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Boys and writing: Attentiveness levels and the impact of single gender classes and teaching methods

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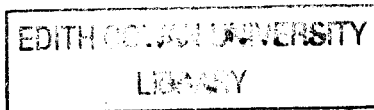
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Boys and Writing

Attentiveness Levels and The Impact of Single Gender Classes and Teaching Methods

by

Janet Fellowes, Dip.Tch (Primary), B.Ed

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
the degree of

Master of Education

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2005

ABSTRACT

The study is concerned with boys' literacy learning. It seeks to gauge whether the change to a single-gender class brings about any improvement in the boys' attentiveness levels during writing lessons and also to ascertain whether attentiveness is influenced by other factors associated with the learning tasks, and with the teacher's pedagogical and management practices.

This study involves the scrutiny of writing lessons in three classes in Western Australian metropolitan primary school – a Year 5 co-educational class, a Year 6 all-boy's class (comprising boys from the Year 5 class) in the hands of one teacher and the same class in the hands of another.

Attention levels are measured at various times during writing lessons in the three classes and the approaches taken by the three teachers in the delivery of writing lessons are closely monitored.

The performance of a particular boy in these classes is also studied in the hope that a useful comparison might be made between his results and those of the classes generally.

The study concludes that higher levels of attentiveness will not necessarily flow from the introduction of an all-boys' class and that teaching methods are of greater importance in this regard.

However, the study does indicate that all-boys' classes are potentially advantageous in creating an environment where boys feel more assured and contented and that a possible consequence of this is a willingness on the part of boys to participate more fully in lessons. The study also highlights that any potential for greater attentiveness of boys during writing lessons is unlikely to be realized if the teacher maintains a negative view about boys' capacity to learn and achieve. Finally the study observes there is great individual difference in attentiveness of individual boys, even when there is an overall pattern of higher or lower attentiveness.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
 - (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;
- or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material
-

Signature of Candidate:

Date: 10th November 2005

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 The Background

A vast quantity of literature has been published on the topic of boys and literacy particularly during the last decade when there has been media-driven community concern about boys' education and social development. Much of the concern has been generated by the results of statewide and national literacy tests in which performance of boys has generally been inferior to that of girls. Studies into the problem frequently show that boys are uninterested, inattentive and disengaged with school literacy (Rowe, 2002; Rowe & Rowe, 1999; University of Newcastle, 2000; Buckingham, 1999; Wilhelm & Smith, 2002).

One Perth school's response to the issue of boys' inattentiveness and disengagement in the classroom was the establishment of single gender classes for its upper primary male students. The school was motivated to introduce this measure in 1997 because of concerns about a disparity between the genders in classroom achievement and also in social and classroom behaviour.

Although no formal study has been undertaken by the school in an endeavour to measure the success of this initiative, there is an obvious feeling of satisfaction in the school community that it has been advantageous for both male and female students. The school believes that all-boys' classes have enabled the teachers to

organize teaching in a way that caters for what they regard as the unique needs of boys.

1.2 The Aim

This study is intended to arrive at an understanding of the extent to which the attentiveness of upper-primary schoolboys during writing lessons is influenced by participation in an all-boys' class rather than in a coeducational class.

The study also endeavours to identify other factors which may account for variations in boys' attentiveness levels. As the single gender classes should allow teachers to structure learning in ways which are compatible with the learning needs of boys, the study is expected to provide an insight into the contribution to attentiveness made by the nature of the learning task, lesson context and aspects of teacher instruction and behaviour management.

This therefore, leads to two major research questions for which answers are required:

- Do middle primary male students in classroom writing lessons exhibit higher time-on-task behaviour when learning occurs in a single gender class instead of in a coeducational class?
- If there is an improvement in attention are there factors other than gender composition which contributes to the improvement?

1.3 The Significance

It is widely accepted that attention is a necessary condition for learning (Anderson, 1948) and the harnessing of boys' attention is therefore an obvious step towards increasing their levels of learning in literacy. The identification of factors which affect boys' attention should therefore provide a useful insight into questions relating to boys' performance in literacy learning. This study is expected to lead to such an insight.

1.4 The Thesis Organisation

The study begins (Chapter 2) with an examination of the literature on the topic of boys and literacy. It specifically looks at the reasons advocated (within the broad areas of biology, sociology and pedagogy) for boys' literacy performance differing to girls' performance. The literature review then turns to looking at attentiveness and its role in students' academic progress.

Chapter three outlines the study design. It provides a definition for attentiveness (the focus of the study) and presents information about the study participants, the instrumentation and the techniques used for collecting and analyzing data.

Chapter four provides background information about the school in which this study was carried out and about its single gender classes' programme. This programme, a fairly unique innovation for Western Australian state schools, provided the impetus for this study.

Chapters five, six and seven present three case studies containing detailed descriptions of writing lessons in each of three classes. Each case study begins with background information about the class teacher. This is followed by the presentation of data covering the design and characteristics of the writing lessons and the strategies and management techniques used by the teacher in the delivery of the lessons. The case studies conclude with a summary of the attentiveness levels achieved by the boys' in the writing lessons in each class.

Chapter eight presents data about one particular boy as he participated in the writing lessons in the three classes. It outlines his attentiveness levels for each class, and details information about his background, lesson participation, application and general attitude to writing.

Chapter nine provides an analysis of the data. There is a comparison of the statistical information showing boys' attentiveness levels in writing in the Year 5 co-educational class and the levels in the Year 6 all-boys class. The comparison extends to a third set of data, that of attentiveness levels in the same Year 6 class but under the leadership of a different teacher.

Chapter 9 moves to a comparison of the descriptive data covering the three classroom contexts. The nature of the writing lessons and the pedagogical and management approaches of the three teachers are compared and the similarities and differences are highlighted and explained. An important outcome of this comparison is the identification of those features of writing lessons and teaching

methods that are unique to the learning environment in which higher levels of attentiveness were achieved.

Finally, chapter 9 presents an analysis of the data concerning the focus student. His measures of attentiveness in the writing lessons of each class are examined and compared to the attentiveness measurements of the group of boys. A comparison of his experiences in general and of his writing progress in the different classes is then made.

Chapter 10 contains the findings of this report. It consists of a discussion of the findings with respect to boys' attentiveness levels in co-educational and all-boys classes. It also puts forward some practical suggestions for teaching and some recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In recent years there has been widespread concern that boys generally are less interested and less successful in reading, writing and other aspects of literacy than are girls. Testing and research studies in Australia and overseas consistently show boys to be achieving less in literacy subjects than girls (ACER study and UK study cited in West, 2001; National School English Literacy Survey, cited in Bantick, 1998; Travis, 2001; Robinson, 1997). A vast quantity of literature on the topic *boys and literacy* has been published. This review presents a summary of findings from the literature concerning possible impediments to boys' literacy development and the particular aspects of teaching thought to have special relevance to the literacy growth of boys.

2.2 A Biological Perspective - Brain Development and Language

Various studies have attempted to establish a relationship between gender differences in the organization of the brain and the capacity for cognitive tasks. These studies assert that the forebrain consists of left and right hemispheres and that the left hemisphere is tied to language functioning while the right specializes in visual/spatial functioning (Teyler, 1975; Halpern, 1992). The central bundle of fibres relaying information back and forth between the two hemispheres is called the corpus callosum. It is claimed that because of differing levels of testosterone during periods of brain development, the corpus callosum in males

is smaller and less fibrous than in females, resulting in fewer channels of communication between the two hemispheres (Brody, 1999; Springer and Deutsch, 1998). Moreover, male brains are said to have more neural connections within the right hemisphere (Teyler, 1975).

These gender differences in brain development have lead to the theory of brain lateralisation, the central concept of which is that females use both sides of their brain to process information (bilateralisation) while males use only one side (lateralisation) (Springer and Deutsch, 1998; Moir and Jessel, 1989). Although studies in this area have been extensive, it would seem that the results are inconclusive. Many who have reviewed the literature suggest that neurological differences are speculative and unclear and that data is confusing and inconsistent (Brody, 1999; Swann, 1992; Halpern, 1986 cited in Swann, 1992; Reed, 1999; Maccoby 1990; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998).

It is also uncertain how these neurological differences interact to affect cognitive and behavioural functioning. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, there are still many who maintain that the differences do have this effect particularly in relation to ability with language.

A predominant theory is that greater interhemispheric communication (bilateralisation) leads to greater verbal and linguistic skill (Soderman, Chhikara, Hsiu-Ching and Kuo, 1999; Biddulph, 1997; Moir and Jessel, 1989). This is supported by claims that females generally do better in language-based tasks

requiring verbal fluency, speed of articulation and grammar, than males and that males perform better on spatial and mathematical reasoning tasks (Springer and Deutsch, 1998; Moir and Jessel, 1989). However, these claims appear to give little consideration to the many variations in individual ability and do not necessarily support a logical argument relating language competency to brain organization. Nonetheless, the claims are regularly given prominence in the popular press, particularly in response to a culture of concern for the social and academic achievement of boys. For instance, Biddulph (1997) claims that the result [of brain lateralisation] is that boys' brains are not "organized for language" and that certain tasks such as reading, talking about feelings and introspection are thus difficult for boys. Again, the evidence linking brain development with differences in cognitive ability is inconsistent, and fails to consider the significance of the differing social inputs girls and boys may receive (Swann, 1992; Miller and Costello, 2001; Udry, 2000).

A significant study disputing the causal relationship between brain lateralisation and language and literacy ability is that of Shaywitz (1999) who examined the brain activation patterns of men and women as they carried out the reading task of *decoding unknown words*. It was observed that men did indeed activate the left hemisphere of the brain and women both the left and right hemispheres as they completed the task. Even so, results showed no gender difference in task achievement suggesting, as Shaywitz (1999) does, that, "men and women can get the same result by perhaps using different routes" (p.5). These results are a

significant counter to the argument that because boys' brains are less connected from left to right they will have trouble reading.

Some literacy researchers consider the notion that gender competencies are embedded in the brain to be false (Reed, 1999; Makin and Jones Diaz, 2002; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). Others highlight the need to consider such differences within a social and cultural framework, acknowledging the role of the environment in affecting brain development and in contributing to girls' and boys' preferences for certain tasks (Brody, 1999; Swann, 1992; Miller and Costello, 2001; Udry, 2000).

The biological / sociological relationship as a preferred standpoint is further illustrated by Brody (1999), who explains that biological development never occurs in isolation and that gender differences are shaped by and developed through interaction with social processes. As he argues:

The biological underpinnings tell only a partial story about the origins of gender differences in language and literacy. The rest of the story is told by culturally determined gender roles, socialized by families, peers and society in interaction with biological dispositions (Brody, 1999, p.127).

In other words, the different social pressures brought to bear on boys and girls may alter their neurological development. Alternatively, environmental factors may simply lead to a female preference for language-based activities and a male

preference for visual/spatial tasks. For instance, during development, caretakers may emphasize language more to girls than to boys.

Overall, while there may be a substantial body of argument supporting the unique brain functioning and physical development of boys and its bearing on language and literacy aptitude (suggesting little that can be done to change literacy learning outcome) there are just as many studies showing no significant difference in brain development or showing that any such differences are the result of the social experiences of the developing child (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). To consider these characteristics as being naturally male and therefore enduring, is dangerous. A purely biological rationale for gender differences in language development, where the social dimension is ignored, offers little opportunity for educators to challenge an inequality that sees boys disengaged with literacy activities (Makin and Jones Diaz, 2002). On balance it seems that the social experiences of the developing child should be acknowledged for their influence on the types of behaviours which are regularly attributed to the natural physical and neurological development of boys.

2.3 A Sociological Perspective

2.3.1 Introduction

Boys' under-performance in literacy at all levels of schooling has also been explained within a sociological framework. This perspective gives little credence to a biological rationale for differences but rather looks to the effects of the socialisation process.

The theoretical impetus behind much of the research in this area is that boys, due to the attributes and ideology of their masculinity, are uninterested in and detached from the literacy practices fore-grounded in the English classroom. Fundamental to the argument is that boys, because their social interests and behaviours lay in other areas of endeavour, do not readily participate in school English lessons and that the consequence is underachievement. The argument is strengthened by research which suggests that boys perceive literacy to be a feminine discourse and that their masculinity requires them to distance themselves from behaviours, activities and talk considered feminine (Martino, 1998; Millard, 1997; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, Gilbert, 2000).

2.3.2 Dominant Masculinity

Through the socially based practices of contemporary culture, children learn specific behaviours and attitudes required of them as they assume a gender identity. Despite the availability of options to enable boys to develop their masculine identity, it is a hegemonic masculinity characterised by mobility, toughness, adventure, heterosexuality, authority and emotional control that has become legitimised as being normal and natural in our society. This dominant form of masculinity requires adherence to a narrowly defined and intransigent set of behaviours and expectations. Pallotta-Chiarolli (1994, pp 100 – 101), in a summary of findings from research conducted with Australian adolescent boys, offers us insight into such behaviours and expectations:

- Boys should be aggressive and fight to prove their superiority
- Boys should not show any soft emotion
- Boys are not as caring and nurturing as girls
- Boys should dominate and act with contempt towards girls and women
- Boys should only undertake so-called men's careers and jobs.
- Boys' friendships should remain on a superficial level
- Boys must be physically strong, rugged and athletic
- Boys must succeed at all costs
- Boys must keep their problems to themselves as communicating their needs is a sign of weakness.

Martino's (1998) research provides a similar understanding of the way in which masculinity is acted out in boys' lives. A profile of a *cool masculinity* as developed from Martino's interviews and questionnaires with adolescent boys, shows the need felt by boys to be tough, be cool, play sport, be active, avoid intimacy, think rationally, display emotional control, be stoic, resist and be autonomous. Because such behaviour is not seriously challenged the dominant norm is created for what it is to be a man.

Beynon (2002) referring to the study of Browne and Rosse (1995) gives emphasis to the fact that such indexical markers of masculinity are not exclusively the dominion of the adolescent male but are embodied at an early age in the male identity as indicated by the choices a three year old makes in terms of toys, activities and style of interaction with peers.

2.3.3 Masculinity as Defined in Opposition to Femininity

It is significant to the argument for boys' rejection of literacy that dominant masculinity requires behaviour which is fundamentally different to that required of femininity. Boys, as they display masculinity, must learn to display it in opposite ways to girls (Martino, 1998; Millard, 1997; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, Gilbert, 2000; Beynon, 2002; Young 2000; Webb and Singh, 1998). Girls display desire to cooperate; boys rebel. Girls enjoy passive leisure activities; boys must be actively engaged. Girls are comfortable with emotional display; boys exhibit bravado and emotional aloofness.

Such is the weight of this gender requisite that masculine behaviour which is deemed improper because it resembles feminine behaviour, is disparaged, inviting derogatory labels and ridicule from the male peer group (Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert 1997; Martino 1998; Gambell and Hunter, 2000). In short, failing as a male is deleterious to the individual identity of males.

The potency of this dominant form of a male identity is highlighted through the research of Best (1983) and Martino (1998). Best (1983 cited in Gambell and Hunter, 2000), who conducted research over four years in primary schools in Canada, concluded that "males, by second grade had to expunge anything in their behaviours, emotions and tastes that could be remotely construed as feminine" (p.697). Her young male subjects came to believe that they had to do the opposite to females. Martino's research (1998) with adolescent boys verifies that this conviction persists as boys get older.

The conclusions drawn from this line of argument in relation to boys' literacy development is that the construction of masculinity characterized by a desire to be unequivocally heterosexual is seen to be at odds with the school construction of literacy. Masculinity, defined within a framework of feminine opposites, necessitates the shunning of classroom literacy activities for boys.

The correlation between the inflexible, rule bound, masculine tenet, the feminine nature of school literacy practices and boys' rejection of school literacy is effectively illustrated by extracts from Martino's (1998) interviews with adolescent males. The following comments are indicative of the attitude of many of the boys of his study:

English is boring...playing sport is way more interesting.
I don't like reading. I think it is because I'm an active person and can't sit down doing nothing.
English is not suited to guys because it is not the way guys think.
But most guys who like English are faggots.
This subject is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever done.
I would rather be outside with friends, or working on my bike.
The books we are given to read are not action packed enough.

(Martino, 1998, pp 45 - 60)

2.3.4 Literacy as a Feminine Discourse

The feminine construction of literacy begins with the cultural traditions of the home and the wider community where reading and writing role models are predominantly female (Gambell and Hunter, 2000; Millard, 1997). Socialisation theory argues that, as children interact with people, they use them as a reference

point, as a model to be imitated because they identify with them on the basis of gender (Davies, 1989). The role of the mother, it is posited, is significant in engendering a relationship between female identity and literacy (Gambell and Hunter, 2000; Millard, 1997; Power 2001). A study conducted by Millard (1997), draws attention to the pervasiveness of the female as the reading role model in the home lives of young children. The male and female participants of her study identified female family members as being the most practiced readers in the home. They also acknowledged their mothers as being key figures in their early reading experiences, such as making books available in the home, reading stories to them, conducting visits to the local library and providing support as they begin literacy instruction at school.

Despite the preponderance of female reading role models in homes, Moss (2000) disputes any correlation with a lack of interest in reading by boys. Her findings show no relationship between the gender of the reading role model in the home and boys' engagement and development in school reading. Her data does, however, suggest a strong link between boys who are skilled, engaged readers and parents who see themselves as readers. However, this was regardless of the gender of the parent who reads.

The role model argument is reinforced by the belief that the predominance of female English teachers in the early years of schooling contributes to boys' perception of the feminine nature of literacy (Gambell and Hunter, 2000).

However, the veracity of this theory has not been established through research

and is firmly opposed as a rationale by Alloway and Gilbert (1997) who point out that teachers presiding over primary mathematics classes are also mostly females and that engagement with mathematics is not an issue for boys. Reed (1999) also disagrees with the whole role model argument, taking the firm stance that a greater presence of male role models in boys' lives will not affect boys' school literacy achievements.

The pedagogical and ideological characteristics of the classroom also work to set literacy up as a female discourse calling for practices that are aligned with those encouraged in females through the process of socialisation (Martino, 1998; Simpson, 1996; Alloway and Gilbert; 1997; Barrs, 2000). English lessons are described as a discourse of feelings where students are encouraged to engage in intimate, exploratory and reflective talk as they empathise with story characters, relate story events to their own feelings and explore their own responses. This is contradictory to the patterns of talk required of boys in other social settings such as the sporting field and the male peer group where talk is characterised by competition, stoicism, suppression of feelings and rationality (Gambell and Hunter, 2000; Barrs, 2000; Gilbert, 1998; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997). As Maynard and Lowe (1998, p.8) point out, "Outside of the school boys are required to understand themselves very differently – to concentrate on things outside of self rather than on self". Moreover, the English classroom rewards behaviours such as sitting down, sitting still, being passive and conforming, behaviours more readily associated with the female identity and more tolerable to girls.

Given these behavioural and discourse demands of the English classroom, for many boys participation generates conflict with their experiences of masculinity necessitating avoidance so as to distance themselves from females and establish what they see as masculinity (Gilbert, 1998; Martino, 1998; Martino, 1994; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Gambell and Hunter, 2000; Barrs, 2000).

Millard (1997) gives more specific shape to an understanding of how the classroom inadvertently endorses literacy as a practice more suitable for and desired by girls. She identifies, for instance, the strong classroom focus on the narrative text over the information text and the pursuit of reading for leisure. Millard has noted the story genre not only to be the core reading material for the young emergent reader but also to be the favoured genre for teacher read-aloud sessions as well as the genre upheld by teachers as being more appropriate for students during set, independent reading times in class. The reading of the narrative text is more often associated with girls' reading practices and as such boys are less willing to engage with the narrative genre. Again, because of the feminine association, boys are disinclined to choose reading as a leisure activity, preferring other pursuits (Martino, 1998). When boys do choose to read it serves a different function in accordance with acceptable male leisure pursuits. They are more inclined to read non-fiction texts such as computer or hobby magazines (Martino, 1998; Millard, 1997). The content of such texts is felt by boys to be more reflective of their interests and is accordingly more appealing to them.

It is not just narrative reading tasks that boys reject. They are also less willing to engage in narrative writing tasks, a customary and highly valued classroom literacy experience. The reluctance of boys to write stories, that they get distracted and give little attention to detail and description when writing, are seen to be consequences of gender (Maynard and Lowe, 1999).

2.3.5 The Male Peer Group

The gender differences identified through engagement in reading practices have frequently been attributed to the different social behaviour of the male and female peer groups (Millard, 1997; Moss, 2000; Simpson, 1996; Barrs, 2001).

The male peer group, unlike its female counterpart, does little to influence boys' attitude to and involvement with the reading of narrative texts (Millard, 1997; Moss, 2000; Simpson, 1996; Barrs, 2001). On the other hand, recommendation, circulation and discussion of good books is an important part of the social life of young girls and is a noteworthy influence on girls' positive attitude to reading stories and their adeptness and ease with the discourse of the English classroom. This peer group behaviour does not exist for many boys and they may consequently be less prepared than girls for the English classroom. The discussion of stories does not motivate many boys and is therefore not a consistent social feature of the male peer group. On those rare occasions where boys do share and discuss reading material it usually involves a more competitively driven type of talk around text types that rarely feature in the English classroom. For instance, boys will demonstrate what they know of a

subject using a text as a prompt or they will compare collections such as stickers in a football album (Moss, 2000). For boys, talk needs to be for specific purposes and involves functional texts such as computer manuals and surfing magazines (Millard, 1997).

The male peer group also exerts influence on the choices young male readers make as they grapple with the complexities of learning to read (Moss, 2000; Barrs 2001). Classrooms, because of the instructional practices employed, often render achievements and failures in reading very visible (Moss, 2000). This can have critical implications for the struggling male reader who, because of his gender, will put a lot of effort into hiding and escaping from the peer group discomfiture created by a low reading status. One such escape route is to choose not to read at all or to read non-fiction texts where access to meaning can be more easily achieved and understanding better exhibited even though reading skill is weak. The narrative, says Moss (2000), is not being rejected because of its feminine connotations but because “non fiction texts allow [boys] to make claims about their own status as experts which didn’t depend on them having read the text at all” (p.103).

An inescapable conclusion from the sociological perspective is that the social and cultural dimensions of gender identity need to be carefully considered when looking at issues which bear on boys’ school literacy achievement. Not all boys conform to a hegemonic masculinity and not all boys experience literacy underachievement. Nonetheless, it seems that boys in general need to be given

the resources and opportunities to examine and question this dominant version of masculinity because of the restrictions it puts on their lives and for the experiences that it misappropriates.

2.4 The Literacy Learning Environment of the Classroom

2.4.1 Introduction

Boys' underachievement in literacy has been attributed by many to the process of schooling itself. Literacy, as presently constructed in the classroom through learning tasks, lesson content and reading materials is said to disadvantage boys as a group. The characteristics of the English lesson are contributing to boys' disenchantment, disinterest, inattention and disengagement with school literacy (Rowe, 2002; Rowe and Rowe, 1999; University of Newcastle, 2000; Buckingham, 1999; Wilhelm and Smith, 2002).

This perspective is supported by the fact that, while boys are rejecting school based literacy, they continue to enthusiastically participate in literacy practices at home and in other contexts outside the school (Wilhelm and Smith, 2002; Power, 2001; Simpson, 1996; Millard, 1997; Moss, 2000; Martino, 1998).

Studies by Wilhelm (2002), Martino (1998) and Simpson (1996) show that boys not only passionately engage in reading and other literacy practices, but also that these practices are characterised by critical thinking and involve the selection of texts inclusive of a wide range of genres and topics. Boys are thought to be motivated with literacy practices where the social purpose is clearly visible.

Outside of school, boys read magazines, manuals, music sheets and emails. They show competency with the literacy requirements of the internet chat room, peer group discussion, television news, shows and movies. As Power (2001) stresses, it is possibly our “nationally sanctioned audits of literacy practices” (p. 58) which contributes to the perception of a problem. The choices made about what and how to teach and assess, prizes certain literacy practices and learning styles over others.

2.4.2 The Narrative

A significant distraction to boys’ interest in school literacy is the use of fictional texts. The narrative text is fundamental to the English curriculum. In the English classroom it is assigned high status as a reading genre and is bestowed with a pivotal role in the teaching of all aspects of English (Millard, 1997; Martino, 1998). Moreover, narratives often chosen for classroom use tend to have little connection to the cultural experiences and social interests of boys. Additionally, enquiry into the reading practices of boys tells us that most boys prefer to read non-fiction texts (Martino, 2001; NZ-ERO, 1999; Gambell and Hunter, 2000; Barrs, 2000; Martino, 1998; Love and Hamston, 2001; Millard, 1997). Boys will generally choose to read texts about such things as music, sport, surfing, girls, cars and construction (Martino, 2001). Reading of these texts has value to boys as they serve a purpose - learning about topics of interest. However, as Martino (2001) reports, it is important to note that not all boys are adverse to reading fiction. His study into boys’ reading choices identifies a

small cohort of boys who view the reading of fiction texts as pleasurable but only if they contain humour, suspense, action, adventure or science fiction.

2.4.3 Qualities and Demands of the Literacy Learning Task

Teacher quality is the most important source of variation in student achievement (Rowe 2002) and can be measured by the way teachers design instruction so as to cater for the needs of the individuals in their classes. Good teaching requires the employment of varying strategies and teaching methods while catering for individual differences as manifested through differences in learning styles, interests, social and cultural backgrounds and gender. Rowe (2002) places substantial emphasis on the importance of the quality of teaching in influencing boys' learning. He asserts that any variation to student achievement stems from the "identity of the classroom to which the student is assigned" (p. 8).

It would seem that the literacy learning tasks of the English classroom have a sameness about them in that they are consistently typified by a high reliance on verbal reasoning, written communication and sustained attention (Rowe, 2002; NZ-ERO, 1999; Reed, 1999). Added to this is a lack of structure and minimal set guidelines for how to best complete the task and achieve the requisite outcome. Moreover, the central discourse is predominantly one of feelings with only peripheral regard to action, fact and analysis. It is suggested that such an approach to literacy teaching is not sufficiently addressing the learning style and strengths of many boys (Rowe and Rowe, 1999; Rowe, 2002; Wilhelm and Smith, 2002; Buckingham, 1999; Martino, 1994; Martino, 1998).

The inadequacy of this approach to literacy teaching for boys is highlighted by research which identifies how boys best learn. The New Zealand Education Review Office (1999) and Rowe (2002) identify attributes of the classroom-learning task which result in greater participation of male students. Their work argues that boys are better suited to and thus more willing to engage with, tasks reflective of a more traditional approach to teaching as characterized by:

- High level of structure / rules for completion
- Provision of explicit criteria for presentation
- Involvement of personal target setting by the student
- Short term goals
- Immediate reward/ feedback from the teacher
- Highly structured lessons
- Emphasis on challenge
- Frequent change of activity
- Detailed but simple instructions
- Short term targets

(NZ-ERO, 1999; Rowe 2002)

Similar understandings are outlined in the work of Barrs (2000), Rowe and Rowe (1999), Wilhelm and Smith (2002) and Martino (1994).

Wilhelm's study (2002) looks carefully at boys' literate lives both inside and outside the school. His research concludes that boys' rejection of school literacy

results from a disparity between the characteristics of the task set and those of other more motivating activities outside the classroom.

The boys in his study were motivated to participate in activities that were characterised by:

- A feeling of competence
Able to see progress and gain a sense of being good at the task.
- An appropriate level of challenge
Being challenged but not overmatched by the task.
- Clear goals and feedback
Able to be satisfied through receiving immediate short-term feedback.
- A focus on the immediate experience
Able to experience the immediate enjoyment of the task in which they are engaged.

Because the requirements for motivating boys, engaging their interests and harnessing their preferred learning style contrast with the characteristics of classroom English lessons, it would seem that the schooling process currently operates to disadvantage boys. The research presented points to the need for teaching and learning strategies to be reviewed in order to improve English outcomes for boys.

2.5 Attention - An Important Factor of Learning

Attention can be defined as the time when “the student’s mind is focused either on lesson content or on applying lesson content to other matters appropriate to

the lesson” (Rinne, 1984, p.23). It can also be described as student attention, attending behaviour, student engaged time, time-on-task behaviour or academic learning time (Rinne, 1984).

There is little doubt that attention is one of the most critical components of a student’s capacity to achieve in the classroom. There is wide acceptance of the maxim that for learning to take place in the classroom, the student must be actively attending to the learning process (Burden and Byrd, 1999; Anderson, 1984; Rinne, 1984; Good & Brophy, 1997). Studies of teaching consistently confirm that achievement goes hand in hand with student engagement or time-on-task. Engagement has commonly been used as a criterion variable in classroom studies (Wittrock, 1986, p.395).

Carroll’s *Model of School Learning* (Carroll 1962 cited in Anderson 1984) highlights the important role which attention plays in the various factors contributing to a student’s aptitude for learning. These factors also include motivation, opportunity to learn, quality of instruction, perseverance, time available to complete a task and ability to understand instruction. The teacher’s ability to bring all these factors into play in the classroom environment plays a major part in determining the quality of learning.

Anderson (1984) also looks at the link between attention and learning from the historical perspective and her account once again underlines the importance of

attention or time-on-task to student achievement. More recent studies point to the same conclusion (reviewed by Rinne, 1984 and Brandt, 1989).

In his review of research into attention, Rine (1984) concludes that an increase in learning runs parallel to an increase in attention and time-on-task behaviour.

Brandt (1989) reaches much the same conclusion in his own review of research into the same subject. He maintains that student engaged time is one of nine powerful, consistent factors that contribute to an increase in learning.

Brandt (1989) also emphasizes the important distinction between allocated learning time and productive learning time. He makes the point that productive learning time is enhanced when teaching is designed to meet the different needs of different students. In other words, lessons should be adapted to the needs of individual students so that each student will be encouraged to concentrate on his or her particular requirements rather than merely engaging in more and more activity.

2.6 Conclusion

It would seem from the literature reviewed that boys have a distinct preference for literacy learning tasks which are different to those which are commonly presented in the classroom. It is not so clear as to whether their preferences have evolved because of a biological disposition that is different to girls or because they are the result of the socialisation process. Regardless of the reasons, boys will be more fully engaged with the learning tasks of the classroom if these tasks

embody certain attributes. Finally, an essential point to the argument is that fully engaging boys with the learning tasks of the literacy classroom is critical if there is to be a genuine growth in boys' school literacy achievement.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Definition of Terms

Attention is referred to as attending behaviour, student engagement time, academic learning time and time-on-task behaviour (Rinne, 1984). Attention is considered to occur when “the student’s mind is focused either on lesson content or on applying lesson content to other matters appropriate to the lesson” (Rinne, 1984, p.23).

Time-on-task behaviour is defined as the time during which the person is oriented to the learning task and actively, engaged in learning (Carroll, 1963, p.725 cited in Anderson, 1984, p.63).

For the purpose of this study, *attention* is deemed to be the same as *time-on-task behaviour*.

3.2 The Design

In order to achieve the aims of the study it has been necessary to draw on two kinds of data: statistical data involving measurements of the time-on-task behaviour of boys during writing lessons in both the coeducational and all-boys classes and case study data involving detailed descriptions of the features of the co-educational and the all-boys classes and specifically of the writing lessons.

The following is an account of the steps taken and the methods utilized in assembling answers to the research questions.

3.3 The Participants

Participants are the Year 5 male students in a coeducational class at a northern suburbs state school in the Perth metropolitan area and then these same students in Year 6. The school is unique amongst Western Australian government schools in that it presently employs a system under which parents of boys have the option of moving their children into an all-boys class for the final two years of primary school.

One particular boy from this Year 5 class was also selected. This boy was ten years old and spoke English as his first language. He had not been diagnosed with any learning difficulty but was regarded as not having achieved his learning potential because of a lack of interest and disengagement with the task of learning. He was from a middle classification socio-economic bracket. He was selected by his Year 5 class teacher with the principal selection criterion being a consistent display of inattentive behaviour during writing lessons. The choice was supported by the teacher's completion of the Attention Checklist (Appendix B).

Permission was sought from the school principal and the class teachers, to visit classrooms and collect whatever information was required. It was also sought

from the parents of the selected student. To ensure anonymity, teachers, students and the school concerned have been given pseudonyms.

The Instrumentation

The following instruments were employed in the collection of the data:

- *Attention Checklist* (Appendix B)

An Attention Checklist was used to assist the Year 5 teacher in choosing the male student for the purposes of this study. It was developed from a pre-existing test of attention (Das, 1986) designed to help teachers appraise the inattention of students. It poses twelve questions about covering a range of classroom behaviours that demonstrate inattentiveness. In addressing each question the teacher rates the student's behaviour in regards its frequency or intensity.

- *Interview Schedules 1,2 and 3* (Appendix C)

Three interview schedules, consisting of a series of prepared questions, were used to assist the collection of case study data. Interview schedule 1 consisted of a set of questions making general inquiries into the school's single gender classes programme. Interview Schedule 2 was designed to elicit information from the class teachers about their lesson design and approach to the teaching of writing. Interview Schedule 3 was for the purpose of obtaining the viewpoint of individual students in regards to class writing lessons. Schedule 3 was also used when

interviewing the focus student, to collect information about his background, school experience and attitude to writing lessons.

