

**THE USE OF JOURNALS IN
CHILDREN'S WRITING DEVELOPMENT**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Bill and Ena Platt. Their dream of a better future for their children was not without sacrifice and hardship. It is because of their enduring love and vision that I was given this opportunity to fulfill a dream.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the content of dialogue journals of selected third grade students in order to discover the predominant themes in their writing. A second purpose is to explore how a teacher used the information gained from journals with her students to make curriculum decisions in her classroom.

Although many reasons have been given for using journals in school writing programs, few studies have examined the role and impact of dialogue journals in primary grade classrooms. It is hoped that this study will add to the knowledge concerning dialogue journals in primary grades.

This study is rooted in the desire to explore and explain what it means for a teacher to enter into a dialogue through journal writing with his or her students. It is hoped that this investigation will not only provide new insights into this relationship but also describe what grade three students and their teacher write about in the process of utilizing a journal. Six grade three students and their teacher were involved in this study. Student journal entries, the teacher responses to the students' journal entries, and subsequent teacher interviews were all subjected to content analysis.

The principal finding of this study was that dialogue journals not only provided a safe and secure environment in which children could express their ideas and knowledge, but it also became an important curriculum tool where specific writing needs and/or instruction based on interest could be met cooperatively. All students wrote on a variety of topics, regardless of their writing ability, and the teacher always responded in a positive manner.

This study may provide added awareness of the possibilities of utilizing dialogue journal writing for cooperative curriculum planning. If teachers provide opportunities for students to become partners in curriculum planning, based on their needs, perhaps schools may become more personally fulfilling for both teachers and students.

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PREAMBLE

No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly testifies to the presence of other human beings (Arendt, 1958, p. 22).

Communication between teachers and students is at the heart of education. The format and content of such communication plays an integral role in shaping children's views of themselves. Students may come to view education as something adults do to them if teachers predominantly lecture and assign 'fill-in-the-blank' writing activities. In this circumstance students may think very little of education and even less of themselves as learners, readers, or writers. By asking students for one particular answer, teachers may be inadvertently sending a message that student reactions, feelings, and insights are of little value. Smith (1989) notes that such instructional programs do little to enhance the personal relationship between a teacher and a student.

It has been suggested that an environment that promotes personal engagement with the printed word must be created in order to teach reading and writing. This environment consists of more than specific techniques and teaching strategies; it invites students to create, imagine, and explore their own inherent possibilities. The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a director of learning. Smith (1989) continues on to say,

Reading and writing help the brain achieve what the brain does best - the creation of worlds. Imagination is the essence of mental life - including comprehension, learning, remembering, and reasoning - in public and in private. Reading and writing both provide opportunities to exercise the imagination in manners and to extents in no other way possible (p. 357).

Teachers who facilitate learning also build upon their students' knowledge and allow them to become actively involved in learning. In a language arts program, this type of learning may involve creating an environment that is rich in all types of literature, focuses on student experiences, develops an atmosphere where students view themselves

as authors by writing, and hands-on activities are encouraged. Students consider themselves as active participants, who shape and nurture their own learning. "Learning is produced by mutual participation in interesting activities" Smith (1989) notes, "not by panegyrics."

Some contend that teachers spend little time talking to or writing with their students on a one-to-one basis (Barnes 1975; Shuy 1987; Staton 1980). Class time is largely dominated by teacher lectures and questions are specific, requiring a single correct answer. As an alternative, these authors contend that students must be allowed to engage in meaningful written and oral dialogue. Students must be interactive, utilizing the knowledge that they already possess in a manner that invokes open-ended responses and reactions. This mimics their early learning experiences (Shuy, 1987).

Children enter school with various personal experiences, knowledge about their language, and an eagerness to express themselves as writers. Many six-year-old children want to write on the first day of school (Graves, 1983). Teachers must consider how to build on these student strengths as well as how to allow for more written and oral dialogue to transpire in a classroom. When working with twenty or more students, teachers must consider individual factors and how to engage in a meaningful dialogue with each student.

Not only is language a social activity, but schools must find ways to promote language opportunities which will enhance dialogue (Bean and Bouffler, 1987; Shuy, 1987; Smith, 1989). Teachers must respond to each and every student in a fashion that encourages them to share the knowledge that they possess. Language is the principal vehicle for making sense out of our world and children must be exposed to language in meaningful contexts so they can learn their native language more fully.

Meaningful language opportunities allow students to utilize their own knowledge, personalizing learning, and enhancing awareness and sensitivity towards others. This can be accomplished through the use of journals. In particular, the responsible interactions achieved through journal writing foster an awareness of others. This responsible

interaction means to be attentive to another, to be considerate, to be reciprocal, and to be willing to partake in the constant search for mutual understanding. Acting responsibly in writing asks the participants, both the writer and reader, to enter into a dialogue that assumes meaning will be negotiated between both parties. It is through such written dialogue that one's knowledge base is furthered developed. To understand one's world as fully as possible, one has to communicate with other people. It is only through the interpretations and negotiations that occur in these dialogues that clearer meaning structures develop within the individual. Teachers and students must become partners in a dialogue about the common concerns of human life (McCarthy, 1978).

Despite living in a common culture, each person perceives the world in different ways. New meanings develop over time through conversations with others as well as our own experiences with the world. Teachers must engage in reciprocal dialogue with children that opens the possibilities of life for them and to have them entertain its many and often complicated issues. This dialogue should not be adult directed; rather it must include speech that engages both the student and teacher. It is important to introduce children to open, expressive, and thoughtful modes of language so that they may become more fully aware of themselves and the world around them (Staton, 1987). The journal is a medium that allows for an open and committed dialogue to take place.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Education is such a vital activity that it has been a consistent focus for concern throughout all societies. The manner in which the young are to be reared, the values that are to be instilled, and the way they are expected to function in the society have been major considerations in all communities (Tolstoy, 1967, p. v).

A journal is a vehicle through which the encounters of everyday life may be explored more fully with oneself and another. The journal can allow the writer and reader to create a dialogue which assists in exploring life more fully. In recent years, considerable attention has been directed towards encouraging students to engage in meaningful written dialogue. Such dialogues can be either with oneself (intrapersonal) and/or with another human being (interpersonal). However, of greatest importance is the intent of the dialogue. A written dialogue may indeed become just a series of sentences, but it has the potential of becoming much more.

Communication and Learning

The major means by which children in our schools formulate knowledge and relate it to their own purposes and views of the world are speech and writing (Barnes, 1975, p. 19).

Educators must continually seek ways to create writing, reading, and speaking activities that bring together a child's life experiences with school knowledge. Barnes (1975) suggests that a curriculum should be filled with meaningful activities. A curriculum becomes meaningful when students are given an opportunity to transpose new knowledge into the world in which they live. This application of knowledge to the child's world helps the child to reformulate, reflect, and create new meanings in a context that is real. Wherever possible the teacher should relate talking, writing, and reading activities to events in the student's life. In writing, for example, students can practice a specific skill in a purposeful fashion by writing a letter to a friend. In contrast, learning the form of a

friendly letter by filling out a teacher-prepared handout is not a purposeful or meaningful activity. Asking students to engage in an activity that does not have any relevance to their lives leads them to seek a correct format or answer, not to learn and to share.

A teacher must also try to develop activities that have evolved from both the teacher's and students' ideas. This type of planning is truly reciprocal in nature. Students must be able to participate more fully in formulating knowledge if educators wish them to apply what is learned in school to their own life experiences. The format of instructional activities is also important. Yes/no questions invite a singular response where the dialogue is largely teacher dominated. In contrast, open-ended/reflective activities ask students to become actively involved in more of a shared way.

Journals are one way in which to involve students in using their own knowledge to discuss new ideas being learned in school. Journals provide students and teachers with an environment that allows knowledge to be reciprocal, meaningful, and motivational. Knowledge may still be received, but it becomes ours to remake and shape in a personal way. Journals can do this if the opportunity is afforded students by a teacher who is committed to active participation rather than receptive learning.

The Dialogue of One

The journal may become an extremely personal account of one's daily life in terms of thoughts, actions, metaphors, and feelings. This type of journal allows the writers to recreate and examine their lives in order to gain further understanding of themselves. To use a personal journal is a choice that can only be made by the individual. Emily Carr attests to the benefits of personal journals: "It was the tiny things that, collectively, taught me how to live. Too insignificant to have been considered individually, but ... the little scraps and nothingness of my life have made a definite pattern" (Carr, 1966, preface).

The Written Dialogue of Two

A journal can promote a written dialogue that begins with self, moves to others, and finally to the world. Meaning can be derived from life experiences when journal entries question, suggest, formulate, and respond to events and other people. Journal writing also serves as an example of real-life writing having a real audience and with a topic and context (Bromley, 1989; Farley, 1986; Gambrell, 1985; Guetter, 1990; Staton, 1980). The type of dialogue that needs to take place is one that asks students to become thoughtfully aware and concerned with their everyday experiences.

Children must be encouraged to enter a reciprocal dialogue that opens the possibilities of life for them and to have them entertain life's many and often complicated issues. This dialogue should not be adult directed; both adult and student hold a shared responsibility towards its outcome. It is important to introduce children to open, expressive, and thoughtful modes of language so that they may become more fully aware of themselves and the world around them (Staton, 1987). A response given in dialogue is to commit oneself to another in a manner that signifies the importance of the other in dialogue.

Significance of the Study

Although many reasons have been cited for using journals in school writing programs, the following are particularly relevant to this study. Shuy (1987) states that since language is social, schools must find ways to promote language opportunities which will enhance written dialogue. Staton (1980) and Shuy (1987) contend that teachers spend little time talking or writing with their students on a one-to-one basis. Both of these authors state that dialogue journals afford the teacher and students more of an opportunity to interact. Journal writing also fulfills the conditions of real-life writing (stating ideas and describing events), with a real audience, and with a topic and context (Bode, 1989; Farley, 1986; Gambrell, 1985; Shuy, 1987; Staton, 1980). Finally, the dialogue journal assists the

teacher in personalizing his or her teaching. This is accomplished by having a teacher plan lessons, give individual assignments, and/or discover who needs extra help based on the student entries (Farley, 1986; Shuy, 1987; Staton, 1980).

Few studies have examined the role and impact of dialogue journals in primary grade classrooms. Manning, et al., (1987) and Tierney, (1985) state that there is a need for further research concerning all types and aspects of journal writing. It is hoped that this study will add to our knowledge about dialogue journals in primary grades.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the content of dialogue journals of selected third grade students in order to discover the predominant themes in their writing. A second purpose is to explore how a teacher uses the information gained from journal work with her students to make curriculum decisions in her classroom.

This study is rooted in the desire to explore and explain what it means for a teacher to enter into a dialogue through journal writing with his or her students. It is hoped that this investigation will not only provide new insights into this relationship but also describe what grade three students and their teacher write about in the process of utilizing a journal. The study will involve six grade three students and their teacher. The purpose of this study will be accomplished through a qualitative investigation which will include: a) interpretation of journal entries to uncover the major themes discussed by the participants and b) interviewing the teacher to clarify what is involved in this type of reciprocal relationship and to discover how the contents of the student journals are used in curriculum planning. The following research questions will be pursued:

1. What process does the teacher use to structure journal writing in her classroom?
2. What do children write about in their journals?
3. How does the teacher use the content of student journals in her instruction?

4. How does this teacher respond in her students' journals?

Selection of Research Methods

Since the nature of this study is to be attentive to the experiences of a teacher interacting with her students through dialogue journals, a qualitative perspective appears appropriate. It entails a deep questioning which surrounds description and the search for experience or themes, rather than on categories or predetermined assumptions. A qualitative approach suggests that to understand these lived experiences, the setting must be natural and the writing rich in description. The realities of human existence must be seen as wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Van Manen (1984) reminds us that to more deeply question a particular aspect in life assists in restoring the original sense of what it means to be a researcher. To seriously question a particular phenomenon in life means to be committed and interested in it. This type of research may be pursued by: "a) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world, b) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it, c) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, and d) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting" (Van Manen, 1984, p. 39).

Qualitative research is a general term that has been used to describe the procedures which were used in this investigation. While qualitative research paradigms have been widely used in the fields of sociology and anthropology, more recently they have been widely advocated for use in education. Qualitative and quantitative methods differ from each other in a number of ways. The following briefly reviews these differences, with particular emphasis on those dimensions which had most relevance to the selection of this paradigm in the present investigation.

Induction versus Deduction

Much qualitative investigation is inductive, a term which implies that the researcher enters the inquiry without any preconceived expectations concerning the information to be sought or the results which will be obtained. Thus, the qualitative researcher often works from the "bottom up" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 29); specific details and observations build toward conclusions concerning general patterns (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These emerging categories facilitate an understanding of the patterns and interactions which exist in the environment under study (Patton, 1980). In contrast, quantitative methods typically require the researcher to determine in advance the variables of importance, as well as the expected relationship between these factors (Patton, 1980). Experimental methods and variables are clearly defined prior to the investigation and deviations are discouraged in order to reduce the probability of biasing research results.

Given the lack of knowledge concerning the process of journal writing analysis, it was determined that qualitative methods were most appropriate for use in this investigation. That is, as this approach is flexible and exploratory, it allows the researcher to be responsive to the developing interpretations which are revealed through inquiry.

Objectivity versus Subjectivity

Quantitative researchers strive to maintain the "objectivity" of their data through a variety of methods: "distance from the setting and the people studied, formal operationalism and quantitative measurement, manipulation of isolated variables, and experimental designs" (Patton, 1980, p. 336). It is assumed that some truth exists, and that quantitative methods will allow measures to be gathered which are unaffected by the biases of the researcher. The degree to which quantitative methods are truly objective has been subject to much argument, as has been pointed out by Patton (1980), "numbers do not protect against bias, they merely disguise it" (p. 336).

The qualitative researcher focuses on subjective data, or on discovering the perspectives which are held by the subjects concerning the events in their environment, expressed in their own words (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Thus, qualitative researchers tend to use nondirective, open-ended data collection strategies which allow them to capture the respondent's perspective, without predetermining the types of information to be collected by the selection of questionnaire categories or rating scale items (Patton, 1980).

Controlled versus Natural Conditions

Qualitative data is always collected within the natural context, that is, the goal is to understand the naturally occurring phenomenon within its naturally occurring states (Patton, 1980). As a result, any variable which would naturally influence behavior will continue to operate as the data are collected. As a result, qualitative researchers are said to have a holistic approach to educational activities.

A holistic view assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Patton, 1980) and that the isolation of specific dimensions of an activity cannot possibly lead to a full understanding of the phenomenon of interest. In contrast, the presence of uncontrolled variables are the nemesis of quantitative researchers, rather, they seek to rule out the influence of such variables in order to enhance the internal validity of their investigation (Patton, 1980).

Procedures

The subjects of this study were six grade three students and their teacher. Other studies concerning journal writing and writing in general have used a range from one to twenty subjects or more, (Baghban, 1984; Farley, 1986; and Manning, et al., 1987).

Purposeful sampling procedures (Patton, 1980) were used to select the students. The teacher was asked to divide her class into three groups: prolific journal writers, average journal writers, and those who write minimally. The main criterion for delineating these

categories was the amount each child wrote. Two subjects were selected from each category. All of the subjects within each category were randomly selected. The sample was therefore stratified in order of differing levels of productivity to determine whether the teacher responded differently to each of these students as well as to discover whether or not the teacher used any of the students' journal contents for the purposes of curriculum decision-making.

Limitations of the Study

In a study the researcher must consider the type of design that would be most appropriate in fulfilling the ultimate goal of the research. The choice of methods is dictated by the design of one's research and the type of questions being asked. This study can be defined as a case study since Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define a case study as, "... a detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p. 58).

Since this study involves selected third grade students and their teacher the results may be viewed as context specific. The ability to generalize from the findings to the larger population will be limited until a sufficient number of similar studies are undertaken. This will eventually allow the opportunity for generalizations to be validated (Baghban, 1984). Borg (1987) suggests that a major problem of a case study is the extent to which the results can be generalized to the population from which the subject(s) were drawn. He does state, however, that the reader has two bases from which to estimate the degree that the results can be generalized. These considerations are the description of the research subject(s) and the replication of the study. If the research findings are similar across several replications the results will instill far more confidence than findings based upon one research study. Teachers and human scientists share in the experiences of the child, therefore, they must take as their task the telling of the stories they share. As Polakow (1985) suggests,

"Stories are where we must begin and stories are the clues which will lead us to new ways of knowing" (Polakow, 1985, p.833).

A review of the literature on journal writing is provided in the following chapter so its significance in the process of a teacher and students dialoguing through a journal may be clarified. The review will also describe studies of the writing process, as well as, those which focus on teacher/student relationships that promote a reciprocal dialogue.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Writing touches every part of a person's life (Smith, 1982), helping to organize and develop the possibilities of one's mind (Britton, 1970b; Calkins, 1983; Gage, 1986; Mikkelsen, 1987; Murray, 1984; Simon, 1987). An individual may write to communicate ideas or thoughts, to provide a permanent record of some event, or for enjoyment such as through poetry or plays. Each attempt at writing helps people make sense out of their world (Smith, 1982). Writing must be an engagement using the cognitive, creative, and reflective skills that each person possesses as a result of his or her past experiences.

Journals afford children an opportunity to question and work out ideas being studied or to question some aspect of life without the fear of being formally graded or criticized. The opportunities to take risks are enhanced and thus the ability to formulate new understandings. New understandings may not be fully assimilated at first, but teachers can assist children in re-evaluating their new knowledge. However, the type of writing completed by children is of critical importance. Improvement in writing will not occur simply because numerous writing assignments are given (Fulwiler, 1980). Rather, children must be given the opportunity to write about their concerns, ideas, and reactions.

According to Murray (1984) writing is a way to discover meaning, and the more one writes the more that is discovered about one's interests, one's world, and oneself. Britton (1970a) emphasizes this by stating that writing is a major way of interpreting the world. A growing number of authors believe that students should write about what matters to them (Britton, 1970b; Guetter, 1990; Rosen, 1986; Simon, 1987; Smith, 1982; Suransky, 1982).

Educators should stress respect for the knowledge students possess (Friere, 1985a; Goodman and Goodman, 1981; Polakow, 1985; Van Manen, 1986). Children bring to school a tremendous range of personal interests, abilities, and knowledge. Writing can

accentuate these areas if it is taught in a manner that is viewed as meaningful by students. Children need time to dialogue, think, wonder, and to marvel (Van Manen, 1986). The act of writing about real life experiences allows children an opportunity to think, wonder, and marvel about themselves and the world. Writing then, must be seen as an opportunity to reflect upon areas of concern and interest, both personal and academic. Teachers of writing must help students to engage in a struggle to articulate, develop, refine, and advance their meanings as opposed to the simple reproduction of words from a textbook, blackboard, or handout (Rosen, 1986).

Simon (1987) suggests that educators must empower students by allowing them to participate effectively and share authority equally. A curriculum then, must allow students to draw upon their own resources for the development of new skills and knowledge and to bring the realities of life into the curriculum.

Bonilla (1989) and Calkins (1983) contend that students will not be able to write with their own voice if they are told what to write. Simon (1987) believes that voice is an attempt by students and teachers to actively engage in dialogue. Simon is suggesting that students and teachers must strive to define themselves as authors of their own worlds. Reflecting about one's life experiences is an important aspect not only of learning how to write, but also of becoming an independent and critical thinker. Shor (1980) emphasizes the need for introspection in everyday life. Writing should be a means by which one "questions social reality" (p.48). Shor (1980) believes further that everyone has a story to tell, and that opportunity to tell our stories must become part of the writing project. Suransky (1982) notes that a student should not go through school deprived of the ability to utilize their own history making power.

Writing allows people to inform, criticize, question, and fantasize about life around them. To express oneself through writing is to openly announce oneself as an individual. What is at stake is an announcement of who we are and what we are about. As well, the act of writing should concern itself with dialectical responsibility; it should speak to and

about individual life issues and understandings one has. People must take as their primary responsibility an engagement of what it is to be human. Understanding, knowledge, respect, and compassion are only hollow words unless a common concern and appreciation is directed towards the individual as a sculptor of his or her own environment.

