Master of Arts in Education Thesis

Thesis advisor Dr. Andrew Manning

This thesis is submitted to the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

TEACHING INSIDE A MANDATED PROGRAM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to begin by thanking my former professor, Connie White, for believing in me and encouraging me to pursue my passions through a thesis.

I would also like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Andy Manning for his commitment and dedication during this process. Dr. Manning's availability and willingness to work with me over the past year and a half has had a tremendous affect on who I have become as both a researcher and a teacher. Working with Dr. Manning has inspired me to explore a Doctorate degree in the area of literacy and learning.

I would also like to thank Rita Armitage and Susan Settle, members of my thesis committee, for their efforts and contributions to my thesis throughout its many rewrites and revisions.

This thesis was only made possible with the support and encouragement of my family. To my wife, Marsha, thank you for being with me during each step of this process. You were my rock, my inspiration, and you kept me grounded and focussed. I could not have accomplished this feat without you. To my parents, Emmett and Linda, thank you for being there for me throughout my life and for supporting my decisions and determinations. Lastly, to my grandmother Florence—thank you for always believing in me; and for being proud of me as both a grandson and a teacher. May I continue to make you all proud with each educational endeavour I embark upon. Your love and support are greatly appreciated.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of mandated literacy practices on teaching and student learning. The methodology employed was qualitative teacher research and data was collected over ten months. A research journal was used to record and reflect on data on a daily basis. The recurring themes within the journal were Reading Levels, Running Records and Guided Reading. The data was analyzed through a Foucauldian lens and also through the lens of reading theory (Direct Instruction and Whole Language). The discursive practices within reading instruction were shown to have a significant impact on students' perceptions of reading and learning. The research also illustrated the effect that mandated reading programs have on the decision-making ability of the teacher and the student.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Student: Do you have another Spider book?
Me: I don't have one at your level.
Student: Can I read the same one you just gave her?
Me: You will be reading that book later on in the year.
Student: But I don't like the one you gave me.
Me: What about any other book from the blue bin?
Student: Nah. They're boring. I want to read the one about spiders.

As a primary school teacher, this was not the first time I had experienced what I would describe as an uncomfortable teaching moment. As the result in a change of policy about teaching reading, I found myself frequently faced with situations that seemed to challenge my beliefs about teaching and learning.

In this particular incident I had two choices: give the spider book to the child and celebrate their interest and enthusiasm; or stick to the script—assigning a title from the bin associated with his reading level. Neither choice would have positive consequences. If I chose to follow my beliefs and give him the spider book, facilitating a pre-reading session with him to ensure success when he took the book home, I would be viewed as insubordinate. On the other hand, if I didn't give the book, I would be following school protocol but would be abandoning my philosophy that literacy learning is built on student interest, engagement, and connections. It was a lose-lose scenario. Despite my beliefs, and the uncomfortable feeling in the pit of my stomach, I followed school protocol.

Me: You'll get to read that book when you get to the green bin.
Student (handing back book): I don't want a book tonight.
Me: Try the book. You might like it.

Such incidents were difficult for me. I have never believed in a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. I believe that the individuality of both the students and the teacher contribute to a unique and ever-changing classroom dynamic. This dynamic between the teacher and student is one that cannot be manufactured by outside entities; it is a relationship that is fluid, unique, and changes based on the environment. What works in one classroom may not work in another. Teaching and learning cannot be deconstructed to a list of generically applied instructions. For effective instruction and learning, teachers and students must work together to develop a curriculum that is relevant to the individuals within a particular time and place.

For the past six years I have taught at a school which for the purpose of this study I will refer to as Mainstream Elementary. During this time I taught grades one, two, physical education, and a combined one/two classroom. In my third year at Mainstream Elementary I enrolled in a graduate study program at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) where I have been studying about literacy ever since. My studies at MSVU caused me to examine my literacy teaching practices and consider the impact these practices had on my students. As a result I was cognisant of the uncomfortable incidents occurring within my classroom and I began to seek guidance and clarification.

During my years at Mainstream Elementary there was a paradigm shift within the educational setting. The Prince Edward Island[1] Government implemented a review of the education system resulting in recommendations to *improve* student learning. A major

[1] Prince Edward Island is the smallest province in Canada and is one of the three Maritime Provinces located on the East coast.

focus of this review was student learning in literacy, and recommendations such as new program implementation and provincial student assessments were put in place to combat low achievement. The Department of Education, school board and school administration initiated mandates to standardize literacy instruction in the primary grades. Teachers were to follow a set literacy program and to use specific assessment tools in their classroom. My school board and Department of Education facilitated in-services to immerse teachers in these instructional practices. Teachers were also directed to report specific reading scores to the school administration and school board.

This shift in educational policy handcuffed me as a teacher and limited my control within my classroom. My teaching decisions, through mandates from my school administration and my school board, were being based on published programs. Any attempts I made to express my concern were deemed as insubordination, and resulted in a questioning of my professional competence. Students were also limited by the shift in educational policy and were given little to no input in their learning.

My classroom was not what I wanted it to be, and students were not in an environment that I felt optimized their learning. I struggled with the lack of control I had in my classroom, and with the impact this was having on students and student learning. I struggled with what students were learning about literacy and how reading was being reduced to a single number.

I wanted to know how my teaching was being influenced by my school's literacy program. As a result of the conflict between keeping my job and doing my job, I decided to examine the literacy program in my classroom closely to understand the impact it was having on what I was teaching and what my students were learning. I needed to answer the question: How is my teaching situated within my school's literacy program?

Chapter 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section situates the questions and concerns generated from my classroom experiences within the methodology of teacher research. It provides a detailed explanation of the teacher research methodology I employed within my classroom, and the rationale as to why I selected this research methodology for my research study. I also include a description of the methods used to gather and analyze my data.

2.2 RESEARCH SITUATED IN CLASSROOM

Throughout the course of my teaching, I have encountered many questions regarding reading instruction. I have ridden the proverbial pendulum from teaching phonics, to whole language and back again. As I swing from philosophy to philosophy I become confused, disoriented and discouraged. With each swing of the pendulum comes "new and improved" knowledge and evidence supporting one theory over another. Currently the pendulum is on an upswing toward measurable outcomes.

At Mainstream Elementary, measurable outcomes had begun with running records, levelled books, and guided reading sessions, with an increased emphasis on recording and reporting the data from each. I had no issue with being held accountable; my issue rested with the effect accountability had on my teaching and subsequently on student learning. I was concerned that the focus within Mainstream Elementary had shifted from student based to score based, with less attention to student needs and learning experiences. This

posed a moral dilemma for me as I wanted to keep my teaching practice in line with the aspirations I had for my students (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2008).

Upon recognition of this moral dilemma, it became important for me to ensure that I was maintaining a focus on teaching and learning in my classroom, while at the same time being mindful of the accountability expectations for teachers within my school. In order to ensure this was happening, I needed to examine what was occurring in my classroom and what role I was playing. I was experiencing concerns about the origin of my teaching decisions. I felt a lack of confidence and frustration when my teaching decisions were driven by forces outside of the classroom (Patterson, 1990). I needed to understand how my teaching was being influenced by my school's literacy program.

Studying my teaching through my classroom experiences enabled me to scrutinize my teaching practices in relation to student learning. Teacher research provided me with a lens to examine my reading instruction and, more specifically, to understand how the actual events in my classroom corresponded to my beliefs about teaching and learning. This process also allowed me to recognize the reasons leading to the teaching decisions I made within my class and to identify the theories on which I based these decisions.

2.3 TEACHER RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Manning and Harste (1994), "there are two kinds of educational research, that which is done to teachers and kids and the other that is done by teachers and kids" (p. 2). Teacher research is a form of educational research performed *by* teachers. With this

research methodology, teachers are the agents responsible for researching their classroom experiences as they are "expert knowers about their own students and classrooms" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 16).

Teacher research is not a new concept. Quite often this type of research is referred to as teacher research, action research, reflective teaching and/or practical inquiry (Manning & Harste, 1994; Raphael, 1999; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992; Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). For the purpose of this research study, I will refer to my research methodology as teacher research.

Teacher research, as defined by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990), is the systematic and intentional inquiry by teachers to answer authentic questions derived from real classroom experiences. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) further this definition by stating:

> By *systematic* we refer primarily to ways of gathering and recording information, documenting experiences inside and outside of classrooms, and making some kind of written record. By *intentional* we signal that teacher research is an activity that is planned rather than spontaneous. And by *inquiry* we suggest that teacher research stems from or generates questions and reflects teachers' desires to make sense of their experiences—to adopt a learning stance or openness toward classroom life. (p. 3)

It is this desire for teachers to make sense of their experiences that sets teacher research apart from other branches of research as a process of discovery and understanding and *not* a process of determining something to be true or false; right or wrong (Britton, 1987). As Manning and Harste (1994) state, teacher research is "about trying to understand our own professional practice" (p. 2).

The key aspect of teacher research is that it is an attempt to understand authentic questions deriving from real experiences. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006), this means that teacher research "must flow from the *authentic* (or felt) questions, issues and concerns of *teachers themselves*" (p. 8). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) agree that the research questions involved in teacher research must emanate from the daily experiences and practices of teachers themselves. They also maintain that these questions must be based on practice and theory, and must stem from a critical reflection of both.

Many of the authentic questions that fuel teacher research originate from discrepancies between what the teacher intends for students and what actually occurs within the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). It is this discrepancy that ignites a passion within the teacher to take "a learning stance or openness toward classroom life" (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 450) as a means of examining his/her teaching practices. Addressing questions that are connected to the everyday practices of teachers ensures that the research remains "grounded in questions of practice" (Raphael, 1999, p. 50).

For teachers, questions of practice evolve in the classroom and often focus on the implications teaching decisions have on learning experiences. Patterson (1990) describes classrooms as providing an exciting learning context for teacher researchers. The teacher is able to witness how teaching decisions affect student learning within the context of the classroom. The rationale behind these teaching decisions, whether explicit or implicit, becomes an area of inquiry for the teacher.

Questioning classroom practices provides insight into the significant data being generated in the classroom on a daily basis. “Almost by definition, teacher research is case study—the unit of analysis is typically the individual child, the classroom, or the school” (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 466). The classroom, as the unit of analysis, provides an abundance of data surrounding day-to-day literacy practices, such as: lesson plans, rationale for lessons, student engagement and learning events, assessment beliefs and practices, classroom dialogue and discussion; and dialogue and discussion with colleagues as well as parents.

The classroom is full of events and experiences that become the data for the research. Engaging in the active process of teacher research creates awareness about such data and makes explicit the events and experiences occurring in the classroom. “When teachers treat classroom occurrences as data, they see discrete and sometimes disparate events as parts of larger patterns of student behaviour” (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 454). Teacher research provides a way for the teacher to interpret and understand the intricacies of classroom life (Massey & Duffy, 2003).

2.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHER RESEARCH

Manning and Harste (1994) outline the criteria for teacher research as encompassing: openness, learning, vulnerability, collaboration, commitment, and reflexivity. Each author/researcher writing about teacher research uses various terms when discussing and defining the qualities of teacher research. Despite the terminologies used in various materials, the characteristics of teacher research as I understand it all fit within the criteria

provided by Manning and Harste (1994). As a result, I will use their framework as an umbrella under which I will explore the criteria of good teacher research.

As discussed earlier, teacher research is not a means to a preconceived end, but rather it is the journey itself. Teacher research is a process in which the teacher scrutinizes his path, recognizes bumps in that path, and either plots a new course to avoid those bumps, or makes adjustments to accommodate for those bumps. In this way, the destination does not remain static, but evolves depending on the choices made. The teacher researcher is then able to make connections between the final destination and the deviations taken along the way.

This analogy is similar to Herr's (1999) view that "while we may not be able to control where our data leads us, we can go into the process with our eyes open" (p. 15). According to this statement, Herr is suggesting that openness requires that the researcher follows the direction of the data, realizing before hand that this direction will vary throughout the course of the research. Manning and Harste (1994) explain this variance in direction as stemming from the evolutionary nature of data. "The starting point is data, but everything is data and data changes as it elaborates our theory and examining our assumptions changes our conception of data" (p. 4). In this way, the process of teacher research is both dynamic and cyclical—the destination changing with the data and the data changing as a result of the new destination.

Manning and Harste (1994) discuss a second element of teacher research as being learning, stressing the importance of learning over attempting to establish or unveil some discernible truth. They further this viewpoint by stating that "teacher research is not about proving hypotheses" (p. 4). By researching the classroom, teacher researchers learn both the explicit as well as implicit aspects of teaching and learning.

Boomer (1987) states "research is deliberate learning" (p. 8). Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2008) share the view of learning as a primary characteristic of teacher research. They define the process of teacher research as being "a powerful process and structure for *professional growth and development* and lifelong learning; a process made possible by *intentional and conscious learning* from experience" (ibid., p. 5) both of which emphasize the importance of growth and learning over truth.

Being able to put one's self under the microscope has been a recurring criterion for teacher research in most, if not all of the materials I have read to date. Teacher research, unlike other forms of research, requires the researcher to be at the centre of the research (Manning and Harste, 1994, p. 3). Being the focus of the research requires the strength of character to not only scrutinize our own practices and beliefs, but to assume that some aspect of our doing is wrong; and the courage to adapt our doing and reflect on the effects of those adaptations. Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2008) tell us that teacher research is a "critically reflective practice in which we question our assumptions and personal experiences, and we inquire into the perspectives of students, colleagues, the social context, and the literature" (p. 9).

One distinct difference between teacher research and other forms of research is the consideration of the people involved. Teacher research does not use subjects or informants, but instead relies on the participation of collaborators (Manning & Harste, 1994, p. 3). In this way, people involved in the research process provide valuable information and are considered to be on equal standing with the researcher. This relationship maintains the criterion established by Manning and Harste (1994) that teacher research is done *with* others and not *to* others.

As with any form of research, teacher research requires a commitment on the part of the teacher and "ought to make us and members of the community itch. It needs to be committed to something, have a sense of urgency about it" (ibid., 1994, p. 4).

If we consider that teacher research stems from questions and concerns arising in the classroom, then it only stands to reason that the research must be committed to addressing these questions and concerns. Upon review and reflection of all contributing factors—the research analysis—teachers become increasingly aware of "the roles they play in the learning environment" (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2008, p. 28). At this point it is not enough for teachers to simply learn from their research. They must act on what they learn and to make appropriate changes to their practices, beliefs, or both. Teacher research is therefore "about change and must go somewhere" (Manning & Harste, 1994, p. 4).

Reflexivity is the going somewhere that Manning and Harste (1994) refer to. It is the deliberate change in our practices, beliefs, theories or any combination therein, as a result of reflecting on our research findings. Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2008) state that "an action researcher's job is to bring to light assumptions, beliefs, and actions; to examine them; and to bring their actions into closer alignment with their values and aspirations" (p. 28). This process of change as a result of reflection—reflexivity—is what Manning and Harste (1994) define as "the active use of oneself to outgrown oneself" (p. 4).

2.5 RATIONALE FOR TEACHER RESEARCH

The decision to use teacher research was not so much a conscious one on my part, but rather more of a surprise. My journey into teacher research began more by accident than by an intentional goal to do research. I had questions and concerns. I wanted to address them. I began examining where my questions and concerns were coming from as an attempt to better understand my situation. This was by no means an intentional attempt on my part to become a researcher.

The desire to understand and address my issues led me on a quest to find a practical method that would best meet my needs. I wanted to find a method of inquiry that would allow me to remain a teacher first. As Patterson (1990) stated in *Teacher Research: From Promise to Power*, "I am first a teacher, then a researcher; so my research decisions can never interfere with my students' opportunities to learn" (p. 28).

Teacher research was the perfect methodology to explore my issues without compromising the teaching or the learning occurring in my classroom. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) provide a concise synopsis of teacher research and the power of inquiry in *Teacher Research as a Way of Knowing*:

> Teacher research is a powerful way for teachers to understand how they and their students construct and reconstruct the curriculum. By conducting inquiry on their own practices, teachers identify discrepancies between their theories of practice and their practices, between their own practices and those of others in their schools, and between their ongoing assumptions about what is going on in their classrooms and their more distanced and retrospective interpretations. Inquiry stimulates, intensifies, and illuminates changes in practice. (p. 458)

Teacher research often stems from concerns and inquiries related to student learning. In this regard, who better to conduct the research than the experts, and, in the case of teacher research, teachers are "expert knowers about their own students and classrooms" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 16).

Teacher research provides teachers with a means of addressing questions and concerns pertinent to their practice. Teacher research, according to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990), "has special potential to address issues that teachers themselves identify as significant" (p. 4). Teacher research not only gives voice to teachers, but validates their issues and concerns as being significant and relevant in the world of research.

There are many advantages involved in conducting teacher research, the most immediate and notable being "that it can contribute demonstrably to improving teaching or instruction" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 5). Reviewing and revisiting teaching beliefs in relation to the decisions made in the classroom allows teachers to reflect on and

improve their instruction. In this way teacher research is "an agency for change" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 15).

Aside from improving instruction, teacher research has numerous other benefits. Hahs-Vaughn and Yanowitz (2009) describe several other advantages of teacher research as being an increase in content and pedagogical knowledge, greater connections between theory and practice, and the development of deep and critical thinking. By developing skills in these areas, teachers are better equipped to analyse and reflect on teaching and learning experiences. Baumann & Duffy (2001) suggest that "the power of practitioner research is to inform teachers about their classroom worlds and to transform their thinking and actions about literacy teaching and learning" (p. 613).

Teacher research, as seen by Lankshear and Knobel (2006), is "an important means by which teachers can develop their capacity for making the kinds of sound autonomous professional judgements and decisions appropriate to their status as professionals" (p. 5). Not only does teacher research assist teachers in increasing their capacities within their profession, but teacher research also gives voice to teachers and allows them to "communicate their wealth of knowledge to other practitioners" (Richardson, 1994, p. 5).

2.6 RESEARCH METHODS

For the purpose of this study, I identified research methods that would assist me in researching my teaching and classroom. I decided on qualitative research with data collection and data analysis tools that were both practical and effective. The selected

research methods were chosen with the intent of gathering suitable data and with little interruption to classroom learning.

Richardson (1994) explains that there is no one single form of research method associated with teacher research. Qualitative research, however, has been closely related to teacher research and correlates strongly with the idea of teachers researching their own classrooms.

2.6.1 Qualitative Research

I selected qualitative research methodology for my research study because of its contextual approach to research. Taking the data from daily experiences—as opposed to taking data from experiences and/or experiments which are controlled and replicable—allowed me to study my classroom and my teaching practices in a real-life setting; recording and examining *why* things were happening, *as* things were happening. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) consider the gathering of data in real-life settings to be a crucial aspect of qualitative research. By carefully observing their classroom and using suitable data collection and data analysis techniques, teachers can develop new ways of understanding their teaching and classroom (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2008). Qualitative research enabled me to look more extensively at, and listen more intently to what was going on in my classroom and "understand something that is complex, socially influenced, dynamic, and interactive with many variables" (ibid., p. 34).

