - to elicit and provide information.

March 2 Before we started to read I reminded Sam of our new rule, 'no discussion during the reading of the story', unless it concerns word recognition or comprehension. Consequently there was no off topic talk during the reading. However talk still occurred during the remainder of our lesson. We got into several small discussions as Sam told me about his morning at school where they had a visit from the Quebec carnival snowman. We also discussed things related to the story he read: things he likes; bees on his farm; fighting forest fires; what he did on the week-end; clarifying the use of the exclamation mark and semi colon; and why I suggested he use a marker rather than a pencil.

My Reaction I was thrilled with our discussion on punctuation - this is the type of things we should be discussing during the course of our lessons. It is easy to see the literary merit of such discussion and I do not feel we are wasting time in doing so.

Upon Reflection I seem to waver between the need for talk and the desire to keep it to a minimum. On the one hand I recognise its importance in helping me to better understand Sam, his likes and interests, how he thinks and processes information. It also provides an outlet for Sam, relieves the pressure when we have been working hard. Everyone needs diversions and breaks once and awhile. It's just the time issue. Finding the balance between too much talk and not enough is what I need to determine.

### Summary of Digression and Off Topic Talk

Prior to initiating the present study I instituted a new rule in our tutoring sessions - although I would be happy to assist Sam with any word he was having difficulty with, no discussions or comments were allowed while we

read the story. This rule developed as a result of the pilot study which indicated frequent interruptions during the reading of the texts with an overwhelming majority of the talk being off topic. At the beginning of the present study we tried to adhere strictly to this rule. Over time, as the sessions developed, the rule was relaxed. Talk about what was happening in the text was considered appropriate, as it sometimes indicated a genuine interest in the reading material or an attempt to clarify information. Off topic talk continued to be an area of dissension between us.

For much of our time together I viewed off topic talk a digression in a negative sense. Although I recognised it's contribution in providing me with information concerning Sam I saw no literacy value in this type of talk. I felt it to be a waste of time that rarely contributed to the literacy activities in which we were engaged. In hindsight I realise my perceptions were limited and inaccurate. The subjects of the off topic talk were indications of Sam's genuine interest, areas that I could have further explored that were of consequence to Sam. I had forgotten Paley's (1988) views, that digressions were the sounds of children thinking and could be used to hook children into learning activities and concepts. These topics could have been used as spring boards into literacy, means of engaging Sam in activities that previously held little interest.

### Examples of Inappropriate Text Material

Feb. 21 While reading the e-mail I had sent to Sam during the preceding week, he took little responsibility for reading the message, holding the paper sideways and consequently had difficulty reading the text. When Sam had difficulty with a word in the message, he digressed and referred to the fact that the weather seemed to be clearing (observed through a skylight).

My Reaction To assist Sam and keep him focused on the task at hand I pointed to the words as he read. I also fed into his off topic talk, remarking on the weather.

Upon Reflection Some of the words in the e-mail text appeared to be difficult for Sam. I will need to take more care in the words that I select, particularly since there are no pictures to support the text (a crutch that Sam relies heavily upon). Choosing suitable words can be really challenging; I now understand the difficulties that children's authors must overcome in trying to gear the vocabulary to the appropriate level, while still trying to get across a message. I was disappointed in the fact that Sam did not have time to respond to my e-mail. Usually our correspondence is reciprocal; I send him a message, then he sends me one in return. I wonder if not having responded caused Sam to be less interested in this activity than he has been in the past. When viewing the video tape I noticed that Sam's ability and word recognition improved towards the end of the reading when he himself started to point to the words. Does pointing improve his performance, help him to remain focused and enhance his engagement or is it the result of his engagement in the activity, of his assuming control of the reading?

Feb. 21 Building on Sam's interest in content books and in how things work, during the past week he was asked to read and practise a book that describes the breathing systems of several different creatures. While slightly more challenging it was felt the content would be of extreme interest and might help to sustain Sam in his effort to read. The text was also picture supported and contained a strong pattern. Unfortunately Sam had great difficulty with the text of this book and became discouraged while reading it at home. During our lesson I suggested that we use echo reading; I would first read a line and then Sam would read it back to me. Within a few pages Sam was reading the text with little difficulty without my having first read it for him.

My Reaction My initial reading of the text helped to alleviate some of Sam's concerns over the difficulty of the text and gave him the encouragement, support, and confidence he required to attempt reading the book on his own. However I was disappointed that Sam did not readily pick up on the pattern in this story. Using the pattern would have greatly helped Sam in decoding unknown words through the use of prediction and repetition. As it was Sam treated each page as if it was entirely different from the preceding pages.

Upon Reflection Sam's inability to recognise patterns in words and stories is not a new phenomenon. He had the same difficulty last summer when we were reading books from the McCracken series. (He is however easily able to recognise and make patterns using patterning blocks.) For the most part patterns in words such as cat, fat, rat etc. continue to elude Sam unless they are pointed out to him. I guess that is why I continue to work on root words using the magnetic letters. Using roots within new words is a great decoding strategy and one employed regularly by successful readers. I wish I could get Sam to use it more effectively.

Feb. 28 Sam's reading of Fire! Fire! (1994) was slow and halting. Numerous errors were made although most were semantically correct. The meaning of the passage was maintained, with Sam substituting words based on meaning, but rarely monitoring for beginning letter sound. Where errors did not make sense, Sam re-read and generally was able to come up with the correct word. On one occasion Sam attempted to use the strategy of reading on when he couldn't figure out the word again. Unfortunately this word was repeated three times in the same sentence, making the strategy ineffective. Eventually I had to give Sam the word.

My Reaction After Sam's difficulty with this story I was concerned with whether or not he had been able to understand what had been read.

Consequently I asked Sam several inferential questions and to re-tell the story, checking for comprehension. Sam appeared to understand the story quite well despite the high frequency of errors.

Upon Reflection The high frequency of errors suggests that although this book has been graded within the current range of Sam's reading level, because of other factors it was beyond his level. It is possible the combination of the text and structure of this book were too demanding for Sam; the use of speech balloons requires two different levels of reading - 1. sentences which indicate the content of the story, and 2. speech balloons that show what the characters are saying. Sam often appears confused by too much print on a page, or if the print is presented in an unusual manner. In an effort to assist Sam I sometimes find it useful to block parts of the text that are not being read.

Feb. 28 The book I like (1988) has very limited vocabulary which can be easily predicted using picture clues. It is very much the type of book Sam was reading during our time together the previous summer. The relatively few words per page meant that Sam was able to read the text with little difficulty. After reading the story Sam was not interested in engaging in discussion concerning personal likes and dislikes. He simply responded with 'yes' or 'no' answers to my questions.

My Reaction This story had been offered to Sam at the end of the previous day in an attempt to give him more control over book selection. Although there were several other more challenging and interesting books available, Sam selected this book after noticing how few words were on each page. I was disappointed in his choice as it was the words and not the content or his interest that determined Sam's selection. Knowing the book would not offer him much of a challenge, I thought Sam was being lazy, taking the easy way out. But looking at the brighter side I thought that reading it might increase Sam's awareness of the progress he had made, as last summer this

book would have been challenging for him. Once he had finished reading the book I found Sam's lack of enthusiasm in responding to questions and engaging in discussion to be very frustrating. While I had hoped for a genuine conversation concerning Sam's likes and dislikes, I received the opposite, boredom and indifference.

Upon Reflection Sam's one word responses were most likely due to the fact that he found this book unchallenging and non motivating. His reading level was far beyond the demands of this book. Its content was not in the least appealing to Sam's more sophisticated interests. But perhaps the experience was useful in that it provided Sam with reassurance of his progress and prior knowledge that he would be successful. He might also come to recognise that selecting the easier book may not be the most rewarding.

March 7 The new baby calf (1984) was a difficult book for Sam. Although there was a small pattern in the book which allows prediction of words, there were many words that were new to Sam. Also contributing to the difficulty of this book was a greater number of words per page than Sam was accustomed to and the smaller spacing between words, also something that Sam has difficulty with in the past. As a result Sam had a much more difficult time with the book than I had hoped. It was not that the text was uninteresting to Sam - he truly is interested in cows - but that the work was too complex.

Several times while reading the book Sam laid his head down on an arm that was resting on the table or looked away from the text at the camera or elsewhere in the room. Often he totally disengaged himself from the text and I found it necessary to draw him back to the text with prompts. Sam rarely turned a page while reading this book, as if to say this is not what I want to be doing, it is too hard, I don't own this situation/book/reading. Slipping back into our former pattern of talking throughout the story, Sam often tried to initiate a discussion based on the pictures, stalling for time when he came to a

difficult word or a long passage. At one point Sam even started mentioning the page numbers at the bottom of the page, possibly to mark our progress through the book.

My Reaction For the most part I turned the pages and started asking questions or making comments about the pictures. I did so in an effort to keep Sam engaged - breaking my own rule of not discussing the book while reading. Sam seemed to be relieved by this strategy, it was as if it gave him a much welcome break. When in the middle of the book, Sam seemed to get bogged down in the new vocabulary, I suggested that we try shared reading. Sam eagerly agreed. We tried several techniques. On some pages I would read the sentence and then Sam would read it back, tracking the words with his finger. On other occasions we read together, my voice reading the words followed closely by Sam's. Some sentences we used a cloze technique, where I read the more difficult words and Sam supplied the ones he knew or that completed the story pattern. In this manner we finished the story.

Upon Reflection Offering this book to Sam to read independently was a major mistake on my part even though I had done it with the best of intentions. I thought Sam's interest in the subject matter would help pull him through the difficult words. How wrong I was. Instead books like The new baby calf (1984) should be read to Sam. The only time he displayed true engagement in this story was when we were discussing how the illustrator had made the pictures, which is unfortunate because the text of this book is delightful and lyrical. Sam did not experience this.

Instead of having Sam continue his painful reading of this story, I should have simply said I had erred in its selection and volunteered to read the book to him. But I worry that suggesting a child stop reading may signal to the child that I feel they are not capable. But surely Sam got this message anyway; he knew the text was too difficult. Sam's restless behaviour of arm movements,

resting his head across his arm on the table, and breaking eye contact with the text to stare elsewhere indicated that the work was too challenging, that it was not meeting his needs or ability. I realise now that while I have attempted to match the material with Sam's interest I have not matched it with his reading level.

May 23 It was easy to observe Sam's behaviour as he flip-flopped between fluent reading and loss of focus in the books that he read this week. When the text was not difficult Sam read fluently, generally sat up straight, used his finger to track words, and held the book with both hands in an easy to read position. When the words became more challenging, Sam's head would go down on arms that stretched across the table surface. Or he would prop the book upright on the table without touching the book at all. During the pauses that ensued, while Sam tried to figure out a word, it was often possible to hear a sigh, or see his eyes glance around the room. Often during and after a difficult passage Sam stalled for time, making comments on illustrations, connecting what had been read to his own experiences and sometimes asking questions for clarification purposes.

My Reaction While reading the book on plants I found it necessary to encourage Sam to read by proposing that we read the first section on radishes together and then I would read the final section on carrots to him. While reading I was concerned that the text was not read fluently. Sam frequently interrupted with questions and comments. Although the comments were on topic and related to Sam's experience, I worried about the loss of fluency and the passage of time. Again I felt that Sam was stalling, trying to delay reading by initiating discussions.

Upon Reflection I could have better prepared Sam for the text of this book by my reading the section on radishes first and then asking for his participation in the section on carrots. Since the text on carrots repeats the

same pattern and vocabulary of the text on radishes, my reading first would have assisted Sam by introducing him to new vocabulary and content. As it was Sam did not have the appropriate preparation to help when he had to decode unknown and difficult words.

### Summary of Inappropriate Text Material

The manifestation of the gap between teacher goals, objectives, and curriculum and student interest, ability, and need is not just a matter of the child's interest, but also depends on the child's ability to successfully complete the activity, whether or not the materials are at an appropriate level for the child. While interest can help sustain a child through difficult text, causing him or her to be more persistent than with less engaging material, it was found not to be enough in the examples presented in this section.

Restlessness, stalling, and digression were often noted when reading material was inappropriate, not meeting Sam's need or ability, either by being too difficult or too easy. When the material was extremely challenging, Sam became fidgety, moved frequently in his chair, would stare off into space, yawn or rest his head on outstretched arms that lay across the table surface. Most likely these behaviours were used as a means of providing Sam with an excuse for his unsuccessful reading. It is difficult to be successful when one is not putting the required effort into the task; the reader is able to attribute lack of success to lack of effort rather than lack of ability. Reading material that was too easy elicited little enthusiasm from Sam, few verbal responses and generally bored, distracted behaviours.