- *Observation Records 1 and 2* (Appendix D)

The Observation Record 1 was used to record the number of boys judged to be attentive during writing lessons at any given time. It provided for the consistent collection of data by detailing the types of behaviours that constitute attentiveness and those that represent inattentiveness. The Observation Record 2 was used to record attentive and inattentive behaviour of the focus student over a given writing lesson. It also allowed for the coding of the inattentive behaviour.

- *Observation Schedule* (Appendix E)

The Observation Schedule consisted of a list of components of the learning task and teacher instruction that were to be observed during writing lessons. It provided a guide for the systematic collection and recording of data to ensure that information relevant to achieving a comprehensive understanding of each learning environment was not overlooked.

- *Attitude Survey* (Appendix F)

The Attitude Survey is a measurement instrument that gives statistical information about a student's attitude to writing. It calls for students to rate their attitude to each writing experience outlined in each item of the

test. It was used to gauge the general attitude to writing of the boys and of the focus student. It was also used to get information about attitudes to specific writing tasks.

3.4 The Data Collection

3.5.1 Introduction

This study involved collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was a series of measurements expressed as percentages, of the number of boys exhibiting time-on-task behaviour during writing lessons in the Year 5 co-educational class and the Year 6 all-boys class. Measurements of the focus student's time-on-task behaviour were also collected. In this instance the measurements recorded the time during each writing lesson that the student spent attending to the task. The qualitative data gathered was about the writing lessons of the Year 5 coeducational class and the year 6 all-boys class. For each class information was gathered about the features of each writing lesson and the way in which the teacher delivered the lessons.

3.5.2 The Orientation Visit

An orientation visit to the Year 5 classroom took place in the first week of term four prior to the formal data collection visits. This involved being present in the class during a writing lesson and was intended to encourage the teacher and students to become at ease with the presence of a researcher. Initial notes were made in relation to the contextual features of the Year 5 classroom and to become familiar with the seating arrangements for the boys.

During this time, the Year 5 teacher completed the attention checklist and selected the focus male student.

During this preliminary visit the opportunity was also taken to carry out a semi-structured interview with the school principal in order to learn about the school's programme of single gender classes for its upper primary students. (Appendix B, Interview Schedule 1).

3.5.3 The Collection of Quantitative Data

In term 4 of 2002 a series of visits to the Year 5 classroom was conducted in order to observe, measure and record the time-on-task behaviour of the boys during the writing lessons of this co-educational setting. These visits took place twice a week for five weeks. The procedure was to observe the students as they participated in classroom writing lessons and, at regular ten-minute intervals, scan the class and notice how many male students were attentive or inattentive. The number of attentive male students was logged on a recording sheet (Refer appendix C, Observation Record 1). Good and Brophy (1984) refer to this repeated observation and measurement of student behaviour as *time sampling*. Following each lesson the average number of male students who were attentive during the lesson was expressed as a percentage and then recorded on a graph where the horizontal axis indicated the lessons and the vertical axis displayed the time-on-task percentages.

During these classroom visits data relating to the attentiveness of the focus student was also gathered. The process was similar to that followed for attentiveness measures of the boys in general. It required observation of the student at two-minute intervals as he participated in classroom writing lessons and indicating on the Observation Record (Refer Appendix D, Observation Record 2) whether or not he was displaying time-on-task behaviour. When the student was displaying off-task behaviour a code was used to provide information as to the types of behaviours that the student engaged in on these occasions. Good and Brophy (1984) refer to this as *frequency counts*, where the number of behaviours per unit of time is collected.

A second set of measurements of time-on-task behaviour was collected in the first term of 2003 when the boys moved into the Year 6 all-boys class. The procedure replicated that followed for the Year 5 class except that the data collection took place over six classroom visits instead of ten as had been the case the previous year. It also became necessary to measure the boys' time-on-task behaviour again in the second term of Year 6 when a new teacher took charge. This third set of measurements was necessary to ascertain whether a change in the teacher of the all-boys class – and perhaps a change in teaching methods – would bring about a change in attentiveness measures. The procedure for collecting the data on this third occasion followed that which was previously used.

The boys' attitude to writing was also measured using an attitude scale. This specific scale known as The Writing Attitude Survey (Refer Appendix F) was administered in Year 5 and then again in Year 6 and provided scores that could be converted to a percentile rank indicating each student's attitude to writing in relation to what is normal for the average student within the same age group.

3.5.4 The Collection of Qualitative Data

Information about the nature of the writing lessons and of the teacher's instruction for each class was also collected during the visits when the measurements of attentiveness were carried out. During these visits, observations were made and notes taken about the learning tasks and the teacher's instruction and management style. An observation schedule (Refer Appendix E, Observation Schedule) for the taking of field notes was used to ensure that the information gathered was comprehensive and that it included a variety of different aspects of the teaching methods. Lessons were video taped for later viewing during which time further observations were noted and transcripts of lesson dialogue were written up.

Semi-structured interviews with the teacher and students were conducted during the weeks when lesson observations took place. A list of open-ended questions was prepared (Refer Interview Schedules 2 and 3, Appendix B) to ensure that discussions were directed towards providing information about the writing lessons. These interviews were taped and later transcribed.

Further information about the writing lessons was gathered through the examination of each teacher’s writing programme, lesson notes and lesson materials. Copies of worksheets and samples of students work were randomly collected.

The Writing Attitude Survey (Refer Appendix F), which was administered for the purpose of quantifying writing attitude, was also used to provide descriptive data. The answers students gave to each item of the survey was used to reveal students’ feelings about the various writing tasks that were regularly carried out by students during writing lessons.

Multiple data collection methods were used to ensure accuracy in the information provided by the case studies. Gall, Gall & Borg (2005) refer to this process as *triangulation* and highlight its importance in establishing validity of study findings. Table 3.1 on page 37 represents a summary of the qualitative data collected and the different methods by which it was obtained.

TABLE 3.1

Data Collection

Topic	Data	Data Source
The Writing Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall structure of each writing lesson: beginning, middle and end• Length of time of each lesson• Topics central to learning tasks• Text types produced• Other materials used• Central discourse during discussions• Cognitive demands of the task• Level of challenge of tasks for students• Students attitude to the learning tasks• Students’ sense of achievement from completing the task• Relevance of tasks to students lives• Degree of choice made available to students within the task• Degree of student independence in completing the task• Group or independent tasks• Short or long term tasks	Observation /Interview/ Documents Observation Observation /Tchr Interview Observation / Tchr Interview Observation / Tchr Interview Observation / Tchr Interview Observation Observation Observation / Std Interview Std Interview / Attitude Attitude Survey Std Interview Observation / Std Interview Observation Observation Observation/ Tchr Interview Observation/Tchr Interview
Teacher: Instruction and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher use of discussion, explanation, demonstration or direct instruction and other strategies at different stages of the lessons• Use of explicit teaching or modeling of skills / strategies• Clarity of criteria for completing the task or achieving outcomes• Ways in which the social purpose of the task is made visible to students• Teacher feedback to students about task performance or progress• Techniques used for establishing or holding students’ attention to in lessons• Structured behaviour management programmes used in the classroom• Level of talk, noise and movement around the room tolerated• Nature of decisions made about students’ behaviour	Observation / Documents Observation / Documents / Tchr Interview Observation Observation Observation Observation Observation / Tchr Interview Observation Observation / Tchr Interview

3.6 The Data Analysis

3.6.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

A graphic representation was compiled of the data showing the measurements of boys' attentiveness during writing lessons in the different classes. The use of a *box and whisker* graph was used display the average of the time during each of the lessons for when boys were attentive. It also displayed the lowest and highest attentiveness scores for each lesson.

The measurements displayed on each graph were examined in order to reach an understanding of the features of boys' attentive and inattentive behaviour in each of the classes involved. The graphs for each class were then compared to determine difference in attentiveness between the classes and to develop an understanding of the nature of that difference. The data was examined to determine firstly whether any change in attentiveness had occurred between classes and, secondly, whether any differences were of such a magnitude as to be judged significant.

The measures of attentiveness of the focus student were also graphed so that there was a graph displaying his attentiveness for each of the three classroom contexts. The student's attentiveness measures in each observed lesson in each class context were displayed. Changes in the focus student's attentiveness measurements from class to class were compared with changes for the whole class to ascertain the extent to which they followed a similar pattern.

3.6.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Information about each of the three classroom contexts which was gleaned from interviews and lesson transcripts, field notes, document examination and the attitude survey was analysed and then written up as three separate case studies. Each case study was written using the same organizational structure; that is headings were used (taken from the categories identified prior to the commencement of the study) that covered a range of factors relating to the nature of the writing lessons and the pedagogical approach taken by the teachers. This allowed for consistent interpretation and for comparison across cases. The comparisons were made and the similarities and differences between the two learning environments were identified. An important feature of each case study was that it contained a *thick description* of each learning environment, which as Burns (1994) points out, allows for a more thorough understanding of the subject being described.

A case study of the focus student was also written-up detailing background information, school performance and writing achievement within each class. This was then examined in order to consider his attention measurements against this background.

3.7 Limitations

The validity of any conclusions which may be derived from this study would obviously be limited by the fact that the study was confined to just one group of boys at a particular school. Although the number of boys involved (there were

24 boys) probably would be sufficient to support a claim that it was a fairly representative sample, demographic and other environment factors may possibly erode any such claim.

It should also be borne in mind that the question of attentiveness, which is central to this study, has been considered only from standpoints of classroom gender composition and certain teaching approaches. While these factors are important, there may be others which the study leaves untouched but which may themselves play a part in attentiveness with respect either to the subject group of boys or to bots in general.

CHAPTER 4

Gender Based Classes –

The Fernleigh Primary School Experience

Up until about 15 years ago the land on which the suburb of Fernleigh now stands was no more than sandy bush land situated just over thirty kilometres from Perth on the periphery of the northern suburban sprawl. However, it was quickly enveloped into that sprawl and has since bloomed into a modern residential area in one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia.

Fernleigh probably represents a good example of a new multicultural residential precinct. Almost one-third of the people who make up the suburbs population were born overseas in twenty-five different countries. Another 9.5% are indigenous Australians.

The suburb is inhabited primarily by young families with almost 70% of the total population below forty years of age and a mere 3.9% over sixty-five years. An examination of the weekly income (ABS 2001 census) of Fernleigh households suggest typically low to middle – income earners.

Since it was established in 1992, the Fernleigh Primary School student population has rapidly increased and is now steady at 850 students across the kindergarten to Year 7 classes. There is a significant degree of diversity in the cultural backgrounds of the student group with over twenty different countries

being represented. Of the students attending the school, 49 are Indigenous Australians.

The school has a total teaching staff of forty-three. The management personnel comprise the principal and three deputy principals. There are specialist teachers for the subjects of art, physical education and music. For the support of students from non-English speaking and indigenous backgrounds there is an ESL teacher and an Aboriginal support person.

Early in the school's history, a large number of students at Fernleigh Primary School were considered to be "at risk" of not achieving their educational potential. In response, the school established a number of special programmes in order to maximize positive educational outcomes for students. These programmes have included Aboriginal homework classes, an early identification /intervention programme, emotional literacy project, a pastoral care programme, students' services manager, school based positive student behaviour management, multi-aged-grouping classes, the Reading Recovery programme, Wolfendon - oral intervention project and, significant to this study, a gender based classes programme.

The gender based classes programme was established in 1999 by the principal, Mr Wayne Smith, in response to evidence before the school that a large number of its students were socially and academically in trouble. In 1998 Students at Educational Risk (SAER) screening of Fernleigh Primary School students

revealed that many Year 6 students, chiefly boys, were “critically at risk”; that is, they were one year or more behind their chronological age in academic attainment. Moreover, Year 6 boys had the highest number of behavioural referrals in the school, typically for bullying and other aggressive and anti-social behaviour. Added to this was the Principal’s concern about the lack of effective male role models in the lives of the boys. He made the observation that, “being in Fernleigh is a really difficult thing for a boy. The difficult thing is there are so many poor role models and there is an expectation that you don’t have to do a lot to achieve, to end up having a life like the people around you.”

The following account of the development of the gender based classes programme at Fernleigh Primary School has been composed primarily from information gained through discussion with the school principal, Wayne Smith. Information acquired from the school’s programme documents and from interviews with the teachers involved has also contributed to this account.

The gender based classes programme began with just two Year 7 classes where boys and girls were separated in the morning for mathematics and science and then combined in the afternoon for integrated studies in science, technology and society and environment. Later, single gender classes were extended to both Years 6 and 7. Initially, the boys’ class was staffed with a male teacher and the girls’ with a female teacher. At this time the programme structure was designed to focus on the differing academic needs of girls and boys. However, as the teachers and principal considered factors other than those related to student

learning they began to believe that gender-based classes had the added potential to contribute to the social, behavioural and emotional needs of students. The programme was therefore fine-tuned to enhance this potential.

The teachers of the single gender classes were encouraged and supported by the principal in creating a classroom context where issues related to social, behavioural and emotional development were taken up. The teachers of the all-boys classes were directed towards professional development courses and reading material addressing the social and emotional needs of boys and outlining best practices for supporting this aspect of development through boys-only classes. One of the important focal points of the boys' class, as emphasized by the principal, was related to definitions of masculinity and male stereotypes. He explained, "What we are trying to do is empower boys with enough self confidence and self belief to be able to determine their future on their terms rather than on the expectations of their mates or of the people they hang around with."

A further development of the programme related to the choice of teacher. As a result of observations of the programme so far, discussions with teachers and continued research in the area, the principal decided that choosing teachers for the single gender classes should not be done on the basis of gender but rather in relation to teaching skill and proven effectiveness in creating positive and productive classroom environments. He decided that the gender of the teacher was not significant in achieving programme aims and presently female staff

members are teaching both the all girls' and the all boys' classes. In stressing the change in focus from teacher gender to teacher quality, the principal said that, "essentially they have to be gifted teachers who focus on relationships and are good at developing relationships with kids. They have to be relationship oriented."

The school continues to recognize the efficacy of the single-gender classes in addressing issues of poor academic performance. The principal continues to promote the application of a pedagogy in the single gender classes that is reflective of what the school knows of how boys and girls learn best. This knowledge is drawn from the school's ongoing evaluation of the single gender classes programme, background reading in the area and professional development of teaching staff. The principal's view is that, "the pedagogy in terms of how information and competencies are facilitated is more in tune what we think their [boys and girls] learning style is."

Although the school is committed to the concept of gender-based classes, it nevertheless acknowledges that learning needs are not the same for all students. The school principal continues to emphasize that, within the context of these classes, a teacher ought to strive to understand each particular student. As he says, "Teachers should avoid being 'sucked in' to thinking that all girls or all boys are the same." He went on to say that he thought that, "the biggest issue in education is getting teachers to focus on the individual, rather than teaching Year 5 or teaching the boys or teaching music or whatever."

Notwithstanding the perceived benefits from gender-based classes, the principal and teaching staff came to realize that for particular students, coeducational classes provided the best arrangement. Accordingly, the programme now runs so that students in Year 6 and 7 have the option of being a member of a single-gender class or completing their primary schooling in a coeducational setting. The question of choice with regard to the single-gender educational setting is important, as the school firmly believes that this educational experience is not beneficial for every single student.

Gender based classes are not for everyone but they can work. It's just a strategy. Lots of schools think it's an outcome. For kids in the main, pretty well adjusted, going pretty well, strong family support, doesn't seem to bully or be a victim of bullying, it's probably not for the ideal class for them.

Wayne Smith,
Principal

There is a strong conviction within the school community that the single-gender classes' programme at Fernleigh Primary School is making a major contribution towards improved academic and social outcomes. This is indicated by the results of the parent surveys conducted by the school and by informal discussions between the principal or class teachers and parents.

Although the extent to which academic standards have improved as a direct result of gender-based classes has not been measured, the principal confirmed that results of the recent SAER screening show that, from an academic

standpoint, the number of Year 6 and 7 students “critically at risk” has been markedly reduced. In addition, teachers’ reported a greater willingness of their male students to engage in classroom experiences with apparent development in boys’ readiness to participate in language and literacy tasks.

The teachers of the boys-only classes testify to a marked improvement in the social and behavioural attributes of students as they progress through Years 6 and 7. The principal’s scrutiny at the end of 2001 of behaviour referrals to the Deputy Principal revealed that there have been fewer behaviour referrals of the male students. Teachers said that they had also noted a positive change in the general attitude of boys towards schooling.

The teachers’ belief in the programme is well supported by feedback from a number of parents. Parents, in informally expressing their views to the principal and teachers have been enthusiastic in support of the programme, suggesting that the single-gender classes have generally advantaged their children. A 1999 / 2000 survey of parents conducted by the school reveals that 86% of parents “strongly agreed their child had been advantaged by the programme” and 90% “agreed their child had enjoyed the class.” The principal reported that more and more parents approach him to have their child placed in a single gender class.

CHAPTER 5

Case Study

Scott Hamersley's Co-educational Class

Year 5 Term 4 2002

Vignette

The Year 5 teacher, Mr Hamersley, gathers the children on the mat area at the front of the classroom. After taking some time to settle them down and gain their attention he reads from a book, the fable, The Wolf and the Sheep. When the story is read Mr Hamersley initiates a discussion by asking the class, "What is the message of this fable?" Many hands go up and he asks several children for their thoughts, providing them with an appropriate comment about their willingness to have a go. However, he is still waiting for the right answer.

"Remember" he says, "Fables teach a message. It's not always just about the story. It's about something that happens to everyone or everything over their life. So think carefully. What do you think this fable teaches us about life?" Two more suggestions and then Mr Hamersley receives the answer he is looking for.

"I think it means that if you tell lots of lies, when you tell the truth, no-one will believe you," suggests Sam.

"Great, that's very well done. Let me read you Aesop's version of the moral." Mr Hamersley carries on to read the moral from the book. He then moves the lesson on by detailing the writing task to be completed. He explains to them that they are going to do a storyboard of this fable; that is, he wants them to summarise the story into four parts with each part to be written into a separate box with accompanying pictures. As he explains this, he draws four boxes on the board and demonstrates where the text and the illustration should go. He is careful to indicate the number of sentences and expected level of detail of the pictures. He then reads the story once more, stopping to ask children about the meaning of some of the words. When he finishes reading he directs the children to move back to their desks, take out their language books, rule up and begin the writing task. As they do this there is a lot of talk and movement. This settles down somewhat after about ten minutes but the children continue to move in and out of conversation as they carry out their work. Mr Hamersley moves around the class and assists individual students. He soon realises many children are having difficulty with writing this form of a story summary so he stops the class and gives further instruction.

"I want to tell you the reason we're doing this...to learn about paragraphs. Each paragraph and picture is just one idea. You need to write two or three sentences into each box. Each box is one part of the story." Specific children are then chosen to read out what they have written in the first box. A discussion then follows when different and varying suggestions for the content of the subsequent boxes are called for. The next twenty minutes is given over to independent work. Talk and movement around the classroom continue as children proceed with their work. The lesson is concluded with Mr Hamersley asking the children to put their books away and move outside for sport.

5.1 Introduction

The Year 5 class at Fernleigh Primary School comprised 24 students, 16 boys and 8 girls. It was one of three Year 5 classes at the school. For various reasons, the class had experienced a number of changes in teacher. The present teacher, Mr. Scott Hamersley, had been with the class for ten weeks. Although new to teaching this particular class, Mr Hamersley was an experienced teacher who had been on the staff for eight years working in various other roles. Immediately before being appointed to this class, he was working as the school counselor.

The description presented here gives insight into the writing lessons conducted in Mr Hamersley's Year 5 class and comprises both design of the writing lesson and characteristics of the teacher's method of instruction and management. For the purpose of compiling this description ten writing lessons were observed during the fourth term of the school year. The description was further supported by information gained from an interview with the class teacher, Mr. Hamersley, from incidental conversations and from inspection of his writing programme and daily work pad.

5.2 The Writing Lessons

5.2.1 Writing Tasks

Four different writing tasks were carried out over the ten observed lessons; a summary recount, two character descriptions and a play script. Each of two of these tasks was completed within a fifty-minute lesson, the other two were

spread over the other eight lessons. Students carried out two of the tasks independently and the other two in cooperation with one or more of their peers.

All four writing tasks incorporated the topic fables or fairy tales. In the first two lessons, students were required to work independently to compose a summary recount in the form of a storyboard of the fable, *The Wolf and the Sheep*. The storyboard had four sections and the students had to represent the fable in four parts in visual and printed text. The character description task of the third lesson began with the students working in groups to devise and then perform a role-play of a known fable. The teacher instructed the students to act out each of the four paragraphs of the fable separately. On completion of this drama activity, the students were asked to write a paragraph describing one of the characters of the fable. A character description was once again the writing task of the fourth lesson. The lesson began with the students reading four unrelated paragraphs taken from well-known fables and working with the teacher to identify the main idea of each of the paragraphs. Subsequently the students worked independently to write a character description of one paragraph in length. The character was to be chosen from one of the fables they had read. In the six lessons to follow students worked in pairs to write a play script of the fairytale *The Three Little Pigs*. A summary of the main characteristics of each lesson is outlined in Table 5.1 on page 51.

TABLE 5.1

General Characteristics of the Learning Tasks Involved in the Writing Lessons

Lesson	The task	Text type	Topic	Independent or group task
1 & 2	Create a storyboard with visual and written text summarizing a fable into four parts.	Recount (summary) of a known Narrative	Fables	independent
3	Create a role-play of a fable. Write a paragraph describing a character	Description paragraph	Fables	group
4	Identify main idea sentences from paragraphs Write a paragraph describing a character	Description paragraph	Fables	independent
5 - 10	Write the story of The Three Pigs as a play script	Narrative – Play script	Fairy Tales <i>The Three Pigs</i>	Group (pair)

5.2.2 Time Allocated

The teacher’s timetable showed fifty minutes twice a week had been allocated for writing lessons. The actual time of the observed writing lessons varied between forty and sixty minutes. On two occasions the teacher extended this even further to allow students more time to work on the allocated task. The sixth lesson ran for ninety minutes.

5.2.3 Lesson Stages

As the teacher implemented each writing lesson the following broad pattern emerged in the lesson steps:

Lesson Introduction:

The children sat in a group on the mat area or at their desks and the teacher asked questions as he directed a whole class discussion on a topic connected to the writing task to follow. On one occasion this discussion was followed by a drama activity. But otherwise the teacher went on to explain the writing task. The time for this stage of the lesson varied from ten minutes to fifty minutes. The students were then directed to their desks to begin the activity.

Lesson Development:

The students worked at their desks on the set writing task while the teacher moved around to help with individual writing needs. The time allocated to this stage of the lesson was between twenty and forty minutes.

Lesson Conclusion:

The teacher directed students to pack away their language books.

A variation to this routine occurred when a writing task carried over from a previous lesson and a lesson introduction was not therefore required. In these instances the teacher simply instructed students to take out their language books and continue with their writing assignment.

5.2.4 Materials Used

Minimal resources were used during the writing lessons observed. In fact, over the ten lessons the resources consisted simply of the whiteboard, the students' language exercise books, a worksheet, a book of fables and three storybooks of

The Three Little Pigs. Students entered all their writing into their language exercise books. The teacher used the whiteboard to demonstrate the method of setting out for all four tasks and on three occasions to demonstrate the manner in which a particular part of the writing task should be carried out. Fables and the fairy tale read from the storybooks during lesson introductions were the impetus for the writing tasks. No other resource was used.

5.2.5 Teacher / Student Talk

The teacher introduced five of the ten writing lessons by using questions to steer the class into what he described as “discussions on a topic”. The themes of the discussions were morals within a fable, attributes of a paragraph, developmental stages of a narrative and characteristics of different versions of the story, *The Three Little Pigs*.

In the first lesson, after a fable was read aloud, the stimulus for discussion was the question, “What is the moral of this fable?” In the third and fourth lessons discussions were directed by the teacher’s questions, “What is a paragraph?” and “What does a paragraph look like on paper?” In the fifth lesson, after reading to the class different versions of *The Three Little Pigs*, the teacher guided a discussion by asking children to identify the similarities and differences in the different accounts of the same story. Finally, in the sixth lesson, the teacher began a discussion on narratives, specifically looking at the structural features of this text type by asking ‘What is a narrative?’ and then “What are the main features of a narrative?”

These teacher / answer sessions served the purpose of reviewing students' knowledge or focusing their attention on the topic. For instance in the first lesson the teacher was focusing on fables and in the third lesson the teacher was drawing out the students' understanding of the structural conventions for writing a paragraph. These sessions were often long in duration and limited in the depth of topic knowledge developed. The following extract is from the session that took place during the introduction of the fifth lesson, after the students had heard two of the versions of *The Three Little Pigs*. It is representative of each question / answer session observed and particularly highlights the limited depth of development of the topics.

T: I want you to tell me what is the same and what is different about these two stories. Let's start with similarities. How are the two stories similar?

S1: They have the same number of animals

S2: They both end the same way

T: Yes, good, Kathleen?

S3: They both have pictures

T: Okay, let's look at the differences then.

S4: One wolf fell in the pot at the end and one wolf ate the pigs up.

T: yes. Anything else? Julie?

S5: They happened at different times. One happened when it was the olden days and the other one is more modern.

T: okay, good, different times, anything else?

S6: One is the story about what the wolf thinks happens and the other says what the pigs think happened.

T: Well done. He picked the one that I really needed to hear. This is a different point of view. Each story is being told from a different point of view, one from the wolf's and one from the pig's.

The focus questions used by the teacher to initiate the teacher / student talk are outlined in Table 5.2 on page 55. The focus questions are indicative of the topics central to each of the discussions. Observation of the follow-on writing tasks

(refer table 5.2) indicate that these discussions did not always serve to support students with the skill or knowledge required for successful completion of the writing task. For instance, discussions within the second, third and fifth lessons achieve the outcome of identifying the structural features of different writing forms. These writing forms were then the defining characteristic of the tasks to follow. Here the relationship is clear. The learning that occurs during the discussion would, to some extent, inform the writer about the writing task to follow. Discussions 1 and 4 achieve the outcome of developing students' knowledge of written texts. However, the writing tasks to follow require application of a different text type. The discussion does little therefore to assist the writer in carrying out the writing task to follow.

TABLE 5.2
Teacher / Student Talk and Writing Lessons

Lesson	Examples of Teacher Questions	Writing Task
1 & 2	What are fables? What is the moral of the fable?	Summarise the fable, <i>The Sheep and the Wolf</i> into the form of a storyboard.
3	What is a paragraph? What does a paragraph look like on paper?	Write a paragraph describing one of the characters from a fable.
3	What is a paragraph?	Write a paragraph describing a character ensuring main idea is evident
4	What are the similarities and differences between the different author's written versions of The Three Little Pigs?	Write the one of the versions of the story of <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> as a play script.
5-10	What are the main features of a narrative? Can you identify the conflict and resolution of the following story?	Play script continued

5.2.6 Cognitive Demands

Participation in the discussions within lesson introductions and the undertaking of the writing tasks in the lessons, necessitated students using certain cognitive processes. Students were obliged to recall and understand stories, identify issues and main points, make judgements, summarise, translate, interpret, imagine and compare (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

In the first lesson, after hearing the teacher read a fable, students were asked to identify the moral. To do this, students had to recall and understand the story, identify critical issues and make a judgement as to how the story measured against contemporary behavioural standards. The lesson then shifted to the writing summary task where, in order to complete the task successfully, students had to understand and recall the storyline of the fable and then identify and summarise the major points.

The third and fourth lessons both began with the teacher asking the students to explain their understanding of a paragraph. The intellectual demands at this stage of the lessons were of a low level as students simply had to retrieve knowledge about the paragraphs from their memory. However, through the role-play task that was to follow lesson three, the demand on students' cognitive skills was increased. They were required not only to understand and recall the storyline of the fable told orally but also to translate this oral reading to a play involving actions, dialogue and expression. This lesson concluded with the students being asked to write a paragraph describing a character from the fable.

The fourth lesson also involved a character description. In writing these character descriptions students had to recall details of story character and further interpret the events in the story so as to form an opinion as to the personal qualities and attributes and physical appearance of the character. This activity called for imagination in developing a full character description. The students had to identify words and sentences that portrayed their understanding and opinion of the character.

In identifying the main ideas of the given paragraphs in the fourth lesson, students had to understand the concept of a main idea sentence and then distinguish such a sentence from the ancillary statements in a paragraph. The discussion which began the fifth lesson necessitated students comparing and contrasting three contemporary versions of *The Three Little Pigs* after the teacher read each of them aloud. Students had to understand and recall the components of each story as well as detect correspondences between components of the story such as point of view, plot development, character and setting. The task of writing one of these versions of *The Three Little Pigs* as a play script commenced in the fifth lesson and continued over the next five lessons. The cognitive process central to this task was the translation of a verbal narrative into a series of dialogues and actions.

The discussion in the sixth lesson where the teacher asked the students about the elements of a narrative once again called for knowledge recall. In addressing the teacher's questions the students articulated their recollections of the structural

components of a narrative and identified the events in a specific story that could be labelled as the conflict and resolution elements of that story.

5.2.7 Purpose and Audience

Students completed all four of the writing tasks in their language exercise books.

At the conclusion of the writing lesson these were then placed in their desks. In setting the tasks it was noted that on some occasions the teacher did not indicate to students a purpose for it whilst on other occasions he simply outlined the purpose as being “To improve our writing”, “To be better at writing paragraphs” or “To prove that you know the order it [the story] went in.” There was no suggestion of an audience other than the teacher, for the students’ writing.

Four students in the class were later asked to explain why they thought they needed to do the writing tasks their teacher gave them. They responded as follows:

S: Mr Hamersley tells us that practice makes perfect

A: So you can write when you get older, you might want to be a writer.

J: For good education and we can grow up to be good at working.

T: I’m not sure. I was actually thinking of when I’m older writing a book and then put it out and then I could be famous.

The teacher did not make the relationship between the writing tasks and the social relevance of the associated writing skills apparent in the lessons observed.

5.2.8 Student Choice

The lessons were structured to give students some choice but the choices were generally confined only to matters that were ancillary to the lesson itself such as classroom and work arrangements.

It was observed that in setting the class to work on the writing tasks the teacher allowed students to sit with whomever they chose although this opportunity was usually taken up by only a few students, nearly always boys. Where the writing lessons required students to work with one or more of their peers, such as in the play script and drama activities, the teacher allowed students to choose with whom they worked.

When setting students the task of writing the play script the teacher read three stories – versions of the same fairytale - and allowed students to choose the story that was to be the subject of their play script.

Apart from this limited choice, the teacher maintained tight control over all other aspects of the lesson particularly the lesson content. He did not give students the option of doing things differently. This high degree of control is typified in the following extract from the story summary where the teacher explained to the class what the writing task entails: -

What I want you to do is...you're going to use that page in front of you. You need to draw two dividing lines so your language book page is split into four boxes [demonstrates on board]. What I'd like you to do is, you're going to write a sentence. This is going to be kind of like a storyboard. You are going to retell the story in a series to prove that you know the order it went in.

You're going to do a sentence or sentences and a picture or pictures. It doesn't need to be too artistic. I don't want you to spend an hour and a half on these. You put about two or three sentences into each box and one picture with some detail...

For each writing task the teacher alone had chosen the topic, the task and the materials. In explaining the task to the students at the beginning of each lesson, the teacher outlined clear and specific parameters for the methods to be used and how he expected the finished product to look. Such explicit direction in task and process was also evident in the following extracts from the lesson requiring students to work together to write a play script

What you are going to do is write your own version of one of these teacher [holds up the three books he read from] stories. The rules are, basically you divide your page so you have the characters names on the left hand side and also you have the narrator who describes what happens... Now, the characters, they are actually speaking. This is called direct speech. Make sure you keep the sentences short, not too long. Don't go on and on. Now the other thing you need to do is put in sound effects.

You are going to be writing the story of The Three Little Pigs. You are going to choose one of the versions I read out to you, your choice. Now how you do it is with someone else. You and a partner are going to work together to do it. You both have to produce a copy of the work. You use a 3cm margin ruled in your language book. You write down the characters who start talking and you write down the direct speech. The rule is, anything a person says goes in the quotation marks.

In discussion with the teacher, he explained the reasons for some of his choices within writing lessons. He said that he chose the writing tasks according to his

understanding of the students' needs and the requirements of the school's genre-based writing programme, which outline what genres and text types were to be taught and revised at each year level. He also suggested that many of the students he worked with in this particular class "Lacked self discipline and the ability to derive pleasure from achieving results." He commented, "They don't have the maturity. I need to put tight external controls on these children so they come up with the results, to help them put up with the pain of doing the task."

5.3 The Teacher's Instruction and Management

5.3.1 Teaching Strategies

The strategies used by Mr Hamersley during the writing lessons were recitation (Cazden, 1988), exposition, demonstration, drama, cooperative learning (Barry and King, 1998; Marsh, 1996) and guided task completion. Table 5.3 on page 62 indicates frequency of strategy use and outlines the strategies that were used in each of the observed writing lessons.