Qualitative research is "trying to understand and explain what is going on, without any recourse to numbers or statistics or variables" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 30). Numerical data is not the focus of the research; instead it is the actual events that are being studied. It is the teaching and learning that is being examined, the rationale for decisions, the reflections of events that take place and the dialogue that occurs.

Understanding the role of the teacher in the classroom is another basic tenet of qualitative teacher research. Teachers understand that events in classrooms are "far more complicated than they would appear to an outside observer" (Power & Hubbard, 1999, p. 36). Teacher research "involves teachers researching their own classrooms" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 4), and thus situates the teacher as an active participant in relation to the contextualized data.

The teacher plays a dual role within the process of teacher research. First, the teacher is a significant member of the classroom that is being scrutinized. The teacher's actions, motivations, philosophies and beliefs are under the metaphoric microscope. Second, the teacher is the researcher that is analyzing the classroom for an enhanced understanding. In this way the teacher is not only under the microscope, but also the person looking through it and manipulating the lens.

To effectively conduct teacher research, the teacher must understand this dual role when making decisions both as a teacher and as a researcher. The teacher must recognize and appreciate the biases involved. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) acknowledge that these

biases—the values, assumptions, beliefs and knowledge held by the researcher—directly inform the data collected and how this data is interpreted and reported.

In many forms of research, bias is something that researchers attempt to eliminate; something which hinders the results of their studies. These researchers attempt to create an event, or series of events, which can be replicated for reliability and accuracy of results. They repeat the experiments multiple times, and study all variables to ensure the validity of their results. In qualitative research, however, bias is the factor which allows teacher researchers to focus in on specific events and occurrences that are of particular interest to the study. Bias allows the teacher researcher the opportunity to consider only those incidents relevant to their research question and dismiss others.

Because teacher research is conducted by teachers, and not by research agents outside of the classroom, it is often referred to as insider research (Manning & Harste, 1994). The term insider emphasizes the connection between the teacher and the research. Stenhouse (1981) supports the connection between the teacher and the research, claiming "the professional researcher seems to me more vulnerable because of his distance from practice and his lack of responsibility for practice than is the teacher by virtue of his involvement in practice" (p. 16). This involvement in practice provides a wealth of information when classroom events and activities are recorded as data.

2.6.1.1 Data Collection

Classrooms provide teachers with a multitude of research opportunities ranging from lesson plans, to classroom interactions, to dialogue amongst teachers, students and parents. Classroom events also provide rich data for the teacher researcher. Teachers "have sophisticated and sensitive observation skills grounded in the context of actual classrooms and schools" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 7). These observational skills allow the teacher to examine both obvious and subtle events that take place within the classroom. The teacher researcher is able to situate these events within contextual understanding of the classroom.

Lesson plans as well as teaching resources (assessment tools and classroom texts) provide an effective way of researching teaching and learning. Understanding the rationale behind the lesson plans and the actual results from implementing the lessons provide insight into the teacher's theory as well as the impact of teaching decisions on student learning.

Having such an abundance of research possibilities, the teacher researcher must select data collection methods that best correspond to the research question. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) state "data collection methods primarily comprise observations of 'real practices" (p. 68). These real practices are what teacher researchers examine and base their research upon. Throughout the course of qualitative teacher research, methods often change during the research study so that the researcher is able to adapt to the events that are taking place within the classroom.

Writing a journal provides "rich data about classroom life" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 8). This data takes many forms: daily events, reflections, interpretations, hunches, emotional responses, and questions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The various forms of data within the journal provide a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's decisions, student learning and the underlying meanings generating the actual events that occur within the classroom. The journal provides the teacher researcher an avenue to "document and describe experience, to explore, to gather insights, and to give voice to our developing professional hunches and repertoires" (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2008, p. 14).

Waters (1999) states:

> It is through the process of deliberately writing down my observations, systematically recording my reflections, routinely collecting and sorting out on paper the patterns of teaching and learning going on around me, that I learn about my students and myself. (p. 44)

The teacher research journal is a working document that allows the researcher the opportunity to return to the document to reflect, make new connections and answer questions. Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2008) state that the journal is a "powerful tool for scholarly reflection and professional development, and for collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, and extending data" (p. 15).

The writing within the teacher research journal can take many forms (objective, subjective, creative, and expressive) each of which provides valuable information (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2008). The various forms of writing provide the teacher researcher with various forms of thoughts, thus providing a thorough and multifaceted view of the data.

As a way of recording events, thoughts and questions that arose during the course of this research study, I kept a teacher research journal. When I began journaling, I was completely unsure of what exactly I was doing. I felt as though there should be some concrete process to follow; some formula for what I would record and how I would record it. As I became more familiar with the literature surrounding journals as a form of data collection, I learned that no such concrete process or formula exists. No two journals look identically the same and each is a reflection of the researcher and the research question(s) being addressed.

It took a while before I was comfortable and confident in my skills as a journal-ist. Initially I was recording everything—every minute detail of my day—with little regard or reflection on the relevance of what I was recording. It was not until I began reading through my journal that I realized I was not doing myself any journalistic favours. The entries in my journal were not pertinent to my research question. I did not need a description of every little aspect of my day—especially the aspects which had no bearing or significance for the issues I was exploring. Once I identified why my recordings were of little to no use, it was easier for me to identify what would be useful in understanding my research question.

At this point I began identifying and recording the classroom events and occurrences that were relevant to my research question—the events and occurrences that brought me back to my initial unease; to the feeling that I was doing an injustice to my students. I recorded

lessons and activities that left my student disinterested and disengaged. I recorded student comments and reactions to these lessons and activities, and my own reflections and insights as well. I also recorded lessons that had been successful; lessons that had students highly motivated and engaged. Again I recorded student responses and interactions as well as my own thoughts and reflections. I recorded incidents and dialogue where students questioned classroom practices, voiced displeasure about events and/or activities, and expressed opinions about their learning opportunities. I recorded conversations with parents and staff surrounding classroom practices and activities, program resources and initiatives in my classroom and in the school as a whole.

Sometimes I recorded things as they were happening—stealing a few moments here and there to jot down essential information—other times I would record things during my prep period, after school, or at home in the evenings. Each night I read through my journal and recorded any insights or responses that came to me. I also answered questions that had presented themselves in the journal, recorded any information that shed light on previous issues or concerns, or just continued a dialogue with myself about issues that were not so easily understood and/or resolved.

My journal became my sounding board; a place for me to consider issues and questions that presented themselves in the classroom, a place to deliberate pros and cons of the choices I had made, and a place to explore the rationale behind my decisions. Content became conversation and margins became areas of deep insight and inquiry. My journal

became my silent partner throughout my research study; always challenging me to look deeper, to reach further and to consider myself in my practice.

2.6.1.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial component of teacher research. It is during this stage of the research that the researcher analyzes and makes interpretations based upon the data collected. However, data analysis does not necessarily occur at the conclusion of data collection. Data analysis and interpretation can be woven throughout the entire research study (Merritt & Labbo, 2004), so that the data being collected can influence the research decisions of the teacher.

Lankshear and Knobel (2006) state:

> Analysis is about finding what is 'in' the data we collect that seems to us to be significant, and *interpretation* is about saying what this 'implies' or 'means' for the question or problem underpinning our study. It involves looking for trends and tendencies, patterns and regularities in the data, as well as for what seem to be interesting or significant exceptions and variations to these trends or patterns. Researchers use analytic tools and techniques to 'work on' the data in order to find what is 'in there'. Analysis is always more than description or re-description. It tells us more than what is simply 'on the surface' of the data. (p. 33-38)

Data analysis reveals what the data means in relation to the research question. It is with this in mind that researchers must "see what is there—not what we expect to be there" (Merritt & Labbo, 2004, p. 408). What this means is that we have to be responsive and open to the data we examine. We cannot have preconceived notions of what we will find.

The researcher must be explicit in how the data is analyzed. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) state:

> [I]t has to be clear *how* and *why* other teacher researchers have derived the concepts, categories, patterns and so on that they have from their data. It needs to be clear why they have analysed it one way rather than another, and what ideas and prior experiences or theories have made them decide to approach the data in the way they have. Readers need to know why something was interpreted in a particular way before they can decide whether to accept that interpretation. (p. 19)

For the purpose of this research study, I analyzed my teacher research journal. The language of the data analysis pertaining to this research study was "coding, identifying emerging patterns, recognizing themes, and challenging interpretations" (Merritt & Labbo, 2004, p. 414). I coded the entries of my journal to identify the themes and patterns that were present. "Finding the patterns within data, viewing each bit of information as a part of a larger puzzle which you must unscramble" (Power & Hubbard, 1999, p. 35) was crucial during the process of data analysis.

During the analysis of my research journal, I identified three main themes: reading levels, running records, and guided reading. These themes occurred during interactions with educators, students, and parents.

The themes and patterns revealed during the analysis of my journal allowed me to categorize my data into manageable segments. I examined the themes and patterns emerging from the codification of the journal and considered the underlying notions behind them. I considered how and why these themes emerged, the consequences of the themes on my teaching, and my contribution to these themes as significant classroom experiences.

The themes, as well as my reflection and interpretation of the themes, were then considered in regard to the research question. As a way of relating the data to my research question, I used two analytic lenses: dominant discourse and reading theory. These two lenses will be explained in Chapters Three and Six respectively. Reflecting on the data and relating it back to my original research question required my thinking to be "flexible yet systematic" (Merritt & Labbo, 2004, p. 407).

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the characteristics of teacher research and the rationale for using teacher research as the methodology for this study. With teacher research as my selected methodology, there needed to be an analytical framework established for data analysis. This analytical framework consists of two components: dominant discourse and reading theory. Chapter Three will establish dominant discourse as the first analytical framework, while Chapter Six will establish reading theory as the second analytical framework.

Chapter 3: ANALYTIC LENS I: DOMINANT DISCOURSE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on the theory associated with dominant discourse. The theory component establishes the concept of discourse and provides a detailed description and explanation of dominant discourse as a result of regulated practice. The data component, which follows in Chapters Four and Five, situates my research data in relation to the concept of dominant discourse. Dominant discourse was used as one of two lenses through which I considered my data and examined the implications of my data on my research question.

3.2 THEORY

3.2.1 Dominant Discourse

While the common meaning of discourse is usually conversation (Finn, 1999), the concept of discourse actually extends far beyond language in and of itself. There are various understandings, meanings and theories regarding discourse. For the purposes of my research study, I have adopted the discourse theory of Michel Foucault.

Foucault's theory (Luke, 1995) considered not only the language associated within a particular system or setting, but the practices that systematically shape the aspects to which they refer. Foucault (1972) viewed discourse "sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (p. 80).

Within this definition, Foucault examined the structures that are established in any given system. Such structures include the ideas, concepts, and ways of thinking and behaving that are created within a particular context (Mills, 1997). In this way, Foucault's work surrounding discourse studied the elements and variables at play within a given context, examining not only their contextual role, but their role in developing and maintaining the context in which they operate.

Discourse as regulated practice (Foucault, 1972) resonated as the most suitable choice for my research study as it was the instructional reading practices at my school that were of interest to me. I was not only researching the origin of these practices at my school and subsequently the practices that occur within my classroom, but also the ways in which these practices were being promoted and maintained. Foucault's work in discourse as regulated practice provided me with a structured framework necessary to examine these practices. This examination included discursive practices such as in-services, committee objectives, administrative mandates, teacher collaboration, classroom events, student comments, and parent discussions.

Foucault's theory of discourse is shaped around three basic principles: power, knowledge, and truth (Foucault, 1995). Each of these principles strongly influences the balance of discourse and each is intricately connected to the other, almost becoming synonymous in meaning and understanding. The work these three basic principles do in any given field,

such as education, can manufacture a discourse which can develop into a dominant discourse within that culture.

Power, according to Foucault (Rabinow, 2010), is not a commodity—it is not something that can be possessed by one individual or passed from one individual to another. The concept of power, as it applies in this context, is one which is exercised by people. With this understanding, people are not the targets of power but are the medium through which power is dispersed (Gore, 1992). In this model of power, each individual has the ability to exert or resist power, should he/she choose to do so (Foucault, 1995). Power then is neither gained nor lost at the expense of another individual.

There are differing views of knowledge but that which is accepted and considered to be real is often the result of power struggles between individuals or groups of individuals. Thus, within any given discourse, individuals in positions of power control or produce official knowledge filtered down to individuals within that discourse. As Mills (1997) stated, "Foucault argues for the imbrication of power with knowledge, so that all of the knowledge we have is the result of the effect of power struggles" (p. 21). The relationship between power and knowledge is described as follows:

> We should admit … that power produces knowledge …that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault, 1995, p.27)

Thus, power and knowledge are interdependent. One does not exist without the other. Where there is power, there is a field of knowledge. Where there exists a field of

knowledge, there is power. A cyclical nature exists between power and knowledge. Power and knowledge are joined together through the use of discourse. It is through language, and the practices associated with discourse, that power produces knowledge and that knowledge is given the power to sustain.

According to Foucault (Rabinow, 2010), truth does not refer to fact, nor does it refer to right versus wrong. Truth refers to the "ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific efforts of power attached to the true" (Foucault as cited in Rabinow, 2010, p. 74). The focus then is not on determining something to be true or accurate; the focus is on understanding the mechanics whereby one discourse becomes the dominant discourse while another is dismissed or subject to doubt.

There are always multiple discourses at work within any given context. The concept of dominant discourse refers to the generally accepted way of thinking, acting and believing at a particular time and in a particular context. Compton-Lilly (2007) stressed this relationship between dominant discourse and social acceptance by suggesting that "the word *dominant* more aptly captures the power dynamics that accompanies these generally accepted and unquestioned ways of knowing" (p. 16).

Foucault made the distinction between discourse and dominant discourse as being one which is acknowledged—discourse - and one which is cultivated—dominant discourse. In this sense, the dominant discourse is supported and encouraged within the population as a whole. The dominant discourse is one that is supported and furthered by discursive

practices. These practices relate to the cornerstones of Foucault's theory of dominant discourse: power, knowledge, and truth.

Given that discourses serve particular interests, it comes as no surprise that dominant discourse empowers those who are members of that discourse and suppresses those who are not. Dominant discourses are typically supported by governing bodies, through funding, publicity, promotion, policies, and acceptance. Dominant discourses in education permeate into the classroom and are supported through literacy policies and curriculum.

Dominant discourse played a significant role in the practices associated with reading instruction at Mainstream Elementary. My school's literacy program was based on the beliefs and practices that school board and school administration felt were most effective. These beliefs and practices were grounded in direct instruction methods. Thus, the preferred methods of the board and administration were given the status of and the authority of *best practice;* situating these methods as official knowledge. Because of the power held by the school board and school administration, these *best practices* were accepted by educators, students and parents as superior knowledge. The school board and school administration developed practices—truth—such as literacy committees, literacy coaches, literacy documents, *best practice* handbooks to ensure the acceptance of the knowledge and to maintain a status of power.

3.2.2 Dominant Discourse Functionality

Within the work of Michel Foucault, governmentality, hegemony, regime of truth, and surveillance are presented as pertinent aspects of dominant discourse. These aspects directly relate to the three principles of discourse theory that were previously mentioned: power, truth and knowledge; and are fundamental to understanding the complexities associated with Foucault's theory of discourse. Examining these four aspects will provide a framework explicating how dominant discourses originate, operate and are sustained.

3.2.2.1 Governmentality

Governmentality is a concept that was developed and introduced by Michel Foucault in the late 1970's. Foucault's (Rabinow, 2010) concept looks at power not only in terms of a hierarchy—where power is deployed top-down - but also considers the social control over power by institutions of influence. Foucault also addresses forms of knowledge as having the ability to affect and influence the balance of power. As I indicated above, the form of knowledge that is accepted and promoted by institutions is often perceived as being superior and is therefore accepted verbatim by the population which these institutions serve. As knowledge becomes internalised by individuals they conduct themselves in accordance with the knowledge and are therefore governed by this knowledge (Leira, 2009).

The school board had established their reading instruction philosophy, that of Direct Instruction, as being the most effective method of teaching students how to read. With Direct Instruction being promoted as superior knowledge, teachers adjusted their teaching

practices to reflect this philosophy. Thus, teachers monitored and modified their practice to align themselves with this knowledge.

3.2.2.2 Hegemony

Hegemony plays a significant role within the discursive structure of dominant discourse. Dominant discourses impact everybody, whether people support or oppose the dominant discourse, and whether they are cognisant of the beliefs, ideas and opinions underlying the discourse. The structures of a dominant discourse assist in the maintenance of the discourse, and thus can exert pressure on people. Within a dominant discourse, knowledge is situated as being a sound and natural belief. Because of these beliefs being viewed as sound, people often accept them at face value. Hegemony, people being compliant in their own subjugation (Mills, 1997), becomes a realistic way of people accepting and operating within the dominant discourse.

As a teacher, I was in-serviced on programs and resources that were to be used in my classroom. With student learning as my teaching focus, I often took these programs and resources as being necessary for student learning and incorporated them into my teaching. I accepted these programs and resources—knowledge—as sound, and became compliant in the suppression of my own reading philosophy. Thus, the dominant discourse of Direct Instruction, in relation to reading, was being facilitated in my classroom through hegemony.

3.2.2.3 Regime of Truth

Foucault's theory of discourse was more concerned with the discursive practices that were put in place to support a certain field of knowledge. Foucault (as cited in Rabinow, 2010) termed this practice regime of truth:

> [T]he types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (pp. 72-3).

Foucault was not so much concerned with the end result as much as he was concerned with the structures put in place which led to the end result. Foucault considered why this regime existed, how statements were distinguished as true or false, and the status of the individuals or groups who make the determination of true or false (Mills, 1997).

A regime of truth had been established within my school board and school. Practices were put in place that distinguished and categorized various reading instructional programs and resources as either effective or ineffective. These practices included the development of the literacy coach position, the development of school literacy committees, the creation of various literacy related documents, and professional development sessions.

3.2.2.4 Surveillance

According to Foucault's (1995) beliefs about surveillance, people learn to discipline themselves or learn self-discipline because of the idea that they are potentially under supervision. The perception of being monitored in essence influences the discourse with

which people align themselves. People adhere to the dominant discourse for fear of disapproval or disdain.