For Sam to experience success and regain confidence in his reading capabilities, it was found that he must be given books that he was able to read independently. More challenging books, offered as a result of his personal

interest, required that Sam be assisted through the use of echo or shared reading. Text difficulty and structure were also important considerations when selecting a book for Sam's independent reading practise.

### Importance of Control over Content and Material

In my continuing attempts to understand Sam's non-engagement in reading I decided to look at who was controlling the content and materials used in our tutoring sessions. Sakari (1997) suggests that unlike good readers, students who are having difficulty with reading rarely are given or take responsibility for lesson content and materials. To the detriment of struggling readers, it is the teacher who assumes and maintains control, does the mental and physical work of reading. I wanted to determine if Sam and I fell into the same pattern. I have selected a typical videotaped session from midway through the present study (April 3) and analysed it using the Control Checklist developed by Sakari. Two additions to the checklist, who manipulates magnetic letters and who initiates discussions not related to story content, were included to reflect the use of magnetic letters in our sessions and the numerous incidence of off-topic talk. These additions are marked by an asterisk.

Control of Materials Table 3 indicates the number of events or occurrences throughout the lesson where Sam or I controlled the material. After tallying the number of occurrences under both the student and teacher headings it is apparent that I was the person most often in physical contact with the materials, most frequently holding the book, turning the pages, keeping place while reading, and getting out and returning the materials.

Sam began reading by selecting A friend for little white rabbit (1994). Sam read this book comfortably displaying a fair amount of fluency and some expression - two behaviours we have been working on recently. While

reading this book, Sam remained quite engaged and focused in his reading. His body posture was relaxed, elbows bent, resting on the table, and the book placed at a distance and level that was comfortable to him. Sam assumed control of the materials, holding the book using one hand on each side, with the book resting upward on the table. Unfortunately this manner of holding the book made it difficult for Sam to finger track.

Sam's body posture while reading the second story, Sally's red bucket, (1994) was very different from reading the first book. Not having had as much practice with this book, Sam appeared to lack confidence which was evident in how he held the book. While Sam did maintain control of the material, on this occasion he held the book at arms length, as if he was trying to put as much distance between himself and the book as possible. His reading lacked fluency, was quite choppy and several times he started tapping the book on the table surface in rhythm with the words he was reading. I suspect Sam did this in order to keep his place in the book, as instead of tracking with his finger, his hands were busy holding either side of the book. Resting his head on his arms while reading also prevented Sam from properly tracking, resulting in several miscues and a general lack of engagement with the text, even though Sam seemed to have some previous knowledge of and interest in the subject matter.

In discussions with Sam's mother I discovered that upon my suggestion, Sam had read the first book several times during the course of the week, participating in three timed readings at home. Consequently I decided to time today's reading. Even though I praised him for exhibiting self-monitoring behaviours used by good readers, Sam's disappointment in not surpassing the previous reading times from home was evident. Sam's motivation to read today had been extrinsic; he wanted to beat a previous record, and this had not been accomplished. Sam responded by resting his head in his hands (something he

Table 5  
CONTROL CHECKLIST - Materials

	<u>Student</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
who picks up the book (paper, etc.)?	2	3
replaces the book (etc.) when finished	0	4
who holds the book?	2	6
one or two hands?	two hands	
at the bottom of the spine?	both sides	
who keeps the place in the book?	2	5
with finger, marker, etc.?	with finger	
who turns the page?	2	3
who holds the paper when writing?	0	1
with pencil hand or both hands?		
whose body is positioned in front of other?	Mostly side by side or teacher slightly behind	
who has the work positioned in front of them?	2	1
leans away from the work?	2	
sits in awkward position to work?	Often with head resting on hand or arm, while laying on table	
adjusts materials to fit own position?	1	4
(or) moves to accommodate the materials?	1	5
* who manipulates magnetic letters?	2	2
	16	34

does frequently throughout this tape), twisting his body and arms away from the book, and looking elsewhere while I attempted to discuss it with him.

Sam's extrinsic motivations for reading were also apparent later in the lesson when I introduced him to the new books he would read during the upcoming week. Before even looking at the titles and illustrations, Sam wanted to know what level the books were graded at, indicating he wanted to be reading in the green or the highest level.

My Reaction Although in the past I have tried to encourage Sam to place the book flat on the table, I have been advised to let him find the most comfortable position for him; a good reader does not always read with a book flat on a table and we should not expect that struggling readers should either. However, holding the book in the position that Sam chose can lead to difficulties with tracking, as was apparent in the reading of the less practised second book, Sally's red bucket (1994). Because of Sam's lack of engagement and non-attention to the second text, I found it necessary to point out on two separate occasions that he had omitted two entire sentences while he was reading. While Sam read the second book I became the monitor, checking for incongruities and assuming responsibilities that Sam should have himself.

When I anticipated that the reading level of the text was beyond Sam's independent level, I resumed complete control over the reading materials, holding the book and turning the pages. This occurred with the shared reading of 1 is for one (1996) and when we read the material on monkeys. During the shared reading of 1 is for one, Sam seemed generally passive and disengaged and I attempted several times to draw him into the story by asking him to hold one side of the book, and by making comments on the illustrations and rhyming nature of the text. For most of the time while we read together Sam rested his head on his arms that were lying across the table, barely holding his side of the book. Only infrequently did he point to a picture or

print. Once again I was in complete control of the materials.

On one occasion, Sam did appear engaged as he took the book out of my hands to open up the little books housed in envelopes at the back of the larger books. Holding the book, Sam showed me that the text on the back page of the littlest book was different from the other two. Instead of allowing him to keep control of the book, foolishly I took it away and when we resumed reading, Sam reverted to disengagement, placing his head on his arms as they rested on the table. Only when he began to notice that there were some further differences in the books, did Sam begin to become engaged once again.

Sam's voice during our shared reading was not very strong, and at times barely audible, with me doing most of the mental work of reading, and Sam passively going along for the ride. Sensing his disengagement, I further let Sam off the hook by suggesting he read only the rhyming word at the end of each couplet - something he was able to do without visually attending to the text.

Although encouraged to look through several of the books on monkeys when we began our research on this topic, Sam immediately selected the book with which he was most familiar. I was disappointed with his selection as one of the other books contained text that was more appropriate for his reading level. However I wanted to give Sam as much control and responsibility as possible so I agreed to his choice. As the readability of Chimpanzee family (1991) was beyond Sam's independent reading level, I once again resumed control of the materials, although I did place the book in such a manner that it was easily visible to Sam in the event he tried to read along with me. Although Sam continued to rest his head on his arms, he did remain engaged in what was being read, pointing out details in the illustrations and making many connections between what was written on monkeys and what he knew about humans.

Sam remained engaged in listening to the reading of the text throughout, but began to disengage once again when I suggested that we write down information answering one of the questions Sam had formulated on a previous day. Thinking that Sam might be getting tired, as we were nearing the end of the lesson, I volunteered to write the information as Sam dictated. He was given the job of choosing a coloured marker and thinking of the sentences to be written. Instead of remaining attentive, Sam became engaged in folding a piece of paper accordion style. Although I tried to out wait Sam, I finally removed the paper and was able to just barely refocus him by re-reading the paragraph that listed the foods that monkeys eat.

Clearly by this time in our session, Sam was beginning to tire, becoming restless, standing up, sitting back down again, leaning way over the table while resting his whole upper body on the table top, and looking up at the ceiling. Even though Sam was interested in this topic, we had been sitting in one place too long, and engagement was becoming more difficult.

Upon Reflection I was disappointed when Sam backed away from further timed readings later in the session, leading me to question the validity of using such a technique. Still, it did produce better reading behaviours, so maybe there is some merit. Sam's continued reliance on extrinsic motivation continues to worry me. I should have asked Sam what he thinks will happen when he reaches the green level; does he anticipate that this level is the end or does he understand that finishing the green level books is a wonderful accomplishment of one goal in a long series of reading steps forward? I want Sam to see reading as a valued activity, one in which he will engage with enthusiasm, where he is not just reading to get to the next level. I am beginning to wish I had not explained the meaning of the little symbols on the back of his books when Sam had asked during an earlier session.

I suspect Sam was able to read the first of the little books quite well,

despite not tracking with his fingers, due to the fact that he had read it many times at home. The second book, practised only once, was more of a challenge and required careful monitoring. Unfortunately Sam was unable to do so because of the manner in which he held the book. This put me in the position of having to do the monitoring for him, a behaviour that is not as effectual as Sam doing it himself. The difference between Sam's success in reading the two books clearly indicates the importance of the student taking responsibility for monitoring his reading.

In trying to ensure that the responsibility of learning and engagement rests with Sam, I have consciously been sitting back, waiting and seeing what Sam is capable of doing on his own accord, watching for where he wants to go in the lesson. This behaviour fits in nicely with my early childhood Piagetian background that suggests that children only learn what they are able to reinvent for themselves. It is an ideology that I generally practised in my pre-school and kindergarten classrooms. However, sometimes as teachers we need to step in and scaffold learning when children are unable to go ahead on their own (Vygotsky, 1987), a skill I am still trying to develop and use effectively. Finding the balance between wait-and-see and intervening is extremely difficult.

The magnetic letter segment of the lesson is an example of what can happen when teachers fail to respond to the needs of the child. In this segment of the lesson Sam had difficulty remaining engaged and staying focused on the task and I contributed to his confusion by not giving explicit help when it was required. While I initiated the task, choosing to work with the phoneme /ake/ in response to Sam's earlier difficulty with the word cake, I attempted to get Sam to take more responsibility for selecting the required words and letters. Unfortunately in doing so neither one of us truly assumed control of the activity. In reflection, Sam's behaviour of removing and

tossing letters into the tray clearly indicates he was looking for some guidance on which letters to select and unfortunately in holding back I failed to provide him with the necessary information. Trying to find the letters with his eyes closed again indicated how lost and unsupported Sam felt in this situation. Obviously Sam felt that selecting letters with closed eyes would give him as much of a chance of getting the right letter, as doing it with his eyes open. This is an example of where I should have taken control, but did not, to the detriment of the learning situation.

Although my intentions were good, I took responsibility away from Sam frequently throughout the lesson including the writing component. Writing late in a session is difficult for Sam as he is generally tired. On this occasion I decided to give him a break and do the physical work for him. But in doing so I wonder if perhaps I signalled Sam that he was not capable of thinking of the letters that corresponded to the sounds in the words he wished to write. Or perhaps I am indicating that if the work is hard I will do it for him. I suspect my actions also contributed to Sam's further lack of engagement in the project, resulting in him having difficulty generating ideas even after listening to the passage being read several times.

Control of Content Table 4 records who had control of the content of the lesson. 'Who did the most talking' in this session was fairly evenly split, with teacher talk at 19.2 minutes and student talk at 18.7 minutes as was the total number of occurrences (Sam - 44 and teacher - 43). While I generally controlled what was to be read and the questions asked concerning the story, Sam initiated a large majority of the discussions about the story, pointed out more details in the text and illustrations and made the most connections to background knowledge.

I controlled the structure and flow of the lesson, what we were going to do and when, while Sam was given some choices over the lesson content. He

chose the order in which he would read the little reading books. Consistent with Guthrie's (1996) suggestion of allowing students the chance to read in their area of interest, prior to this lesson, Sam was given the opportunity of selecting the topic to be studied in our research project and also formulated the questions to be answered in our reading. During this lesson he was able to select the book from which we read information about monkeys.

Interestingly, Sam selected this book even before looking at all the others. I had anticipated a long process of selection, perhaps based on Sam's previously used technique of eeeny, meeny, miney, moe and was surprised when this did not occur. In a somewhat drawn out process, Sam also constructed and dictated the information that was to be recorded on monkeys' eating habits.

Although Sam did not initiate any questions, the talk in this lesson was almost equally shared by Sam and myself, with Sam pointing out numerous details in the text and illustrations and making the most connections to background knowledge. Pointing out details and making connections to background knowledge is an indication that Sam was somewhat involved and engaged with the text and not totally passive in the learning process.

My Reaction As indicated in Table 4, Sam did not initiate any questions about the stories or concepts related to the stories. I, on the other hand, asked many - 16 in all - falling into the typical teacher behaviour of quizzing students on comprehension. I also used this device to try and engage Sam in what we were reading and to clarify my understanding of something Sam had mentioned. In reviewing the video I noticed there were several instances where Sam only used one or two words to answer questions or respond to my comments. I wonder if perhaps this indicates that Sam may feel I am asking too many questions or trying too hard to engage him in areas in which he is not interested.