The remainder of this chapter concerns itself with one type of dialectical encounter that opens up possibilities of what writing can do and be for an individual. This type of writing focuses on the use of journals. The question of product versus process, writing and dialogue, journal writing, historical uses of journals, and journal use today will be addressed.

The Writing Act: Product Versus Process

Educators may view writing as a technical skill or as an intellectual process (Gage, 1986). Those holding a technical skills orientation will focus on the mastery of the skills of writing, such as punctuation, spelling, and sentence order. If teachers take the viewpoint that writing should facilitate meaning and understanding, they will focus on the intellectual process. Writing becomes an intellectual process when teachers ask students to concentrate on the meaning rather than on the mechanics of writing.

This dichotomy between the technical and intellectual aspects of writing has continued to divide researchers. Nelson (1982), notes that the teaching of writing may centre on notions of neatness, logic, and being a well understood mechanical act by some teachers. Conversely, the teaching of writing can be viewed as a very complex, at times messy, psychological and spiritual process (Graves, 1983; Nelson, 1982; Simon, 1978). If teachers agree that writing is a very complex activity that students must be actively involved in, they need to develop writing activities that will meaningfully engage students.

Many authors view the writing process as inseparable from one's own personal experiences and growth (Bowman, 1983; Graves, 1983; Simon, 1978; Thaiss, 1986). Smith (1982) notes that few individuals write frequently and many that do show little skill

or enjoyment in the writing activity itself. He further suggests that writing should be a task that everyone ought to be able to do and enjoy. Schools are accused of stifling student enthusiasm and curiosity for learning by inhibiting free and natural expression (Ashburn, 1984; Graves, 1983; Smith, 1982). Smith (1982) feels that students become disinterested and discouraged because something happens within schools to inhibit their desire to express themselves. Students begin to believe they cannot achieve certain extrinsic rewards and subsequently are reluctant to perform. Graves continues:

We ignore the child's urge to show what he knows. We underestimate the urge because of a lack of understanding of the writing process and what children do in order to control it. Instead, we take the control away from children and place unnecessary road blocks in the way of their intentions. ...we lose out on the surprises children have for us because we don't let them write (Graves, 1983, p.3).

Applebee (1986) and Gage (1986) propose that the product-centred view is a technical approach that promotes the belief that writing can be mastered by learning skills and practicing them in exercises separate from real life writing situations. Gage (1986) further notes that excessive attention to skills reduces writing to a thoughtless exercise, in which competency in mechanical skills becomes more important than the ideas generated. Schools in the United States have typically been prescriptive and product-centred (Applebee, 1986).

Several problems with the product-centred approach to writing may ensue if the mechanics such as spelling and syntax become more important than what the student has to say. Students who are forced to concentrate on skills rather than ideas learn to write from a part to whole perspective. Perhaps Smith (1982) is correct in suggesting that students do not like to write since their ideas appear to count for very little in the product-centred orientation. Writing activities that are concerned strictly with the end product do not support mutual dialogue. They do not allow for personal engagements or personal knowledge to be developed. For writing to be a fruitful encounter it must allow for introspection, self-indulgence, and show a respect for others. Writing should and could

fulfill these endeavors if education of the young is perceived as a meaningful encounter with life's issues rather than a predetermined course of action.

The 'fill-in-the-blank' type of rote exercise to develop writing skills does very little to stimulate creative and critical thinking. Calkins (1983) criticizes the skills orientation approach to writing, noting that students find it difficult to conference, draft, and revise if the feedback takes the form of an autopsy of their work. In contrast, Calkins (1983) proposes that students should be asked to initially concern themselves with meaning. Through teacher/student, student/student, and even parent/child conferences concerning student writing, ideas are further developed. This further exploration of ideas leads to refinement and new drafts of their writing are generated. Once students feel that their intended meanings have been sufficiently stated, revisions can then be done for the mechanical aspects of writing.

Through this process students learn that their ideas are initially paramount but eventually the mechanics of writing must take precedence. If this procedure is reversed, and with the focus on mechanics taken first, students receive an autopsy as feedback. Their writing is full of red marks and strange symbols which may communicate the message that not only was what they said not important but also how it was said was not acceptable either. In such a situation, it is little wonder that students take very few risks and are hesitant to write. Indeed, conforming to a set piece of writing procedure and standard proves easier and less threatening than seeing an original work cut to pieces.

As an alternative, Freire (1985a), Goodman and Goodman (1981), and Harste, et al. (1984) discuss a writing environment that promotes risk-taking on the part of students. Bowman (1983) notes that risk-taking involves utilizing one's own words in order to communicate ideas first. Writing teachers must focus on meaning and trust students to share in the responsibility of learning. As Tchudi (1987) states, teachers need to assist children in becoming better writers by placing them in control of the writing process with teacher interventions during teachable moments. Teachers can guide students writing by

continually questioning them on what it is they wish to say. It is through this ongoing dialogue that teachers can assist students in refining ideas and the mechanics of writing. As issues arise concerning each individual's writing the teacher is there as a partner to share and help resolve the problem.

If the student is struggling to write about an issue of personal concern or to make new knowledge his or her own, it would seem logical that correction and refinement is needed. Teacher interventions become perceived as important so that the writing becomes more fully comprehensible and structurally correct. Students then have a real stake in this venture since what is written is truly their own.

Goodman and Goodman (1981) suggests that writing must be based on our own experiences. Children learn about language and its improvement incidentally as they seek to understand what it is they wish to say and comprehend. Altwenger, Edelsky, and Flores (1987) also believe that learning to write must surround real use rather than a concentration on practice exercises. For Freire (1985b) this means working with students' experiences in both their public and private lives. This type of pedagogical experience is an invitation to share the language, dreams, and values that constitute the lives of students. There needs to be more of an opportunity for dialectical reflection in schools. Freire (1985a) also suggests that educators need to liberate learners from verbalism and nonsensical syllables. Breaking words down into nonsensical sounds is not how one speaks or communicates with the world and regurgitating and copying notes verbatim is a violation of one's intellectual capacity. One only learns to be passive; not how to be responsive and reflective.

Boomer (1984) would encourage students to make personal notes, talk about emerging notions, and to actively seek out information that extends their understanding. The teacher's responsibility is to establish a broad framework since one cannot make intelligent choices without knowing all of the choices available. There must be a delicate balance between freedom and control. Freedom stems from being aware of all of the choices available to the individual, and is severely limited when the choices have already

been made for the writer. The strictly product-centred approach appears to limit the amount of choice available to writers. As Bruner (1967) tells us, a subject must neither be presented as normative nor as an exercise in how it should be written or said. Educators must give their students respect for and confidence in the powers of their minds. Students must then be allowed to extend this respect and confidence to reflect upon the human condition.

Gambrell (1985) feels that writing cannot be taught in a traditional sense. He postulates that writing must be learned through extensive exposure and practical experience with the use of language as it naturally presents itself. The process-centred approach to writing development appears to foster such goals. Students are asked to write about topics that are of interest to them. Students are exposed to a tremendous variety of reading materials, and the teacher becomes less of an evaluator and more of a facilitator (Cox, 1988 and Goodman and Goodman, 1981). The process approach includes such instructional activities as brainstorming, journal writing, focus on student ideas and experiences, conferences, and multiple drafts where editing is postponed until the final draft (Applebee, 1986). Applebee (1986) believes that a process approach is more effective than any other approach, an idea supported by many other educators and researchers (Goodman and Goodman, 1981; Graves, 1983; Mikkelsen, 1987; Smith, 1982).

However, educators must concern themselves with how the process approach is being implemented. The majority of the writing taking place in schools is to discover what students have learned; what appears to count most is the accuracy of the students' recitation. Applebee (1986) believes that a shift towards the process approach would be inappropriate without a shift in the purposes for which writing is assigned at all. He suggests alternatives that would aid in implementing a successful process oriented approach. One method is instructional scaffolding, a process in which learning becomes a process of gradually internalizing routines and procedures. Aspects of instructional scaffolding are:

1. Student ownership of the learning event.
2. Appropriateness of the instructional task.
3. A structured learning environment.
4. Shared responsibility.
5. Transfer of control. (Applebee, 1986, p. 110).

Students must be allowed to make their own contributions to any activity in which they are involved. Their writing activities should be centred around real language functions such as informing and persuading others. There must also be tasks that build upon knowledge and skills that students already possess (Applebee, 1986). Further learning is built upon previous knowledge so that new knowledge is continually being integrated with past experiences. The learning environment becomes structured; there is a natural sequence between student thought and language. Students are presented with strategies and approaches to assist them in accomplishing tasks and new skills are learned through the process of working through tasks. These tasks are accomplished via a collaborative mode, with the teacher becoming a facilitator and partner in the learning environment. Thus, because of an increased internalization of procedures and routines, students take more responsibility over their learning (Applebee, 1986; Graves, 1983). All of these changes would require a fundamental shift in what seems important to learning at school. We must begin to reaffirm that learning is a socially based activity, thus language learning must be treated as an interactive process (Langer, 1986). The concern must be for meaningful interaction with life and with those around us.

Dialogue and Writing

If dialogue is important, one must consider its implications for the writing act. As Bruner (1967) and, more recently, Shor and Freire (1987) state, a traditional pedagogical stance is very normative in nature. This particular viewpoint suggests that students should be told what to write and say. One is not asked to write about personal concerns or issues but to replicate a position already stated. The feelings and values students have are largely

ignored. A focus on dialogue shifts the focus of instruction. It must be noted that dialogue is not simply a tactic to make students our friends (Shor and Freire, 1987). Rather it is a way for humans to reflect on each individuals own reality so one may make and remake it. "I can only learn my students' idioms, consciousness, and real cognitive skills if they let me, if I create a classroom discourse where they open up" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p.145).

For an individual to be truly open he or she must produce language that reveals what they know in the words that they know it (Shor and Freire, 1987). As Clay (1979) suggests we must not insist on error-free work since this will only convince students that the task is too difficult for them. Students must come to realize that they have something to say that is worth listening to; that their voice will be heard and they will be considered important. Van Manen (1986) tells us that adults must know how to be with a child and know that we can learn from children. Graves (1983) reiterates this attitude of learning from children by suggesting that children teach us about their perceptions and interests. "Children teach, solve problems, answer impossible questions, or discover new information hidden in the recesses of experience. The children can do this when their teachers know it is the child's action that produces the learning" (Graves, 1983, p. 119).

Van Manen (1986) goes further by suggesting that children live life as a possibility. Adults must model possible ways of living life for children. Of importance here is that educators realize that learning is never complete. If we open ourselves up to what children have to say by listening to their words and by truly speaking with them, instead of at them, all will benefit.

Journal Writing

The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word from word to thought. . . . Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 125).

Graves (1983) and Hipple (1985) note that more research is needed in understanding childrens' writing development. One of the ways we may study childrens' writing is through the use of journals. The myriad of topics and concepts discussed may provide new insights into childrens' writing and could possibly only be gained through the journal. Much of the literature on journal writing suggests that a journal is a powerful tool that allows students to come to a better understanding of themselves and their world. Journals provide a means by which students of all ages can clarify personal experiences, work through feelings, a means of learning, and a way to wade through the ideas and concepts encountered at school and in their daily lives (Tchudi, 1987). There is a need in research to uncover exactly what children believe to be important in their lives and how a teacher can foster this type of learning.

Jenkinson (1988) believes that journals are far too important a learning tool to fall victim to protest. He believes that too many positive discoveries and interactions transpire within the journal to have it drop by the wayside. Once teachers discover the potential of the journal many of the criticisms it has undergone such as a place for dull writing, repetition of errors, and as promoting sloppiness will be dismissed. Newman (1984) reminds us that one of the major purposes of the journal is to allow children a chance to explore ideas and the writing process without restriction. The journal acts like a sanctuary safe from outside pressures (Progoff, 1975). Perhaps one of the most important reasons for utilizing the journal is to grant students an opportunity to write freely about their concerns and ideas. This type of writing may greatly enhance students' attitudes towards learning in the classroom. With an improved attitude a heightened sense of self-esteem may also be achieved (Ouzts, 1983). Many authors such as Barbieri, (1987); Bowman,

(1983); Fulwiler, (1980); Mikkelsen, (1987); Polakow, (1985); Simon, (1978) believe that journals are powerful learning tools. Educators overall have become more thoughtful about the processes involved in writing, however, there are still many unexplored areas (Manning, Manning, and Hughes, 1987). The following is an attempt to shed more light on what appears to be the major uses of journals as part of the school curriculum.

A Historical Perspective

Simon (1978) and Lowenstein (1987) tell us that journal writing is as ancient an art as writing itself. Lowenstein notes that journal keeping dates from at least 56 AD. in China where journals were written and then archived as historical documents. During the Renaissance period individuality became very important; journal use focused on more private, autobiographical forms of writing. Lowenstein (1987) describes the 'pillow book', as a type of diary used during the tenth century. The pillow book derived its name from being placed in bed chambers or in the drawers of wooden pillows. The pillow book was written almost exclusively by Heian court ladies, and included factual accounts of daily life as well as dreams, fantasies, and poetry. The personal journal evolved much later in time. Lowenstein (1987) describes the personal journal as being a combination of other types of journals, which shows appreciation for individual growth and unique qualities.

During the French Revolution another sub-type of the personal journal arose called the French Journal Intime. During this period writing was characterized as self-preoccupied, confessional, and passionate. A further sub-type of the personal journal was the apologists' journal. This particular journal proclaimed the rightness of one's position or a justification of an unconventional point of view.

In modern times journals have become recognized and valued in such arenas as women's studies courses and consciousness raising groups (Lowenstein, 1987). In the United States, clinicians practicing Jungian and behavioral therapies include journals or journal-related writing as a part of their treatment.

Progoff (1975) describes his "Intensive Journal Method" as a means to draw each person's life towards wholeness. Progoff's therapeutic approach provides active techniques that enable an individual to draw upon his or her inherent resources. Progoff's method attempts to establish an individual's sense of his or her own being by enriching one's inner life with new experiences of a creative and spiritual quality. One must place themselves between the experiences of the past and the possibilities of the future (Progoff, 1975). The journal can also be used to reflect upon and respond to prevailing societal issues, beliefs, and constraints (Lowenstein, 1987). Lowenstein notes that certain conditions promote the active use of journals, such as times of personal crisis and/or exploration.

Journals have begun to play a key role in classrooms in schools throughout North America. Whether a teacher is involved in science, art, or music, journals can be used to enhance student learning. With the emphasis on process, journals appear to be flourishing in educational settings. Yet journal writing can become tedious if the activity is poorly carried out by the teacher. When journals are utilized effectively they become a powerful device for personal and academic growth.

There are a number of ways to use journals with students, but no easy answers as to what type to use with a certain class. A teacher must decide the type of journal best suited to student needs, the subject matter, and the teacher's overall perspective on learning. The following outlines the main types of journals that can be used in the classroom.

Personal Journals

Student journals come in many varieties of shapes and sizes (Bowman, 1983). Typically they are student scribbles where personal observations, reflections, and responses to literature are kept. Goodman and Goodman (1984) believe that a successful writing curriculum is one that builds on personal writing. The frequent use of personal

writing assists students in discovering real purposes for writing itself and writing for real audiences. Simon (1978) feels the greatest attraction in personal writing is the opportunity it provides for being one's self. This type of writing also allows one to write without standards being preset by others. One of the most engaging uses of journals is one that invites students to discover language that is deep within themselves or to confront dreams, concerns, and aspirations (Bowman, 1983).

Craig (1983) notes that the uniqueness that each individual possesses may in fact be otherwise overlooked by teachers if not for personal journal writing. Each individual's uniqueness is often overlooked because of the pressures teachers have in covering content, exerting control, and the traditional roles students and teachers play. Craig believes that individuals must write for themselves since this will improve student's self-knowledge and language usage.

To engage one another in a thoughtful dialogue around our personal writing is of the utmost importance. As Simon (1978) states we all need places where we can nurture and care for our own words and thoughts. We must not only listen to, but also care for ourselves. Cox (1988) and Simon (1978) assume that personal journals give rise to new ways of viewing information, thus helping the individual to better understand their own way of knowing. Poets do this and children may be given this opportunity as well (Cox, 1988).

Journals are also seen as opportunities for playing with ideas and language itself (Cox, 1988; Rensenbrink, 1987; Simon, 1978; Simon, 1987). The notion of play in journals is an important concept, since students are allowed opportunities to be in control of their writing and their own learning. As Rensenbrink (1987) notes, personal journals provide students with the chance to discuss their own personal interests, such as toys, troubles, games, and dreams. The classroom then becomes connected to the child's world.

People are constantly engulfed by a world that they strive to organize and comprehend in a way that yields meaning (Lund, 1984). Without personal meanings, life

may become a set of incomprehensible dogmatic rules and regulations. One way in which people interpret their life experiences is through the use of language (Lund, 1984). This personal commentary concerning one's lives allows greater self-reflection and an enhanced ability to make sense of the world. It stems from the fact that people are constantly striving to understand their thoughts and impressions. When people write, they are continually refining their understandings through their daily interactions. As their interactions become more complex so do the journal entries. Conceptualizations are in a continual refinement mode; that is, individuals are continually incorporating new information into existing knowledge. The end result is a new synthesis of knowledge.

Personal journal writing enables people to reflect upon who they are and how to make sense of their world (Lund, 1984). Through personal journal writing, individuals are involved in a conscious interaction with their cognitive processes which brings about a new synthesis of existing ideas. In turn, this can lead to great personal discoveries. By allowing students to engage in personal written dialogue with themselves, teachers promote mastery of the writing process (Lund, 1984). Schwartz (1985) found that in utilizing personal writing with her students, they began to look differently at their own present and past experiences.

It is believed that personal journal writing allows students to improve self-knowledge and enhancement of language usage (Cox, 1988; Craig, 1983; Lund, 1984). By continually writing, an individual begins to write more clearly as knowledge about the mechanics of language is gained through meaningful practice. Writers are also able to gain increased knowledge about the world by continually describing new personal experiences. Barbieri (1987) feels that if students are allowed to make use of what they know, they will manipulate this information into further knowing. All of the experiences of students are transformed in many ways in their own stories. When students are permitted to use their experiences in their writing it becomes more meaningful and satisfying to them.

Simon (1987) discusses the concept of empowerment as an opportunity to share and participate in authority. Simon further notes that to empower students, a teacher must utilize an instructional agenda that permits students to draw upon their own resources as a foundation for developing new skills and questioning existing knowledge. A teacher must find ways to allow students' voices to be heard which is vital for writing in journals (Ashburn, 1984; Bonilla, 1989; Simon, 1987). A student's voice is defined as using his or her personal writing of topics that are of interest to the student. Simon (1978) believes that journal sharing creates a situation whereby we become vulnerable to each other. He goes on further to note that in journals we listen to people and not to principalities and to powers that be. Graves (1983) views a student's voice as the imprint of self in writing. If teachers ignore the student's voice their writing becomes mechanical and lifeless. We cannot teach through forms of silence. An education that creates silence is not what education is all about (Simon, 1987).

Teaching and learning must allow students to take risks and to envision the world in new ways. In order for a student to discover his or her voice, both the teacher and student must actively engage in dialogue. They will begin to view themselves as authors, thereby giving legitimacy to their individual existences. Students and teachers must view their relationship as a partnership in the learning process (Unia, 1985).

When personal journals are used students are given an opportunity to write about their own experiences. This gives students a real reason for writing. By confining their writing to personal experiences new knowledge may be gained which lead to a new synthesis of ideas and discoveries. Students also learn to react responsibly to each other's writings by reacting in a way that supports yet assists in developing both ideas and skills in writing. The personal journal points out individual uniquenesses that otherwise may be overlooked if teachers concentrate solely on covering content in ways suggested by guide books. For example, the skill to be mastered may be using a period. Activities then focus entirely on mastering this skill, rather than on utilizing a topic that may be of interest to the

student to practice using it. The period then becomes a skill needed to be mastered if students practice it in context since it will be needed to add to the overall meaning of the text.