TABLE 5.3

Writing Strategies Used During Each Lesson

Lesson	Writing Lesson	Teaching Strategies
1	Storyboard summary	Recitation Explanation Demonstration Guided Task Completion
2	Storyboard summary cont...	Guided Task Completion
3	Character description	Recitation Drama Cooperative Learning Explanation Demonstration Guided Task Completion
4	Character description	Recitation Guided Task Completion Explanation
5	Play script	Recitation Explanation Demonstration Guided Cooperative Learning
6	Play script continued	Recitation Explanation Guided Cooperative Learning
7 - 10	Play script continued	Guided Cooperative Learning

Five of the ten writing lessons began with the teacher using questions to steer the class into what he described as “discussion on a topic”. It involved the teacher asking a question, or a series of questions, on a topic and then nominating different students to give their responses. It served the purpose of reviewing students’ knowledge and drawing out an understanding of, or focusing students’ attention on, the topic of the lesson. The relationship between the teacher’s

questions and the outcome for students is summarized in Table 5.4. The time assigned to these question / answer sessions varied from between ten and fifty minutes.

TABLE 5.4
Teacher Questions during Recitations and the Learning Outcomes

Examples of teacher questions during recitations	Outcomes for students
What are fables? What is the moral of the fable?	Students' attention was focused on the fable of <i>The Sheep and the Wolf</i> . The students new what was the moral of this fable.
What is a paragraph? When you say a group what do you mean?	The teacher determined students understanding of paragraphing. Students' attention was focused on paragraphing.
What is the definition of a paragraph? How would you show a paragraph in a piece of written work?	Students knowledge on paragraphing and setting out paragraphs on paper is reviewed
What is the same and what is different about these two stories? Anything else?	Students' attention is focused on the three stories read by the teacher specifically character, plot, and point of view of the stories.
What are the main features of a narrative? What is the special thing about a narrative? What is that called? Can you identify the conflict and resolution of the following story?	The teacher determines students' knowledge of features of a narrative. The Students attention is focused on the narrative read out and on the conflict and resolution aspect of this narrative.
What is the part of the narrative that goes wrong? It starts with "c" With the story "The Three Little Pigs" what is the complication?	Students' knowledge of the complication element of the narrative is reviewed.

Cazden (1988) refers to this type of classroom discourse as *recitation* rather than *discussion*. In each instance, the teacher tightly controlled the boundaries for the

direction of the talk. Students responded only to the teacher's questions and comments and did not have an opportunity to influence the topics discussed. An example of this occurred in the first lesson where the teacher's questioning serves to focus students' attention on the topic of fables. Following this session the teacher went on to give students instructions for completing a written summary of this fable.

T: So, what do you think the moral is?

S1: Only play the trick once.

T: Only play the trick once? [points at another student] So what do you reckon it is?

S2: Um, I reckon he shouldn't play the trick until the wolf does come.

T: Yes, but that wouldn't be a trick. Would it? [points at another student] yes?

S3: don't lie

T: Don't lie? Okay, what about you Marty?

S4: Just be good until the wolf really comes. Be sensible.

T: Okay, just put your hands down for a moment. Remember these stories or these fables teach a message. It's not always just about sheep or about stories it's about something that happens to everyone or everything over their life.

S5: Don't tell a joke about scary things.

T: John?

S6: Whatever you do comes back to you.

T: Whatever you put out in life comes back to you. [points to another student]

S: Don't tell jokes about serious things.

T: Don't tell jokes about serious things. They're coming good. Yep?

S7: You know how I lied to you on Monday about the hat?

T: Yep, you have lied to me. We don't have to go into details.

S7: I said it was my hat. Well, say a real wolf came.

T: Would he be wearing a hat? Whose hat would he be wearing?

S7: [seriously] and you'd keep on thinking that it wasn't my hat.

T: Ah! So you're saying that once you tell a lie, the person who you tell a

lie to doesn't trust you again. So I would always check your hat.

That's a very good point. Let me read you what Aesop's version of

the moral is. People who tell lies are not believed even when they tell

the truth. So who actually got that by people talking about that?

The teacher facilitated these sessions, established the focus, controlled the direction and dominated the talk time. This was demonstrated in the following extract that began the third lesson, which was about paragraphing:

- T We talked yesterday about paragraphs. Can someone give me a definition of a paragraph?
- S About four or five sentences long.
- T Anything special about four or five sentences long? Because I could give you four or five sentences. Here they are; Pens are very useful items. Today is bandana day. I just saw a car driving down the road by the oval. Sarah lined up behind Joe and Taylor today. – Is that a paragraph?
- Ss No.
- T So four or five sentences do not a paragraph make. What is a paragraph?
- S A group of 4 sentences.
- T When you say a group what do you mean?
- S Like all in one lot. Like one paragraph and then a line underneath, then a gap.
- T That's important, yes you're right. Did you hear, Andrew? He said a paragraph needs to be shown to be a paragraph by being a little block then having a line missed out. But that still doesn't give us a definition.
- S Like what Joe said but it's gotta be all about the same thing but with different words.
- ...
- S Well, say you write a short story and then you miss like two lines and then you write like, not totally on the same thing, it goes to a different sort of story so your talking about one thing and then another.
- T Okay, so a paragraph is about one thing. To tell the truth, if we wanted to sell your definition we might need to fine-tune it a little. I think I'll go with David's because he's kind of put what everyone said together. Andrew, I'm going to give you an example. I want you to listen. The example is this: After the bell went Sally lined up very quickly. The students in room 20 lined up behind her. When their extremely intelligent teacher

arrived he asked the students to go inside. The students all went inside. – that’s a paragraph.

S That’s not a paragraph.

T Why?

S Because the third sentence is not true.

T You’re right, I didn’t tell you to go inside. Anyway, so that’s what we’re looking for. We’re looking for some groups of sentences.

Throughout, the various recitation sessions the teacher used sustaining questions (Tough, 1977) such as “Anything else?” or “What do you mean?” as well as examples to further draw out the students’ understanding of the topic. For example, when asking them about paragraphs he gave the example, “Pens are very useful items. Today is Bandana Day. I just saw a car driving down the road by the oval. Sarah lined up behind Joe and Taylor.” and then followed with the question, “Is that a paragraph?” When answers were given to his questions the teacher consistently gave feedback, which was typically related to the students’ effort, participation and accuracy in giving the answers he was looking for.

For instance: -

“That’s a very good point.”

“I tell you what you’re really working hard. That’s good John”

“That’s a great definition. You could probably publish that one in a dictionary.”

“Well done. He picked the one that I really wanted to hear.”

Another feature of these recitation sessions was humour, shared by the teacher and his students as demonstrated in the following extract from the lesson on paragraphs.

T The example is this: After the bell Sally lined up very quickly. The students in room twenty line up behind her. When their extremely intelligent teacher arrived he asked the students to go inside. The students all went inside. That's a paragraph.

S That's not a paragraph.

T Why?

S Because the third sentence is not true.

T You're right. I didn't tell you to go inside...

In communicating information to students the teacher used the strategy of explanation. This strategy was used in two different situations within writing lessons. The first was during recitation sessions where the teacher sought to enhance the students' answers to his questions by presenting new knowledge on a topic. The second was when the teacher presented the details of the writing tasks to be carried out. In these instances, the strategy of explanation was often accompanied by demonstration as the teacher sought to more effectively achieve his communicative purpose.

In the recitation session which began the first lesson explanation was employed to broaden topic knowledge. The teacher was asking students to identify the moral of a fable he had just read. Different students gave their suggestions but failed to identify the actual moral and supply the answer he was looking for. The

students' answers reflected a misunderstanding of the word, "moral". The teacher explained the following: -

Okay, just put your hands down for a moment. Remember these stories or these fables teach a message. It's not always just about sheep or about stories it's about something that happens to everyone or everything over their life.

This then lead to students identifying the message and the recitation session was thereby concluded.

Explanation was employed more regularly for presenting information relating to the tasks of the writing lessons. In using explanation in these situations the teacher detailed the requirements of a new task and outlined processes for completing it. These explanations varied in length and complexity as indicated in the examples to follow.

In the third lesson the teacher gave an explanation as to the drama task he wanted students to carry out. The explanation was short and stated the task, highlighting the final product, without detailing specific steps of the process student were to use in creating the drama:-

What I want you to do is put this into a play. I want you and two other people to act out the first paragraph and then stop, then act out the second paragraph, then the third, whatever happens. There are three paragraphs and you have one group to display them.

The task was carried out successfully and then immediately followed with the students being asked to write a descriptive paragraph on one of the characters from this fable. The explanation for this task began with an example providing students with some clues as to the desirable features of the final writing product. The task is then stated:-

When we read that Viking story yesterday it told us how they attacked the monastery. The way the author put the words together made you think you were really there and witnessing the battle. Wouldn't it be great if we could create some sentences in a paragraph that may start off boring but that, if we just added a few more words we could make our sentences more interesting. Let's write a paragraph about the lion [from the fable dramatized].

[The teacher then wrote on the board, 'the lion roared.' And asks, "how could I make this sentence more interesting?" As students suggested adjectives he writes them on the board in the appropriate places within the original sentence. He then reads the sentence out.]

What I want you to do is write a paragraph describing the lion from the fable. Take out your language books and rule up. Write just one paragraph, four or five sentences describing the lion.

Within other writing lessons verbal explanations were often given in association with written demonstrations where page layout was the focus. In the first lesson where the storyboard summary task was introduced, the teacher gave the following explanation while drawing the required page layout on the board:-

What I want you to do is...you're going to use that page in front of you. You need to draw two dividing lines so your language book page is split into four boxes [demonstrates on board]. What I'd like you to do is, you're going to write a sentence. This is going to be kind of like a storyboard. You are going to retell the story in a

series to prove that you know the order it went in. You're going to do a sentence or sentences and a picture or pictures. It doesn't need to be too artistic. I don't want you to spend an hour and a half on these. You put about two or three sentences into each box and one picture with some detail...

The teacher carefully described how to rule up, the number of boxes needed, how many sentences to write in each box and the level of detail expected in each illustration. However, he did not indicate to students through explanation or example, the writing skill central to successful completion of the task, that is, summarising the story. Students needed to be able to identify and record the essential facts which were critical to convey the plot of a story. Here the teacher's explanation and accompanying demonstration emphasized the process rather than the academic skill involved in completing the task.

In the fifth lesson, the play script task was explained while aspects of page layout were once again demonstrated on the board. This explanation was lengthier and more detailed than those involved in previous tasks. Here, the teacher described, in differing degrees of detail, the nature of the writing task, the page layout, characteristics of scripts, and the complication and resolution aspect of the narrative in question. He also explained rules for working with a partner:-

Now, what I want you to do, there are a couple of things I need you to know about writing scripts. Scripts are a bit like narratives in that they have a setting or a way of explaining where something is. They talk about what happens and then something goes wrong, a complication. Now you can see what's gone wrong in the three little pigs. They're being chased by a wolf. That's a complication. Now you don't have to make up your own narrative. What you are going

to do is write your own version of one of these [he holds up the three books he read from] stories.

The rules are [he gets up and writes on the board as he continues talking], basically you divide your page [he demonstrates by drawing a line down the board] so you have the characters names on the left hand side and also you have the narrator who describes what happens [writes their names in the left hand column on the board]. So you've got a narrator who does the talking so you don't have to have the pig or the wolf always talking. Now the characters, you have their name here [writes this and then points]. They are actually speaking. This is called direct speech [writes on the board, in the right hand column some words that the wolf says]

Make sure you keep the sentences short, not too long. Don't go on and on. Now the other thing you need to do is put in sound effects. You are going to be writing the story of The Three Little Pigs. You are going to choose one of the versions I read out to you, your choice. Now how you do it is with someone else. You and a partner are going to work together to do it. You both have to produce a copy of the work. You use a 3cm margin ruled in your language book. You write down the characters who start talking and you write down the direct speech. The rule is, anything a person says goes in the quotation marks.

After the students had been working for fifteen minutes and noticing that many were having difficulty in completing the task, the teacher stopped the class to further explain what to do: -

What I need you to understand is you are basically making your version up of one of the stories I read out to you, the one you and your partner choose. What I want you to do is to bounce ideas off each other as to what to write. You don't have to make up the story yourself. You choose one of the stories I read out. You don't have to write every single word you just have to get the main parts. You write it as a script like actors have when they make a movie.

Again, the teacher explained certain features of the product such as where to write the name of the speaker and where to write the spoken words when compiling a play script. However, the academic skill required to convert a story to a play by replacing a narrative with what are basically detailed verbal exchanges between the characters, was not addressed.

In the sixth lesson the students were required to continue working on this writing task. The teacher began the lesson by once again explaining aspects of the page layout of the play script students were required to produce: -

If I show you that [holds up a commercially produced play script of The King's Breakfast] you will see there is writing down that side [points] that says who the characters are. Then what they say is next to them [points]. If you look at that [points] that is what you guys have got to come up with for your play script. So that is how it looks. What I'd like to see you do, I want you to sit next to the person you are working with and just to get you back in the frame of this sort of writing, you and your partner can go through and read out aloud what you have done already just to practise it then continue writing.

One-on-one explanations also occurred during writing lessons. During each of the ten lessons observed, Mr Hamersley walked around the room, identified students having difficulty and assisted them to successfully complete the task. His explanations were usually verbal and focused on the mechanics of the writing task.

Drama was used as a teaching strategy within one of the writing lessons which was observed. Small groups of students were directed to work together to create a play of the fable, *The Lion and the Mouse*. This activity followed a discussion on paragraphs and preceded the written task of writing a paragraph describing one of the characters from this fable. In explaining the drama task to the students, the teacher emphasized the division of the story into paragraphs suggesting this was to be obvious in the performance of the fable: -

What I want you to do is put this into a play. I want you and two other people to act out the first paragraph and then stop, then act out the second paragraph, then the third, whatever happens. There are three paragraphs and you have one group to explain them.

The students worked in their groups to devise and practise the drama and then each group made a presentation to the class. The drama task allowed students to use their imaginations. The teacher's feedback was based on the clarity of the display which was based on the three paragraphs of the story. This aspect of the lesson lasted for forty minutes before the teacher moved on to the writing task.

The teacher employed two strategies when setting students to work on the tasks of his writing lessons; cooperative learning and guided writing. Cooperative learning required students to work together interacting in a task related way to achieve a writing goal while guided writing required students to work independently but with some guidance and support from the teacher.

The strategy of cooperative learning was used within two of the observed lessons. Use of this strategy was first observed in the third lesson where students worked in groups to produce a drama and in the last five lessons where students worked in pairs to convert a narrative into a play script. It was noticed that these groups of students, while working within the guidelines of this strategy interacted and made decisions together as they completed the set task. This appeared to be more successful with the drama and all groups achieved the task of creating a drama within the allocated twenty-five minutes. However, with the play script many students seemed to experience difficulties in making decisions with their partners. As a consequence, after two lessons on this writing assignment, six pairs of students had not begun writing. Other students had separated from their partners and begun the task independently.

The strategy of guided writing was used for all other writing tasks undertaken within the lessons which were observed. In these other lessons the teacher instructed the students to work independently and as they did so, the teacher moved around and worked with individuals or small groups of students guiding them in particular aspects of task completion.

5.3.2 Classroom Management

The teacher managed the students' behaviour using the techniques of look/pause/prompt, establishing a presence, reprimand, penalty, time out, student-teacher discussion and reward (Barry and King, 1998). The different techniques were exercised primarily for the purposes of focusing the students'

attention when the teacher was talking and encouraging students to engage seriously in the writing task at hand. The teacher drew upon behaviour management techniques more frequently during the lesson introductions when he was leading a question / answer session or explaining the writing task to the students.

When the teacher needed to gain the classes' attention he would use a statement or request typically along the lines of, "I need everyone's attention." or "Please put your pens down" or "I will count to four and then I need all eyes on me." At these times, most students paid attention. However, before proceeding with the lesson the teacher often found the need to follow this request with an additional comment such as "I am just waiting for a couple of people". Comments of this kind accompanied by a pause in proceedings and looking at the inattentive student, were used frequently and effectively to eventually gain everyone's attention.

This look/pause/comment method as well as the issuing of a reprimand was also used to manage minor interruptions during times when the teacher was leading a question/answer session or explaining a writing task. When a student spontaneously called out, was distracted or inattentive the teacher would stop midway through a sentence, pause and look at the offending student. He would name the student and then request his or her attention using statements such as ' "You know what'd be great is if you would really listen" or "Justin, I really need

you to focus on this.” The teacher was consistent in reacting to student inattentiveness during this stage of the lessons.

Reprimand, when used in attending to inappropriate student behaviour, involved the teacher remaining quiet and calm but adopting an authoritative voice to communicate his own annoyance at the interruptions of inattentive students.

Such reprimands as exemplified below were addressed to individual students or to the class as a whole: -

“What would the answer to that be Alan? I am choosing you because you’re not actually focused on me. I’d like you to feel a bit under pressure now because I need you to know that I am getting angry now.”

“I will hear from you later. I won’t choose you now because you’re making a strange noise.”

“Shall I keep waiting or shall I just insist that every pair of eyes look at this board while I explain this activity? Will that give you a clue that I’m pretty irritated? I’ve had to raise my voice now. Everybody have a look at the board.”

“I am getting really cross. I’m not asking you to do anything too difficult. I’ve read three wonderful stories. We’ve had a nice morning. And now I’m seriously starting to think that I’ve asked you to cut your arm off without anesthetic. I’ve got ten people here who are interested. The rest of you I really need you to focus. I am not asking you to stretch yourself. I’ve asked you three lots of questions.”

“I’ve got about ten kids here doing exactly what I have asked and the rest of you aren’t listening. This should be simple. I should have 25 kids with their hands up. We’d get through these questions in five minutes.”

“Girls, I really need you to sit closer and pay attention while Andrew is talking.”

The following examples are typical of the teacher's use of humour when addressing students' inappropriate behaviour through reprimand: -

T: Timothy, please don't interrupt. I really want to say this myself.
When you get to be a teacher I promise I won't come into your class and

S: [interrupting] I'm going to be an engineer.

T: when you're an engineer, I promise I won't come and tell you how to build bridges.

T: Okay, I'll have to repeat that for the girls that have come in late. That was the longest drink in history girls. I hope there's water left in the system. You know we're on water restrictions. Your days for drinking water are Tuesday and Thursday. Lucky it's Thursday.

T: I'm seriously starting to think that I've asked you to cut your arm off without anesthetic.

T: You need to pay attention. I could ask you in English or perhaps you would understand more clearly if I asked you in chipmunk language.

Reprimand was at times followed by moving the wayward students to a different place in closer proximity to the teacher: -

"Phillip I need you to come and sit up here mate. Sorry to have to do this but you're not taking any initiative."

"I need you to look at me my friend. Can you come up closer to me? That way you can look straight at me. Maybe you get sidetracked too easily from there."

The teacher, in order to influence students' off-task behaviour and encourage greater work output, used penalty or logical consequence such as requiring them to stay in at lunchtime or finish the task at home. The teacher made such statements as, "I think you need to get on with the job otherwise you'll be staying in here at lunchtime," and "If you don't get this finished you will need to do it for homework." Student time-on-task behavior inevitably increased after the issuing of these warnings.

There was only one occasion observed when the teacher used time out to deal with a student's disruptive behaviour. The student was distracted by another activity when he should have been focused on the explanation the teacher was giving. The teacher first reprimanded the student and issued a warning but when the behaviour continued, he sent the student outside for a short time to complete his work. The teacher followed this up at a later stage in the lesson by discussing the incident with the student.

Reward in the form of praise and credit points for directing and maintaining appropriate classroom behaviour were used intermittently. During question/answer sessions the teacher would acknowledge students participation and the answers they gave with such feedback such as "Well done" "Very clever" and "Excellent". Students who were often inattentive, were acknowledged and praised on those occasions when attentive behaviour was demonstrated; for example in one lesson the teacher commented, "That's a very good observation. It tells me something very important, that you were listening and watching and

that’s fantastic” and then in another lesson, “Thanks Sam for doing the right thing. Chelsea, Fran, thank you also.”

When the students were working on the set writing tasks, either independently or in cooperation with other students, the teacher moved around the classroom providing assistance with the task at hand. This movement around the classroom also served as a management function for the teacher. As he moved around the classroom he would often pause to establish a presence in close proximity to inattentive students and thereby draw them back to the task at hand. However, it was noted on numerous occasions that once the teacher moved away, these students would resume their off-task behaviour.

The teacher rarely applied other methods of behaviour management when students were working on the set writing task. It was apparent that levels of student time- on- task behavior were considerably lower at these times.

5.4 Attentiveness Levels

Table 5.5 on page 80 discloses that overall the level of attention was not high. The very best average at any lesson being only 69% and the worst just 44%. The mean of the average attentiveness levels at all ten lessons was 58%.

Interestingly, the range of attentiveness levels for each lesson indicates a wide disparity between the worst and the best, the greatest disparity being recorded at one particular lesson when at one stage only 12% of the entire class was paying

attention and yet at a different stage of the same lesson, the full 100% was attentive. The mean of the worst in the ranges for all ten lessons and of the best, was 39% - 79%.

TABLE 5.5
Student Attentiveness during Writing Lessons

Lesson	Number of boys	Attentive boys Average	Attentive boys Range
1	15	64%	52 – 80%
2	16	58%	50 – 63%
3	15	64%	12 – 100%
4	14	53%	25 – 87%
5	14	53%	20 – 68%
6	16	54%	44 – 75%
7	12	69%	50 – 87%
8	16	68%	60 – 84%
9	15	53%	43 – 69%
10	15	44%	29 – 72%
All Lessons	15	58%	39 – 79%

- Notes: (1) The percentage shown in the above table represents the average of percentages recorded for a number of observations at each lesson.
- (2) The range shows the lowest and highest degrees of attentiveness over all observations within the particular lesson.

A review of the research notes shows that the lowest levels of attentiveness were consistently recorded when the teacher had withdrawn from direct communication with the students who had been left to work on assigned writing tasks. Attention levels invariably peaked when the teacher was leading the class in discussion, was speaking about some aspect of the writing lesson or was otherwise the focus of attention. This usually occurred during the introductory stage of a lesson although it was also observed on at least one other occasion when the teacher interrupted the students' work to remind them about some aspect of their task.

5.5 Conclusion

In his writing lessons Mr Hamersley used the conventional teaching stages of introduction, development and conclusion. He planned a variety of sound learning tasks, drew on a range of different instructional and management techniques and appeared to be diligent in attending to the needs of students as they engaged in their writing assignments. Students enjoyed the humour he injected into lessons and responded well to his comments and questions.

However, Mr Hamersley did not appear to place much importance on certain aspects of the writing lessons. While he went to some lengths to ensure students' attention when directing the class such times as question / answer sessions and when giving explanations during lesson introductions, he did not attempt to exert the same control over students' behaviour when they were working independently on their writing assignments. At this stage of the lesson, whatever

the degree of attentiveness, he only rarely took wayward students to task, appearing content to let matters take their course.

Mr Hamersley seemed to regard the undertaking of a writing assignment as being the principal means by which the students acquired the knowledge and skills of writing. He focused his teaching time on preparing students for the writing task by explaining its features and how to set it out but spent little time in directly teaching the skills involved. It was as if he thought that the task itself would be self-educating.

CHAPTER 6

Case Study

Jenny Bailey's All-Boys' Class

Year 6 Term 2 2003

Vignette

Jenny Bailey, the teacher of the year six boys' teacher arrives in the classroom following recess and with the students sitting at their desks, she moves to the front of the room carrying the worksheets that are central to her writing lesson. The worksheets list questions about the movie, 'The Karate Kid' to which the students will be required to give written answers. Mrs Bailey uses a loud authoritative voice to get over the noise of her class of twenty-eight boys who had been chatting and laughing as they waited the few minutes for her to arrive.

"Okay," she announces, "We've got some sheets on 'The Karate Kid'.

As she leads the students into a discussion of the movie, most of them stop their talking to listen. She ignores those who keep talking and simply raises her voice and asks the first question from the worksheet.

"Okay, hands up if you think you could tell me who are the main characters in the movie The Karate Kid?" The students enthusiastically call out the names of the different characters. She then moves to the other questions on the sheet including questions about the storyline, the moral of the story, the setting, the conflict and resolution and the students' favourite part of the movie. She calls upon different students to give their answers to these questions. Their answers are usually brief and in some instances Mrs Bailey seeks responses from a number of different students before she is satisfied that she has obtained a comprehensive answer.

Occasionally the nature of the discussion changes as Mrs Bailey elaborates on the theme of the movie, attempting to explain connections between aspects of the movie and the students' own lives. The discussion is regularly disrupted when students' call out comments that are impertinent and unrelated to the teacher's question. The teacher wavers between ignoring the comments and reprimanding those who cause the interruptions.

After about fifteen minutes of discussion about the movie Mrs Bailey returns to explaining the writing task to the class. "Okay, it's just a simple sheet. There are two sides. You need to write answers to the questions. Each answer needs to be at least five sentences. I expect these questions done with your very best effort. I want you to decorate around the edges when you have finished.

The class begins the task though there is a lot of talk and movement around the room. Some students take a long time to begin their writing. Mrs Bailey wanders the room as her students attend to their task. She occasionally stops to answer students' questions. She also addresses a few individual students about the standard of their work, the length of their answers or their setting out. At different times throughout this stage of the lesson, Mrs Bailey blows a whistle and indicates her disapproval of the level of noise. At other times she dispenses lunchtime punishments to students who are off-task or making too much noise. After about 40 minutes of work time the lunchtime bell sounds and the lesson is concluded. Mrs Bailey collects the students' work sheets.

6.1 Introduction

There were 28 students in the Year 6 all-boys class at Fernleigh Primary School. It was one of three Year 6 classes in the school, the other two being an all-girls class and a co-educational class. For the boys it was their first year in a single gender class. The previous year they had been part of the co-educational Year 5 classes. Mrs Jenny Bailey taught the class for the first two terms replacing the permanent teacher, Mrs Maureen McKenzie, while she carried out the duties of Deputy Principal. Mrs McKenzie later stepped back into the role of class teacher and remained for the final two terms of the year.

Mrs Bailey was a recent teacher graduate and her appointment to this Year 6 boys' class was her first full-time teaching position. She had previously worked only on a casual basis in co-educational classes.

Mrs Bailey believed all-boys classes to be “a good idea” and of “definite benefit to boys”. She outlined the advantages as mostly being the development of an emotional maturity in boys. She thought that boys working together without girls were more comfortable “being themselves” and were less inclined to behave in “macho” ways. “It [the all-boys class] brings out their caring nature because the girls aren’t there to jump in first.” The boys, she suggested, “look after each other.”

Notwithstanding these encouraging views, Mrs Bailey had a negative attitude towards boys' aptitude for learning and especially for learning about writing.

“They see writing and mathematics as sitting in your chair and just laboriously grinding away,” she said. “They prefer science and doing experiments.” She went on to say, “If they’re not interested in what they’re writing about you are wasting your time – they’ll just switch off.” This negative attitude was reinforced by further comments:

- Boys cannot see the purpose of doing something they can do orally.
- Girls always outstrip [achieve better academically] boys.
- Boys assume that school is boring; they’ve lost interest in school.
- They have no interest in grammar and don’t care about punctuation, so my plan was not to emphasise that.
- You must keep instructions and tasks very, very short because their concentration span is not fantastic.

The following outlines the examination of the activities of Mrs Bailey’s Year 6 boys’ class and attempts to provide an insight into the context of the writing lessons which she conducted. It includes an analysis of the learning tasks and observations on the teacher’s method of instruction and management. For the purpose of compiling descriptions of contextual factors, six writing lessons were observed during the second term of 2003. Additional information was obtained from a discussion with the teacher and inspection of her writing programme and daily work pad.

6.2 The Writing Lesson

6.2.1 Writing Tasks

Five writing tasks were undertaken over the six observed lessons. One involved the writing of a narrative which was completed over two lessons, while the other four involved the writing of short answers to questions which were provided on worksheets. These questions were variously based on a short story, a movie or the student's understanding of his personal and physical characteristics. Students completed each of the work sheet tasks independently and within one sixty-minute lesson. The general characteristics of the lessons are displayed in Table 6.1 on page 87.

The first writing task was one of a selection of literacy activities related to the movie, *The Karate Kid*, which the class had viewed the previous week. Students were provided with a worksheet containing a series of questions about the movie. They were required to write their answers and so practice their writing of short descriptions while also demonstrating their understanding of the movie theme, plot and characters.

The movie theme continued into the next writing task which this time was carried out over two lessons. The students were required to write a narrative that was somehow to feature a bonsai plant (the plant from the movie *The Karate Kid*) as part of the story plot. This narrative writing task was broken down into two parts. First of all, students completed a *story framework* worksheet that provided headings to be used in making decisions about the main elements of

their story. They made notes as they planned such aspects as setting, characters, story development and conclusion. They then used these as a guide to write their narrative.

TABLE 6.1
General Characteristics of the Learning Tasks Involved in the Writing Lessons

Lesson	The task	Text type	Topic	Independent or group task
1	Review the video of <i>The Karate Kid</i> by writing answers to questions given on a worksheet.	Video review	<i>The Karate Kid</i>	Independent
2 & 3	Write a narrative plan using the given framework and then use this to write a full narrative text.	Narrative	Free choice but including the bonsai plant	Independent
4	Write paragraph answers to comprehension questions based on a story read	A series of short descriptions	Dreaming Fear	Independent
5	Write paragraph answers to questions about own physical traits and character.	A series of short descriptions	Self Reflection Physical and Personal Characteristics	Independent
6	Write paragraph answers to comprehension questions based on the short story, <i>Beware the Dog</i>	A series of short descriptions	Burglary	Independent

The third and fifth writing tasks were similar in that they each called for the completion of a reading comprehension worksheet consisting of a short story and

a series of comprehension questions. For the first task the story was *The Scarecrow* about a boy's dream of being chased and captured by a scarecrow and for the second, it was *Beware the Dog*, a humorous reflection on burglary. In answering the questions the students were able to practice writing descriptive paragraphs but the task also served to test students' level of story understanding.

There was some similarity in the fourth writing task because it also involved the writing of answers to a series of questions provided on a worksheet. However, this time the questions focused on the students' own personal and physical attributes. The sheet contained questions such as "What are your positive physical characteristics?" and "What are your positive personal characteristics?" calling for students to reflect on their own traits and individuality and record their conclusions.

6.2.2 Time Allocated

The teacher's timetable allowed for one sixty-minute writing lesson each week. However, the timetable was flexible and she explained that students were always given time to finish tasks. In other words she often extended the set time by continuing with the writing lesson the following day. A writing component also often featured in other curriculum area lessons; for example, in science students wrote reports and explanations relating to the science concept under consideration.

6.2.3 Lesson Stages

In observing the teacher's writing lessons a pattern in the implementation stages quickly became apparent. Each lesson generally had three stages, the characteristics of which are outlined below:

Lesson Introduction

The students remained seated at their desks as the teacher introduced the task. She did this by showing the worksheet (as each task was worksheet based) and reading out the questions and headings. If a story was involved she would read this aloud while students followed on the worksheet. The teacher would often take students through the task orally before requesting them to complete it in writing.

Lesson Development

The students worked independently at their desks to complete the writing task/ worksheet. The teacher moved around the room helping students and providing feedback on their standards. The students handed their worksheets to the teacher as they finished and went on with another unrelated task while waiting for others in the class to finish and for the teacher to move on to the next lesson.

Lesson Conclusion

The teacher announced the conclusion of the lesson and the beginning of the next.

6.2.4 Materials Used

Worksheets were the only materials used by the teacher in the delivery of her writing lessons. With the exception of the two lessons devoted to completing a narrative, the writing lessons required students to complete short answers to questions that were outlined on a worksheet. These worksheets were taken from commercially produced teacher resource books. On the other hand, the lesson involving the writing of a narrative was a little different as it began with a story

framework sheet consisting of headings relating to typical narrative elements. Students used this to plan their narrative before moving on to writing the full text on a piece of lined paper.

6.2.5 Teacher / Student Talk

Teacher / student talk occurred at the beginning of each lesson for the purpose of supporting students to successfully carry out the subsequent writing tasks. Talk on these occasions was usually teacher dominated involving as it did extended periods of time during which the teacher talked and the students listened. For instance, the teacher read aloud the story and the comprehension questions from the work sheet, she explained the meaning of questions or individual words within questions and provided examples of types of answers that would adequately address questions. On the few occasions when the talk was interactive, the teacher led the class in question/ answer recitation session which involved her asking different students to suggest answers to the questions. She then provided feedback on the appropriateness of their answers. Table 6.2 on page 91 outlines the questions the teacher asked and the writing tasks she set. It highlights that the main purpose of the teacher's questions was to prepare students for successfully understand how to do the writing tasks.

TABLE 6.2

Teacher / Student Talk and Writing Lessons

Examples of teacher questions	Writing tasks
What was the moral of the movie? Who were the main characters? What were the characters like? What is the meant by storyline [as written on the worksheet]?	Review the video of <i>The Karate Kid</i> by writing answers to questions provided on a work sheet.
What does the author do to set the scene of the story? What does she do next? What does Emily Rhodda use as her complication? How are things resolved?	Write a narrative plan using the given framework and then use this to write a full narrative text.
No teacher questions	Write paragraph answers to comprehension questions based on a story read
What are your positive physical characteristics? What does ‘physical characteristics’ mean?	Write paragraph answers to questions about own physical traits and character.
Reads aloud, from the work sheet, the story, <i>Beware the Dog!</i>	Write paragraph answers to comprehension questions based on the short story, <i>Beware the Dog</i> .