Upon Reflection At least on one occasion I attempted to reinforce

Table 4  
CONTROL CHECKLIST - Content

	<u>Student</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
who chooses the book?	2	5
who initiates questions about the story?	0	17
who initiates discussions about the story?	7	5
who initiates discussions not related to the story or content	4	-
who does most of the talking?	19.2 min.	18.7 min.
who points out details in the text or illustration?	14	7
who makes connections to background knowledge?	13	5
who writes when engaged in written work? keeps the list, web, etc.?	0	1
who keeps score in a game?	-	-
holds the pencil? manages the pad?	-	-
who leads the work?	1	3
or appears disengaged, passive?	3	-
	44	43

positive reading habits displayed by Sam in this lesson. Although I'm not sure how I expected Sam to respond, I was disappointed in his lack of apparent interest and have sensed this feeling from him on other occasions. Does Sam not believe me when I suggest that his reading has improved or that he is using reading behaviours exhibited by good readers, or does he feel such talk is boring? Perhaps Sam needs to more than just hear about his improvement, he also needs to physically see it (Payne, 1997). Sometimes I worry that I overdo things, or that perhaps Sam has heard these comments so often from myself and others that he tunes me out. I want him to know when he is doing well and yet with Sam there seems to be a fine line that I often sense I am crossing over. I envision a little voice within Sam crying - "Yeah, yeah, let's get on with it!!" Although Sam is never hostile or overtly angry with me, as he is becoming with some of his teachers at school, I sometimes feel that he just tolerates me and I wonder if teachers of other struggling readers attribute the same feelings to their students.

In reflection I can see now that I have been giving Sam only superficial choices over the content of the lessons. Even though he was able to select his research topic, I am the one who initiated the activity, set up the structure of formulating questions and looking for answers within the books I had selected. In particular, the writing activity in our lessons is most often initiated by me. Although Sam is given some control over the content, I usually decide on the form it will take and what the end product will look like. And even though I expect Sam to make choices in selecting letters, I am the one who decides when and where to use the magnetic letters and the length of time the activity will last. The agenda for our lessons, including this one, is completely mine.

Within me I feel a pulling and twisting of ideologies. One voice says that I as teacher should be in control, making the big decisions concerning

curriculum and its implementation. Sam cannot possibly understand what he needs to know and how best to achieve education goals, he isn't mature or responsible enough. But there is another voice that grows increasingly stronger. The one that says with appropriate guidance, students can and do make those decisions. It is my job to determine what guidance Sam needs and then set about to ensure he gets it in a manner than enables him to become an accomplished reader and writer.

#### Summary of Control of Content and Material

Who controls the content and materials in lessons may be of prime importance in understanding the gap between teacher expectations, goals, and objectives and student interest, need, and ability. When children are given the real responsibility of selecting content and using materials they are more likely to be engaged in the activity and therefore benefit from the activity. No gap exists between curriculum and child interest and ability when learners are in control of learning. Instead with individual choice and control, the child is able to set the pace and activities within a range that will ensure his or her success.

As evidenced in the present study teachers often think they are offering students choices over content only to learn on reflection that this is not the case. Most choices in this study were found to be artificial or superficial in nature, including the selection of books to be read, how the lessons were organised, the types of activities offered, and the expectations of what the end product would look like. Often Sam was asked to select from a group of items preselected by myself. For the most part the agenda was mine. Sam rarely had control over where the lesson was going and how we were going to get there.

In the present study it was also found that it is just not who controls the materials but also how the materials are controlled that is important. When I was in total control of the material, holding the book, doing the reading, or monitoring what was being read, Sam was less engaged in the activity. As I was the one doing the work, Sam did not need to remain focussed and frequently displayed restless behaviours at this time.

When Sam was confident in the material, he was more likely to be in control of the materials, holding the book in a comfortable position which ensured successful reading. When Sam lacked confidence in reading an unfamiliar text, he was less likely to assume control, trying to pass responsibility to me by holding the book inappropriately. While reading difficult text, Sam's awkward handling of the book almost ensured his inability to monitor his own reading, ensuring that I would step in and resume control. Understanding the importance of confidence in one's ability to assume responsibility for materials and content highlights the need for both to be at the level of the student's independent ability. When reading material is too difficult it is highly unlikely that students will assume responsibility and control; they will not engage in the activity.

While it is extremely important to have students take responsibility for their own learning, teachers must not abdicate their responsibility of offering the appropriate support to ensure that the students needs are being met. In the present study it is easy to see that in trying to get Sam to assume more responsibility, I did not always provide the direction he required to complete and master tasks. On several occasions, in particular when working with magnetic letters, Sam was left without the means or skills to do the work I had assigned and is a prime example of the gap between teacher expectations and student ability. I had set my expectations at one point but did not ensure that Sam had the skills necessary for the task.

Summary of Indication of a Gap Between Teacher Goals, Objectives, and Curriculum and Student Interest, Need, and Ability

In the present study the gap was manifested in several ways. Sam's restless, unfocused behaviour was found to be a symptom of the gap. Sam found it difficult to engage when lessons were poorly paced in regards to his needs, abilities, and interests. When I did not follow Sam's lead he became fidgety. Restless behaviours were also observed when activities were too challenging in relation to Sam's abilities or when he was improperly supported while learning new concepts.

Stalling behaviours were used as a means of saving face. When Sam was unable to complete an activity over which I had control, he stalled for time apparently hoping to figure out what was required or be let off the hook. Frequently Sam used off topic talk for the same reasons. However many times this talk was found to have merit. It provided an insight into Sam's genuine interests. When used properly, talk was a springboard into literacy engagement, a way of closing the gap.

Interest was not the only important criterion to consider in identifying the gap. Materials at an inappropriate level were found to also widen the gap between teacher goals, objectives, and expectations and student interest, needs, and abilities. When the materials did not match Sam's abilities, he was less likely to engage or to be successful with reading and writing when he did try. Sam's lack of success with such materials eroded his self confidence and led to further stalling behaviours.

Control and responsibility for learning was found to be the most important variable in widening or lessening the gap and providing Sam with confidence to engage in literacy. Lessons for which I was responsible, had set the objectives and direction, often were not successful in that they did not

match Sam's needs, abilities, and interests. Even though I felt I had a good grasp of Sam's abilities, after working for the last several months together, it was a surprise to me that Sam also had a good understanding of what he was capable of doing. Giving Sam control of the lesson and material ensured his engagement and subsequently opportunities for practice that would eventually lead to success.

#### Examples of Closing the Gap Between Teacher Goals, Objectives, and Curriculum and Student Interest, Needs, and Ability

In analysing the video tapes and my journal notes I also looked for areas within the lessons where Sam was truly engaged in the literacy activity. Most often I found that these activities were not only initiated by Sam but he was also in complete control of both the content and materials. These activities were generally spontaneous in nature, ones in which I had done no planning and was therefore unprepared. They were developed by Sam, around his interests and needs and were bounded by what he was able to generally complete independently with some adult assistance when requested. The agenda for the activity was Sam's, we followed his lead and often I did not know what the outcome of the activity would be.

While there were numerous examples of partial engagement, only examples of sustained engagement are detailed in this account. These examples include those initiated by both Sam and myself and are shown in chronological order to indicate how perceptions changed over the course of the study. The following section is divided into three sections: a) activities where my planning caught Sam's attention and resulted in engagement, b) activities where Sam initiated and assumed total control of the work that lead to engagement and, c) the use of games and self-competition to bring about

engagement. Each of the examples are identified by the date on which they occurred and further subtitled to describe the event, my reaction to the event, and later reflection upon viewing the video tapes. Themes or patterns that run throughout the present study are summarised upon the conclusion of this section.

### Teacher Planning that Results in Child Engagement

Feb. 28 During the last couple of weeks Sam had been talking about the new baby calves born on his uncle's farm. I decided to bring in the book The new baby calf (1984) to read with Sam and have him take home and practice reading with his mother. Although this book was above Sam's reading ability, I thought that perhaps because the subject was one that was of particular interest to him, the book might help him stretch his abilities as he tried to figure out the new words. In preparation for reading the book, I asked Sam how the new baby calves were doing on his uncle's farm. Sam's response was quite enthusiastic. Consequently we did not get beyond the cover of the book. Getting up and moving around the room as he talked, Sam quickly launched into an elaborate verbal description of where the calves were living. At one point Sam turned, walked back towards our work table, and asked if he could borrow a piece of paper. Quickly Sam began to sketch the barn, providing details such as overhead lights, feeding troughs, and windows.

Upon my suggestion that he label his diagram Sam moved around to the other side of the table, sat down and without hesitation, began printing words, and asking for assistance with letter sounds. The first word for which Sam required assistance was bottle. As in previous lessons I drew Elkonin boxes on the upper section of Sam's notebook page to help him determine the correct spelling of each unfamiliar word. Immediately Sam commented on my new

technique of grouping letters together in the Elkonin boxes instead of placing each letter in a separate box, and wanted to know its significance.

Once the drawing and labelling of his sketch were completed to his satisfaction, Sam began to talk of the other barns on his uncle's property that house the cows as they mature to adulthood. Sam made small pictographs of the buildings in the corner of his paper, labelling each with a number that indicated the sequence in which they would be used. Too quickly our time together had come to an end.

My reaction My choice of The new baby calf (1994) was most effective in starting the discussion that led to the drawing and labelling activity, which was initiated by Sam. I remember the concentration apparent on Sam's face as he discussed the calves and drew a sketch of their living arrangements and I quickly realised this was a hook, a means of truly engaging Sam in literacy. Although it was a digression from where I had envisioned the lesson going, I saw that this activity could be used to engage Sam in a purposeful reading and writing activity. And not one that I had devised. Seeing the level of his engagement, and remembering a picture he had once drawn for me of Peter Pan and the pirate ship, all intricately labelled, I suggested that Sam label this diagram as well so I would be sure to remember all the various apparatus required to feed new baby calves who have been separated from their mothers. This was a big hit!!

I provided the necessary support, assisting Sam as he stretched out the words, listened for sounds and recorded the letters. Sam recognised immediately that I was drawing the Elkonin boxes differently than we had in the past. Instead of using a box per letter, on this occasion I constructed boxes to represent letter blends, clusters and roots of words. I had selected this method in an effort to assist Sam in being less focused on individual letter sounds and make him more aware of the letter sounds as they are blended

together. Instead of reading letter by letter I wanted him to start chunking sounds as fluent readers do.

Upon reflection Sam quickly picked up on the different technique of recording letter sounds and seemed surprised that the letters could be combined together to make blended sounds. Had Sam not realised this before? Is this the reason why he continues to decode and read unfamiliar words letter by letter, rather than looking for root words and letter clusters? I am certain we have discussed letter blends previously and I am equally sure that it has been covered in school. Obviously Sam did not take this information in, comprehend its significance. Perhaps this is another indication of the gap, where something is covered by teachers before a student is ready to understand, resulting in the learner failing to learn what has been taught. In continuing to use this technique of making boxes for letter combination sounds rather than individual letters I may be able to enhance Sam's ability to decode unfamiliar words, to use blends and roots rather than letters.

Sam was extremely engaged in using the technique of labelling diagrams, much more than I have ever seen him before. There certainly was no difficulty in getting him to write the words. It was apparent that Sam demonstrated real ownership in this activity, hunching over his paper, his arms and hands spread around his work. There was no room for me to get close to his page - it was his and he acted like he was defending it from the intrusion of others. Sam carefully watched my mouth as I stretched out the words for him to listen for the sounds and his tongue moved within his own mouth as he silently mouthed what he had heard. As I wrote down the letters in the boxes, Sam was already writing them down on his paper. Quickly he added other details to his drawing, expanding his work to include two more labels. It was as if he did not want the activity to end. Now that I think about it, I remember how interested Sam was in reading the labels in an earlier book we read.

Perhaps through the use of labels Sam can be encouraged to write more frequently.

It was an enchanting 20 minutes, I could see the power of Sam's concentration, his hunger to learn and use language competently. There was no sense of restlessness, no fidgeting, no yawning. This engaged behaviour is what I want to recapture in our future lessons; it was a prime example of the gap being bridged, learning was occurring and it was on Sam's own terms. I had moved from using my own agenda, my objectives, to using Sam's agenda, and his interests.

Mar. 27 I decided to try something different today. Instead of having our usual writing session, where Sam has to think of a sentence to write down that he has only a superficial and fleeting interest in, I borrowed from the ideas of Guthrie (1996) on the subject of literacy engagement. Hoping to build on Sam's interest in content material I thought that it might be more interesting for Sam to work on a research project, reading and writing in an area of particular interest to him. Consequently at the beginning of our lesson I asked Sam to think about a topic that he would like to learn more about. I had originally planned that while Sam was mulling this over, we would preview the reading books for the next week. I should have known this would not work. We had only just started to look at one of the books when Sam asked for a piece of paper so he could write down some of his ideas. After initially suggesting Sam wait I decided to have him record his ideas while they were still fresh in his head.