The concept of surveillance was illustrated impeccably in Foucault's (1995) detailed description of the Panopticon. The Panopticon was a surveillance structure within a prison that positioned the guard tower in a centrally located area. The position of this tower enabled the prison guard to constantly view all aspects of prisoner's life. The prisoners were aware of the guard's ability to watch all that was happening within the prison walls. In theory, the guard did not have to watch the prisoners at all times as the prisoners were unable to determine when guards were actually watching. This created the situation in which the prisoners were unsure of whether or not they were being watched, so they felt it necessary to act accordingly out of fear that that they were constantly under surveillance. Thus, as Foucault (as cited in Rabinow, 2010) stated:

> [T]he major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary (p. 201).

As outlined by Foucault (1995) under this practice of surveillance, people were not sure when they were being watched. In fact, people could be under surveillance at any point and not be aware of it. People were, however, aware that this was the case. In this way, surveillance itself was unnecessary as it was the perception, belief, or fear of surveillance that brought about the desired result of conformity.

Schools are organizationally structured in such a way that teachers are potentially under constant supervision by administrators. Teachers are continually monitored by school administrators. This monitoring often includes unannounced classroom visits, requests for program updates and student progress reports, and inquiries into classroom practices. In this way teachers, much like the prisoners in Foucault's (1995) discussion of surveillance, are under the perception that they are under constant supervision even when that is not the case. Teachers then, adjust their teaching pedagogy to accommodate and support the prevailing beliefs of the school.

3.2.3 Effects of Dominant Discourse

Dominant discourses set parameters within which we function. In this way, they place limitations on what we think and believe, on the opinions we have, as well as on how we think and act. As Mills (1997) stated, "discourse causes a narrowing of one's field of vision, to exclude a wide range of phenomena from being considered as real or as worthy of attention, or as even existing" (p. 51). This subtle and oftentimes unseen control reinforces the dominant discourse as being true while undermining alternative discourses.

Simplistically speaking, the dominant discourse produces a circular effect—the more accepted a discourse becomes, the more entrenched and circulated it becomes as knowledge, the more difficult it becomes to speak against it, and the greater the pressure to conform to it. It is a vicious cycle.

The circular effect of dominant discourse was visible within Mainstream Elementary. The more accepted the dominant discourse of Direct Instruction became within the school board, the more teachers, parents and students viewed direct instruction as being superior knowledge. As Direct Instruction took on the status of superior knowledge, the more difficult it became to speak against it. Alternative reading philosophies, such as that of Whole Language, were viewed as being inferior when compared to Direct Instruction.

3.2.4 Challenging Dominant Discourses

Despite the pressure to fit into the dominant discourse, there are alternate discourses present in any given context which challenge the dominant discourse at hand. However, because of the structures put in place to support the dominant discourse, it becomes increasingly more difficult to maintain membership in an alternate discourse. These structures work to discredit alternate discourses from being considered as valid or possible viewpoints.

Challenging the dominant discourse in my school created a precarious situation. As I go on to show in my data, opposition to the dominant discourse of Direct Instruction was viewed as teacher incompetence and neglect. Using the Whole Language philosophy of reading instruction drew the attention of school administration, and resulted in the direct order of adjusting teaching practices to meet the more acceptable method of Direct Instruction.

Despite my fear of surveillance, and the repercussions associated with acting against the dominant discourse in my school, I maintained my beliefs regarding reading instruction. Resistance was a form of power, and challenging dominant discourses was difficult, but it was not impossible.

3.3 RATIONALE FOR FOUCAULDIAN THEORY

Foucault's work regarding discourse allowed me to explore the literacy program and the practices which held it in place in Mainstream Elementary. This theory of discourse allowed me to re-examine my actions and decisions, and understand where my belief in the theory of Whole Language had originated from and how it was situated within my classroom and within the larger school setting. I was also able to consider the things that bothered me—to recognize the nagging instinct inside my head, to identify where that instinct was coming from, what it was based on, and to realize why my actions and my instincts were not always aligned.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter focussed on the discourse theory of Michel Foucault and how dominant discourse was a result of regulated practice. The Foucauldian lens will be used as one of two lenses to analyze the reading practices in place in my classroom and Mainstream Elementary: reading levels, running records, and guided reading. Chapter Four will document the analysis of reading levels, and Chapter Five will continue with an analysis of running records and guided reading.

Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS: DOMINANT DISCOURSE I

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Chapter Three, I used Foucault's theory of dominant discourse as one of two lenses to analyze my teacher research journal. During this data analysis, I coded the entries in my journal, and sorted these entries into three main themes--reading levels, running records, and guided reading. These themes are reflective of the key components of my school's literacy program. This chapter deals specifically with reading levels. Running records and guided reading are analyzed in Chapter Five. Although I examine these three themes separately, they are interrelated.

In order to understand and manage my data, I subdivided each theme into types of interaction. The majority of entries in my journal pertained to interactions with educators, students, and parents. As a result, these became focal points for my research. For the purpose of this analysis, the term educator refers to teachers, school administration, and board and department officials.[2]

4.2 READING LEVEL

While reading levels have become a permanent fixture within the school setting, this discursive practice has also permeated into student and parent awareness as indicated through my observations and communication with them. Reading level, as defined by Mainstream Elementary, refers to the level of difficulty at which a student is able to

[2] Although reading levels, running records and guided reading were recurring themes, not all three themes included data from each of the representatives (educators, students and parents).

decode text independently. This level is often represented by a letter or a numerical value. The letter value is based on the levelling system of Fountas and Pinnell (1996). The numerical values are based on PM Benchmark and Reading Recovery systems.[3] The primary grades at Mainstream Elementary have a PM Benchmark collection of books used specifically for determining the reading level of students. Books from Reading Recovery are also used to determine reading levels. Within the educational system, and subsequently within my school, reading level has become an accepted discursive practice amongst educators.

4.2.1 Educators

My journal documented a tremendous shift in the professional conversations I have experienced with teachers over the past year regarding reading. When I first taught in the primary grades, four years ago, other teachers and I discussed various reading centers, how students were doing with certain language arts themes, and what types of books students were choosing from classroom libraries. Over the past year, however, the concept of student reading levels has begun to dominate teacher discussion. Numerous entries in my teacher research journal involved conversations with teachers in which reading levels were the focus of the conversation. Topics included:

> *Teachers asking the range of levels within a given classroom.*
> *Teachers questioning the reading level of previous students.*
> *Teachers expressing concern and personal failure over students reading below the expected reading level for their grade.*

[3] PM is a collection of levelled books used in the primary grades at my school. PM Benchmark are kits that enable the teacher to assess and evaluate student reading levels through the use of levelled books and running records.
Reading Recovery is a program developed by Marie Clay to understand and enhance student reading through a process of miscue analysis. This program is a short-term, one-to-one intervention for students identified as having reading difficulties.

> *Teachers boasting levels higher than expected or an unprecedented increase in reading levels of certain students or within certain classes.*

Reading levels were being presented by the department and board as superior forms of reading assessment and evaluation. This stance was then reinforced at the school level by administrators in after school sessions and grade level meetings. Mainstream Elementary administrators stressed the importance of high student reading levels, and emphasized that the board was constantly examining the schools' reading levels to evaluate students' progress. These meetings not only reinforced this particular body of knowledge as accepted practice or truth, but also added the pressure of surveillance (Foucault, 1995) by board and department personnel. These issues from various journal entries reflected Foucault's (Rabinow, 2010) views of governmentality and hegemony.

My principal frequently asked for the reading levels of my grade one and two students. I was told that this was to check up on how things were going in my classroom. Instead of discussing my students' progress or my teaching practices, our discussion consisted of reporting the reading levels of my students, followed by my principal's questions about what I was doing to address the lower reading levels of my students. The focus was on the reading level, not the context in which the reading level was determined. I documented my reaction to these interactions:

> *This is the third visit into my classroom, and all that is mentioned are reading levels. And even when I try to illustrate student strengths through other forms of work or assessment, it always comes back to the level. There seems to be a serious hole in this practice! How can this be all that matters? What about the fact that one student is showing great progress on unlevelled books from home that are more geared to his interests and hobbies?! I am afraid that we are missing the boat on this one!*

My journal also contained other comments, conversations, and experiences with my administrators and other school board personnel. One journal entry outlined the expectation presented at one of my school board workshops that reading levels were to be submitted to the board annually. Reading through a Foucauldian lens, this mandate illustrated a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) in existence—a system was put in place to ensure the use of reading levels in the primary grades. My journal entry was as follows:

> *I was told today that I was to report the reading level of my grade one and two students to the board at the end of the school year.*
> *What?!*
> *This is SUPPOSEDLY necessary to allocate personnel resources to schools whose students are reading at low levels.*
> *Is the reading level number all that matters? Nothing about my thoughts on student progress.*

Analysis of this journal entry revealed that school administrators and school board officials had shifted the focus of reading discussion to a numerical representation of the student's reading ability.

Some journal entries were more alarming than others. One journal entry documented feelings of fear surrounding the changes taking place regarding reading. I had jotted the following comment in the margins of my journal during an in-service on reading instruction:

> *No room for questions or discussion.*
> *Don't concern yourself with what you believe.*
> *Just mindlessly jump on board…Don't look, just leap!*

Teachers were relentlessly being told that reading levels were necessary and that using a levelled program would ensure students reached their potential. When questions were asked, the presenters referred to how reading levels were necessary in effective reading

instruction. This exemplified Foucault's concept of governmentality (Rabinow, 2010) in that the department was situating reading levels as superior forms of knowledge. The overall message was that in order to teach effectively, one had to use reading levels—teachers not using reading levels were ineffective.

This significant emphasis on the quantification of a student's reading ability had created some interesting dialogue around reading. Many of the conversations I had with primary teachers of Mainstream Elementary involved reading levels and the subsequent labelling of students as at-risk based on lower than expected reading levels. There were three such conversations that I recorded in my journal that reflected reading levels:

Conversation 1

Teacher A: I am happy that we finally have a consistent way to measure student reading.
Me: I think that we always assessed student reading effectively and accurately.
Teacher A: Well, yes but now we have a number that parents can't argue with.

Conversation 2

Me: I don't find reading levels accurate based on what I am seeing in my classroom.
Teacher B: I know. I find it too limiting. I miss the way that I use to assess reading.
Me: What way did you use to assess?
Teacher B: I listened to children read and discussed the book with them. I guess that way isn't good anymore.
Me: I think it is.
Teacher B: But the board doesn't.

Conversation 3

Teacher C: How many struggling readers do you have in your class?
Me: Why?
Teacher C: I only have a couple.
Me: How do you know? It's only the first couple of weeks of school.
Teacher C: I just looked at their reading levels from last year.

Several pages in my journal were committed to such conversations, highlighting questions and concerns, and expressing feelings toward the new program. These conversations illustrated teachers operating within the discursive practice of reading levels (Rabinow, 2010).

Some teachers were pleased with the introduction of reading levels. One entry in my journal focussed on a conversation I had with a colleague in which he praised a system that enabled him to gain full insight into students' abilities. The conversation was as follows:

> *Teacher A: This is great. I can track student reading throughout the year. In fact, their reading can be tracked from the start of grade one until they finish school.*
> *Me: Didn't reading teachers always do this, even before we had reading levels?*
> *Teacher A: Not this thoroughly. Now we can monitor their progress and get a good understanding of them. If they stay at a level too long, or move really quickly, we will instantly know it and change our teaching.*

Another journal entry documented the thoughts of a retired teacher stating how reading levels were over-simplifying reading, and students' abilities were too complex to be represented by a stand-alone score. The entry is as follows:

> *Teacher A: I can't believe that teachers just give one number for student reading. When I was teaching, we had to do a lot more than give one number. We had to listen to the student read, ask questions, discuss the book and make anecdotal records. Then, after we assessed, we had to give a thorough explanation of what the student's reading was like and the evidence that supported our evaluation.*

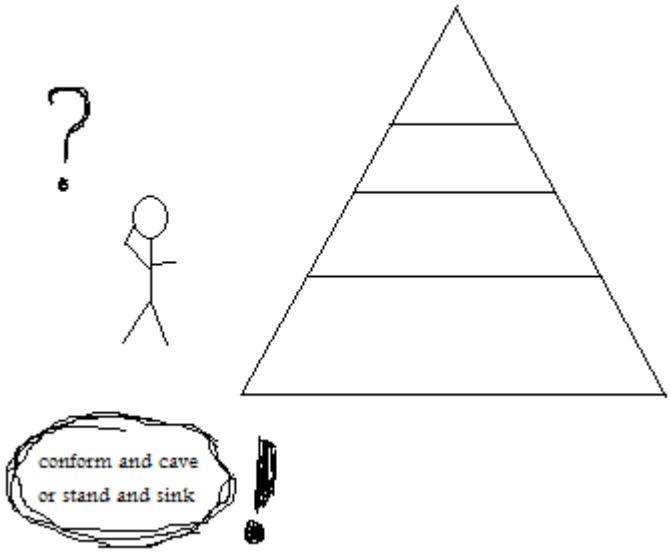
My own reflection of these conversations mirrored the latter journal entry, sharing concern that my students' reading abilities were not adequately or accurately depicted by their reading level.

As a way of facilitating the implementation of student reading levels, my school board had created the position of literacy coach. The purpose of literacy coach, as explained to me by my principal, was as follows:

> *Principal: The literacy coach is there to help and explain how to teach students to read and write. Teachers are to follow the initiatives set forth by the board through the literacy coaches.*

My reaction to this reflected feelings of resentment and resistance. I felt as though my professionalism was being overlooked, to put it mildly, and that I was being told, either directly or indirectly from school board officials and Mainstream Elementary administration, that my teaching was to reflect the initiatives of the board and that literacy coaches were there to tell teachers how teaching should be done. This entry reflected aspects of Foucault's regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) in that literacy coaches were put in place to implement and support the department and board reading level initiative.

My journal entries not only consisted of words but of visuals. One such visual is as follows:



This visual is a pyramid, my interpretation of the school board, a top-down hierarchy which operated by creating directives and initiatives to be carried out in the schools. I had a little stick person outside of the pyramid, representing me. There was a huge question mark hanging over my head illustrating my confusion as to my place in the pyramid. Beside my sketch were the words ‘conform and cave or stand and sink’. These words were circled several times and followed by an exclamation point which had been traced over many times making it very dark and very bold. These words represented the turmoil I was experiencing as a teacher. I felt as though I were choosing between keeping my job and doing my job. I felt that by conforming to the initiatives set forth, I was doing an injustice to my students and consequently not doing my job which I felt was to ensure that my students reached their own personal best.

The introduction of a primary literacy committee at my school led to many comments, questions and concerns, all of which were documented in my journal. The following statements were taken from my journal:

> *Why do we need a literacy committee?*
> *Is this committee to support primary teachers, or direct primary teachers?*
> *Why are we always talking about board initiatives?*
> *Is this a method of control?*
> *My teaching beliefs are not reflected anywhere during these meetings.*

The goal of this committee, as explained to me by my Mainstream Elementary administration, was to enhance the instruction of literacy and examine the reading level of students. The committee was facilitated by the school's literacy coach and was chaired by administration. The committee met once a month to discuss the reading levels of students in grades one through three. These levels were charted throughout the year as a means of following student progress and identifying at-risk students. This created an atmosphere of competition amongst teachers.

One of my journal entries focussed on the apprehension I felt when it was my turn to report the reading levels of my students.

> *I feel horrible. I know that other teachers are being praised for the high reading levels of their students. I know that the reading levels of some of my students are not as high. I can try to explain the reasons for the lower levels, but all that matters is the number. I don't want my teaching to be judged as ineffective or inferior. I don't want my students to be judged. How is this atmosphere of competition healthy or helpful?*

The literacy committee represented not only an aspect of regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010), but also an active form of surveillance (Foucault, 1995). The committee served to promote the use of reading levels within the Mainstream Elementary. There was no room

for discussion of this method of reading assessment, or for alternative forms of assessment strategies. By having board personnel and school administration team up to facilitate the committee, I was feeling as though my teaching practices were being monitored and scrutinized. I felt the need to comply with the suggested practices associated with reading levels as this was the expectation of committee members. I felt that by expressing my concerns about reading levels I was subjecting myself to undue judgement. This again brought to mind Foucault's (1995) description of the Panopticon, as outlined in Chapter Three. I was consciously governing my teaching out of the fear that I was being monitored.

Regardless of what I was being told by the school board, school administration or literacy coach, there was more than simply the levelling of my students that affected their reading progress. The texts, student experiences, student interests, and what was going on in their lives at that moment, were some of the key factors that played a role in their reading level. These were all aspects that became apparent throughout the course of the year. The following excerpt from my journal supported these factors:

> *I couldn't believe it. I had a student who was reading at a level 13. I knew for a fact that this student was reading at a higher level. However, when I sat down and took a running record, her level was 13. I struggled with this baffling result for a couple of days. I then thought I would try a book about horses. This student loved horses.*
> *I was relieved and amazed at what happened next. The student read the horse book fantastically. The student's reading level was 16.*
> *Was this discrepancy all due to the book selection? What would have happened if I had not tried another book? How scary is that thought?*

I attempted on numerous occasions to communicate the immediacy of my concerns to my administrators and literacy coach. Regardless of the dialogue that developed around these

concerns, the conversation always ended with a reiteration of the directives from the school board accompanied by an endorsement of their policies. My journal entries documented the responses that I received from Mainstream Elementary administration when I questioned the board initiative of reading levels.

> *This is a board initiative that everyone has to follow.*
> *Current research supports the use of reading levels.*
> *Consistency is key for student success, and reading levels promote this consistency from grade to grade.*
> *Reading levels are what exemplary teachers use.*

Knowledge being deemed current, result-proven, and superior is a method of exerting power. More specifically, this is what Foucault described as governmentality (Rabinow, 2010). I was being influenced by the dominant discourse. Dominant discursive structures (Rabinow, 2010)—regime of truth, governmentality, hegemony, and surveillance—were in place, establishing and maintaining the practice of reading levels. My teaching decisions were being controlled and manipulated through a process of governmentality (Rabinow, 2010).

