Teacher Intervention within Dramatic Play

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dramatic play of five year olds when one of the active participants is their teacher, and considers the place of dramatic play in a school setting.

The teacher-researcher investigated the dramatic playing in a kindergarten environment using a qualitative methodology. The data was collected by observing and recording the events and dialogue in a journal. An examination of the recorded events revealed that dramatic playing is a learning medium that five year olds use to explore ideas which results in their growth as learners. The teacher as a participant is an intervention agent who supports the development of dramatic play initiated by five year olds.

This thesis reveals that dramatic playing can provide educators with an environment in which they can intervene in role while observing the children and assessing possible areas of development and exploration. Within this context, a teacher can participate in the children’s social, cognitive and aesthetic development. Dramatic play often is chosen by five year olds to experiment and explore ideas and concepts. By supporting the
children's choice of dramatic play, the teacher can observe the players' development through integrated learning. Large blocks of time, a variety of materials, and books to be read aloud representing many genres are resources that a teacher can use to enhance dramatic playing. "Being as if" and "what if" are two characteristics of dramatic playing that promote problem solving. The players, as others, can pose questions, try out ideas, and analyze, reflect, modify and extend responses. In creating texts, the children reinforce and develop language strategies and skills. Dramatic playing gives the teacher a context in which he/she can be a participant as well as an observer of young children's learning.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** .................................................................................................................. ii

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** .................................................................................................. iv

**SECTION 1** ..................................................................................................................... 1

**INTRODUCTION: TEACHER AS LEARNER** ................................................................. 1

**CHAPTER 1 PLAY GOES TO SCHOOL** ......................................................................... 13
  - *Development of Early Education* .............................................................................. 14
  - *Froebel’s Influence on Education* ............................................................................ 15
  - *Implementation of the Froebelian Philosophy* .......................................................... 17
  - *Comparison and Contrasts of Froebelian and Deweyan Environments* ............... 20
  - *Progressivism* .......................................................................................................... 21
  - *Other Views of Play* .................................................................................................. 25

**CHAPTER 2 FROM PLAY TO DRAMA** ....................................................................... 32
  - *Tending Gardens and Filling Pitchers* .................................................................... 32
  - *An Interest for Dramatic Play* .................................................................................. 35
  - *Drama Developers* .................................................................................................... 36
  - *Fiction Worlds* .......................................................................................................... 39
  - *Metaplay* .................................................................................................................... 44

**CHAPTER 3 CONNECTING STORY AND PLAY** ......................................................... 47
  - *Story and Play* .......................................................................................................... 47
  - *Reading Aloud to Children* ...................................................................................... 49
  - *Teacher-Researcher in the Classroom* .................................................................... 51
  - *Recording My Curriculum Building* ......................................................................... 59

**CHAPTER 4 DOCUMENTING THE PLAYERS THROUGH PLAY** ........................ 61
  - *The Children* ............................................................................................................. 61
  - *The Teacher-Researcher* .......................................................................................... 64
  - *Looking Back, Moving Forward* ................................................................................ 72

**SECTION 2** .................................................................................................................... 79
SECTION 1

Introduction: Teacher as Learner

Play was an important part of my development as a child, and I have vivid memories of play, especially dramatic play. My interest in drama remained with me throughout my childhood school years and affected my work from my first year of teaching. Drama activity with older children raised questions that I thought might be answered by observing and interacting with five year olds.

During my study of five year olds and the teacher inside dramatic play, my observations were recorded both while in the dramatic play and while outside the dramatic play. During the first year, I tried recording my observations through journals, audio tapes and video tapes but I found the latter two unsatisfactory. As much of the dramatic play was spontaneous and, since I was both researcher and participant, I discovered that I was unable to effectively operate a tape recorder and video camera and participate in the process, since much of the dramatic play involved rapid physical movement and changing settings. After experimenting with a variety of strategies, I
chose to record our dramatic playing events in a journal. I had used this observational strategy of my children for several years and I was comfortable with this medium. The children were also accepting of my jotting points down as they watched me, more often than not, making daily anecdotal entries about their learning. From their questions about my writing, I was aware that the children were observing record keeping and they often asked me to share what I had written.

Through my writing, I wanted to gather information to observe how children used dramatic playing to experience events, and to see what role dramatic play might have in their learning. I had observed that the children brought to their dramatic play many stories that they had heard and viewed. When I was invited into their dramatic play, I discovered that the children defined the “what if”. My lead was taken from the children on the “how”. We then went into role by being “as if”.

For Richard Courtney (1989), the focus on play as being and becoming “as if” results in a separation of the abstract life and acknowledgment of paradoxes and contradiction. For E. J. Burton (1958), being “as if” in play allowed children to express and work out relationships in action. We come to know the possible by enactment. Burton saw the role of the teacher as focusing attention on a dramatic problem in an acceptable life situation where the teacher could use a variety of instructional methods to this end (in Courtney,
For Dorothy Heathcote, being "as if" was the acceptance of the play world as fictional but with complete belief by the player in the play situations. Players start from the self and, through identification with a role, begin using representational thought through language and movement. In dramatic playing, a child learns to pattern from one situation to a new one, to communicate and co-operate reciprocally. Weininger concluded that dramatic play is the foundation for future children's imaginative thinking (Weininger, 1979, 1992, Courtney, 1989). These concepts of being "as if" influenced my thinking about dramatic playing. The literature, university courses and my teaching colleagues provided me with new ideas to consider and helped with my transformation from teacher to teacher-researcher.

The many experiences that I have had with my own learning led me to carry out my research in a classroom setting through my main role as teacher. My reading of both the professional literature and children's literature has greatly influenced my teaching. One of my passions is collecting picture books and bringing these to the classroom is an example of my style of intervention. My choices are, of course, influenced by the children, and by my interests, reviews in journals and recommendations from my network of picture book collectors. All of us, as learners, are influenced by what others bring into a learning situation.
In education, there is much talk about empowering learners in their learning (Boomer, 1988). This talk often involves the direct involvement of the learners in choosing the “how” and “what” for their learning. However, there is often little actualization in the classroom. Reasons often given for not putting the learning into the hands of the learners include that there is a “curriculum to be covered”, a body of knowledge, but not the possible strategies and skills that a learner might need. The dramatic play of five year olds provides an environment where the learners can to a large extent be in control of the learning. Their “as if” explorations through the vehicle of dramatic play demonstrated to me their strategies for exploring life’s realities and solving problems that they encountered. Being an invited participant in dramatic play has given me the opportunity to see what happens when a teacher is an active player, and to explore what role dramatic playing has in a school setting.

Another issue is that of choice of the learning inquiry. This closely connects to the concern of control by the players. The more choice children have, the more they will perceive that they are in control of their own learning. Learner choice has always been important to me. My best learning occurs when I, the learner, am in control of what is chosen to be explored, as well as how it will be experienced. This concern has greatly influenced my interactions with students. When working in a school setting, by necessity, there will be intervention by the adults involved in the learning, such as the
choice of books and materials that will be placed in the learning environment. These teacher choices are made, one hopes, taking into consideration the needs of each learner. I am concerned, as a teacher, when the intervention moves from intervention to interference. With young learners, I have found they usually respond to interference with verbal comments such as, "I'm not doing that", or silent non-compliance.

Over several years, I have explored the role of teachers and children in dramatic play. The "teacher in role" model, as originated by British educator Dorothy Heathcote, was the vehicle that drove my investigation. A major issue which arises from her work has been the degree of control children have over what they explore. When working with young children, the teacher usually provides the "what"; the children choose the "how". Observations of young children's play reveals that five year olds often choose both the "how" and the "what". As a participant/leader in the dramatic play of five year olds, one of my aims was to observe from inside the play and consider the importance of the control of the play by the players.