In the first lesson the teacher asked the students questions which required them to recall aspects of the movie, *The Karate Kid*; “What was the moral or message of the movie?” “Who were the main characters?” “What were the characters like?” Students participated by providing answers to the teacher’s questions. This was then followed by reading out the questions written on the work sheet and as the teacher did so she posed further questions requiring students to demonstrate their understanding of the written questions. For instance, she read

from the work sheet, “Give a brief description of the story line.” She then asked the students, “What is meant by ‘story line?’” Students provided answers to these questions.

In the second lesson the teacher’s questions focused on students demonstrating their knowledge of the elements of a narrative text. She asked questions requiring students to recall a narrative read earlier in the year and identify the setting, characters, conflict and resolution. For instance the teacher asked, “What does the author do to set the scene of the story? “Who are the main characters in the story?” “What does Emily Rhodda use as a complication?” “How are things resolved?” The students again provided answers to these questions. Each question was asked until the teacher received the correct answer.

The third lesson was a continuation of this narrative lesson but did not involve teacher / student dialogue. The fourth lesson began with the teacher reading aloud from a work sheet. She read the story, *The Scarecrow*, to the students and then read the comprehension questions on the back of the work sheet before setting them to work. The students listened to the teacher and were not required to participate in the discourse. The dialogue in the fifth lesson took a similar form to that employed in previous lessons whereby the teacher read the questions from a work sheet, which then become the writing task within the lesson. The questions this time were based on the students’ knowledge of themselves rather than on a story text. The teacher read each question aloud

from the work sheet and followed this with a question that would have students demonstrate their knowledge of the work sheet question. For example, the teacher read aloud, “What are your positive physical characteristics?” She then asked, “What does ‘physical characteristics’ mean?” Finally, in the sixth lesson, the teacher read aloud the story from the work sheet, *Beware the Dog!* She then instructed students to begin the writing task, which involved answering the comprehension questions. There was no interactive dialogue.

6.2.6 Cognitive Demands

The questions which the teacher posed and the tasks that she set, generally required students to apply no more than the lower level thought processes of remembering and understanding (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001); that is, students, as they participated in the writing lessons, had only to regularly recall, describe, interpret and summarise. There were few occasions when the lessons called for students to place greater demand on their cognitive processes by applying, creating, analysing or evaluating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

The first lesson began with the teacher’s questions prompting students to recall and describe elements of the recently viewed movie, *The Karate Kid*. The application of these thought processes continued as the lesson developed and students were set the task of writing answers to the questions. As students described an aspect of the video story in their own words they were engaged in interpretation and then they went about summarizing aspects of the story into three or four sentences.

In the second and third lessons the students completed a narrative writing exercise but before it commenced the teacher called upon them to recall features of narratives in general and of the narrative, *Delta Quest* specifically. In analysing this particular narrative the students were isolating and explaining the components of setting, characters, plot development, conflict and resolution. The written element of these lessons required students to create their own narrative, which required application of the known narrative structures to their own writing.

Like the first lesson, the writing tasks in the fourth and sixth lesson, involved story comprehension tasks. The students wrote answers to questions which all required them to read and remember a short story and to recall, interpret and then describe aspects in writing. The fifth lesson also involved writing answers to questions. However, on this occasion the questions were based on the students' knowledge of themselves rather than on a written text. In answering these questions students were obliged to analyse and evaluate their own personal and physical features, select appropriate attributes and then describe these in their own words.

6.2.7 Purpose and Audience

Except on one occasion when the writing task was to be included in their portfolios to be read by parents, the teacher collected and marked the students writing without providing opportunity for any other audience. She did not endeavour to establish a connection between the tasks of her writing classroom

and the wider social lives of the students. For instance, in instructing students about the movie review writing task the teacher commented, “I want you to decorate around the edges when you have finished. I want them to look nice for your portfolios” thus establishing the task as an assessment activity. In instructing students in the narrative writing task the teacher indicated herself as the reader of the writing produced by stating, “You are going to write a story for me. It’s called a narrative.” The remaining tasks were all story comprehension tasks where students wrote short answers to questions about a story. These tasks are normally implemented in a classroom to increase students’ skill in gaining meaning from a written text and do not involve the compiling of an original written text. By their nature, they would be difficult to connect to the social function of writing.

6.2.8 Student Choice

The students were given no control over the tasks in which they were engaged during writing lessons. The teacher pre-determined the activities as well as the procedures for completing the task.

The teacher selected four of the five writing tasks from commercially produced teacher resource books. These tasks were presented in the form of a worksheet, which contained the questions students were required to answer. In setting these tasks a similar instruction was given each time. For instance in the first lesson, the teacher instructed, “Okay, we’ve got some worksheets on *The Karate Kid*. Remember we watched *The Karate Kid* last week.” In the fourth lesson, after

reading the story, the instructions were, “Gentlemen, you have questions on the other side you need to answer.” In the fifth lesson, the task was explained with the comments, “You will need to split in pairs. I will choose the pairs. The first part of the sheet is answering questions about your self.” Finally, in the sixth lesson, the instructions are given as, “You are going to do a simple comprehension sheet...guys, you know what to do.”

The teacher also explicitly determined the manner in which the writing tasks were to be completed. Such high level of teacher control in these matters was made evident through the teacher’s comments as she responded to students work;

“Gary, new sheet, you’re not to write in highlighter.”

“Jack, I want you to rule up your sheet with lines.”

“Gentlemen, I want six sentences for each answer.”

The narrative writing task was also tightly controlled by the teacher and was established through the instruction:-

What we are going to do know is some writing. You are going to write a story for me. It is called a narrative...what you have to include in your narrative is the Bonsai [the plant from the video *The Karate Kid*]. It has to be included in some shape or form. I do not want a rewrite of *The Karate Kid*. It has to come from your own imagination. You will do a draft [holds up draft sheet] and then you will do a good copy...

In discussion with the teacher the reasons for some of her choices during writing lessons were revealed. For instance she explained that the comprehension worksheets were chosen as writing tasks because “they [the short stories] were great little stories to read...we did the horror stories and they were interested in them.” She also explained that the limitations of the writing output required by these comprehension sheets helped to engage boys as, “These boys are not interested in writing stories and it is important that I keep it short.” The teacher’s choices were influenced by her belief that, “boys can not see the point in doing in writing what they can do orally.”

Despite the restrictions imposed by the teacher that saw her stipulate topic, text type and procedure for completion, she was observed to exercise only episodic influence over the level of student application to the completion of the task.

When the teacher was leading a discussion she was most persistent in attempting to gain a high level of student attention. However, when students were working on the set writing assignment they were only sporadically addressed by the teacher for their behaviour that was frequently off-task. At these times they seemed to have more choice in the work habits they displayed.

6.3 The Teacher’s Instruction and Management

6.3.1 Teaching Strategies

The teaching strategies applied within the observed writing lessons were recitation (Cazden, 1988), broadcast (gaining information by watching a video), explanation, directed questioning and guided and independent writing (Barry and

King, 1998; Marsh, 1996). Table 6.3 outlines the strategies employed within each of the six observed lessons.

TABLE 6.3
Writing Strategies Used During Each Lesson

Lesson	Writing lesson	Teaching strategies
1	Writing answers to questions based on the video <i>The Karate Kid</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Broadcast▪ Recitation▪ Explanation▪ Directed questioning
2 & 3	Writing a narrative – planning notes and then full text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explanation▪ Recitation▪ Independent writing
4	Writing answers to questions based on the short story, <i>The Scarecrow</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Directed questioning▪ Independent writing
5	Writing answers to questions about their physical and character traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explanation (with demonstration)▪ Directed questioning▪ Independent writing
6	Writing answers to questions based on the short story, <i>Beware the Dog</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Directed questioning▪ Independent writing

The *broadcast* strategy was used when the teacher showed the movie, *The Karate Kid*, to the class. It was necessary for students to view the movie in order to complete the writing task that followed, that is writing answers to questions about the movie.

The recitation strategy was used in three instances to begin writing lessons. On two of these occasions, the teacher asked a sequence of questions taken directly from a worksheet and in accepting answers from students called for them to display an understanding of, and an accurate answer to, the question. If a question was not clearly understood the teacher would either re-word it or explain its meaning to the class. For instance, in the first lesson, based on the movie *The Karate Kid* the teacher read from the worksheet, "Give a brief description of the storyline." When there was no response from students the teacher asked, "What was the movie about? What happened in the story?" Later, she read aloud the question, "What is the moral of the story?" and in receiving no response from the class, she re-worded the question, "What are you being told by the movie?" She then continued to clarify what was meant by the question by explaining, "Everything you watch and everything you read is telling you something. You need to tell me what the movie told you." Recitation, when carried out in such a way, was immediately followed by the teacher setting students the task of completing the worksheet where they had to answer in writing the same questions that had been presented orally.

On another occasion, where the lesson involved the writing of a narrative, the teacher's questioning during the recitation session served a different purpose. The questions with which the teacher began the lesson, called for students to recall aspects of the story, *Deltor Quest* by Emily Rhodda. The questions were asked in such a way as to result in the identification of the general structural components of a narrative text; that is orientation, characters, complication and

resolution. The following teacher questions taken from this recitation session exemplify this:

How does Emily Rhodda begin the story?

What is the setting?

How does she introduce the characters?

What does she do to get the reader interested in reading more?

What does Emily Rhodda use as her complication?

Now the final part is the resolution. How will things be resolved?

The strategy of explanation was used within the recitation sessions. The teacher used explanation to expand on the students' answers to her questions. In so doing she highlighted the kind of information which it was necessary to provide in each component of a narrative. The following extract from the second lesson shows how the teacher uses explanation to elaborate on students' knowledge of an orientation:

T: What does Emily Rhodda do to set the story?

S: She describes the place it takes place.

T: Okay she describes the castle where it took place. She describes Del. She describes lots of different thing, which allows you to know where Del is, what sort of place Del is and the kind of people that live there. What she is doing is giving the story an orientation. She's giving you something to build on. She's allowing you to use your imagination. What does she do next?

When giving directions to students for the writing task to be completed the teacher again used the strategy of explanation. In three of the lessons these explanations were brief and gave little detail about the task to be done. For instance in the fourth lesson the explanation given in setting the students to work on the task was limited to one sentence: “You have questions on the other side you need to answer.” While in the sixth lesson the writing task was introduced by the teacher reading the short story from the sheet and then explaining, “You are going to do a simple comprehension sheet. You know what to do. I want your name on the sheet...I don’t want you telling everyone else the answer; I want you figuring out the answer. Similarly the task of the first lesson was established through the following explanation,

Okay, we’ve got some sheets on *The Karate Kid*...It’s just a simple sheet. There are two sides. I want you to decorate around the edges when you have finished. You need your name and your date. If you do not put your name on it I am putting it in the bin...I expect these to be done with your best effort.

When the task varied from a directed questioning worksheet, as it did on one occasion with the narrative writing task, the teacher provided a greater level of detail in her explanation as she set the students to work:

What we are going to do in this lesson is some writing. I am going to give you a plan that you need to do your narrative on but when you’re planning your not writing your story... [holds up planning sheet]. This is just for you to plan on...the only thing I am going to tell you about your story is it has to include in some shape or form, your Bonsai plant [from *The Karate Kid* movie]. I do not want a rewrite of *The Karate Kid*... Your bonsai needs to

be part of your story. I don't expect your best copy on this. I expect a draft. You will then write up a good copy. Now, a draft means you put down all your ideas and you move through it because it's a growing process.

The strategy of directed questioning was used in four out of six of the observed lessons. The teacher, in employing this strategy within three of the lessons, presented the students with a worksheet listing a series of questions related to a short story. They were required to record written answers to these questions. Through the written answers the students were able to demonstrate their understanding of the short story and their ability to express this understanding in writing. In a fourth lesson, the strategy was employed in the same way but the questions drew on students' personal knowledge of themselves rather than on information within a written text.

The teacher employed two strategies when setting students to work on the tasks of her writing lessons; guided writing and independent writing. Guided writing occurred when the teacher supported students with their writing by providing input and instruction as they were engaged in carrying out the writing task. Independent writing occurred when the teacher left the students to independently complete the writing task, providing no support or guidance as they did so. On both occasions the teacher collected the work on completion for marking and assessment.

The strategy of guided writing was used in the video review lesson, one of the story comprehension lessons and the lesson involving short answers to personal reflections. On these occasions the teacher set the students the writing task and then walked around the classroom stopping to assist students as required. Such assistance sometimes occurred as a result of a student's request for help and at other times as a consequence of the teacher observing a student's error.

The assistance provided by the teacher during guided writing sessions mostly related to helping students interpret the questions on the worksheet and to ascertain the answer required by the question on the sheet. For instance, one student asked, "I don't know what I have to do here?" The teacher pointed the student in the right direction by asking, "What does the sentence say? Read it out. What does that sentence mean? What is important?" In another lesson, a student asked the teacher, "What's a personal characteristic?" The teacher replied, "Are you smart? Are you kind? Are you generous? Are you friendly? Things like this."

The strategy of independent writing was used within the other three observed lessons. The task was explained, the recording sheet was given out and students were left to carry out the task to completion without any teacher or peer assistance. Although talk is not normally a feature of independent writing sessions, the observed independent writing exercises were characterized by a high level of talking and shouting by the students as they worked on their piece of writing. On one occasion the level of noise was exacerbated by music

played in the classroom. This occurred during the first of the narrative writing lessons when the teacher blew a whistle and addressed the students about their level of noise, stating, “Gentlemen, there’s too much noise. If you keep the noise level down I will play some music.” She then put the Michael Jackson album *Thriller* on the CD player. Students groaned, covered their ears or began moving to the music as they resumed working on their writing task. Their own noise levels increased noticeably as they attempted to be heard above the music.

6.3.2 Classroom Management

The teacher spent a substantial proportion of the lesson time in attending to students’ off-task behaviour. The behaviours most often addressed were the calling out of comments unrelated to the process of the lesson, general eruptions of class noise and lack of attention by individuals to the task at hand. In addressing these behaviours the teacher usually used the methods of reprimand and penalty and to a lesser degree look/pause/prompt, time out, teacher discussion and reward (Barry and King, 1998). However, high levels of off-task behaviour persisted despite the teacher’s actions. It was also observed that the teacher was inconsistent in dealing with inattentive or disruptive behaviour. Sometimes certain behaviour was dealt with while at other times the same behaviour was ignored.

The teacher frequently gave out reprimands in addressing students’ behaviour. These were directed either to individuals or to the whole class and involved the use of a question (‘Are you calling out?’ ‘Where’s your hand?’), a statement

(‘Gentlemen there is too much noise and it’s not all related to work’) or an instruction (‘Look at me please Jordan’). Below are a few of the reprimands which were typical of those given out by the teacher and which demonstrate the frequent sarcastic content: -

I am going to use that dirty word again. Are you all listening? You are going to need to use your imagination. You are going to need to think. I know that’s a bit radical. I know it’s hard.

You are going to have to excuse Jordan’s behaviour today because he obviously feels the need to regress and behave like a pre-primary child.

I must be mistaken. For a moment there I thought you yelled something out.

Gary, am I mistaken or do you have a hat on?

Could I have one of those sheets before they do a tour of the school?

Gary, get a new sheet and start again. [and then in response to his groan] It’s a hard life Gary, I know.”

[In response to Adam saying he wasn’t a writer] Adam, you didn’t write anything yesterday when we did our science experiments? Yes? Oh gosh! That must make you a writer.

That’s unacceptable behaviour young man. This is not a zoo.

The teacher also invoked penalties as she attempted to regulate students' behaviour. She often established the prospect of penalty by placing a student's name on the board and warning that the next step would be a punishment such as picking up papers at lunch time, staying in at lunch time to complete work, missing out on sport or being sent to the Deputy Principal. The following situations are some examples of the teacher's strategy on penalties: -

In the first lesson the teacher responded to an interruption by writing a student's name on the board and then explaining to the class, "Gentlemen, if you get an X by your name, you have scab duty at lunch time." Later in the lesson as talk erupted when students should have been working on the writing task, she blew a whistle and stated, "Gentlemen, there is far too much noise and it does not all relate to what you are meant to be doing. Now, if I need to keep you in here during lunchtime I will and you will finish it off then." This threat of punishment came after the issuing of a number of reprimands that had been largely ignored. Further into the lesson with no respite from the noise, individual students were identified for punishment as follows, "Andrew, you are on scab duty at lunch time" and then, pointing to two other boys, "Both of you have scab duty at lunch time"

At other times penalties were imposed on the whole class such as in the second lesson when the teacher responded to the general noise level of the class by writing "10" on the board and then commenting, "Gentleman, if you are not going to play ball then you leave me no choice. This is how long you will have

to stay in at lunch time.” In another lesson the word written on the board was “sport” and the accompanying comment was, “If I wipe all this word off the board before the end of the lesson, then you no longer have any sport.”

The method used most often by the teacher when she needed to gain the attention of the class was to blow a whistle and commence speaking. If, as she spoke, students continued to talk she raised her voice and carried on with her questions or explanations. Her voice was clear and loud and could be heard above the din of any class chatter. However, she did on occasions call for greater levels of student attention as she talked by pausing and focusing on individual students in order to gain their attention. In addressing the class she would request, “Gentlemen, eyes on me now.” She would then pause a moment and focus on individual students: “Dylan, you need to be looking at me...[looking at one student] Put that down...When you’re ready Zac.”

It was noted that the teacher used the management technique of time-out on one occasion. In this instance a student had moved his chair to sit in another place in the classroom. He was requested to move back to his own place but refused and was asked to leave the classroom. He again refused and the Deputy Principal was called in to remove him.

The teacher used reward as a method of regulating students’ behaviour on only two occasions during the six writing lessons which were observed. In the sixth lesson the teacher acknowledged the attentiveness of one student during a

question/answer session by commenting, “Jacob, you always sit and listen so beautifully. Go and take two lollies out of my jar.” In the third lesson a student was rewarded as the teacher commented, “Thank you Jake. You can take a lolly off my desk.” However, on this occasion, it was unclear what behaviour was being rewarded.

The use of discussion as a method for attending to inappropriate behaviour was used only once during the six writing lessons observed. On this occasion the teacher sat down to talk to a student who had not begun work on the set writing task. She put the worksheet in front of him and began talking quietly to him about his behaviour. He pushed the sheet away and then turned his back to the teacher. The teacher walked away and ignored him for the rest of the lesson.

6.4 Attentiveness Levels

Table 6.4 on page 109 outlines the attentiveness levels achieved by boys in Mrs Bailey’s class.

TABLE 6.4

Student Attentiveness during Writing Lessons

Lesson	Number of boys	Attentive boys: Average	Attentive boys: Range
1	24	70%	55 – 92%
2	25	63%	35 – 95%
3	26	46%	31 – 85%
4	26	66%	38 – 88%
5	27	54%	30 – 85%
6	24	58%	34 – 76%
All lessons	25	59. %	37 – 87%

- Notes: (1) *The percentage shown in the above table represents the average of percentages recorded for a number of observations at each lesson.*
- (3) *The range shows the lowest and highest degrees of attentiveness over all observations within the particular lesson.*

The mean of the attentiveness levels over all six classes was 60% while the mean of the best and the worst ranged from 37% to 87%.

The worst level of attention during any lesson was 30% while the best was 95%. For all but one of the lessons the low end of the range was 40%. The average of attentiveness levels during all six lessons was 60%.

Once again, the research records show that the highest levels of attention were always reached during lesson introductions when the teacher was the centre of attention as she spoke about the impending writing task.

6.5 Conclusion

Mrs Bailey's writing lessons featured comprehension worksheet tasks that necessitated students applying low levels of cognition and writing skill. As she conducted her lessons she applied a narrow range of teaching strategies and behaviour management techniques. Her classes were characterised by inappropriate student behaviour that disrupted the smooth flow of lessons and by high levels of noise while students worked on tasks. The majority of her lesson time was devoted to the students actually completing a task rather than to her teaching the skills involved in writing.

It would seem that Mrs Bailey saw the setting of writing assignments for students as being her primary role. Like Mr Hamersley she seemed to consider the carrying out of these assignments to be the crucial factor in students' learning. She spent little time teaching writing skills but merely set tasks and collected these at the completion of lessons.

Mrs Bailey used penalty and reprimand most often when addressing the inappropriate behaviour of the students. She applied these techniques frequently though inconsistently during her lessons and was often unsuccessful in affecting a change in student behaviour. This approach appeared to prevent her from

establishing a positive relationship of mutual respect with the students of her class. She appeared to give little weight to the use of more positive methods, such as reward and praise, to guide student behaviour.

CHAPTER 7

Case Study

Maureen McKenzie's All-Boys' Class

Year 6 Term 3 2003

Vignette

Mrs. McKenzie was sitting at the front of the class and politely but authoritatively instructing the boys to take out their energy research notes and their writing strategies notebooks. She ensured that the lesson started with minimal delay by prompting those boys who did not immediately follow her directions and praising those who did.

"We are not doing the computer now – nothing to do with the computer now please Mark... Well done Colin, you've done that. That's excellent... No drawing things please Adrian, just your energy notes and your strategies notebook."

The class of thirty-one boys was soon organized and quietly waiting for the lesson to begin.

"Right that's great to see people have done what I asked. That's terrific". The writing lesson began and the class listened as Mrs. McKenzie explained the purpose of today's task. They were going to learn how to take notes when gathering information for a research report. The class had been working on energy projects for the past week and Mrs. McKenzie had noticed that, in taking notes, they tended to copy large chunks of information from reference books rather than identify and summarise the relevant information. She explained all this to the class and then went on to highlight the importance of putting information into ones own words.

Following this introduction Maureen gave each student an information sheet on the topic of coal. She referred to this as she instructed the students on the steps of note taking for the purpose of report writing. She had six 'note taking steps' written on the board and she drew attention to these as she proceeded.

Maureen guided the class through each of the six steps, first by explaining the step, second by demonstrating it using the information sheet and the overhead projector and finally by giving the students a chance to practice the step before she moved on to the next.

Finally, Maureen asked her students to work independently on a note taking exercise; to apply the same steps using a different information sheet. She first reviewed the steps by asking different students to explain each one.

As the students carried out the task there was a subdued hum of talk in the room. After about fifteen minutes the teacher asked some students to read the notes they had made. She listened and praised them for their efforts. The students were then given time to record the note-making steps into their writing strategies book, for future reference. Before the lesson ended the teacher reminded the students of the importance of note taking in their lives.

"This is something that you are going to have to do a lot of. It is one of those things, the more you practice it the easier it gets. It's being able to look at a book and say 'look at all this information' and being able to find the information that gives you the answer to your question. If you follow these steps then that's the way that helps you find it." The students put their writing strategies books away and continued working on their energy research reports.

7.1 Introduction

Maureen McKenzie took over the teaching of the Year 6 all-boys class in the third term of the year. She had regularly taught all-boys' classes but had been temporarily called from the classroom during the first two terms to perform the duties of Deputy Principal.

Mrs. McKenzie was a teacher with fifteen years experience and had been at Fernleigh Primary School for six years. This was her third year teaching in one of the school's all-boys' classes.

Mrs. McKenzie believed whole-heartedly that single gender classes were beneficial for boys. Like Mrs. Bailey, she saw advantages for their emotional development because "a class without girls can provide a safe environment in which boys can take risks with expressing themselves." She believed that an all-boys class provided opportunity for the teacher to discuss relevant social issues with the boys and to nurture the development of strong supportive friendships amongst the students. She saw these social and emotional benefits as enhancing academic learning because "it makes it easier to teach them."

Unlike Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. McKenzie was enthusiastic in her belief that boys had as great a capacity and willingness to learn as girls. "If you teach them how to do it, they can do it," she said. "I still expect the same standards [as girls]." She thought that "sometimes boys did it [writing] better when they were on their own because they are not being compared to the girls."

Mrs. McKenzie said that she did not make fundamental changes to her approach to teaching just because the students were all boys. Nevertheless she did make some adjustments as indicated the following comments:

- I spend more time building up their skills.
- Talking before writing is really important for boys.
- One should avoid having boys working in small groups too often as they can slack off a bit.
- Boys need to see the end point in doing something if they're going to invest the energy.
- They require quite explicit teaching; they like to know exactly how to do it.

The following is a description of the writing lessons conducted by Mrs. McKenzie in the Year 6 all-boys' class. The description has been compiled using information gained through observation of six lessons in the second term of 2003 and from discussion with the teacher and inspection of her writing programmes and lesson plans. The description contains features of the teacher's lesson design and of her teaching methods and approach to managing students' behaviour.

7.2 The Writing Lesson

7.2.1 Writing Tasks

Over the six lessons observed, four were devoted to specific writing tasks. On the other two occasions the students were engaged in teacher-directed skills

lessons where the focus was the teaching and practice of specific writing skills. The writing tasks involved the writing of a list of strategies for dealing with bullies, the writing of a report on the topic of energy and the writing of an explanation as to how a piece of artwork was produced. The skills lessons focused on developing students' note-taking ability and extending their editing whereby the quality of descriptive writing are improved by the insertion of adjectives.

With the exception of the report, each writing task was completed in a one-hour lesson. The report carried over to a number of lessons; two of the observed lessons and at least three other lessons. The report was part of what the teacher described as "rich topic" work. The "rich topic" of energy was used to integrate learning tasks across different curriculum areas. The skills lessons were each of hour duration.

Each student carried out two of the writing tasks in partnership with another class member and completed the third task independently. The skills lessons involved the students working with the teacher for the majority of the lesson but working independently when the lesson called for practice in a particular skill. Table 7.1 on page 116 provides an overview of some of the defining features of the lessons.

"Bullies" was the topic of the first lesson and each student worked with a partner, under the direction of the teacher, to create a list of behavioural

strategies they felt could be used when responding to being bullied at school.

The strategies were discussed, ranked and recorded.

TABLE 7.1

General Characteristics of the Learning Tasks Central to the Writing Lessons

Lesson	The task	Text type	Topic	Independent or group task
1	Completing a personal list identifying strategies that can be used when being bullied	List	Bullying Life strategies	Partner
2	Creating a power point presentation reports on one aspect of the topic of energy	Report	Energy	Partner
3	The explicit teaching of the skill of note taking followed by practice of the skill of note taking	No specific text type	Energy Note taking	Independent
4	Explaining how the art work recently carried out was produced	Explanation	Art work – Line drawings	Independent
5	Continuation of the power point report on energy	Report	Energy	Group (Partner)
6	The explicit teaching of editing at the sentence level – adding adjectives to enrich a description	No specific text type	Editing	Independent

The second lesson was on the topic of “energy”. The students again worked in pairs. This time the written product was a report drawn up in the form of a power-point presentation and resulting from research carried out over a number of lessons into a specific type of energy.

The third lesson was a skills lesson where the teacher explained, demonstrated and provided students with controlled practice to improve their note-taking skills. The lesson focused on the development of writing skills rather than on the production of a written text.

The fourth lesson centered on the students' artwork and called for them to write a text explaining the steps taken in producing the artwork. Students completed this individually. In the fifth lesson the students continued working on their energy power-point reports.

The sixth lesson was another skills lesson. This time the teacher worked to develop the students' editing skills. She taught them how to use adjectives in sentences for the purpose of enhancing written description. The students used previously written pieces for the purpose of applying the skill. Table 7.2 on page 118 identifies the writing skills of each of the tasks the teacher set.

TABLE 7.2

Skills Employed in Carrying Out Writing Tasks

Writing task	Writing skill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create a list of behavioral strategies for dealing with bullies	Record ideas in complete sentences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Write a report in power point format on a given topic	Take notes from information sources Summarise information Record information in a report format
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Write an explanation outlining the steps taken in producing art work	Recall steps of the art work process Record the steps using the explanation framework

7.2.2 Time Allocated

The teacher taught writing for one hour twice a week. She also set aside two afternoons where the students engaged in “rich tasks”. “Rich tasks” were tasks students carried out to investigate a topic so that the completing of these tasks contributed to students’ learning in a number of curriculum areas at the same time. Many of these tasks involved writing. The topic of the rich tasks this term was “energy”. Each of the observed writing lessons was one-hour duration.

7.2.3 Lesson Stages

All of the writing lessons observed followed a similar routine but there were some variations depending on whether the lesson involved the students completing a writing task or the teacher instructing students on a writing skill.

Lesson Introduction

The lessons always began with the teacher talking to the students and preparing them for the writing experience or teaching them about what was to follow. The content and nature of this talk varied, depending on the purpose of the lesson. The teacher would lead a discussion or conduct a brainstorm on a topic significant to the writing task, read out writing commenced by students in a previous lesson and highlight positive features or explain the lesson, its purpose and its significance to students learning. If a writing task was to be set, the teacher would explain it to the students.

Lesson Development

When a writing task was set the teacher worked closely with the students to support them in its completion. She generally broke the writing task up into small segments and demonstrated each one before setting a period of time for children to complete it. She then provided feedback on their efforts and set the students to work on the next step of the task.

When a skills lesson was taken the teacher worked in a similarly close way with the students. She followed a routine of explaining, demonstrating and providing practice as she taught the fundamentals of writing skills.

Lesson Conclusion

Lessons were concluded with the teacher reading out students' work and providing specific feedback about the areas of strength in the writing. She would sometimes call for other students to comment on a piece of writing. She also summed up to the class how they had been working and occasionally recapitulated the learning aspect of the lesson in which the class had been involved.

On one occasion, when the class worked on their 'rich task' – the energy report - the lesson took a different course. Each student simply spent the time working on research with a partner while the teacher moved around the class providing assistance when required.

7.2.4 Materials Used

The teacher used a variety of materials in the writing lessons. She regularly used the blackboard or the overhead projector for demonstrating processes, writing up the steps of a task or strategy, displaying a standard explanation or definition, or recording information resulting from a discussion or brainstorm. She used computers; for instance to access websites containing information which might be useful for reports, to display reports as power point presentations and to word process written texts. The students had 'strategy books' which were used to list the steps or instructions of a particular writing process to outline the components of a text type. The students kept these books as a ready reference. They also had writing pads for recording ideas and plans. They were also used for the initial draft of a piece of writing.

7.2.5 Teacher/Student Talk

The topics covered during teacher/ student talk related either to the topic of the students' writing tasks such as bullying, their art work or energy, or they stemmed from the writing skill being taught such as note taking, using adjectives, editing or the explanation genre. Discussions usually took place at the beginning of the lesson before students set about completing the writing task. However, on two occasions discussions were held intermittently throughout the lesson which fluctuated between developing an understanding of a skill and putting it into practice. Table 7.3 on page 121 outlines typical teacher questions for the initiation of discussion. The questions indicate the topics and the purpose for teacher directed talk.

TABLE 7.3

Teacher / Student Talk and Writing Lessons

Examples of teacher questions	Writing tasks
What is bullying? Does bullying hurt your feelings? Can anyone think of a time it has happened to them? What can we do about bullying?	Brainstorm, list and rank possible things to do when being bullied.
What are the steps to follow when taking notes [from informational texts]? Can we remember how to do it [take notes]?	Learn some specific strategies for taking notes from informational texts by following the teacher's demonstration and explanation and then practicing.
Can anyone remember one of the frameworks that we've done? What is the purpose of an explanation text? What are the stages of an explanation? If we were writing an explanation about your drawings [done in art last week] what would you say about these in each of the stages? Let's start with step one, the definition. What do we write here?	Write an explanation using the appropriate framework, on their drawings. These were constructed in art the previous week.
How is it that people can write to make us be able to visualize, to imagine a scene in our mind? What do they do? Can anyone tell me what an adjective is? Why do we use them in our writing? How do they make it better?	Learn how to edit for the purpose of enhancing descriptive writing by following the teacher's demonstration and explanation and then practicing.

The first lesson began with the teacher asking the students about bullying; what it was, how it affected people and what could be done about it. In the third lesson a discussion, which occurred towards the middle of the lesson, concentrated on the skill of note-taking and involved the teacher questioning the

students to assist them in recalling the steps to take when extracting and recording information from a text. This occurred once the steps had been demonstrated and explained. During the fourth lesson where the students wrote an explanation text, discussion focused firstly on the explanation genre in general and then on the possible content of an explanation genre describing the process of completing artwork. The sixth lesson involved the students learning how to improve the quality of their writing by using adjectives. In this lesson the discussion sought to inspire students to consider the elements of good descriptive writing and then to recall their understanding of adjectives; what they are and how they affect written expression.

The following extract is from the discussion on bullying as observed in the first lesson. It preceded the students writing task, creating a personal list of strategies for dealing with bullying and was typical of the approach taken by this teacher in employing discussions for developing topic knowledge to support students' writing.