This philosophy of the school board was presented as common sense. As documented in my journal, I was even told that:

> *All good teachers know the exact reading level of all their students.*

Alongside this comment, which irritated and aggravated me beyond words, were the very deliberate letters spelling out the sarcastic and pointed phrase:

> *What a disservice I would be doing to my students if I did not know their reading levels!*

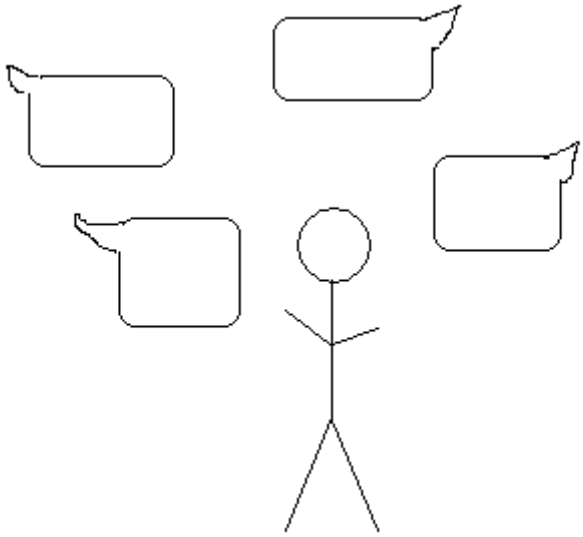
Through discursive practices, the theory supporting reading levels had been situated as common sense. I was told this by board officials and my school administrators, and heard it repeatedly at multiple in-services. I was told this through the numerous resources that were purchased for my grade one and two class. Being bombarded by all this support for reading levels made me hesitant in voicing my opinions and practicing the teaching that related to my pedagogy. This hesitancy, in and of itself, was the beginning of my reluctant consideration to operate within the discursive practices established within Mainstream Elementary.

As a professional, I tried to have meaningful conversations with my school administration in which we could discuss the rationale for our differing beliefs regarding reading levels. As recorded in my journal, during one conversation my principal told me:

> *As a primary teacher you are to assess students by determining their reading levels, and change your teaching practices to involve reading level activities.*

Any questions or contradictions I had were quickly refuted and dismissed. This created what Foucault termed a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010). These reading levels were situated as truth, while contradictory views were considered false. This regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) was established and maintained through the administrative power of the school board and its representatives. Teachers were expected to follow the decisions set forth by the authoritative body.

Having a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) established left me feeling significant tension. I reverted to more doodling in my journal. This time I had drawn the following diagram:



This drawing illustrated a stick man surrounded by thought bubbles, but the point extended from the speaking bubbles did not point to my own head, but off in other directions instead. I was trying to represent the fact that my thoughts were generated from somewhere outside of my own knowledge, practice and experience.

I understood that the school board was the authoritative body within the educational system. I also understood that the implantation of reading level resources was the current initiative set forth by the school board; however I strongly disagreed with the theory on which these decisions were based.

I had difficulty in accepting the notion that I was to alter my teaching practices in regards to a belief that I did not support, but I also believed I had no choice. I believed this for two reasons: first, measures had been put in place by the school board to regulate the use of reading levels in classrooms; secondly, teachers not following board initiatives were labelled as incompetent and incapable of effectively teaching their students. I had one

journal entry surrounding the latter, a conversation in which my school administration questioned my qualifications as a primary grade teacher based on my questions regarding reading levels.

> *Administration: I am not sure if you are a grade one teacher!*
> *Me: I have experience in the primary grades, and my education degree focuses on the primary grades.*
> *Administration: But, you don't agree and support the techniques that the school board and I feel are best teaching practices for grade one.*
> *Me: I only ask questions and try to rationalize my teaching pedagogy.*
> *Administration: It doesn't matter, because our teaching philosophies differ and I don't feel comfortable with you teaching grade one.*

My teaching practices and my abilities as a teacher were being questioned. I was deemed incapable of teaching grade one. Regardless of my qualifications, I was not suitable for this teaching assignment. Because my viewpoint differed from that of Mainstream Elementary and the school board, my professional abilities were deemed as unfit for specific assignments. This institutional power was yet another example of Foucault's governmentality (Rabinow, 2010).

There was one journal entry that involved a visual beside a reading activity that I conducted in my class. This reading activity was that of determining the reading levels of a student. Beside this entry was the following visual:

This representation was of a large daunting eyeball, signifying a watchful eye—surveillance (Foucault, 1995).

I was aware that the board was not always watching me, scrutinizing my every move; however, my teaching practices were altered in fear that I may have been watched. As Foucault (1995) stated, I have learned, subconsciously or consciously, to self-discipline out of fear that I was under supervision: again representative of the Panopticon. I felt as though all of my teaching decisions and practices were under the microscope, so consequently I planned my lessons accordingly in response to my principal and school board. This reflected the discursive practice of surveillance (Foucault, 1995).

4.2.2 Students

The concept of reading levels was not restricted to teaching manuals. Classroom books were printed with the reading level placed on either the front or back cover. At first, students in my classroom had not paid much attention to this number. However, as the year went on, students began to identify this number as being of importance and began to discuss and question the concept of this number.

There was one journal entry that documented a student asking me what a reading level was.

> *Student: Teacher, what is a reading level?*
> *Me: A reading level is the book's level of difficulty.*
> *Student: What does this mean for me?*
> *Me: Well, this helps me find you a book that you are able to read.*
> *Student: So, can I only read books that are the right difficult level?*

I remember writing the word *awkward* beside this entry. I did not want to explain that each student had a reading level and would only be able to read books from a selected

bin. However, I did because I believed that the best course of action was answering the student's question with the truth. The journal entry continued.

> *Me: For the most part, yes. But we will work our way to higher levels as the year goes on.*
> *Student: Why can I only read certain books? Sometimes I want to pick my own books.*

The students were not pleased. I had written the following question numerous times around the statement:

> *Why am I limiting access to reading materials!?*

While the students were intrigued that they each had a number representing their reading (realizing the fact that my students thoroughly enjoyed math class and loved working with numbers), they were displeased with the notion that they had to choose books from a predetermined bin (a bin containing the appropriate levelled books). I tried to explain that this was for their reading development, that they would be reading books at an appropriate difficulty level. This did not fly. They wanted to choose their own books. They asked what I was going to do if they wanted a book that was at a higher or lower level. I explained that we could read these books together, but that their independent reading would require them to read books from their own level.

I often questioned what my choices meant for my students. What results did my choices have on student learning? In my journal, I wrote the following question three times:

> *Did my compliance with reading levels promote or stifle student success?*

This not only illustrated student reactions toward levelled books, but also demonstrated my role in governmentality (Rabinow, 2010). By following the mandated discursive literacy practices, I was influencing student beliefs about reading and reading levels, and devaluing their concerns.

The concept of reading levels had transmitted from school board to teachers to students. Instead of discussing their favourite books, or favourite authors, students were discussing their reading levels. During independent reading centers, students were asking their peers for their reading levels. One conversation between two students was documented in my journal:

> *Student A: What level are you on?*
> *Student B: E. What about you?*
> *Student A: E too. How long have you been at E?*
> *Student B: I don't know. For awhile I think. You?*
> *Student A: Not long. I go through levels fast. I think I go faster than you.*

This was another example of how reading levels had permeated from the board, through educators, to students. They were experiencing the reading level, and had adapted their language accordingly. Students now conversed about reading levels, and how that situated them as a reader, thus playing a part sustaining the discursive practices of reading levels.

During writer's workshop, students would write narratives. There were no restrictions placed on this writing assignment. Students were able to choose the topics to write about. My students had decided to write about their March Break. Students made a good copy of

these three-page booklets and placed them in the classroom library. What happened next was documented in my journal.

> *Student: Where should I put the reading level?*
> *Me: What do you mean?*
> *Student: Well, the book's level should be a three or four because it used some of the grade one sight words. So, I want to know where I should write the number.*
> *Me: I don't think that you have to have a level for this book.*
> *Student: All books in our classroom are levelled, so my book has to be levelled.*

This discussion was overheard by other students in the class. When others heard that this student levelled their book, the rest of the class decided to level their books as well. There was a level hysteria within my class. I was shocked at first, but then realized that this was to be expected. Students were thinking and speaking of levels not because of their passion for reading levels, but because of the environment I fostered within my classroom and the school as a whole. Students were seeing, hearing and experiencing the discursive practices of reading levels. Students were becoming immersed with reading levels, and adjusting their knowledge and language to accommodate this theory.

This shift in student discussion surrounding reading, from books to levels, impacted their attitude toward the reading process. Within my classroom, student interactions represented students using their reading levels as a means to compete and compare themselves with one another, and not as a measure of their abilities. This was exemplified in the following journal entry:

> *Student A: My level is D. What is your level?*
> *Student B: C.*
> *Student A: I am a good reader, better than you.*
> *Student B: No you are not. I will be a D soon.*

Student A: When you are a D, I will be E.

This competition turned reading from a process of meaning-making to a process of out-performing others. Reading levels were being used as a form of competition. Students were positioning themselves in relation to other students in the classroom as a result of their reading levels. This illustrated not only an acceptance of reading levels, but active participation in the idea of reading levels. This confirmed the existence of what Foucault referred to as hegemony (Rabinow, 2010), at the student level.

Students came to accept this concept of reading levels as common sense, as natural. Similar to teachers, students were operating with a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010). The discursive structures that had been put in place by my school board and Mainstream Elementary administration had not only affected teachers but had affected students as well. Students abandoned their discussions of meaning-making, favourite books, and connections to discussing reading levels. Unbeknownst to them, they had accepted the mandate set forth by school boards. Students had altered their beliefs and actions to accommodate the beliefs of the school board and administration. They were operating within governmentality (Rabinow, 2010). They took the knowledge of the school board, principal, and my actions, the actions of their own teacher, as superior knowledge. They replaced their own discourses of reading with the dominant discourse in Mainstream Elementary.

4.2.3 Parents

Parents also picked up the school discourse, and used it to become active participants in the dominant discourse of reading levels. When I first started teaching in the primary grades, parents asked me about their child's reading interests, what books we were reading in school, what activities would be used as a response to books and whether their child read during free time. Now, when parents were discussing their child's reading, they discussed reading levels. What a difference a couple of years can make!

Since the school board's reading level initiative was introduced to teachers, parent comments and questions had been drastically altered. The dominant discourse of teachers, and subsequently Mainstream Elementary, escaped the confines of the school. Parents were speaking of reading levels and levelled text. There was no way of knowing whether this transformation was facilitated directly by teachers, or indirectly by teachers through students. It was interesting though, to have discussions about reading with the parents of my grade one and two students.

Being new to the educational system, parents of my grade one students had only started talking about reading levels. This discussion was limited to questions about what the number on the book covers represented. Parents of my grade two students were of a completely different mindset. The grade two parents were cognisant of reading levels, and were very much interested in the reading level of their child. I discussed this difference in the questioning of the parents with another primary teacher. This conversation was outlined in the following journal entry:

Me: Parents of my grade two students frequently ask about reading levels, while parents of my grade one students aren't as concerned about reading levels. Have you experienced this before?
Teacher: No, but I would expect it is because the grade two parents would have heard about reading levels last year when their child was in grade one.
Me: Are you aware of grade one teachers discussing reading levels?
Teacher: Yes. Parents would have noticed levels on homework books, would have heard about levels from the grade one teacher, and would have heard about levels from Reading Recovery. They would have also seen levels on report cards and notes from teachers.

Within one year of schooling, teachers have introduced and solidified a new concept within parent discourse. Parents have taken on this new concept, and have used it as part of their thinking regarding student progress. Beside this documented conversation, I wrote: *what have we done*.

I documented one conversation I had with the mother of one of my students.

Mother: How is my child's reading?
Me: He is doing great. His is showing great progress.
Mother: I agree. He's doing great at home too. What level is he reading at?
Me: He is reading at level 16.
Mother: Oh no. Last year he was at 12, and he should be much better than that at this point in the year.
Me: Not necessarily. It is typical for student reading to take a step back during the summer if they had not read. His reading is showing progress, and I am confident that this progress will continue.
Mother: But 16's not good.
Me: But I thought we just agreed that he is doing well and has shown great progress.
Mother: That was before I knew his level.
Me: But the level doesn't change his reading. He's still doing well and showing progress.
Mother: Where should his reading be by year's end?
Me: He will be fine. You and I have both seen progress.
Mother: I know, but I need to know what his level should be by the end of the year. I don't know why I need the level, I just do.
Me: By year's end, he should be reading approximately at level 20.

Beside this conversation I had written the words: *dominant discourse.* It was completely obvious in that exchange that the discursive practices of reading levels had permeated into parent discussion. I told the parent the reading level and she was immediately discouraged with where her child was reading, despite having been so pleased with his progress only seconds earlier. Relying on the reading level to inform her about her child's reading was a form of hegemony (Rabinow, 2010). She was giving all control associated with her child's reading to the reading level assigned by the school.

Parents were not only speaking of reading levels with teachers, but with their children and with other parents as well. I have a page in my journal that lists the statements students made to me regarding their parents and reading levels:

> *My mom told me how proud she is of my reading level.*
> *My parents want to know when I am changing levels.*
> *My mom and dad told me that my reading level was the highest in my grade.*

I also have a page in my journal that lists the statements parents made to me regarding their child's reading level:

> *What can I do to increase my child's reading level?*
> *When will my kid change to a higher reading level?*
> *Why has my daughter being at this level for so long?*
> *Why are there students in the other class reading at higher levels?*
> *My daughter was higher than this when she was in grade one.*

Both entries in my journal reflect the discursive structure of reading levels. Governmentality (Rabinow, 2010) was visible when analyzing these entries as the board's and hence Mainstream Elementary's philosophy of reading levels was being

accepted as correct because of the school's perceived level of authority regarding student reading.

Following the work of Foucault (Foucault, 1995; Rabinow, 2010), the discursive structure of reading levels can be readily identified through these experiences. The theory of reading levels has been adopted by the educational system as fact. Practices of dominant discourse were put in place (board workshops, committees, school communication with families) that situated reading levels as an accepted practice. Thus, a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) surrounding reading levels had been established within the parent community as well as within Mainstream Elementary.

As this regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) permeated from Mainstream Elementary to parents, so did the oppression. It was not only teachers, but parents of students that were being oppressed. Parents were adopting the discursive practice of reading levels, and were using it when conversing with teachers and other parents about student reading. Parents were compliant in their own oppression. There were a considerable number of parents who communicated reading progress in terms of reading levels. As written in my journal, I was unsure whether they did this out of belief that it was a superior theory, or that they did this out of fear that they would be judged as parents not working in the best interest of their children.

4.2.4 Summary

As evident in the analysis of my journal entries, reading levels had become a discursive practice within the educational system by educators, students and parents. Reading levels had become accepted as common sense, and as a result were considered to be superior knowledge. With reading levels considered official knowledge, reading achievement and reading progress have taken a backseat to the numerical representation of reading levels.

Alternative views to reading levels were often refuted by department and board officials, Mainstream Elementary administration, teachers and parents. These alternative views of reading levels were deemed unsubstantiated and flawed by those in the educational hierarchy. The language used by the department and board verified the effectiveness of reading levels, and situated alternative views as inferior.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This analysis chapter examined reading levels using a Foucauldian lens (Foucault, 1995; Rabinow, 2010). The analysis investigated how the discursive practice of reading levels was adopted into the school system, and how this practice helped to maintain the dominant discourse authorized by the school board and Mainstream Elementary.

A similar analysis of running records and guided reading follows in Chapter Five. As with the reading level analysis, running records and guided reading were analyzed through a Foucauldian lens.

Chapter 5: DATA ANALYSIS: DOMINANT DISCOURSE II

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter completes the journal analysis using Foucault's discourse theory as the lens by focussing on the themes of running records and guided reading. In order to understand and manage my data, I subdivided each theme into types of interaction. The majority of entries in my journal pertained to interactions with educators, students, and parents. As a result, these became focal points for my research. Again, for the purpose of this analysis, the term educator refers to teachers, school administration, and board and department officials.[4]

5.2 RUNNING RECORDS

The running record is a miscue analysis reading assessment that is used to determine the oral reading level of students. This reading assessment analyzes miscues as: meaning (semantic), syntactic, and visual; as based on the work of Marie Clay (2006). Reading errors which maintain the meaning of the text (ie. car for vehicle) are coded as meaning (semantic) errors. Reading errors which are structurally correct up to the error (ie. the man walked vs. the man was) are coded as syntactic errors. Reading errors based on visual information from the print (ie. horse for house) are coded as visual errors. Errors and self-corrections are then calculated to determine the easy (independent), instructional, and hard reading levels of students (Clay, 2006).

[4] Although reading levels, running records and guided reading were recurring themes, not all three themes included data from each of the representatives (educators, students and parents).

5.2.1 Educators

Within the school setting, running records had become a discursive practice among educators, and had also permeated to student thinking. This discursive practice was very apparent among educators in conversations I had recorded in my journal. Regardless of my professional setting—whether it was department or board in-services, Mainstream Elementary committee meetings, staff meetings, or classroom conversations between teachers—it did not take long before running records were the topic of conversation.

One journal entry in particular resonated with my re-emergence into primary teaching. I had documented a meeting that took place at the beginning of the school year. I had been setting up my grade one/two combined classroom when my principal dropped by.

> *Principal: How are things going?*
> *Me: Great. My classroom is almost finished.*
> *Principal: Have you given much thought to running records? How will you assess reading?*
> *Me: Actually…*
> *Principal: Running records are the best way of assessing reading.*
> *Me: I was thinking about them, but also other assessment techniques.*
> *Principal: Well, the board expects grade one, two and three teachers to use running records, and so do I.*

Beside this conversation, on the margins of the page, I wrote: *why bother asking me my thoughts if you are not going to listen to my response*. I also underlined the statement which had most frustrated me: *the board expects grade one, two and three teachers to use running records, and so do I.* This statement stressed how running records became the preferred method of reading assessment. The board, and subsequently Mainstream Elementary administration, had taken this assessment as optimal, and insisted on primary grade teachers using this technique. Speaking from a position of authority, my principal

insisted that I was to use this form of assessment, and rationalized that decision with the fact that this was a board initiative. This journal entry reflected Foucault's (Rabinow, 2010) regime of truth, as the principal had set criteria to ensure the use of running records in the primary grades.

This was not the only journal entry pertaining to running records. In fact, there were a string of journal entries that focused on running records. Many of my journal entries were recorded during the many language arts in-services I attended during the year. Most of these entries mentioned the emphasis placed on the use of running records and in many margins I had jotted down feeling pressured and feeling as though I had no choice.

One journal entry centered on a presentation from the language arts consultant. This entry again documented the promoted positives of running records. The words *objective*, *insightful* and *necessity in providing effective reading instruction* were jotted down in this journal entry. It seemed that these were the key phrases used to situate and defend running records as the optimal assessment.

I recorded events from one in-service in which there were a few questions asked to the consultant from teachers in the audience. Teachers asked:

> *Teacher A: When should we do running records?*
> *Teacher B: How many running records should we do on our students?*
> *Teacher C: Why should we use running records?*

Before I had time to think about the questions and possible responses, another teacher mentioned:

> *Teacher D: Just look at Guidelines for Running/Reading Record Assessment for Grades 1, 2 and 3. This will answer all of your questions.*

In my journal I drew a huge question mark. Beside that question mark I wrote: *why did the department of education feel it was necessary to create a booklet that supports and promotes the implementation of running records in the classroom*? Was the purpose of this booklet to situate them as an authority? Was this book to situate the use of running records as the preferred method of reading assessment? Was this book to act as a catalyst for the acceptance of running records by teachers? This was a form of governmentality (Rabinow, 2010) in that the department and board were using their status as educational experts to influence teachers to use running records. This also embodied a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) in that this document was created to distinguish running/reading records as being a superior form of reading assessment.