Journals Across the Curriculum

Fulwiler (1980) suggests that journals should be implemented in all disciplines. He maintains that journals can stimulate discussions, clarify issues, reinforce previous learning, and stimulate student imagination. Fulwiler cautions that journal writing will not automatically make passive students active learners, but will make it difficult to remain passive. Journals have been used in science, social studies, and in business education classes; listening journals may also be attempted in music where students would record their personal experiences with music (Fulwiler, 1980). It is difficult for a journal writer not to view his or her own personal and language growth over time. By looking back on previous journal entries students have a written record of what they have written about in the past and how they have said it. One may then look back on topics discussed to discover whether or not their individual writing style has improved.

Nahrgang and Petersen (1986) have utilized journals in order for students to learn mathematics. They believe that journals provide students with opportunities to organize their thoughts and improve their writing skills. Students may work informally and personally on mathematical concepts. They view the journal as a series of responses to questions, assignments, and statements made by the instructor. Both of these authors feel that journals are excellent diagnostic tools since they can expose misunderstandings and areas of student concern. Journal writing is a most effective method in assisting students in learning Math. Students can relate information from a lecture to what they already know. This will lead students into organizing and synthesizing the new information so that the concept becomes their own.

In history classes, Steffens (1987) believes that the traditional transactional language exercises (term papers, essays, and reports) are not the best vehicles for teaching history. He feels that often our writing assignments separate students from their own ideas and the enjoyment of writing. Teachers need to promote the personal involvement of students in the writing process and in the learning of history. Steffen notes that we must allow students the opportunity to explore ideas and to speculate about ideas so that their ideas will hopefully develop in complexity. He argues that the traditional transactional view negates the possibility of this type of idea development.

Barnes (1975) reinforces Steffen's notions by stating that language learning is not simply an adding on of new information, but a reshaping of our ideas. This is accomplished by allowing students the freedom to formulate and reformulate thoughts aloud or on paper (Barnes, 1975). Barnes feels that if we do not allow students the opportunity to explore how new knowledge relates to their existing knowledge, we will leave them with only school knowledge. School knowledge for Barnes is knowledge that does not penetrate to the students' sources of action. It does not call them to interact with learning.

Action knowledge becomes a reality when classroom talk and writing allow for exploration of their implications for living (Barnes, 1980). The content areas present information to students that is needed for a better understanding of the world in which they live. They present information that aids us in understanding nature, human interactions, and mathematical concepts. This understanding may become an either/or situation. The content area material is either presented as fact leaving little room for personal thought, or as information that needs to be interacted with in such a way as to grant it personal meaning. Journals are excellent vehicles that foster personal and academic growth. Teachers must be careful, however, to ensure that they use journals in promoting such growth. If journals are used as time fillers they will have little value for students; and will

probably become viewed as a type of punishment. The writing that transpires in that type of journal will likely be unorganized, redundant, error-filled jargon.

Another use made of journals is having students comment on literature that they have recently encountered. Atwell (1987) discusses many methodological ways in which students may respond to literature. Students may respond by the use of questions, jokes, arguments, or even in the form of gossip.

Brown (1981) notes that younger students may keep journals that contain words discovered in reading stories that have personal meaning for them. They may also print their own personal words out in their journals and try to create sentences from these words once they have built up quite a few words.

Lindberg (1987) believes that response to literature journals connect literature to real life for students. These journals may also assist students in learning such writing techniques as point of view, genre, and plot by allowing students an opportunity to discuss them in their journals.

The most thoughtful journal entries are often responses to literature (Alejandro, 1981). She discovered that her students responded sensitively to various human experiences found in many books that her class read. They were human experiences with which they could identify and understand more fully through the use of their journals. Atwell (1987) mentions that when older students are allowed to respond to literature in an open and sensitive manner, they explore their own feelings about and reactions to the novel you have chosen to read.

Strackbein and Tillman (1987) believe that students gain a better understanding of literature through the use of response journals as well. It is through the response journals that students learn what good writers do, good readers do, and how readers talk (Atwell, 1987). She cautions that the purpose of this journal is not to offer counsel or invite students' personal problems, but to come to a mutual understanding of life. Through the reading of literature students will be faced with problems that they have in everyday life.

The journal is an avenue for the student to write about and work through these issues in hopes that a new understanding will ensue. The teacher and student work through these issues together as they unfold in the literature and resurface in the student's journal. The response journal in schools is not a therapeutic device, but a way to confront reality.

Response journals work best when the teacher responds as a curious human being revealing sincere concerns and feelings. Communication becomes more important than the end product. Isakson (1986) also mentions that the purpose of writing is communication so a teacher's response must reflect the semantic intent of the writer.

Dialogue Journals

Staton (1980) believes that language and thought are fundamentally dialogical in nature and are acquired through conversational interaction. Shuy (1987) notes that educators agree that conventional dialogue is a good thing, but that it is thwarted once students attend school. The dialogue journal is an attempt to bring back to education a dialogical encounter that will stimulate both the teacher and student. Dialogue journals provide for a wide range of language functions that are commonly found in oral discourse such as listening, giving directions, and promising. Students are able to practice using these language functions when dialogue journals are utilized (Bromley, 1989; Shuy, 1987; Staton, 1987).

Staton (1987) states that dialogue journals are bringing back to education the essence of language in its natural form. They allow time for a natural dialogue to develop between teacher and student. Within this dialogue grows a close personal relationship between the student and the teacher (Atwell, 1987; Danielson, 1988; Gambrell, 1985; Shuy, 1987; Staton, 1980; Unia, 1985). Unia describes this position, "It clearly illustrates the reciprocal relation of the teacher and the student, the partnership we share" (Unia, 1985, p. 72).

Dialogue journals may be as simple as exploring the weather to as complicated as comprehending Einstein's theories. Whatever is being discussed in dialogue journals the results of the dialogue may prove to be of utmost importance to the students understanding of the writing process. Staton (1980) believes that dialogue journals serve three purposes: granting individual attention; becoming self-motivating, and improving students handwriting, spelling, grammar, and expression.

The consequences of a written dialogue then, are increased writing ability, motivation, an improved self-understanding, and personal development (Danielson, 1988; Gambrell, 1985; Platt and Bright, 1989; Staton, 1980). Dialogue journals and journals in general appear to offer students three levels of language practice. Students are able to practice their spelling, syntax, and semantic levels all during journal activities. Through their constant writing students become aware of the ways certain words are spelled and in what ways certain sentence patterns make the most sense. Finally, students become more attuned to the meanings that they are striving to express. Meaning becomes important to students since what they are striving to say and share is a part of them. They want it to be said in such a way as to ensure that others may understand.

Staton (1980) suggests that the major value of dialogue journals is that the teacher really gets to know a student and understand them as a person. When a teacher creates a written dialogue which is similar to the dialogue that existed between the mother and infant earlier in life, major types of learning are occurring at high cognitive levels. Freire (1970) emphasizes as well, the need for teachers and students to be involved in a partnership of trust between each other and in their creative abilities. It is through dialogue that the teacher no longer teaches, but learns as well. The teacher and student became responsible for the learning process so that each will grow (Freire, 1970).

Danielson (1988) wishes to see the use of dialogue journals extended from simply teacher/student to parent/child interactions. The child through the use of dialogue journals has an excellent opportunity to discover that his or her life is worth writing about (Thaiss,

1986). The child, hopefully, will realize that they are important and have something important to say. A child can only come to know about themselves and about their teacher if allowed to enter into a dialogue that promotes this endeavor. Students will learn that you, as a teacher, are a real person and are genuinely interested in them in terms of what they have to say. Isakson (1986) maintains that dialogue journals give authenticity, purpose, and meaning to the language processes. Hall and Duffy (1987) strongly believe that we must be able to see the individuality of each student. Personal journals allow students to learn and grow through writing about their own experiences by using their own language skills. Dialogue journals, on the other hand, allow both students and teachers to come to an understanding of one another. This understanding hopefully leads them both to appreciate not only each other, but other individuals as well. The dialogical nature of this type of journal beckons each participant to respond to people in terms of their unique circumstance.

Implications for Teaching

The teacher must stop correcting grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors when reading students' journals. The main purpose of journal writing is to place one's ideas down on paper (Graves, 1983). One must concentrate on what the child is trying to say through journal entries. The spelling, grammar, and punctuation will develop over time (Barbieri, 1987; DeFord, 1980; Gentry, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983). If a story is going to be published or an error continues then the teacher and student must find ways to correct this mistake.

Journals allow teachers an opportunity to reflect on their teaching style so that they may make changes if need be (Barnes, 1980). He argues for the use of exploratory talk and a tremendous amount of writing. These strategies aid all learning and encourage students to become active, critical, confident, and ready to take responsibility for themselves. As language teachers our responsibility is to provide students with the best

possible opportunities to engage in meaningful writing activities (Lund, 1984 and Talbot, 1990). The journal is one way of accomplishing this task. The teacher should react to the journal entries honestly and openly not as a teacher, but as a person. A teacher must model the process of writing (Atwell, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Strackbein and Tillman, 1987). Students and their teachers are both learning together as they share and react to one another's writing. Mechanics will come later when students revise their work (French, 1986). Teachers must concentrate on meaning, since thinking underlies reading, writing, and talking. The teacher should write with students, thus modelling the writing process for them. The process oriented teacher uses student writing for spelling, grammar, and vocabulary lessons. The pursuit of knowledge must be paralleled with a mutual humanization among those engaged in such a pursuit (Giroux, 1981). If teachers do not allow children to speak on issues of concern to them, we are teaching with violence; violence that suppresses genuine thought and thus real learning. Smith (1988) speaks of abandoning teacher jargon for a responsive authenticity that will eventually lead children and teachers to deeper understandings of one another and what true learning should be about.

It is up to the teacher to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to journal writing. Van Manen makes this point clearly as he writes, "The sense of mood or atmosphere is a profound part of our existence. ... Atmosphere belongs to all aspects of human existence" (Van Manen, 1986, p. 32). A teacher must provide a classroom that tells the child that he or she is important and that what they have to share has value and needs to be said. An intriguing feature of journal writing is that it allows individuals the chance to speak to issues that are of concern to them. Writing in journals is enhanced by the dialogue that should ensue between either the author and the reader or author and self. The dialogue becomes interpersonal or intrapersonal. How a dialogue occurs is secondary to the new knowledge that evolves. Writing and dialogue are inseparable components in a learning environment where individual uniquenesses are encouraged and applauded.

One must be able to speak or write about experiences to understand them better and be able to create new expectations from them (Thaiss, 1986). Vygotsky (1962) reminds us that when our thoughts are put into words, we have managed to select among a myriad of images that confront our minds and that is our only way of giving them a form with which we can deal. Our efforts to communicate are actually a further attempt to make meaning for ourselves (Thaiss, 1986). There are many forms of writing and each entails a unique purpose, process, product, and audience. Journal writing is a rather joyous and worthwhile way to communicate (Strackbein and Tillman, 1987).

Journal writing has been shown to enhance fluency, creativity, linguistic ability, and self-esteem (Chomsky, 1971; Hipple, 1985; Thaiss, 1986). Fluency should be the first priority in journal writing. Mechanical proficiency cannot improve until students have become fluent writers. Students will want to do the best they can and will generally strive to spell words correctly (Thaiss, 1986).

Journal writing celebrates human uniqueness by trusting students to confront life responsibly. Mechanical skills are developed and shaped through the writers desire to achieve greater clarity. Journal writing should not only become a part of our educational pedagogy, but should be used as a model for other forms of writing as well.

The use of journals appears to create a situation where true understanding, caring, and trust develops. Journals help to create an atmosphere where teachers and students practice speech that attunes itself to the human condition. It questions our existence and problematizes our lives. Journals give birth to our ideas and hold us accountable for them. Journal writing may do all of these things for us or they may become just another educational technique for busy work. Journal writing will work and work well if the teacher is more interested in what students have to say than how they say it. A teacher must believe that meaning will assist the mechanics of writing to the point where both will be accomplished well by the writer.

The initial focus in writing should be on meaning. Mechanical skills will develop by utilizing teachable moments and the inherent desire of the student to become responsible for his or her writing. The teacher's task in implementing journal activities is a difficult one. Teachers must set time aside for journal writing, model writing, respond to the students' writing, and be constantly looking for those teachable moments.

Journals are but one way to interact with one another and oneself. They can assist us in interpreting life and all that it entails. The journal is not a program or a method of writing, but a way of becoming responsible, critical, creative, and understanding. It is a way of seeing and thinking that is uniquely human.

Summary

The preceding review of the literature has focused on the various types of journals, and how to make writing more meaningful through journal work. It has also discussed the differences between a process and product approach to writing. Of particular importance in all of this is the relationship between the adult and child. A child brings with him or her many qualities that are synonymous with childhood. They are inquisitive, talkative, impetuous, frank, and incredibly imaginative. Young children bring a special perspective to the world which entails a genuine trust in people, as well as, the ability to teach, those adults who are willing to listen, how to celebrate life within the seemingly ordinary reality of our world.

It seems that young children do hold special powers in the lives of adults and as such have a special place in our hearts. Because adults often forget how to take time to enjoy everyday experiences and to continually search for the playfulness in life, we need children to teach us. They are master mentors since they perceive the world as their own to enjoy no matter how fleeting those joyful moments may be. They teach by their actions and their insistence that we participate. It is an active process which has no place for the

shortsighted or for those who do not let their true selves show for they can never truly participate.

Children remind us of what life was like and what life could become again. They tell us about adulthood and demonstrate to us the art of childhood. Do we listen? Can we remember? Is it possible to show ourselves as children do? It is within our honest dialogues with children that will provide us with the remembrances of what it means to be a child and grant us the vision to see the present that will sustain and nourish us as human beings. This does not evolve from an intuitive vision but from the miracle of innocence -- the child. This study does not seek to define childhood or adulthood, but to describe what it means for a child and adult to be with one another in a mutually respectful written conversation. The journal, I believe, allows both voices to be heard in a way that shares responsibility for our actions towards one another and for us to consider possible ways of living life.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to analyze the content of the dialogue journals of selected grade three students to discover the predominant themes in their writing. A second purpose was to explore through a series of interviews with the teacher how the information gained from journal work was used to influence curriculum decision-making in the classroom. Qualitative research methods were employed since the purpose was to allow themes to emerge from the data rather than begin with a set of hypotheses.

Participants

The teacher. Catherine began the school year providing students with a lined scribbler that they used for journal writing. A forty minute period every Thursday was set aside for journal writing. The particular day chosen for journal writing fit into the overall class schedule the best and was not chosen for any other specific reason. Catherine has been teaching for twelve years and has used journals in various forms for four years. Catherine had considerable experience with journal writing, both with students and in her personal life prior to this study. It was felt that the process and content of journal writing would be much richer in detail because of Catherine's own personal commitment towards journal writing.

Catherine strives to have her students bring their worlds into the classroom, so that school may be viewed as a vital part of their lives. Catherine views each student as a unique and creative individual, and personalizing her curriculum for each student is a major part of her personal and professional teaching style. As Catherine states, "When I come here in the morning and I know the people I am going to be dealing with and I can individualize their learning so much or the things that I find for them because I know their strengths, I know their weaknesses, I know the things that are important to them, I know the kind of things that they like to do or an activity that might help them more than

something I had just planned if I didn't know them. I think by doing that -- like we talked about trust and coming here with a comfortable feeling -- children learn easier and remember things easier..."

Personal relationships between students and teachers are very important to Catherine as she views this as a way of creating a learning environment that tells children teachers care, learning can be fun and exciting, and risks should be taken, thereby freeing students to think freely without the anxiety of being marked wrong.

The students. The class is a split grade two/three classroom in a small rural school district in southern Alberta. The school includes ECS to grade nine. This particular classroom was selected because of the teacher's involvement with dialogue journals. The students selected for the study had been writing in a journal since grade one. Although the procedures involved in journal writing differed with each particular teacher, their journal writing has been largely in dialogue with the teacher. The students selected for this study ranged from 9 to 10 years of age. Table 1 provides a more complete description of the participating students.

Purposeful sampling procedures (Patton, 1980) were used to select the students. The teacher was asked to divide her class into three groups: prolific journal writers, average journal writers, and those who wrote minimally. The main criterion for delineating these categories was the amount written by each child. Two subjects were selected from each category. All of the subjects within each category were randomly selected. The sample was stratified in order of differing levels of productivity to determine whether the teacher responded differently to each of these students as well as to discover whether or not the teacher used any of the student's journal contents for the purposes of curriculum decision-making. During this student selection process all of the student journals were

Table 1
Description of Students

I.D. #	Age	Years of Journal Writing Experience	Years in School	Writing Classification	Gender
01	9	3	3	Prolific	Male
02	9	3	3	Prolific	Male
03	9	3	3	Average	Female
04	9	3	3	Average	Female
05	9	3	3	Minimal	Female
06	10	3	4*	Minimal	Female

* based on current teacher evaluation

completed for that school year, hence Catherine did not interfere with any of the student entries which may have affected this study.

Purposeful sampling procedures were used because this classroom was considered to be a "critical case", as all of the grade three students in this study had nearly three years of school based experience with journal writing and their current teacher had a great deal of experience with journals. As Patton (1980) notes, "Looking for the critical case is particularly important where resources may limit evaluation to the study of only a single site" (p. 103). One must choose a site which will lead to the most useful and informative information that will allow for the greatest understanding to occur.

Purposeful selection implies that participants are selected in a manner that maximizes the diversity in the sample. It is appropriately used when there is an insufficient number of students available to permit the use of random selection. The use of purposeful selection also maximized the probability that information relevant to the topic under study could be obtained, despite the relatively small sample size (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980). While the sample size was small enough to allow the collection of a considerable body of data from each participant, there was a sufficient degree of diversity within the sample to facilitate the collection of rich and detailed information.

When using purposeful sampling procedures instead of random selection significant questions regarding the generality of the results are raised (Patton, 1980). Statistical inferences cannot be made when using purposeful sampling: rather, induction and logical inferences are made on the basis of the accumulated data (Patton, 1980). The study of one or more critical cases does not necessarily permit generalizations to all similar cases, however, generalizations may be more logically founded based on the evidence acquired in studying a single case since if something is true in one case, it's likely to be true of all other similar cases (Patton, 1980). Also, the transferability of these findings cannot be definitely estimated, the researcher can facilitate judgements concerning the applicability of the findings by providing a "thick description" within the discussion of the

results (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980). The implication of providing a thick description is that the author has sufficiently provided enough detailed information to allow a reader to make logical decisions concerning the degree to which the findings can be applied to a different context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The classroom. The classroom corresponded with Catherine's philosophy of having her students feel comfortable at school. It had a warm, cozy feeling about it. The usual teacher's desk and small windows were present, but were overshadowed by the atmosphere created by the furnishings in this room. Students sat at round tables, four or five to a table, assisting one another in some way depending on the subject being studied. Two large bookshelves filled with free reading books were placed near a listening centre and a carpeted area. A chesterfield and coffee table were also placed near the bookshelves so students could free read in a more comfortable area. The bulletin boards were covered with student's work and colourful posters of the particular unit being studied at that time. A visual display can be seen in Figure 1.