- T: Okay, first things first...what is bullying? Yes, Martin?
S1: A person who's being mean to ya.
T: How could they be mean to you?
S1: Hit ya
T: So they could punch you or something; Okay, that's one way. What else?
S2: Verbal and physical...ah...
T: What's verbal mean?
S2: Like name-calling
T: What else could be verbal, not just calling out our name? What else?
S3: Saying bad things about you.
T: So, gossip; making up stuff that's not true; that's bullying isn't it.
S4: It could hurt your feelings

- T: Yes, so we've got verbal, we've got physical stuff. What else could be bullying? Michael?
- S5: Racist
- T: Yes, we had to deal with that didn't we? It's not nice, people being racist is it Michael? Does it hurt your feelings?
- S5: Yes
- T: We've talked about that before. Okay, so we have racism, verbally teasing, saying something that's not true, gossip, physically hurting. Is there anything else?
- S6: How someone looks at you.
- T: How they look at you? Yes, that can be bullying. They can tease you just by looking at you. They really can. Can anyone think of a time that that has happened to them? Chris?
- S7: Someone looks at you in a funny way. They do something that can say, oh, there you go again.
- T: So, you are saying that you don't have to actually touch someone, you don't have to actually speak to someone, it's the way you look at them? Great.
- S: Ye
- T: There's gossip, there's the way you look at someone, how about if you were out in the playground and you really wanted to play a game...
- T: ...Okay, we know what bullying is, what are we going to do about it? What can you do? Now this is where I want you to work with your partner or a group.

7.2.6 Cognitive Demands

The teacher's writing lessons were structured so that students were required to draw upon a number of different cognitive processes as they engaged in the teaching tasks and activities. These cognitive processes can be classified using Bloom's Taxonomy model (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) as belonging to the knowledge, comprehension and application categories and therefore place low to medium cognitive demand on students.

The first lesson began with the teacher asking questions that required the students to recognize and recall their knowledge and experiences on the topic of bullying. Following this, students were given the task of generating a list of the strategies they could use in dealing with any bullying behaviour of others. In completing this writing task they were again recalling known information.

The second and fifth lessons involved the students working on energy research reports which were eventually to be submitted in the form of a power point presentation. Throughout the two lessons they carried out the tasks of reading and comprehending different information texts in order to find the necessary facts, taking notes relevant to the report topic and summarizing these notes into their own words. In so doing they were using the cognitive skills of comprehension, interpretation and summarization.

The third lesson was a teacher directed skills lesson on note taking which involved the teacher explaining and demonstrating the steps of note-taking and requiring students to listen and observe in order to understand the procedure. Students were then asked to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge by recalling and explaining each step of the procedure. Finally students were given the opportunity to practice the steps of the skill by applying them to a new situation.

The fourth lesson saw the students write about the drawings which they had completed in a previous art lesson. This teaching focus was on the correct

application of the components of an explanation framework. The lesson began by calling for the students to listen and understand as the teacher described the components of an explanation framework. The lesson then called for students to suggest a suitable content for each component of the framework to explain how they went about completing their drawings. Finally, the students were required to apply their understanding of the stages of the explanation framework by writing about their own artwork and including appropriate information in each component of the framework.

The sixth lesson also necessitated the students' use of the cognitive processes of recall, understanding and application. The lesson involved students learning how to insert adjectives into descriptive writing in order to improve the effectiveness of that writing. As the lesson began the students were required to recall experiences and illustrate knowledge as the teacher questioned them on the difference between effective and ineffective descriptive writing and on the word classes – adjectives and nouns. Students then listened and observed in order to construct meaning as the teacher demonstrated a type of editing - the addition of an adjective before a noun. Students were then asked to apply the knowledge gained through this exercise by editing their own writing, identifying the nouns and inserting adjectives to enhance the vividness of the description.

7.2.7 Purpose and Audience

The teacher consistently highlighted to her students the reasons for the activities involved in the writing lessons which she was conducting. When the lesson

involved isolating and teaching a specific writing skill, she clearly explained the benefit of this skill in achieving a good writing standard and then outlined the various ways in which the lesson would assist students to improve their use of the skill. The students were given a clear insight, not only into what activities they were to engage in but also why they were to do so. Likewise, as the students completed a written text, such as the list of strategies, the explanation or the energy report, the teacher emphasized what the written text was intended to communicate to the reader and the necessity to always keep the reader in mind.

Skills of writing were isolated and taught in the third and sixth lesson. In the third lesson the skill was note taking. The teacher began the lesson by highlighting the importance of this skill to the effectiveness of the writing in the reports which students were required to complete:

Last week we were taking notes for our power point presentations and I saw people at the computer writing down words and sentences straight from the research material onto their own power point slide. You can't just copy what someone else has written and then go and pretend it is yours. That's called plagiarism. So this skill that we are going to learn, some of you can do already but it takes a long time to get good at it. What I am going to show you today is the way to take notes. What you have to do is read something and then go and put it down in your own words. We are going to practice doing this together and then you're going to do one on your own.

The teacher indicated her firm belief that outlining the reasons to students for the task they were to engage in during writing lessons had a motivational effect. She explained, "They have to know from the outset why they are doing something.

If they don't know, they don't really see the point and if they don't see the point to something they don't invest the energy in doing it."

In the sixth lesson the skill was improving the effectiveness of the description in writing by using adjectives in sentences. The students were learning this new skill in relation to the descriptive writing they had completed the previous week. The teacher began the lesson by outlining the responsibility the students had to make their writing interesting and vivid in order to maintain the interest of their readers:

When you edit your work you make it more readable and more interesting for the reader...now that's your responsibility as a writer...
It's your responsibility to make the stuff you write interesting for other people to read.

In discussing aspects of her writing lessons, the teacher further emphasized the importance of instructing students on the notion that written texts have readers. She explained, "I encourage them to read what they've written to someone else. They have to understand that what they write has to be understood by someone else."

On four occasions the objective of the writing lessons was for students to complete a writing assignment using a specific text type. Over these four lessons the students were set the tasks of writing a list, a report and an explanation. The first lesson concentrated on the task of composing a list of strategies for handling

bullying. The students had been given a “strategies booklet” where they were to record information useful in helping them manage different situations in their lives and instructions to assist them as they become more familiar with the rudiments of writing. “This [book],” the teacher explained, “is going to be filled with lots of different things, different information to do with your life and to do with your writing...”

The second and fifth lessons required students to write a research report on one facet of the larger topic of energy. The teacher consistently reinforced the communicative purpose of this task as she interacted with students about the information they had gathered and about the clarity they needed to achieve in constructing slides for their power-point presentations. The audience was to be their classmates and then, for some, students in other classes.

Integral to the fourth lesson was the writing of an explanation text where information had to be included which was appropriate to the various components of an explanation framework. The lesson began with the teacher emphasizing the writing purpose of this text type by asking, “When would we use this framework [explanation] to write? When are explanation texts used?” Later in the lesson, when students were writing an explanation about their own artwork, the teacher’s comments emphasized the need for the students, as writers, to consider their audience. She stated, “Up until now you have been talking about only your own drawing. The reader of this explanation does not know that everyone in the class has done one. So you need to tell the reader that everyone

in the class has done it. Perhaps at this part of your writing, you could start off with ‘our drawings’.” The teacher made this general reference to an audience but did not identify specific readers in this instance.

7.2.8 Student Choice

The teacher held control over most of the different elements of the writing lessons. There were however, occasional opportunities for the students to make choices during a lesson. The teacher also expressed a willingness to consult students and consider their interests as she designed the writing tasks.

The writing lessons involved the teacher in instructing students in specific skills of writing or in setting a writing assignment for students to carry out to completion

She said that she identified the skills which were incorporated into these lessons as part of her assessment of students’ writing. In the delivery of these skills lessons, the teacher was quite authoritative in addressing the various shortcomings which she had observed. As for the writing task lessons, the selection of content and methodology was largely the teacher’s although students were given some opportunity to participate. The text types chosen were based on curriculum requirements that students be taught the different writing frameworks for each of the designated genres and that they be given the opportunity to practice them. The school had specified a topic for each term which had to be addressed in all classes. This topic was to be used for a number of writing tasks over the term. The topic on this occasion was “energy” and in

the lessons observed the students were writing research reports on this topic. They were however, allowed to choose a specific energy source about which they wished to research and report.

The teacher chose other topics based on her observation of the students. As she explained, “You can tell when they are interested in something and as soon as you find an interest then you lead them into writing about it if you can.” The teacher also explained that she liked to consult students; to ask them what they would like to write about. The students carry out “daily writing” where each day they write freely and without input from the teacher on a topic of their own choice.

On a number of occasions the students were required to work in pairs or in small groups as they engaged in a particular aspect of a writing lesson. Whenever students had to work with others they were given the opportunity to choose their partners.

In the main, the lesson steps were tightly directed and controlled by the teacher. She carefully guided the students through the stages of her skills-based and task-based lessons in order to impart her desired level of learning. The energy power-point project appeared to be an exception as in this instance she simply set the task and then put the students to work on completing it.

7.3 The Teacher’s Instruction and Management

7.3.1 Teaching Strategies

The strategies used by the teacher during writing lessons were recitation (Cazden, 1988), direct instruction, explanation, demonstration, structured group discussion, independent research and cooperative learning (Barry and King, 1998; Marsh, 1996). Table 7.4 on page 132 indicates the frequency with which these strategies were used and outlines the strategies that were used in each of the observed writing lessons.

The strategies used most often by the teacher during writing lessons were direct instruction, explanation and demonstration. These strategies were all used collectively throughout 4 of the 6 writing lessons observed; that is, those lessons that involved students completing a writing task using a specified text type or learning a new writing skill. In the other two lessons students worked on an independent research project on energy and alternative teaching strategies were called upon.

TABLE 7.4

Writing Strategies Used During Lessons

Lesson	Writing lesson	Teaching strategies
1	List of strategies for dealing with bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explicit Teaching▪ Explanation▪ Demonstration▪ Recitation▪ Structured Group Discussion
2	Report on energy presented in power point mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Research▪ Guided Cooperative Learning
3	Skills lesson teaching note taking methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explicit Teaching▪ Explanation▪ Recitation▪ Demonstration
4	Explanation on process for completing artwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explicit Teaching▪ Demonstration▪ Explanation▪ Recitation
5	Report on Energy continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Research▪ Guided Cooperative Learning
6	Skills lesson teaching editing to enrich sentences using adjectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Explicit Teaching▪ Demonstration▪ Explanation▪ Recitation

The use of direct instruction was identifiable by the lesson characteristics of:

- overt teacher control over proceedings;
- lesson delivery where the task or skill was broken down, for the purpose of teaching, into smaller units;
- development of students’ metacognitive strategies;
- a lesson routine consisting of a number of regular stages that can be described as introduction, elaboration, demonstration & practice and conclusion.

The teacher's employment of explanation and demonstration strategies was integral to her use of direct instruction. Direct Instruction was initially exhibited during lesson introductions. In addressing the students at this stage, the teacher specifically explained to them the expected learning outcome of the lesson, the necessity of the learning for genuine writing improvement and the pathway by which the lesson would proceed. The explanations shown below introduced the note-taking lesson and the lesson which required the listing of strategies. Both demonstrate the explicitness of the teacher's use of the lesson introduction for elucidating the what, why and how of the writing lesson:

What we are doing today is learning how to take notes. Last week when you were taking notes for your power point presentations I saw some people at the computer writing down words and sentences straight from the resource material onto their own power point slide and if you don't know that is called plagiarism. You can't just copy what someone else wrote and go and pretend it's yours...

So this skill of note taking that we are going to learn today, it takes a long time to learn. What you have to do is read something and then go and put it in your own words. What I am going to show you today is the way I do it. We are going to do one together following some set steps and then you are going to go back and have a go at doing another one on your own.

Today we are going to do some talking about bullying. Then you are going to work in pairs and think about the things you could do if you are being bullied. Then after you've talked you will share your ideas with the rest of the class and come up with the things you could do, the five best strategies you could use if you were being bullied. You are going to write the list of ideas into your strategies book, the stuff that you know that you could do. Please don't put in there something that someone tells you because this is going to be your book, you want to be able to use it... I am going to show you today how to come up with a list of ideas and how you might set your writing out.

Direct Instruction was again evident in the second stage of the writing lessons when the teacher outlined and explained in detail each of five or six specific steps to be followed in completing the written task or applying the developing skill. These steps were written on the blackboard and the students were required to record them into their 'writing strategy book' for future reference. The explicitness of the information provided by the teacher through the use of explanation was exemplified by the following extract from the note-taking lesson:

There are some steps to go through when you have to do note taking. I am going to go through each step and then we will do it together. First of all we have to identify the question or subtopic. For our example today it is going to be the uses of coal. Now I've identified that. Then we are going to scan the resource material. That means, go through, look at the headings, look at the pictures and see if we can find anything useful to our topic. We then read the sections that contain useful information. And we say in our minds as we go along, is that really helping me with what I have to do? Do I understand what it means? And if you don't that means you have to read it again. Sometimes when you get to that point the best thing that you can do is go back and read a little bit that is before it and see if that gives you some help. What I do is I skim forward again and try and work out what it means. So I scan backwards and forwards until I have made sense of what I have read. The next step is to get a highlighter out and highlight the key words. That is, the little triggers that you need in your brain to help you remember what the writer is trying to say...

After elaborating on the steps of the skill or task of the writing lesson, the teacher would then explain and demonstrate each step one at a time. She would provide opportunity for students to practice each step independently before she moved on to explaining and demonstrating the next. For instance, during the

editing skills lesson, involving learning how to insert adjectives into sentences to enhance descriptive writing, the teacher used a sample of a student's written work transcribed onto the white board for the class to see and she demonstrated the steps of the process one at a time. As she modeled the first step to the students, identifying the nouns in the text, she explained, "Alright, what I am going to do is try and put some adjectives in here. Now adjectives describe nouns so I need to have a look in the first sentence and find the nouns. Can you help me find a thing or an object or a person?" She then used a red pen to circle the nouns. Following this she asked the students to do the same on their own draft piece of writing.

In the lesson on note taking, the teacher used an information sheet on energy to demonstrate the steps which she had outlined for taking notes from an information resource. The information sheet was enlarged on the board using the overhead projector. In modeling the second step of the process, choosing and highlighting significant words and phrases, she explained, "Okay, what I'd do now is I'd pick up my pen and I'd underline the word steam, turbines and the word electricity". After some discussion on the significance of these words to the research topic, the teacher asked the students to "Have a go yourself, following the first three steps and using the section on coal from the sheet you have. I am looking for those people that can follow the steps carefully."

The teacher's use of direct instruction in attending to learning objectives was also a feature of her lesson conclusions where she restated or reviewed the

concepts or skills central to the requisite learning. In two of the lessons the teacher concluded by asking the students to recall and describe the process required for completing the written task or applying the focused skill. For example she asked, “Okay, what are those steps?” or “Okay, number one, what is the first thing that we do?” In two other lessons she concluded by re-stating the benefits of the learning in which the students had been directly engaged. For example, the note-taking lesson ended with the following comment:

It’s being able to look at a book or the internet or in a newspaper and say, oh, look at all that information. I don’t need all that information. I just need to find one bit to answer this question. You have to find a way of getting to that answer. If you follow these five steps, that’s the way that helps you find out. If you do this part properly when you are getting your information for your slides [referring to students’ research projects] then your slides are going to be easy to do and they’re going to end up being the way they should be.

Explanation was also used when the teacher monitored the students as they engaged in their own writing. At these times, if the teacher noticed students applying a writing skill inaccurately, she would call the class to attention and address the problem by explaining the correct process while demonstrating it on the board. This occurred in all four of the lessons employing the explicit teaching strategy. For example, in the lesson which dealt with the writing of an explanation text, the teacher observed a number of students incorrectly applying punctuation for direct speech.

The strategy of recitation was used in writing lessons but only moderately relied upon. The teacher used this strategy in three of the six writing lessons but only for periods of as little as two minutes and at most seven minutes. When *recitation* was used it was used for the purpose of exploring a topic or assessing students' knowledge of a process or topic.

Before they attempted the task of the first lesson - writing a list of strategies for dealing with bullying - the teacher questioned the students on the topic of bullying and began by asking, "What is bullying?" Her questioning continued, calling for the students to recall their experiences and understanding on the topic. The teacher's responses to students' answers served to further extend their understanding of the topic.

- T: Okay, first things first...what is bullying? Yes, Martin?
S1: A person who's being mean to ya.
T: How could they being mean to you?
S1: Hit ya
T: So they could punch you or something. Okay, that's one way. What else?
S2: Verbal and physical. Ah!
T: What's verbal mean?
S2: Like name-calling
T: What else could be verbal, not just calling out our name? What else?
S3: saying bad things about you.
T: So, gossip. Making up stuff that's not true. That's bullying isn't it.
S4: It could hurt your feelings
T: Yes, so we've got verbal, we've got physical stuff. What else could be bullying? Michael?
S5: Racist
T: Yes, we had to deal with that didn't we? It's not nice, people being racist is it Michael? Does it hurt your feelings?
S5: yes
T: We've talked about that before. Okay, so we have racism, verbally teasing, saying something that's not true, gossip, physically hurting. Is there anything else?

S6: How someone looks at you.

T: How they look at you? Yes, that can be bullying. They can tease you just by looking at you. They really can. Can anyone think of a time that that has happened to them? Chris?

S7: Someone looks at you in a funny way. They do something that can say oh, there you go again.

T: So, you are saying that you don't have to actually touch someone, you don't have to actually speak to someone, it's the way you look at them? Great.

S: Yeh!

T: There's gossip, there's the way you look at someone, how about if you were out in the playground and you really wanted to play a game...

In the third lesson the teacher used recitation for the purpose of reviewing the students' knowledge of the process of note taking. She began by asking, "Okay, what are those steps [referring to the steps of note-taking]?" After a student proposed a step the teacher responded by elaborating on the step. For example, when a student suggested that the first step in the process was to "read it [the text]", the teacher responded by saying, "Read it, well done! So you quickly read through it. Make sure you understand it. Re-read bits you don't understand."

Finally, in the sixth lesson the teacher used recitation to develop students understanding of the way in which authors use language to assist readers to vividly picture what is being described.

T: Remember when I read to you a Paul Jennings story and I asked you to visualize? What does visualize mean? What did you have to do when I asked you to visualize?

S: Imagine it in your mind.

- T: Imagine it in your mind. Exactly. Now, how come people can write to make us be able to visualize? What do they do?
- S: Write the way they write, like they describe the colour of the hair and everything.
- T: Okay, so it's the way they write. Can anyone add to that? David?
- S2: They describe the colour, the size and that of things.
- T: So they describe things. Great. Anything else?
- S: They give descriptions.
- T: They give descriptions. How do they do that?
- S: Describing words.
- S: They don't keep going on and on. They write short paragraphs.
- T: Sometimes they do. If it exciting they write shorter sentences to let you know that things are going faster.
- S: They use the correct grammar

Following this short discussion, the teacher proceeded to demonstrate the insertion of adjectives into descriptive writing to enhance its vividness.

Two of the observed writing lessons involved a different arrangement from the other four as they involved the students working more independently of the teacher on a research project. Different teaching strategies were therefore used, namely independent research and cooperative learning.

Independent research required students to:

- take more control over their learning as they had to choose an aspect of the general topic of energy that they were keen to learn more about;
- source information on the topic from a number of different references;
- take notes and produce a summary of the information as a power-point presentation.

A number of lessons were set aside for the completion of the research task though only two were observed. Co-operative learning required students to work with a partner, sharing duties, interacting and making joint decisions as they completed a research project.

During the two lessons utilizing the independent research and cooperative learning strategies, the teacher adopted a role which was different to that which she regularly followed in her other writing lessons. Rather than systematically directing students through a task, students were given a research project to independently complete over a number of lessons. As they undertook this project the teacher moved around the room assisting students with the skills of the task as the need arose. Her guidance was unwavering throughout these lessons and most often took the form of a direction to students as the research was being undertaken. For example, "You could just say the USA but you could get more specific information. Go back to the website and try and get more information," or "What is meant by renewable? Go back to the book and try and explain this." Or:

A lot of people have got information that comes from America. That is fine but it doesn't tell you about where the energy source is mined or harnessed in Australia. You need to go to the jacaranda atlas and turn to the page that is called land resources, page twenty-nine. You need to have a look at the legend and check out whether your energy resource is there and whether it is found in Australia. Do we all understand that?

There was one occasion when the teacher's observations lead her to put aside the research project and explicitly teach the skill of note taking. She devoted the following writing lesson to teaching this skill to her class before allowing the students to resume work on their research projects.

7.3.2 Classroom Management

The teacher most frequently used praise in managing the students' behaviour. This technique was exercised consistently throughout the observed lessons for gaining and maintaining students' attention and encouraging them to exert maximum effort as they engaged in the task at hand. The teacher also used, but to a much lesser extent, the techniques of request, look/pause/prompt, naming a student and reprimand (Barry and King, 1998).

The technique most often used for directing students' behaviour during writing lessons was that of comments involving praise. In fact, of the 110-recorded behaviour management comments, 77 (70%) of them were observed to be comments of commendation and positive recognition of students' behaviour and accomplishments. The teacher was observed to use the technique of praise in situations where students' complied with her requests for attention, displayed good work habits and lesson participation or produced writing of sound or improved quality.

The teacher gained students' attention by clapping her hands, counting to three or verbally requesting them to "Stop work and listen to me." In successfully

gaining students' attention the teacher would respond with general comments of praise typically, "Well done boys, excellent." Though occasionally the feedback was more specific and included a statement of the behaviour being praised; "I really like that people actually clap and then they actually do stop and listen. Well done."

The teacher also used comments of praise in response to students' application to their work. These comments were regularly addressed to the whole class and to individual students. At regular periods throughout the writing lessons the teacher would acknowledge the work habits of the class as a whole with such comments as, "Thank you for working so well in a group. Everyone's basically getting it done." Or "That's great to see people have actually done what they've been asked to do. That's terrific." or "I really have to say thank you to those students who are staying on task and who are making the right choices. You really make it worthwhile. Okay, thank you very much."

Comments made to individual students for the purpose of acknowledging their work habits and application were just as frequent and provided students with specific feedback about the appropriateness of the behaviour they were displaying. An example typical of this came from the third lesson where she commented, "Over here Justin and Sam are working extremely well. They've almost finished their notes and they haven't spent time chatting. They've come to me about it already."

Positive comments directed towards the standard of written work achieved by students also served to motivate other students to greater effort and application. The following comments taken from different lessons observed, typified the nature of praise given to students where the focus was on the quality of work produced and exemplified the simple, sincere and direct nature of these comments:

“Most of you did a really good job of writing a procedure for how to use a compass.”

“You have obviously edited this as your sentences are great. You have all your full stops in.”

“That’s good. I like the way you’ve added a little bit as to why the different people liked it. When comments are specific like that, it’s good because it gives extra information there. This helps the reader to really understand people’s reactions.”

“I’ve read it through and it’s really good. I like the last line you’ve written there.”

“I love this sentence it gives me a mental picture in my head.”

“Good. Actually, this is much better than the first time I read it.”

“This is really good. What I like about it is that you really explained why you were happy about all the things you wrote about. You didn’t just say you were happy. This is much more interesting.”

Another management technique used during writing lessons was that of request. The teacher employed this technique intermittently in response to students’ inattentive or other inappropriate classroom behaviour. The teacher’s requests

for a change in student conduct were always delivered in a polite and calm voice and always received the required behaviour change from the students concerned.

For example, during a lengthy teacher explanation, which included a number of outside interruptions, a group of students began talking quietly amongst themselves. The teacher requested, “Gentlemen please, we’re getting there. I need you to keep paying attention.” The students responded by stopping their talk and once again listening to the teacher. On another occasion the request occurred when students who were working on a writing task had begun to engage in off-task conversation. The teacher’s request to the class was, “I would like to see everyone doing what they’re supposed to be doing.” She then named specific students who didn’t respond to this initial request until all the class was once again engaged in the task at hand.

The teacher occasionally just stated a student’s name and in so doing the request for a change in behaviour was implied. For example during the sixth lesson while the teacher was explaining the writing task she was interrupted by a student who called out a question without raising his hand and waiting to be asked to speak. The teacher simply said “David” and continued with her explanation. David then raised his hand and waited. Eventually the teacher asked him to speak and he asked the question.

The look / pause / prompt method was occasionally used for adjusting students’ behaviour when a minor interruption occurred during times when the teacher was

giving instructions, leading a discussion or providing an explanation to students.

In order to address the inattentiveness the teacher stopped speaking and looked at the offending student. This was usually enough to once again focus the student's attention at which time the teacher would resume talking. The use of this technique occurred infrequently and generally lasted only a few seconds. The behaviour management techniques of reprimand and the threat of penalty were used on only two occasions.

7.3 Attentiveness Levels

Table 7.5 on page 146 shows the percentage of students displaying time-on-task behaviour in each of the writing lessons observed.

TABLE 7.5

Student Attentiveness during Writing Lessons

Lesson	Number of boys	Attentive boys Average	Attentive boys Range
1	28	88%	71 – 100%
2	24	90%	70 – 100%
3	24	90%	79 – 100%
4	27	88%	70 – 100%
5	27	81%	70 – 92%
6	28	84%	71 – 96%
All lessons	26	87%	72 - 98%

- Notes: (1) *The percentage shown in the above table represents the average of percentages recorded for a number of observations at each lesson.*
- (4) *The range shows the lowest and highest degrees of attentiveness over all observations within the particular lesson.*

These measures indicate that the teacher was successful in securing no less than 70% of her classes attentiveness at any one time and that on average at least 80% of students were engaged in each writing lesson.

Not only were the overall attentiveness levels for Mrs McKenzie’s class very good (a mean of 87%) but the worst was still a most satisfactory 70% and the best (100%) was achieved during four of the six lessons.

Mrs McKenzie broke the lesson into several distinct components, each one preceded by speaking and explaining and discussing. The students were not left to their own devices for extended periods. The research notes show that attentiveness levels were especially high when Mrs McKenzie was the focus of attention but that they were also maintained at a good level while students attended to their writing tasks for the relatively short periods involved.

7.5 Conclusions

During the course of Mrs. McKenzie's lessons it was apparent that she was directing the students' learning. She was at the helm of all stages, continually focusing students' attention on what was to be learnt and continually monitoring their work. She designed and conducted writing lessons that demonstrated clear learning objectives and which used explicit teaching methods for achieving them.

Writing skills were identified and taught, and students were instructed on the linguistic and structural requirements of different writing genres. A variety of materials and teaching techniques were used. Lessons were designed around topics that were relevant to the students' lives and during lessons there was a continual emphasis on writing purpose and readership.

A strong feature of Mrs. McKenzie's teaching was her approach to discipline, which, whilst firm, seemed to display a degree of respect for the students. The

general tenor of her approach was one of explanation rather than command and commendation in preference to criticism.

CHAPTER 8

Case Study

Adam in

the Year 5 and Year 6 Classes

8.1 Introduction

The following case study examines the attitude, application and behaviour during class writing lessons of Adam, a student at Fernleigh Primary School. Adam was in a Year 5 coeducational class when the study commenced but entered the Year 6 all-boys class the following year as part of the school's single-gender classes programme. He therefore participated in three classroom contexts: Mr Hamersley's co-educational class, Mrs Bailey's Year 6 all-boys class and Mrs McKenzie's Year 6 all-boys class.

The study was built up from interviews with Adam, firstly when he was in Year 5 and then six months later when he had moved up to Year 6. It was further developed through discussions with his Year 5 and Year 6 teachers and through observations during a series of class writing lessons over six weeks in the last term of Year 5 and the first two terms of Year 6.

Adam lived in Fernleigh with his mother and her partner, and his three sisters. His home was within walking distance of the Fernleigh Primary School which he had attended for the previous six years. Adam rarely saw his father and did

not get along with his mother's partner. He enjoyed the outdoors and eventually wanted to be a farmer "planting crops and riding a truck."

8.2 General Attitude, Application and Behaviour in Years 5 and 6

According to his teachers, Adam had struggled with the academic demands of the Year 5 and Year 6 classrooms. They said that he worked at a standard considerably below the level of that expected of a boy of his age. His Year 5 teacher (Mr Hamersley) stressed, "Adam is so far behind and so disinterested that I think it would be difficult for him, without intervention, to achieve more than he's achieving now." His first term teacher in Year 6 (Mrs Bailey) explained that Adam's level of achievement in literacy and numeracy was particularly poor and said that she believed Adam had made little progress in reading, writing or mathematics since Year 2. She nevertheless maintained that he was a child with potential albeit one who had "learnt how not to work." An examination of the written work produced by Adam during the period of this study strongly suggested an inability to grasp the fundamentals of writing and spelling (refer to figures 3 – 6, pp. 159 – 162).

It was apparent from observing Adam in the classroom that his work habits were erratic. Discussion with him also revealed a negative attitude towards school and poor self-esteem in relation to his own academic ability. According to his teachers, he participated reasonably well in science and other subjects which had some practical content but consistently tried to avoid doing mathematics and English. It was clear that Adam's serious lack of achievement in these areas

had affected his self-esteem and contributed to his negative attitude. Mrs Bailey put it this way; “These [maths and English] are his weak subjects and he knows where he is compared to everyone else... He tries to avoid doing them because he is a failure, isn’t he?”

Adam’s teachers spoke of his disinclination to do any work if he didn’t want to. Mrs Bailey said that, “he doesn’t get deterred by punishment” and “he is absolutely disinterested and absolutely totally hates school. He only comes because he knows he has to.” His second term teacher in Year 6 (Mrs McKenzie) thought his avoidance of work stemmed from his attitude that “school is simply not for him.” She explained, “It seems as if he doesn’t see any sense in it at all.” She did, however, go on to say that he seemed to respond to individual attention. “If I sat down with him and did the work with him, he would really want to show you that he could do something. He really tried then and he would ask you if he had any problems.”

It was noted during the writing lessons observed in both Years 5 and 6 that Adam was instructed in the same manner as the rest of his class. He was assigned equivalent learning tasks although occasionally with the concession that he was allowed to produce less writing. A comment made by Adam about a task he was set in Year 5 revealed his frustration when faced with a considerable writing assignment for which he lacked the skills. He explained, “Once, for homework, I had to write about Vikings and I was there on the Internet for four and a half hours, trying to figure out what to do.”

Concern over Adam extended beyond the classroom. He tended to associate with a small group of like-minded boys with anti-social and negative school behaviour. In this group he was a leader and, according to Mr Hamersley, “a tough character”. This toughness was evident during an interview with Adam when he described the manner in which he dealt with his intolerance of other students. He explained, “I hit people when I get angry,” and “Last week Sean got on my nerves so I told him I’d ram this ruler straight up his arse. He took me to the limit.”

His behaviour in the playground was often brought to the attention of teachers on playground duty. He was regularly referred to the deputy principal for his playground conduct; typically for swearing, writing graffiti and disrupting the games of other students. Adam’s behaviour, it was suggested by Mr Hamersley, might be partly attributable to his lack of acumen in ‘normal’ group social behaviour. During the first semester of Year 6 he had twice been suspended from school for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Mrs Bailey stated, “Adam has the most amazing ability to sniff out trouble and join in...If there’s trouble in the school Adam will be there.”

Having agreed about Adam’s unsatisfactory classroom performance, his propensity for anti-social behaviour and his generally poor attitude, his Year 6 teachers nevertheless saw a more favourable side to his character. They said that he often presented himself as a likeable and interesting child. Mrs Bailey even described him as a child who could be “compassionate and caring.” She had

observed him acting in a manner that was supportive and caring of others, often witnessing him quietly helping out a student who was injured or upset at school. She also cited a number of incidents in the classroom where Adam had taken the initiative to resolve problems. Mrs McKenzie also spoke of a likeable quality in Adam suggesting, “He is a lovely kid. If you get to talk to him...he really enjoys adult company. He just can’t see any sense in school...he can be such an amiable kid that you can’t help but like him.”

In Year 6 Adam’s teachers became concerned over frequent truancy. Mrs McKenzie observed, “In the first couple of weeks of the [second] term I wondered what all the fuss was with this kid. He seemed fine. The next thing I know he just doesn’t turn up [to school]...He was here for the first two weeks and then in the last couple of weeks he’s been here maybe two or three days.”

8.3 Participation in the Writing Lessons of the Year 5 Co-educational Class

In his Year 5 co-educational class Adam sat in a group with five other boys, although the composition of this all-boys group varied from week to week as students were given the opportunity to choose a new place at the beginning of each week.

Adam for the most part, conformed to the teacher’s expectations of classroom behaviour. He was not observed to be outwardly disobedient or disruptive although his poor body language and general disengagement with what was going on during writing lessons were apparent. When the teacher led a

discussion or gave directions for a task, Adam would often put his head on the desk, lie on the floor or sit far away from the class group, suggesting a complete lack of interest in the content of the lesson. Occasionally the teacher would draw him back into the discussion. On these occasions Adam would sit up and participate for as long as he felt inclined to do so, then resume his uninterested demeanour.

When a writing lesson required independent work at his desk, Adam habitually sought distractions and thus avoided the demands of the task. He thus spent a large part of his time engaged in off-task behaviour, typically socialising with others around him, wandering the classroom or simply daydreaming at his desk.