*Three Looms Waiting* (1967) was a film that acted as a catalyst for me in helping me question what I did as a teacher with the vehicle of creative drama. Seeing Dorothy Heathcote work with children in schools, in an institution for emotionally disturbed children and in a prison for young offenders, made me realize that I needed to move beyond my teacher centered
way of viewing drama. Viewing *Three Looms Waiting* occurred during my third year of teaching, but in my first two years of teaching, through workshops and my readings, I had incorporated the ideas of Viola Spolin (1965), Peter Slade (1954) and Brian Way (1967) to develop a creative drama framework. I tried to put into place their ideas that a teacher must start "from where they are". Going to where the children were often meant that my plans included a great many "drama" games before we explored their interests. I was influenced by Way, who suggested that the children's imagination could be broadened by emphasizing sensory training, working on movement using sound, speech, characterization, voice improvisation, and ending in play making (Way, 1967). However, when I watched Dorothy Heathcote, I saw a teacher who was inside the drama, one of the players. At that moment, I realized that I was on the outside looking in: I controlled what happened. At this point in my teaching career I had my own script, called a lesson plan, which I often dutifully followed. I had only started to abandon rigid plans when I asked the children for their feedback about what we were doing. I remember questioning the children as to what they thought reading was and they revealed that they considered it to be doing workbook pages. This was a revelation to me, for the children saw no pleasure in it, mostly drudgery. I needed to try to find ways to make reading more meaningful and pleasurable for the children.
In looking back, Three Looms Waiting helped me to ask more questions about what I did in the classroom and, in particular, about the learning environment that was being created. After each viewing of the film, I had more questions, mostly involved with how I could move from my teacher centered way to a more child centered way of viewing learning. Dorothy Heathcote's film, various articles, and a consultant who had introduced me to Heathcote's work, were the impetus for me to begin to change how I interacted with children in creative drama.

Much of the information that I obtained on Heathcote's teachings were authored by others, as she herself has written only a few articles. From my reading and viewing I came to understand the following about her approach to creative drama. "Her aim is to build on her pupils' past experience and give them a deeper knowledge, not just of themselves but of what it is to be human, as well as an understanding of the society in which they live, and its past, present and future" (Johnson, L. and O'Neill, C., 1985, 12). This became an important element of my philosophy. Heathcote provided frameworks for the children to take a close look at their thinking and problem solving from different points of view. She identified three laws of the drama medium: the first is the willing suspension of disbelief, when the players agree in advance to believe what is happening while at the same time knowing that it is imaginary; the second is "agreement to pretense", when the players agree to be someone other than themselves; third, participants must employ "all past
experiences available to the group at the present moment and any conjecture of imagination of which they are capable, in an attempt to create a living, moving picture of life which aims at surprise and discovery for the participants rather than for onlookers” (Heathcote, 1971, 44). What was important for me was that the players did not pretend to be somebody else but acted as if they actually were whom they had chosen to be.

Heathcote taught me the importance of building belief which resulted in long planning sessions in which the topic was chosen, the setting was established, and the players came to know who they were in reference to the setting. She showed me how to use large and small group techniques to have the children enter deeper and deeper into the role. Often the drama was stopped so that we could analyze where we had been and where we might go next. Teacher in role was a method that Heathcote introduced as a way for me to be a participant in the drama as well. When in role the players focused their attention on reacting to the character that the teacher had become. The teacher could take on different roles depending on what was perceived as an appropriate role at a given time in the drama. For example, at one point the teacher’s role could be one of authority, at another a role of seeking help, and at another in the role of expert. At other times it was appropriate for the teacher to take a less active role as observer. It was important that the role that I took was one that related to all the participants. Negotiations within
the drama allowed the players to enter into role, resulting in the possibility of meaningful change happening.

To create a clearer understanding of how Heathcote influenced me, I will describe one dramatization in which I participated with a group of children in a grade three-four-five family grouping. Most of the children had been in the family grouping in my class for a year. I had read two novels that took place in medieval times, and several of the children suggested that we create a drama that took place in that period. In our first session we brainstormed what we knew about medieval times, and the children broke up into small groups and came up with questions which they felt needed answers. Through discussion, it was decided by consensus that we would convert the classroom into a medieval castle. The children decided to take responsibility for setting up the room and finding information about medieval people. After a period of time, the children concluded that they did not know enough and that they needed to conduct further research. They divided into two group: in one group each member chose a habitant of the castle to find information about with the librarian, and the other half worked with me in exploring the setup of a castle. Over several days, the group I was with used their new knowledge and available materials to change the room physically into their interpretation of a castle. The other group found out about the roles of those they had chosen to play. Using this information each child became the medieval person that he/she had researched.
The children and I decided the drama would occur when twelve new apprentices arrived at the castle. The role playing began with twelve separate dramas occurring at the same time in the room and the children were able to extend these dramas with the situations they had created, until many groups had began to merge. Until that point I had been an observer, but then I made the decision that the drama needed to develop. I took on the role of a page from another kingdom, and two children in role as the lord and lady gave me an audience during which I told them about a mysterious death that was killing many of the people in my kingdom. The king and queen then called the members of the castle together to talk about the problem and how they were going to try to solve it. The players took ownership of the drama and, through talk, moved the work on, continuing for many weeks. The children were able to go back into their chosen roles and continue making decisions that resulted in changes in their understanding of the characters. The children demonstrated that they were able to build belief and direct their dramas without my constant control. This was the moment when I started to question what I, as the teacher, should be doing in dramatic situations.

As I have previously stated, my personal philosophy is driven by the importance of choice for the learners and learner-directed learning. I began to question if, in fact, that teacher in role may be too teacher-centered, resulting in many of the techniques appearing manipulative or not resulting in the players expressing their own ideas. I felt that the children were
involved in the topic where I directed the drama but I wanted to find other ways of ensuring that the children and I developed the drama collaboratively.

My search began with the reading of many books and articles on drama, leading me to the theories of child play. A year later, when I began teaching in a kindergarten environment, the children gave me insights into what drama was through their play. I realized that I needed to step back from creative drama and discover more about child play and story in the kindergarten classroom.

Over the three years that I worked in a kindergarten environment, five year olds were my teachers. Initially, my new role had been that of observer and I began to see how the children brought stories and narratives to their learning and that their knowledge was often shared through their dramatic playing. In time, the children invited me into their dramatic playing. They defined the "what if". My lead was taken from the children as to the "how". In a sense, we all became "teachers in role". From my interactions with five year olds, two questions to be explored surfaced: what happens in the dramatic playing of five year olds when the teacher is an active participant; and, what place does dramatic playing have in a school setting? My thesis will attempt to explore both these issues, in theory and in practice.
As a learner, I made discoveries about play which are described in chapters one to three. Chapter four briefly examines the child players and the role of the teacher-researcher. Chapters five to seven show a schema of dramatic playing events and include my reflections. The final chapter discusses the implications and conclusions about dramatic playing and learning.
Chapter 1
Play Goes to School

I will begin with a brief and personal look at the origin of play in school.

The play school movement appeared in the late 1800's and the early 1900's. Influencing the movement were the writings during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, Johann Pestalozzi and Johann Comenius. Comenius advocated in The School of Infancy (1650) that mothers should educate their children, six years and younger, at home. He advocated universal institutionalized education (but not for very young children), because he observed that young children acquire speech and other developmental benchmarks at different ages. Comenius stressed the importance of natural settings, often using horticulture and animal husbandry analogies. "Comenius introduced the possibility of a new naturalistic form of education that was appropriate and even beneficial for young children – that might produce better, healthier fruit" (Beatty, 1995, 4).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, like Comenius, felt that young children should not be placed in schools but that children be educated by a male tutor who would teach them in a natural environment away from society, as advocated in Emile (1762). Rousseau advocated that childhood be prolonged and protected,
that children be treated as children and not as potential adults. Rousseau created new teaching techniques as antidotes for the traditional school curricula, and recommended informal learning experiences through observing objects and playing games whose purpose was to enhance children's sensory abilities. Like Rousseau and Comenius, Locke, in Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693), recommended education at home with a tutor. He advocated that adults be positive role models, and he thought learning should be like play, not work. Children could learn to read naturally and, if they didn’t, he offered several games to assist. Some of Locke’s views were transitional; he was modern in wanting parents to abandon the past and trust their own ideas concerning what was good for children. Locke’s and Rousseau’s books influenced the educating of the young: neither recommended formal schooling and both expected adults to devote a great amount of time to educating a child. Their books were widely read and educators attempted to implement their ideas with children, often in group settings.