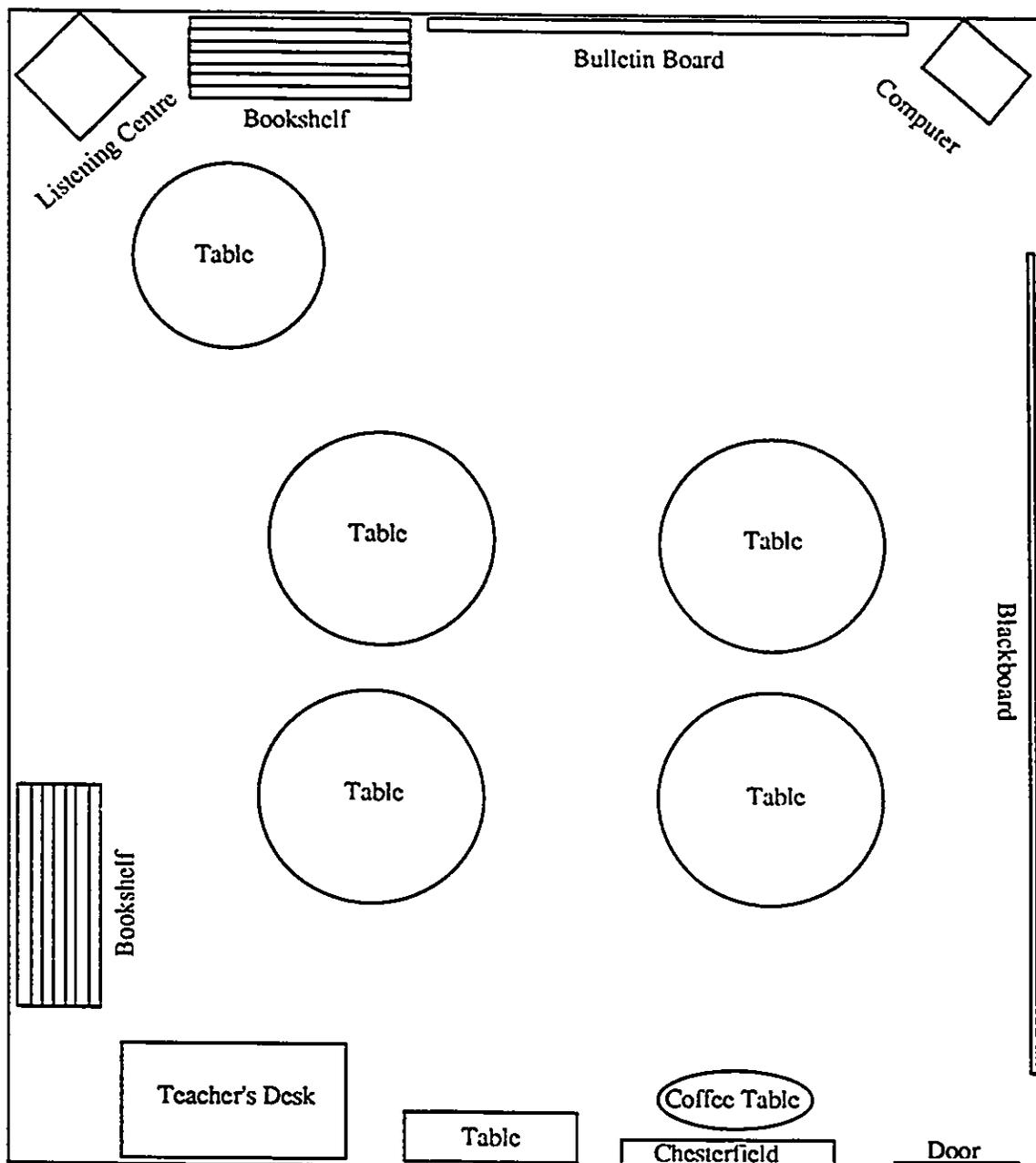


Figure 1: Classroom Set-up

Procedure

Qualitative Interviews

The method of data collection used to collect information from the teacher in this investigation was a qualitative interview guide. The rationale for the selection of this data collection method is described in the following section.

Rationale for qualitative interviews. Patton (1980) described the different types of interview methods as varying along a continuum according to the degree of structure imposed, or the extent to which the questions are determined and standardized prior to the interview. At one end of the continuum is the informal conversational interview, in which the respondent has the dominant role in defining the content of the conversation. This method does allow the interviewer to be very responsive to the issues that arise, however, it also is highly vulnerable to bias as a result of interviewer effects. Another consideration when using this interview method is that it requires considerable time in gathering relevant information and these results are difficult to summarize and interpret.

At the other end of the continuum is the open-ended interview, in which questions are asked using the same words, in the same sequence, across all respondents. The interviewer does not probe deeper or follow-up on any responses, or deviate from the predetermined or standardized format. This method does reduce interviewer effects which helps to ensure that the information gained is consistent across all respondents, however, interviewer flexibility is lost which may result in the loss of further information.

The interview method used in this investigation can be thought of as falling midway between these two extreme ends of the continuum. This method has been referred to as the interview guide approach, and involved:

Outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The issue in the outline need not be taken in any particular order and the actual working of questions to elicit responses about those issues is not determined in advance (Patton, 1980, p. 198).

The interview guide approach ensured that the desired information was obtained from the respondent and allowed the interviewer to adapt the wording and order of questions to suit the context of the interview. This made it possible to take into account the unique circumstances of each interview. This interview approach also allowed the interviewer to decide which topics to pursue more fully based on the nature of that particular interview. Clarifications and elaborations therefore were more easily accommodated as issues arose during the course of the interview.

The interview guide approach allowed the researcher to discover information which could not be directly observed (Patton, 1980). That is, to fully understand a process such as curriculum decision-making, the investigator had to ask the teacher to make her decision-making explicit through verbal explanations. As well, the use of interviews for data collection is appropriate since further insights and discoveries can be made which would not normally be observable or explained sufficiently in the student journals or teacher responses to each student journal entry.

This data collection method allowed the researcher to determine the teacher's perceptions of the journal writing process. The interview was used to elicit the teacher's own descriptions, in order to gain insight into how she viewed the process. Finally, as all questions were open-ended, the teacher was able to describe her perceptions in detail, without reference to predetermined categories. This methodology can be contrasted with the use of a questionnaire, an instrument which would have forced the teacher to fit her knowledge, experiences, and feelings into the researcher's predetermined, standardized categories (Patton, 1980). Given the lack of information concerning the decision-making processes inherent in the process of journal writing analysis, it would have been inappropriate to predetermine the type of information to be sought from the participant.

Interview procedures. Three interviews with the classroom teacher were conducted in order to discuss the process used to implement the journal and the degree to which this process has or could be used to influence curriculum planning. Two interviews were conducted over a two month period with an average interview of 60 minutes. After the initial interview was completed and analyzed a second interview evolved from the teacher's responses from the first one. Content analysis was used on each interview to determine themes that were emerging from the interviews. A final interview was scheduled so that the teacher could respond to the final draft of the previous interviews and to the written description of the themes discovered in the student journals.

The first interview guide (see Appendix C) was aimed at discovering the process involved in using journals and the curriculum value placed on each student's journal contents by the teacher. The second interview guide (see Appendix E) focused specifically on the possibility of using separate journals in content area subjects. This topic was identified by the teacher during the initial interview. This shifting to other subject areas was seen as a natural progression by the teacher for herself as well as for the class.

Both interviews took place in the teacher's classroom during spare periods and through the noon hour. Each interview was tape recorded and field notes were taken for later transcription. The recording allowed the interviewer to focus attention on the respondent and to note further questions or insights. The use of a tape recorder adds to the accuracy of the data being collected and allowed the interview to be conversational in tone (Patton, 1980).

Rationale for tape recorders. The use of tape recorders during qualitative interviews is recommended as it allows for more accurate transcripts to be made of each interview, thus facilitating later analysis and interpretation of the data (Patton, 1980). Since the raw data of this type of study are actual quotations and words of the respondent,

the validity of the interpretation of the data will be dependent upon the accuracy with which the respondent's comments are preserved.

Fieldnotes. Fieldnotes were utilized both during and after each interview session. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggest that there are two categories of fieldnotes: descriptive and reflective. Descriptive notes centre around capturing the particular setting, participants, actions, and conversations as they are observed. The descriptions presented in these types of fieldnotes are the researcher's efforts to objectively record details of what has occurred during the course of the interview. Descriptive fieldnotes also assist the interviewer in formulating new questions as the interview transpires. These notes help in facilitating the analysis of the interviews since facial gestures and tone of voice may be noted as well (Patton, 1980).

The second category of fieldnotes used were reflective which were concerned with capturing the interviewers subjective impressions of the interview. An interviewer describes prejudices and speculates about what he or she is learning. The purpose of reflecting is to improve the notes and, hence, the overall study.

Because the researcher is so central to the collection of the data and its analysis, ... the qualitative researcher must be extremely self-conscious about his or her own relationship to the setting and about the evolution of the design and analysis. In order to do a good study, the researcher must be self-reflective, and keep an accurate record of methods, procedures, and evolving analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 87).

Thus, the reflective notes were intended to allow the interviewer to comment on the variety of issues related to the data collection and analysis. Reflective fieldnotes were used before and after each interview. Before each interview began assumptions about what would be discovered were noted as well as expectations about the outcome of this study. This allowed assumptions to be confronted and compared with what finally occurred during the course of the study.

After each interview reflective notes were used to note assumptions and perceptions. These reflective notes started the process of data analysis. Themes that were appearing were noted along with learning the process involved in journal writing with this particular class. "The reflective part of fieldnotes is one way of attempting to acknowledge and control observer's effect" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 89). Immediately following each interview observations were written down concerning each interview. Patton (1980) believes that the time immediately after an interview is critical for reflection and elaboration because everything is fresh in the interviewer's mind. As Patton (1980) notes, "It is a time of quality control to guarantee that the data obtained will be useful, reliable, and valid" (p. 251).

Member checks. Member checks were conducted throughout various stages of data collection. After each interview session the interviewer summarized the interview to the respondent. The accuracy of the interviewer's interpretations were immediately tested by allowing the respondent to react to these interpretations. This allowed the interviewer to assess the accuracy of the initial interpretations of the data and also provided the respondent with the opportunity to correct errors, clarify meanings, and volunteer further information (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Rationale for member checks. This method of assessing the credibility of the obtained data required the interviewer to ask the original participant to review the interview data, the classification systems, as well as interpretations and conclusions at various points during the course of the investigation. This technique recognizes that researchers should not assume that they have automatically represented the respondents thoughts and opinions accurately. Rather, it was necessary to give the respondent an opportunity to react to the representations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980). If the respondent agreed with the researcher's findings and conclusions, the credibility of the findings were enhanced. The

investigator is not required to modify any interpretations and/or conclusions based on the respondents feedback, however, it is useful to listen to such feedback (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Content Analysis

Consistent with the use of qualitative research methods, data were analyzed inductively. That is, the investigator did not enter the field with specific hypotheses which had been advanced prior to the study, but was equipped only with general questions related to the topic of interest. Inductive analysis means that patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis. The researcher looks for natural variations in the data (Patton, 1980). As the fieldwork was completed, and a body of evidence accumulated, the research focus was continually narrowed, and the resulting questions became more specific (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1980). The process of analyzing data is one of bringing order or making sense of the field data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In working with a naturalistic paradigm the researcher does not usually have a priori theory or hypotheses to test, but allows the data to provide working hypotheses or questions that may be further explored. These types of data analysis are referred to as inductive analysis.

Content analysis is a procedure that enables a person to systematically analyze some product (Covert, 1977). The data analyzed in this particular study were student journal entries and three teacher interviews. The specific procedures used for analysis were specifying category systems, developing coding units, and finally categorizing coding units.

Drafting the category systems: Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that an analyst begins by searching for "recurring regularities" in the data (p. 311). Such regularities suggest patterns which can be sorted into categories. When choosing an appropriate

category system it is important to know before hand the particular coding unit that you wish to use. This is extremely important since, ". . . both coding units and category systems are essential and not sufficient by themselves, it is possible to change one or the other to best meet the purpose of the analysis. If, however, a coding unit has been agreed upon, it is essential that the category system be consistent with the coding unit" (Covert, 1977, p. 10).

The category system utilized in this study was the frequency of each theme mentioned. The transcripts of both interviews, each student's journal entries, and subsequent teacher responses to each student's entries were repeatedly reviewed in an attempt to identify the natural patterns and variations which could be grouped into a classification system.

Coding units: Coding units are the subdivisions of the content which are then used for classification purposes (Covert, 1977). The coding unit used in this study was themes. Themes may be defined as a simple sentence or single idea (Covert, 1977). In analyzing the student journals, teacher responses, and the teacher interviews, the coding unit was consistently applied.

Categorizing coding units: Once the category system and coding unit were determined all of the data are subjected to content analysis. Journal entries, teacher responses, and the teacher interviews were analyzed and the coding units were assigned to appropriate categories. Once the categories had been developed they were then judged by the following criteria: Internal homogeneity; the extent to which the data that belong in a certain category hold together, and external heterogeneity; the extent to which differences among categories are bold and clear (Patton, 1980, p. 311). Exhaustive; the categories chosen allow all of the data to be categorized (Covert, 1977).

Credibility and reliability. The intent of utilizing content analysis was to provide a systematic and an objective method of analyzing and presenting the data. In order to further demonstrate that the findings or category systems were credible, member checks and interrater reliability were used.

Member checks were used to allow the participating teacher to react to the presentation and classification of the data. This procedure allowed the respondent an opportunity to determine the accuracy of the interviewer's perceptions. Giving the respondent an opportunity to react to the perceptions of the interviewer enhances the credibility of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that, "The task is to obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed by the informants, or to correct, amend, or extend it, that is, to establish credibility of the case." Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that member checking is an extremely important procedure for establishing credibility. "The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 314). Once all of the data had been collected and analyzed it was presented to the participating teacher for reaction.

When using content analysis, ". . . it is important that the procedure be consistently applied" (Covert, 1977, p. 14). Covert refers to such consistency as interrater reliability, whereby, other raters reach identical results. Following the development of the specific coding units and category system an independent judge analyzed all of the data collected using the same criteria as the researcher. An agreement was noted when a coding unit was classified in the same category. If a disagreement arose categories were either revised or redefined so that total agreement was reached.

The following chapter contains the findings of this study. Data will be presented in summary and examples will be included to provide further support for the findings given. The final chapter will discuss the interpretations and conclusions which can be reached.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As noted in the previous chapter, the purpose of this study was to analyze the content of the dialogue journals of selected grade three students to discover the predominant themes in their writing. A second purpose was to explore through a series of interviews with the teacher how the information gained from journal work was used to influence curriculum decision-making in the classroom.

The students' journal entries, the teacher responses to the students' journal entries, and the subsequent teacher interviews were all subjected to content analysis. These data were repeatedly reviewed to discover natural patterns and variations which could be grouped into a classification system. Each journal entry was broken down into coding units referred to as themes. The journal entries were then physically cut and grouped so that each coding unit could be placed into an appropriate category.

The teacher responses to student journal entries and the teacher interviews were analyzed in the same manner as the student journal entries. The results of this study will be presented in the following manner: a) examples of the themes that emerged from the student journal entries will be provided and elaborated upon, b) examples of the themes that emerged from the teacher responses to the student journal entries will be presented and discussed, as well as, c) examples of the themes that emerged from the teacher interviews.

Student Journal Entries

The themes that emerged from the student entries have been summarized in Table 2. It can be seen that eight different categories of information emerged from the content analysis. Also noted in Table 2 were the number of coding units, as well as, the number of the six respondents who commented on a given category. Each coding unit varied in length from one-half to two pages. The final column specified the number of students who wrote

about that particular topic. This final column also assisted in ascertaining whether a particular topic should be dealt with individually, as a whole class, or not at all by the teacher.

Family and relatives. The results of the content analysis indicated that the categories of Family and Relatives and Sports and Recreation were the most frequently discussed by students. In the former case all students contributed comments that could be classified as relating to "Family and Relatives." This category was defined as an entry that dealt with a student's immediate family or extended family. Three-quarters of the comments discussed in this category related to visits to a relative's house. For example, one student was not only excited about visiting her relative's house, but also has her visit planned out.

Dear Mrs. Catherine,
... I can't wait til Friday because I get to go to my grandma and grandpas place and help grand and I get to sleep ofer night till Sunday. I get to make breckfast, lunch and super. For breckfast we'll have cereall for lunch we'll have chees sandwiches for supper we'll have sphaghetti or chicken.

Approximately one-half of the comments that addressed visiting a relative's house expressed the child's concern that he or she may not be able to visit these elderly relatives for much longer. In contrast, other visits celebrated the beginning of a new life. The following two student journal entries point out these two contrasting views.

On the weekend we are going to lethbridg to see my grandma and my other grandma and my grandpa to visit them because they are geting sick so we have to go see them before they get even sicker.

Table 2
Results of the Content Analysis on Student Journal Entries

Category	# of coding units	# of respondents
Family/Relatives	32	6/6
Sports and Recreation	32	6/6
Friends	30	6/6
Pets and Animals	19	5/6
Trips	18	5/6
Gifts and Holidays	11	6/6
School Relationships	11	4/6
Academics	5	3/6

When my auntie had a baby I was so excited. This is what hapend. K_____ was staying at our house and we went to A_____ and we went to grandmas house. J_____ phoned and said it was a girl and I was just getting off my bike and K_____ comes running to me and said its a girl.

All students' discussed at least once how they enjoyed visiting grandparents. These students were also cognizant of the fact that their grandparents may, in fact, not be around for them to visit for very much longer. The analysis of these particular journal entries indicates that this group of grade three students are already thinking about what it means to be a grandparent, what it means to be old, and the reality of death.

On Friday the 21 we went to my grandpas house the one that died. When my grandma died we went to see her in her box and it was so nice because it was blue and white with florders on top.

Sports and recreation. The category of Sports and Recreation was as frequently discussed as the preceding topic of Family and Relatives. All of the six respondents wrote about a variety of activities that could be classified in this category. When students discussed this category they frequently mentioned how much fun they thought sports and other such activities were.

I'm going to be verey bisy on week-ends because I know go to gymnastics Saturday and Sunday yesterday I had gymnastics and it was fun I like the uneven bars the most.

Even though all of the respondents were involved in a variety of activities, each had a sport which appeared to stand out as their favourite. This particular respondent wrote about hockey whenever he could.

On December 3 my hockey team played against T_____. We played them our second game of the year and they beat us twelve to two. They beat us by ten points. this time they only won nine to eight and in the first period it was three nothing for us in the third period it was nine to six for then with thirty seconds left in the game we got two goals it was a pretty good game. Afterwards I went to a birthday party at C_____ and we had a boxing tournament on the video games and we played baseball and football and we watched some movies it was a GREAT day.

Another student appeared to enjoy activities that involved his family.

The first thing that happend to me at W_____ was when I was making a turn and I picked up too much speed and I went flying. Then when I opened my eyes I found out that my poles where at least ten yards away then I found that I had only one ski. Then when me and my dad were going up the T-bar it jerked then we fell off and my dad sat on my ski and it came off. But the second time we didn't fall. Then after I got down I quit then dad went down one more hill then Dad bought me and D_____ a pop. Then got on the bus and left.
THE END.

P.S.
I had fun.

Regardless of the activity, students all wrote about enjoying themselves. Most of the respondents were involved in a team sport such as hockey or an individual sport such as gymnastics. All of the respondents also mentioned a family member or friend when discussing a sporting activity; indicating that the socializing aspect of sports appeared to be as exciting as the activity itself. All six of the respondents wrote about sporting activities in such a way as to want to share their excitement for them.

Friends. This category referred to classmates or any other child who was not related to the author of the journal entry. The theme of friends occurred quite regularly in every student's journal signifying the importance of this area in their life. Most of the student entries focused on friendships that were occurring away from the school setting. The following excerpt is a representative sampling of these entries.

On Saturday we went to B_____ house and we played games and made a fort out of pillows and blankets. it was fun we were playing with hot popers there rubber bowl shapes and they pop real high we hid them and forgot were they were and we were walking and they popped up one hit me in the arm, one hit B_____ in the head and the rest missed and one got lost it was a great night.
The End.

Three types of journal entries emerged from the theme of friends. Students discussed friendships that involved cooperative activities in which they became active in

and were of interest to them. These activities ranged from games that they engaged in to keep themselves occupied or community-based activities, such as gymnastics, that either one or both children were involved in. In this area friends were considered to be very important either as equal participants or as supportive members of an audience.

The second type of discussion surrounding the theme of friends encompassed the interpersonal nature of what it means to be with others in one's peer group. This was seen as not always being a positive experience. Even though some interactions were negative in nature, all of the students wrote of having a strong desire to remain friends with everyone in their group.

Other entries discussed one's day to day interactions with his or her peer group. This particular excerpt discusses relationships that involve more than two individuals.

To day R_____ gave me a sort a nasty letter that she told J_____ to rite but J_____ rote it in the rong way. R_____ ment it to be nice but J_____ didnt rite it the way R_____ said and it made me cry...and wen I started crying R_____ came over and said, "Please dont cry or youl get me in truble" ... But please don't yell or get mad at her because I still want to be her best freind.