Within a few minutes Sam had listed, with very little help from me, several different animals that he would like to learn more about. Having selected the subject of monkeys, after a long and complicated procedure which involved the drawing of a clock, Sam was asked to tell me everything he knew about monkeys and I listed this information, web-like, on a large sheet of

paper. Initially Sam was hesitant to say much, indicating that he knew little on the subject. With prompts Sam was able to indicate where monkeys live, what they eat and he had some knowledge (although a bit confused) of humans evolving from apes which I recorded. After webbing the information we read it together in a form of duet reading. Sam was then asked what further information he would like to know about monkeys. At first Sam couldn't come up with any ideas, saying he just wanted to learn more about them. Eventually, after explaining that researchers ask themselves questions about their topic so they know what to look for when they investigate and read about their topic, Sam was able to think of three questions: How many monkeys are left?, Where do monkeys live? and What do they eat?

I asked Sam to write his questions down, so we wouldn't forget what to look for next week while reading the books. Together, at times using Elkonin boxes, we figured out the sounds in the words and Sam wrote down the questions - but he was tiring and found this difficult. At one point Sam asked if I could just write the questions for him. I explained that he had to do the work in order to learn, but that I would help him as he needed. Using felt markers Sam printed very large - perhaps hoping to fill the page up before he had to write too many words. I had to remind him several times to make his letters smaller so all his words would fit on the paper.

The paper is covered in dots, squiggles, and lines, all marks Sam made while squirming around when writing. He was definitely uncomfortable about the whole writing process. But Sam's interest and engagement caused him to write more today than he has over the last few months including both connected and unconnected text!!!!

My reaction My initial reaction to Sam's immediate desire to write down his research choices, while we were still previewing the next week's reading books, was to have him keep his ideas in his head until we were

finished. I wanted to be sure we previewed these books before the end of the lesson and I knew it would be difficult to come back to after starting our discussion on Sam's topic of choice. However I quickly realised that delaying the discussion might put a damper on Sam's enthusiasm, something I did not wish to do. I was finally seeing some interest, engagement from Sam and realised I needed to build on this - besides he was clearly no longer interested in looking at next week's books .

I was initially disappointed in Sam's inability to verbalise his knowledge of monkeys. Sam is a very bright boy and I was genuinely surprised that he did not volunteer more information on the subject. I thought he was holding back for some unknown reason. I also had the same reaction when I asked Sam to suggest some questions that he would like answered on the topic of monkeys. If it was true that Sam had little knowledge on monkeys, and he wanted to learn more, then he must have many questions that he would like answered. But it was like pulling teeth to get him to verbalise any original ideas. Was he being lazy? Or was he just not accustomed to having to do the work?

Upon reflection In adjusting my agenda and lesson organisation of previewing reading books first and then listing research choices, I facilitated Sam's engagement by allowing him to take the lead. At this point he became the person in control of where the lesson was headed. Sam chose the topic and the scope of the information to research. In doing so, he was empowered. Sam knew his ideas had merit and would be followed.

Due to the increasing volume of reading I have done on the topic of struggling readers physically doing the work, I did not back down when Sam asked if I could write down his questions. Instead I informed Sam I would offer him assistance and did so by once again stretching out words, helping him to identify sound and letter combinations and record the appropriate letters.

This was exhausting work for Sam, evidenced by his restless behaviour during this segment of the lesson. Still he benefited much more by doing the work himself and even though it took much longer than I had anticipated I do not regret having made this decision.

In reflecting on Sam's inability to express his ideas and knowledge while brainstorming and formulating research questions on monkeys, I have thought of two possible reasons for his poor response. Sam may have had difficulty responding because he truly did not have the information and background to do so. If this is the case then it is an example of how I failed to understand the knowledge level and ability of my student, one of the reasons why there is often a gap that exists between teacher goals, objectives, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability. It is possible that Sam was telling me he did not have the appropriate information, that I failed to listen and expecting more, was frustrated when he was unable to live up to my expectations.

But I also think there may be a second reason why Sam had difficulty responding with his own ideas and generating questions. It is also possible that Sam needs help organising and classifying his thoughts, in understanding what he knows and what he needs to know to accomplish his goals. This appears to be a fundamental problem for Sam. He has little metacognitive understanding of how to approach a problem and solve it. What knowledge Sam does have, has rarely been practised as I and other well intentioned adults have been doing the work for him. While Sam's comprehension and re-tell ability are excellent, I suspect he would have difficulty picking out important information in text, classifying that information and reorganising it to answer questions. While some children seem to be able to do this naturally, these are basic study skills with which Sam has probably had little practise. Sam simply did not have the background to

complete the task more effectively. Perhaps if I had modelled the process in this research project, Sam would have had a better understanding of what was being asked of him. Or as this is the first research project we are doing together, I should continue to have Sam to do as much of the work as possible and revise my expectations to reflect Sam's lack of experience, while building and modelling the required skills.

Sam's lack of metacognitive awareness also extends to how he approaches difficult words while decoding and writing. In reading, Sam looks at a word and quickly becomes lost and discouraged when he can't recognise it immediately. Sam rarely looks to see how this word is similar to other known words or gives serious thought to strategies he could use to figure out an unknown word. In writing, Sam has the same difficulty. He does not think of how hearing a particular sound and recording it in one word may be used to write it in a word sounding similar.

April 10 Sam's reading of The best cake (1994) proved to be a jumping off point for our lesson today. Just as Sam started to read, he began to talk about a recent school fair at his school. I quietly reminded Sam of our no talking while reading rule, suggesting he wait until after the story to tell me all about the fair. Sam had little difficulty reading the book, but I made a mental note to bring out the magnetic letters to give Sam extra practice with /est/ and /ust/ letter combinations once we finished reading.

After reading the story, and before I could get out the magnetic letters, Sam quickly returned to the conversation he had started just at the beginning of the book - his school fair. Sam began talking about the cake he had won in an activity called the cake walk, describing the game and the room in which it was held. Thinking I could get Sam to do a bit of writing/labelling, as in a previous lesson, I asked him to draw me a picture of the room, showing the location of various items. Half way through drawing a detailed map of the

school and its gym, Sam began talking about the cake itself and turning his page over and drew the butterfly cake he had won.

Just as Sam had appeared to abandon his drawing of the school, I took my cue from Sam and asked him to tell me an oral story about the cake walk, a story that we could write down to compliment his picture. I expected Sam to balk at the suggestion of writing, but instead he repeated some of the things he had already mentioned. I asked Sam where he could find some of the words he would need to use in writing the story and what words he would need to figure out. Sam quickly opened the little book and began searching for words. He was able to locate several and using Elkonin sound boxes that Sam himself constructed in his notebook, we found the letters for the other words. When working out the word butterfly, Sam commented on the word being a compound word made up of butter and fly. Sam then proceeded to write a three sentence story - "We went to my school fair. I won in the cake walk. I got a butterfly cake."

My reaction Disappointed when Sam once again began to digress when he started to read the story, I quickly moved to curb his behaviour. Sam appeared content to read the book once he knew he could tell me his news when the story was completed. Initially I didn't realise how important this digression would be to the remainder of the lesson. Seeing how closely Sam's experience tied in with the story and remembering a comment made by Paley (1988), that distractions are the sounds of children thinking, I encouraged Sam to explore the topic of the school fair further, rather than working with magnetic letters. When Sam changed the focus of his exploration, from map drawing to cake description and illustration, I trusted his interest and how he wanted to develop the topic. To help provide Sam with some support I suggested that he tell the story before writing it down, to organise his ideas and thoughts prior to attempting to spell the desired words. After Sam had

completed his written story I re-wrote the story sentences out onto sentence strips for further vocabulary practise. The sentences were cut up into individual words, extra words were added and then the words were rearranged into new sentences that provided additional reading practise.

Upon reflection One of my goals for Sam has always been for him to construct connected text. Getting him to do so has often proved frustrating and challenging. This lesson's experience was much different. This was the most connected text Sam had ever written and I could have hugged him forever!!! At the bottom of Sam's notebook page, he drew five happy faces - I think Sam was pretty proud of himself, too!!

So what was different about today, why did Sam choose today to write when on other occasions it has been such a struggle? Perhaps it was because the topic was of genuine interest to Sam. He was not writing about something of little interest that had no direct relationship to him. Instead something had occurred on the week-end that was significant and he wanted to share with me. Allowing Sam to narrow down his topic, allowing him to abandon an initial attempt at recording information that I had suggested and select another that was of more importance and interest to himself, must have given Sam a real sense of control. Supporting Sam through the suggestion that he first tell his story verbally and locate possible desired words in the book text lead to his confidence in being able to complete the task successfully. With support Sam was empowered to do the work and took great pride in his accomplishments.

Imagine if I had not adjusted my plans of magnetic letter word construction. Instead of actively engaging in constructing and writing a story, and all the reading and rereading it entailed, Sam would have had the much more limited and artificial experience of constructing words with /est/ and ust/ roots, experience he in all likelihood would not have carried over into

genuine reading and writing activities.

### Summary of Teacher Planning that Results in Child Engagement

Although each of these activities were initially planned by me, very early in the lesson Sam assumed control and ownership of the activity, changing the scope of the lesson and its end product to suit his needs, interest, and ability. The topic of each activity was one in which Sam held a previous interest, acting as a hook. It was this interest that sparked Sam's engagement, holding his attention long enough for him to assume ownership. As I relinquished control and Sam assumed ownership, his interest in the topic drove him to take control of the materials and content of the lesson. My role became that of support only. I had provided the jumping off point, Sam had made the jump, and in doing the physical work of reading and writing, he benefited from the experience.

### Power of Child Initiation Leading to Engagement

April 17 Today Sam came to our session armed with three library books on ants and some hand written notes he had begun to make at home on the same topic. Sam (and his mother) had proudly wanted to show me what he had been working on. Sam had become interested in the topic of ants over the weekend when his father began building him an elaborate ant farm. Just prior to leaving from home for our session, Sam began to do "research," looking for information on what ants eat so that he could be sure to feed his ants properly once the ant farm was finished and his ants had taken up residence. At home Sam had begun by copying down sentences from the book that he thought contained important information. Although copying is not

always a valued writing activity, for Sam, who never writes on his own initiative, this is a major step forward.

As Sam was still enthusiastic about his efforts I immediately decided to adjust my plans for the day and we continued to work on this project for most of our lesson. In total, Sam produced and read eight sentences and drew two diagrams, one of the interior of an ant hill and a sketch of his new ant farm. The book that Sam worked from was beyond his independent reading level, but he tried valiantly to read and figure out the words. And once Sam had read these difficult words, he was able to re-read them without error the next time.

When it became apparent that we were running out of time and Sam had still not located the information on what ants eat, I suggested looking in the index to help narrow the amount of reading. Sam quickly flipped to the back of the book, located the food heading and several page numbers. He then turned to each of those pages respectively and with my support, read the passages. Only one provided the information he required, but was written in an elaborate, long paragraph that Sam did not want to copy in its entirety. Instead, Sam synthesised the information and composed two short sentences using the words in the text to assist him with the required spelling.

Throughout the entire lesson Sam assumed complete ownership and control of the materials. While writing, Sam's body was directly positioned in front of the paper, one hand held the page while the other printed the words, and his body leaned in close to his work. His eyes remained focused on his writing or that of the text, rarely looking elsewhere. Sam turned the pages, used his pencil or finger to keep track while reading, and decided what it was that he would write, while I supported the book in an upright position that made it easier for him to glance at and find the necessary words. On several occasions Sam took the book out of my hands to get a closer look at the print or pictures.

My reaction Once Sam began to show me his work, there was no question in my mind that we would pursue his topic if that was what he wanted. Although I recognised immediately that the books were beyond Sam's reading level, I resisted earlier temptations of assuming control and reading for him. I was extremely and pleasantly surprised by Sam's persistence in trying to decode unknown words and in how few words he actually found difficult (i.e. different, together). I was also pleased to see that Sam was able to re-read these difficult words later in the session, indicating that he made the first step toward incorporating them into his reading vocabulary.

Upon reflection Our last two sessions reinforced in my mind the power of interest, engagement, and purpose in facilitating reading and writing in children who are struggling with literacy. Using his new interest in ants, Sam had searched, read and composed an eight sentence informative paragraph complete with diagrams all on his own initiative - something he has never done in school (to my knowledge) or during our eight months of weekly sessions. My role was solely supportive. I did not in any way lead the action (except perhaps when I suggested the index). Even though the reading material was challenging for Sam, he held the book, he kept track of his place, he turned the pages, and he got out and replaced the books at the beginning and end of our session.