Development of Early Education

The first educator to develop pedagogical methods that resulted from experimenting with real children was Johann Pestalozzi (1781). Having read Emile, he tried to implement its teachings with his own son, Jean-Jacques, but found that his son was unable to read, even by eleven. Pestalozzi came to doubt Rousseau’s teachings, and began experimenting with methods
designed to teach poorer children. This approach was different from 
Comenius, Locke and Rousseau, whose methodologies were designed for 
children of the “well-to-do”. In his novel, *Leonard and Gertrude* (1781), he 
introduced the teacher as “peasant mother”, and moved his education from 
Rousseau’s outdoors into the cozy peasant house. His books gave parents 
methods for teaching their children at home, as his goal was “to raise every 
mother whose heart beats for her children, step by step, till at last she can 
follow my elementary exercises by herself and be able to use them with 
children” (In Beatty, 1995, 11). Pestalozzi felt older children needed schools 
modeled on good homes, and wrote to British reformer, James Greaves, 
saying that schools should be more student and learner centered places 
where children are taught to act as teachers and the adults act as educators. 
He believed, like Rousseau, that students should experience things, not read 
or be told about them.

**Froebel’s Influence on Education**

The educational philosophies I have briefly described were important in 
shaping education for school children in North America. A great influence in 
the schooling of young children was Friedrich Froebel, who had read 
Rousseau’s educational ideas and worked with Pestalozzi. He developed 
materials which he called “gifts” to relate theory and methodology. The first 
gift was six softballs, three primary and three secondary colours; the second 
gift was a set of six blocks. These gifts came with manuals describing how to
use the balls and blocks. Froebel's gifts were to draw out of each child the fullest potential of his/her nature. Froebel wrote that "the purpose of teaching and instruction is to bring ever more out of man rather than to put more and more into man" (Weber, 1969, 4). He stressed that the curriculum should be created based around the native impulses, the inner urges and should be child-centered. In practice, his kindergarten program was teacher-directed. Indeed, teaching manuals showed how each gift was to be used. The teacher was the provider of materials, the organizer of the environment and the one who encouraged the child to discover meaning in the objects. For Froebel, imitation and direction were included in creative self-activity.

Froebel felt play was the medium for encouraging self-development. In The Education of Man (1826) he wrote: "Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage and, at the same time, typical of human life as a whole of the inner hidden natural life in man and all things. It gives, therefore, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world ... The plays of childhood are the germinal leaves of all later life; for the whole man is developed and shown in these, in his tenderest dispositions, in his innermost tendencies" (Froebel, 1889, 55). Froebel saw kindergarten as a place where happy children learned harmoniously. He felt group work was essential for social development and his goal was to have the program reflect a sense of unity. He carefully chose materials that would focus the attention of the children and logically correspond to his goals and views of the learning process. Through the design of his materials and with specific written
directions for their use, Froebel provided instructions for teachers to follow. The given sequence kept the program as a whole and, when implemented in North America, was accomplished by adhering to directions found in his manuals. The implementation pattern started first with private kindergartens for children of the well-to-do as well as for underprivileged children supported through donations; public schools followed.

Implementation of the Froebelian Philosophy

The teachers were trained in the Froebelian ideology but the program was often not followed. Parts were emphasized over others, resulting in some aspects being minimized. Following the gift, sequencing became a ritual. The intellectual study of the gifts occupied most of the instruction period, leaving little time for playing with the materials. Criticism of Froebel methodology began to be voiced by people such as Anna Bryan (1894). In a speech to the kindergarten department of the National Education Association, she said: “The child is not creatively active, only mechanically so. He has played with his spinal cord, not with his heart. It therefore may be called a barren uneducative play” (Weber, 1969, 45). Three concerns emerged: the symbolism, the logical sequence, and the lack of self-determined purpose in the child’s play. Frederick Burk (1889), Superintendent of Schools, along with Caroline Burk, did a year-long study in kindergarten classes. They concluded that, when given a choice, young children did not play with the Froebelian “gifts” but played with other toys. They said the problem with the
kindergartens was that the children were not consulted in the choices of the materials and how they were to be used. The Burks advocated that the children be given two free play periods, called "recesses", and advocated that teachers gain knowledge about children's intrinsic interests. The recesses were a radical departure: directed play was replaced by free choice and manipulation and traditional games gave way to dramatic play and free physical activity.

Bryan (1894) stressed that because Froebel had developed a complete and comprehensive system, there was a danger that teachers would interpret his theories and methodologies as a prescribed, formal line of teaching instead of tools to be used discriminately and skillfully. Bryan distinguished between "free play" and "dictation play". Meaningful learning occurred when a child's consciousness passed through an active creative sequence, not a passive, literal one (Beatty, 1995). The role of the teacher was to assist children in their discovering and thinking about relationships for themselves. Bryan was one of the first to advocate incorporating themes from children's daily lives.

"Though seemingly a small shift, the introduction of child-initiated topics to the formerly teacher controlled curricula, and of imperfect reality to artificial naturalism was an enormous change that was to have a lasting effect in preschool pedagogy" (Beatty, 1995, 82). Patty Smith Hall (1894), a teaching assistant of Bryan's, provided an environment where the children used the Froebelian gifts like building blocks to make furniture, rejecting the
prescribed designs. The students also played games in which they were postmen delivering mail and acted out other events that they had observed adults doing. Bryan, the Burks and Hill are examples of educators who, through observations, challenged prescribed methodologies that had the child adapting to formalized sequence learning. They were proponents of following the children's leads.

Teachers trained by Anna Bryan worked with John Dewey at the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago. The teachers' roles were as guides who helped support each child's effort by giving suggestions rather than dictating or showing a model to be copied. An important premise was that the materials and activities had to be real. Dewey sought balance; he felt that there had to be a middle between the child's unguided fantasies and the control of his/her activities by external directed tasks. Dewey felt play was important to help produce conceptual images in concrete form. He said in Froebel's Principles: "Play is not to be identified with anything the child externally does ... it is the free play, the interplay, of all the child's power, thoughts and physical movements in embodying, in a satisfying form, his own images and interests" (Weber, 1969, 61). The curriculum at the Dewey school had a close relationship between theory and practice.
Comparison and Contrasts of Froebelian and Deweyan Environments

In summary, the Froebelian and Deweyan environments for five year olds demonstrate ideological differences and have implications for teaching practice. First, the Froebelian kindergarten had an idealistic, introspective base while the Deweyan sub-primary was pragmatic in outlook. Froebel believed that the child had within him/her the “seeds” of understanding, and it was the job of education to unveil symbolic premonitions and spiritual ideals (Weber, 1969). Dewey, on the other hand, saw the child having the potential for growth to be developed by interacting with the environment. Secondly, the educational aim for both was character building but each envisioned different learning activities and roles for the teacher. For Froebel, play with symbolic materials led to an understanding of fixed, universal truths. The teacher directed the learning experiences following the detailed manual, resulting in little room for a teacher’s initiative. For Dewey, a child’s individual development was enhanced through play, closely related to a child’s daily experiences and elicited problem solving on the part of the child. The principal teacher role was that of guide, promoting social skills through the opportunity of practising them. The child participated in planning, organizing and evaluating his/her own experiences, resulting in growth. Teacher initiative and responsibility were significant components in this environment. Thirdly, Froebel’s program was based on using a sequence of logically designed materials while Dewey’s centered around individual
growth. Activities and experiences were developed based on a child’s present interests which would lead the child to higher levels of thought and action. Fourthly, both Froebel and Dewey began with a child’s interest in activity and play. Froebel fostered creative self-activity through imitation, believing that these disciplined experiences would result in the child’s inner creative powers being freed. On the other hand, Dewey’s idea of productive activity centered on a child’s creatively expressing the child’s own ideas. During the early years of the development of kindergarten classes, two views developed: one had the teacher as imitator following prescribed methods and the other saw the teacher as observer, negotiator and curriculum builder. Play was an important vehicle in both but, again, in the Froebelian environment, play was closely directed while in the Deweyan environment the child had more control.