The final type of entry that discussed friends spoke of seeing friends during special times such as holidays because they lived in far away places. Initially, these entries mentioned their friends in a casual manner, but as the time to visit them became more immediate the discussions became more frequent and animated. Entries dealing with this theme spoke of being reunited with friends from far away during prolonged holidays. The following journal entry not only discusses this particular theme but also is significant in that it sheds some light into how this child feels about her life.

...Thats is realy all I have to say to you. My life is not that interesting. Oh I forgot in the sumer time are friend's frome Astrela are coming here. Well that raps it upfor now. Until next time by.

Pets. The next theme to be prominent was the theme of pets and animals. This is perhaps natural as all students live on or close to a farm, and a large proportion of the student body belongs to a club or association that deals specifically with animals. Only one student failed to discuss this theme at all; this journal was filled with entries concerning sports and family information.

A typical entry categorized in this area concerned horses. Most of the students owned their own horse and knew that their teacher also rode horses and enjoyed discussing the topic. The following entry is typical of the type of discussions that surrounded this theme.

I had a great weekend. I had fun at EquiFair. I loved the breeds for the world. I loved the horses I really liked the Arabians and this one morning because this man was giving me a picture of a morning stallion and the morning swished her head over the man and started sniffing me! I had a great time.

Other student entries addressed household pets and their activities around the home. This student entry concerned the playfulness of her pet kitten.

Our little kitten it jumped into the bathtub when the bathtub was full of water and I had to save her. Our little dog Amy and the little white kitten will jump on Amy and anything the little kitten sees anything in sight she plays with.

This next journal entry addresses another episode regarding a cat, however, this particular entry also deals with death as well.

My cat had her babies and she had six and three of them died and my mom said that their eyes would be open in ten days and that is in 4 more days. She had them before my mom came home from the school. My dad saw them before my mom and he said that she had six and three died so they got on some gloves and picked up the cats and put them some ware but they didn't tell us ware they put the dead cats at but they were so cute and they died but we still have three left...

The student discussions of the theme of pets and animals largely focussed on the positive relationships that have developed for the students towards their pets. It appeared quite clearly that strong emotional bonds were developing and that various types of animals held special significance in the lives of these students. The student journal entries were lengthy and expressed how this group of students felt about their pets. The students derived a strong sense of pride from owning a pet that they could care for and expressed a feeling of personal closeness to something or someone other than their immediate family. It appeared through the entries that students' pets helped them feel that they were contributing something useful to the world, as they were assisted another species to flourish in a loving and caring environment. This next journal entry typifies this as this student demonstrates concern, compassion, and a basic knowledge regarding horses.

This spring I have to get Bullet and Silver trained. I just about have Bullet trained he's halter broke already. I'm getting him to like the brush's so far I'm doing pretty good. He likes the soft brush but not the comb he hates the comb. But I guess hes going to have to like it. I wonder what he ll do when I get on his back I don't know if he will be like Silver because when my dad got on Silvers back he didn't budge then he just was walking around. I'm not sure if bullet will like being around other horses our arenas but I think hes going to be like his mom because hes good tempered like his mom and hes as gentle as Velvet I hope. But with those blood lines I don't know because I don't know who his father was whether he'll be a good horse.

Trips. The next theme concerned the trips taken at various times of year with family members or fieldtrips involving the school. The following journal entry was unique as it discussed a camping trip, which no other student spoke of during the school year; all of the other student journal entries discussed quick overnight trips or day trips to various locations where relatives or motels were used as accommodation.

On the weekend my famly and me went caping whith some fendis becus my mom and dad had a ball ternument in High River. we had a lot of fun in High River whith T_____ and the other people off the ball team. The capgrawnd had a really neat and nice play grawnd. It was could all the time icsept for friday and sunday. We got there friday and we left sunday after lunch. We got home at seven twenty

there we had a bath me and C_____ got some brown beans well we wached T.V. after that we went to bed and then we got up in the moning and came to school and now I am done righting in my Journal.

A further journal entry regarding trips was what a particular student hoped would happen for him.

Yesterday I said to mom and dad this week-end I want to go to edmonton mom put her thumbs down Dad just sat there then I said to mom I have'nt been to edmonton. So I'm not sure If were going to edmonton. If we do I'll love mom forever because well go to west edmonton mall and I'll go on the water slides, see the dolphins maybe go on the submarine but I don't like gonig on it because I gist about got sick!

A final journal entry typical of the majority of trips taken by these students centred around quick day trips.

...Then R_____ grandma + grandpa came and took us to Lethbridge and we went to the Galt Museum. Then we went on a natures hike and we ended up at Fort Woopup and we went through all of it. Then we went out for chinise food. I want to go to her house again.

All of the students discussed trips in a positive way as they described them as fun, exciting, and a great time. These trips involved either friends or immediate family members and always appeared to leave an impression on each student that went on such an excursion. Students were quick to share their adventures in their journals as well as the new facts and information they had gained from their experiences.

School relationships. Another category of themes involved the theme of School Relationships, which entailed student relationships with fellow students and teachers at their school. This first journal entry concerns the relationship between Catherine and one of her students as this student perceives it.

Dear Catherine:

you are giving me a hard time all the time K_____ wanted me to read something. I dont like this school because no budy likes me at all not even you and I don't now if I should like you eny more and I'm going to ask my dad if I can go to a diffrent

school. and you only like the people that are nice to you I hope I go to a different school. you like every body but me so there.

This was one of two entries in which this student expressed feeling left out and alone during her time in Catherine's room. This quotation described how she felt up to this point in the school year. In order to show how this issue was resolved, Catherine's response and the student's next journal entry will be presented.

From Catherine

Hi _____

I admit that I am putting some extra pressure on you but it is because I want you to do well in EVERY part of your school work.

I ask you this:

1. Do you think that talking to K_____ constantly during the String Quartet's performance was acceptable behavior? I believe it was rude.
2. Do you think that after TWO YEARS in my classroom I should have to speak to you about what we're to do during U.S.S.R. and you know very well I'm not talking about once or twice, I have to remind you constantly.
3. We have talked a lot about co-operation, caring and thoughtfulness in this room -- especially since we sit really close to other people at tables this year. How do you suppose J_____ feels having you lean across his work to visit with K_____? Don't you remember why I moved you and K_____ from sitting beside each other in the first place? Your continuing to talk at the table tells me that you are not ready to do as I ask you, so my next plan to try and help you understand that I mean what I say is to remove you from the table completely.

So . . . who is giving who a hard time? I guess I could say that you're giving me one because you won't listen to me or do as I ask you to do.

As for your idea of changing schools -- is running away from a problem the way to solve it?

C_____, I don't dislike you, but I do expect you to do as I ask. I do not think that asking for good behavior is unreasonable.

The very next journal entry by this student focussed on her resolution of the problem.

I am sorry what you and me reat to each other. I gess that I was rong what I rote to you can I sit back at the table if I don't talk to K_____ any more because I like that table so much.

Me and you!

Hi C

I don't think you need to be sorry or need to apologize for what you wrote. I think it was good that you told me how you felt, and now we both have a better understanding of each other.

Entries from other students in this category dealt with the positive side of how students felt about school as this student writes.

Dear Catherine:

I have been having a lot of fun at school so far it is neat having you for a teach agan. I like haveing the old grade oners in your classroom. And I like what we have been doing so far.

A final type of entry dealing with school relationships discusses the interplay between students in the classroom.

Sometimes R_____ is a big show off. She acts like she knows everything. She hits somotimes with her ruler. But I still like her. But she lys sometimes like when she said she was only going to play with L_____ for two weekes and she played with J_____ from then on. And I gess if she want to ly thats fine. And she lags at every thing she says.

The theme of school relationships certainly portrays the human element in the educational arena. The interplay between teacher/student, student/student, and teacher/teacher evolves daily creating a particular atmosphere within each classroom. The importance of this atmosphere lies within the fact it may either stifle creativity, spontaneity, and overall learning or nurture and encourage further explorations in all aspects of learning (cognitive, psychomotor, and affective). How learning evolves within a classroom setting is ultimately a teacher responsibility.

Gifts and holidays. A further theme that emerged from the student journals was that of Gifts and Holidays. These entries either discussed activities relating to summer

holidays, Christmas holidays, and subsequent gifts, or Easter holidays. This student entry discusses her adventure during a trip through the mountains.

On the summer holoday we went to the montins and we saw a baby deer and to mother deer and one dad deer and a montin gote. We saw three montin climers.

The majority of entries surrounding this theme centred around Christmas holidays. Two entries proved to be typical of what these students wrote about on this topic. One type of entry listed the gifts that they received during this time.

This is what me and my sister got I got finger paint, A Teddy bear, a quarter horse paint set, a drowing book, a slinky and a huge colering book. My sister and I got Play Doh Mop Top Hair Shop and my brother got a farm set and a rocking horse. My sister got a slinky, a kitty paint set, Barbye clothes, a book, doll, bear. Oops I forgot I got a puzzle, P.J.s and a beret.

The second type of entry surrounded going away during the holidays with family members such as this typical entry.

This weekend I'm going to have FUN! Because we are going to hana, a for Chirstmas, and I can't wait. But one thing is we don't get to go to the Rodeo in Edmonton. But I think I will HAVE LOTS OF FUN: and I hope I get LOTS OF TOYS!

All of the students wrote about Christmas either in terms of what they had received or the people or activities that they would be involved with. Other holidays such as summer holidays or Easter break were only mentioned by half of the students.

Academics. The final student theme noted was academics. This theme involved any discussion around various subject areas; i.e., tests, timetabling, and/or computers. This first entry demonstrates how a student feels about the timetabling of journal writing.

Today has been fun and fast. I have been thinking mabey we should have Journal on Monday because Monday comes after the weekend and some people like to rite what hapend on the weekend. So maybe you could gang it from Thursday to Monday.

Another type of entry surrounded taking a test and how this student felt about that.

In Math to day there was a test me and J_____ only got 100. Today it was my lucky day.

The final type of journal entry relating to this theme was a retelling of what had occurred for that particular student the previous day at school.

Yesterday in school I was doing my story when Mrs. _____ came to help me do my work with me. We did a lot of work and we wached E.T.

The End.

Catherine initially felt that her students would write more on academic matters and had mixed reactions to the paucity of journal entries in this area. This issue will be addressed during the discussion of the teacher interviews. However, it should be pointed out that the teacher noted that all of her students were doing well academically. This topic then was perhaps not seen as a concern or a priority for this particular group of students.

Summary

This particular group of students managed to discuss a variety of topics in their journals throughout the school year, revealing to the teacher their interests, hobbies, and fascinations. The benefits of creating an environment where students can enter into such a written dialogical encounter is quite clear. This type of writing can be contrasted with the boring and repetitive written assignments often required of students (Guetter, 1990). More recently authors have suggested that students must find something to say, something that is important to the writer. It is further believed that students must be able to write about what matters to them personally (Guetter, 1990; Rosen, 1986; Simon, 1987; Smith, 1982;

Suransky, 1982). Writing about what matters to an individual encourages each person to engage in a written dialogue confidently and respectfully. Bonilla (1989) and Calkins (1983) suggest that this confidence is developed when students are asked to write about their own life experiences. This type of writing allows for each student's voice to be heard since the students are actively engaged in meaningful communication.

In this particular class, a dialogue journal format was used which allowed the teacher and students to enter into an ongoing reciprocal conversation. The students were given the opportunity to write about what mattered to them at any given time during the school year. A benefit of this type of sharing was that problems or issues were often brought to the teacher's attention, thus allowing them to be discussed and resolved.

It should also be noted that a variety of language functions such as questioning, complaining, promising, and listening were utilized by these students through the use of their journals. Certain researchers believe that dialogue journals allow for the development of language functions that are commonly found in oral discourse in a secure and mutually respectful medium (Bode, 1989; Bromley, 1989; Shuy, 1987; Staton, 1987).

Through the use of dialogue journals a close personal relationship between the teacher and student develops (Atwell, 1987; Danielson, 1988; Gambrell, 1985; Shuy, 1987; Unia, 1985). Talbot (1990) goes on to suggest that the magic in teaching lies within the rapport that is developed rather than on specific teaching strategies. In order to teach effectively a teacher must be able to develop a procedure where both students and their teacher have a part in personalizing education for one another. In terms of writing assignments the journals appear to be an important part of this practice.

Writing in journals results in increased writing ability, motivation to write, and improved self-understanding (Danielson, 1988; Gambrell, 1985; Platt and Bright, 1989; Staton, 1980). Teachers play a very significant role in the journal writing process. They may assist students in all aspects of writing and conversation, motivating them to continue their journal writing or may squelch any further writing by turning the journal into a

redundant, meaningless written exercise. If educators believe that students and teachers must engage each other on a path of lifelong learning, schools must find ways to allow students to share their experiences and to voice their authority in a mutually beneficial manner. Students must develop an attitude that what they have to say is important and, hence, respected by a teacher. If we, as educators, allow this to occur in our classrooms we are fostering meaningful dialogue and are bringing the outside world into our schools. This would perpetuate a sense of wholeness to the educational process as students could view education as a meaningful endeavor encompassing their lives and not as something being done to them.

The journal writing process needs both the student and teacher to participate in a thoughtful manner for it to be successful. What, in fact if anything, did Catherine do to assist her students in this process? The following section will deal with Catherine's responses to the students' journal entries.

Teacher Responses

The five different categories that emerged from the content analysis of teacher responses have been summarized in Table 3. Also noted in Table 3 were the number of coding units in each theme and the number of students who received the specific teacher feedback. Determining the quantity and type of feedback given by Catherine assisted the researcher in outlining what the teacher did to make her journal writing program successful. The final category allowed the researcher to discover which students were receiving the various types of feedback. For example, was the group of students with minimal ability receiving all of the feedback on grammar or was it equally distributed amongst all of the students?

Table 3
Results of the Content Analysis on Teacher Responses

Category	Number of Coding Units	Number of Students Given Responses
1. Support	55	6/6
2. Sharing	52	6/6
3. Questioning	47	6/6
4. Grammar	8	3/6
5. Relationships	5	3/6

Support. The theme of support was defined as statements such as any form of positive feedback which tells students that they are doing well at a particular activity. Table 3 indicates that all of the students received supportive responses from the teacher and this category was the most frequently used by Catherine. Supportive teacher feedback ranged from discussions about school work to providing encouragement for personal activities outside of the school setting. In this first example Catherine is responding to a student who felt she had worked hard to do well on a test and felt very lucky since she doesn't always receive as good a mark as she would like.

Hi C_____.

Yes C_____, you did a super job on your test! Way to go!! I believe that if you really concentrated on school work that you could do better than you are doing in all your subjects. C_____ you have also done a great job on writing paragraphs in your journal writing.

Not only has Catherine managed to give this student positive feedback on her test results, but she also offered encouraging remarks regarding another area of her school work. In this second example Catherine offers positive support to a student who is having problems with a classmate.

Hi S_____.

Sometimes people do things that we don't like for strange reasons unknown to us. I hope R_____ and you can still be friends. Look on the positive - not the negative.

Finally, Catherine provides support to a student who is going to be involved in a hockey tournament over the weekend.

Hi D_____.

Good luck at the tournament. I would like to see you play before hockey season is over.

Not only are students being afforded an opportunity to share their excitement over good school marks or an upcoming event, but are also being provided a supportive and meaningful context to write this in. Danielson (1988) stipulates that we need to utilize dialogue journals so that children gain practice in writing in a conversational tone and be able to share their writing. If this occurs, children come to view writing as a means of recording information, expressing feelings, and interacting with people. By responding the way Catherine does her students view journal writing as writing that has a purpose and to someone who cares about what they have to say. Danielson (1988) believes that not only will this build confidence within each student, in terms of their writing ability, but it will also assist them in viewing their school as a friendlier place to be.

Questioning. The theme of questioning was defined as statements that asked the writer to provide more information, to clarify information, or to reflect on their own behavior. In this initial example a student is being asked to reflect somewhat on her recent behavior regarding a personal relationship.

Hi C____,

Why would K____ and her mom say things like that? Have you done something to provoke K____ and her mom?

A further response by Catherine regarding this theme involves a student's feelings about being in a split grade 2/3 classroom and her involvement in a weekend activity.

Catherine begins by providing some supportive statements;

Hi L____,

I'm glad that you're enjoying school. I like having the same kids for two years in a row because it is always interesting to see how they grow up, and what better

readers and writers they become!... Do you feel older and more grown-up? Is school becoming easier? ...What kinds of things do you do on the uneven bars? Do you swing back and forth like I saw at the Olympics?

The final example illustrates two boys' fascination with a ditch and a fence. This topic has been written about several times by both students; however, Catherine is unclear as to the significance of their journal entries.

Hi J_____,

D_____ wrote in his Journal about playing in the ditch with the fence too, but I'm not sure I understand what makes the fence in the ditch special. Could you fill me in on this?

A considerable amount of time was spent on this theme by Catherine. All of the students were asked by her to either define, clarify, or reflect on all or parts of their journal entries, regardless of their writing ability. These particular entries exemplify the conversational tone between two people that should arise in writing. Danielson (1988) notes that students will come to view their writing as natural if they write for a purpose and it is responded to in a mutually interactive manner. Catherine's responses appear to be directed towards what the students have to say more so than on how they say it. Many researchers suggest that educators must respond to meaning initially and that the grammatics and structure will develop over time by constant practice and the desire to write more effectively (Barbieri, 1987; Gentry, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983; Guetter, 1990; Smith, 1982). When students compose their own thoughts and respond to comments and questions from others, students learn to manipulate language in new ways (Danielson, 1988).

Sharing. The theme of sharing was defined as teacher comments that related to Catherine's personal experiences either as a child or as an adult. Catherine responded to all of the students using this method. The teacher comments ranged from discussing

experiences from when Catherine was young to activities she does now as an adult. The following example relates a story to a student that was jarred by this student's use of a title.

Hi J____,

I loved your closing on February 23rd's writing... "Happy Trails"! When I was about your age, every day after school I watched the Roy Rogers Show. He was a cowboy with a famous horse named Trigger, and at the end of every show he sang a song called "Happy Trails". So by you writing that as your closing, it caused a flood of memories for me.

This next excerpt demonstrates to students that teachers often have similar feelings as they do.

Hi D____,

I have days when my life seems to be uninteresting too. Sometimes I think that I do nothing but school related activities. With Spring and warm weather just about here I'll get outside more and I think that will make me happier.

If students should write about what matters to them, (Guetter, 1990; Rosen, 1986; Simon, 1987; Suransky, 1982), these particular students are in fact being given this opportunity. Students are writing about what is important to them in a meaningful way and are practicing their writing skills simultaneously.

Another factor that is equally crucial to the furthered enhancement of journal writing is the role of the teacher. Teacher responses are critical in nurturing further honest and reflective writing by students. Bode (1989) and Staton (1980) tell us that dialogue journals, if managed properly, allow for mutually constructed conversations to occur. These conversations do not just happen, they are developed by allowing students to write about what is important to them and a teacher who responds to these writings in an honest and respectful manner. Students begin to feel that what they have to say is important and is supported by the teacher. Both students and their teacher share experiences that assist in

promoting an atmosphere of trust and opening up an honest and purposeful dialogue between the students and their teacher.

Talbot (1990) suggests that the magic in teaching lies within the rapport that teachers develop with their students and not with specific instructional strategies. As Danielson (1988) discusses, teachers need to help make schools friendlier places to be. One way in which to develop such an atmosphere is to aid students in building confidence in their writing ability and to build friendships. Not only do dialogue journals allow for this to occur, but the corresponding teacher responses play a crucial role in this endeavor. Students who write about what matters to them must be heard by someone who cares about and shares in their writing for further writing to develop.

Grammar. One important aspect of writing development is the proper use of grammatical rules. The theme of grammar was defined as any teacher comments that were directed towards the rules of writing in a reinforcing or constructive way. Three out of the six students had teacher comments that were categorized as grammatical remarks. Of these three students, one student was identified by the teacher as an average journal writer, one who was identified as a minimal writer, and one who was identified as a prolific writer.

Catherine's remarks ranged from questions about grammatical rules to telling a student to use a specific rule. In this initial example Catherine tells a student to be more careful with her handwriting and tries to give her confidence at the same time.