While writing, Sam used his own pencil he had brought from home (usually he writes with one of mine). His paper (again brought from home) was positioned squarely in front of his body, and was steadied by his left hand while he wrote with his right. I offered support by holding the book upright at an angle, making it easier for Sam to locate the words he required. While writing the last two sentences that he himself composed, Sam used the text to find the required words. When labelling his sketch of the ant farm, Sam used the technique of Elkonin boxes. Although I did get out his note book, Sam took

it from me, drew the boxes himself, and proceeded to write in the appropriate letters when we determined what they would be. In the past I have been the one that drew the boxes and wrote down the necessary letters.

In this lesson, Sam very clearly told me with his actions that he is much more capable than I have been giving him credit. Sam is a reader and writer. And I have learned the power of engagement. In bringing his own materials from home, Sam made the initial response and it became his agenda. I have also learned that Sam has been paying attention during our previous lessons. Techniques I had introduced to Sam were used throughout this session, including looking for information in response to personal questions concerning a topic, using the index to quickly locate specific information, using Elkonin boxes to determine letter placement, and synthesising and reorganising large chunks of information into smaller more manageable pieces. And Sam was able to do all this on his own initiative.

One of the things that impressed me was the authenticity of Sam's work. For the first time since working together, Sam initiated an authentic task that was of importance and interest to him and worked hard to complete it on his terms. He was working in response to his own genuine need to find out information about ants. I realise now that our project on monkeys does not fulfil this criteria. I was the one who initiated the project. Even though Sam was given choice, able to select the topic and its scope, I controlled the agenda. Sam has not taken over the responsibility for or control of the topic on monkeys, indicating he very much saw it as my agenda.

I have no doubt that learning took place during this lesson. Sam read a book that was beyond his current reading level, stretching his abilities while continuing to be supported by me when required. Perhaps this is a good example of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986) - but going one step beyond, in that the learner truly initiates what it was that was to be

learned. I followed along behind, monitoring, assisting, and scaffolding when required.

This lesson is an example of the closing of the gap between teacher goals and objectives and student interest, need, and ability. No longer did I focus the lesson on my objectives, but allowed Sam to take the lead according to his own interests and needs. He needed to find out about the types of foods ants eat for his ant farm, so Sam read about ants and wrote down the information that he required. Sam has shown me that he is capable of initiating a good session, that he has good ideas, and that he is able to balance activities (i.e. reading, writing and drawing) during the session.

#### Summary of the Power of Child Initiation Leading to Engagement

The link between child initiation and literacy engagement was found to be strong in this study. When Sam initiated the activity he assumed total control of the content and materials, to the point of even bringing his own writing and reading materials. Supported by a strong desire to find further knowledge about a topic of choice, Sam was able to persevere when the material became challenging. Instead of giving up and resting his head on his arms, behaviours displayed while completing work initiated by me, Sam fought to make sense of the difficult material, sought help, and was able to complete the work to his satisfaction. As the help provided was based on Sam's need, he was able to understand the purpose of the information and received immediate practise and feedback on its use. Piaget's teachings suggest that when learning occurs in such a manner, the child is much more likely to internalise the concept being taught and use it on other occasions.

### Use of Games and Self-Competition to Foster Engagement in Literacy

May 15 After reading the day's books Sam was given a small reward of a wooden Tic Tac Toe game for reaching the goal of reading 20 books. We enthusiastically played several games of Tic Tac Toe with Sam volunteering to keep a written track of wins and losses. He so much enjoyed the use of a game format that I decided to continue our lesson in a similar manner. Sam was first asked to read a written clue, the answer for which would be the word used in a game of hangman. This spontaneous activity involved reading a short sentence, and listening for and recording sounds in words.

Sam was extremely interested as I began to print the clue, leaning over the work and reading each word as quickly as it was written. Sam found some words in the clue challenging, evidence by when he dropped his head and rested it on his arm when he encountered a difficult word. Once Sam had read the clue he quickly determined the correct answer, monkey. Sam was then asked to name each of the letters in this word. Correct responses were recorded in blank spaces that indicated the amount of letters in the word. Each incorrect response was recorded by progressively constructing a stick figure that eventually gets hanged if too many incorrect answers are given.

Although Sam had been highly engaged in the activity, it was at the point of playing hangman that he assumed total control, taking the pencil out of my hand and recording the first letter of the word monkey in the first blank space. Both of his hands framed the paper as he hunched over the paper. Sam initiated a means of scoring, marking incorrect answers on the right hand side of the paper, as well as progressively drawing the stick man. It was Sam who decided how many incorrect responses he would have to make before the hanging would be complete. Together, with my help of stretching out the word, Sam was able to discover the correct letters before his man was

hung.

My reaction When Sam became challenged by a particular letter sound combination during this game, he displayed the stalling behaviours that I now realise indicate that he is at an impasse and cannot go on without further help by me. At this point I gave Sam a clue, indicating that he needed a vowel. Sam drew a box on the page and asked me to write the vowels inside. I handed the responsibility back to Sam, suggesting that he write them down himself. Sam guessed letters and eventually wrote down all but the 'o', the exact letter he required. Once again Sam was stuck and required assistance from me. I sang the alphabet song to the prescribed letter, hoping this chant would help him to recall the remaining vowel. Sam finally was able to answer and placed the letter in the correct spot.

Upon reflection The use of a game format was an excellent means of engaging Sam in literacy activities. Even though it was initiated by myself, Sam quickly took over the lead, making the rules by which we played and commanding the materials including the paper and pencil. The first part of the game required that Sam decode familiar and unfamiliar words while reading a written clue. Again this clue was given by myself, but the challenge to figure it out engaged Sam in the task and perhaps helped him to persist longer than if he had just been reading a difficult sentence in a book. During the second component of the game Sam had to listen for sounds in words, match them to the appropriate letter, and record the letters in the proper sequence, all skills that I had tried to focus on in other activities but that Sam often found less than engaging.

The success of the game format depended upon and used Sam's competitiveness, his desire to best his own accomplishments. Throughout the game Sam was competing against himself, there was no threat from others or sense that he would not be able to do as well as other children. When it looked

like he might lose the game, Sam simply extended or changed the rules he had made. In this manner Sam ensured his success, he matched the activity to meet his abilities and did not lose face either in front of peers or myself.

I continue to be surprised by Sam's inability to state the letters of the alphabet in proper sequence and his general lack of knowledge about such things as vowels, consonants, and letter sounds. Vowels in particular seem to cause Sam extreme difficulty, both in naming them and in identifying their sounds. In the written clue segment of the lesson, Sam read 'loves' instead of 'lives', substituting the letter 'o' sound for an 'i'. When asked to check out the word again, Sam could not see that he had made an error, although he did agree that the sentence did not make sense how it was read. When Sam was asked what sounds could be attributed to each of these letters, he could not offer any answer. It was only after I had written the word love on the page that Sam could see he had made an error in decoding this word, but he still could not read the word and I finally gave it to him. I know vowels are a difficult concept to grasp for beginning readers and writers, but I wonder why Sam seems to continue to have so much difficulty even after all our work with magnetic letters and root words.

May 29 Building on past lessons where we have played a combined version of Wheel of Fortune and hangman, Sam was asked to read a question/clue that required recalling of information found in the day's story selection. After a rather unfocussed reading of the story, Sam much more enthusiastically engaged in the game activity. In response to Sam's difficulty with reading the word 'laughed' in the story, I decided to use a clue which had this word for an answer. As I wrote the question/clue, Sam leaned in close beginning to read before I had finished writing. Sam repositioned the page in front of his body and finger tracked as he read the remainder of the question/clue. Once Sam had given the oral answer he continued to assume

responsibility, making decisions about how many attempts he would be able to make before the stick man was hung. Sam also recorded wrong guesses as he attempted to sort out the letters that were found in the word laughed.

My reaction Sam had little difficulty identifying the first two and last letters in laughed. Sam did have difficulty with the middle letters which isn't surprising considering the nature of the word. As in previous lessons I provided Sam with a clue, indicating one of the remaining spaces required a vowel. This was not as helpful as I had hoped. Sam was once again not able to remember names of the vowels. Sam suggested /f/ and /ph/ for the /gh/, both excellent attempts, but in the end I was required to give him a short visual clue to assist in identifying the appropriate letters. Sam was allowed a five second look at a page on which the word appeared in the story. He easily picked out the word 'laughed' and placed the necessary letters in the correct spaces.

As this activity had held Sam's attention quite well, I decided to use it after Sam had read the second book. But as Sam was showing some apprehension that the hangman word might be as difficult as the first I tried to use a word with which Sam would have little difficulty. The word 'jumped' was easily figured out. Sam did not make even one incorrect guess and this increased his confidence level enough to attempt a third game. The third and last game involved a three word answer that described the main character in one of the daily stories. This too was answered with a fair amount of ease.

Upon reflection The game format is a great help in keeping Sam focused and engaged in literacy activities. Sam only becomes restless and unfocussed when determining letter/sound combinations that are too difficult. At that point he begins to yawn, shift in his chair, and engage in digression and stalling behaviours. If I can keep these overly challenging words to a minimum, selecting words that are more in keeping with Sam's abilities, he happily engages in the extra reading practise and work of listening for sounds

in words. I doubt that Sam even considers that the game is work when it is played at his ability level and with his interests in mind.

It is interesting to think back to our earlier lessons and compare what we did today with those of the past. Earlier in the study I followed a rather strict format with detailed lesson plans and objectives. The objectives of the lessons offered earlier in the study reflected the types of skills that I thought would be beneficial to Sam's needs and abilities. I determined the criteria for successful performance and measured Sam's performance against that standard. Often his accomplishments did not meet my expectations. Deviations or digressions from the format were considered in a negative light, incidents that took away from what I was trying to accomplish. While I still enter each lesson with a general idea of the types of activities and objectives that might be accomplished, I am much more willing to adjust these plans and focus on Sam's interests and suggestions.

### Summary of the Use of Games and Self-Competition to Foster Engagement in Literacy

The use of games in this study was found to foster engagement in literacy by using Sam's competitiveness with himself to motivate learning. Throughout the study Sam has been shown to be motivated by self-competition; he liked to set goals for himself and work towards them, either while writing, trying to fill a specified amount of space on a page, or when reading and trying to get to the next reading level. Through the use of a game format, Sam's enjoyment of self-competition caused him to practice reading behaviours, as well as determine the order of letters in words while writing. It was important to keep the game within Sam's ability range, to find a balance that challenged yet provided for success and allowed Sam to have some control

over the process.

### Summary of Closing the Gap

Often lessons that I had planned, including objectives and end products failed to engage Sam in literacy. During these lessons Sam frequently did not assume responsibility or control for learning; he expected me to do the work. Sam viewed these activities as mine, that he did not have any say in what was being done. Consequently Sam was less likely to put any effort into the work. Concepts taught during these lessons frequently were forgotten or not applied elsewhere. Even though I had been working with Sam for several months and felt I knew him well, I repeatedly overestimated Sam's ability and taught a concept that Sam was not yet ready to learn. Instead of recognising Sam's lack of skill, I made assumptions attributing his behaviour to laziness, disinterest or uncooperativeness.

Lessons that developed spontaneously through Sam's interest were found to be most effective in holding his attention. When Sam initiated the activity it was important that he be given total control over the entire scope of the activity, what it encompassed, how the material would be used, and how the final product would be recorded. If the activity was suggested by myself it was important to quickly turn over all responsibility to Sam, to let him control the materials, the scope, and the actual work to be completed. In doing so, Sam became engaged in the literacy activity, expended great amounts of effort and displayed pride and accomplishment in his work. Lessons using Sam's enjoyment for self-competition provided a valuable means for engaging Sam in literacy activities as well as additional opportunities for reading and writing practice.

### Summary of Results and Discussion

The gap or mismatch between teacher goals, objectives, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability was observed throughout the course of the present study. Initially areas of tension or discomfort within lessons were explored through the use of journalling and analysis of video taped lessons. The gap was identified by classifying and analysing patterns in Sam's behaviour as he worked on literacy activities. Teacher behaviour was analysed, looking at how I contributed to the tension within the lesson and influenced Sam's behaviour. The study also identified areas of literacy engagement, where there appeared to be little or no gap between what the learning situation was asking of Sam and his needs, ability, and interest level.

Several behaviours were identified as indications of the gap, including student restlessness, stalling tactics, and off topic talk. When these behaviours were most evident the gap was at its widest; the curriculum and teaching practice was not meeting or matching Sam's needs or abilities. The gap was found to exist under the following circumstances: 1. when Sam did not have control of or responsibility for his own learning, 2. when the literacy activity/material was not at the appropriate level to ensure Sam's success, 3. when teaching practice did not support Sam at the level at which he was working, and, 4. when motivation to read and write was primarily extrinsic.