**Progressivism**

While Dewey was the father of progressive education, many others were associated with this movement. Progressivism was experimental philosophy in action, often based on a child’s inclination towards play. Caroline Pratt began a school in 1913 in Greenwich Village where play was the core methodology of curriculum, based on the Rousseauian vision that play was a medium for all meaningful and lasting learning. Pratt, in her autobiography, *I Learn From Children*, recounts an event that renewed her interest in young children’s learning. By watching a friend’s six year old playing with a train
environment which he created from building blocks, cardboard boxes and available scrap materials, she saw a perfect picture of a child learning. Play could continue to be play for a child while it could also be directed toward obtaining knowledge about his/her environment. She wrote: “He had observed for himself, had gathered facts and was here, before my eyes, writing the perfect child’s textbook of what had been seen” (Beatty, 1995, 137). Pratt concluded that a child’s play could be developed into a way of organizing a learning environment for young children. In creating her kindergarten environment, she also used her teacher training experiences. She described a teacher trainer having the student teachers following her around the room as butterflies, and she did not approve of the rigidity of this type of kindergarten methodology. She wrote: “You taught children to dance like butterflies when you knew they would much rather roar like lions, because lions are hard to discipline and butterflies aren’t and, in this realization, described the kindergarten as an institution designed to get children ready to be bamboozled by the first grade” (Pratt, 1970, 21). Pratt felt that generally educators saw the child as a product to be molded towards preconceived aims and outcomes; she saw the child as an incipient artist who was eager to externalize his/her own perception of reality. Her learning environment provided many first hand experiences, giving each child important information that they could use in dramatic play. The child’s dramatic plays were self interpretations of what was perceived. Pratt called her educational philosophy “creative pedagogy” and saw teachers as “artist
teachers”, rebels against traditional schooling. The extension of her methodology revealed that each child was an artist, too, when the creative artist was unleashed by “good teachers” in “good schools”. Pratt emphasized that artist teachers could help a child compose and create, moving beyond appreciating and reproducing. Other educators supported play as a central component of program for young children. Pratt’s basis for her program was her observations of children and her testing of procedures. She relied on herself, not only on the theoretical propositions of other educators who experimented usually in university laboratory schools and in some school districts. Most teachers and schools still incorporated directed systematic methodologies. In Before Books (1962), Jessie Stranton, an “artist teacher” shared her journal entries over six years, and her writing showed how she recorded the children’s actions and comments and used these to develop the children’s curriculum. In the progressive era, there had been a move from “essentialism”, where the teacher is the possessor of knowledge and transmits it, often by the lecture method, to “experimentation” where the teacher is a guide of inquiry through exploration and problem solving. Usually the factory model, an assembly line approach to learning, remained but activity and pleasure within this model were seen as a way to learn, especially for young children. By the 1950’s the environment for experimentation with all forms of subjects and methods in the curriculum was replaced by the “mental discipline” curriculum of traditional subjects taught through rote learning. After the Sputnik satellite launch by Russia,
there was more pressure on educators to provide programming at a faster rate. Many researchers were hired to construct materials and methodologies to fill this mandate and turned to previously ignored works by Piaget, Bruner and others. They demonstrated the need to design programmes in which the natural vehicle for a young child's learning was play (Glichman, 1984). Many of the programs incorporated three elements of play: pleasure, intrinsic motivation, and active engagement. Their research signaled that learning was developmental and activity was important. Changes in programming were made based on cognitive research, which resulted in play being looked at as a core of the curriculum. Experimentation began to happen in the sixties and seventies mirroring the laboratory schools of the progressive era. The late sixties, a time of protest, created an environment ideal for questioning and experimenting and capitalized on activism in the curriculum. “Play was justified as essential for learning but beyond that as a moral and constitutional right of students to be able to question, to move, to puzzle and to make choices” (Glichman, 1984, 267). At present, play is questioned and is rapidly moving out of the core of curriculum for young children.

Play is difficult to define when tied to educational purpose. Each historical setting has had a different purpose for play, resulting in different definitions. Play in pre-industrial times was defined as an imitation of adults and a release of excess energy. For the industrial period, play was frivolous and
non-productive. Play in the progressive period was seen as active problem solving and socialization. After World War II, play again was generally seen as useless and unproductive. Garvey (1980), a leading play researcher in the late seventies, saw play as pleasurable, enjoyable, and having extrinsic goals. However, motivation must be intrinsic and involve active enjoyment, a foundation of social, motor and cognitive and language development.

**Other Views of Play**

There have been others whose thoughts on play have influenced me in developing my concepts of play and dramatic playing.

As early as 1795, Schiller saw play as a form of art. He compared the child in play as being similar to an artist, poet or composer, while in their imaginative world. Schiller said that man plays with beauty as a child plays with toys, that the child controls the form, meaning and function of the objects (Smilansky, 1990, Courtney, 1989). Over two hundred years ago, play and its value was being identified. Previously I had thought that the interest in play was a twentieth century phenomena but Schiller found that the child was in control within the play environment. This characteristic of play is one that still appears in many definitions.

Spencer, in 1872, saw play involving a choice of activity, resulting in the child's using his/her excess energy (Smilansky, 1990). Spencer and Schiller
shared the idea of child choice in play, since Spencer introduced the physical component of play. Spencer was the first modern day scientist to give a full explanation of play. He theorized that children play seriously at what they will do in adult life, that acting is a form of play, that the form depends on the level of development of the player, and that play can act as compensatory satisfaction. Play was seen as an instinct. From these two researchers, I can understand how play started to be viewed as an internal activity.

Stanley–Hall (1906) saw play as a means for a child to relive and recreate his primitive nomadic ancestors. Through play, the child was to arrive at acceptable social behaviour by channeling his primitive ways (Smilansky, 1990). Stanley–Hall’s definition introduced a biogenetic way of looking at play, since most of the play evolves from situations children have viewed or experienced.

Groos, in 1922, defined play as a preparation towards work and it was embedded in the child’s instincts. He viewed play as characteristic of a specific developmental period which disappeared as the child developed (Piaget, 1962). Groos saw play as assisting in the improvement of physical and psychological mastery of the self and environment (Groos, 1976). From his theory, I can see how play began to take on the negativism of unwork. He also introduced the idea that play is just a stage that a child passes through, which I am unable to accept.
Vygotsky, writing in 1933, saw play as “a very complex system of speech with the help of gesture, communicating and indicating the meaning of different playthings” (Smouchla, 1992, 51), the leading source of development in the preschool years. Play, to Vygotsky, cannot be defined based solely on pleasure. “Play occurs such that the explanation of why a child plays must be interpreted as the imaginary, illusory realization of unreliable desires” (Vygotsky, 1976, 692). Vygotsky felt that play is essentially wish fulfillment, that the child plays without realizing the motives of the play. An imaginary setting is created by a child in play but there is no such thing as play without rules. For example, in a domestic drama there might be a mother, a brother, sisters, and so on. “The imaginary situation will always contain rules. In play, the child is free. But this is illusory freedom” (542). Vygotsky said that play is a transitional stage at that critical point when an object becomes central for severing the meaning, for example, as when a stick becomes a representation of a real horse. For Vygotsky, this was one of the basic psychological structures determining a child’s relationship to reality. In play, a child deals with things as having meaning. Word meanings replace objects and result in a freeing of word from object. The transfer of meaning is helped by the idea that a child accepts a word as the property of a thing; the child does not see the word but the thing that represents it. By school age, play is changed to internal processes: internal speech, logical memory, and abstract thought. “Play also creates the zone of proximal development of the child. In play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in
play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself... play condenses all developmental tendencies in a condensed form" (552). Play, then, is the source of development and creates the zone of proximal development. Action in the imaginative sphere, in an imaginary situation, the creation of voluntary intentions and the formation of real life plans and volitional motives... all appear in play and make it the highest level of preschool development. The child moves forward essentially through play activity. Only in this sense can play be termed a leading activity which determines the child's development.

As well, Vygotsky introduced the importance of talk. He reinforced, for me, the importance of both inner and outer talk and how both kinds of talk help the child in developing concepts.

Susan Isaac's work from 1935 has influenced many present researchers. She realized that there are different kinds of play integral to the orderly, genetic, intellectual, social and moral growth of the child. Isaac saw play as simultaneously expressive of a child's concerns and as a learning vehicle. For her, play was important for the development of manipulative skills and for growth in thought, discovery, and reasoning (Schwartzman, 1978). Isaac introduced three main types of play: development of physical skills, direct interest in physical phenomena, and games of "let's pretend" (Smilansky, 1990, Weininger, 1992). She also introduced the idea of fantasy play.
Imaginary play was important for the “here and now” of a concrete situation which makes possible hypotheses and the being “as if” consciousness. She emphasized that the active involvement of the child on materials found in his/her environment is important in the child’s learning.

Erikson stated in 1958 that play was an outlet for expressing those drives that control the child’s life. Play allows a child to release experiences that have been confusing and that may have blocked him/her emotionally. Erikson said that the function of playfulness “is the restoration and creation of a leeway of mastery in a set of developments or circumstances” (Play and Actuality, 691). He compared a child’s play to a dramatist’s job . . . playwright’s work. “He, too, condenses into scene of unitary place and time marked by a ‘set’ and populated by a cast, the tragic (and comic) dilemma of representative individuals caught in the role of conflicts of their time” (692). Play is used as imaginative rehearsal for future traumatic experiences that might be encountered in reality (Smilansky, 1990). Erikson introduced a component that play can represent but, for me, it is only an aspect of its many facets.