R____, I wish you would take more care with your handwriting. I know that you can do better.

In this second excerpt the student is being asked if he knows how to use a specific rule.

Hi D____,

... I'm wondering if you know how to use Capital letters yet?

In this final example Catherine praises this student for doing much better at using paragraphs and reminds her about a particular rule regarding paragraphs.

Hi C____,

...You have also done a great job of writing paragraphs in your Journal writing. Don't forget to indent the first line of each new paragraph.

The theme of grammar is a much discussed topic in the area of journal writing. Gage (1986) tells us that writing can be viewed as a technical skill or as an intellectual process. Instead of developing a program that predominantly asks students to master the skills of writing, Gage suggests that students should be asked to concentrate on the meaning that they derive and not simply on the mechanics of writing.

Newman (1984) suggests that one of the major purposes of journal writing is to allow children to explore ideas without restriction. In so far as the journal is concerned then, meaning should be the main goal. Staton (1980) believes that a dialogue journal assists students in improving handwriting, grammar, spelling, and expression because students become self-motivated. This motivation is derived from students being able to write about what concerns them.

Others believe that spelling, grammar, and punctuation will evolve over time (De Ford, 1980; Gentry, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983). This evolution will stem from continued practice in a nonthreatening environment such as in the journal.

Catherine did make comments regarding grammar with three of her students involved in this study. The literature regarding this area appears to be mixed. Some researchers feel that because students become self-motivated and write a great deal in their journals students will strive to communicate more effectively on their own. Other

researchers believe that grammar, even in journals, can be taught during teachable moments. Tchudi (1987) notes that indeed we need to assist children in becoming better writers by placing students in control of their writing with teacher interventions during teachable moments. It is through this ongoing dialogue that teachers can assist students in refining ideas and in the mechanics of writing. The notion of correcting or not correcting grammatical errors then, would appear to rest with each individual teacher. Catherine definitely mentions grammatical errors to certain students if she believes students need to be reminded or praised for their work in this area.

Relationships. The theme of relationships was defined as teacher comments dealing with teacher/student, student/student and/or student/parent relationships. Three out of the six students received teacher comments that dealt with personal relationships. These comments ranged from resolving classmate differences to resolving issues outside of the school.

This first example demonstrates Catherine agreeing with a student on how students should behave.

Hi C____,

I agree with J____ I don't believe that anyone should "boss" anyone else - I think everyone should just get along.

The second excerpt again has Catherine promoting positive behavior.

Hi S____,

... I'm glad that you and R____ have resolved your differences and are back to being friends again. I think it is a good thing if everyone in the class gets along.

Finally, this example illustrates a relationship that has occurred outside of the school setting.

Hi J____,

I agree with what your Mom says ... and I'm glad I phoned C____ Dad and we got that problem solved!

Danielson (1988) suggests that for students to write about topics that are of importance to them, they must develop a special rapport with a teacher. The student and teacher must come to know each other on a more personal level so that an atmosphere of trust may develop. Furthermore, Harste (1990) notes that a good place to begin instruction is by utilizing the student's own language and experiences. From that point teachers and students can share in the meaning of texts. The journal entries of these students appear to demonstrate that Catherine has attempted to create an environment whereby students' life experiences are viewed as an important part of the schooling process.

The results of the content analysis completed on student journals reinforced the fact these students were allowed to write about what mattered most to them. All of the students were responded to in a similar fashion. Catherine did not respond differently to a student who was identified as a prolific journal writer as opposed to a minimally identified journal writer.

The following section will deal with the teacher interviews that were conducted over the course of this study.

Teacher Interviews

The results of the content analysis completed on the teacher interviews are presented in tabular form in Table 4. There were three general themes that emerged from the teacher

interviews. General themes were all encompassing categories such as writing process. Specific themes were then more distinctly identified from the general themes. For example, a statement regarding the general theme of writing process was more distinctly identified as modelling. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the themes that emerged from the teacher interviews.

Writing Process

During the initial interview three general themes emerged relating specifically to the use of journals. The theme of writing process contained four distinctly defined sub-themes. These sub-themes were modelling, feedback, evaluation, and change.

Modelling. The theme of modelling emerged at the beginning of the first interview while Catherine was discussing how journals were being implemented in her classroom. Modelling refers to Catherine writing along with her students during the selected journal writing time. As Catherine states, "Usually we write for thirty minutes and I write with the children at the same time in my journal..."

Catherine felt that by writing alongside of her students, she would not only be a good role model but also believed that teachers should not ask students to do anything that they are not prepared to do.

"I think the children see me doing it and that makes it more valid in their eyes. I don't think that we should ask students to do anything that we are not prepared to do ourselves."

Catherine became an integral part of the journal writing process in her classroom. Journals were completed by everyone and not just assigned by the teacher as part of a writing assignment to be marked later. This was an important feature since the students viewed Catherine as an integral member of the journal writing class.

Table 4

Themes from Teacher Interviews	
Interview #1	Interview #2
Writing Process	Writing Process
-modelling	
-feedback	
-evaluation	
-change	-change
Curriculum	Curriculum
-planning	-planning
Atmosphere	Atmosphere
-trust	-trust
-bonding	-bonding
-self-growth	

"...sometimes I share parts of my journal with them. They might say Mrs. Smith you haven't shared your journal for a couple of weeks, would you like to share or they might ask what is journal writing about today?"

Feedback. The second theme discussed was that of feedback. This theme revolved around teacher feedback or comments directed towards student journal entries. Feedback was looked upon as a very important theme not only by Catherine, but by various researchers as well. This fact was exemplified by Talbot as he writes:

"I think we also need to realize that the magic in teaching lies less in the strategies and methodologies than it does in the rapport we have with our students" (Talbot, 1990, p.56).

Catherine gave a lot of thought as to how she was going to respond to the student journal entries initially. The problem of providing feedback becomes complex when a teacher strives to develop a certain type of learning environment in her classroom. This not only takes time to evolve but a teacher must also be consistent with the approach to providing feedback so that students are not receiving mixed messages. Finally, a teacher must be willing to show students, through the writing act, something of himself or herself personally. The teacher needs to respond in such a way as to be seen as a real person in an honest and sincere way. This is what Catherine had to say about providing feedback.

"...what worried me at first, when I started journal writing, was how I was going to respond to these children? What did I have to say to them? I think I have become more comfortable with responding, more comfortable in revealing more of me to them through journal writing. I think this year has been the most successful year in journal writing with my class because I think they write to me very freely and openly about anything. I in turn write back as a person through the journal. I've gotten to know them better."

Catherine does not mark or grade her students' journal entries.

"I never grade it or mark it. I just respond to the content of what they have written about or I might answer questions if they've asked me something or I might give them suggestions that could help them with a problem..."

Even though journal entries are not corrected Catherine does respond to sloppy spelling, handwriting, or to little effort put into the journal entry itself.

"What I've done a couple of times is with a couple of the grade two students -- who do not write very much -- is I write nothing back to them and talk to them about that in terms of how they felt about that; such as I had nothing to respond to, so if you want me to respond you have to write to me."

A third theme that emerged from the general theme of writing process was evaluation. This theme dealt with student evaluation by handing out grades for journal writing. Catherine felt that since journals were used to share thoughts and feelings, giving grades was not appropriate.

"I wouldn't want anyone to grade me on my thoughts or on my ideas. If I just want to share them with you and I chose to write them in a journal to you about them I wouldn't want you to come back and give me a grade on my thoughts... I just want to respond to them as another human being."

Catherine has tried to present a very humanistic environment in her classroom. It is important to her to allow students to see her as a caring human being. One of the avenues for this to occur is through the use of journals in her writing program. Catherine tells the parents of her students that even though journal writing is an important element of her program, it is only one aspect of it. She wants parents to view her as a human being as well and not just another teacher their child will have.

"This is just one part of the writing program that I really enjoy. Most of the parents know what we are trying to do through meetings and the primary teachers work very closely together. I would like parents to think that I'm not distant but human."

Change. The final theme emerging from the writing process category was that of change. The theme of change ranged from timetabling journal writing activities to actually thinking about changing the format of journal writing. This theme of change was discussed during the two interviews. Initially, Catherine began the first interview by

stating why she implemented journal writing the way she does. Students eventually were writing once a week during a formal time period and then could write in them at any other time during the week if they wished.

"Some students go back to their journals throughout the week. Probably I would like to do it more than once a week. I think I got into the once a week when I had the grade 3/4 writing class and I had twenty-seven children in that class and I was doing journal writing with them. I was also doing journal writing with my grade two students in my regular classroom as well. I ended up having about 45 or 48 journals to respond to every week. When I say respond I usually write half a page or a page to them... So that is why I sort of cut back to just once a week..."

As with any type of program or activity in schools, journal writing for Catherine has evolved through the years. This evolution can be positive and, at times, may be negative. The whole notion of changing an activity is to create something that is better than it previously was. In terms of the journal writing in Catherine's classroom, better largely meant creating a format and schedule that allowed everyone to feel that they could express their unique thoughts and notions about any topic they chose to write about without feeling rushed. When Catherine discusses this evolution, she also manages to identify many of the themes that were found in the class' journals. Catherine talked initially about wanting her students to write about other subject areas more, so that she could discuss, through writing, what they were thinking about or concerned about. She goes on to state how she planned to accomplish this and why she eventually changed this format to suit further writing requirements.

"We had a section of the journal called scoop and it could be relationships at school or subjects at school... When I looked at some of the themes that were coming through in their journals, school was one, entertainment was one,... sports was another one. So we divided the journal up into different categories or themes. What I didn't like about that (just the whole physical thing of doing it) was there was so much flipping back and forth... Looking at the number of children I was dealing with and all this flipping back and forth and checking the dates and finding what section do I have to turn to today to respond to, that was more time consuming than maybe the value that they may have gotten out of it. Because I think they could have just written straight in their journals without having those categories about all those different things anyway just through paragraphing."

Catherine went on to suggest that she was thinking about having her class next year write about specific subject areas in their journals.

"I'd like to get the children doing more of a journal type of writing about specific subjects... maybe that would be different than the dialogue journals, but I would like them to write about the arithmetic lesson... Maybe a concept in social studies or science."

During the second interview Catherine had more to say about changing the format of the dialogue journals that she was using and was going to use next year.

"Well I've thought about that since our last interview and originally I was thinking I might have separate journals -- like separate physical books -- one for socials or sciences or arithmetic... But after thinking about this for a week or so I was going through this in my mind and wondering maybe by just talking the idea up to the children -- like they could write about personal experiences or some learning in a subject..."

Catherine eventually decided that she wanted to keep the dialogue journal format that she had been using previously. The only change she would make would be to ask students to write about a specific concept when she felt that feedback was needed to decide whether or not the class had in fact understood it.

The second general theme that evolved from the teacher interviews was that of curriculum. There was one specific theme that emerged under this category; that of planning.

Curriculum

Planning. The theme of planning ranged from the scheduling of journal writing to planning lessons based on the contents of student journals. In the following excerpt Catherine describes how journals are implemented in her classroom.

"I started out this year doing journals once a week every Thursday. I don't know why, other than just because that was the day it just seemed to fit into the schedule. But the children really seem to enjoy writing in them -- so sometimes we write in them a couple of times a week or sometimes I say to them if during our one scheduled journal time you didn't get finished and they want to keep their journal and add to it or write in it later in the week we can do that sort of thing. But basically it is once a week for a forty minute class period."

In terms of curriculum planning Catherine has developed individual lessons, class lessons, and themes from student journal entries. The following excerpts illustrate the planning that was developed. In this first example Catherine is discussing spelling.

"... I might pick some words out of their journal and just write them on a piece of paper and then that might be the spelling lesson for a few of them or I know quotation marks came up once since a couple of students were writing a conversation... I said maybe we had better have a little lesson on these quotation marks. I do that kind of thing."

Another aspect of the journal is that a student may tell the teacher of a problem he or she is having in a particular subject area, as in this example:

"Like the boy who was having difficulties with his multiplication; that told me that I needed to spend some time just with him going over it and making sure that he felt comfortable before he had to tear into the assignment."

That particular type of entry allows the teacher time to plan an individual lesson or activity for that student. This next excerpt deals with planning a theme from a journal entry.

"...This student wrote about his summer holiday for about the first three weeks of school. The journal entries were all about what went on at the sea shore. I thought because this student was so shy I should scratch what I was doing and get onto a theme about the sea because I thought it would mean a lot to him."

During the second interview Catherine spent a great deal of time discussing the type of learning environment that she wanted in her classroom. It became increasingly clear that journal writing had a dramatic part to play. This final example demonstrates why Catherine plans from student journal entries.

"... I know their strengths, I know their weaknesses. I know the things that are important to them, I know the kinds of things that they like to do or an activity that might help them more than something I had just planned if I didn't know them."

The final general category was atmosphere. This category revolved around creating an environment that left students feeling safe, secure, and that each student was an important and integral partner in the learning process. There were three themes that emerged under the general category of atmosphere. These themes were trust, bonding, and self-growth.

Atmosphere

Trust. The theme of trust centred around the notion of having confidence in one another to write openly and honestly. This theme was important in terms of journal writing particularly since students must come to trust their teacher if they are going to write in an open and honest fashion. To gain individual student's trust, teachers must reciprocate in writing in an open and honest manner as well. Catherine believed that because she was responding in an open fashion, she was being rewarded with better student writing and gaining the trust of the class.

"I really feel that I am responding in a more open fashion this year than maybe with other classes. The content and the quality of the writing that I get maybe is a reflection of the way that I've been willing to respond back to them. You know I think that you have to set that, well that trust has to be there first of all. With the grade three class I've had them for two years and they trust me; they trust that they can tell me something and it will be in confidence...with the grade three class that trust is there that security, that what they write in their journal is confidential since they are writing to and I'm writing to them and nobody else has to know about it. I think that frees them to write."

During the second interview Catherine explained further why creating a trusting environment was important.

"I think by doing that -- like we talked about trust and coming here with a comfortable feeling -- children learn easier and remember things easier -- knowledge kinds of things -- if they feel comfortable in an environment that they are in... I know I had a really good teacher for grades 5, 6, and 7... I used to try and analyze how was that so easy for me -- what did she do that made it easy? I think it was the kind of relationship that she had developed with us as a class and I remember that. School doesn't have to be hard -- it can be fun and you can make their learning easier."

Bonding. The second theme that emerged from this category was the theme of bonding. Bonding referred to the actual teacher/student relationship, either positive or negative, that had actually developed. In this example Catherine explains how her relationship with each student affects the way she responds in the journals.

"I think I'm a lot more sensitive to their content to them as people... Knowing them as individuals as I do, I suppose I respond differently to each one. I know what each one needs to hear or how they need to be helped or what I could say that would have an impact on them."

Catherine felt very strongly that learning would be enhanced and have a stronger humanistic tone if personal relationships were developed and nurtured. When asked if children wouldn't learn anyway, even if a teacher wasn't concerned about setting up personal relationships, Catherine replied:

"Maybe they would, but it wouldn't be as much fun for me. My days coming here, I'm always glad to see them. I have come to know them better. I really believe that journal writing has had a profound effect on the way I teach... I found myself sharing more of me verbally and now I share more of me physically. Like at the end of the day, some of them, not all of them, line up to give me a hug before they go home."

Self-growth. The final theme in this category was that of self-growth. Self-growth was defined as a teacher's personal professional development. In this particular instance it was Catherine's own personal evolution with journal writing that she discusses. This personal evolution has allowed her to refine her journal writing process in her classroom.

"A strong thing was taking a couple of classes from one University professor in particular. We used journals in the classes which helped me see how I could use them to help me understand my studies, which made me realize that students could probably do that very same thing too. But I think that got me going in seeing that using the journal is a valuable experience."

Summary

After interviewing Catherine it became apparent very quickly that she truly believes that learning is enhanced if a classroom has a very open and trusting atmosphere in it. Van Manen discusses atmosphere in his book, The Tone of Teaching. This is what he says about atmosphere as it relates to how a teacher may foster learning:

...Parents and teachers should understand the power of atmosphere to contribute to the general sense of being, and to the positive well-being of the child. A sensitive teacher is able to create or foster an atmosphere that is productive for certain kinds of living and learning (Van Manen, 1986, p. 33).

Catherine has strived to create an environment that invites students to not only feel safe and secure, but to view learning as a process of striving to come to an understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Catherine believes that journals play a major role in creating such an environment. She also believes that journal writing can assist teachers in this process as well as students.

"My personal experience has been in using journal writing myself is that I have come to a greater understanding of myself and the world and my place in it and how I understand it and how I understand the people in it who come into contact with me. Because I am always trying to understand my learning too as it was when I was using it in university. I hope that the students can come to use their journals for that sort of thing even in later years if they have a year or two where they don't do it, that maybe they can still remember what they did in their first three years of school and come to the realization that they should or could use the journal to help them in their learning, to help them with life, to help them with problems."

Catherine is personally and professionally committed to using journals. She cares a great deal about teaching and the students in her classroom. In order to assist students in doing the best that they can while they are in her classroom, Catherine strives to incorporate academic and personal experiences in her room. She feels that if students incorporate

personal experiences with academic areas, learning could be viewed as fun and more concrete by her students. Journal writing has played a significant part in this process and certainly will continue to play this part in Catherine's classroom.

Catherine's comments to students in their journals along with the overall writing process that she implements sends a strong message to students that what they have to say and how they say it is important. During the teacher interviews Catherine spoke considerably about trust, atmosphere, and the overall well-being of all her students as human beings. The commitment towards journal writing that Catherine has shown has offered her the opportunity to really get to know her students as children, learners, and community members. It can be seen from the student journals that students write about a variety of topics in their journals and that Catherine offers genuine and supportive feedback. The concluding chapter will summarize the findings of this study as well as provide recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, SIGNIFICANCE, IMPLICATIONS, and
RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the content of dialogue journals of selected grade three students in order to discover the predominant themes in their writing. A second purpose was to explore through interviews with the teacher how she uses the information gained from journal work with her students to influence curriculum decision-making in her classroom.

The themes that emerged from the student journals ranged from relationships to sports. There were eight categories of themes in all with sports, family, and friends being the predominant themes. All of the respondents wrote about each of these topics. The theme of academics was the least discussed as only 3 out of the 6 respondents wrote about this topic. Catherine felt that was because the class as whole was doing well academically so the need to discuss problems in individual subject areas was, therefore, not there.

Catherine began the school year providing students with a lined scribbler that they used for journal writing. A forty minute period every Thursday was set aside for journal writing. The particular day chosen for journal writing fit into the overall class schedule the best and was not chosen for any other specific reasons. Catherine's students appeared to really enjoy writing in journals so she became a bit more flexible in terms of time. On occasion, if students were working hard in their journals but were not completed after the forty minute period, they were given more time. As well, on certain weeks her class wrote in them a couple of times during the week depending on the interest that was shown. Catherine also allowed students to write in their journals during any free time they had during the school day.

This particular group of six students wrote on eight different topics, although they were given the freedom to write on any topic they chose. Since one of Catherine's major

goals was to create a writing environment that supported open and honest dialogue, allowing students to choose their own topics appeared appropriate. Catherine felt that she was being rewarded with excellent student writing in terms of content and thoughtfulness towards their intended audience -- the teacher. This thoughtfulness was reflected by the students in their journal writing by choosing topics that appeared important to each of them. If a child feels comfortable in an environment, Catherine believes that each child will learn things easier. She truly believes that journal writing greatly imparts this, in her classroom at least.

Talbot (1990) believes writing for improvement should grow out of the ability to write to real audiences, on topics of personal choice, and for each individual's own purposes. In order to be able to accomplish this, teachers must give control over writing to the students. Catherine has done this to a certain degree as journal writing has become a personal writing program for each of her students. Writing to a real person who is truly interested in what the writer has to say is a good way to develop writing ability such as stating ideas and describing events (Platt and Bright, 1989 and Staton, 1980). Staton (1980) continues on to suggest that usual practice exercises in schools do not involve intellectual attempts to express personal experience and ideas in order to receive information back or to describe problems. Staton believes that writing in journals incorporates the three levels of language: phonics, syntax, and semantics.