Over the 10 one-hour writing lessons which were observed, Adam's level of engagement with the set tasks never exceeded 60% of the available time; most days it was 40% to 50% (refer to Figure 1 on page 155). During one particular lesson (Lesson 4, Figure 1) where the writing assignment necessitated a high level of writing skill, requiring students to change a story text into a play script, Adam spent a mere 20% of his time attending to the task; he completed just four lines of writing. On the ten occasions under observation, Adam never once fully completed the writing assignment.

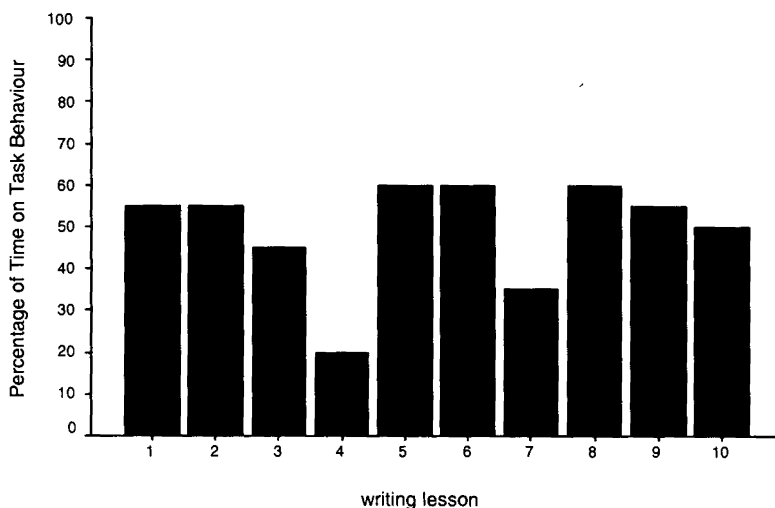


Figure 1. Adam's Time on Task Behaviour in Writing lessons in Mr Hamersley's Year 5 Coeducational Class.

8.4 Participation in the Writing Lessons of the Year 6 All-Boys Class

Adam had two different teachers in Year 6. During the first term Mrs Bailey taught the Year 6 all-boys class while Mrs McKenzie taught the class during the second term and continued doing so for the remainder of the year.

While in Mrs Bailey's class, Adam's level of participation differed within and between the observed writing lessons. The teacher-directed discussions that began the writing lessons were typically a time when Adam was quietly present in the classroom but not partaking in the discussion or responding to the teacher's comments or those of other students. He often carried out an unrelated task such as in the fourth lesson when he organised his papers, sharpened his pencils, cleared rubbish from his desk and wandered about the room and in the fifth lesson when he read a magazine during the class discussion. On these

occasions, when the teacher asked him to pay attention, he generally ignored her and continued what he was doing until the discussion stage of the lesson was finished. On the other hand, Adam willingly participated in the discussion stage of the sixth lesson. For reasons that were not apparent, he repeatedly volunteered answers to the teacher's questions, gave his opinion on the topic and responded to the contributions of other students. In fact he was engaged and responsive for 90% of the discussion time.

In the second stage of each of the observed lessons where students were given a writing worksheet to complete, Adam's attention to the task vacillated. He usually began the task when it was first presented to him but would stop regularly to fidget, socialise, listen to the conversation of others, call out to another student or simply daydream. After some time he would resume working but inattentiveness would eventually return. For some reason during the second and fourth lessons Adam displayed a more determined effort to succeed with the writing task and regularly sought the teacher's assistance. These requests for assistance concerned spelling and the comprehension of questions on the worksheet.

Over the six writing lessons, observed measures of Adam's time on-task-behaviour disclosed that his level of engagement fell between nil and 58%. In four of the lessons it was less than 50% while during the third lesson Adam did not display any time-on-task behaviour (refer to Figure 2 on page 157).

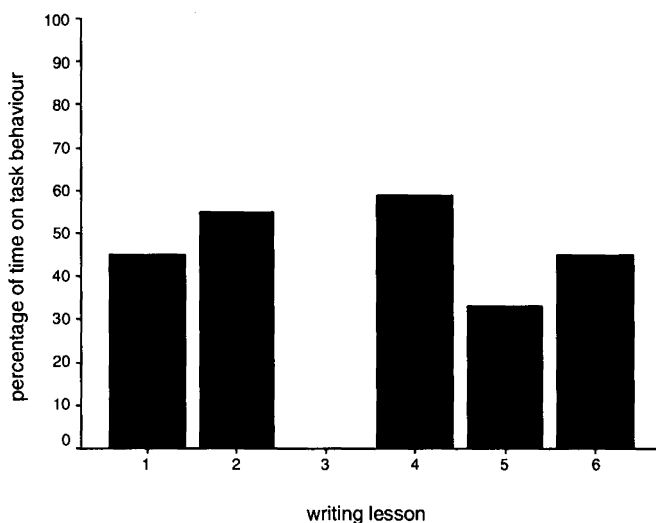


Figure 2. Adam’s Time on Task Behaviour in Writing lessons in Mrs Bailey’s Year 6 All-Boys Class.

During the third lesson Adam’s behaviour was such that he did not engage in any facet of the lesson. Moreover, the behaviour caused other students to disengage from the writing task. In this lesson Adam refused to follow the teacher’s instructions but instead banged on his desk, played with objects, talked loudly to other students and eventually began crawling around the room. He disregarded the teacher’s reprimands and was eventually issued with a punishment form (to be taken home and signed by a parent). His behaviour still remained unchanged and the teacher continued with the lesson. When asked about his behaviour on this occasion, Adam explained, “Getting up in the morning is hard so sometimes I come in [to school] feeling tired and I can’t be bothered doing anything.” The teacher believed the behaviour was the result of problems Adam was experiencing at home. While he was often distracted and

disinterested during lessons such overtly defiant behaviour had not previously been observed.

According to Mrs McKenzie who took over the class in the second term, Adam was experiencing serious family problems which she believed affected his attitude and attendance at school. Adam often went out in the evening remaining on the streets until late at night and then staying at the homes of teenage friends. When interviewed during one of his few days in attendance at school over this time, Adam looked tired and yawned a lot. When questioned about this he explained, "I was at a friend's house last night, watching movies on Foxtel until 1am."

Adam was absent during most of the second term observations. In fact of the six lessons observed during this time, Adam was in attendance on only one occasion. Although a consistent attendance by Adam would have made for a more comprehensive examination of his behaviour and his engagement in writing lessons, it suffices to say that in the single lesson during which he was observed in the second term, his engagement and interest in the lesson was little different to that observed in the previous term. The measurement of his time-on-task behaviour during this lesson was a mere 45%. During the other 55% of the lesson he fidgeted, daydreamed or socialised with other students.

Mrs Bailey explained that Adam had begun the first two weeks with her well, so much so that she wondered about the concerns expressed by previous teachers.

On the other hand, she also spoke of his reluctance to work during writing lessons but saw this as being due to his lack of confidence and suggested that with an appropriate level of teacher assistance he could engage more fully in the task at hand. However, after the initial two weeks Adam's attendance at school was limited to three or four days over a six-week period.

8.5 An Overview of Adam's Writing in Year 5 and Year 6

Observation of Adam's writing disclosed poor skill in written expression and indicated that he had an ability to use only simple and repetitive sentence structures, possessed a limited vocabulary lacking semantic variety, lacked knowledge of spelling conventions and had a poor understanding of punctuation. He made no use of adjectives or adverbs to enhance meaning and altogether his writing had an immature quality.

It is difficult to determine whether a lack of knowledge or a lack of effort brought about by lack of interest was the major contributor to the observed deficiencies in writing skill but his teachers believed that the problem could be sheeted home to both these shortcomings. There were occasions when Adam's untidy handwriting, errors in spelling and punctuation omissions made his work nearly incomprehensible. This is illustrated in the text below which is typical of many of those Adam produced in Year 5 and Year 6.

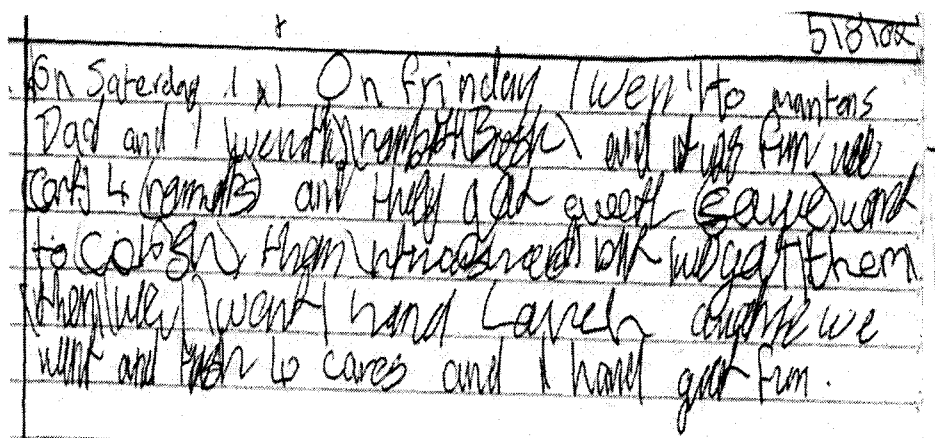


Figure 3. Samples of Adam's Writing - Year 5, 2002.

The written work produced by Adam highlighted the many different aspects of his poor writing skill. The two texts shown in Figures 4 and 5, (one resulting from the Year 5 storyboard summary lesson and the other a story comprehension sheet completed in Year 6) display the lack of punctuation, constant misspelling of words and failure to construct grammatically accurate sentences which typified his work.

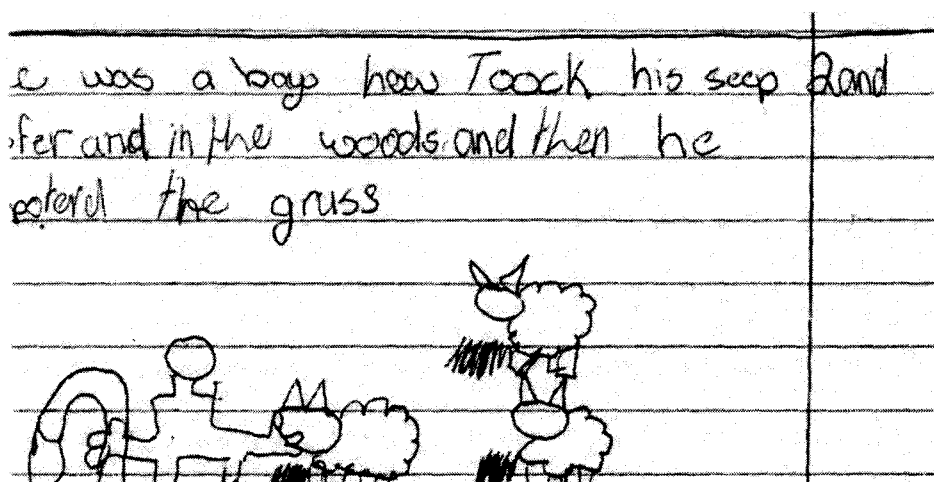


Figure 4. Samples of Adam's Writing - Year 5, 2002.

Beware the Dog!

Level A—Use one word or a short phrase to answer these questions.

1. What was the sign on the front gate made of? Don't worry about
The Dog. Bishel Grass is matted
2. What was the owner of the house wearing? Dark Blue
Suit cap and a red silk
line
3. If Buster was a burglar, how come he had never been caught by the police?
he was stie
4. What did the guard dog do when it saw Buster? Stop and look
and then he wake to wake him and rool
off and he wanted a skras on the Big

Level B—Use brief sentences to answer these questions.


1. What made Buster smile when he read the sign on the front gate?
he is asphtha a vampire
- 
2. What does the writer mean by saying Buster was going to 'make a real killing'?
sell good Bargen

Figure 5. Samples of Adam's Writing - Year 6, 2003.

Adam's poor knowledge of the basics of spelling was further evidenced in other examples of his writing where even simple words were spelt incorrectly; for example, "once, who, house, grandma, sugar, door, then, little, one, answered, felt, took, through, mountain, grass, patted."

Adam's reliance on a simple vocabulary and repetitive sentence structure; gave his writing a monotonous quality; for example, when a writing task required Adam to briefly describe the storyline of *The Karate Kid*, he wrote, "The boy is involved in the movie. The girl is involved in the movie. Bonsai were involved in the movie. Mr Miyag is involved in the movie." In another example from the storyboard summary of a fable, Adam wrote, "There was a boy who took his

sheep hirer the woods and up the mountain and to the grass.” This example also highlights an over reliance of the conjunction “and”.

In undertaking the play script writing assignment in Year 5, Adam demonstrated an inability to separate the direct speech of a story character from the narrative.

The text Adam recorded for the narrator read as follows:

Once upon a time there was a pig that lived in a house. He was [?] to bake a cake for his grandma but he had no sugar so he went next door to a pig’s house and then he knocked on the door little pig are you in no one answered and he felt ashes coming.

Not only did Adam’s writing reveal serious inadequacies in writing skills, it also pointed to a lack of engagement with the content of the writing which he produced. The work sample below, *Feeling Good about Myself*, is indicative of this disconnection. In response to the worksheet instruction, “write down all of your positive physical characteristics”, Adam wrote, “I like my eyes, my hair, my shirt, my pants.” In response to, write down all your positive characteristics, Adam wrote, “telling jokes, telling more jokes, farting.”

Feeling Good About Myself

1. Write down all of your positive physical characteristics.
 - a. I like my eyes
 - b. my hair
 - c. my smile
 - d. my teeth
2. Write down all of your positive personal characteristics.
 - a. telling jokes
 - b. telling more jokes
 - c. making sketches
 - d. _____
3. Write down one characteristic you feel negative about.

waking up early




Figure 6. Samples of Adam's Writing - Year 6, 2003.

In the light of the poor capacity displayed by Adam in the writing process, it is perhaps not surprising that he had developed a negative attitude towards classroom writing. This attitude became clear from his comments when interviewed as well as from the results of the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) (Kear et al, 2000).

During the interview, toward the end of Year 5, Adam's comments consistently highlighted a negative attitude toward a variety of classroom writing tasks. For instance, he explained, "I don't like writing about what I done on the weekend. I don't like to share everything;" and, "When we write straight in the morning, I don't like doing it because I'm still half asleep...I just get up and leave;"

On the WAS, which was administered to the class when Adam was in Year 5, he achieved a raw score of 53 out of 112, which converts into a percentile rank of 4. This was well below the Year 5 national median score of 50 and the class mean of 51. Scrutiny of Adam's responses to specific items in the survey (questions 4, 5, 8,9,12,13,14,15, 18, 23, 24, 25) revealed a dislike of writing within the genres of explanation, exposition, narrative and report. On the other hand, Adam gave fairly positive responses to items addressing the writing tasks of a letter to an author, an advertisement and the keeping of a personal diary.

Adam was interviewed again at the end of the second term of Year 6. His comments this time reflected a negativity that was not restricted to writing lessons but which encompassed all aspects of school. When asked specifically about writing he shrugged his shoulders and in a casual tone remarked, "I don't want to come to school. I can't be bothered. I don't like school because I don't like sitting in class for about six hours. It's boring. Writing's alright when I'm in the mood."

Unfortunately Adam was absent in Year 6 during the second application of the Writing Attitude Survey and additional information about his writing attitude could not therefore be obtained.

8.6 Conclusions

For Adam membership of the three classes did little to affect positive participation or produce satisfactory learning outcomes. His attentiveness in

writing lessons, while showing some variation across individual lessons, did not improve during his time in any of the three classes. His writing skill remained at a most unsatisfactory level. It should be noted that the social problems he experienced both within and outside the school remained an issue and a point of concern for each of the three teachers involved.

CHAPTER 9

The Three Classes -

A Comparison

9.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a comparison of boys' attentiveness levels during writing lessons in the Year 5 coeducational class at Fernleigh Primary School and of the same boys in the Year 6 all-boys' classes the following year.

The boys whose attentiveness was measured were actually taught writing in three classroom contexts; firstly the coeducational Year 5 class conducted by Mr Hamersley then the subsequent year's all-boys Year 6 class which was conducted in the first term by Mrs Bailey and in the following term by Mrs McKenzie. For the purpose of this examination these three classroom contexts are referred to as three separate classes – Mr Hamersley's class, Mrs Bailey's class and Mrs McKenzie's class. It is perhaps fortuitous that the three could be observed because the two all-boys classes made for an interesting comparison.

The chapter then turns to: -

- establishing whether the change from a coeducational to a single gender class had a major effect on attentiveness;
- making a cross analysis of the three classes to ascertain whether factors other than gender composition might account for a shift in attentiveness

levels (these other factors were considered in relation to the nature of the writing lessons, and the pedagogical and management strategies of the teachers); and

- examining one boy's experience in each of the classes in an effort to determine whether his attentiveness levels were consistent with those determined for the three classes generally.

9.2 Boys Attentiveness in Writing Lessons

The time-on-task behaviour of boys during writing lessons was measured in the three different classes and the levels of attention which they achieved in each are shown in Table 9.1 on page 168 and in the Box and Whisker graph on page 169.

TABLE 9.1

Student Attentiveness during Writing Lessons -
The Three Classes

	Year 5 co-educational Mr Hamersley		Year 6 all-boys Mrs Bailey		Year 6 all-boys Mrs McKenzie	
Lesson	Attentive Boys		Attentive Boys		Attentive Boys	
	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
1	64%	52 – 80%	70%	55 – 92%	88%	71 – 100%
2	58%	50 – 63%	63%	35 – 95%	90%	70 – 100%
3	64%	12 – 100%	46%	31 – 85%	90%	79 – 100%
4	53%	25 – 87%	66%	38 – 88%	88%	70 – 100%
5	53%	20 – 68%	54%	30 – 85%	81%	70 – 92%
6	54%	44 – 75%	58%	34 – 76%	84%	71 – 96%
7	69%	50 – 87%				
8	68%	60 – 84%				
9	53%	43 – 69%				
10	44%	29 – 72%				
All Lessons	58	39 - 79	59%	37 - 87	87%	72 - 98%

- Notes : (1) *The percentage shown for each lesson (in each class) represents the average of percentages recorded for a number of observations at each lesson.*
- (2) *The range shows the lowest and highest degrees of attentiveness over all observations within the particular lesson.*

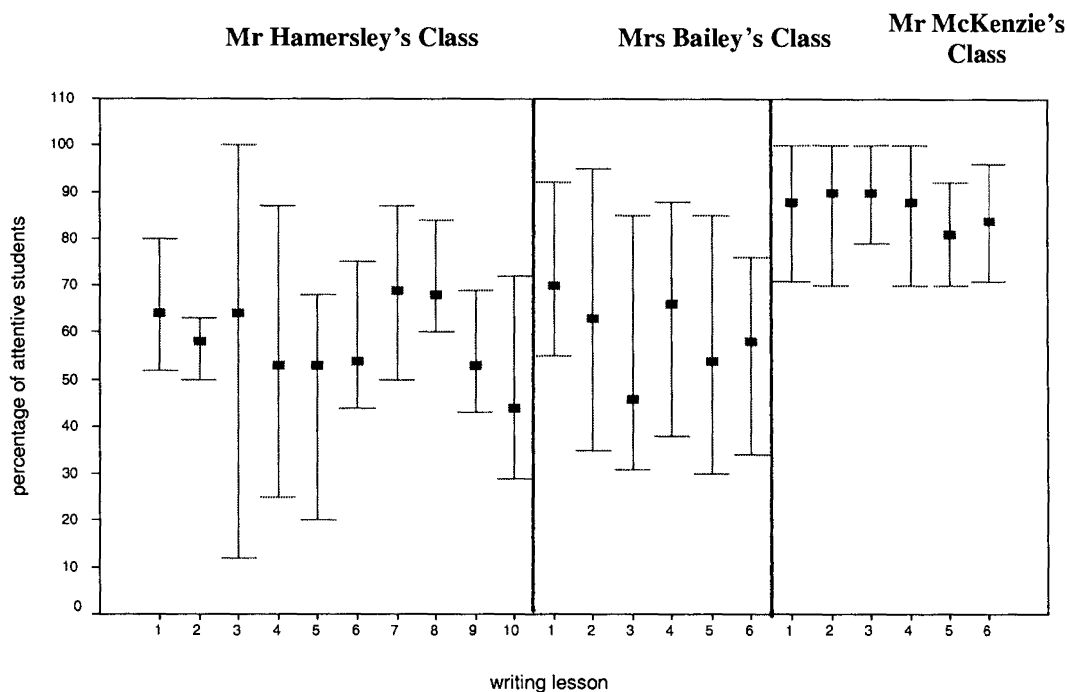


Figure 7 Percentage of Boys who were Attentive during Writing Lessons in the Three Classes.

Note: The graph represents the range (highest and lowest measurements) of student attentiveness for each of a series of lessons for each class. It also indicates the mean attentiveness for each lesson.

The table and graph disclose little difference in attentiveness levels between Mr Hamersley's co-educational class and Mrs Bailey's all-boys class. Although the measurements do perhaps put Mrs Bailey's class ahead of Mr Hamersley's, the differences are only slight; for instance the highest level of attentiveness in Mrs Bailey's was 70% whereas in Mr Hamersley's it was 69%. The lowest in Mr Hamersley's class was 44% while in Mrs Bailey's it was 46%. Descriptively, these differences are so small that from a statistical standpoint they are almost

inconsequential. For all practical purposes it could be said that levels of attentiveness in the two classes were on a par.

However, the measurements for Mrs McKenzie's all-boys class tell a different story. They indicate far higher levels of attentiveness than those of the other two classes. Not only was the highest level an outstanding 90% (and that observed in two lessons) but the lowest was still a commendable 81%.

9.3 The Gender Composition

A comparison of the data displaying boys' attentiveness levels in the three different classes shows that boys' attentiveness levels during writing lessons did increase noticeably in one of the classes.

It is evidenced by the measures displayed that male students were much better engaged in the writing lessons in Mrs McKenzie's all-boys class than in Mr Hamersley's co-educational class or in Mrs Bailey's all-boys class.

At first glance, therefore, the statistics suggest that gender composition was irrelevant. After all, Mrs Bailey's all-boys class displayed levels of attentiveness which were close to those in Mr Hamersley's co-educational class. Moreover, the attentiveness levels in Mrs McKenzie's all-boys class were much higher than in the same class when Mrs Bailey taught it.

However, to discard gender composition as an influence on attentiveness, would be to dismiss the strong views of the two teachers who taught all-boys classes, that it was indeed beneficial to learning. Even Mrs Bailey, whose class did not display attentiveness levels which were any better than those recorded for the co-educational class, was adamant on this matter.

Of course, while the statistics do clearly reveal different attentiveness levels, they do not tell the full story behind the differences. They do not for instances indicate the extent to which any differences in the quality of, or methods used by, each of the teachers may have played a part in the students' propensity to pay attention. Perhaps more importantly, the bare statistics do not provide any insight into the different approaches to the teaching of writing to an all-boys class, which were taken by the two different teachers. One teacher appeared almost to think it futile to attempt to teach writing to boys. The other thought that boys were perfectly capable of developing good writing skills.

9.4 The Writing Lessons and Teacher Instruction and Management

9.4.1 Introduction

Having reached the position where it seemed improbable that the higher time-on-task behaviour exhibited by the students of Mrs McKenzie's class was attributable to gender composition alone, other features, relating to the nature of the writing lessons, and pedagogical and management strategies, were examined which might have affected attentiveness levels.

The nature of the writing lessons given by each of the three teachers and of their pedagogy and management methods, have already been discussed in Chapters V – VII. In order to identify similarities and differences, the following sections compare the approach taken in these areas by each teacher and, more particularly, it seeks to identify anything in the approaches taken by Mrs McKenzie which stood apart from those followed by the other two teachers.

9.4.2 Text Types

There was a greater use of different text types in Mr Hamersley's and Mrs McKenzie's class than in Mrs Bailey's class. Mrs Bailey writing tasks were worksheets though on one occasions she called for the children to write a narrative. Mr Hamersley's writing lessons had slightly more variety and involved a narrative, a description and a story summary. For her part, Mrs McKenzie focused on the writing genres of a report and an explanation and on the text type of a list. She also dedicated two lessons to teaching the specific writing skills of note taking and of editing. These lessons focused on the processes involved in good writing skills whereas the overriding concern of the other two teachers appeared to be completion of the task.

9.4.3 Topics

The choice of topics varied across the three classes. All of Mr Hamersley's writing tasks related to the fairytale or fable themes that prevailed in his literacy classroom at the time. Mrs Bailey changed the topic each week and covered *The Karate Kid*, burglary, dreaming and self-reflection. *The Karate Kid* was central

to two of the tasks but other than this no thematic planning or topic integration was carried out. The topics provided by Mrs McKenzie were bullying, the students' own artwork and energy. They differed from those set by the other two teachers in that they were generally related to the direct experiences of students. The bullying topic had particular social significance to the young boys in this class, as it was a prevalent school based issue. The artwork the student wrote about was based on experience gained only a few days previously during an art class. The steps for completion were therefore easier to recall for the purpose of the writing task. The topic of *energy* was relevant to the students as they could relate it to many aspects of their own lives.

Mrs McKenzie used the energy topic as a "rich topic" for the planning of an integrated teaching programme. The learning activities she planned around it combined different curriculum areas. For instance the students, in undertaking the task of investigating and reporting on an aspect of energy, were required to apply skills in reading and writing and information technology whilst also learning concepts and developing content knowledge in the curriculum areas of Science and Society and Environment.

9.4.4 Time Allocated

Writing lessons were timetabled to last for 50 – 60 minutes in each of the three classes. In Mr Hamersley's class and Mrs Bailey's class this time allocation was sometimes extended to allow students to finish a piece of writing. However, writing

lessons took place only twice a week in Mr Hamersley's and Mrs McKenzie's class and only once a week in Mrs Bailey's class. Only a small part of the teaching timetable was therefore devoted specifically to the teaching of writing. All three teachers claimed that they provided students with further writing practice through the application of writing tasks in other curriculum area lessons, typically those of Society and Environment, or Science. All three espoused the use of an integrated curriculum and highlighted the regularity of writing practice given to students during other curriculum area lessons. They considered that this practice contributed to the development of writing skills.

9.4.5 Lesson Stages

In all three classes, writing lessons were conducted in three basic stages and followed the conventional lesson structure of introduction, development and conclusion. Notwithstanding the similar lesson structure between the three classes, events occurring at each lesson stage were often different as recorded in Table 9.2 on page 175: The writing task was considered by Mr Hamersley and Mrs Bailey to be the critical component of their writing lessons and to be the principal element in writing development.

TABLE 9.2

Stages of Each Teacher's Lessons – An Overview

	Mr Hamersley	Mrs Bailey	Mrs McKenzie
Introduction	Whole class discussion of topic or task or the reading of a story Teacher explained the task	Teacher introduced the writing task (worksheet) and explained what to do Teacher read the worksheet aloud Teacher orally modelled answers to questions on worksheet.	Whole class discussion or brainstorm Teacher read out children's writing done or started previously – highlighted positive features Teacher explained the writing task and purpose Teacher explained the skill involved and demonstrated the task
Development	Students worked on the writing task Teacher walked around and helped individuals	Students worked to complete the task Teacher sometimes assisted students and sometimes sat at her desk	Students worked in small stages on the writing task. Teacher stopped students intermittently for feedback and to demonstrate the next step.
Conclusion	Teacher instructed students to pack away	Students handed worksheets to the teacher as they finished	Teacher read out samples of students' work – provide feedback on the application of the focus skill. Teacher outlined to class what they have achieved and what they have learned.

A regular feature of Mr Hamersley's lesson introductions was the lengthy, whole- class, question-answer sessions. These sessions, while connected to the lesson topic fables or fairytales, did not feed into the actual writing task and did not therefore provide any useful support to students in completing the writing;

for instance, in the lesson where students were required to write and illustrate a summary of a fable, Mr Hamersley began by asking students, “What is a fable?” and “What is the moral of a fable?” The thinking stimulated by these questions would likely have increased students’ knowledge of fables and may perhaps have motivated them to the topic of the task but did little to enhance the students’ capacity to complete the actual written summary. The question-answer session was usually followed by an explanation of the writing task and the process by which it was to be completed.

In lesson introductions Mrs Bailey took a different approach. She began her lessons with an immediate explanation of the writing task. She gave out the worksheet, read out the questions and then elicited from the students, oral answers to these questions. Before calling for the answer she sometimes paraphrased the written question or called for students to explain their understanding of specific words or phrases within the question. These events indicate that her purpose was to ensure the students were capable of independently completing the task; that is the writing of answers to the given questions.

Mrs McKenzie’s lesson introductions included more variation than the other two teachers, involving as they did question-answer sessions, explanation, demonstration and explicit feedback. A strong feature of her lesson introductions was a reminder to students of their writing development so far and an outline of the goal of the writing lesson. Sometimes the lesson would begin

with Mrs McKenzie reading out writing which had previously been completed by students and highlighting the growth in skill that the pieces illustrated. At other times the lesson began with Mrs McKenzie questioning students about the topic or conducting a class brainstorm for ideas such as when she asked the students to think of all the solutions to the problem of bullying. Mrs McKenzie also used the lesson introduction to explain the writing task of the lesson, the skill required in completing it and the steps of the lesson. Characteristic of Mrs McKenzie's use of the lesson introduction was her explanation of the significance of the lesson to the students' learning and writing development.

The development and conclusion stages of writing lessons were the same for Mr Hamersley and Mrs Bailey. In both classes, the lesson development stage was characterized by students working on set writing tasks until completion or until the end of the lesson was announced. During this time the teachers generally moved around the room providing assistance to students as requested. Neither Mrs Bailey nor Mr Hamersley brought their lessons to a conclusion in any formal way. They employed no teaching technique for winding up the lesson. They simply brought it to an abrupt halt and dismissed the class or began the next lesson.

Mrs McKenzie's writing lessons developed and concluded in an altogether different way. The writing tasks, having been explained in full at the beginning of the lesson, were then broken up into manageable sections for students to complete. During the lesson development, students were given a small section

of the task at a time to understand and accomplish. The teacher explained and demonstrated each of the segments. The students then put what they had been told into practice. In this way she maintained greater control over the students' learning. The teacher constantly provided feedback at the end of each segment. Mrs McKenzie's concluded her lessons by reading examples of students' fully completed texts to the class and by providing specific feedback about the writing strengths indicated by the text. She would sometimes call on students to comment on the strengths they observed in each other's writing. She reiterated the learning purpose of the lesson and expounded to students' their writing achievements.

9.4.6 Materials Used

All three teachers made minimal use of teaching resources during their writing classes. This was particularly so in Mr Hamersley and Mrs Bailey classes. Mr Hamersley limited his use of resources to such basics as the whiteboard, student exercise books, worksheets and storybooks. Mrs Bailey's use of resources was even more scant as she merely incorporated the use of worksheets and the classroom blackboard into her writing lessons. For her part, Mrs McKenzie used both the blackboard and the overhead projector for demonstrating and listing task steps. She created writing tasks that required students to regularly use the classroom computers; for instance when working on their energy project students were required to research the topic on the internet and present the report in the form of a power point presentation. Other of her writing tasks gave students the opportunity to use the word processor in producing the final text.

9.4.7 Teacher / Student Talk

The way in which student / teacher talk was used to support lesson objectives varied from teacher to teacher but in all three classes any dialogue was subject to tight teacher control. In each class the teacher tended to ask all the questions and generally chose who was to answer them. There was very little in the way of general discussion with students initiating comments and questions either to the teacher or to one another.

Mrs Bailey initiated student / teacher talk at the beginning of lessons in an endeavour to ensure that students understood the questions on the worksheets which were a feature of all but one of her writing tasks. The dialogue she created was highly teacher dominated and was generally limited to the minimum level necessary to convey an understanding of the task. One example of this was when she was preparing students to complete the movie review worksheet - a series of questions and writing directives that lead students to explore the elements of the movie, *The Karate Kid*. Mrs Bailey read the questions one at a time from the worksheet and then explained or put the question another way or called for an explanation from a student. For instance after reading out the first directive on the worksheet, give a brief description of the story line, she went on to say, "What's the story line? What is the movie about? You need to identify the problem in the movie." After then reading a question from the worksheet, "What is the moral of the movie?" She restated the question as, "What are you being told by the movie?" and then elaborated on its purpose with, "Everything

you watch, everything you read is telling you something. I want you to tell me what the movie told you.”

Mr Hamersley’s student / teacher dialogue also took place at the beginning of each lesson. Like Mrs Bailey, he strongly controlled the direction of the dialogue, but was a little more forthcoming in creating two-way interaction with students. His use of teacher / student talk was also more expansive and on one occasion it lasted for as long as 50 minutes. Mr Hamersley used these student / teacher dialogue sessions for the purpose of testing students’ knowledge as was demonstrated when he asked students about the features of a narrative text. He steered the students into recalling their understanding of the structure of a narrative text through questions:

What are the main features of a narrative?

What is the special thing about a narrative?

Can you identify the conflict and resolution of the following story?