Piaget, in 1962, said that play is an end in itself. Whereas “work and other non-ludic behaviour involves an aim not contained in the activity as such” (Piaget, 1963, 147). He saw play as spontaneous while work was compulsive. Piaget said “Play is an assimilation of reality to the ego, as distinct from
'serious' thought in which the assimilating process is in equilibrium with an accommodation to other persons and things" (Piaget, 1963). Piaget showed, through his research, the importance of symbolic play in cognitive development and the importance of the child interacting with materials in his environment. Piaget, as Vygotsky and Bruner point out, downplays the construction of knowledge though language and social interactions with peers and adults. "Children's knowledge is often a product of the joint construction of understanding by the child and more expert members of his culture" (Wood, 1988, 8). Piaget demonstrated the importance of observation of play over long periods of time.

Brian Sutton-Smith, in 1967, proposed that a child's attitude of being "as if" in play shows his/her ability to conserve make-believe identities. Sutton-Smith suggested that the being "as if" attitude of play is seen as a representational play set assisting in the adoption of representational categories. This fits into Vygotsky's view of play as the highest level of preschool activity and supports his theory of proximal zone development.

Weininger, in 1992, said "Play evokes thought, language and activity; it permits the child to deal with the intellectual process in a way that makes the process acceptable and accessible to her. When it is not forced, rigid, or restricted or circumscribed, it allows her to structure her world using language, gestures, body movements and objects of the environment"
(Weininger, 1992, 69). This concept of play closely corresponds to what I envision as play. The significant factors for me are choice and control by the child.
Chapter 2
From Play to Drama

Throughout the twentieth century there have been two views of education: the traditionalist sees the purpose of education as transmitting knowledge. The metaphor often associated with this philosophy is the “empty pitcher” image where information external to the student but valued by a teacher is poured into a passive container. The teacher is the one who does the pouring and, through an external examination system, the capacity of the vessel is measured. The second view of education is based on the romantic, which emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual, greatly influenced by Rousseau’s writing in Emile where he emphasized that the child grows naturally and in “goodness”. He writes: “Let us lay down as an incontrovertible rule that the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart” (Bolton, 1984, 56).

Tending Gardens and Filling Pitchers

The metaphor introduced by Froebel is that of a seed looked after by a caring gardener who waits patiently for the blossom that lays always within it. In the educational setting, the teacher is the gardener. From my experiences, the “empty pitcher” metaphor usually prevails in education. The personal experience is often discredited by scientific empiricism. Marthinus Versfeld
stated that Descartes reduced the person to the epistemological subject.
Whatever thing that is being examined cannot be looked at for itself, but only as a specimen, and the observers act as classifiers. The result is that, in our educational system, we give priority to facts and the knowers of facts (Courtney, 1989, Bolton, 1984).

At the beginning of the century, some catch words were “child-centeredness, “self-expression”, “learning by doing”, the “activity method” and the “play-way”. The New Education movement challenged the “empty pitcher” model and the puritan view of play as a regrettable indulgence of children. John Wesley had warned that one who plays as a child will play as an adult. At the turn of the century, people like Hall, Groos and Freud were examining child play. “Learning by doing” transferred to “drama is doing” (In Bolton, 1984, 8). John Dewey (1934–1938) emphasized that doing should have a purpose and that the learning environment was a key factor in a child’s learning. While the traditional model was prominent, Dewey’s view slowly filtered through the educational system. Drama was welcomed by progressivists because it seemed to be about self-expression. For traditionalists, it was not concerned with knowing, resulting in its being dismissed as having no value in educational settings.

Hughes Mearns (1928) made a connection between Dewey’s “experience” and the purpose of play, which was moved toward the participants’ artistic form.
Winifred Ward (1930) based her "creative dramatics" on Mearns. She assumed that being "as if" would result in order growing from artistic form and social control. Nellie McCuslin (1980) moved away from Dewey and was influenced by H. S. Sullivan (1947). Her work centered on the creativity of play; imagination was the initial ingredient and being "as if" was a cohesive social force. Virginia Koste moved even further away from Dewey. Being "as if" for her was "transformation: paradoxical, spontaneous, holistic, energetic, non-linear, meta-rational, non-categorical: it arouses curiosity, internalizing observation though empathy and intervention" (In Courtney, 1989, 53). Viola Spolin moved even further away from Dewey. Her focus in educational drama was on the "as if" act as inner workings, not on the extrinsic or aesthetic value. Spolin's first question was the "what" of being "as if" (what happens) contrasted to the usual first question of "how" (how do we do it) (Courtney, 1989). British drama education has taken a "bottom up" approach, from "what is" to "what might be", the opposite of the American experience represented by Dewey's outlook.

Peter Slade wrote a significant book in terms of drama education called *Child Drama* (1954), in which he showed teachers alternative approaches for working with young children. He was perceived as being against performance by the majority of drama educators who saw themselves as progressive, since they were trying to show traditional teachers that drama did not interfere with the proper work of imparting facts. Also, they saw themselves as
missionaries, bringing the arts and culture to children who lacked these experiences. Two camps of educators emerged who labeled themselves as progressives. For one group, the doing of plays was what mattered; for Peter Slade, the content held little importance. Slade wanted to move away from dramatic art as the imitation of concrete actions since he felt that the creation of and response to symbols had been neglected.

**An Interest for Dramatic Play**

There was now interest in the value of dramatic play. These drama exponents, influenced by Froebel, saw play as the purest, most spiritual activity of humans. James Sully (1896) was one of the first to look at make-believe play as opposed to play in general and saw parallels between a child's development in make-believe play and the development of primitive art. There was a difference between dramatic play and performance, he claimed, and the pleasure of a child in dramatic make-believe play is independent of an audience. Joseph Lee (1915) attempted to isolate the elements of play. For Lee, play to the child is growth. Peter Slade extended Sully and Lee in his trying to help teachers refine a universal symbolism in a child's exploratory play. He writes:

The constant repetition and use of symbols in the realm of child behaviour, also the acting out of situations sometimes before they can have been experienced, is entirely in line with the Jungian conception of the collective unconscious. We find story themes concerned with birth, marriage, parenthood, death and resurrection. All dolls and treasures are in a manner, babies;
weddings always come into dramatic play, as do mothers and fathers and people who are killed but often get up again (resurrection). We also hear references to the hereafter and to eternity and, at five years, there is already apparent a certain recognition of good and evil, or at least of opposing forces (1954, 48).

Drama Developers

Slade and Lee emphasized the importance of the circle or ring. Lee saw the symbolic circle as a collective experience while Slade explored it as non-collective. Slade looked for evidence of the private circle, and saw the child trying to create his/her own circle through “dipping his fingers in spittle of paint, through crawling in circles, through gestures and dancing” (1954, 25). He did acknowledge the importance of the group circle, but Slade’s interpretation took drama on the path of individualism, whereas Lee saw the ring as part of us – an extension of ourselves, resulting in our acting not as individuals but as the ring. The ring was like the family, a social whole. Slade’s followers took up the slogan “drama as doing” and generally ignored the symbolic content. His followers were concerned with dramatic playing. Peter Slade set up environments for players to experience dramatic play as defined above. The teacher took on the role of “loving ally” helping in the natural expression of the children but Bolton feels that Slade’s theories in practice resulted in drama activities without content and form. Peter Slade tried to put into form the Rousseauesque conception of education. Gavin Bolton defines dramatic playing as an “intention to be, to be in a different
environment or context from the actually present. Performance mode refers to the intention to communicate to an audience, that is, to describe to something outside the make-believe, whereas dramatic playing is an intention to be in an imaginary event” (Bolton, 1984, 32).