Isakson (1986) maintains that dialogue journals give authenticity, purpose, and meaning to language processes. This is enhanced further if students see their teacher engage in journal writing as well. Catherine wrote in a journal along with her students and did share her entries or parts of a particular entry when asked to by her class. If a teacher writes in a journal along side the class, students begin to see that writing is a lifelong activity that is useful and that should be shared (Danielson, 1988).

This particular group of students not only wrote in dialogue journals to express ideas, practice writing, and develop personal relationships, but had a teacher who

developed further learning based on journal entries. Individual lessons, class lessons, and themes were developed based on student journal entries. For example, spelling lists were generated from student journals, as well, a science unit was developed concerning the ocean based on the content of student journal entries. At times Catherine dropped what she had been teaching to develop a new theme based on a particular student's interests or on a particular topic that quite a few of her students had been discussing in their journals.

Developing individual or class lessons and themes was seen as an extremely important feature for Catherine since she wanted her class to believe and feel each one of them was an important and integral partner in the learning process. The importance of constructing lessons or themes based on student writing also provides the students with more concrete learning experiences. Students begin to see the parallel between learning in school and life outside of school. This type of learning is based on the fact that learning becomes more meaningful and pertinent when each member of the group has an integral part to play in it and when it is based largely on personal experiences. As Catherine has previously stated, journal writing is only one aspect of the total writing program that she provides; however, it has become a very important aspect of her overall writing program not only for its personal flavour, but for its curriculum value as well.

In as much as this study has alluded to the importance of student entries in terms of curriculum intent and personal relationship building, the way a teacher responds to students is as important as the student journal entries themselves. The content analysis performed on Catherine's responses showed that she responded in five ways. These five themes were support, questioning, sharing, relationships, and grammatical responses. Supportive, sharing, and questioning responses far exceeded the other two types of responses.

Danielson (1988) suggests that primary grade teachers should model correct spelling and usage, ask elaborative questions, and share own life experiences. This is what Catherine has done for the majority of her responses. Regardless of each student's writing ability, Catherine continually asked everyone of her students in this study to clarify

statements. She also gave support to students and shared personal experiences with each of them. Even when Catherine remarked about a certain student's sloppy handwriting, she still managed to provide some positive remarks as well.

Many researchers would suggest, that the way Catherine responded to these students, she was promoting a natural written dialogue to develop between herself and her students. Staton (1987) states that this type of written dialogue brings back to education the essence of language in its natural form. Catherine alluded to the fact that by responding the way she does actually helps her students out academically and personally. Catherine feels this is the case since one of the features of dialogue journals is that a teacher really gets to know the students as people. A teacher may then be able to respond to each student in a more personal manner by sharing information and/or setting them straight about an issue in such a way as to be pertinent to that particular student. If a teacher really knows his or her students well, as Catherine appeared to, he or she is then able to tell each student information in a personally meaningful way. This treats and respects each student as a unique individual.

Significance and Implications

Catherine felt that because she responded to student journal entries by predominantly questioning, sharing, and supporting their writing, she received a high quality of writing from them. Catherine believed that she managed to gain each student's trust because of the way she responded to them. She suggests that learning becomes fun and easier for students if they feel comfortable in a particular environment. Feeling comfortable directly relates to the type of relationship a teacher is able to create with students. Catherine firmly believes that journals greatly assist in creating a positive environment.

Developing a positive environment also assists teachers in wanting to be at work with students. Catherine noted that she believed that journal writing has had a profound

impact on her teaching. She discovered that initially she was sharing more of herself verbally, which eventually led to sharing more of herself physically. These factors have led Catherine to promote a safe, secure, and trusting classroom climate.

There are several factors which appear to be unique to this particular setting. Catherine has had this particular group of grade three students since they began grade one. She taught them in grade one and has had them in her split grade two/three classroom. In terms of creating a trusting environment, Catherine and this group have had three years to develop this. The question then becomes, can a trusting environment be established in one year that will actively promote a healthy journal writing program?

The answer lies largely within each individual teacher and partly within each child's educational background of experiences. If a teacher believes strongly enough about journals to want this type of writing to be flourishing in their classroom, I believe journals have an excellent chance of being successfully implemented. The other factor to note is the educational background of the children within a teacher's class. Catherine stated that the primary teachers within her school work very closely together and even though they may teach using different styles, they all utilize journals in their classrooms. If one were to be teaching grade three then, the students, at the beginning of the school year would have had two years of journal writing behind them. This may or may not be a useful feature as teaching style and philosophy may be a predominantly motivating factor.

The final important characteristic of this teacher was the fact that she herself writes in a journal outside of the school setting. Catherine really believes that journals work and it is not just another time filler or another aspect of the curriculum that has to be implemented. Thus, Catherine's responses and her commitment to journal writing may be a reason why journals have been such a success in her classroom.

This study described how dialogue journals were implemented and what students wrote about in a grade three classroom. Dialogue journals are like having a conversation with another individual. This conversation allows for a relationship to develop between the

reader and the writer. The implementation of dialogue journals in a primary grade classroom may differ from room to room, however, there should be several similar key ingredients in place.

One very important factor is the belief of a teacher regarding the use and implementation of dialogue journals. Catherine viewed her use of dialogue journals as being a success since she truly believed in them as a learning aid. A teacher does not have to personally use a journal, as Catherine does, in his or her private life to have a successful journal writing program in school. A teacher must believe in using the journal, however, so that it does become an important part of the primary writing program. If dialogue journals are being utilized in a classroom, a teacher must ensure that he or she writes back to each student. The type or nature of the responses should be handled in an open and honest fashion. A key factor in the success of journal writing appears to be how a teacher responds to students. Catherine responded as an interested and caring person offering supportive statements as well as asking questions, and even sharing similar experiences, all of which attempted to get these students to clarify their own thoughts and to continue refining them.

Teacher responses appear to be a very important ingredient for successful implementation of journal writing in primary grades. Questioning, sharing, and supporting teacher statements appeared to aid this particular group of students with their journal writing. Along with ensuring that teachers respond to each child's journal writing, it seems important as well that primary teachers write in a journal along with students. Catherine found that not only are your students interested in what you write about, but it vastly adds to the class cohesiveness as a whole. Students are also provided with an excellent role model who is continually showing them that writing is a purposeful lifelong activity.

Dialogue journals are mainly utilized for the conversational nature of the writing that takes place. In primary grades this type of writing is an excellent way to allow students the opportunity to write to a real audience about topics that are of personal importance.

Teachers are then provided with an ongoing means of watching each child's writing development. Writing problems may be identified early and then become the basis for future instruction. The dialogue journal became an important curriculum tool for Catherine. She was able to generate lessons based on writing problems, ideas, and interests of each of her students that she noticed in the dialogue journals. Lessons, activities, and themes then were based on the actual needs of the students. This type of planning would assist in bringing each child's world closer to the classroom, thus making learning more concrete and relevant for each child.

Journal writing appeared to be most successful in this particular classroom. There were numerous ingredients that were implemented by Catherine that appeared to assist in the success of dialogue journals. These factors were:

- 1) topics were open-ended,
- 2) teacher responses were open and honest,
- 3) teacher participated in journal writing,
- 4) curriculum was generated from journals, and
- 5) students journal writing time had flexibility.

The journal writing process should be ongoing and reciprocal in nature. The ownership belongs to the class as a whole and not just to the teacher. Journal writing, as Catherine has stated, is only one aspect of her total writing program. It is not meant to be a substitute for the direct teaching of writing skills (Danielson, 1988). Dialogue journals are an effective way to have children write in a safe environment that allows ideas to be shared and relationships to develop. The link to curriculum is an important one as the dialogue journal allows teachers to meet the writing needs of the students on an ongoing basis as well as to provide instruction based on interest and occasionally meet social needs as they arise.

Recommendations

- 1) More studies are needed in all types of journal writing to assist in discovering if journal writing leads to the promotion of good writing skills.

Journal writing has been shown to enhance fluency, creativity, linguistic ability, and self-esteem (Chomsky, 1971; Hipple, 1985; Thaiss, 1986). It has also been noted that mechanical proficiency cannot improve until students have become fluent writers. One way to become a fluent writer is to be continually writing about various topics. Journals allow students to write as much as they like about topics of their own choice. Isakson (1986) maintains that dialogue journals give authenticity, purpose, and meaning to the language processes for students. However, writing improvement will not occur simply because numerous writing assignments are given (Fulwiler, 1980). Writing skills may not improve either just because students are allowed to write on topics of their own choice in journals. Teachers must provide assistance in guiding students towards using good writing skills. In order to determine if journals in fact assist students in becoming more proficient writers studies are needed. These studies will, hopefully, be able to tell us whether or not journals promote good writing skills and what specific processes need to be utilized by both the teacher and student.

- 2) Studies in journal writing are needed to further discover what types of journal experiences promote a good attitude towards writing in primary grades.

It has been suggested that an environment that promotes personal engagements with the printed word must be created in order to teach reading and writing. Such personal engagements allow students to create, imagine, and explore their own inherent possibilities. Graves (1983) tells us that many children want to write on the first day of school. It is important that primary grade children develop a positive attitude towards writing for further productive development to occur. In terms of using journals in the classroom, the question

is what type(s) of journal writing experiences promote good attitudes towards writing in general? Does a dialogue journal, in the primary grades, enhance children's attitudes about writing more than using a response journal would? These questions need to be addressed further so that teachers in the primary grades are able to utilize journals in a more effective manner.

- 3) Information is required in terms of the types of teacher responses that appear to promote and nurture student journal writing.

Teachers who correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors when reading students' journals are said to retard children's writing development. The spelling, grammar, and punctuation will develop over time (Barbieri, 1987; DeFord, 1980; Gentry, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983). Thaiss (1986) states that students will want to do the best they can and will generally strive to spell words correctly. In this particular study the feedback given to students by the teacher fell into five distinct categories. Teacher responses were largely supportive in nature, information was shared by both the student and teacher in a reciprocal way, and the teacher questioned a lot of the student entries in hopes of providing an impetus for further student writing. This particular teacher, however, did respond to grammatical errors by students. This was accomplished in a positive and supportive manner. Much more research is required to determine the types of teacher responses that appear to promote a healthy journal writing environment for students. Teachers need to discover which types of responses appear to enhance and nurture student journal writing.

- 4) More studies are needed to determine the curriculum value of journals and how they should be implemented to best suit an individual teacher's writing program.

Further studies are required to assist in determining whether or not the writing skills and ideas presented by students in journals has value in terms of curriculum planning. Since journals can play an integral part in any teacher's writing program, consideration must be given to the concepts and ideas presented by the students and to the writing skills being expressed by each child. Is it feasible to plan activities based on student journal entries? If this is possible, how should activities be implemented by the teacher? A further question, is how should journals be implemented by a teacher so that they may enhance a writing program? If journals are seen as an important element in the total writing program, a teacher needs to know how often journals need to be utilized to be as effective a writing tool as possible. Consequently, more research is required to answer these questions and to ultimately assist teachers in providing a successful journal writing program.

Conclusion

A dialogue journal appeared to be an excellent journal to utilize with this group of primary students. It allowed the class to develop a positive personal relationship with the teacher and promoted writing that invited students to converse with a real audience about topics of personal interest. Teachers interested in implementing journals in their classrooms need to have a vision regarding what it is they would want to accomplish with a journal. Dialoguing with students certainly is beneficial especially at the primary level since a teacher needs to have her students feel safe and secure within a specific classroom. This dialoguing, however, may not be enough once that teacher/student rapport has been established for the teacher or the students.

Catherine discussed change extensively during the interviews we had together. Her dialogue journals have evolved from not only being used for ongoing assessment but to student directed curriculum content. This evolution for Catherine has been continuous and perpetuated by the needs and desires of herself and her students. Catherine has always maintained a basic philosophy about why she utilizes journals. Even though this

philosophy has remained constant, Catherine has always strived to have dialogue journals evolve in such a way as to assist her students in being better writers and learners. This evolutionary process has led her to consider having students write about a specific school related topic whenever she feels feedback is needed in terms of how she has taught a concept. This will not take away from the original purpose of dialogue journals, but will allow Catherine to incorporate new ideas which are designed to enhance writing and learning within a basic framework.

Teachers who wish to use dialogue journals will need to develop a basic framework from which to work. This framework should entail what is expected of students, how this can be best accomplished, why dialogue journals are being used, and how this process can be kept moving in a positive direction so that students and their teacher are always learning and writing in a functional manner. Classroom environments are still very much person-centred which, on occasion, can be forgotten. If teachers let instructional devices remain constant, further learning becomes difficult to pursue. One of the main reasons dialogue journals worked in Catherine's classroom was that she always strived to ensure that journal writing continued to consider the people involved in the process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student at the University of Lethbridge conducting a study entitled, "The Use of Journals in Children's Writing Development". The purpose of this study is to analyze the content of dialogue journals of selected third grade students to discover the predominant themes in their writing. I request permission to use your child's journal in my study.

As part of this research I will be photocopying and analyzing entries from your child's journal. The journal passages will be coded so that names or other identifying characteristics will be eliminated. These entries will provide information for discovering what it is that interests each student in their writing. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results.

If you agree to have your child's journal be a part of my study, please complete and sign the bottom portion of this letter and return it to Mrs. Smith at your earliest convenience.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at the University of Lethbridge at (329-2456) or my Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Michael Pollard (329-2296).

Yours sincerely,

David Ian Platt, University of Lethbridge (329-2456)

(Please detach and forward the signed portion)

The Use of Journals in Children's Writing Development

I agree to allow my child's journal to be photocopied and used in this study.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B
Interview Consent Form

Dear Catherine:

I am a graduate student at the University of Lethbridge conducting a study entitled, "The Use of Journals in Children's Writing Development". The purpose of this study, as you know, is to analyze the content of dialogue journals of selected third grade students, in your classroom, to discover the predominant themes in their writing.

As part of this research I will need to conduct one to two, one hour interviews with you. These interviews will add further understandings and insights to the data collected in the student journals. I have attached a copy of my interview guide for your perusal. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results.

If you agree to these interviews, please complete and sign the bottom portion of this letter.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at the University of Lethbridge at (329-2456) or my Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Michael Pollard (329-2296).

Yours sincerely,

David Ian Platt, University of Lethbridge (329-2456)

(Please detach and forward the signed portion)

The Use of Journals in Children's Writing Development

I agree to participate in this study by allowing David Platt to conduct several interviews with me concerning the journal writing being used in my classroom.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix C
Interview Guide #1

- 1) How long have you been using journals in your classroom?
- 2) How are journals implemented in your classroom?
- 3) What types of change to the journal writing process have you implemented over the years?
- 4) What has led you to use the journal in the manner in which you now do?
- 5) How do you respond in each student's journal?
- 6) Do you respond to each child similarly or are there differences in your responses?
- 7) Why do you respond the way you do?
- 8) Do you use the contents of student journals in your curriculum planning? How is this accomplished?
- 9) What benefits do you see as a teacher in using journal writing?

Appendix D
Interview Number 1

1. How long have you been using journals in your classroom?

Catherine: I've been using journals with different age groups (grades 2, 3, and 4) for four years now. A couple of years ago I taught a grade 3/4 writing class and I used journals as part of their writing class. That was a class that I taught it wasn't in this classroom.

2. How are journals implemented in your classroom?

Catherine: I'm not sure what you mean by how?

David: In what way are you using them? Are you using them everyday for ten minutes or once a week?

Catherine: No, I started out this year doing journals once a week every Thursday. I don't know why, other than just because that was the day it just seemed to fit into the schedule. But the children really seem to enjoy writing in them -- so sometimes we write in them a couple of times a week or sometimes I say to them if during our one scheduled journal time you didn't get finished and they want to keep their journal and add to it or write in it later in the week we can do that sort of thing. But basically it is once a week for a forty minute class period. Usually we write for thirty minutes and I write with the children at the same time in my journal and then I say to them, usually in the last ten minutes, would anyone like to share their journal. Generally there are a few three or four or maybe five people who want to share, maybe not all of their entry but some of it and so they share it with us and if we have any questions we ask them. Sometimes after the sharing they decide that they should keep their journals and write further or add something to it.

David: Do you have to give them story starters to get them started?

Catherine: Oh, I never do -- No! I just say to them it is journal time and they just write. See, the grade three class have written in journals for three years now because

they wrote one year in grade one and last year I had them in grade two so they wrote, so now they have three years of journal writing behind them and the grade two class has two years behind them.

David: So the content is open-ended?

Catherine: Yes, that's right. You know I guess the climate for the journal writing is sort of set in grade one with the grade one teacher and then they know when they come in here it's like a continuation of that. The very first day of school I ask them to write in their journal and they just know that they open their book and that they can write whatever they care to write about to me and that I'm going to read it and respond back to them in a way that I think is meaningful to them.

David: Would you see this format more like a dialogue journal?

Catherine: Yes, a dialogue journal.

David: Even though this is a dialogue journal where, you as the teacher dialogue back and forth with each one of your students, your students still volunteer to share their entries or parts of their entries to the rest of the class?

Catherine: Sometimes they do. I never grade it or mark it. I just respond to the content of what they have written about or I might answer questions if they've asked me something or I might give them suggestions that could help them with a problem if that is what they write about.

David: Do parents become involved in your class's journal writing in any way?
(Reading to give feedback or responding in written form).

Catherine: They haven't so far. I know the parents are very anxious at the end of the year because they know I do journal writing and they are always very anxious to read their children's journals. But this is just between the students and myself so it doesn't go home for homework or anything like that. I haven't involved the parents in terms of responding.

David: How do you feel about that? Does the process you go through seem sufficient to you? Do you find that students go back to their journal other than during journal time as I know that you promote that?

Catherine: Some students go back to their journals throughout the week. Probably I would like to do it more than once a week. I think I got into the once a week when I had the grade 3/4 writing class and I had twenty-seven children in that class and I was doing journal writing with them. I was also doing journal writing with my grade two students in my regular classroom as well. I ended up having about 45 or 48 journals to respond to every week. When I say respond I usually write half a page or a page to them. I was getting overwhelmed with all of the writing that I was having to do. I was physically getting a sore arm from doing it. So that is why I sort of cut back to just once a week although with just having twenty-one children in here maybe in retrospect I should have done it more frequently maybe for a shorter period of time. Some of them really get into the writing, you know, like they can write really steadily for thirty minutes. I don't know if writing more frequently for a shorter period of time might not be good enough for them either. They just get rolling and then I say stop. So I sort of like the longer period of time.

David: But the option is there for them to go back to their journal and write more or add to it if they wish?

Catherine: That's right or if they have some free time and they want to write in their journal -- I mean that is one of the things that they can choose to do as well.

3. What type of changes to the journal writing process have you implemented over the years?

Catherine: One thing that I tried with that grade 3/4 class that I had for writing only (I didn't see them at all throughout the day for any other thing so I didn't really feel that maybe some of the things coming through in their journals were very integrated with other subjects) so one thing that I tried that year was that we took their journal, after we talked a bit at the beginning of the year about their journal writing, and I said I would like to try something a little different in that if they wanted to write to me about things at school or things related to other classes that maybe I could talk to them about through writing, that we could do that. We had a section of the journal called scoop and it:

could be relationships at school or subjects at school. I don't think we started this right off the bat when I think about it. Maybe they had done a bit of journal writing with me and then we started this say before Christmas. When I looked at some of the themes that were coming through in their journals, school was one, entertainment was one, whether it was going to movies or watching videos at birthday parties because that seemed to be the social scene that they were into, sports was another one. So we divided the journals up into different categories or themes -- so if they were going to write about sports they would then flip to the sports section of their journal and write there or if they wanted to write about home they would flip back there. What I didn't like about that (just the whole physical thing of doing it) was there was so much flipping back and forth. They might write half a page about sports and on the same day write half a page about home and on the same day might write about school. Looking at the number of children I was dealing with and all this flipping back and forth and checking the dates and finding oh, what section do I have to turn to today to respond to that was more time consuming than maybe the value that they may have gotten out of it. Because I think they could have just have written straight in their journals without having those categories about all those different things anyway just through paragraphing. I don't think that I would do that again. What else? My time has changed to a longer period of time.

David: Did you used to worry about content more than you do now?