Throughout the course of the year, I had many meetings, discussions and professional development sessions with the literacy coach in my school. Being new to a grade one/two classroom, I had numerous questions concerning the teaching and assessing of reading. As I wrote in my journal: *I want to make informed decisions that will enhance the learning environment within my classroom*. I had documented my intentions for the visits and what I had hoped to accomplish and/or answer during each visit:

> *Get a better understanding of reading and writing instruction.*
> *Develop a daily classroom schedule.*
> *Better understand all the resources available in the primary grades.*
> *Identify contacts when certain aspects arise during the year.*

Most of the suggestions I had received from the literacy coach involved the use of running records. Beside these suggestions in my journal, I inserted the equation: *running records = answer to everything*.

During one conversation with the literacy coach, she discussed the positives of running records. I wrote her comments in my journal.

> *Literacy Coach: Running records are a truly objective reading assessment that assists the teacher in two ways. First, running records shed light on the reading strategies being used by students as they read. Second, running records would be used in determining the reading level of the student, which assists the teacher in assigning levelled books.*

I circled the words *truly objective* several times. Is the literacy coach, a board official, now using certain terminology as a means for teachers to accept and use running records? Seeing how the literacy coach was in a position of influence, did the board want teachers to accept this rationale as verbatim—to again establish what Foucault (Rabinow, 2010) referred to as a regime of truth?

I documented another conversation between my school's literacy coach and myself in which I had attempted to discuss the pressure I was feeling regarding running records.

> *Me: Running records are constantly being stressed, by the department and board, as the definitive way of assessing student reading.*
> *Literacy Coach: Running records were now being referred to as reading records.*

The literacy coach's statement had been underlined and circled numerous times. My reflections about this situation contained the words frustrated, voiceless and helpless.

I inquired about the name change, and recorded the response I received from the literacy coach.

> *Literacy Coach: The name change was because running records measure reading as a whole process.*

This was not the only entry regarding the change of name from running records to reading records. I had documented another conversation with my principal where she stated:

> *Principal: I want you to call running records reading records when talking to parents about student reading.*
> *Me: Why?*
> *Principal: When parents hear reading records they would know it is an assessment about reading, and that will help them understand why we do these.*

In my journal, I jotted down that by changing the name of the assessment, the department and board hoped to change attitudes and thoughts of teachers and parents regarding this assessment.

As the end of the school year approached, the literacy coach explained to me the appropriate technique of conducting running records for the end of the year reading levels of students. These end-of-the-year reading levels were required from the board so that board officials would have an understanding of how primary students were reading. It was explained to me that the board produced a list of acceptable texts that teachers were to use for these running records. When I questioned why certain texts were to be used, I recorded the literacy coach's reply as a journal entry.

> *Literacy Coach: For consistency. For reading record scores to be consistent and comparable throughout the province, teachers must use certain texts.*

I wrote the word *control* beside this entry. Not only were teachers being forced to use a certain assessment, but we were also being forced to use certain texts.

As I compared the journal entries from my in-services to those from my meetings with the literacy coach I highlighted the commonalities. Both contained similar descriptors and benefits of the running record. In the margins I wrote the words propaganda and governmentality (Rabinow, 2010) in dark letters and followed them by several exclamation points.

It was not only board and department officials, and literacy coaches that had been conversing about running records. Many, if not all, primary teachers at Mainstream Elementary had discussed running records on a daily basis. Some of the comments teachers made regarding running records were captured in my journal:

> *How long does it take you to do a running record?*
> *I usually do a couple running records every few days.*
> *We haven't been doing any read alouds lately because I need to do more running records for my report cards.*
> *I have been thinking about holding a few students back during gym or music to do a running record with them.*

The number of running records performed on students seemed to spike as teachers were filling in report cards. In one journal entry I asked myself:

> *Is the increase in the number of running records due to teachers believing that running records are an effective reading assessment, or because of the increased mention of running records by the department and board.*

Beside these two journal entries I wrote the words surveillance and hegemony (Foucault, 1995; Rabinow, 2010); surveillance because some teachers took running records out of fear they were being watched; hegemony because some teachers were doing running records because their teaching decisions were being influenced by the adamant stance the department and board took in regards to running records.

The department and board, both authoritative bodies within the educational system, promoted and implemented the use of running records, as often noted in my journal. This promotion had resulted in the belief that running records were superior forms of assessment, and were used by competent teachers.

Arising from this promotion and implementation of running records was what Foucault (Rabinow, 2010) referred to as governmentality. According to Foucault, governmentality referred to knowledge as having the ability to influence the balance of power within a setting. Running records, being positioned as superior forms of reading assessment, had given the department and board the power in the reading debate. The argument that running records were both effective and efficient allowed the department and board to defend their stance and to mandate the use of such reading assessments. In fact, the sudden name change of running records to reading records, by the department and board only strengthened the notion that this technique was a superior form of reading assessment.

The department and board, through language arts consultants, literacy coaches, and school administrators, had developed structures that promoted and supported the use of running records. Language arts consultants, literacy coaches, and school administrators, stressed, facilitated, and mandated the use of running records. This organizational structure, resembling that of a hierarchy, reaffirmed the department and board's stance on running records. A system had been created and maintained that supported the positive nature of running records. This resulted in a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010). In fact this regime of truth had gone so far as to include knowledge of running records as prerequisites for departmental and board positions. What better way to ensure the promotion of running records than to screen out those teachers who may question this reading assessment?

This organizational structure resulted in teachers accepting the department and board's views on running records as verbatim. Teachers accepted the information being presented as common sense. Consequently teachers based their teaching decisions on what the department and board stated, and altered their practices to adhere to department and board beliefs. By operating within this hegemony (Rabinow, 2010), I was equally responsible for promoting these beliefs and for subjecting myself and my students to the propaganda that was being spread to primary teachers.

I, as a teacher, had continued to question the use of running records and continued to question the knowledge being given to teachers. Despite this questioning—this resistance—I still fell prey to one of the discursive practices that Foucault (1995)

described as surveillance. I conducted running records in my classroom, frequently in fact. I did this not believing in the propaganda that had been fed to me, but because I had feared that my teaching was being scrutinized by Mainstream Elementary's administration. I feared that my teaching would be questioned and criticized if I did not conduct regular running records. This fear was based on the frequent comment that competent teachers used running records.

5.2.2 Students

Running records not only became the discussion of teachers and staff, but also entered the vocabulary of students. Students became aware of this type of reading assessment. One of my first journal entries regarding students' interest in running records involved a conversation between me and the students.

> *Student A: How do you do running records?*
> *Me: I listen to all the words students say as they read a book.*
> *Student B: Are the checkmarks for when we say the right words?*
> *Me: Yes.*
> *Student A: What do you do if we say the wrong word?*
> *Me: I write the word you say above the word that is in the book.*
> *Student B: How do you know how we did?*
> *Me: I count all the words that you read, all the words that you say right and all the words that were missed. Then I do some math and find your level.*

Students wanted to understand what was happening in their classroom, and what I was doing while listening to them read. Not only did students ask questions, but they became keen observers of what I was doing during their reading. This interest in observing how running records were taken resulted in students' focussing more on the assessment procedure instead of reading. In my journal I wrote:

What part did I play in this change?
Did students emphasize running records because they thought I was?

These questions documented in my journal helped me understand how my actions caused a change in student thinking. This was a form of Foucault's governmentality (Rabinow, 2010) in that students were accepting what I was doing as right because I was in a position of authority as the teacher.

Instead of focussing on their reading, students were focussed on what I was doing as they read. They would constantly glance toward the running record sheet as they read. Students were looking back and forth, from the book to the running record sheet. Occasionally, students would stop reading and ask me questions. One incident was recorded in my journal. This incident involved a student and me as I was taking a running record of the student's reading.

A student was reading and then suddenly stopped.
The student looked at me and asked why I wrote a word on the running record sheet.
I explained that I was keeping track of their reading, and I urged them to continue reading.
Instead of going back to the book, the student continued asking me questions about the checkmarks and words that I had recorded on the running record sheet.
The student lost all interest and focus in the book, and became obsessed with the running record sheet.
The student would not continue reading until he could see the sheet.
Once the student started to read again, he made errors that were not typical of his reading. He was not focussed on the text.

After reflecting on this journal entry, I decided to record the student perceptions regarding running records.

Student A: Running records see how good students read.

Student B: Running records are used to find reading levels.
Student C: They are used to help the teacher pick books for everyone.
Me: I use running records to get a good understanding of their reading.
Student A: Running records are like tests. We have to pass them or we don't get new books.

Beside this entry I questioned how one assessment could result in so much student anxiety.

Running records became a permanent fixture of student dialogue. This dialogue was not one reflecting the reading progress, but one of anxiety and results. Regardless of what I told my students or how I tried to ease their anxieties, the emphasis placed on running records became more visible in the classroom. I could not tell students that running records were insignificant and at the same time be performing them on a daily basis. I reflected on this notion in my journal and recorded the word *hypocrite* on the top of one page.

Another journal entry emphasized how running records changed the discussion and thoughts surrounding reading. I recorded this entry in my journal as soon as it transpired.

I was listening to a student read a book during silent reading.
The student was reading the book very well and then abruptly stopped.
I waited for him to continue reading, but he did not.
When I asked him why he stopped reading, he said that he always stopped around the middle of the book.
I asked him why he would not want to finish the book.
He said he wanted to finish the book, but he was always asked to stop reading the book around its middle when he was reading with me.
I did not understand this statement at first, but later realized it was true. When he told me that it usually happened when I was taking running records, I realized why he stopped reading when he did.
I tried to explain how I only had him stop reading at certain parts of the book because I knew that he was doing well and that we did not have enough time.
He asked why he had to stop if he was doing so well.

I did not have a response.

I was as confused as he was, and I questioned what effect my teaching decisions were having on my students' beliefs about reading. My teaching practices had caused a student to abruptly stop reading a book. This was a book that the student enjoyed and wanted to finish. However, because of the events that transpired in my classroom, the student realized that finishing the book was not significant. What was significant, to this student as a result of my actions, was to stop reading. The discursive practice of running records had resulted in the student changing his actions. He had adapted to Mainstream Elementary's emphasis on running records. He stopped what he wanted to do for something he knew the school valued. This incident exemplified student acceptance of the discursive practices of running records. Thus discursive practices modified student behaviour and knowledge.

As the end of the second semester approached, I felt pressured by administration to take a running record of all of my students as reading levels were to be communicated to parents during parent-teacher interviews. What this meant was that for two weeks I conducted many running records. Students realized that these assessments were being conducted at report card time, and that these running records would be used for report card comments. This incident became a journal entry.

> *I explained to students that these running records were only one assessment tool within an assessment toolbox, and that the running records would not be the sole evaluation of their reading.*
> *Students asked why I was doing so many running records if running records were only part of the evaluation.*

Reflecting on this journal entry caused me to recognize that I placed a great deal of emphasis on this single assessment, and had not realized this until my students questioned me. This was an example of surveillance (Foucault, 1995) as I did not want my teaching practices to be questioned because of a hesitance to take running records.

Another journal entry documents student interactions during an indoor recess, and how running records had become part of student vocabulary. I had noticed a group of students huddled together in the morning message area of my classroom. They seemed to be abnormally quiet. When I approached the students, I was shocked to hear them talking about running records.

> *Students discussing the number of checkmarks they got, the number of books they read, and whether they thought the books were hard or easy.*
> *I asked students why they were spending their recess time talking about running records.*
> *They were seeing how everybody did, and trying to find out what person did the best.*
> *I asked how it was possible to find out what person did the best.*
> *One student said whoever had the most checkmarks did the best. The student that got a lot of checkmarks would get more books and read at a higher reading level.*

The discursive practices that were in place in my classroom surrounding the use of running records had a significant effect on my students. The regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) that was established in the educational setting had permeated into Mainstream Elementary, and subsequently into my classroom. This had established parameters and structures that situated running records as natural, as something that was common sense. Any questions that students had regarding running records were deflected or refuted because of the discursive practices that were in place. In fact, as a teacher, I was a

component of the regime of truth when I rationalized the use of running records to my students.

Students accepted the rationalization of running records and sought to understand them more clearly. While they were curious about the purpose and techniques associated with the running record process, they were participants. In fact, students bought into the results of running records and placed as much priority on the running record as educators had. Students, much like teachers, were concerned with running record results and what these results meant for their reading materials.

5.2.3 Summary

It was apparent from the analysis of my research journal that running records were a discursive practice. Running records were being pushed by department and board officials as being the most comprehensive and effective form of reading assessment. As such, running records were being touted as the way all competent teachers assess student reading. With running records being situated as a superior method of assessment, department and board officials took an active stance on implementing this form of reading assessment.

5.3 GUIDED READING

The dialogue of teachers at Mainstream Elementary regarding reading instruction had a third common theme: guided reading. Guided reading is the teaching of reading strategies to a small group of students. The small group of students is determined based

on reading levels. Within the school setting, guided reading has become a significant portion of the reading program, and as such became a discursive practice. The discursive practice of guided reading permeated from educators to students, and is closely aligned with reading levels.

5.3.1 Educators

Since I began teaching in the primary level, I constantly heard from the department, board, and Mainstream Elementary administration about guided reading and how it should be incorporated into my daily schedule. In fact, guided reading was one of the primary components of my school's literacy program.

Multiple entries in my journal spotlighted guided reading and the priority placed upon it within the educational system. Language arts consultants, board officials, literacy coaches, and Mainstream Elementary administration have stressed the benefits of guided reading and have emphasized how, in order to effectively teach reading, teachers should implement guided reading within their classrooms. In fact, my school had gone so far as to mandate the implementation of guided reading within the primary classrooms.

One such journal entry focused on a conversation I had with my administration.

> *Me: I held reading conferences with my students while I was teaching in the upper elementary grades and would love to try this technique in my grade one/two classroom.*
> *Principal: Reading conferences are not supported by the school nor the board. You will use guided reading in your classroom.*
> *Me: Why?*
> *Principal: Guided reading is an efficient method of teaching reading. Plus, this is a board initiative for all elementary schools.*

Beside this journal entry I drew a large question mark. I was shocked to realize that my principal was simply following a mandate from the board instead of basing decisions on authentic conversations with staff in the school. I was also frustrated about the phrase *efficient method* when that seemed contrary to any of the research I had been reading. This mandate resembled a regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) in that the school board and principal were putting structures in place to support guided reading.

Related to this was another journal entry about a meeting I participated in with the Mainstream Elementary's literacy committee. The purpose of this literacy committee, comprised of the literacy coach, vice-principal, primary teachers and the Reading Recovery teacher, was to ensure that board initiatives were carried out in the school. One committee meeting focussed on guided reading. Being relatively new to teaching in the primary grades, I asked questions regarding guided reading. The answer I received from the literacy coach became its own entry in my journal.

Literacy Coach: Watch a guided reading video.

Shortly after this committee meeting, the vice-principal came to see me in my classroom. The vice-principal reiterated the guided reading discussion from the meeting, and stated that the video would be great to watch.

The literacy coach and vice-principal, both operating within the hierarchy of the educational system, referred to a video when questioned. This video, much like Foucault's governmentality (Rabinow, 2010), was situated as being of superior

knowledge. Instead of participating in a dialogue, the literacy coach and vice-principal directed me, with my questions, to watch a video.

There were a handful of students in my class experiencing difficulty reading. I had listened to them read, discussed their reading with their parents, and stayed after school with them to try to help them with their reading. Feeling overwhelmed and still having unanswered questions, I spoke with a few primary teachers at Mainstream Elementary, and asked them for suggestions and insights. All three teachers responded similarly: more guided reading. The rationale for their responses was recorded in my journal.

> *Guided reading books are accompanied by instructional handouts that illustrate what the teacher should focus on during the guided reading sessions.*
> *Guided reading is the best way to improve reading levels.*
> *Guided reading gives students a chance to practice reading strategies.*

Hearing the feedback I received from my fellow teachers, and wanting to do what I could for my students, I established more guided reading within my classroom. This was not a seamless transition. I struggled with how to incorporate more guided reading into my daily schedule, and I struggled with what would have to be removed from my daily schedule if more guided reading was to be included. A journal entry reflected this painstaking process.

> *I removed reading buddies from my schedule so that I could do more guided reading.*
> *Students were not happy.*
> *I eventually took some time off silent reading and morning message to introduce centers, and re-introduced reading buddies.*
> *Within centers, I conducted guided reading sessions.*

Beside these entries in my journal, I questioned whether I felt pressured to add more guided reading or whether I added it because I thought it would benefit my students. I later went back to this entry and underlined the word pressured. This pressure was indicative of the fact that I felt my teaching was being monitored, much like the result of the Panopticon (Foucault, 1995).

Much like that of running records, guided reading was being promoted within the educational system as being a superior form of knowledge. With guided reading being promoted so strongly by department and board officials, numerous teachers adjusted their teaching accordingly. This was the pressure that I felt. I was being told by language arts consultants, board officials, literacy coaches, Mainstream Elementary administration and other teachers that guided reading was effective and efficient in the teaching of reading. If I was to object to this notion, I worried that my teaching would be questioned and considered inferior. This discursive practice exerted pressure on me to incorporate guided reading into my daily schedule. Subsequently, this pressure resulted in a form of surveillance (Foucault, 1995). Worried that my teaching would be questioned, I was adamant on studying guided reading and following the proper procedures within my classroom.

A regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) was established in Mainstream Elementary surrounding the practice of guided reading. Regardless of the questions I posed to my school administration or literacy coach, I was met with resistance. Their response was similar: the department and board supported the use of guided reading, and this was the

technique that would be used in all primary classrooms. My administration and literacy coach had positioned guided reading as infallible because of the stance the board and department had taken on the matter. The viewpoint of guided reading being effective was irrefutable in the minds Mainstream Elementary administration and literacy coach, not because of its merits but because of the origin of the mandates.

5.3.2 Students

Incorporating guided reading into my teaching schedule had resulted in students becoming quite familiar with this particular reading instruction technique. My grade two students were much more familiar with guided reading than my grade one students. This was due to the fact that my grade two students had experienced guided reading the previous year in grade one, while my grade one students had not had guided reading in Kindergarten. As a result of this increased familiarity, grade two students discussed and questioned guided reading much more frequently.

Keeping a research journal had prompted me to listen more closely to the dialogue of my students. This student dialogue occurred during classroom instruction, walking in the halls to specialist classes, and during recess. I heard and recorded, in my journal, many conversations pertaining to guided reading and student interpretation of this reading instruction technique.