Brian Way, an associate of Peter Slade, extended the philosophy and practice of “child drama”. In 1967, he published Development Through Drama, and the time period provided a more receptive climate for change in drama education. Way identified several assumptions in creative drama: individualism stressed one’s identity; drama is used to promote one’s growth. He also provided an extensive catalogue of exercises and games to develop a child’s sensitivity, concentration and intuition. These put the teacher in control: for example, the teacher would describe a story to which the students responded through movement all at once. Many teachers adopted the exercises as their total drama program. Way was also interested in the process, rather than putting the emphasis on the product; he wanted to introduce direct experience. Way’s exercises and direct experiences were his means of moving from the “empty pitcher” model. Bolton argues that drama is not about the individual, but is a social event; self-expression is not drama’s purpose, but rather it is a celebration of what the group shares. Bolton suggested that the direct experience was not related to symbolic representation as found in make-believe.
For Dorothy Heathcote (1979), drama is human curiosity about the world. In her work with children, she saw each child functioning as an “expert”, working in a frame like the one in which a scientist creates. The scientist is motivated by what is true and by a sense of responsibility towards what is true. Heathcote sees arts and sciences as part of each other and says that by concentrating on the object, one can analyze and celebrate it. Humans making sense of the world is not only the source of the arts but the reason for them (Bolton, 1984, 57). Heathcote introduced the “mantle of the expert”; the child, through examining and exploring an object, earns the right to participate in its celebration. For Heathcote, material objects of the world give the child the scientist’s and artist’s view of knowledge. Bolton suggests that all activities that take children outside reality; (reading a novel, listening to music) are subsumed under play or are extensions of it. Play allows for a pause from everyday events. It is a second order of experiencing, enjoying something for its own sake. All play evokes a high degree of concentration and attention and is absorbing because it is self-initiated. Bolton sees play, drama and games sharing a structure base that results in a sense of order to the randomness of day-to-day life. In a game, a player takes on a role based on his/her perception of others’ roles. In dramatic play, the participants agree to enter make-believe play, a game or drama, with the intention of temporally separating themselves from everyday life, allowing them to experience the newly-created present. The action is at the present and what happens in the future cannot be predicted.
**Fiction Worlds**

Drama and make-believe play can appear like real events because the medium provides concreteness. Young children freely choose to enter the make-believe world “secure in the signals from the real world that the real world is continuing to exist” (Bolton, 1984, 107). An important difference between a game and drama is that, in a drama, the signals between fiction and reality are now vague. One of the prerequisites of second order experiencing is freeing the self to be a part of the experience. In dramatic playing, the players participate in a personalizing/objectifying dialectic as in life. The participants communicate with each other, resulting in the normal interactions in a social context. The players have the freedom to negotiate meanings; “In both living and in dramatic play, a participant continually accommodates to an image of himself as an object in order to communicate with others. This is the essence of participating in a social order” (Bolton, 1984, 123). Within the dramatic play there is a publicly accepted expectation of how one performs. A player’s gestures and words signal to the others what the player is doing. When they occur in a frame that is publicly accepted, the participants act in accordance to the roles that they’ve chosen. Elements of the performance are found both in dramatic playing and in life.

Dramatic playing is constantly in a state of tension between personal expression and discovering the public form for presenting oneself, through
gestures and language, to communicate with other participants. Egocentric play is the most extreme form of dramatic playing.

A central thesis of Bolton's (1984) is that the dual consciousness of "as if" is a form of mental liberation. Imaginative acts free the player from a circumscribed view of the world. Imaginative behaviours are those that show inventing, anticipating, hypothesizing, remembering, creating, pondering, and day-dreaming through the medium of concrete action. Through participation in an occurring event, the perceptions and conceptions are achieved uniquely. Dramatic players remain in a heightened consciousness that keeps two worlds in the mind simultaneously. The fiction world is actively constructed, resulting in the players submitting to its experience which is tempered by the treatment of it as an object.

Bolton says that "dramatic action is a learning tool that can separate and objectify an event and break down established perceptions and concepts" (1984, 142). "Aesthetic meaning is a special quality of attention in the creator or observer but is not itself an element" (1984, 144). Bolton suggests that drama's immediate power lies in the fact that a basic response is illicit: both take the doer and observer to the magic of transposing something into the present and the presence is not occurring. All forms of enactment contain the aesthetic dimension of an art product. The aesthetic level depends on the type of attention the players give to the enactment. The kind of attention –
functional or aesthetic – that is given to an enactment requires the player to be in a state of consciousness that holds two worlds in mind at the same time. This state is being “as if”. The player can see his experience as an object to reflect upon. Imagination can allow the player to be free from his/her habits of conception and perception.

Dramatic play occurs when a child chooses a role and uses make-believe to become someone else. Through the process, the child draws on his/her first and secondhand experiences with other people in a variety of situations (Kase-Polisini, 1988, Smilansky, 1990). The child explores things which frighten him/her and things which puzzle him/her (Weininger, 1979).

Dramatic play involves the child being “as if”. The “as if” allows the child to act differently from his/her everyday life and “as if” acts transform what the child knows (Courtney, 1990). In Understanding Children’s Play, Hartley has identified eight functions of dramatic play:

- to imitate adults
- to play out real roles in an intense way
- to reflect relationships and experiences
- to express pressing needs
- to release unacceptable impulses
- to reverse roles usually taken
- to mirror growth
- to work out problems and experiment with solutions (Hartley, 1964, 27-28).

These functions surround three general motifs which are
constants in children’s dramatic play: a need for protection, a need for power, and a need to attack and destroy.

(Weininger, 1979, 39-40)

Five year olds’ dramatic play often is demonstrated through symbolic-dramatic play; often seen in socio-dramatic play and dramatic play within a thematic fantasy frame. Socio-dramatic play is defined as the play that two or more children are involved in together, recreating scenes from their own experiences: going shopping, going to the dentist (Monighan-Maurkot, 1987, Smilansky, 1990, Jones, 1992, Christie, 1991). “Socio-dramatic play is thus a social medium and a social creation although each step depends on individual initiative. The speech/action of the players is spontaneous, created on the spot for the moment. Play episodes include theme definition and role declaration. The play episode allows the children to seek the reality of adulthood as if it were from within; thus they gain experience and understanding which is important for their eventual maturity” (Smilansky, 1990, 7-8). In this play, the children, through pretending, create an agreed upon environment. The children teach and learn from each other in this context. The action can usually be carried out for long periods of time.

Dramatic play described in the literature referred to acting out stories that they heard or viewed within a thematic fantasy play context. Symbolic dramatic play contains six elements: imaginative role play, make-believe in regard to objects, make-believe in regard to actions and situations,
persistence of ten-minute duration, interaction, and verbal communication (Levy, 1992, Smilansky, 1990). Within symbolic dramatic play, metaplay takes place when the child steps out of role and engages in conversations about the play and then goes back into role. Williamson and Silvern identify six categories of metaplay:

1. Nonverbal directions: Attempting to get another child to do something using nonverbal methods. For example, waving a hand as in “go on” or pushing another child to a certain spot.

2. Object: Communication indicating that the other players should accept a prop or mimed prop. For example, “Pretend this is an ax” or “Pretend I have some flowers”.

3. Action: Communication indicating that the other players should accept a particular action. “Pretend I’m on the bed” or “Let’s pretend we’re going to cross the bridge”.

4. Story line: Communication about what is supposed to be happening in the story. “You’re supposed to stop her” or “Don’t you run away now”.

43
5. **Assign roles:** Communication regarding who will play each role in the story. “I want to be the chopper!” “You be the troll” “You can’t be grandma. You’re a boy”.

6. **Directing or rebuking:** Telling a child to perform a specific act or criticizing an action. “No, you have to wait!” “Go into the house!” (1992, 83).

**Metaplay**

For me, metaplay is similar to Bakhtin’s concept of meta-language. “Meta-language is not simply a code; it always has a dialogic relationship to the language it describes and analyses” (Bakhtin, 1986, 136). Metaplay has a dialogic relationship as well. As in meta-language, the children often go beyond describing, often analysing their play. Metaplay drives the drama forward when the players clarify the stories and their roles. Bakhtin, in talking about meta-language, said that “the inexhaustibility of the second consciousness, that is, consciousness of the person who understands and responds: Herein lies a potential infinity of responses, languages, codes. Infinity against infinity.” (Bakhtin, 1986, 136). When several children are involved in metaplay, the possibility of directions of the drama in place is infinite. Not all the metaplay is verbalized; much of it is going on inwardly. Often this unverbalized metaplay does not come into action until the dramatic play commences again.
Metaplay, for me, serves as a form of reflection. As in meta-language, there is an understanding component to metaplay. Bakhtin said, “Thus understanding supplements the text, it is action and also creative by nature”. Creative understanding continues creativity and multiplies the artistic wealth of humanity (Bakhtin, 1986, 142). Metaplay of five year olds can have this level of understanding. When this occurs, the resulting dramatic play takes many sources from various experiences. Through metaplay, the children often evaluate their play. “Understanding is impossible without evaluation. Understanding cannot be separated from evaluation: they are simultaneous and constitute a unified integral act” (Bakhtin, 1986, 142).