He then went on to expand on the answers students gave through further explanation. In response to “What is special about it?” one student answered, “It has a resolution.” Mr Hamersley then went on to say, “Yes, a resolution at the end. When everything all comes together, something has gone wrong and is fixed up.” For Mr Hamersley another application of student / teacher talk involved the directing of students’ attention toward a particular topic. This was exemplified in the story summary lesson when he steered students towards thinking about fables and morals within fables through such questions as, “What are fables?” and “What is the moral of the fable?” Although Mr Hamersley’s

teacher/student talk contributed to topic knowledge and topic motivation, it was notably lacking in information about the skill or knowledge required to master the subsequent writing task. For instance, the conversation between Mr Hamersley and the students about the features of a narrative would have been of little help when it came to translating a narrative into a play script. Students would have been better served by being questioned about the features of direct and indirect speech. In another instance the conversation about the nature of fables did not contribute to the students' ability to summarise a designated fable.

Mrs McKenzie probably made the greatest use of teacher/student talk time because she used it for a variety of purposes associated with competency in completing the designated writing tasks. She initiated conversations with the class for short periods but at regular stages throughout lessons. One purpose for which Mrs McKenzie used teacher / student talk was to draw out and extend students' knowledge of the topic about which they were required to write. This was illustrated in the lesson that required students to write a list of strategies for responding to bullying. She questioned students on the topic and in so doing assisted them to recall experiences involving bullying and clarified their understanding of the issue. The writing task that followed called for students to apply the knowledge and understanding gained from the conversation. Another purpose for which Mrs McKenzie used student/ teacher talk was to revise the steps of a writing strategy that had previously been taught and one that was required for the impending writing task. For example, students had been working on energy research projects, a feature of which was the taking of notes

from a variety of informational sources. In conducting a note taking lesson, Mrs McKenzie commenced by questioning the students on the usual steps in note-taking and ensuring their understanding of them. The questioning and ensuing conversation were combined with examples given by the teacher and served to ensure students had a frame of reference for the note-taking component of their energy research projects.

9.4.8 Cognitive Demands

The level of intellectual skill required for the achievement of writing tasks was reasonably comparable between all classes with most tasks calling for no more than recall and comprehension. This meant, according to Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive behaviours (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) that students, as they engaged in the writing tasks set by the three teachers, were applying lower order thinking skills. There was some variation to this from class to class. Mrs McKenzie's students were given tasks that required them to apply higher level thinking on three occasions while Mr Hamersley's and Mrs Bailey's class were each given such tasks on one occasion.

In Mr Hamersley's class, the writing task that made higher cognitive demands on the students was that which required them to write a play script for the story *The Three Little Pigs*. In order to successfully convert the story line into a dialogue interposed with a narrative explanation, students had to use the more mentally demanding skill of *application*. They first had to recall and comprehend the

story and then write it in the form of a play script having regard to the strictures applying to that format.

In Mrs Bailey's class, the use of the higher-order thinking skill of *application* was also required on one writing task. On this occasion the writing of a narrative where the stipulation was to use a specific narrative writing structure that had been previously taught, made higher cognitive demands on the students. The lesson began with the students being asked to recall and explain the structural components of a narrative text. They then had to apply this knowledge as they wrote their story involving a bonsai plant. All the other writing tasks in Mrs Bailey's class called only for recall and comprehension.

In Mrs McKenzie's class, higher order thinking skills were used in three writing lessons. The note-taking writing lesson called for students to apply specific steps to a different writing event. The lesson where students wrote an explanation and that where they edited their draft descriptions also called for the transfer of previously learnt knowledge and skills to a new situation. The explanation task required students to apply their knowledge of an explanation text structure to the task of writing about some artwork previously completed. The editing task involved the students in the application of a method for enhancing the imagery of descriptive writing.

9.4.9 Purpose and Audience

The purpose of the writing tasks was given a different emphasis in Mrs McKenzie's class to that in the other two classes. In her class the students wrote texts for a variety of reasons and for different readerships; to create a reference list for themselves, to inform others in the school about a topic being studied, to explain the method used in producing art work so as to inform visitors to the classroom and to entertain fellow students with a descriptive passage. In the writing lessons there was a strong emphasis on the writing process and the requirement for students to write with the eventual audience in mind. The teacher's comments constantly reinforced the connection between the quality of their writing and the gratification of the eventual reader. This emphasis on social function did not abate when the writing lesson focused on developing a specific writing skill and the principle of writing to achieve a communicative purpose, ultimately involving a reader, continued to weave through these lessons. Though the emphasis was on quality, students were helped to understand how the skill involved would benefit the standard of communication.

In Mr Hamersley's class there was no obvious reference to the social or communicative purpose of the act of writing. Throughout writing lessons the focus was clearly on writing practice and development. Little recognition was given to readership beyond the teacher. Comments of the type, "You need to do this to be better at writing paragraphs" or "This is to prove you know the order it went in" served to reinforce this purpose. Students completed all writing tasks in their writing exercise books. Once the writing task was completed there was no

further reference to what the students had produced except on occasions when the teacher collected the work for marking. The teacher was the only person to read the students' writing.

In Mrs Bailey's class, the writing lessons usually consisted of tasks requiring students to write answers to sets of comprehension questions. The questions were answered on the worksheet provided and the teacher collected these at the conclusion of the lessons. Like Mr Hamersley's class, no communicative purpose was established and no link made between the writer and the reader. There seemed to be no established social purpose to the tasks.

There was one occasion in Mrs Bailey's class when she took a different approach to the task type and students were required to write a narrative. She provided a readership on this occasion by emphasizing to students that the narrative they wrote was to be included in their work portfolios for later viewing by parents. However, with this instruction, emphasis was placed on neat and decorative presentation rather than on the entertainment value of the narrative.

9.4.10 Student Choice

In none of the three classes were any of the three teachers at pains to ascertain student preferences in the choice of writing tasks, topics or procedures. Even had they been disposed to allowing students a high degree of choice, they were of course constrained by the requirements of the school programme; but even allowing for that, there was a high degree of control by the teachers in the

selection of tasks, topics and procedures. That is not to say that student wishes were totally disregarded or that all three teachers took exactly the same attitude toward the question of choice.

Mrs Bailey appeared to exercise the most stringent control. This may have been largely influenced by her attitude that her students were simply not interested in writing; that they saw no point in it. Perhaps her authoritative approach was based on a belief that absolute control was necessary to ensure that students made at least some progress in a subject that they would otherwise treat with disdain.

Mr Hamersley's attitude towards choice was more liberal than Mrs Bailey's but only marginally so. When he chose three stories for transposing into play scripts, he did at least allow the students to choose the one which they wished to adopt for this purpose. He also allowed them to choose whom they paired off with when a joint student effort was required. It was however, interesting that – like Mrs Bailey – he had a somewhat negative view of the students' attitude towards writing.

Mrs McKenzie appeared to allow her students the greatest element of choice albeit they could exercise it only within fairly tight parameters. She did consult them about their interests and allowed some choice; for instance on the selection of a particular source in the prescribed topic of energy and by allowing them a free hand in power point presentations.

The three classes varied in the level of independence given to students in carrying out the allotted tasks. In Mrs Bailey's students were required to carry out tasks independently from other students; that is, they were told what was to be done and were then required to set about individually completing and submitting their own written work. The teacher did not expect the students to work in collaboration with anyone else in completing the task. This was so whether writing the narrative, answering the movie review questions or completing the questions on the comprehension worksheets. Mr Hamersley and Mrs McKenzie generally maintained a balance between cooperative and independent work. Mr Hamersley's students were required to carry out the storyboard summary activity and the paragraph activity independently and unaided by others. Each student had to produce his / her own text. However, in the case of the character description and the play script task of Mr Hamersley's class each student was required to collaborate with another student on the production of a single written text. Mrs McKenzie's students worked independently on the artwork explanation, writing task and the two lessons which focused on explicit teaching of a writing skill – note taking and editing. On the other hand, students worked in collaboration with others on the energy reports and the list of strategies for responding to bullying.

The overriding characteristic of all three teachers was that they appeared to take the view that they were the best judges of student interests. In this they may well have been right but it would have been interesting to observe the outcomes had

they gone to some trouble to purposefully ascertain from the students themselves just what they liked and what they did not.

9.5 The Teachers' Instruction and Management

9.5.1 Teaching Strategies

The teachers involved in this study called on various teaching strategies as they conducted their writing lessons and worked towards achieving their lesson objectives. All three teachers adopted recitation, explanation and demonstration as the principal strategies and, while there were some shared characteristics, each employed them in different ways.

All three teachers used the teaching strategy of recitation in order to achieve one or more instructional goals in their lessons. In Mr Hamersley's case, these recitation sessions, some of which lasted for up to fifty minutes, functioned to draw out the students' understanding of, or focus their attention on, the subject of the writing task. They began with the teacher's questions and included elaboration by the teacher in response to students' answers. Both the questions and the elaborations served to control the direction and outcome of the conversations. In the lesson where the central task was the writing of a descriptive paragraph about a story character, the recitation session began with the teacher directing the conversation to assist students in their understanding of paragraphs by posing the questions, "What is the definition of a paragraph?" and "How would you show a paragraph in a piece of written work?" In one of the lessons where students continued to work on their play-script text, Mr Hamersley

began by questioning students regarding the complication element of a narrative. He sought to convey an understanding of this narrative element by asking the questions, “What is the part of the narrative that goes wrong?” and later, “What is the complication in *The Three Little Pigs*?” and finally, “What other stories can you remember and what is the complication?” The attempt to reach understanding was further served by his elaborating on students’ answers to his questions. For instance when he asked about the “part of the narrative that goes wrong,” he received the answer, “The resolution” so he went on to explain, “The resolution is at the end when everything works out like when the good guy wins or when good things happen at the end.” After much prodding and hinting (e.g. “It starts with C”) he achieved the desired answer (the complication) and he elaborated on it by saying, “Yes and its also known as a misunderstanding or the thing that goes wrong. It is when something goes wrong in the story.”

Mrs Bailey’s and Mrs McKenzie’s use of recitation was less protracted and while Mrs Bailey only ever used this strategy at the beginning of a lesson, Mrs McKenzie used it in small measures throughout the course of a lesson. In Mrs Bailey’ case recitation mostly served to ensure that students could interpret the questions on the comprehension worksheets that constituted the writing tasks. This is illustrated clearly in one of the worksheet lessons when she read each question out, for example, “write a description of the personality traits of the three characters from the movie”, and then by questioning students about the worksheet questions she satisfied herself that their understanding was adequate.

In this instance, “What do I mean by that? What are character traits?” were typical of the follow up questions.

Mrs McKenzie used recitation for various reasons (e.g. to develop students’ knowledge of a writing technique; to assess their knowledge about a specific writing genre or to explore a topic in preparation for the written task) but only ever applied this strategy for short periods (2 – 7 minutes). She did, however, employ it at regular intervals throughout her lessons. Mrs McKenzie’s purpose in using recitation was illustrated in the lesson that required students to produce a written explanation text. She began this lesson by asking questions which were intended to focus students on, and revise their knowledge of, the explanation text type; for example, “Does anyone remember one of the frameworks that we’ve done?” and “When are explanation texts used?” Having established the writing task and explained the different elements of the explanation text, she then set students to work on their own writing. Once students had reached a particular stage, she brought their work to a halt and then questioned them about the next stage before setting them to work again. The questions she asked created discussion that served to establish an understanding of the writing requirements as students addressed each element. For instance, throughout the course of the lesson the teacher raised the following questions and stimulated conversation:

The next step is the application part, what does this mean?

Can anyone think of what we’d say about our drawings in writing about the application?

Now, look at the next part, how could you start this paragraph? How can you say how the drawing affected you?

All three teachers used explanation as one approach to the delivery of their writing lessons but its use varied from teacher to teacher in both the frequency and purpose of in relation to lesson objectives. Mr Hamersley used the strategy of explanation in many lessons and on some occasions he accompanied it with a demonstration whereby an example of the writing task was written on the blackboard. His explanations, which were frequently given as he introduced the writing task, often focused on the page layout and visual features of the text rather than on clarifying the cognitive processes or skills required for completing the written text. For example when introducing the play-script writing task, Mr Hamersley explained,

What you are going to do is write your version of one of these stories. The rules are, basically you divide your page [as he is talking he demonstrates the setting out on the white board] so you have the characters names on the left hand side. You have the narrator who describes what happens [demonstrates]. So you've got a narrator who does all the talking so you don't have to have all the pigs or the wolf always talking. Now, the characters, you have their names here [demonstrates]. They are actually speaking. This is called direct speech [demonstrates a line of direct speech]. Make sure you keep the sentences short. Not too long don't go on and on. Now the other thing you need to do is put in sound effects...you use a two-centimetre margin in you language book. You write down the characters who start talking and you write down the direct speech. The rule is anything a person says goes in quotation marks.

Mr. Hamersley also used explanation concurrently with recitation in a way that served to evoke and clarify topic knowledge. On these occasions, his use of explanation allowed him to elaborate on the answers given in response to his questions. For instance, when questioning students about the structural components of a narrative he asked, “What is the part of the narrative that goes wrong? What’s that called?” After receiving the answer, “A disaster”, he went on to explain, “Yes it could be a disaster. It’s the resolution, at the end when everything works out like when the good guy wins or when good things happen at the end.”

Mrs Bailey used the explanation strategy less extensively but in a similar way to Mr Hamersley. Like Mr Hamersley, she used it at the beginning of a lesson, often in conjunction with the recitation strategy with the intention of establishing the students’ understanding of the nature of the writing task and of enhancing their ability to independently complete the task. Her use of the strategy in this way was illustrated in the lesson where the writing task called for students to consider and describe their physical and personal characteristics as they answered questions on a worksheet. Mrs Bailey explained, “...The first part of the sheet is writing about yourself. It is called Feeling Good About Yourself. She then went on to read each question from the worksheet and to elaborate on the responses required by each question. For instance she read aloud the question, “What are your positive physical characteristics?” and then she asked students, “What does it mean, physical characteristics?” When the students failed to produce an accurate answer she explained,

Not that kind of physical. What you look like, how you physically look, whether you are strong or you have long hair, nice eyes. What you like about yourself. One of the things I like about myself is that my hair grows really long. I like that. What of your appearance do you like? Think about it and name four things.

The writing task involving the writing of a narrative text was explained as follows,

...I am going to give you a plan that you need to do your narrative on but when you're planning you're not writing your story... This [sheet] is just for you to plan on...the only thing I am going to tell you about this is that it has to include in some shape or form your Bonsai plant... Your Bonsai needs to be part of your story. I do not expect your best copy on this. I expect a draft. You will then write up a good copy. Now a draft means you put down all your ideas and you move through it because it's a growing process.

Mrs McKenzie's also used the explanation strategy in combination with demonstration. This was a strong feature of her approach to the teaching of writing and part of her direct instruction technique. She used these strategies in more elaborate ways than did the other two teachers; applying them at various steps of her writing lessons, and for a variety of teaching purposes. At the commencement of a lesson, explanation served to establish an understanding of the writing task, the associated skills, the learning value of the task and the steps to be taken in achieving the learning outcome. The following explanation began her lesson on proof reading;

Today we are going to try and make our writing a little bit more interesting for the reader...you are going to learn to fix up the writing you've done before. That's called proof reading. And when you proofread your work you attempt to make it more interesting for the reader...that's your responsibility as a writer. It's your responsibility to make the stuff you write interesting for other people to read. Otherwise people really don't want to read it...I have photocopied some of your writing. We are now going to develop some of your proof reading skills. You are going to re-read it and perhaps change sentences around or add words to make it more interesting.

At other stages of the lesson, explanation and demonstration functioned to develop students' understanding of, and ability to apply, the processes and skills required to complete the writing task. For instance, the proof reading lesson went on to involve Mrs McKenzie using a sample text to demonstrate how to use adjectives in descriptive writing where the goal was to make the writing more interesting. She began by stating, "This is Daniel's piece of writing. He uses some adjectives to describe things but we can still fix it up more." She then read Daniel's text identified the nouns and demonstrated how adjectives could be placed before these so as to make the overall text "more interesting". This demonstration had been preceded by an explanation of the different types of adjectives. Her lesson delivery was highly structured. The writing tasks were broken into a series of small stages where the teaching was quite separate from the practice which accompanied by a close monitoring of each student's progress. In the proof reading lesson, Mrs McKenzie provided students with opportunity to master one step of the task before she addressed the next. After circling the nouns on Daniel's writing, she had the students do the same with their own writing. She then spoke about the addition of adjectives before

requiring the students to practise this themselves. This approach provided a good basis for students to master the skills associated with a writing task.

Mrs McKenzie was the only teacher to use discussion as a teaching technique. She used it in the lesson on bullying to assist students to develop their knowledge of the topic before being required to write about it. After introducing this lesson, Mrs McKenzie placed students in small groups to explore together their ideas about the topic. She asked them to discuss and make notes about “all the different things you could possibly do if you are being bullied.” Although the teacher set the agenda for the discussion group, it was the students themselves rather than the teacher who controlled the conversation as they interacted with each other. The discussion lasted for about twelve minutes and during this time the teacher walked around and listened to the different groups as they talked. She occasionally contributed a comment to a discussion.

All three teachers used some variation of the strategy of guided writing; that is, they set the writing task and then while the class completed it they helped individual students or groups of students as the need arose. Although all used this strategy there was some difference in the way each did so. Mr Hamersley used it in all of his writing lessons. After establishing the writing task, he walked around the room observed students at work and stopped to assist one on one, those who were experiencing difficulties. Often students would put their hands up for assistance but Mr Hamersley also sought out students who he considered to be struggling with some aspect of the task.

Mrs McKenzie was equally as steadfast in her guidance of students as they carried out their writing. However, her students were less reliant on her assistance during this independent writing time than were those of Mr Hamersley. It would seem Mrs McKenzie's custom of breaking up the writing task into manageable chunks supported the students in independently and capably carrying out the writing. Mr Hamersley set writing assignments in their entirety, while Mrs McKenzie set only small sections of a writing assignment at a time. In so doing, she made efforts to ensure the associated skill and steps of completion were well understood by the students before they were set the task of completing it. The students were therefore less in need of her guidance further down the track. However, she still walked around the room and observed students as they carried out their writing. She assisted students when necessary though this tended to focus on an identified few as she closely monitored their progress with the task.

Mrs Bailey used a rather restricted form of the strategy of guided writing in some of her writing lessons. Like Mr Hamersley, she set the whole of the writing assignment at the beginning of the lesson and allocated the rest of the lesson for students to complete it. She moved amongst the students providing help as needed. However, this assistance was generally restricted to achieving task understanding rather than to improving writing skill. She assisted students only when they sought it, with interpreting the questions on the worksheet which constituted the written task.

In some writing lessons even this level of assistance was not provided. Mrs Bailey simply gave the writing assignment to the students and without any explanation she gave a directive for them to set about completing it. That this was to be done without her guidance and support was clearly conveyed by her switching on music and then engaging in administrative tasks at her desk. The music itself played at a volume that was such as to render effective communication between teacher and student extremely difficult. Despite the obstacle, some students occasionally sought Mrs Bailey's assistance and took their questions to her at her desk though most vacillated between working on the writing task, singing along with the music or carrying out a loud conversation with fellow students. A high level of noise, unrelated to the task at hand was therefore a feature of these independent writing periods.

Both Mr Hamersley and Mrs McKenzie used the strategy of cooperative learning whereby students worked on the joint completion of a writing assignment. In Mrs McKenzie's class, this strategy was used for just one of the set writing tasks; the energy research project. In carrying out these projects students, working in pairs together explored and wrote about a chosen aspect of the energy topic with the ultimate writing outcome being a report in the form of a power point presentation. In these cooperative learning situations Mrs McKenzie's assumed a less up-front, primary teaching role than was her custom in most other writing lessons. Instead, she worked more unobtrusively in contributing to students' success by means of guiding questions, comments and suggestions as the need arose. Occasionally, when she noticed a number of students exhibiting a similar

structural problem in their writing, she gave explicit instruction to the whole class about the way in which the common problem should be addressed.

Mr Hamersley used the strategy of cooperative writing for the task that required students to write a play script. This single assignment took the students six lessons to complete. It began with the students listening to, and discussing, three authors' adaptations of the story of *The Three Little Pigs* and then saw them working in pairs to re-work one of the stories into a play script. (As was the case in Mrs McKenzie's class, two students had to work interdependently to achieve this writing outcome.) As in other writing lessons, Mr Hamersley took on a supportive role and moved about the classroom assisting students as the need arose. However, the great majority of students had difficulty with the essential skill of transforming the oral narrative into a play script. Mr Hamersley had to work relentlessly throughout all six lessons in his advisory role as he sought to impart understanding of the mechanics of this writing task. One problem experienced by the students as they worked in pairs was the difficulty in making cooperative decisions about how to do the task and what exactly to write. As a result, students either completed very little writing even given the almost six hours allowed for the task or they separated from their partners and pursued the task independently.

9.5.2 Classroom Management

A variety of different management techniques were employed by the three teachers as each sought to gain and maintain student attention and direct their

behaviour over the course of the writing lessons. The techniques which appeared to be most relied upon were reprimand, look/pause/prompt, penalty and praise and reward. Other techniques such as establishing a presence, time out and discussion were also used but to a much lesser extent. Each teacher called upon the different techniques in different combinations and each used them to different degrees. Mr Hamersley relied mainly on look/pause/prompt, reprimand and establishing a presence most often as he sought to guide student behaviour. On a few occasions he used time out and praise and reward. Mrs Bailey relied heavily on reprimand. She used it frequently and most often in combination with penalty or logical consequence. She rarely used other techniques when dealing with the classroom behaviour. Mrs McKenzie took a different approach and most often sought to affect students' behaviour through the use of praise to reinforce desirable behaviour and work habits. She used reprimand but usually in a way that communicated polite request for a change in behaviour as well as disapproval.

Mr Hamersley most frequently attended to the regulation of student behaviour during the lesson introduction phase rather than during other stages of his lessons. He generally relied upon look/pause/prompt and reprimand. The introductory stage of his writing lessons was usually protracted and called for students to focus their attention on his questions and explanations as he sought to develop topic knowledge or to outline the writing task. His behaviour management strategies were generally applied in response to student inattentiveness while he was talking. As he explained a task or questioned

students on a topic he would suddenly stop and admonish an inattentive student through a change in tone and volume and a comment such as, “Justin, you are not focused on me mate. Stop making that strange noise and focus on what I’m saying.” At other times he would pause and glare at the inattentive student until such time as the student realised he/she was under scrutiny, at which time he reminded the student of the behaviour he expected. This comment was simple and direct; for instance, “I need you to look at me my friend”.

In attempting to refocus a wayward student’s attention, Mr Hamersley’s rarely raised his voice. His reprimands and behaviour prompts were invariably issued with a strong but calm voice and in a tone that, whilst authoritative and indicating annoyance, did not display any loss of control. Mr Hamersley often imbued humour or sarcasm into his reprimands or disciplinary comments. For instance, after admonishing a group of boys for talking when they were required to listen to him explain a task, he made the comment, “I’m seriously starting to think that I’ve asked you to cut your arm off without anaesthetic”. On another occasion, after he had repeatedly addressed the interruptions of students as he read a story, he addressed them with the sarcastic comment, “I could ask you in English or perhaps you would understand more clearly if I asked you in chipmunk language.”

Mr Hamersley was notably more tolerant of higher levels of off-task behaviour during the next stage of his lessons when students were working independently in carrying out the set writing assignment. During this time as he walked around

the room assisting students, off-task behaviour was often left unaddressed. Occasionally Mr Hamersley used establishing a presence to affect this off-task behaviour. He did so by positioning himself in close proximity to a student or group of students who were off-task or misbehaving. This usually resulted in restoring the desired behaviour from the offending students. Although when he moved away the students often resumed their offending behaviour.

Mrs Bailey also responded most often to students' inattentiveness during lesson introductions when she was engaged in conveying information relevant to the writing assignment. She employed some of the same strategies as Mr Hamersley but the manner in which did so was different. She relied primarily on reprimands delivered using a loud and angry voice and typically involving comments such as "There is too much noise", "Don't call out" and "Put your hand up." Comments such as these were delivered incessantly throughout the lesson introductions and continued, although less frequently, for the remainder of the lessons. She issued reprimands in response to students calling out comments unrelated to the lesson, the general eruption of talk amongst students and other off-task behaviour such as doodling, playing with an object, daydreaming or inappropriate conversation.

In reproaching wayward students, Mrs Bailey quite often used sarcasm, which often tended to ridicule or denigrate. An example of this was the comment addressed to a student who had loudly groaned when a writing task was

explained; “That’s not necessary John. I know you are going to need to work and I know that’s a bit radical.”

Mrs Bailey frequently combined reprimand with the additional management strategy of penalty though this often involved only a warning or threat of punishment. For instance an inappropriate behaviour sometimes resulted in a students’ name being written on the board with an accompanying statement typically, “Next time you will be on scab duty at lunch time.” or when the threat of punishment was directed to the whole class; “Gentlemen, there is too much noise...if I need to keep you in here at lunch time I will and you will finish it off then,” or more specifically, “Gentlemen, I am trying to talk to you. If you’re expecting to go to the interschool, I would be thinking very strongly of your behaviour at the moment”.

Mrs Bailey used look/ pause/prompt on some occasions when needing to gain the attention of a distracted student. At these times she would stop talking and focus on the inattentive student, waiting for him to attend to the lesson. However, she was often content to simply ignore off-task behaviour or talk louder so as to be heard over the students’ din.

Mrs Bailey’s approach to classroom discipline was characterised by inconsistency within and between lessons and amongst different students. She would often let a particular form of misbehaviour pass without consequence but then issue a reprimand or penalty for the same behaviour on the next occasion.

Sometimes, as a result of misbehaviour, she would issue one or more students with a warning of a possible penalty whereas at other times, when confronted with the same misdemeanour, she would simply apply a punishment without warning. Mrs Bailey's behaviour management techniques were often ineffective in achieving the desired behavioural change. Many students displayed little concern about the reprimands or penalties which were meted out.

Mrs McKenzie's use of behaviour management strategies was notably different in that, unlike the other two teachers, her most oft-used strategy was praise rather than reprimand. She seemed to take any opportunity which presented itself, to praise commendable behaviour; for instance, attentiveness and task engagement, motivation to the task, individual student effort, good work habits and writing quality. Mrs McKenzie's use of praise for guiding student behaviour reflected a student / teacher relationship of respect and student empowerment as typified by statements like, "You really are making good choices" and "Thank you very much for staying on task".

Although praise was the most dominant strategy employed by Mrs McKenzie it was not the only one. She did rely on reprimand or the threat of penalty in some instances but rather than display anger, she used a tone of voice that reflected her disappointment or disbelief in having to deliver the penalty or reprimand at all. In one lesson where one student was not listening to another student reading out his writing, she commented, "Alex, sh! You need to listen to your mates when they're talking and you need to listen to me when I talk. That's important.

[addressing class] If I have to speak to Alex again, unfortunately, I am going to have to put his name on the board and he would have to collect rubbish at lunchtime.” Her voice was calm and the tone reflected authority and regret.

A technique unique to Mrs McKenzie’s class and one that characterised her respectful manner in dealing with students, was that of request as an alternative to reprimand. In instances where students were inattentive or off- task Mrs McKenzie would deliver a statement that appealed to an established sense of teamwork. During a lesson that was fraught with interruptions and that involved students working on a difficult task she responded to students’ unsettled behaviour with, “Gentlemen, please! We’re getting there. I need you to keep paying attention”.

The strategy of praise was used infrequently and irregularly during Mr Hamersley’s lessons and hardly at all in Mrs Bailey’s lessons. Mr Hamersley’s use of praise served to indicate his approval of students’ behaviour or their answers to his questions. He would use acknowledging comments such as, “Good”, “Well done” “Excellent” or “Very clever”. He was occasionally more explicit in the comments he made and clearly identified the behaviour he wished to acknowledge. For example, “Jack, I really like the way you are listening mate. You are looking at me and you are answering my questions.”

9.6 Adam

It would have to be said that the different gender composition between the Year 5 and Year 6 classes appeared to have been quite irrelevant to Adam’s attentiveness levels as did the differences that existed in relation to the nature of writing lessons, and the teacher’s pedagogical and management strategies. Moreover, the different classroom contexts did not appear to impact on Adam’s writing skill development or on his attitude to writing.

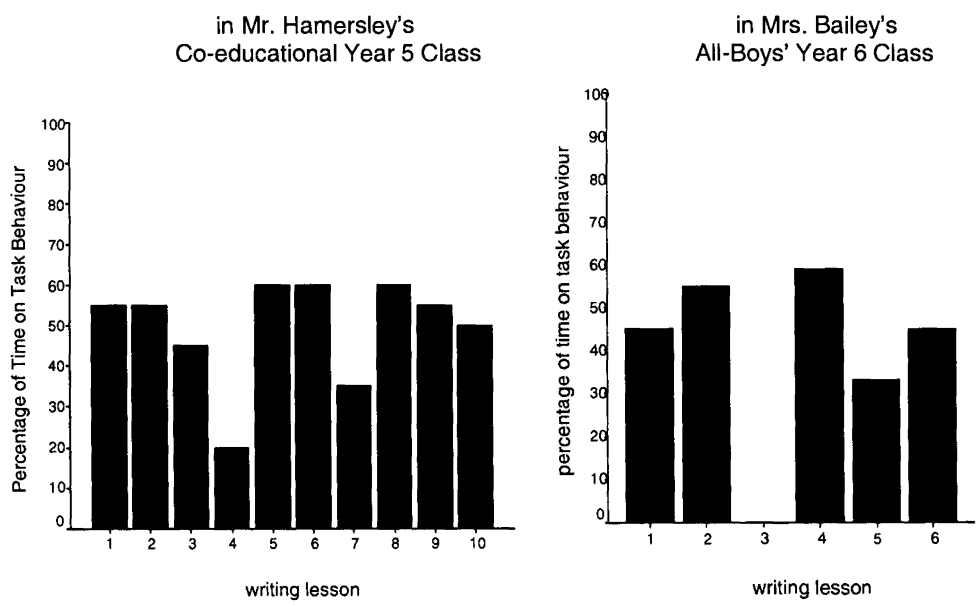


Figure 8. Adam’s Time-on-Task Behaviour during Writing Lessons.

Adam’s standard of attentiveness remained low over Mr. Hamersley’s coeducational class and Mrs. Bailey’s all-boys class. Any fluctuations ranged between poor and ordinary; between 20% and 60% in Mr. Hamersley’s class and

between nil and 60% in Mrs. Bailey's class. Unlike the class as a whole Adam's attentiveness did not peak during Mrs. McKenzie's class although in her class Adam was in attendance for only one of the observed lessons and in this instance he was attentive for 45% of the lesson.

Adam's standard of written expression in Year 5 was poor and his writing continued to display the same poor qualities in each of the Year 6 classes. In Year 5 he lacked fundamental knowledge in sentence and text construction, had a limited writing vocabulary and had only a tentative grasp on the requirements of punctuation and the conventions of standard spelling. These deficiencies in the quality of Adam's written expression prevailed in the two Year 6 classes.

Adam clearly displayed a negative attitude, not just to written expression but also to most aspects of academic school life. His teachers spoke of his poor self-esteem in relation to academic ability and the contribution this has made to his negativity toward class learning tasks. Adam's dislike towards and disinterest in school was expressed resolutely on the three different occasions he was interviewed. In Year 6 his comment was, "I don't want to come to school. I can't be bothered. I don't like school because I don't like sitting in class for 6 hours."

It would of course be unwise to read too much into this single case study but it does indicate that all children do not respond equally to different stimuli. Adam was a 'student at educational risk'. He was working at an academic standard

below the level of that expected for his age and years of schooling. He was experiencing obvious difficulties with the work requirements of the Year 5 and Year 6 classrooms and according to his teachers, was “capable of a lot more.” Adam displayed behavioural problems that were made apparent in both the classroom and the playground. During lessons, Adam regularly disregarded the work requirements as set by the teacher and instead carried out other activities such as talking to fellow students, wandering the classroom, doodling or fidgeting, although Mrs. McKenzie spoke of Adam’s willingness to put an effort into tasks where the teacher worked one-on-one with him. In the playground Adam’s antisocial behaviour involved swearing, vandalism and graffiti, disruption of games and aggressiveness towards other students. It seems that whatever was happening in the three classes in which Adam participated during the course of this study, it was not affecting his attentiveness during writing lessons, nor his learning and development in written expression attitude to writing lessons and school in general. As a ‘student at risk’ Adam obviously required an altogether different intervention and teaching approach that were specific to his particular situation and that stemmed from an understanding of the complexities of his individual academic and social needs.

9.7 Conclusions

Mrs. McKenzie achieved higher attentiveness levels in her all-boys class than did either Mrs. Bailey when she instructed the same class a term earlier or Mr. Hamersley when he taught the boys in the co-educational class the previous year.

Mrs. McKenize's writing lessons, although similar in some ways to those of the other two teachers, also contained many significant differences. These differences covered aspects of lesson design and teaching, and management approach. In contrast to Mrs. Bailey, her attitude towards boys' capacity to learn and to progress in writing was also altogether more positive. Her expectations for boys were equivalent to those which she held for girls. Mrs. McKenzie did acknowledge some variations to her lessons in order to accommodate the specific learning needs of boys but also emphasized that she maintained a teaching style that she found to be effective for improving writing outcomes for students regardless of their gender.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This study was prompted by the concerns expressed in recent times about the lack of achievement by boys in school literacy. It focuses on one school's attempt to address the apparent problem by instituting all-boys classes in the final two years of primary school.