When Sam did not have control or responsibility for his own learning he was found to be a passive, disengaged learner, frequently restless, and involved in using stalling tactics that disrupted the planned flow of the lesson. Sam was content to sit back and become a bystander in his own learning when the curriculum was set by me. Although it was occasionally possible to persuade Sam to do the physical work of reading or writing the words in

lessons I had planned, I was the one who generally assumed ownership, initiated the activity, defined the scope of the work, monitored the activity while it was in progress, and evaluated it when completed. Literacy concepts that were planned for and taught during activities initiated by myself were rarely transferred when Sam was presented with an opportunity to do so in a new situation. While Sam may have been offered choices during my lessons, those choices were superficial in that they had been preselected by myself. Consequently Sam had no real control over the scope of his learning during these lessons and had little understanding of the purpose or direction of the activities.

Conversely when the activity was initiated by Sam and remained under his control, when he was able to set the scope of the activity, select the text to be read and decide when the activity was finished, Sam became highly engaged in literacy processes. He could see the reason or the need for the activity, it met his goals and needs. Sam was able to define and adjust the activities based on his personal knowledge of his strengths and weaknesses. Although my support might have been required periodically to meet a specific need, in initiating and controlling the activity, Sam was able to ensure his own success and thereby maintain his level of self confidence, resulting in a far more satisfying and rewarding experience. Sam's persistence with challenging material and focused behaviour when assuming responsibility for self initiated activities were strong indications that learning was occurring, as was his obvious pleasure and pride at their completion.

Poor matches between curriculum materials and student ability were also found to contribute to the gap between teacher goals etc. and student interest, need, and ability. When the text or activity was too challenging Sam became extremely restless and initiated behaviours such as stalling for time and off topic talk. Sam's behaviour suggested that if he could delay long

enough, it would not be possible to complete the activity, perhaps before I ascertained that he was incapable of doing so. Reading material that was too easy in relation to Sam's ability resulted in passive behaviours. Sam simply lacked the desire to engage with over easy text, responding with little enthusiasm.

The best matches between text/materials and student ability occurred when Sam selected the reading materials himself. When given the opportunity Sam was shown to be an excellent judge of appropriate reading materials as indicated by his focused and determined behaviour when reading self selected text. When the text proved somewhat challenging his interest in the content caused Sam to be more persistent and willing to seek support from myself and use some of the decoding strategies to which he had previously been introduced.

The third indicator of the gap involved teaching practice, in particular how I responded to and met Sam's needs. Learning was compromised when I failed to understand or appreciate Sam's ability and level of understanding, expecting more from him than he was able to give. Although I had thought that I was using scaffolding techniques and providing appropriate support, upon analysis and reflection it was apparent that this was not the case. Many times Sam was left to flounder and without direction he often engaged in stalling and off topic talk. I frequently did not capitalise on teachable moments including times when off task talk could have been used as an opening or hook, a means of engaging Sam and furthering his literacy skills. Instead off topic talk was most often viewed as a waste of precious time. I forgot Paley's advice, that distractions are often the sounds of children thinking, and should be used to facilitate learning instead of suppressed or ignored. Other teaching practices that contributed to the gap included inappropriate lesson pacing and poor teacher questioning techniques.

When Sam initiated and assumed control and responsibility for lesson activities, my position was relegated to that of background support. During these times I found it necessary to restrain myself, not to interfere verbally or physically with how the lesson was progressing unless Sam requested my assistance. This was extremely difficult to do. At times I sat with my hands clenched in my lap so that I would not touch materials or be seen to be taking over the lesson. I was frustrated with not knowing where the lesson would take us, what the outcome would be.

Remaining silent had a positive effect on Sam. He was sent the message that I had confidence in his abilities and ideas, that he was indeed capable and in control of his own learning. As my teaching practice during the study evolved Sam was able to take ownership in his learning and became completely engaged in literacy activities as he completed his task. No gap existed for Sam when he initiated activities because Sam, an excellent judge of his own abilities, needs, and interests, was in control. I on the other hand did feel the gap.

Activities that were initiated by myself and remained under my control were generally non-motivating for Sam and further evidence of the gap between teacher goals, expectations, and curriculum and student needs, abilities, and interests. Sam rarely saw the purpose or need for these teacher planned activities. He completed the writing or reading solely to satisfy my expectations and gain praise for doing so. Occasionally he received a sticker or a prize for completing a prescribed amount of work. Sam's motivation during my planned lessons was extrinsic, he did not have a vested interest in what I was asking of him. It only became intrinsic if Sam set a goal for himself, reading to get to the next level or writing to fill a certain amount of space. Without this interest Sam appeared to have little direction or purpose and stumbled even with familiar material. His engagement was minimal and

learning that occurred during these sessions was rarely transferred to other occasions.

In this study intrinsic motivation was found to lead to more prolonged reading and writing engagement than activities where Sam was externally motivated. When Sam was allowed to initiate and control the literacy activities, his genuine interest led the way to engagement and learning. He completed activities not to satisfy my needs but his own. Sam's motivation was intrinsic, he knew and understood the purpose for engaging in the work. In persisting with the sometimes difficult materials and challenge of the task Sam wanted to accomplish, many literacy skills were practised in a manner that could only enhance learning. When the task was too difficult Sam either modified it to meet his ability or recognised that in requesting my help he could learn new skills to accomplish his goal. Where there was intrinsic motivation the gap was observed to be narrower, the engagement greater, as the activity was more consistent with Sam's needs, abilities, and interests.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary and Conclusions

The present study has led to many discoveries concerning myself, my teaching, and the abilities and needs of my student. The use of journalling and video recording have added immeasurably to the quality of the reflections as has discussions held with peers and more knowledgeable others. The concluding chapter of this thesis is subdivided into three sections: (a) reflections, (b) issues, and (c) future considerations. The first section, reflections, discusses discoveries directly related to myself and Sam. The second section classifies these discoveries into five issues as they relate to engagement in literacy: (a) motivation, (b) responsibility, (c) control, (d) initiation, and (e) the power of interest. The final section discusses the future for Sam and myself. The chapter concludes with a final summary.

#### Reflections

##### Discoveries Concerning Child's Literacy

Through the course of a year the reading level of most children will naturally progress, due to maturity and experience. As previously shown in the literature, teachers have the ability to enhance this progress by offering supportive instruction and appropriate learning situations. Although it is difficult to assess how much of Sam's improvement in reading ability is the direct result of myself and the instruction I provided, careful observation and reflection have enabled me to make valuable insights into the inner workings of Sam's literacy processes and behaviours. These insights provide an excellent resource upon which to base future assistance.

Sam and Literacy Engagement During the course of the present study I have gained much information regarding Sam's literacy development and behaviours. Typical of most students Sam did not learn literacy concepts when he was not fully engaged in the activity (Cambourne 1988, 1995). Concepts that were taught when Sam was not engaged were rarely utilised by Sam in other contexts. An example of this phenomenon occurred most poignantly when using previously learned phonograms while constructing new words with magnetic letters. Sam was generally restless and unfocussed during this activity and had difficulty transferring the knowledge he gained about phonograms when later reading independently.

Perhaps the concept that was being introduced to Sam was done in an inappropriate manner or Sam did not have the necessary prerequisite skills or abilities to understand what was being taught. Or perhaps I failed to help Sam understand the importance of using roots to decode unknown words. Even though the roots that we worked on were often directly related to words that Sam found challenging while reading, it was evident that Sam did not understand the purpose of the activity and therefore did not use it when he came across an unknown word.

Learning occurred only when Sam assumed total ownership in literacy activities. Sam was most willing to assume responsibility and engage fully in the literacy activity when he initiated the activity. There was a marked contrast between his behaviour when he initiated and when I initiated the activity. When the activity was in response to Sam's own interest and needs, he was more persistent, willing to work harder and for longer periods of time, often beyond the level that I would have suggested. As Sam was in control of setting the tasks for these activities, they were more in line with his abilities. Sam was well aware of his limitations and was able to adjust the activity to ensure his success. Consequently few of the stalling or diversionary

behaviours that were frequently apparent in my activities were evidenced when Sam had initiated the literacy activity.

Sam's Use of Coping Behaviours After repeated viewings of the video tapes I began to see patterns in Sam's behaviour and realised that many of his actions were the result of trying to cope with what for him was a difficult situation. Stalling for time was most frequently observed when the activity had been suggested by myself and was rarely seen when Sam initiated the task. Like many of us Sam stalled for time when he needed time to gather his thoughts, to think of ideas in response to being asked to complete an activity.

However stalling behaviours also occurred for a variety of other reasons, including when Sam received inappropriate instruction. Sam frequently stalled when he reached an impasse, could no longer continue because the task I had set was asking something of him for which he was unprepared and I had not provided the support he required to move ahead. A prime example of this occurred when Sam was asked to choose a magnetic letter to complete a task. Sam simply didn't know what letter to select. First he tried to choose a letter with his eyes closed, indicating his predicament of lack of knowledge and then he talked, trying to engage me in a conversation that would divert my attention away from the task at hand.

Frequently Sam was observed to initiate off topic talk when the text or task was inappropriate for his abilities; rather than facing the difficult words Sam would try to start a conversation, either about the text or something altogether unrelated. When he was discouraged from talking while reading, Sam became quite restless and unfocussed, yawning and fidgeting in his chair, frequently requiring assistance from me to refocus his behaviour. Often Sam would place his arm outstretched across the table and rest his head on top when the text became difficult. At times stalling and off topic talk also occurred during activities in which Sam had initiated and was happily

engaged but were now proving to be too challenging, indicating that interest and understanding of purpose were not the only variables playing a part in Sam's ability to engage in literacy activities.

Stalling behaviours were also noted during times of transition. This may be due to the fact that Sam does not like uncertainty. In periods of transition it was impossible for Sam to know where the lesson was going and whether or not he would be successful at the next activity. Undoubtedly Sam felt uneasy over his lack of control. In an effort to regain control, Sam initiated off topic talk or other stalling behaviours, delaying the unknown and perhaps failure at a too difficult task.

On occasion Sam employed the strategy of propping the book upright on the table surface, barely holding the pages open. This behaviour made it difficult for both Sam and myself to read the text. Holding the book in this manner, Sam was able to remain unaware of his miscues due to the fact that he was not able to see the text or properly track while reading. It also ensured that I would have difficulty in seeing the errors he made.

Sam's Use of Strategies While Engaged in Literacy Like many other young readers Sam is in the process of building reading strategies to assist with story or content comprehension and decoding of unknown words. One of the areas where Sam continues to require support is metacognitive awareness; knowing what he knows or does not know and how he knows it. Sam's inability to use strategies, monitor his own reading, and formulate oral questions indicates he needs help with organising and classifying his thoughts, with how to approach a problem or unknown word and solve it.

While Sam can orally describe several strategies for decoding unknown words, he rarely used them with any consistency. Most often when he was unable to figure out a word, Sam stalled for time, using off topic talk. Or he substituted a word based on meaning and how it agreed with the context of the

story using inferencing and prediction skills rather than visual cues such as beginning and ending letter sound correspondence.

Early in the study when Sam tried to decode a word, he generally used individual letters, attending to the beginning and ending consonant sounds. Rarely did Sam look at phonograms or patterns within words even though this was the focus of many lessons with magnetic letters. Sam also neglected to use patterns in story structure and vocabulary as a source for decoding unknown words, despite the fact that he understood the concept of patterning as evidenced by his ability to construct and predict patterns using patterning blocks. Towards the end of the study Sam began to use consonant blends or clusters found at the beginning and endings of words. This change of strategy was most likely the result of a change in teaching practice, where I moved from focusing on individual letters to blends and clusters when using the technique of Elkonin (Clay, 1993) boxes for listening to the sounds within words. Sam continued to have difficulty with naming vowels and has little understanding of vowel sounds in relation to other letters.

Sam's reading improved, became more fluent and he made fewer errors when he finger tracked. Blocking out parts of the text that were not being read helped Sam to remain focused, not become distracted by the remaining text on the page. In an effort to help himself, Sam occasionally used his finger and thumb to frame individual words as he read. However I tried to discourage this behaviour as it resulted in very choppy reading. Books that had too many words per page, smaller spacing between words and used a combination of regular text and speech balloons often proved to be too challenging and confusing for Sam. He required text that was presented in a simple manner.

Sam's Motivation for Reading For the most part Sam's motivation to read and write in this study was external, as his reading was in response to my request that he complete an assigned activity. Although many children may

first be externally motivated to work at an activity, they frequently become hooked on the activity (engaged as it were) and make the switch to being internally motivated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Schiefele, 1991). Rarely did this happen in Sam's case, although on a few occasions he did set personal goals of completing a page or a level of the reading series.