The understanding that the children gain through metaplay often gives form as they continue their dramatic play. “Such work is creation, inventing is finding. Forming is discovery. As I actualize, I uncover. I lead the form across . . . into the world of It” (Buber, 1970, 61). Metaplay allows the participants time to consider possible actualization; they make discoveries about who they were, who they are, and who they might be.

Dramatic play, then, is a process which involves imitation, role identification and transformation. It is self-initiated behaviour in which the child is in control of the process of creating situations, and is not concerned with the completion of a product. Discipline is self imposed. During socio-dramatic
play there are rules that relate to the framework of the play. "Dramatic play is a powerful learning tool when used by children" (Kase-Polisini, 1988, 53).
Chapter 3
Connecting Story and Play

Story and Play

The experiences of five year olds with stories can be the foundation for the curriculum that is constructed over a school year. In *Teachers As Curriculum Planners*, Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin state that “a situation is composed of persons, in an immediate environment of things, interacting according to certain processes” (1986, 6). In a five year old’s school environment, the people are the children and the teacher; the things are the stories; and the processes include the reading, the telling, the retelling and the play. Of course, the classroom situations involve play, the medium with which children explore story. The classroom must be set up in a way that promotes the exploration of stories through play, different types of story: those which children bring to the classroom, those the teacher provides from children’s literature, and those they create on the shoulders of the literature. Sharing narratives is one of the “things” that a teacher can use in building the curriculum, for literature provides a variety of “voices, scripts and settings other than those they receive from adults in the course of their daily lives” (Wolf and Heath, 1992, 18).
Through listening to and observing children's talk and play, the teacher can see how children's literature can connect with play, and provide possible plot lines. "In watching and listening carefully to each child and to the mutually constructed play, we find the plot lines of the experimental curriculum" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1992, 390). What is more, the teacher can often become a character in the curriculum story. As the children bring their stories to the environment, so does the teacher. In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey says that:

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about being also a part of the situation; or the toys with which he is playing; or the book he is reading.

(43)

Dewey saw reading a book as an "experience" for the young child. Such an experience can occur by listening to a story, and another when the story is ended and transformed into dramatic play. Susan Engel in *The Stories Children Tell* points out that the "listening to and telling stories are cultural activities" (1995, 10) that shape the way a child might reflect about and remember experiences. Through story experiences, cultural learning can take place. Dewey saw this as an important learning, often more important than school-based knowledge learning (Dewey, 1938).
The child's active involvement within experiences is important in order for learning to occur. Ralph Tyler in the *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* defined "learning experience" as the relationship between the learner and the environmental external conditions. Tyler emphasized the importance of active participation of the learner. Dewey and Tyler, then, saw the importance of the active involvement of the learner in their experiences. They recognized one role of the teacher was the observer of learners, whose observations would provide information on each learner's interests, and help in setting up situations for growth. A teacher, through reading literature aloud, can provide the young readers with the materials with which to experiment and to test what comes from various settings, characters and situations. Literature sets up possible worlds for children to reshuffle for transit and testing in their actual worlds. "But literature also stands ready to manipulate, and to be manipulated, by the rules within its own text" (Wolf and Heath, 1992, 18).

**Reading Aloud to Children**

The sharing of literature with children by an adult can result in a singular focus on the text; other activities may stop. Wolf and Heath in *The Braid of Literature: Children's World of Reading* see story books and the time set aside for their reading as double stop-action on hectic lives. The first "stop-
"action" occurs when the book reading temporarily stops the normal activities for the adult and child.

A second stop-action results from the fact that, unlike the continual and relatively undesignated pace of everyday life, story books frame page-by-page words and pictures to make them hold still indefinitely and stand ready for repeated visits. Moreover, both the illustrations and the language of literature highlight the immediate fixity of the page frame and its potential fluidity and flow off the page into the child's creative manipulations.

(Wolf and Heath, 1992, 85)

Much research has been done on the reading between the parent and the preschool child (Wells, 1986, Heath, 1983, Dombey, 1992, Teale, 1986). Many of the studies involved the recording of the verbal interactions between parent and child, and Wells concluded from his longitudinal study, Children Learning to Read Project (1986) that preschool shared reading was one of the best ways to assist a child to become literate. Teale states that the child is provided with experiences in learning some conventions of written language to "help the child cope with the reflective, disembedded thinking so necessary for success in school" (Teale, 1986). The importance of the read aloud sessions with child and parent has led to studies into the interaction of texts with young children and the teacher in a classroom environment. Over an eighteen month period, Mary Cochran-Smith (1984) studied a group of nursery children aged three to five, and her documentation shows the dominance of reading in their environment. Beyond listening to stories, most
of the activities in the classroom had print and literacy embedded within. She emphasized the crucial role of the teacher in building the curriculum to reflect the community’s attitude to literacy. Vivian Gussin Paley (1981) has documented and written about the observations of five year olds in a kindergarten setting. Stories and group responses were a significant part of the children’s and of Paley’s curriculum. She documented the development and use of stories as a main thrust of the creating of curriculum. Both of these researchers demonstrate the central role, previously handled by some parents, that the teacher now takes on. Providing experiences with books, then, becomes an important role for a teacher in a classroom environment.

**Teacher-Researcher in the Classroom**

Vivian Gussin Paley (1988, 1991) recognizes the importance of being “as if” in a kindergarten environment. For many years she worked with three to five year olds and then began observing and asking questions as a developing teacher-researcher. In 1988, Vivian Gussin Paley said that play is a natural medium through which a child actively expresses a variety of behaviours and emotions like pleasure, curiosity, logic and fear. Fantasy play empowers children, giving them the opportunity to explore and develop a role, think about a subject and explore a theme and make sense of their world. Play is an important part of the young child in the classroom. She saw children moving back and forth between being “as if” and fantasy. “Story telling by children is play put in narrative form” (Paley, 1991, 4). She feels children are
the best teachers of "as if" play. The teacher's role becomes that of stage manager, helping to make connections and then record events. Paley feels that there is little separating of storytelling and "as if" play. She encouraged children to share their stories, which she recorded, and to act them out in group sharing. A primary learning device for Paley is play, which encompasses pretense, role relationships and role adoption as a means for a child to develop self-concept, self-confidence and self-regulation.

Paley, in eight books, documents the stories that children create in fantasy play. At the beginning of her records she shares that she uses literature, particularly fairy tales, to provide future ideas for their stories. In her later writings she questions the use of fairy tales, agreeing with Brian Sutton-Smith's findings of the high occurrence of media items in the stories of six and seven year olds in her kindergarten class, but Paley agrees that they explore the power of life and death. In Bad Guys Don't have Birthdays: Fantasy Play at Four, she records fantasy play because "it is the main repository for secret messages" (1985, vii). Fantasy play is one way in which a child expresses feelings and fears and constructs the meaning of the world. She also said that a child's play reveals friendships and fantasies that become avenues of cognitive growth.

In The Boy Who Would be a Helicopter, Paley became convinced that the fantasies of a group form the basis of its culture. Through make-believe, any
role is possible and inner secrets are safely shared. Through collective imagining work, a child is also able to establish connections and build mythologies. The players in a kindergarten class dare to reinvent mythology. The children think up plot and dialogue without instruction and often without a teacher’s awareness. Paley stresses that play feels good because “discovery and using the essence of any part of ourselves is the most euphoric experience of all. It opens the blocked passages and establishes new routes” (1991, 6). Paley stresses that if dramatic play is eliminated from any approach to language and thought, the greatest incentive to the creative process is ignored. For the young child, Paley claims that play is the only set of circumstances that is understood from beginning to end. She observed that when several children combine their imaginings, a more conscious organization evolves. Rules demand each player’s concentration, contemplation, comparison, interpretation and self-evolution. If the children are to attain the magical properties that inform and protect the players, the characterizations and required scenes must look and sound authentic. “The fact that all children share this view of play, along with its alter egos, storytelling and acting, the universal learning medium” (1991, 10).