Catherine: Not so much about content, but what worried me at first when I started journal writing was how was I going to respond to these children? What did I have to say to them? I think I have become more comfortable with responding, more comfortable in revealing more of me to them through journal writing and I think this year has been the most successful year in journal writing with my class because I think they write to me very freely and openly about anything and I in turn write back and I think they have gotten to know me a lot better as a person through the journal and I've gotten to know them better.

David: Has that helped you in your teaching?

Catherine: Yes, because you know something may be bothering them that maybe you aren't aware is affecting them that strongly. One boy in grade three wrote to me and he said, "Mrs. Smith about this multiplication I'm really finding multiplying hard,

I'm really frustrated. I need help -- I just don't get it". I was really pleased that he could say that in a journal because maybe he didn't feel confident enough to say that in front of the rest of his classmates. I felt good that he said that to me and that really made me realize that even though he appeared to be catching on in class and that was when multiplication first started so I hadn't had a lot of his work to mark to find out for myself. We had started in the beginning of the week, so when he wrote in his journal Thursday he was pinpointing that problem that he needed help. I really felt that was a neat way to go about asking for it.

David: You mentioned that the students are willing to talk freely. Have you found that to be generally the case or just seems to apply to certain students?

Catherine: I really feel that I am responding in a more open fashion this year than maybe with other classes. The content and the quality of the writing that I get maybe is a reflection of the way that I've been willing to respond back to them. You know I think that you have to set that, well that trust has to be there first of all. With the grade three class I've had them for two years they trust me they trust that they can tell me something and it will be in confidence. If they say, don't tell my mom about this, I'm not going to or there were a couple of girls having a disagreement here and they are strong friends and they were both writing to me in their journal about the problem and although they didn't know that each was doing it and that was interesting how I could respond back to the two of them. Eventually they did resolve their difficulties and they became fast friends again. So I think with the grade three class that trust is there that security, that what they write in their journal is confidential since they are writing too and I'm writing to them and nobody else has to know about it. I think that frees them to write.

David: Next year I'm assuming that you will use journals again?

Catherine: Yes, I am.

David: Would you make any changes?

Catherine: I've been thinking about that and I'm not sure exactly how to do it as someone at the University suggested this. I'd like to get the children doing more of a journal type of writing about specific subjects.

David: You mean like journals across the curriculum?

Catherine: Yes, maybe that would be different than the dialogue journals, but I would like them to write about the arithmetic lesson. Maybe they need to write about understanding the process of multiplication, or division, or fractions, or something like that. Maybe a concept in social studies or science. I'd like them to do more journal-type writing about the subject areas. If they could do that I think they could show me what they really understood about the different concepts. When I first started journal writing I tried different things with my journal. First of all I wrote with the children and I responded to their journals and a different student responded to mine. As I became less inhibited about writing in my own journal there were things that I felt the students were not equipped to respond to so I stopped having students respond in my journal. So now I just write for my own understanding and problems that I have to work through and I find myself with problems that I have or things that I really want to think about or relationships that I really want to work through or situations that I want to work through, how it helps me so much to write about it, to write through it and so that is a change that I have made that I know works. So if I did that across the curriculum I'm sure that would work for the children.

David: Do you write while the students are writing?

Catherine: Yes, and sometimes I share parts of my journal with them. They might say Mrs. Smith you haven't shared your journal for a couple of weeks, would you like to share or they might ask what are you writing about today? So I might read parts of it as it depends on what the content of it is.

4. What has led you to use the journal in the manner in which you now do? Has there been any other influences in your life that have assisted your thinking in terms of how you use journals?

Catherine: A strong thing was taking a couple of classes from one University professor in particular. We used journals in the classes which helped me see how I could use them to help me understand my studies, which made me realize that the students could probably do that very same thing too. But I think that got me going in seeing that using the journal is a valuable experience. I've kept a diary since I was

eight years old. But what I wrote about through adolescence and high school and University and that were different kinds of things though than this type of journal that I am now keeping with myself. I use to have lots of physical restrictions like I'd buy a diary like those kinds that are made and I would have three inches for this date, so I would only write that much and then I felt compelled to write everyday too because there was a date printed at the top. Now I have a book exactly like the one you have with you today (spiral bound notebook) that I just write in whenever I feel the need to write, which may be everyday or every other day. I was reading it the other day for last summer and I made two entries all summer.

David: Do you think that because you personally use a journal that it has helped you in implementing journals in the classroom?

Catherine: I think the children see me doing it and that makes it more valid in their eyes. I don't think that we should ask the students to do anything that we are not prepared to do ourselves.

David: Do you think that your using the journal has had a profound influence on the changes that you have made because you have gone through a process and have made discoveries yourself?

Catherine: I think the manner in which I use it now comes from discovering and finding things that didn't work for me or worked really well. Plus my own use of it and that's brought me to how I use it in the classroom. Maybe next year I shouldn't schedule time to do it or maybe I should schedule one time but maybe I should somehow, without actually saying it, make more free time available for the students to do it on their own. Or to give them the feeling that if you just want to write in your journal sometime for ten minutes you could take some language time or some math time if you've got something you really want to write about now.

David: You don't think they have that sense now?

Catherine: Not as freely as I might like them too. I don't think it is felt in math or science because maybe my lessons are too structured as I always have my time filled so there may not be five or ten minutes when they feel they could do that.

David: If you made that more explicit to the students and gave them time in math and science, do you think the students would take advantage of this by writing in their journals?

Catherine: I think if I talked about it and encouraged it and mentioned it and started out the year by saying we're going to take 5 minutes out of science to write in your journal about the science lesson today. Start them on that training program where they would think along those lines so that right after Christmas they might be doing it on their own and maybe seeing the benefit.

5. How do you respond in each student's journal?

Catherine: I just respond to whatever they have written. I just respond to the content and do not make any corrections. Now just a couple of weeks ago I noticed my grade three students were getting sloppy in their handwriting so to a couple of the students, after I had responded to the content, I said in looking back in your journal I noticed that your handwriting is starting to get messy so we better practice it since we are writing anyway let's try to practice forming letters as it will give you that much more practice. Also with one girl whose spelling is really notorious I've had to jog her memory by telling her that I'm not correcting spelling, however, just because I'm not giving you a number right or wrong on your spelling, I am still aware of that and it sometimes interferes with my understanding and I know you can do better. I respond in pencil the same as they write.

David: Have you cut down on your responses through the years?

Catherine: In some cases I am actually getting longer depending on the content.

6. Do you respond to each child similarly or are there differences in your responses?

Catherine: What I've done a couple of times is with a couple of the grade two students who do not write very much is I write nothing back to them and talk to them about that in terms of how they felt about that. Such as I had nothing to respond to, so if you want me to respond you have to write to me. Subtly trying to get through to them. It is like writing a letter. You know a lot of the students say Dear Mrs. Smith or Hi Mrs. Smith at the top before the journal entry because that is how I write back to

them as I will say Hi Mark or Hi Sandy, then I carry on with what I'm writing to them about. So it is like writing a letter to a friend that you might receive through the mail since if you don't write to someone they are not going to write back.

David: Does the amount students write to you, if it is very little bother you? Is that a great concern?

Catherine: No, unless like this one little character in grade 2 who doesn't write much because it is a big effort to put those marks down on paper. So maybe I'll just sit here and just get the date down and one or two sentences and that will take me 30 minutes. But usually not, some days I have lots to say and some days I haven't much to say either but I do try to say to them that sometimes I will sit and ponder for 5 minutes or so before I start writing in my journal and I'll say things like, "Gee I wonder what I'll write about today as I'm having a hard time thinking about it". Because I know that sometimes they have that too, but then I get on to an idea and I start writing. The more you write the more ideas come and I try to say to them that if you just start writing about something pretty soon an idea will come.

7. Why do you respond the way you do? Why don't you mark for style or content?

Catherine: Well, I think in journal writing they are sharing their ideas with me or they are sharing their thoughts. I wouldn't want anyone to grade me on my thoughts or on my ideas. If I just want to share them with you and I chose to write in a journal about them to you I wouldn't want you to come back and give me a grade on my thoughts. I mean if something really close to my heart or really dear to me is being expressed, however I express it is the way that I need to express it. I don't want anyone marking me on it, so I wouldn't want to mark them on it. I just want to respond to them as another human being.

David: Do you think your comments help them to discover things about themselves or about school?

Catherine: I hope both!

8. Do you use the contents of student journals in your curriculum planning? How is this accomplished? (activities, individual lessons, themes, units)

Catherine: Although I don't mark spelling in their journals sometimes if I can see there's maybe a few students that are having the same kinds of spelling difficulties, I might pick some words out of their journal and just write them on a piece of paper and then that might be the spelling lesson for a few of them or I know quotation marks came up once since a couple students were writing a conversation. I didn't say to them that I got this out of your journal, but I said maybe we had better have a little lesson on these quotation marks. I do that kind of thing. Like the boy who was having difficulties with his multiplication, that told me that I needed to spend some time just with him going over it and making sure that he felt comfortable before he had to tear into the assignments that I was going to be giving in multiplication.

David: So it is either individual lessons or used as diagnosis?

Catherine: Also with paragraphing, especially with the grade 2 students and even with the grade 3 class, they used to write the whole page just on the left hand side everything that they wanted to write. As their journal writing got more and more involved and longer we started talking about paragraphing. This came from their journal writing. We discussed things like, if you are talking about a hockey game, you have to keep all of that writing about the hockey game in one paragraph and indent it and this is what it will look like. I showed them an example on the blackboard. Then I said if you switch and start telling me about when you went to the West Edmonton Mall, that is a completely different idea than it is about a hockey game, so you'll have to start another paragraph. That came directly from the journals.

David: Could you see journals used more in terms of planning themes or units or is that too much to ask? Could you get enough content from the student's journals in terms of their interests?

Catherine: Yes, I think that is right. Just reflecting on that I remember one particular instance where a student came back from summer holidays in Vancouver and I had a theme developed that I was going to use in September and I was going to work on developing a theme on the sea. This student wrote about his summer holiday for about the first three weeks of school. The journal entries were all about what went on at the seashore. I thought because this student was so shy I should scratch what I was doing and get into a theme about the sea because I thought it would mean a lot to him. So in

that respect I did use a journal entry to plan a theme. I think if I get into journals more, in the different subject areas, maybe I'll see where there might be even a mini unit or theme that should come out of the journals. To make the whole school experience mean something to them.

9. What benefits do you see as a teacher in using journal writing?

Catherine: My personal experience has been in using journal writing myself is that I have come to a greater understanding of myself and the world and my place in it and how I understand it and how I understand the people in it who come into contact with me. Because I am always trying to understand those things or try to understand my learning too as it was when I was using it in University. I hope that the students can come to use their journals for that sort of thing to even in later years if they have a year or two where they don't do it, that maybe they can still remember what they did in their first three years of school and come to the realization that they should or could use the journal to help them in their learning, to help them with life, to help them with problems. You can always safely talk to your journal. It may not talk back, but maybe it will over a period of time because after you have written something down you have thought about it a lot to have expressed it in words on that piece of paper. Then I think that does help to come to your own understandings about what you understand, believe, and think.

David: Do you find that your responses are shaped by you yourself having gone through that process?

Catherine: I think I'm a lot more sensitive to their content to them as people. It's all mixed up, it's all the same ball of wax. Knowing them as individuals as I do I suppose I respond differently to each one. I know what each one needs to hear or how they need to be helped or what I could say that would have an impact on them.

David: Wouldn't the children learn anyway even if you weren't so concerned about setting up personal relationships?

Catherine: Maybe they would, but it wouldn't be as much fun for me. My days coming here, I'm always glad to see them. I have come to know them better. I really believe that journal writing has had a profound effect on the way I teach. Initially I was

really scared to do it, but after I got going I realized that I could share being a person with them. Gradually it was through writing because I found myself sharing more of me verbally and now I share more of me physically. Like at the end of the day, some of them not all of them, line up to give me a hug before they go home.

David: Has that personal feeling that you have for your students helped you professionally?

Catherine: Yes, I want to be here. I want to do a good job. Wanting to make learning easy for them, wanting to make learning fun for them.

David: Four years ago you began using journals in your classroom. What possessed you to try this?

Catherine: I had two friends involved in a writing class at the University and they brought me along. The professor had taken Ira Progoff's Intensive Journal Writing Method and had brought examples of student journal work for us to respond in. I didn't know what to say in response. I didn't know how to respond in journals. I developed a good friendship with this professor who eventually came out to my classroom and said I should try journal writing in my class. So I said finally I'll do it. I don't know why or how but I'll do it. But just talking with her lots about why journal writing based on her experience with Progoff -- it just went from there.

David: Did you feel when you started that because you had been writing in a journal yourself it was easier than you expected to slip into using the journal since you had worked through issues and problems yourself?

Catherine: At first it seemed very hard because I didn't know how I was going to respond to them. They didn't seem to have much problem writing. But I didn't know what I was going to say back to them. After that first year, which wasn't a whole year, we started after Christmas. Next September I started doing journal writing although it was initially difficult I slipped into it pretty easily after we got rolling.

David: Besides developing personal relationships, do you see the journal as a valuable learning tool?

Catherine: I do. Next year I am going to try to incorporate journal writing into the different class subjects. I think that is taking it one step further which maybe I need to take it and they need to as well. I am trying to personalize their learning and I really want them to know what they understand and to know what they believe. Know what they don't know. That is where I hope to take it and use it more because it has been so good for me and for them in relationships and establishing a good climate and taking it into specific subject areas. It certainly has helped them in their learning experiences as well. Talk to me again next year to see if I still feel the same way.

David: Do you have any expectations in terms of journal writing for the grade two class next year?

Catherine: I just wish and hope that they will continue it. Even if they don't continue it with another teacher next year. I think one thought I'd like to leave them with before they leave for the summer is that you can do this on your own. Maybe some other person in their life could respond to it other than your teacher.

David: Have you found a lot of their content is centered around I like you?

Catherine: No, serious issues to them. One of the journals that we used talked about how this one student was so unhappy about me in the way I was putting pressure on her. She wrote about four pages to me and I wrote about four pages to her in response. After I wrote that to her her next entry said, "Sorry Mrs. Smith about what I wrote to you", and I said, "Don't be sorry for what you wrote because that's how you felt and you needed to say that to me. Maybe I needed to hear it and you said some things that were dear to you and I said some things back and we cleared the air. Don't apologize for your thoughts -- you needed to say them and I needed to hear them -- I still like you and now we can only go forward".

David: In using the journal in the way you do (to know the students better) has that changed you in terms of your interaction with them as a group?

Catherine: Yes, because I've got to know them much better I think than I could have by talking to them or by doing class stuff (lessons). This has really opened me and opened the students to me, they really reveal themselves to me in a fashion that I'm

sure wouldn't have happened if I hadn't have had this because before I did journal writing I never knew my kids in class as well as I have now.

David: What would you want your students to say about this experience?

Catherine: I would like them to say -- because I can say this about one teacher that I had -- I don't know how I learned all of the things I learned from Mrs. Smith, it just seemed like fun. I'm really interested in the whole process of their learning and not just the end product. I hope that they could say that they liked journal writing in that they could say that was one thing they did with me that meant a lot to them. By grade three they are starting to get to know themselves as people and have opinions. This can be fostered in the journal. I don't think a lot of people really know themselves or what they think and that must be really frustrating.

David: Do you have any parents complaining that you don't mark spelling or punctuation?

Catherine: Well, I explain that this is only one aspect of my writing program. It isn't the sum total I have them write a great deal for other specific purposes. This is just one part of the writing program that I really enjoy. Most of the parents know what we are trying to do through meetings and the primary teachers work very closely together. I would like parents to think that I'm not distant but human.

Appendix E
Interview Guide #2

1. Why is it important for you to know your students the way you do? How does creating a personal relationship with your students enhance student learning?
2. How would you allow students to write in other subject areas?
3. Do you think that if you began using journal writing throughout all subject areas you would take away from the personalized writing/relationships that you have established with your students?
4. What benefits do you see in having students write in their journals during specific content area subjects?

INTERVIEW NUMBER 2

Appendix F

Interview Number 2

1. Why is it important for you to know your students the way you do?

Catherine: I think it's important for me to know the students the way I do. To really get to know them as people because that makes my job more interesting. When I come here in the morning and I know that I know the people I am going to be dealing with and I think I can individualize their learning so much too or the things that I find for them because I know their strengths, I know their weaknesses. I know the things that are important to them, I know the kinds of things that they like to do or an activity that might help them more than something I had just planned if I didn't know them. I think by doing that -- like we talked about trust and coming here with a comfortable feeling -- children learn easier and remember things easier -- knowledge kinds of things -- if they feel comfortable in an environment that they are in. I know I had a really good teacher for grades 5, 6, and 7 in a little two room country school and she really influenced the way that I think I am in the classroom today. Because I look back on those few years and learning was easy and I really remembered things. I used to try and analyze how was that so easy for me -- what did she do that made it easy? I think it was the kind of relationship that she had developed with us as a class and I remember that. I think learning should be easy for the children. School doesn't have to be hard -- it can be fun and you can make their learning easier.

David: So, if you feel more comfortable it is easier to take risks.

Catherine: Yes, I believe that it is right. Just by being comfortable and relaxed and not in an anxiety-filled situation then it frees them to think freely.

David: Does the journal help to set that up?

Catherine: I think the journal sets it up. In this small school, that I am in, I think the children know the kind of personality that we all are anyway. But I think coming from grade one there is still a certain type of anxiety, coming into a new classroom with a new teacher. We start journal writing right away, the first day or the first week -- something like that. The students may already trust me and some may not, but maybe

by the way that I respond and the things I talk about when I talk back to them in their journal, maybe they can get the idea -- O.K. she's not such a dragon after all. Maybe I could talk to her about this or maybe I could mention this -- I wonder what she might think about this. Maybe she could help me with this!

2. How would you allow students to write in other subject areas?

Catherine: Well I've thought about that since our last interview and originally I was thinking I might have separate journals -- like separate physical books -- one for socials or sciences or arithmetic and then they could write about that subject there. But after thinking about this for a week or so I was going through this in my mind and wondering maybe by just talking the idea up to the children -- like they could write about personal experiences or some learning in a subject or maybe I might specifically say to them, "Today I want you to write about this or tell me what you know about subtracting." I could do this right in their dialogue journal too, because I mean it still is a dialogue, it's just that maybe then I am choosing a topic once in a while. If it's a separate book it's a bit more structured and I wouldn't get the same kind of writing as I would in a journal that they keep now in general.

David: What type of format would you want to use?

Catherine: I think I would keep it the same as I have it now.

3. What benefits do you see in having students write in their journals during specific content area subjects?

Catherine: That is what I got thinking about too and I thought if I do it separately from the dialogue journals in each of the core subjects then maybe that is becoming more like an assignment now that we have to do for science or this is an assignment that we have to do for social studies and it might take away from some of the spontaneity of it. I think if I keep it in the dialogue journal, but maybe I might say, "Okay today I'd like you to just write about what we did in science." If I had a certain concept I was wanting them to learn, then that might come through in their writing. I don't think that would be bad to once in a while say to them. "Okay, today I'd like you to write about this." I would give lots of leeway to write about things that they want to. Like that one boy -- you didn't pick his journal -- but one day I got his journal and he is

saying, "I don't understand this multiplication stuff and I really need help", and "What can I do about it?", and "Can you help me?" "How can I understand multiplication better?"

David: Is that the sort of thing you are looking for when you talk about other subject areas?

Catherine: Yes, it might be. I think if I am teaching, for example, the concept of subtracting, where they have to borrow, that is a big concept and if we could write about it I think that would help them to know that they know it. To help their understanding. It is like sometimes I write about things that I need to work through to come to a better understanding and it's not necessarily things that are personal to me, but it is like some piece of information. If the ideas come out muddled then that should say to me that maybe I need to spend a little more time with this person or that person on that concept. They must come to know what they know.

4. Do you think that if you begin using journal writing throughout all subject areas you would take away from the personalized writing/relationships that you have established with your students?

Catherine: Keeping basically the same format. But on some days stating that today I need to know what you know about some concept. More of a reciprocal engagement.