When reading the weekly stories, Sam's long term goal was to get to the final level as indicated by the colour wheel on the back of the books, even though the content of the books was interesting and would normally appeal to readers of Sam's age and ability. His short term goal was to finish the book and many times Sam checked to see how many pages were left to read while still in the middle of a book. Although encouraged on numerous occasions to bring in books from home to share and read with me, Sam never did. Nor upon my suggestion did Sam take any of our small reading books to school to share with the teacher even when the stories were selected to coincide with concepts being discussed in the class.

Writing activities initiated by myself were completed with the minimum of words and rarely showed any real creativity or originality. While completing my assignments Sam had little concept of writing for an audience or self. Sam displayed a real desire to read or write for personal enjoyment or need only when he initiated and controlled the activity. Even on those occasions where the writing activity was initiated by Sam, he often set a predetermined amount of words, sentences or page lengths and would work towards that goal. Not once did he go beyond that self-imposed limit.

Although I found it difficult and frustrating to plan activities that would motivate Sam, he responded well to the challenge of a game format, particularly when he was given the opportunity to construct and adjust the rules as required. Allowing Sam to set the level of challenges within the game enabled him to adjust the activity thereby ensuring his success. Sam was well

aware of his strengths and limitations and responded accordingly. While the game format was unquestionably fun, perhaps Sam also felt less pressure, realising that he was competing with himself, and was therefore more willing to take risks and engage in the activity.

### Discoveries Concerning My Teaching

The process of action research, journalling and video tapping of lessons throughout this study has proven invaluable in learning more about my teaching practice and philosophy of learning. Many times I wrote in my journal of my perception of an incident that had taken place in a lesson, only to have a completely different understanding of the event after watching it on video. Behaviours that I thought were caused by one reason, upon repeated viewing of the video tapes, reflection and recognition of patterns, were later attributed to another. For example I did not always recognise that Sam's lack of response was due to inadequate knowledge, instead assuming that he was being passively uncooperative, tired or lazy. I realise now that often how I was teaching was the cause of Sam's nonproductive behaviours and non-engagement with literacy.

Pedagogy Upon viewing and reflecting on the video tapes I discovered there is a discrepancy between what I think I do and what I actually do when working with a struggling reader. I have learned that I do not always use scaffolding techniques or the ideas of Vygotsky, letting my student lead the way and placing myself in the role of supportive other. Instead my teaching practice during this study careened madly between wait and see or child discovery and the imaginary and real pressure I felt to teach, to plan and execute lessons that would quickly bring a struggling reader up to the level of his peers.

Under the guise of child discovery rather than providing the appropriate support and background for Sam to be successful, on many occasions I left him to flounder and figure the task out for himself. This was particularly noticeable in the magnetic letter activity of building words using roots, where Sam clearly was looking for guidance and I was determined to wait and see what he could accomplish on his own. Consequently, my actions resulted in Sam enacting stalling behaviours, adding to my feelings of frustration and panic over lost time.

Upon analysis I found that Sam frequently engaged in off topic talk due to my lack of support; he was unable to complete the activity as I had directed so he talked. Frequently the off topic talk was counter productive and I had a right to be concerned. However instead of addressing the problem of Sam's inability to complete the task I often prolonged the discussion even at the same time I was feeling frustration and pressure to accelerate his learning. I made the erroneous assumption that in allowing Sam the opportunity to talk, I was giving him a voice in the lesson. While viewing the video tapes I learned that off topic talk was not synonymous with giving Sam control and responsibility.

Pressure of Time Early in the study (and indeed I now realise throughout my entire teaching practice) I felt continually pressured by time. Any time off the task I planned, I defined as wasted, not useful in bringing Sam's literacy level in line with that of his peers. Frequently I devalued off-topic discussions that were initiated by Sam and therefore not under my control. I only saw merit in an activity or conversation if it was directly related to or furthered literacy activities that I planned. Consequently I missed several teachable moment opportunities by not being open to other possibilities. I failed to recognise that digression is not always stalling for the wrong reasons, but a genuine interest that could facilitate new and exciting language learning activities.

Control of the Lesson I frequently let Sam off the hook and did the task for him, assuming all responsibility and control for the lesson and activity. Instead of Sam assuming the lead and being responsible for his own learning I was the doer and Sam only passively engaged in the activity. Although I thought I was offering Sam choices throughout the lesson, most of the choices were superficial, I was still the one setting the agenda. I was afraid to give Sam real choice for fear of losing control and not accomplishing the objectives and agenda that I had proposed and decided upon, skills that I felt would lead to increased literacy production and learning. I assumed total responsibility and control for the lessons because I felt most comfortable in this position.

During the course of the study when Sam initiated and assumed control of lessons I had difficulty envisioning his purpose, where he was going, why he was doing what he was choosing to do. I viewed Sam's continued use of off topic talk as negative. Only upon viewing the video tapes was I able to see that much of this talk did in fact enhance the story or activity and was modelled on my own teacher behaviour. Such was the case when Sam initiated talk that introduced one of the stories, predicting and discussing story content from the title and cover picture. My first reaction was that this was another of Sam's stalling or diversionary tactics. Revisiting the incident through the power of video enabled me to see the event for what it really was. Sam was simply taking control of the lesson in a manner that I had previously modelled. When Sam was able to assume control, he did not behave inappropriately, but became totally engaged in the activity.

Product Oriented My early childhood background and training supports the notion of process over product and I always felt that my teaching practice was consistent with this ideology. However several incidents in this study point to the fact that while I may view process as being important, I am

also very much product oriented. Like many other teachers I found that I wanted to be able to show or impress my peers, my student's parents and those in authority by having my students produce a polished final product indicative of their learning. I was disappointed when lessons did not evolve in the manner that I had planned, resulting in Sam completing a very different or no final product. I now realise I was looking for validation from others, not just being satisfied with knowing that I was indeed helping a struggling child. I wanted to be praised for doing so, and a polished final product was one way of getting such praise.

This same need for recognition and praise drove me on occasion to encourage Sam to go beyond his ability or his need, adding to work when he had already indicated that he was finished. My actions, pressuring Sam to write more, read more, seem to indicate that I thought more was better when I know that this is not the case.

Two Gaps During the early days of this study I envisioned that the gap existed in only one context - when the teacher led the learning, focusing on his or her own agenda and curriculum and did not take the student's needs, abilities or interests into account. I felt that teachers who misjudged or misread their students contributed to the gap and the child's non-engagement in literacy. Upon reflection I now see that the gap has a mirror image. When Sam initiated and assumed total control of the lesson I felt powerless and impatient, on the outside, with no knowledge of where the lesson was progressing. On these occasions I felt frustrated in not understanding the purpose behind Sam's behaviours, why he was doing what he was doing. My own behaviours imitated Sam's during his non-engaged moments; I moved about, restless in my chair, felt restricted in my ability to touch/interact with the materials, tried to initiate discussions, and attempted to change the scope of the lesson through the use of suggestion. I began to glimpse what it was like

to live on the other side of the gap, to not have control, to live with the decisions of others. It was a frustrating place, one that did not inspire learning or engagement.

### Issues for Educators

As a direct result of this study I have identified five issues of which educators working with struggling readers and writers should be aware. These include: (a) motivation, (b) responsibility, (c) appropriate teacher control and direction, (d) artificial work versus child initiation, and (e) the power of interest.

### Motivation

The concept of motivation, specifically intrinsic versus extrinsic, and its importance to reading and engagement continues to be explored in the literature. While the goal of educators should be to encourage their students to be intrinsically motivated to read, struggling readers are frequently extrinsically motivated, they read in response to the teacher's request or to complete an assignment. While an activity might begin for extrinsic reasons, because it has been assigned by the teacher, if learning is to occur, the goal must switch to being intrinsic. Reading and the activity must become rewarding in itself to the child (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Schiefele, 1991).

Careful observation allows educators to see when children make this switch, why and how the switch is triggered. In this study the switch from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation occurred several times. On these occasions I initiated and set the scope of the activity. Sam initially responded by being extrinsically motivated but then quickly became involved for intrinsic

reasons. He was able to make this switch because of several factors. The topics were of personal interest, were well suited to Sam's background knowledge, and he identified with the subjects. Sam was given immediate encouragement to explore the topic when he began to express an interest in doing so and his exploration was allowed to take the form he selected. While exploring the topic Sam was given full responsibility for both content and materials, and appropriately supported when required. In this way he was made to feel in control of his own learning and could see the purpose of the activity.

Other examples where Sam made the switch from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation are illustrated in the lessons that utilised the game format. Although I initiated these lessons and determined their scope by selecting the word to be deciphered, Sam quickly became engaged in the activity. Within minutes he assumed responsibility and control, making the rules and handling the materials. Sam's self-competitive nature helped to facilitate the switch to intrinsic motivation. Through the course of my involvement with Sam I have discovered that he enjoys self-competition, challenging himself to fill a certain amount of space while writing, or to read better in order to get to the next reading level. He likes to set personal goals and work towards fulfilling them.

For Sam the game format was quite successful in assisting him to become intrinsically motivated. However it is important for teachers to recognise that what motivates one person may fail to motivate another and that one type of motivation is not necessarily less valuable or successful than another. While Sam was motivated by self-competition and extrinsic rewards, I am not and am inclined not to offer such activities to my students. Initially I had difficulty accepting the value of the means in which Sam became motivated. Consequently I did not match my teaching style and activities to meet Sam's needs, instead I attempted to get him to adhere to mine. As a result,

a gap between teacher objectives, goals, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability formed.

### Responsibility

Although immersion in literacy and demonstrations of language use are necessary, they are not in themselves sufficient for learning to occur. Students need to engage in the demonstrations in which they are immersed (Cambourne, 1988, 1995). Too often teachers are the doers and the child becomes an onlooker in the learning process. This is particularly true of struggling readers (Sakari, 1997). The teacher and child co-develop a system that maintains the dependence of the child rather than ensuring they become independent readers and writers. This system satisfies the educator's need to be needed, to fulfil their role of being one who teaches. The child is able to save face in that when the teacher does most of the physical and mental work of reading, the child is not exposed to failure, and to a degree their self-esteem remains in place.

It is easy to fall into this cycle where the child gets the teacher to do the work. Unfortunately, the consequences can be severe. In such circumstances because the child is not doing the work, s/he is not learning, internalising the process and making it her/his own, something on which s/he can draw in new situations. Examples of teacher/adult as doer and child as onlooker are abundant in Sam's learning experience. Early in his school career and indeed until the present time well meaning adults have helped Sam by assuming total responsibility for his learning. Consequently Sam has not felt it necessary to pay attention, to focus on the task at hand. He knows that someone will come to his rescue, show him how or even do the work for him. Unfortunately when

they do not Sam does not know what to do. He has not developed the strategies, the metacognitive knowledge that is required for him to experience more than occasional success. The ability to generate ideas and questions, organise and classify thoughts, how to approach a problem and solve it, continues to elude Sam because teachers and his parents have done this mental work for him.

### Appropriate Teacher Control and Support

Much of what children learn is under the control of the teacher who frequently establishes cognitive and motivational demands through tasks and activities (Clark, 1996; Guthrie, 1996; Turner, 1993, 1995). As some children do not make the types of decisions which lead to engagement in literacy, teachers need to set up the conditions and relationships that will increase the probability that such a decision is made (Cambourne, 1988). Teachers must also provide students with the appropriate support when they lack the knowledge to complete a task successfully (Vygotsky, 1987). Knowing when to intervene and support a student can be difficult as each child shows their need for assistance in a different manner. Teachers need to learn to read those signals to ensure that the gap between teacher curriculum, goals, and expectations and student interest, need, and ability does not develop.

Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and his theory of learning suggests that each child work within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) - the space in which a child is able to be successful with the support of a more knowledgeable other who assists by scaffolding the learning for the child as required. As the child becomes more competent at the task, the more knowledgeable other gradually withdraws support until the child is able to complete the task independently. The zone of proximal development is in constant flux. As the child's abilities shift, so does the ZPD. Social-

constructivist theories of human learning and development suggest that learning can only occur within the child's ZPD (McCarthy & Raphael, 1992, in Harris & Hodges, 1995). Teachers, as more knowledgeable others, play an important role in ensuring that the student is working within their ZPD and is appropriately supported in his/her learning.

Results from the present study indicates that two difficulties can arise concerning the ZPD and students; the teacher does not always implement a curriculum that allows the child to work within their ZPD, and the teacher does not always scaffold the lesson or offer the appropriate support when required. Both of these situations contributed to the gap that I was investigating between teacher expectations, goals, and curriculum and child ability, interest, and need.