One such journal entry involved the grouping practices associated with guided reading. Students were grouped based on their individual reading level for guided reading. Recorded in my journal was the following conversation:

> *Student A: Good readers are grouped together for guided reading and bad readers are grouped together for guided reading.*
> *Me: Why do you say that?*
> *Student B: Groups get different books. The teacher picks books by seeing how good or bad students read.*
> *Me: I make groups based on the skills I teach.*
> *Student A: I think you make groups of good readers and groups of bad readers.*

Regardless of my response, students were of the mindset that guided reading groups reflected good and bad readers. Students were basing their thoughts on what they saw occurring in the classroom. For them, actions spoke louder then words. They understood that reading levels had a role to play in guided reading, and they understood how reading levels indicated the proficiency of student reading. The fact of the matter was the students were not altogether incorrect in their assumptions. Guided reading groups were created based on student reading levels, and therefore students with higher reading levels were grouped together, and students with lower reading levels were grouped together.

Another journal entry was a summary of a student conversation I overheard in my classroom. This conversation pertained to the frequency students attended guided reading sessions.

> *Students said that the weaker the reading group, the more frequently the group attended guided reading sessions.*
> *Students said that some groups had guided reading only one or two times a week, while other groups had guided reading two or three times a week.*
> *Students said how the weaker groups had more guided reading sessions because they needed more practice with the teacher.*

Students were also vocal in discussing how the teacher always selected the book for the guided reading session. This emphasis on book selection appeared as multiple entries within my journal. Students were aware that they were not to choose the book, and had to do their best with the book that the teacher selected. Realizing that students were discussing book selection, I asked students why they thought the teacher selected the guided reading book instead of students.

> *One student replied that teachers pick the guided reading books because they knew exactly what readers should do for each book, and that the teacher knew what books would help students do these things.*
> *Another student responded that teachers have better books for students to practice with.*

The discursive practice of guided reading had permeated to the conversation of students. Students had accepted that teachers should be in control of the reading process, and that students needed guided reading to become better readers. Teachers were seen as the key stakeholders in reading, and that students were passive participants. Teachers determined the groups, decided on the frequency of guided reading sessions, selected the books to be used, and chose the reading strategies to be taught. Students talked about these aspects, but did not question them. Students were accepting the various aspects of guided reading as fact.

Students began to accept this reading instruction technique as common practice. They accepted the notion that they needed teachers to select books for them and to instruct them on how to be good readers. They accepted the teacher's grouping, the teacher's book choice, and the teacher's guided reading schedule. Students accepted all facets of

guided reading because they were operating within the hegemonic (Rabinow, 2010) structure of dominant discourse.

The discursive practices that operated on teachers were also operating on students. However, students accepted guided reading as common sense because it was the practice that had been used during their reading instruction from previous years. Thus, governmentality (Rabinow, 2010) was also a factor. Mainstream Elementary, an institution of influence, had utilized and promoted the use of this reading instruction technique. Having understood this, students accepted the notion that guided reading was necessary for reading success. They and their learning were being influenced.

The regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) that existed for me, as a teacher, also existed for my students. The people in positions of power, and the people whose knowledge was being accepted as fact, had also had an impact on my students. However, I was an instrument in this regime of truth (Rabinow, 2010) for my students. Although I questioned the use of guided reading, I incorporated it into my teaching, and subsequently played a role in my students accepting it as a fact.

5.3.3 Summary

As evident from the analysis of my research journal data, guided reading was a discursive practice within my school's literacy program. Guided reading was considered common sense, and was viewed as a superior form of reading instruction. Thus, guided reading was situated as superior knowledge.

Alternative views to guided reading were deemed inferior, and teacher competence was questioned. Department and board officials implemented and supported the maintenance of this reading instruction technique by using language such as reading success, individualized instruction, and effective reading strategies. This language choice was used to maintain the dominant discourse by situating guided reading as irrefutable.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This analysis chapter examined running records and guided reading using a Foucauldian lens (Foucault, 1995; Rabinow, 2010). The analysis investigated how the discursive practices of running records and guided reading were adopted into the school system, and how these practices helped to maintain the dominant discourse authorized by my school board and Mainstream Elementary.

As a result of the dominant discourse associated with the literacy practices at Mainstream Elementary, there was a marked change in dialogue and perception regarding reading. Mainstream Elementary's discursive practices (reading levels, running records, and guided reading) were positioned as natural and common sense. Any deviation from such practices was viewed as negative.

To better understand these discursive practices, I examined them in relation to the reading theories of Direct Instruction and Whole Language. This examination illuminates the

reading theory that I practiced in my classroom, as well as the reading theory underlying reading levels, running records and guided reading.

Chapter 6: ANALYTIC LENS II: READING THEORY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading instruction has long been the focus of discussion and research, both inside and outside of the school system. Countless articles have been written about best practice for reading instruction with most attempting to cite their findings as a one-size-fits-all approach to reading (Bruneau, 1997; Spiegel, 1998). Despite differences in various studies, the main proponents of reading instruction come down to a debate between two main philosophies: Direct Instruction approaches to reading and the Whole Language approach to reading instruction. This chapter examines these two different positions to provide an account in which I will situate my teaching practices as well as those of Mainstream Elementary at the time of this study. This chapter begins with an overview of the two dominant approaches to reading instruction followed by a description of the emergence of packaged programs and balanced literacy.

6.2 APPROACHES TO READING INSTRUCTION

As indicated above, two significant approaches to reading instruction are Direct Instruction and Whole Language. Direct Instruction focuses on the accumulation of individual skills taught in isolation. Whole Language focuses on a student centered approach to reading instruction whereby instructional activities are based upon meaning making. Within each of these reading approaches, I will consider the role of the teacher, the role of the student, how comprehension is situated within each theory, and how this relates to my classroom practices.

For the purpose of this analysis, the terms reading process and reading instruction will be used. Reading process refers to what happens in the reader's mind as s/he reads, while reading instruction refers to the way that a teacher teaches reading (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

6.2.1 Direct Instruction

Direct Instruction (which I will now refer to as DI) follows the philosophy that reading instruction leans heavily toward a skills-based approach. In DI, students progress through a series of skills which are then combined for the purpose of reading (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

6.2.1.1 Role of the Teacher

The DI model of reading situates the teacher as the knowledge dispenser in the classroom. Jordan (2005) states that "the teaching of reading … seems to be a one-way transmission of knowledge/ideology from the teachers' manual and reading materials to the teachers and from the teachers to the students" (p. 205). The teaching manual referred to is developed by publishing companies, and is the basis of the reading program. It is laid out explicitly for the teacher to follow. Although the teacher seems to be the knowledge dispenser, the teacher is in fact passive in that s/he follows what is written in the teaching manual.

6.2.1.2 Role of the Student

In DI, student learning is believed to be linear. Once students master one skill, they move on to the next one in line. Students are passive in their learning as they are recipients of the knowledge. Rowan, Knobel, Bigum and Lankshear (2002) describe this sequence of skills as "knowing the alphabetic script visually and phonetically, grasping the mechanism of putting elements of the script together to encode or decode words and separating words or adding them together to read and write sentences" (p. 78). Thus, students are to learn small bits of information, and then put them together. This belief is often referred to as the part-to-whole (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

Within DI, decodable texts are to be used during reading instruction (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Decodable texts are comprised of words that follow phonic patterns that students have been taught, as well as sight words of which students are aware.

6.2.1.3 Comprehension

It is believed, within the DI theory of reading, that oral reading fluency is a prerequisite to comprehension (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Fluency is defined as being when "readers efficiently blend sounds and say words without long pauses, hesitations, or going back to reread what they've already read" (Meyer & Manning, 2007, p. 113). That being said, beginning reading instruction focuses on teaching students sound-symbol relationships and sight word vocabulary, using texts that have a controlled vocabulary.

Comprehension is seen as being one of two aspects: comprehension-as-outcome, or comprehension-as-procedure (Aukerman, 2008). Comprehension-as-outcome (Aukerman, 2008) is the belief that the text has a predetermined understanding, and that all other understandings are inaccurate. Within this view, the meaning of the text is viewed as fixed, and students are expected to achieve this set meaning if they are to be assessed as having comprehended the text. Teachers, operating under this view of comprehension, make sure that students learn what the text is really about (Aukerman, 2008).

Comprehension-as-procedure (Aukerman, 2008) is the belief that "a good reader is seen as one who accesses a fixed set of strategies to arrive successfully at the outcome" (p. 52) that the teacher determined. Within this view of comprehension, the text has one meaning and students need to possess and utilize specific strategies to arrive at this particular meaning. Teachers, operating under this view of comprehension, instruct students on specific strategies necessary to comprehend (Aukerman, 2008).

6.2.1.4 Classroom

The philosophy underpinning Mainstream Elementary's literacy program was based on aspects of DI. The literacy coach, at the mandate of the school board, promoted the use of teaching manuals and guides as the basis of reading instruction. Teachers were in-serviced and mentored on instructional methods that were deemed beneficial to student learning. Teachers were told to refer to these manuals for teaching decisions, and for support when needed.

Within Mainstream Elementary's literacy program, the learning process of students resembled the part-to-whole concept of DI. Students were instructed on the strategies used by good readers. These reading strategies were taught to students individually in a predetermined order. Once students achieved mastery with these skills, the strategies were then combined by the students with teacher supervision. Students were passive learners as choice was removed from the equation. The reading levels of students were determined and were then used to assign books to students. Students were not given the opportunity to select books.

6.2.2 Whole Language

Whole Language (which I will now refer to as WL) instruction embodies the philosophy that students be engaged in their learning. Students are able to make choices and have the opportunity to give input into decisions that affect their learning (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

6.2.2.1 Role of the Teacher

WL centers on student needs and abilities as the focus for teaching. According to Smith and Goodman (2008), "the whole language movement came from highly professional and informed teachers using their own understanding of language and language learning to build a pedagogy that they tested in their own classrooms and shared with each other" (p. 63). There is no one set program, or manual to teach from. Teachers tailor their instruction based on the learning needs of their students. Teachers understand that

students are individual, and thus instruction needs to be individualized. Teachers are active decision-makers within the classroom.

6.2.2.2 Role of the Student

At the heart of WL is meaning making (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Students read for the purpose of making meaning. All the activities and strategies that are carried out in the classroom are designed to strengthen and develop meaning making. Because the WL approach to teaching focuses on students' individual needs, teachers are cognisant of the fact that meaning making is not identical for each student and they tailor classroom activities and strategies to suit individual students.

Weaver (1990) explains that in a WL approach to reading, students learn, develop and master complex concepts and strategies through active involvement with authentic texts. These are not texts based only on words that students can sound out or identify, but are texts that have meaning for the child. Within a WL approach, students are read to, and read texts that are authentic to them. Texts used in WL classrooms are typically of various genres.

Predictable texts are described as being repetitive so that students are able to move from reading the whole text to identifying parts of the text, certain words, and sounds (Meyer & Manning, 2007). This reflects the theory behind WL of whole-to-part (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Manning (1991) clarifies this definition further by stating that WL presents "written language in its natural form, not in the small pieces advocated by both

the phonic approach and the skills approach" (p. 13). Students learn to read by using the whole text and deriving meaning from the text. Then, once students comprehend the text, they move into smaller units and practice skills and strategies.

6.2.2.3 Comprehension

WL also reflects the ideology of comprehension-as-sense-making (Aukerman, 2008). Comprehension-as-sense-making (Aukerman, 2008) is viewed as being the process of deciding what a text might mean, not relying on the ability to arrive at any one specific meaning. Thus, students bring their life experiences, questions, and predictions to the text as they are reading. Because of the reliance on student connection to text, there is not one set meaning for any given text. Meaning for a text is derived from the experiences that the individual brings to the text.

The WL reading theory recognizes four systems that readers use to make sense. These four systems, referred to as cueing systems, are: graphophonics (sound-symbol), lexicogrammatics (grammar), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (context) (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

As a way of understanding the use of these cueing systems, proponents of WL developed a reading assessment. This assessment, known as miscue analysis, is a tool used by teachers to see "what the child is doing as a meaning maker" (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Miscue analysis is utilized by the teacher to examine the cueing systems that students use when reading, and to examine the errors in the reading from the perspective of these four

cueing systems. Thus, in contrast to the DI method and philosophy, it is not so much fluency that is of interest to the WL teacher, but how the students make meaning of the text being read.

6.2.2.4 Classroom

These foundational aspects of WL share similarities with my own reading theory and practice. Within my classroom, I felt that my teaching should meet the needs of my students. My lesson plans were not rigid, but flexible in that I was willing to adjust my plans according to the needs of my students. I valued, too, the ability of the teacher and students to be active decision makers within the classroom. Basing classroom decisions on a teaching manual was not conducive, in my mind, to what was in the best interest of students.

I felt that teaching manuals lacked the necessity of being able to identify and understand the individuality of my students. I also felt that the manual was not always in line with my teaching beliefs. Teachers, within the WL reading theory, had the ability to make decisions, and to use their professional knowledge. Students, within the WL reading theory, had the ability to make decisions about their learning, and to have a literacy classroom reflective of their choices and their interests. This was more in line with my teaching beliefs and my classroom practices.

With meaning making being the purpose of reading, why would instructional and assessment practices remove meaning from the process? The WL theory of reading

promoted the idea that meaning making should be present in all aspects of reading instruction, and this belief was crucial for me. I wanted my students to always be cognisant of the fact that they read for meaning, and to facilitate this belief I tried to include meaning making in my classroom activities. For students to be involved in meaning making, they learned that reading was a process to which they brought their personal experiences, not a process that was to be done to determine a right answer.

As a means of reducing the gap between DI and WL approaches, publishers developed programs which were promoted as a combination of the two. Such programs were designed to facilitate reading through direct, step-by-step instruction.

6.3 PACKAGED PROGRAMS

As provincial student assessment[5] became common place in the educational setting, poor achievement and low test scores highlighted reading as a primary area of need. School boards fell under scrutiny as test results were made public and accountability resulted in the search for new and improved methods of teaching reading. As a result school boards turned to 'silver-bullet' programs in the hope that rigid adherence to a scripted, one-size-fits-all program would lead to better performance and higher achievement in the guise of improved test scores" (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007, p. 29). School boards hoped that if these programs were mandated in schools, student reading would improve.

[5] Provincial student assessment was an initiative undertaken by the PEI Department of Education. This topic is discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.5.

Caution should be exercised with any program, and programs should be monitored to ensure students are experiencing success. “No one method or approach is best, many contexts and practices facilitate students’ reading development, and many others would make learning to read difficult for some students” (Flippo, 1999, p. 39). Spiegel (1998) supports the view that there is no one single good method and argues that “not everyone learns in the same way; not every task requires the same strategies; not every teacher has the same talents; not every school has the same combination of learners and teachers” (p. 116).

Aside from the arguments against a single right program, there is also substantial research supporting and promoting the effectiveness of teachers over programs. As Smith (1999) explains, “Teaching is a social activity. Pre-designed programs cannot take the place of teachers, even when the programs are administered by teachers” (p. 151). Duffy and Hoffman (1999) make explicit their views about the value of teachers in educating students. They believe that “effective teachers are eclectic” (p. 11) and in many instructional circumstances, “teacher thought made the difference” (p. 11).

Smith (1999) was even more adamant in his stance that:

> [N]one of the responsibilities for ensuring the appropriate conditions for learning to read can be met by experts or authorities outside the classroom. The conditions can’t be prepackaged in commercialized kits of learning materials, electronic or otherwise. And the conditions certainly can’t be mandated by any kind of legislation. The only person authorized to make all these responsible decisions should be a competent teacher. (p. 155)

An increased demand for "silver bullet" reading programs fuelled what Flippo (1999) referred to as the Reading Wars, as researchers and marketers raced to produce fool-proof methods of reading instruction. Because WL was based upon the interests and engagement of children as individuals, it was much harder to package. As Weaver (1990) stated, "there is no single set of activities, much less a prepackaged program, that could be said to define whole language" (p.3).

These packaged programs also purport easy delivery and step-by-step sequencing of lessons and activities. It is this lack of complication that Chen and Derewianka (2009) claimed policy makers found attractive. Chen and Derewianka also highlighted the perceived benefits of such programs as producing "measurable phenomena that can be reduced to readily digested numbers such as the percentage increase in reading scores" (p. 235). These benefits however, may be misleading.

According to Routman (1991), "teaching discrete skills may yield temporary high scores on isolated subtests, but these results do not necessarily transfer to comprehending meaningful texts" (p. 299). Unfortunately these temporary high scores reinforce the place of such programs in the education system.

As a way to improve student reading, my school board established the position of literacy coach. One of the literacy coach's responsibilities was to facilitate the use of reading programs in primary classrooms, and to provide in-services and resources that support the

use of such programs. The literacy coach searched for programs that would remedy poor student reading. This resembles the search for ‘silver bullets’.

Mainstream Elementary administration, in hopes of raising the literacy scores, supported packaged reading programs as effective reading instruction. Teachers were told to adjust their instructional practices to reflect the position that the board, and subsequently Mainstream Elementary, had taken in regards to reading instruction. The preferred packaged reading program of the school board and Mainstream Elementary was based on a balanced literacy approach.

6.4 BALANCED LITERACY

As a means to resolve the battle between DI and WL model to reading, a balanced literacy approach was developed. This balanced reading approach consists of read alouds, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading. These four types of reading involve decreasing amounts of teacher support which allow for an increase in student independence (Rog, 2003). In this way, responsibility is gradually transferred from the teacher to the student.

The balanced reading approach asserts that using these four types of reading allows for a combination of whole-class, small-group and independent student reading opportunities. Balanced reading programs also stress the use of multiple types of texts (Rog, 2003).

Spiegel (1998) supported the balanced reading approach, stating:

> [W]e need to stop the search for the silver bullet, and the balanced literacy programs allow us to do so. Balanced approaches help us meet the needs of most children because such approaches are not restricted to one way of developing literacy. (p. 115)

Despite Spiegel's obvious support of the balanced reading program, Duffy and Hoffman (1999) cautioned against the full acceptance of any one program and reminded us that "improved reading is linked to teachers who use methods thoughtfully, not methods alone" (p. 15).

As balanced reading programs made their way into my own classroom I found myself drawn into the debate surrounding reading instruction. I became more cognisant of the fact that the lessons and activities outlined in the programs intended for my classroom were often in conflict with my teaching style and beliefs. As Manning (1991) pointed out:

> [T]he view (model, theory) of reading we subscribe to does make a difference. It determines how we organize and carry out instruction, what we judge to be successful reading (evaluation), what are considered to be problems in reading and how we remediate them. (p. 13)

My school board, through literacy coaches and Mainstream Elementary administration, had implemented the work of authors Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (1996) as the balanced reading approach to be used in the primary grades. This approach consisted of using the four types of reading, as well as using authentic literature within the classroom. Teachers were told, by the literacy coach and school administration, that this balanced reading approach was very comprehensive, and was a balance between the two dominant reading theories—DI and WL.