This school came to the view that, by establishing single gender classes, boys would be better served because teachers would be able to design learning tasks and adopt teaching methods that were directed specifically to the needs of boys. This decision was based on the implicit proposition that boys as a group were different to girls as a group; that they learn differently, have different interests and would therefore benefit from a different teaching approach.

This school's perception that boys generally have different learning requirements does of course enjoy some support in the literature. For instance, one viewpoint stemming from the literature suggests that because of brain development patterns boys have less capacity for verbal and linguistic cognitive tasks (Moir and Jessel, 1989; Biddulph, 1997; Springer and Deutsch, 1998; Soderman, Chikara, Hsiu-Ching and Kuo, 1999).

The literature is, however, by no means unanimous on this question. There are those who consider this viewpoint cautiously as they deem it to evolve from data that is ambiguous and inconsistent (Brody, 1999; Swann, 1992; Halpern, 1986 cited in Swann, 1992; Reed, 1999; Maccoby, 1990; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998).

There is another perspective which suggests that the socialization process through which boys learn about their masculine identity, impacts negatively on their engagement in classroom English and therefore their literacy learning; that is, because the activities and dialogue of the English classroom are more strongly identified with female characteristics, boys by virtue of their masculinity, tend to distance themselves from these practices (Martino, 1998; Millard, 1997; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Gilbert, 2000).

There is also a school of thought that holds that physiological or sociological difference there may be between boys and girls, boys' achievement in school literacy is primarily influenced by the teaching process. The view is that certain lesson designs, learning tasks and teaching strategies will not effectively accommodate the learning needs of boys but that others will work successfully in engaging boys and improving their literacy learning outcomes (Rowe, 2002; Rowe and Rowe, 1999; Martino, 1994; Millard, 1997; Wilhelm and Smith, 2002; Barrs, 2000).

In pursuing the question of the literacy achievement of boys this study focused on student attentiveness during writing lessons as it has been well established that student attention and engagement with the learning process is fundamental to learning and academic achievement (Burden and Byrd, 1999; Anderson, 1984; Rinne, 1984; Good and Brophy, 1997).

The study's initial focus at the school in question was to determine whether for a particular group of boys, attentiveness levels during writing lessons increased when learning took place in an all-boys class rather than in a co-educational class. In addition the study was designed to build up an understanding of the characteristics of each learning context (the coeducational class and the all-boys classes) in order to gain an appreciation of any other factors which might contribute to variations in attentiveness levels.

The study also involved the examination of one male student's experience in the coeducational and all-boys learning contexts in order to ascertain whether any conclusions derived from the assessment of the classes generally were equally applicable to an individual student.

It was originally intended to examine the individual experiences of four boys but with the departure of three of these boys from the school after Year 5, this study was unfortunately limited to just the one student.

The principal research questions of this study were:

- Do middle primary male students in classroom writing lessons exhibit higher time-on-task behaviour when learning occurs in a single gender class instead of a coeducational class?
- If there is a shift in attention are there factors other than gender composition which may contribute to the shift?

In addressing these questions the study involved:

- The measurement of boys' attentiveness levels during a series of writing lessons in the Year 5 co-educational class and in the Year 6 all-boys class in the first term of the following year and again in the second term when there was a change in teacher. (The opportunity which presented itself to observe the all-boys class under the control of two different teachers proved to be of great value as it facilitated a comparison of quite different teaching approaches in the same all-boys class);
- Observation of the teaching approaches in terms of lesson design, pedagogy and classroom management which were taken by the teacher in the three different classes;
- Observation of the attentiveness, general behaviour and writing achievements of one particular boy in each of the three classes.
- Interviews with the three classroom teachers, the school principal and the focus male student.

- Administration of the Writing Attitude Survey to the boys in Year 5 and again the following year in Year 6.

10.2 Conclusions

An upswing in attentiveness levels will not necessarily follow from the establishment of an all-boys' class.

The attention levels of the boys in this study did not improve when they moved from the Year 5 co-educational class to the Year 6 all-boys' class in the first term of Year 6. Because researchers of both a sociological point of view (Martino, 1998; 2001; Millard, 1997; Maynard and Lowe, 1999) and a teaching point of view (Wilhelm and Smith 2002; Rowe, 2002; Rowe and Rowe, 1999) advocate that there are unique requirements for boys literacy learning, the grouping of boys together for literacy teaching would at first seem to be an appropriate strategy. However, this study indicates that it is mistaken to assume that an improvement in lesson engagement and learning outcomes will automatically follow merely because boys are located in a single gender class. Other factors associated with the classroom context in the case involved in this study were more powerful.

It is significant that the attention levels of the boys involved in this study did improve markedly when a new teacher took over the Year 6 all-boys' class in the second term, suggesting that whatever were the differences between the first and second teacher in this class, they affected attentiveness. In fact, there were two

important areas of difference. Firstly, the more effective teacher used an altogether different approach to the teaching of writing and to the management of the class. In addition, she held a positive attitude toward the teaching of boys and high expectations for their achievement of learning outcomes.

Attentiveness levels are influenced by the methods used by the teacher.

Although it is not possible to be definitive about the particular aspects of teaching which had the greatest effect on attentiveness, the boys in this study were more responsive to a teaching approach that incorporated:

- direct teaching where concepts and skills were explicitly taught by the teacher using small steps and where each small step begins with the demonstration and explanation and follows with closely monitored practice.
- short bursts of independent work which were followed by teacher feedback as to success.
- an overview at the beginning of lessons where the students were provided with information about lesson goals and direction of, and reasons for the lesson.
- writing assignments which held significance for boys (tasks need to cover topics which boys can personally relate to rather than those which are abstract or disconnected from their lives).
- an audience for the writing that boys completed (this provides the motive for students to learn new skills and to better their writing by making the necessary improvements and changes).

These findings strongly correlate with the research of Rowe (2002) and the NZ Education Office (1999) which highlights elements of a teaching approach that

potentially yields greater classroom participation by boys. The optimal lesson attributes identified by them included highly structured lessons characterised by the delineation of a set of explicit standards for the completion of a task, the establishment of succinct work targets, the application of regular but short-term work sessions rather than long unmonitored sessions and the use of immediate and specific student feedback about task achievement and degree of success. Similar conclusions about lesson design have resulted from other investigations in this area (Rowe and Rowe, 1999; Rowe, 2002; Wilhelm and Smith, 2002; Buckingham, 1999).

The conclusion of this study about those aspects of teaching that were effective in engaging boys in writing lessons is further supported by the work of Wilhelm (2002), Martino (1998) and Simpson (1996). They found that boys are more motivated with literacy tasks where a clear social purpose is evident and where the tasks have a direct correlation to their immediate lives. Further backing comes from the research of Martino (2001), Gambell and Hunter (2000), Barrs (2000), Love and Hamston (2001) and Millard (1997) where results indicated that boys have a clear preference for expository texts and that the use of such texts in literacy lessons more fully engages boys.

The boys in this study were also more responsive when the management techniques involved:-

- acknowledgement and explicit clarification of the positive behaviour, work habits, effort and learning progress demonstrated by boys.

- a firm but respectful manner.
- positive expectation for co-operative behaviour and diligent work habits from students. This also includes a teacher's expectation that the students have the capacity to carry out the learning tasks and succeed in achieving the learning outcomes.
- establishment of a working environment that emphasises the notion of teamwork and support of each other.
- consistency in the standards of behaviour expected and in the methods used for dealing with students' inappropriate or off-task behaviour.

Of course the efficacy of the outlined teaching and management strategies are not necessarily confined to the teaching of boys. Although the Year 6 teacher in this study who secured high attentiveness levels in her writing lessons, voiced the opinion that the teaching of boys did not require an approach that was fundamentally different to that taken for girls, she also said that she did incorporate a few special practices when teaching writing lessons to an all-boys class. She gave the following instances:

- opportunity for boys to talk before they begin writing
- the avoidance of too much group work
- teaching time spent building up writing skills
- keep lessons or steps within lessons short
- begin the lesson by outlining the end point

All-boys' classes, with their potential to create a secure and contented work environment may have an influence on boys' attentiveness.

Although it is not possible to gauge the degree to which these conditions are better for the purpose of attentiveness, this study has shown that without the presence of girls there is the opportunity to establish an environment where boys can discuss issues of personal significance, learn to nurture caring friendships and work as a team in supporting each other. Providing the teacher can take advantage of this environment, it can provide the platform for a greater willingness on the part of boys to attend to lessons and so improve their learning outcomes.

Research has identified some patterns of difference between girls and boys in class. Girls' behaviour is said to be usually characterised by cooperation and conformity, sitting still, ease with reflective talk and emotional demonstration and contentment with passive, open ended tasks (Alloway and Gilbert, 1998; Gilbert, 1997; Barrs, 2000; Gambell and Hunter, 2000). Furthermore, the research proposes that boys, due to the social requirements associated with being male, behave in ways that are positioned as opposite to girls. Accordingly, behaviours such as rebelliousness, activity, bravado, emotional aloofness and the shunning of reflective talk are often adopted by boys (Martino, 1998; Millard, 1997; Alloway and Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Gilbert, 2000; Beynon, 2002; Young, 2000; Webb and Singh, 1998).

Both of the Year 6 teachers involved in this study expressed a strong belief in the potential of all-boys classes to enhance the social and emotional development of boys. They saw an absence of girls in the class as reducing the social restrictions on boys and therefore allowing less inhibited emotional expression and less restrictive social behaviour. Mrs McKenzie, the Year 6 teacher who achieved higher levels of attentiveness, appeared to take greater advantage of this opportunity than Mrs Bailey. Although this was primarily evident in her approach to behaviour management, it was also apparent in some aspects of her lesson design. Through her clear setting of behavioural boundaries, her consistent use of explanation and praise and her sincerity when interacting with students, she established a learning environment that was characterised by security and contentment. Her male students not only attended attentively to lessons but appeared at ease in carrying out tasks and in expressing their opinions. Their behaviour within lessons reflected mutual respect and cooperation. With regard to lesson design, Mrs McKenzie took the opportunity to draw on the students' sense of security in the all-boys' environment. She effectively dealt with topics of significance to boys, such as bullying, where she successfully called for boys to express their feelings about this topic and contribute their thoughts and ideas at all stages throughout the lessons.

The teacher's attitude is critical to boys' participation.

Interestingly, although the two teachers of the Year 6 all-boys' classes were strongly of the view that an all-boys class created a better setting for the teaching

of boys than did a co-educational class, only one of them held a positive view about boys and learning, particularly the learning of writing. She believed that boys were just as adept at learning as girls and saw no reason why their academic achievements should not be as good. Her approach to teaching and her expectation that boys were well able to maintain high levels of attentiveness reflected this attitude.

The teacher who displayed a negative attitude, thought that boys had an inherent dislike for learning about writing. Moreover, she believed that boys lacked the aptitude to succeed in writing and that girls would always do better in this area than boys. In her view they were simply not receptive to learning literacy because they needed to be more active. Her view that they were naturally poor in concentrating on language tasks led her to place a low priority on aspects such as grammar and punctuation. Her approach to teaching and her effort to secure the boys' attention in lessons reflected this attitude. It would be paradoxical if a teacher who held such a negative attitude towards boys and learning, was able to impart knowledge effectively to an all-boys' class.

It must of course be noted that the proposition that boys are inherently unreceptive to the learning of language does find some support in the research. This research suggests that boys' brains are not organised for language and that females will naturally do better at language based tasks (Springer and Deutsch, 1998; Moir and Jessel, 1989) implying that little can be done to change literacy learning outcomes for boys. However, other researchers have argued that these

studies are inconsistent and the conclusions speculative (Brody, 1999; Swann, 1992; Halpern, 1986 cited in Swann, 1992; Reed, 1999; Maccoby, 1990; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998) or limited in that they do not consider the effect of socialisation on boys' preference for certain tasks (Brody, 1999; Swann, 1992; Miller and Costello, 2001; Udry, 2000).

What may be true about the influences on attentiveness levels of boys generally, is not necessarily true in respect of every individual boy.

Whilst the boys in general showed improved attentiveness levels when taught writing by the second Year 6 teacher, the individual focus student did not. However, the data regarding his participation in this class is extremely lean as he was present for only one of the observed lessons. What is clear is that he was a “student at educational risk” who required an altogether different teaching and discipline approach to that taken for the class in general. He displayed very poor writing skills and he had progressed only minimally in all aspects of English as well as other learning areas of the school curriculum. Strong family and social problems were noticeably present. He clearly required a different more individualised teaching and management approach to that which he was getting; one that took into account his unique academic and social situation.

The research of Rowe (2002) emphasises the quality of good teaching as being measured by the way a teacher can continually vary strategies, methods and organizational factors to cater for the differences and individual learning needs of the students in a class. While difference due to gender is one factor that may

affect a student's lesson engagement and learning, other factors need also to be considered. The learning needs and instructional requirements of groups of students or individuals can differ due to factors of learning style, social, cultural or language background and previous school experience and achievement. These different factors influencing an individual student's capacity to reach his/her learning potential must be taken into account in designing lessons for a class of students. The competent teacher uses individual needs as a catalyst to design a variety of learning experiences, and uses understanding of these many factors to inform classroom practice.

10.3 Limitations of the Study

The extent to which the findings of this study can be applied to other settings or generalized to a bigger population is limited because of the following factors:

- The research was carried out in only one school and three classes. Because of this, the results may have been influenced by conditions unique to this particular school, notably the social, economic and cultural characteristics of this school community. These conditions may have played a role and variations, which would no doubt be found in other schools, may produce different results.
- A strong feature of the original study design was the examination of the experiences and attentiveness of four individual boys' in the different classroom settings. The four boys were identified, attentiveness measures

were gathered and information about their experiences collected as they each participated in the Year 5 coeducational class. However, two of these boys moved to another school and another shifted into a Year 6 co-educational class the following year. This aspect of the study was then restricted to the examination of the experiences of only one boy.

10.4 Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study illuminate a number of issues and bring to rise further questions. This has led to the following suggestions for teaching practice and recommendations for further investigations.

- As a single strategy grouping boys together in order to teach them is unlikely to improve attentiveness levels and therefore academic outcomes for boys. Other factors need to be in play. These factors include the lesson design, teaching and management methods and the teacher's attitude to boys.
- If all-boys classes are to benefit boys it is necessary that they are taught by a teacher who views boys in a positive light and who has high expectations for their capacity to learn and progress and to fully engage in the lessons of the classroom and the pedagogical and behaviour management skills required to secure their engagement in learning tasks.

This study has been confined to the examination of attentiveness, writing lessons and all-boys classes. While it has resulted in some interesting findings it has also given rise to further questions. Additional studies could possibly support teachers and teacher educators in better understanding how to assist boys in progressing in literacy and in achieving their potential. The following suggestions are made:

- An examination of the beliefs held by teachers about boys' capacity and willingness to learn to be good writers.
- An examination of the correlation between a teachers' attitude toward boys and the choices made about how and what to teach them in writing.
- An examination of teachers' preparedness in teaching students in general to write.
- An examination of the policies and practices at both the school and classroom level for assisting students who are at risk of academic failure.

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APPENDIX A

LETTERS TO SCHOOL, TEACHERS AND PARENTS
and
CONSENT FORMS

Janet Fellowes
Edith Cowan
University
Pearson St
Churchlands WA 6010

Principal
[REDACTED] Primary School

Dear

I am writing to request your school's participation in a research project on boys and literacy which I propose to undertake as part of my Master of Education Degree course at Edith Cowan University.

The project aims to examine and measure the level of attention in a boys-only classroom during writing lessons. It would involve two visits per week to a year 5 classroom for up to five weeks during term 4 of 2002 and to a year 6 classroom during term 1 of 2003.

These visits would be made during writing lessons to enable me to observe the classroom environment and teaching practices. Classroom activities would be video taped on several occasions.

I would also specifically observe the levels of attentive behaviour of four particular boys as they participate in writing lessons. I would want to interview these boys and the class teachers. I would also like to interview you, as school principal to gather some background information into the schools programme of boys-only classes. Each of the interviews proposed should take no more than thirty minutes.

The school, teacher and students would all remain anonymous in any publications resulting from my research unless specific approval was given for nominated exceptions at a later date.

I sincerely hope that you are able to give your consent to this project. I believe that it will contribute to a greater understanding of pupil attention issues in your single gender upper primary classes.

Please contact me on [REDACTED] if you would like to discuss this project or any aspect of it. If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person you may contact Prof. Max Angus on 9370 6399

If you are happy for the school to participate would you kindly complete the attached consent form?

Yours sincerely

Janet FELLOWES
B.Ed. Dip. Tch (Primary)

**INFORMED CONSENT
TO RESEARCH PROJECT, “BOYS, LITERACY AND ATTENTION”
TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY JANET FELLOWES**

I having read information about the project and received satisfactory answers to my questions, agree to the participation of [redacted] Primary School

I understand that all data recorded during the course of the project including any video tapes, will be securely stored and will be available only to the project researcher. I also understand that the identity of the school and the names of teachers and students will not be disclosed in any publication associated with the research unless written approval has been given in respect of specific cases.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent, without prejudice, at any time.

School:

Principal’s Name:

Signature:**Date:**

Investigator’s Signature:

Janet Fellowes
Edith Cowan University
Pearson Street
Churchlands WA 6010

September 15th 2002

Dear Parents

I am writing to invite you to discuss with your child the opportunity to participate in a research project that I propose to undertake at [REDACTED] Primary School. The project which your school supports, will be part of my Master of Education Degree course at Edith Cowan University. The focus of the project will be to observe the activities and environment of the classroom during regular writing lessons and observe students' attention during these lessons.

The project would involve two visits per week to the classroom for up to five weeks in each of term four 2002 and term one 2003. During this time observations of the classroom environment and measurements of student attention would be made. These classroom visits would be video taped on several occasions.

I am requesting your permission for your child to participate in the videotaping. You retain the right to withdraw your child from the project at any time. Children who do not have permission to be filmed or from whom permission slips are not returned will participate in the class, but will be seated so that they do not appear in the video. The school, teachers and students would all remain anonymous in any publication resulting from my research unless specific approval is given for nominated exceptions.

Participants remain the right to withdraw from the project, without prejudice, at anytime.

After discussing this project with your child, would you kindly complete the consent form attached and return it to the class teacher as soon as possible. If we do not receive your consent form by October 18th, your child will not be videotaped.

If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person you may contact Prof. Max Angus on 9370 6399 or alternatively I can be contacted on 9273 8105.

Your sincerely

Janet Fellowes
B.Ed. Dip. Tch (Primary)

**INFORMED CONSENT TO RESEARCH PROJECT,
“BOYS, LITERACY AND ATTENTION”
TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY JANET FELLOWES**

I (parent / guardian) do not / do
give my permission for (student) to
participate in the research project.

I (parent / guardian) have discussed the project with my child.

I (parent / guardian) understand that my child’s classroom will be videotaped and
that this videotape will be viewed by the researcher for this project.

I (parent / guardian) understand that all data recorded during the course of this
project, including any videotapes, will be securely stored and available only to
the project researcher.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent, without prejudice, at any time.

Signed: **Date:**

Investigator’s Signature:

Janet Fellowes
Edith Cowan University
Pearson St
Churchlands WA 6010

Dear Year Five Teacher,

I am writing to ask you to participate in a research project on boys and literacy that I will be conducting as part of my Master of Education Degree course at Edith Cowan University.

The project aims to examine the impact of boys-only classes on measurements of attention during writing lessons. Your involvement would require allowing me to visit your year five classroom in term four of 2002 for the purpose of observing the classroom environment and teaching practices of the writing lesson. The visits would occur twice a week during writing lessons, for a period of up to 5 weeks during term four. Several of these visits will be video taped. Further to this I would like to conduct a thirty-minute interview with you.

The visits would also allow me to take observational measurements of the levels of attentive behaviour of four boys as they participate in the writing lessons. Further to this, I would want to conduct an informal interview with each of the four students. These interviews will be no longer than thirty minutes each.

Involvement in the research project is completely voluntary and you or your students would be free to withdraw at any time if you wished to do so. Your name or the names of the students as well as the school itself would not be identified in any publications associated with this research unless you or your students indicate otherwise. This research would not create extra work for you or the students, as most data would be collected on a purely observational basis in the classroom during normal writing lessons.

For the purpose of the project I would need you to identify four male students in your present year five class who are frequently inattentive or disengaged with classroom literacy learning tasks. I would also need you to obtain written consent from the parents of all the children in your class. Letters and consent forms will be provided.

Please contact me on [REDACTED] if you would like to discuss this project or any aspect of it. If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person you may contact Prof. Max Angus on 9370 6399.

If you are happy for you and your class to participate in the project would you kindly complete the attached consent form?

Yours sincerely,

Janet Fellowes.

**INFORMED CONSENT TO RESEARCH PROJECT,
“BOYS, LITERACY AND ATTENTION”
TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY JANET FELLOWES**

I having read information about the project and received satisfactory answers to my questions agree to participate in the observation sessions and interview, some of which will be videoed.

I understand that all data recorded during the course of the project, including any video tapes, will be securely stored and will be available only to the project researcher. I also understand that the identity of the school and the names of teachers and students will not be disclosed in any publication associated with the research unless written approval has been given in respect of specific cases.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent, without prejudice at any time.

School:

Name:

Signature:**Date:**

Investigator’s Signature:

Janet Fellowes
Edith Cowan University
Pearson Street
Churchlands WA 6010

September 30th 2002

Dear Parents

You will have already received a letter outlining a research project about boys and literacy that I am conducting at [REDACTED] Primary School. I am now writing to seek your permission for your child to participate in an interview about writing as part of this research project. The interview will take place in week four of the term and will last for no more than forty-minutes.

The interview will be audio taped but will be erased after it is transcribed. Participants remain the right to withdraw from the project, without prejudice, at anytime.

After discussing the interview with your child, would you kindly complete the consent form attached and return it to the class teacher as soon as possible.

If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person you may contact Prof. Max Angus on 9370 6399 or alternatively I can be contacted on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Janet Fellowes
B.Ed. Dip. Tch (Primary)

**INFORMED CONSENT TO INTERVIEW,
“BOYS, LITERACY AND ATTENTION”
TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY JANET FELLOWES**

I (parent / guardian) give my
permission for (student) to participate in
the research project.

I (parent / guardian) have discussed the project with my child.

I (parent / guardian) understand that my child will be interviewed and that the
interview will be audio-taped.

I (parent / guardian) understand that the audio tape recording will be erased once
the interview is transcribed.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent, without prejudice, at any time.

Signed: **Date:**

Investigator's Signature:

APPENDIX B

ATTENTION CHECKLIST

Attention Checklist

Student's Name:..... Year Level:.....

Does child have short attention span	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does child appear detached from class activities?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does child accurately heed directions?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does child daydream in class?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does child have trouble concentrating?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does the child stay with one activity long enough to complete it?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does the child work independently?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Is the child easily distracted?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Is the child able to concentrate on a task until completed?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does the child listen attentively?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does the child become easily engrossed in an activity?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no
Does the child disregard some or all directions?	yes	sometimes	maybe	no

Adapted from: Das, J.P. (1986). Attention Checklist. J.P. Das Developmental Disabilities Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Interview Schedule 1

Interview with the school principal for the purpose of obtaining background information on the school's programme of single gender classes for its year six and seven students.

- What were the factors leading up to the decision to create single gender classes for your upper primary students?
- Who was involved in this decision being made?
- Initially, how was the idea received by parents? teachers? students?
- What criteria did you use for choosing teachers to staff the all-boys' class?
- What problems, if any, have resulted from these class groupings?
- What have staff / parents reported to be the benefits of the all-boys' classes?
- Have any formal evaluations of the effects of the single gender classes been made? If so, what are the results?
- For how many years has the programme been running?
- Do you intend to continue with this programme in the future? Why? / Why not?

Interview Schedule 2

Interview with the class teacher for the purpose of obtaining information about the teacher's approach to writing lessons.

- How do you structure your writing lessons?
- How do you choose topics for writing tasks?
- What topics do you use? Why?
- What text types do you focus on in writing lessons?
- Are there any text types you don't use? If so, why?
- What materials / teaching aids do you use in your writing lessons?
- Do the learning tasks you design involve any group or partner work? If so, to what degree?
- Do the learning tasks you design involve independent work? If so, to what degree?
- How long does each learning task for writing last for?
- Do you use any formal behaviour management programmes in your classroom? If so, could you explain these?
- What do you consider to be an appropriate level of talk, noise, movement around the room during writing lessons?
- How do you deal with any "off-task behaviour" during your writing lessons?
- Do you think the all-boys classes are a good idea? What are the advantages or disadvantages for boys?
- What do you do differently in teaching boys writing?

Interview Schedule 3

Interview with four nominated students for the purpose of obtaining information about the writing lessons they participate in.

- What do you like the least about writing lessons?
- What do you like the most about writing lessons?
- Do the activities your teacher sets you to do in writing lessons require a lot of talking? What do you have to talk about?
- Do these activities require a lot of thinking? What do you have to think about?
- Do you find these activities easy or hard? Why?
- What activities that you have done in writing lessons have you enjoyed the most?
- Do you feel a sense of achievement (proud) in doing these activities? Why? why not?
- Why do you think your teacher gives you these activities to do?
- How will these sorts of activities help you later in life e.g. when you leave school?

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION RECORDS
ATTENTIVENESS

Attentiveness - Observation Record 1

Measuring “Time on Task” Behaviour of Individual Students

Observe the student for a period of 40 minutes during the writing lesson. At the end of each 2 minutes during the lesson, observe the student and mark the activity below that best describes the student’s behaviour. When finished you will have recorded 20 observations. Put a check in the appropriate row to identify the observed activity. When the 40 minute observation period is completed, add up the checks in each row and total the on and off task behaviour.

On-Task Behaviour

The student is actively engaged in tasks related to the lesson. This may include listening to the teacher, asking questions, completing assigned tasks, making suggestions, helping peers and contributing to a group task.

Record Checks Here

Total Number of Checks for
On-Task Behaviour:

Off-Task Behaviour

*Daydreaming
Socialising
Doodling, fidgeting
Playing with other students
Distracting others – entertains or jokes
Distracting others – attacks or teases
Waiting for assistance
Sharpening pencil
Getting materials needed for lesson
Leave the room – toilet or drink
Leaves seat – wander, run or play
Interrupted by another student*

Record Checks Here

Total Number of Checks for
Off-Task Behaviour:

Adapted from: Chiarelott, L., Davidman, L. & Ryan, K. (1994). *Lenses on teaching: Developing Perspectives on Classroom Life*. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Attentiveness - Observation Record 2 **Measuring “Time on Task” Behaviour of Boys in the Class**

Scan the class on several occasions during each 15 minute observation period. Note how many students appear attentive or inattentive at a given time. Record the number in the boxes at the bottom of the page.

Some examples follow from which attention or inattention can be inferred:

Attention (On-Task Behaviour)

- Raising hand to volunteer a response
- Listening to the teacher
- Maintaining eye contact, following teacher’s movements
- Turning to watch another student who is contributing to the class activity
- Asking questions related to the task
- working on assigned task
- Making suggestions
- Helping peers
- Contributing to a group task

Inattention (Off-Task behaviour)

- Daydreaming
- Socialising
- Doodling, fidgeting
- Playing with other students
- Distracting others – entertains or jokes
- Distracting others – attacks or teases
- Waiting for assistance
- Sharpening pencil
- Getting materials needed for lesson
- Leave the room – toilet or drink
- Leaves seat – wander, run or play
- Interrupted by another student

Number of boys in the class:

Attentive boys / lesson average:

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Adapted from: Good, T.L. & Brophy, J.E. (1997). *Looking in classrooms*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

CLASSROOMS

Observation Schedule
Classroom Learning Environment

Part 1: Focus on the Design of Writing Lesson

Categories	Observational Notes		
What is happening at each stage of the lesson? Beginning? Middles? End?	B		
	M		
	E		
Length of time of the lesson		Text type produced	
Topics / themes			
Materials			
Student / Teacher Talk			
Cognitive demands of the task			
Relevance of the writing tasks to students' lives			
Degree of choice for students			
Degree of student independence			
Group or Individual work			
Short or long term			

Part 2: Focusing on Instruction and Management

Categories	Observational notes
Use of discussion, explanation, demonstration direct instruction or other and for what purpose.	Teacher / Student Talk
	Demonstration
	Direct Instruction
	Explanation
	Other
Teaching of skills / strategies required for doing the task.	
Establishing criteria for completing any task	
Establishing purpose to students wider lives	
Teacher feedback about performance	
Teacher's behaviour management techniques	
Teacher's techniques for gaining and maintaining attention	
Level of noise, talk and movement around the room	
Nature of decisions made about students' behaviour	

APPENDIX F

WRITING ATTITUDE SURVEY

APPENDIX G

CLASSROOM TEACHING STRATEGIES

An Overview of Classroom Teaching Strategies

Name of Strategy	Purpose	Description
<i>Broadcast</i>	Bring an experience into the classroom	Information is gained through radio, television, video and film. Student observes and listens
<i>Drill</i>	Aid in achievement of mastery with remembering facts or skills	Repetition of a skill or facts to produce an automatic response or recall. Student practices and copies
<i>Exposition</i>	Transmit information quickly	Material or information is presented through explanation, questioning or discussion. Teacher talk - varieties of a lecture - students listening
<i>Explicit Teaching</i>	Teach a new skill or concept	Small steps introduced and students practice with the teachers guidance
<i>Demonstration</i>	Show a new skill, content or behaviour	Teacher explains and demonstrates a skill or piece of information. Students then practice it. - Students observe and imitate
<i>Concept Deduction</i>	Develop conceptual understanding	Teacher illustrates concept with examples – students identify the concept.
<i>Directed Questioning</i>	Assess knowledge and understanding / Explore a topic / Analyse a problem / Encourage creative thinking.	Oral or written questions constructed by the teacher requiring students to provide answers. Categorised – high and low order; convergent and divergent.
<i>Structured Group Discussion</i>	Promote thinking and decision-making / Foster communication skills	Discussion focused around a theme with set questions for students to respond to. The teacher facilitates the discussion usually around what teacher and students do not know already. Requires a level of reasoning from students. Dependent upon the social climate of the class
<i>Discussion (recitation)</i>	Review std knowledge and skills / Focus stds' thinking on a topic	A recurring sequence of teacher questions plus student answers – where students recite what they already know or are coming to know through the questions
<i>Guided Discovery</i>	Help students develop their problem solving skills	The teacher sets a problem and helps students investigate it. Students are encouraged to discover understandings and draw conclusions
<i>Cooperative Group Learning</i>	Give students control over learning / Allow stds to support each others learning.	Small group of students working together interacting in a task related way to achieve an educational goal. Students share the task and duties.
<i>Role Play or Simulation</i>	Involve students fully in the learning / Enable concepts to be understood more easily.	Group of students, under the teacher's direction play or mime specific roles. Explore through action or discussion an authentic problem situation.
<i>Imaginative</i>	Promote creative thought and natural expression	Students are asked to use their imagination to create art, drama or music.
<i>Learning Centres</i>	Independent learning	A carefully constructed learning component of a classroom in which materials and resources are arranged to allow students to learn.
<i>Interest Based Research</i>	Student control over learning / Motivation	Students select the topic, conduct the research and present the findings

Adapted from the following sources:

Barry, K & King, L. (1998). *Beginning Teaching and Beyond* (3rd Ed). Katoomba: Social Science Press. Marsh, C. (1996). *Handbook for Beginning Teachers*. South Melbourne: Longman.¹

APPENDIX H

TIME LINE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Time Line for Data Collection

Time		Major Activity
Before 2002	Term 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with year five teacher • Identify four male students – participants • Completion of “Attention Survey” by teacher • Determine times / days for visits to classroom
Term 4 2002	Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation Visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Interview principal ⇒ Informal visit to year five classroom ⇒ Observe contextual features
Term 4 2002	Weeks 2 - 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two visits per week to year five classroom during writing lessons for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ baseline measurements of attention of the 4 participants ⇒ (up to 10) ⇒ observation / field notes of classroom learning environment ⇒ rating scale of general class attention
Term 4 2002	Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interview
Term 4 2002	Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student interviews
Term 4 2002	Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student survey – Attitude to Writing
Term 4 2002	Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of teacher’s English programme and DWP
Term 2 2003	Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation Visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Determine times / days for visits to year six classroom ⇒ Informal visit year six classroom ⇒ Observe contextual features
Term 2 2003	Weeks 2 - 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two visits per week to year six classroom during writing lessons for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ intervention measurements of attention of the 4 participants (up to 10) ⇒ observation / field notes of classroom learning environment ⇒ rating scale of general class attention
Term 2 2003	Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Interview
Term 2 2003	Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student interviews
Term 2 2003	Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student survey – Attitude to Writing
Term 2 2003	Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of teacher’s English programme and DWP