Upon observation of the video tapes I was able to determine that in the lessons that involved the use of magnetic letters I was not fulfilling my role of more knowledgeable other. During these lesson segments Sam was frequently unable to complete the task as asked and engaged in off topic talk and other inappropriate behaviour. My response was to wait, to hold back and see if Sam could refocus his behaviour and finish the task. After reflecting on these incidents I was able to see that Sam's actions were the result of a lack of knowledge, not inappropriate behaviour and I had contributed to the situation by not providing the assistance that Sam so desperately needed to be successful. I had not intervened, asked questions, and made comments which would have assisted Sam in moving forward.

This study also indicated that Sam was quite capable of selecting activities that suited his needs, abilities and interests. The ant lesson described in this study was entirely designed by Sam. The lesson's activities were well balanced, including reading, writing, and drawing and required that he stretch his skills to meet the goals he had selected. This included reading a text

that was beyond his independent reading level and writing several lines of continuous text. Although he occasionally asked for my assistance, never once was it necessary for me to refocus Sam's behaviour. In assuming total control of the learning situation, engagement and learning occurred.

### The Power of Interest

Schiefele (1991) examined interest and its relationship with reading. He found that interest motivates the reader to go beyond the text surface, to try and understand the meaning and the main idea of the work. Schiefele agrees with Csikszentmihalyi (1990), who stated that if "intrigued by the opportunities of the domain, most students will make sure to develop the skills they need to operate within it" (p. 126). Interest functions as a hook, it pulls the student in and engages them in the task. In this manner the student receives practice using literacy skills and strategies in a meaningful manner furthering his or her understanding of the concept. With enough practice the concept, skill or strategy is internalised and the student begins to use it automatically as part of their reading and writing repertoire.

In the present study the power of interest is very apparent in how Sam engages with tasks. When Sam is highly interested in a topic, he assumes responsibility for the lesson, and perseveres with the task even when it becomes difficult and challenges his abilities. The lesson where Sam writes a story in his hamster club book is an example of this phenomenon. Responding to a personal interest Sam initiated this topic, proudly bringing his hamster club book from home to show me the story he had begun to write.

When given the opportunity Sam chose to continue writing about hamsters during our lesson, a task that he generally shies away from when suggested by me. Sam worked for an incredible total of 42 minutes, persisting

with the difficult task of organising his thoughts, deciding upon the words he wished to write and figuring out the letter order within each of the words. While working on this self-initiated project Sam needed to use a variety of strategies and skills, ones that he generally lets teachers and parents do for him. In assuming the responsibility for the work and completing the whole task Sam was able to see the need for these skills and he received practice in executing them. He also felt good about the work he accomplished, proudly showing his story to his mother at the conclusion of our lesson.

Activities and topics that did not interest Sam were less effective in engaging Sam in the work. Instead of the focused and engaged behaviour displayed while working on tasks of interest, Sam was frequently restless or simply stared off into space. As Cambourne (1988, 1996) suggests, it is only when a child is engaged in the task that learning takes place. Consequently it is important, particularly when trying to increase the skills and abilities of struggling readers, to ensure that the topic is of interest to the student and will engage him/her in the task.

#### Artificial Work Versus Child Initiated

Similar to my findings on the power of interest, in this study child initiated tasks were found to be more effective in leading to engagement than artificial tasks that were created by me. In activities that Sam initiated, he set the scope of the task, determined what he needed to do to complete the work to his satisfaction. In doing so Sam understood the purpose of the activity and why it was important to learn and use certain skills as they would assist him in reaching his goal. In initiating and setting up the activity, the task and the means to complete it directly met Sam's needs. There was no gap between curriculum and abilities as Sam only set tasks that he felt were within his

capability to complete. If he needed assistance Sam trusted that I would be able to help him.

In contrast, in direct teaching situations and artificial tasks the adult holds the cards, understands the purpose, sets the scope of the activities, determines the outcome and goals. Often the child is frustrated as s/he doesn't understand the reason behind the task, why its completion is important. Artificial tasks keep children from seeing the big picture, particularly when they are young and lack experience. In not understanding the purpose children are less likely to engage in the task that has been set and therefore do not learn or benefit from what is being taught.

### Future Considerations

#### Child

In the present study Sam was found to be most engaged in literacy activities and learning was enhanced when he was able to assume responsibility for and control of the lesson. When Sam led the way and followed his agenda, he was able to work for protracted periods of time and produced higher volumes of quality work than when the curriculum was set by me. Consequently it might be an idea to hand the entire content of the tutoring lesson over to Sam, making him responsible for what occurs in the session. In the event that Sam neglects to bring in an activity or the activity does not require the prescribed amount of time, the teacher should be prepared by having drawn up a contingency plan. At any time during the lesson, the teacher should also be prepared for the diversions that Sam likes to make and use the teachable moment when it arises.

While diversions can lead to golden opportunities for learning, Sam also

uses them to stall when he lacks the information or knowledge to proceed. Sam needs to be encouraged to recognise and then verbally express when he needs help, by asking for clarification and saying such things as “I don’t know what to do next” or “I don’t understand.” Sam also needs to recognise when he is not on task and learn how he can refocus himself. This is important because when Sam is not focused on the task, he is not engaged and therefore not learning. Keeping Sam on task and focused can be accomplished by reminders and ensuring that he is doing the physical and mental work of reading and writing.

To ensure that Sam learns the material, concepts and processes, he must do the mental work involved in reading and writing. While the teacher or more knowledgeable other should continue to scaffold the learning and support Sam when required, Sam must assume the responsibility of organising his ideas and thoughts, deciding how to find and record the information he desires, what he needs to know and do to accomplish his goals. To assist in this area Sam needs to be introduced to the basics of study skills and get sufficient practice using these techniques to internalise the concepts and make them his own. Instead of setting up artificial tasks this should be accomplished through activities that Sam initiates or topics that are known to be of interest to him.

While reading stories Sam must take more responsibility in handling the material. Instead of holding the book at arms length or propping it open on the table, Sam should be verbally encouraged to hold it with at least one hand. The teacher or more knowledgeable other could assist by holding the other side leaving Sam’s second hand free to track words with his finger. In this manner Sam should remain more focused and be successful at monitoring his own reading.

Sam continues to need more exposure to self-monitoring strategies and opportunities to practise the techniques that good readers use. Increasing

Sam's sight vocabulary would significantly decrease the amount of unknown words but Sam also needs skills and strategies to assist with decoding these words. While effective strategy use may be accomplished through teacher modelling and practise, Sam would also benefit from verbal reinforcement and direct instruction in authentic situations. Sam needs encouragement to question whether or not the read material makes sense, to predict unknown words through content and then visually check to determine if the predicted word is correct, to go beyond initial consonants when decoding words, to have a better understanding of clusters, blends, and vowel combinations.

Learning situations that build on Sam's enjoyment of games and self-competition should be regularly planned. Word bingos, lottos, dominoes and fish games could be used to build sight vocabulary while at the same time reinforcing letter clusters, blends, and single and vowel combinations. Games such as hangman help Sam focus on the sequence of sounds/letters in words. Once aware of the letter/sound combinations Sam needs to be shown how this information can assist him in decoding unknown words. This can be accomplished through modelling, questioning, prompting and discussions during the reading process.

### Teacher Researcher

After reviewing the data I firmly believe that my teaching, how I set up the learning situation, selected and presented the learning materials, and supported the learner, either assisted in narrowing the gap between teacher and student or in making it wider. Much of Sam's behaviour, both positive and negative, was based on choices I had made about lesson objectives and materials. Consequently as an educator I must become much more conscious of the choices I am making and how those choices affect individual learners.

My being in complete control of the curriculum and activities was found to be detrimental to Sam's learning and should therefore be avoided. I must learn to break the habit of doing the physical and mental work for my students as they do not learn if I am doing the work. The learning environment was most effective when I was placed in the role of knowledgeable other, supporting Sam in activities of his own making and offering him appropriate direction and support when required. Although I had thought I was using the scaffolding technique effectively I now understand that I was frequently leaving Sam to flounder. While there are many occasions that I must back away from the activity and let Sam do the work, I must also learn when to step in and support him.

Our lessons will be more fulfilling and engaging for Sam when I learn to adjust my lesson plans and use distractions and teachable moments more effectively. In following Sam's lead I can still cover the skills or basic concepts that are required by provincial and district curriculums. However I must also learn to recognise the difference between teachable moments and off task, unfocussed behaviour that is not contributing to the learning situation, and step in to correct this situation. When it is necessary for me to introduce a topic, I must select one for which Sam will happily assume responsibility. Accepting Sam's desire to adjust the activity to meet his needs, abilities, and goals will facilitate the switch of control from myself to Sam.

### Summary

In this study action research has proven to be a valuable tool in providing insights into how one particular child processes literacy, becomes a reader and writer. Engagement was found to be key in this process. When Sam was not engaged, he did not learn the concepts or skills that were taught.

Motivation to engage varies between individuals but is based on interest, something that is interesting is likely to be a hook. What motivates one person may not motivate another and this can be a source of the gap between teacher goals, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability.

For the learner to be engaged, s/he must assume responsibility for the content and materials used in the activity. While the teacher may initiate the task, the child must be willing to accept control early in the activity. In this study Sam was found to be most engaged and take more responsibility and control when the task was initiated by himself. Sessions in the future should encourage Sam to assume this responsibility, while building on strategies, good reading behaviours and metacognitive awareness.

Action research was also beneficial in that it provided windows into the researcher's teaching philosophy and practise. The use of video tape afforded the opportunity to reflect back on what had happened during lessons, providing the opportunity for growth and improvement. Upon reflection I discovered that I was not using the techniques I believed in and was not as supportive as I thought. Reflection made me realise just how much I feel the pressure of time, to bring the learner up to the level of his/her peers and the need to be in control, to know what the final outcome will be and whether or not it will have improved the learner's ability. In the future I will be working on learning to let go of my need for control, to trust my student's understanding of what they need, and how to support the learner rather than doing the work for them. In this manner I hope to alleviate much of the gap between teacher goals, objectives, expectations, and curriculum and student interest, need, and ability.

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APPENDIX  
Permission Letters

## CHILD CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY ENTITLED

## “MISMATCH BETWEEN TEACHING GOALS AND STUDENT INTEREST”

I am working on a school project that looks at the difference between what tutors ask students to do and what students are interested in or able to do, when they are working on reading and writing skills. To help me with this project you will be asked to participate in reading and writing activities for approximately one hour each week, for two months. On occasion I will ask you to answer questions about how you think you are learning to read, what helps you and does not help you in learning to read. I will write down the information I find out and share it with other teachers and adults at the university.

Participating in this project is your choice and you can choose not to participate at any time, without telling me why. If you decide to stop working on this project, the information I have found out will be destroyed and I will continue to work with you, helping you with your reading and writing. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

The information I collect for the project will remain confidential; that means that the videotapes, notes I make while we are working, and my journal will be kept locked in my home, so nobody else will be able to see them. Besides myself, only my supervisor will be able to look at the raw information I find. Your name will not be written on the final report and you will not be identified in any way.

Each of our tutoring sessions will be videotaped. The videotapes will be erased as soon as I have written down what we said and did.

Signature of participant:

Date:

Researcher:

Jan McFarland

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mary Dayton Sakari

## PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY ENTITLED

## “MISMATCH BETWEEN TEACHING GOALS AND STUDENT INTEREST”

This research project involves studying the gap or mismatch between teaching goals/ objectives and student interest/needs in a one-on-one tutoring situation that focuses on developing reading skills. Your son will be asked to participate for approximately one hour each week, over a two month period, in activities that involve reading and writing. Occasionally your son will be asked to answer questions about how he perceives the reading process works for him. The results will be discussed in a thesis document.

Your son's participation is completely voluntary and he can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation. If he chooses to withdraw prior to the conclusion of the study, the information I have collected will be destroyed and I will continue to work with him, assisting in developing his reading and writing skills. Your son has the right to refuse to answer any questions he does not wish to answer.

Data collected in the study will remain confidential; videotapes, notes and the researcher's journal will be kept secured in a private residence. Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor will have access to the raw data. Your son's name will not be recorded on data sheets nor attached to any published results.

Each tutoring session will be videotaped. The videotapes will be erased immediately after your son's responses are coded in written form.

Signature of parent:

Date:

Researcher:

Jan McFarland

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Mary Dayton Sakari

## Vita

Surname: McFarland

Given Names: Jan Gwendolyn

Place of Birth: Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

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Title of Thesis:

Acknowledging the Gap Between Learner and Teacher

Author



Jan McFarland  
April 6, 1998