Teachers in the primary grades, grades one through three, were to conduct one if not two guided reading sessions daily. These guided reading sessions, as outlined in Chapter Five, were to be incorporated into the daily schedule. Guided reading sessions typically were to occur during center time, as suggested in the work of Fountas and Pinnell (1996).

One significant component of Mainstream Elementary's literacy program was the use of running records, discussed in Chapter Five. Running records, a miscue analysis, examined the miscues students made during their oral reading, and attributed these miscues to meaning (semantic), syntactic, or visual. In my school, similar to other schools within the board, running records were used to determine the reading level of a student. These running records were to be conducted on each student, several times during the month.

The texts that were to be used for student reading were levelled books, discussed in Chapter Four. Once a student's reading level was determined, that student could only be given books to read from the appropriate level. Within this approach, the belief was that students should not read books that were either too easy or too difficult.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined Direct Instruction and Whole Language, and considered the effects these reading theories have on the teacher, the student, comprehension, and classroom instructional practices. As outlined at the end of Chapter Two, reading theory (Direct Instruction and Whole Language) will be used as one of two lenses to analyze the

reading practices in place in my classroom and Mainstream Elementary: reading levels, running records, and guided reading. Chapter Seven will document the analysis of these reading practices.

Chapter 7: DATA ANALYSIS: READING THEORY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will revisit the themes of reading levels, running records and guided reading and examine my data for characteristics of Direct Instruction (DI) and Whole Language (WL).

7.2 READING LEVEL

As I described in Chapter Four, reading levels in my school referred to the level of difficulty at which a student is able to decode text independently, and became a key component of Mainstream Elementary's literacy program. This chapter expands on that by using the lens of DI and WL to examine the practice.

The premise behind levels is to ensure that a student has mastered the skills at his/her reading level, before proceeding to the next level. This linear model of skill acquisition follows closely with that of DI, maintaining that learning occurs through achieving and mastering a series of individual skills.

With levels, as characteristic of DI, students are not permitted to skip steps. Students are to progress through skills in a pre-determined order (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Many entries in my journal described incidents in which students expressed interest in reading materials outside their level. The following journal entry outlined an interaction that occurred while passing out homework books to my grade two students.

Student: Do you have another Spider book?
Me: I don't have one at your level.
Student: Can I read the same one you just gave her?
Me: You will be reading that book later on in the year.
Student: But I don't like the one you gave me.
Me: What about any other book from the blue bin?
Student: Nah. They're boring. I want to read the one about spiders.
Me: You'll get to read that book when you get to the green bin.
Student (handing back book): I don't want a book tonight.
Me: Try the book. You might like it.

This situation was one of many which highlighted the rigid adherence to sequential skill mastery associated with reading levels and DI. This situation caused frustration for both me and my student. This frustration was due to a conflict of philosophy. The student's desire to elicit control over his learning resembled the philosophy associated with WL where students are active participants in their learning. My frustration was also due to a conflict between my own philosophy and the DI philosophy and, is illustrated in the following comments which I had documented in my journal.

> *This doesn't feel right. I feel as though I am deterring student interest/enjoyment in reading instead of nurturing it. Should I have just given him the spider book? Would his frustration while reading it have been any worse than his frustration taking home a book he didn't want to read?*

In this situation, I struggled with the protocol of students being limited to reading materials from within a specific level. The philosophy of sequential skill acquisition in this situation was in direct conflict with my beliefs, similar to those of WL, that students should have choice and voice in their learning. I was very discouraged and sought advice and support from my school's literacy coach:

Me: I had an incident today where a little boy wanted to take a book home that was three or four levels above his reading level.
Literacy Coach: I hope you didn't send it home with him.
Me: I didn't. But I am having second thoughts about it.

Literacy Coach: You did the right thing. That book would have been too hard for him and he would have become frustrated.
Me: He was frustrated anyway taking home a book he didn't want to read.
Literacy Coach: Why didn't you give him another one?
Me: There weren't any at his level that he wanted to read.
Literacy Coach: Well, he'll move on to the next level soon enough.
Me: Yah, but I want him to enjoy reading. To look forward to the books he takes home and to be excited about reading them.
Literacy Coach: Levelled books are the best way for students to learn to read more difficult texts. He'll get to read books he's excited about when he gets to higher levels. There may be other books at his level that he'd like. I can look through mine if you'd like.

This conversation illustrated my discomfort with reading levels. I was struggling with the notion that students needed to possess certain skills in order to select books they were interested in reading. As is the philosophy behind WL, I wanted my students to have say in their learning experiences. I understood the philosophy behind levelling reading materials, I just did not agree with all aspects of it. The philosophy behind levelling texts was to ensure students had the necessary skills to read texts independently. Reading levels would ensure that students read books neither too easy nor too difficult. This philosophy again resembled the linear learning associated with DI (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

Another entry in my journal described a situation when I took my class to the library. They were instantly confused by the library's coding system and felt books should be levelled similar to how they were in the classroom.

Student A: What do these numbers mean?
Me: They show you how to find books in the library.
Student A: Where do they put the level?
Me: Library books aren't levelled.
Student A: Are you sure we're allowed to read them?
Student B: Yah, what if we pick one that's too hard?

Me: Why don't you find a book that you like and look through it.
Student A: But I didn't think we were allowed to do that.
Student B: Maybe you should pick our books for us.

This journal entry illustrated the dependence that was being fostered through the use of levelled books. Students were not comfortable selecting their own books and the idea of finding a book of interest did not make sense to them. They wanted their reading choices to be determined by the teacher.

This form of teacher control is an aspect of DI (Jordan, 2005). In DI, teachers are in control of student learning. Teachers are responsible for determining when students have mastered skills and are able to move on in their learning. Students are passive recipients of knowledge and learning in DI (Meyer & Manning, 2007). This passive participation was again illustrated in the situation above.

Another situation documented in my journal occurred during a writing assignment. Students in my class and the grade one class were combined for centers. The resource teacher had volunteered to do a writing center with the students. During one writing session, students were brainstorming story ideas and discussing what made a story enjoyable.

Student A: I want to write a scary story.
Student B: Me too.
Student C: I don't like scary stories. Can I write about a princess?
Teacher: You can write about whatever you would like. That way, if you write about something you like you will probably make your story more interesting. Can anyone think of things that make stories exciting?
Student B: Details.
Teacher: Yes details are a great way to make your writing more exciting. What else?

No response
Teacher: Can you think of any books that you read that you thought were interesting?
Student A: No. Our books are all boring.
Teacher: All of them?
Student C: Yes. They are all boring.
Teacher: What makes them boring?
Student B: They all say the same thing.
Teacher: What do you mean?
Student B: It's like, the cat did this, the cat did that…
Student A: The cat is big, the cat is black
Student C: That's not exciting. That's boring.

Following this discussion, students began picking books off the shelves and showing them to the resource teacher. Students showed example after example of books they found to be boring. The resource teacher began brainstorming with the students things that made books boring instead of what made books exciting. Once students identified things that made books boring, they then brainstormed how to fix this in their own writing. They generated the following list as contributing to what made a book boring.

Saying almost the same thing on every page
Using the same words over and over again
Just using little words
Nothing happens in the book
There's nothing exciting
They're not like the books at home

Students expressed an obvious dislike for decodable texts (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Decodable texts, a component of DI, were used in the classroom as a means for students to practice sight words and develop reading skills. These books rely on the use of sight words, decodable words, monosyllabic words, and repetitive phrasing. The purpose of decodable texts was to practice what Routman (2003) referred to as word calling. Comprehension and meaning making were not intended outcomes of decodable texts.

Decodable texts and DI shared the philosophy that decoding and fluency were necessary precursors to comprehension.

Based on the situation documented above, students expressed interest in texts that had meaning and exciting events. Decodable texts did not describe events nor did they present ideas with which the students could connect or derive meaning from. They wanted texts that were interesting and contained details. Students wanted texts more closely associated with WL, texts which contained meaning and were authentic and reflective of their lived experiences (Weaver, 1990). The books in my classroom reflected the DI nature of my school's literacy program. Such books were the foundation of my reading program, as directed by my school's administration, and were the books students were allowed to choose from for silent reading purposes, as well as those sent home for reading practice.

Reading levels were often discussed by other primary teachers at Mainstream Elementary. One such conversation was recorded in my journal:

> *Teacher A: Students will read suitable books from their reading level. As a way to measure comprehension, students will have to answer questions.*
> *Me: Can this comprehension assessment be in the form of a conversation?*
> *Teacher A: Oh no. You should ask students questions about the book to see if they understand.*
> *Me: Questions dealing with connections, questions, likes/dislikes…*
> *Teacher A: No. These questions should be about what happened in the book. This lets you see if students understand.*
> *Me: You can see if students understand through conversation.*
> *Teacher B: I don't know about that. All I know is that to see if students understand the book at the level, they should have to answer questions.*

This journal entry illuminated how reading levels are representative of DI at Mainstream Elementary. These comprehension questions, as they relate to reading levels, represented comprehension-as-outcome (Aukerman, 2008). Students were viewed as comprehending the text if they arrived at a pre-determined *correct* answer. The belief, within my school's literacy program, was that students were able to comprehend a text at their reading level. This re-enforced the notion of learning being linear, and that student learning occurs in sequential, identifiable steps (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

The struggles and frustrations experienced by me and my students that arose from the conflict between the reading theories of DI and WL, are also evident in the next section on running records. Journal entries were used to document incidents which illustrated such conflicts.

7.3 RUNNING RECORDS

As I described in Chapter Five, running records at Mainstream Elementary were used to determine the oral reading level of students, and became a key component of my school's literacy program. This chapter expands on that by using the lens of DI and WL to examine the practice.

Although running records, similar to Goodman's miscue analysis (Hall, 2003), originated within the philosophy of WL my school's approach to reading instruction used running records as a form of DI. At Mainstream Elementary, the function of running records was to determine students' reading levels, to track student progression through these levels,

and to assist the teacher in assigning students' reading materials. The following journal entry documented an incident that illustrated the use of running records as the linear learning model of DI (Meyer & Manning, 2007) within my school. This journal entry reflected a conversation between me and my principal in which I was reporting the reading levels of my students.

> *Principal: Your reading levels look good.*
> *Me: Yah, but some are deceiving.*
> *Principal: How so?*
> *Me: This student (pointing to the name of a student with a high reading level) doesn't understand what she reads.*
> *Principal: Did you take a running record of her?*
> *Me: Yes, but the running record didn't measure comprehension.*
> *Principal: Don't worry about that. The board just wants the levels you get from the reading records.*
> *Me: But, it doesn't measure reading ability if there is no comprehension component.*
> *Principal: That's fine. The board just wants the levels.*

This entry reflected the use of running records as an isolated tool, disconnected from comprehension. This form of assessment was aligned with that of DI in which again there was an over reliance on isolated reading skills. In this situation, the running record was only examining the oral decoding ability and fluency of the students (Meyer & Manning, 2007). This decoding and fluency was then used to determine the reading level of a student. The pragmatic, meaning-making, component associated with WL was absent in this use of running records (Meyer & Manning, 2007; Aukerman, 2008).

This absence of meaning-making, or connecting to the text, had transferred into the general reading practices of my students. During silent reading time, students were given the opportunity to read any book from their assigned reading level, and to read these

books anywhere within the classroom. I recorded one incident in my research journal in which I questioned the philosophy my students were developing based on their experiences with running records:

> *I was observing students reading silently in my classroom. I was particularly interested in one little boy who always exchanged books quicker than most of his peers. I suspected he wasn't actually reading the books. I assumed he was either skimming through the books, only looking at pictures, or changing books when the reading got challenging. I watched his reading more closely and was surprised to see him actually reading (or what looked like reading). As I approached his desk he closed the book, after only reading a handful of pages, and asked if he could get another book. When I asked this student why he did not want to finish the book, he looked puzzled and said that he had finished. I opened the book to where he had finished reading and stated that he was only in the middle of the book. He pointed to a pencilled in /150 midway down the left hand page and stated that this mark meant that you stop reading.*

What this boy was describing was the process of running records. In Mainstream Elementary, a student only reads the first 150 words of a text during a running record. In most books in the primary classrooms at my school, the 150th word is pencilled in the book for teacher convenience when conducting running records. The student had internalized this practice and equated this with reading. The fact that the story had not ended, or that meaning-making was interrupted by this premature ending, did not seem to matter to the student.

After silent reading ended I decided to have a read-aloud with my students and to ask reading questions as I read. This interaction was recorded in my journal and is as follows:

> Me *(pointing to a period): Who can tell me what this is?*
> *Student A: That's a stop mark.*
> *Me: What is a stop mark for?*
> *Student B: That's when you stop reading to take a breath.*
> *Me (pointing to an uppercase letter): Who can tell me what this is?*

Student C: It's a uppercase letter.
Me: And why do we use uppercase letters?
Student D: To start a person's name.
Student C: Or the name of a pet.
Student A: Or the name of a place.
Student E: And at the start of stories.
Me: Yes that right. And at the start of our sentences too.
Me (pointing to a bold word): Who can tell me why this word is written this way?
Student B: Cause you say the word harder.
Student F: No you say it stronger.
Me: I think you are both right. Why do we want to say some words harder or stronger than others?
Student E: To give it spression.
Me: Very good.
Me (pointing to the /150): Who can tell me what this is?
Student C: It's a stop mark to see if you did good reading.
Student A: That's where you stop reading.
Me (flipping through the remaining pages of the book): But what about the rest of our story?
Student H: That's okay. You did good reading.

In this event students demonstrated connections with a reading practice associated with running records. Most students identified the */150* as a place to stop. Only a few students showed interest in finding out how the story ended.

As running records were used to determine student reading levels, the weeks prior to report card submission were busy. Teachers in the primary grades were told by the school administration to take running records of all students to assess student reading. This would be helpful for teachers when discussing student reading with parents during parent-teacher interviews. Thus, a significant portion of my literacy instructional time was devoted to conducting running records.

The time that I allocated to conducting running records on all my grade one and two students was recorded in my journal as a reflection.

> *What am I doing? I devoted another 35 minutes to running records again this morning. Instead of reading aloud another book, having reading buddies or conducting a book discussion, I took running records on two students. The majority of students wanted me to read another book to them, but I did not have the time. I felt the pressure to take running records because of it being near report card time.*

I am aware that running records are a miscue analysis tool that allow me insight into student reading, but this is not the purpose at my school. Teachers were told by Mainstream Elementary administration that running records are used to determine reading levels. Thus, although running records were developed under the umbrella of WL, my school's literacy program situated running records as being a tool of DI (Meyer & Manning, 2007). This was because the school was more concerned with the decoding ability and fluency of students, than with all four cueing systems. Reading levels, at Mainstream Elementary, are based upon the decoding of text and fluency. Nowhere in the discussion of running records at my school is reading comprehension, the purpose of reading stressed within WL, taken into consideration.

Related to this discussion of comprehension was another journal entry that documented running records.

> *I spent a lot of time today listening to students read. I must have taken 8 running records. Never, during any of those 8 running records, did I discuss comprehension with my students. I did not ask what meaning they made with the story. I did not ask for any questions they had as they read. I did not ask for any comments they may have had while reading. Instead, I listened to them read. I listened for the right words, and I listened for fluency.*

This journal entry reflected the DI view of reading represented within Mainstream Elementary's literacy program. As I conducted the running records, I listened to the students decode the text, and I listened for fluency as students decoded the text orally. These aspects of reading, decoding and fluency represented the skills associated with DI (Meyer & Manning, 2007). I was assessing students on whether they possessed the skills necessary to move to the next stage of their learning. Reading, as situated within DI, is thought to be linear in which students move from point-to-point in their reading progress (Meyer & Manning, 2007). Unlike WL, comprehension was not the critical element of the reading process. Students were not asked about their meaning-making process. This meaning-making process was abandoned for the skills approach to reading.

As running records were given significance within my school's literacy program, teachers were told to adjust their literacy instruction accordingly. I discovered that as a result of running records being mandated, I had less classroom time to devote to instructional techniques that I felt beneficial. One such technique that I had to abandon, due to lack of time, was reading conferences. When I taught upper elementary grades, I saw success in reading conferences. There was no script associated with the conferences, and I was able to have conversations with students about their reading. I had hoped that reading conferences would be as successful in the primary grades. However, the time it took to conduct running records would not allow me time to conference with students. The following conversation I had with another teacher illustrated this situation:

> *Me: I am finding it difficult to teach around all the constraints.*
> *Colleague: What do you mean constraints?*
> *Me: The fact that we have to do running records. Doing these take a lot of classroom time.*

Colleague: I never thought of running records as constraints. I just thought of them as something we had to do.
Me: Just think what we could be doing instead.
Colleague: What would you do?
Me: I would try reading conferences in my grade. They worked well when I taught grade 6 last year. I wouldn't mind trying them this year.
Colleague: Yah, that would be nice to try. Too bad we have to do running records.

This journal entry illustrates the lack of decision-making made available to teachers associated with Mainstream Elementary's literacy program. Much like DI, I was not afforded the opportunity to decide on how to best optimize my instructional time (Jordan, 2005). I was given a mandate by my school administration regarding my instructional decisions that was to be followed. Instead of having the autonomy to direct my teaching according to student learning, as is the case with WL, I was given the directive to incorporate running records into my instructional practices.

Similar to the lack of decision-making that I felt as a teacher, the students were not afforded the opportunity to participate in classroom decisions. The implementation of running records at my school signified this occurrence. This situation is documented in the following journal entry:

Student: Why do we have to do running records?
Me: We do running records to see how well you are reading.
Student: Yah, but why do you only do running records to see how well we read?
Me: What do you mean?
Student: Why can't we pick what you do?

This journal entry reflected the lack of decision-making ability students had within the school's literacy program. Students questioned the use of running records, and were

questioning why they were not able to provide input in the assessments used to assess their reading. This lack of input resembles DI where students are passive recipients. Students were not given input into their learning.

The conflict between the reading theories of DI and WL that were evident in this section also appear in the next section on guided reading. Again, journal entries were used to document incidents which illustrated such conflicts.

7.4 GUIDED READING

Guided reading, as discussed in Chapter Five, is the teaching of reading strategies to a small group of students which is determined based on reading levels, and was a pillar of Mainstream Elementary's literacy program.

My first experience with guided reading came when I was preparing for my grade one and two combined classroom. The literacy coach at my school explained the process of guided reading and the accompanying resources. This exchange was documented as follows:

> *Literacy Coach: Guided reading is small group instruction where the teacher selects a reading strategy for the students to practice. The key for a successful guided reading session is the book selection and book introduction.*
> *Me: So, the teacher picks the book…*
> *Literacy Coach: Based on the student reading level.*
> *Me: What about the reading strategy?*
> *Literacy Coach: Students should be able to use certain reading strategies based on their reading levels. The strategies that students should possess for each level are given by Fountas and Pinnell.*
> *Me: What if students don't possess a given strategy for a level?*

> *Literacy Coach: Then they shouldn't be at that level. Guided reading books are provided for classrooms, and also come with sheets that lay out the guided reading session and tell what strategy to focus on.*

Based on this journal entry, teachers were to follow a pre-determined lesson. The guided reading session was reflective of DI in that publishers developed the texts and accompanying strategy guide sheets, and teachers based their lessons on these materials (Jordan, 2005). Thus, even though teachers may have been directing the small group instruction they were passive in that publishers were determining the instructional practices, and the school board was deciding that they be used. Also, students were passive in that they were situated as recipients of knowledge, and were to move along the learning sequence as directed (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

This approach to reading instruction was similar to DI as discussed by Meyer and Manning (2007). Referred to as part-to-whole, students were to learn small bits of information, and then were to put these small bits of information together. Students were to practice individual reading strategies within guided reading, and then put these strategies together when appropriate.

The above journal entry emphasized the role of comprehension within guided reading. Comprehension was situated as being comprehension-as-procedure (Aukerman, 2008) in that it was believed that students needed to follow a set procedure and use certain reading strategies to arrive at the correct meaning of the text. What was being instructed was cognitive reading strategies that students would utilize to determine the meaning of the text.

I often tried to rationalize the practice of guided reading within Mainstream Elementary's literacy program. The following journal entry dealt with such an incident:

> *What is up with guided reading? I understand the benefit of small group instruction, but I don't understand why it has to be this version. Guided reading focuses on reading strategies. It is believed that effective readers need to possess certain reading strategies to comprehend text. So, I guess my school, and school board, believes there are certain strategies necessary for readers to be effective readers.*

This journal entry situated guided reading as being reflective comprehension-as-procedure (Aukerman, 2008). Students had to be able to access certain reading strategies to get to the pre-determined meaning of the text as was the philosophy of my school—that students must arrive at the *right* meaning of the text. This circumstance reflected DI in that there was a pre-determined *right* meaning of the text, and that students get to this *right* meaning in a uniform way. Student experience, interest, questions, and interpretations were omitted in this method of comprehension.

The previous journal entry also situated guided reading as being small group instruction. This small group instructional format is an aspect of balanced literacy (Rog, 2003). Guided reading represented a part of balanced literacy in that students experienced different forms of reading.

Students in my classroom also demonstrated frustration with guided reading, as seen in the following journal entry:

> *Student: I don't want to go to reading corner today teacher.*
> *Me: Why not?*

Student: I just don't want to.
Me: Well today we are going to be reading a really great book about pirates.
Student: No thanks.
Me: Everyone goes to reading corner. Today is your turn.
Student: Well…I don't like reading corner. I just like to read the book myself.
Me: Would you like to take turns reading during our reading corner?
Student: No. I don't like reading out loud. I just like reading it in my head. It makes more sense that way.

In this entry, the student expressed a frustration with oral reading, and expressed a preference for silent, independent reading. Within the expectations of guided reading at Mainstream Elementary, the students were to participate in guided reading several times each week. For this student, the apprehension about guided reading created a stumbling block. The student was more concerned with the process of guided reading than with the actual reading of the book. This inhibited his ability to engage in the activity. The student had no input in the process of guided reading. He was to follow the prescribed process. Thus, the student was a passive learner, reflective of the DI approach to reading. This guided reading session was focussing on the fluency of this student's oral reading. His discomfort with this caused him to stumble on words that he would otherwise not struggle with. This lack of fluency was considered a major deficit according to DI philosophy. In DI, oral reading fluency was seen as a prerequisite to comprehension (Meyer & Manning, 2007).

On a separate occasion another student interrupted our guided reading session to comment on the book selection. The following conversation was documented in my journal:

Student A: Um teacher.
Me: Not now. We are in the middle of our guided reading.
Student A: But that's what I want to tell you about.
Me: It's not polite to interrupt another student when he's reading.
Student A: But this book is stupid.
Me: That's something we can discuss when we finish the book.
Student A: But I don't want to finish this book. I want to read the book the kids read in guided reading yesterday.
Student B: Yah, me too.
Me: That's not the book we have for today.
Student B: Well can we just come back tomorrow?
Me: Why don't we finish our story and then we can talk about why you don't like it.
Student A: We don't have to finish it to tell you why we don't like it.
Student B: Yah. It sucks.
Student C: Yah. It's boring. We don't care about a rabbit and some carrots.

In this entry, students voiced their disinterest in the reading material. This lack of interest distracted the students from the reading and from the strategy at hand. They were unmotivated by the text that I had selected and experienced little success in that particular reading session. Teacher-selected texts, based on the reading levels of students (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), were an aspect of guided reading with which these students were not comfortable.

This entry also reflected the DI approach to reading as students were expected to learn skills in isolation (guided reading sessions) with the intention of combining these skills at a later date. This is the part-to-whole notion that Meyer & Manning (2007) discussed.

The following day I invited the same group of students back to the reading corner and invited them to choose from a selection of books. Although this did not follow the guided

reading guidelines, I wanted to ensure they had acquired the skill that had been introduced the previous day. The following entry documented the event:

> *Student A: Why are we here two days in a row?*
> *Me: I felt bad that you didn't like our book yesterday. I wanted you to have a chance to have a book you liked.*
> *Student B: So what book is it?*
> *Me: I don't know yet.*
> *Student A: How can you not know? You pick it.*
> *Me: Today I want you to pick your book.*
> *Student C: Are we allowed to pick our book?*
> *Me: Today you can.*
>
> *Follow up: I couldn't believe the engagement of the students today. They were eager to read the story and volunteered continuously to read. Their predictions were amazing! They even demonstrated the ability to revise their predictions as new information was presented.*

This journal entry emphasized the importance of student choice in reading materials and highlighted the success of this group of students when engaged in their reading. These students demonstrated a higher skill level than would have been expected of them based on their reading level alone. Surprisingly, the book that was chosen by the group was two levels above their recorded reading level. It was a book reflective of their experiences and interests. This group of students were being decision-makers. They were taking an active role in their learning. Both of these aspects are characteristics of WL.

This journal entry also signified the role of comprehension. In this documented event, comprehension reflected comprehension-as-sense-making (Aukerman, 2008) representative of WL. Students made meaning from the text based on their lived experiences, interests, and connections with the text. Students' comprehension continued to develop as they read through the book.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This analysis chapter examined reading levels, running records, and guided reading using DI and WL as the lens. This analysis investigated how reading levels, running records and guided reading were positioned, in Mainstream Elementary's literacy program, in relation to DI and WL.

Reading levels shared characteristics of DI as it limited students' opportunity for book selection. As a result of my classroom practices reflecting the DI approach, students struggled with their positions as passive participants in the learning process. Students questioned the instructional practices that restricted their ability to make decisions regarding their own learning.

Although developed from the philosophy of WL, running records were positioned as methods of DI within my school's literacy program. Running records were used to determine students' reading levels, not to provide insight into their reading cueing systems.

Mainstream Elementary's approach to guided reading reflected DI as it positioned learning as linear—students learned individual reading strategies in a pre-determined order. Neither I nor my students were decision-makers, as publishers made the decisions, and the school board supported and implemented these decisions.

Having completed the analysis of my school's literacy program, and how this literacy program is present within my classroom, I now turn to a synopsis of my research as I summarize my findings, and reflect on what they mean for me as a teacher.

Chapter 8: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the consequences of my research: what I have learned as a researcher, what I have learned as a teacher and what impact this process has had on my beliefs and practices. It also examines possible long term considerations of this research.

8.2 AS A RESEARCHER

Probably one of the first and most important lessons I learned from this research study was the amount of time and energy required to gather and record data, not to mention the analysis. The classroom was filled with an abundance of information which, as a researcher, translated into data. Maintaining my focus as a teacher—my primary role—was often a chore when faced with the desire to record incidents and events as they transpired. I did not want to lose any valuable information by waiting until the end of the day to record my findings. Just finding this balance between teacher and researcher was, in itself, a daily battle for me.

My second, and almost immediate lesson, was the extensive work involved with ethical considerations. Although my particular research study did not require approval by an ethics committee, a lot of my preliminary work when setting up my study investigated ethical considerations when conducting research within a classroom. I needed to be as objective as possible and to try to remain neutral throughout the process—striving to maintain open-mindedness and not conduct my research under the guise of a pre-

determined end point. Just learning how to record data required a deliberate effort to record *all* classroom data related to reading instruction and not just the data that I expected to see.

I used a journal to record my data and found this to be a very useful tool during both data collection and analysis. Recording various incidents related to teaching and learning, whether from the classroom, professional development workshops, and/or professional dialogue, enabled me to reflect on these circumstances and record any thoughts, comments, and concerns that arose as a result. I was then able to return to these at a later time and respond to any questions, allowing me to engage in ongoing conversation with myself. I was also able to track conversations, events, and questions from the beginning to the conclusion of my study, thus being able to see the path that my teaching had taken. This was a very powerful learning tool for me as a teacher and researcher.

8.3 AS A TEACHER

Using teacher research as my research methodology not only strengthened my skills as a researcher, but also strengthened my skills as a teacher. I learned to take time and reflect on the daily events of my classroom. I learned to examine the incidents that transpired and to connect them to theory. I learned that there exists a tremendous amount of data within the classroom, and that often the answers to my questions are right in front of me.

Using two analytic lenses—dominant discourse and reading theory—enabled me to explore my teaching practices in a comprehensive manner. I was able to examine

discursive mechanisms within Mainstream Elementary and the larger educational system of Prince Edward Island. I identified the structures that supported the policies and resources of the school system, as well as how these structures were permeating to parents through school communication and reporting. I was also able to examine how my resistance to these discursive practices resulted in my teaching practices being questioned and deterred.

I now understand that the structure of the educational system supports a hierarchal model, and how currently this model is one of accountability. Checks and balances were put in place with accountability as a mindset. Teachers were to use specific resources, assessment techniques and vocabulary during reading instruction. This is promoted as consistency in education; that effective teaching is one where all teachers use the same resources and practices. Somewhere along the way teacher competence has been confused with consistency.

Using reading theory as my second analytic lens provided me the opportunity to situate my teaching practices and those of Mainstream Elementary within a theoretical framework. I was able to analyze significant aspects of Mainstream Elementary's literacy program to determine the reading theory—Direct Instruction or Whole Language—subscribed to, and then compare these findings to the reading theory that I based my teaching practices upon. Within this analysis, I determined that although running records were situated within a Whole Language belief system, Mainstream Elementary was implementing them in a Direct Instruction manner. Thus, this analytic lens enabled me to

explore the foundation of the literacy program, how this foundation was being implemented, and the conflict between this implementation and my teaching beliefs.

Another benefit of reading theory as an analytic lens was how I was able to explore the role of the teacher and student. Mainstream Elementary's literacy program was heavily weighted toward the implemented program, not the student. Although the rationale of this implementation was one of student reading success, the construct of the literacy program, as well as the resources and corresponding reporting practices, were what was being stressed by department, board and school administration. The program was seen as the difference maker, not the teacher or students. Teachers and students did not have a voice in this program; both were told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Teachers were facilitators, not educators, in the teaching of their students and students were recipients of knowledge and not active participants in their learning. This lens illuminated the effect of a mandated program on teachers and students; students, and sometimes teachers, became invisible when decisions about their learning were being discussed within the educational hierarchy.

8.4 REFLECTIONS

I have never believed in a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. There is no one right way to teach reading. Having to base my teaching decisions on programs instead of student needs created an atmosphere of artificial learning. Neither the students nor I were active decision-makers in this environment. I realized that we were pawns in the educational system. Our direction and path were determined from outside the classroom.

Despite my passion and belief that voice and choice should be a vital aspect in student learning, I was allowing my students to be passive in their education. I was contributing to an environment of educational submission by allowing myself to be a victim of mandates. For education to be meaningful, neither teachers nor students can be compliant.

This revelation is one that I will take with me in my new role as Numeracy Consultant. I want my students to be able to reason mathematically and apply their knowledge to real world situations. With this new understanding and new found confidence, I will be more attentive to student learning; ensuring that activities and assessments provide genuine results and do not allow for rote memorization, recall, or isolated skill demonstrations. While I undertook my research study, students were mimicking learning. They were participating in classroom activities and involved in assessment practices that made me think they understood the material being taught, despite their inability to apply this knowledge.

I will no longer allow my teaching to be dictated by a program. I will not teach blindly from a manual, nor can I simply follow the mandates of the department or board. I have to have discussions with my colleagues and my students, and allow them to be part of the decision-making process that will guide my teaching. I have to relate instruction to student interests and lived experiences. I have to relate mathematics to their questions, and adjust my teaching practices to reflect their learning needs.

What I have learned from this research is that an evaluation is needed not only of what is being taught, but what students are actually learning, as well as their place within the curriculum. Genuine connections need to be re-established between students and curriculum and the larger context of curriculum within society. Students and student learning need to be brought back to the forefront of education.

References

Aukerman, M. (2008). In praise of wiggle room: Locating comprehension in unlikely places. *Language Arts*, 86, 52-60.

Baumann, J. F., & Duffy, A. M. (2001). Teacher-researcher methodology: Themes, variations, and possibilities. *The Reading Teacher*, 54, 608-615.

Boomer, G. (1987). A quiet form of research. In D. Goswami & P. Stillman (Eds.), *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change* (pp. 4-13). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook

Britton, J. (1987). A quiet form of research. In D. Goswami & P. Stillman (Eds.), *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change* (pp. 13-19). Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook

Bruneau, B. J. (1997). The literacy pyramid organization of reading/writing activities in a whole language classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 51, 158-160.

Chen, H. & Derewianka, B. (2009). Binaries and beyond: A Bernstenian perspective on change in literacy education. *Research Papers in Education*, 24, 223-245.

Clay, M. M. (2006). *Running records: For classroom teachers*. China: Heinemann.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1990). Research on teaching and teacher research: The issues that divide. *Educational Researcher*, 19(2), 2-11.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher*, 28(7), 15-25.

Compton-Lilly, C. (2007). *Re-reading families: The literate lives of urban children, four years later*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Duffy, G., & Hoffman, J. V. (1999). In Pursuit of an illusion: The flawed search for a perfect method. *The Reading Teacher*, 53, 10-16.

Finn, P. (1999). *Literacy with an attitude: Educating working-class children in their own self-interest*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Flippo, R. F. (1999). Redefining the reading wars: The war against reading researchers. *Educational Leadership*, 57(2), 38-41.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Irvington Publishers.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline & punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (2010). The body of the condemned. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader* (pp. 170-178). New York: Vintage Books.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Gore, J. (1992). What we can do for you! What can "We" do for "You"?: Struggling over empowerment in critical and feminist pedagogy. In C. Luke & J Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy* (pp. 54-73). New York: Routledge.

Hahs-Vaughn, D. L., & Yanowitz, K. L. (2009). Who is conducting teacher research?. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102, 415-424.

Hall, K. (2003). *Listening to Stephen read: Multiple perspectives on literacy*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Herr, K. (1999). Unearthing the unspeakable: When teacher research and political agendas collide. *Language Arts*, 77, 10-15.

Holly, M. L., Arhar, J., & Kasten, W. C. (2008). Action research for teachers: Traveling

the yellow brick road (3rd ed.). Boston, US: Pearson Education.

Jordan, N. L. (2005). Basal readers and reading as socialization: What are children learning?. *Language Arts*, 82, 204-213.

Keene, E. O., & Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2006). *A handbook for teacher research: From design to implementation*. Berkshire, EN: Open University Press.

Leira, H. (2009). Taking Foucault beyond Foucault: Inter-state governmentality in early modern Europe. *Global Society*, 23, 475-495.

Luke, A. (1995). Text and discourse in education: An introduction to critical discourse analysis. *Review of Research in Education*, 21, 1-46.

Lytle, S. L., & Cochran-Smith, M. (1992). Teacher research as a way of knowing. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 447-474.

Manning, A. (1991, October). *Reading as transaction*. Speech presented at International Reading Association.

Manning, A., & Harste, J. (1994). Teacher research: Demonstrations of possibilities. *Reading,* 28(1), 2-4.

Massey, D., & Duffy, A. (2003). The learning and perceptions of teacher researchers and facilitators in a literacy-focused, teacher-research course: A content analysis of system, learner, and spheres of influence. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 35, 1019-1050.

Merritt, S. P., & Labbo, L. D. (2004). Engaging student researchers and teacher researchers in the process of data analysis. *Language Arts*, 81, 406-416.

Meyer, R. J., & Manning, M. (2007). *Reading and Teaching*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Mills, S. (1997). *Discourse*. London: Routledge.

Patterson, L. (1990). Teaching, researching, and problem solving. In, *Teacher research: From promise to power* (pp.22-36). New York: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.

Power, B., & Hubbard, R. (1999). Becoming teacher researchers on moment at a time. *Language Arts*, 77, 34-39.

Raphael, T. (1999). What counts as teacher research?: An essay. *Language Arts*, 77, 48-52.

Richardson, V. (1994). Conducting research on practice. *Educational Researcher*, 23(5), 5-10.

Rog, L. J. (2003). Guided Reading Basics: *Organizing, managing, and implementing a balanced literacy program in K-3*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers Limited.

Routman, R. (1991). *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Routman, R. (2003). *Reading essentials: The specifics you need to teach reading well*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rowan, L., Knobel, M., Bigum, C., & Lankshear, C. (2002). Mindsets matter: An overview of major literacy worldviews. In, *Boys, literacies and schooling: The dangerous territories of gender-based literacy reform* (pp.77-98). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Smith, F. (1999) Why systematic phonics and phonemic awareness instruction constitute

an educational hazard. *Language Arts*, 77, 150-155.

Smith, F., & Goodman, K. S. (2008). "On the Psycholinguistic Method of Teaching Reading" revisited. *Language Arts*, 86, 61-65.

Spiegel, D. L. (1998). Silver bullets, babies, and bath water: Literature response groups in a balanced literacy program. *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 114-124.

Stenhouse, L. (1981). What counts as research?. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 29(2), 8-19.

Waters, R. (1999). Teachers as researchers: Making sense of teaching and learning. *Language Arts*, 77, 44-46.

Weaver, C. (1990). *Understanding whole language: From principles to practice.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.