Educators as teacher-researchers continue to ask questions concerning how play can be the core of curriculum. Vivian Gussin Paley, at present, best demonstrates how a teacher can provide a play-based environment that results in learning for five year olds. First, Paley sees herself as an active
learner and questions herself as a teacher and storyteller. She began to observe and listen to the children. "We were taught to say that play is the work of children. But watching and listening to them, I saw that play was nothing less than "truth and life" (Paley, 1990, 17). This discovery led to Paley doing a serious analysis of its content through her teaching and writing. She says she has moved from seeing her role as studier of play, to figuring out how play solves a child's problems. She stresses that play contains a child's questions and these questions could be useful in defining a teacher's questions. Paley decided that her role was to help put a child's play into formal narratives which could create a "literature of images and themes, of beginnings and endings, of references and allusions" (Paley, 18). Paley discovered from the start that the children used fantasy play to create their stories, making their own literature. She explored the ideas of recording their stories and then having children act them out. She demonstrated how a teacher, using the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky and observing and recording the children's actions and words, can gain new insights into learning and into the importance of play.

Susan Engel in *The Stories Children Tell: Making Sense of the Narrative of Childhood* endorses the importance of stories in the child's experiences. She states that "the stories we tell and listen to shape our own experience and take us beyond the confines of everyday life – into the past, the future, the might be. Without living in a world of stories, children can never attain full
literacy" (1985, vii). Louise Rosenblatt, in The Reader, the Text, the Poem, talks about the shaping of experience, as Engel did, with direct reference to text. Rosenblatt emphasized that "the reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular moment in the life of the reader" (1978, 20). In the context of listening to the story being read aloud, the child is viewed as a reader. Listening to stories and observing the different aspects of the reading process is what beginning readers do (Wolf and Heath, 1992). Rosenblatt states that different readers can have different experiences with the same text. The reader is an active participant in the reading process, bringing his/her past experiences and present personality to the text. A new experience develops to become a "part of the ongoing stream of life experience" (1978, 12). "Stories do not represent experiences for children; they are experiences as immediate and compelling as actual events" (Smith, 1984, 152). The interactions between text and reading can result in ever changing stories for the child who begins his/her own stories when the text stops. They become experimenters with their real worlds.

Wolf and Heath documented literature events with Wolf's two daughters, and the author and her husband during the preschool and early school years. In talking about the experiences that the two daughters had with books, they said that "to be sure, they learned of faraway times and places, but the universal human dimensions of characters interacting within the conditions imposed by specific times and places transferred most often to their
rethinking of their own every day experiences" (1992, 8). The importance of this process is documented in the text, *Better Than Life*, by Daniel Pennac, as the fictional parents describe the entry of their son into literature, similar to experiences undergone by Wolf's daughters. The parents confess that:

> The stories we read to him teemed with brothers, sisters, parents, doubles, hosts of guardian angels and tutelary friends who took charge of his fears but who, when fighting their own ogres, found a haven in the anxious beating of his heart. He became their reciprocal angel: a reader. Without them, he would have remained mixed in the heaviness of his own. He discovered the paradoxical virtue of reading: it takes us out of the world so we may find meaning in it.”

(1994, 17–18)

Children extend this "out of world" exploration through their play, especially dramatic play, to explore situations they can only imagine. In this way, dramatic play allows them to try on new situations and attempt risks they might not otherwise try. As players of story and makers of their own curriculum, the children experiment within the framework of a "literacy club" (Smith, 1988). Being a member of this club begins in the home and moves to the classroom. Within this club, curriculum is constructed by the adults and children. Smith identifies seven important characteristics of learning which take place in this manner: “The learning is always: (1) meaningful, (2) useful, (3) continual and effortless, (4) incidental, (5) collaborative, (6) vicarious, and (7) free of risk” (Smith, 1986, 8). In listening to stories read aloud, a new
member, the young child, is shown that the written language of books makes sense. The activities are useful since the reading is done for purposes, and each interaction with print adds something to one's knowledge bank in a continual and effortless way. Much of the learning in listening to stories is incidental and is demonstrated in other explorations. Learning with books is collaborative between the reader, the text and the writer. The young child learns vicariously from the work of the authors and from the adults who share the stories. In a no-risk environment, the child experiments with different ways to master what more experienced members do (Smith, 1988).

In the classroom literacy club, then, curriculum as experience occurs as defined by Connelly and Clandinin. The five points of their definition are found within the experiences of adult and child learners, using the texts as sources to explore, individually and collaboratively, ideas in a classroom environment full of materials for chosen explorations. The texts provide opportunities for interactions among persons, things and processes. Every situation leads to another situation (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). Exploring text leads the young learners to demonstrate more behaviours of the members of the literacy club so that they can imagine how they might act. Situations in a literacy club lead to growth of its members. Connelly and Clandinin say that “the past shapes the future through the medium of situation and the future shapes the past through stories we tell to account for and explain our situations” (1988, 9). In a classroom literacy club the
members, both adult and child, construct and reconstruct. Dewey, in *My Pedagogic Creed*, said that “I believe education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience: that the process and goal of education are one and the same thing” (1987, 73). The doings of teacher as curriculum maker evolve through his/her experiences in situations.

Joseph Schwab saw a teacher as an important member of curriculum making. His curriculum model is different than the one of teacher as curriculum maker within the classroom environment but his emphasis on the teacher applies in both structures. Schwab saw teachers as having insights into the children as learners. He states that teachers cannot be told what to do; they are not assembly line workers. “Teachers practice an art” (Schwab, 1983, 245). Teachers live in the environment where the curriculum develops and grows. Paley’s work reveals her to be such a teacher. Through her detailed observations and interactions, she is able to develop a curriculum that reflects the needs of the five year olds with whom she works. Paley reflects Dewey’s idea that “the teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences” (1987, 71). As selector of the texts shared by reading aloud, the teacher has an important role in providing stories that might be chosen to be used in future explorations by the children.
Recording My Curriculum Building

My written reflections act as a frame for examining the "somethings" that have been experienced in particular "situations". In my journals, I write about what has gone on in the "read aloud" times and I talk about the student dialogue that has occurred within and outside the text experience. Many interactions happen when pairs of children talk about text. Talk is an important component, allowing us as readers to begin to go below the surface of the text. Having discussed the posed questions in small sharing groups usually results in more children discussing the same questions in the large group setting. The children listen attentively to the thoughts and feelings of their peers. This gives them other frameworks for modeling their own exploration of books. As well, talk is the vehicle that the children use to extend their ideas through play. In recording events of the day, I follow and reflect on the data gathered during their interactions with their texts: what an incredible opportunity. The stories that I record give me information which allows me an opportunity to see the journeys that the children and I have taken in the classroom (Paley, 1981). They also permit me time to reflect on connections being made in terms of curriculum, looking at the children and the subject matter.

Part of my learning is seeing, when children are given choices of ways to explore story, how they are able to build greater understanding about life in the world beyond the classroom. Wolf and Heath point out that "children
come to see literature as part of the full repertoire or range of selections of scenarios and situations from which to infer rules for combining sounds, for assuming character roles, for managing human relations, and for attempting to control the universe” (Wolf and Heath, 1992, 78). Children gain the ability to see the rules for human relationships that occur in literature and I have observed how they explore these interaction patterns in their lives through play.

Literature provides stories that can interact with the stories that children bring with them and with the stories that they eventually create. Stories become vehicles for the learners in the classroom, generating curriculum from the explorations and discoveries made individually and co-operatively.

Stories recorded in my journals give me evidence of a particular environment that has been created. They show the importance of meaningful literary experiences and the importance for learners to be actively involved in the evolving of these experiences. From our experiences, “the most important attitude that can be formed is that of a desire to go on learning” (Dewey, 1938, 48). Stories enable us, as learners, to organize our experiences and our knowledge in order to create our own curriculum.
Chapter 4
Documenting the Players Through Play

Arriving at the decision to study the dramatic play of five years olds with an invited adult occurred during the first year that I was involved in working in a kindergarten environment. Through observing and participating in the learning of five year olds in the school year 1993-1994, I decided that, in the next school year, I would initiate a study of dramatic play. Obtaining permission from parents and school officials was the next stage in preparing to have children included in my research. Having been given positive support from the parents and school officials, I was ready to begin. The main participants were the children, whom I will describe, and myself.

The Children

The children in the two school years of 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 attended school for two and one-half hours from either 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. or 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Approximately half of both morning groups of children were bused to school. The original school neighborhood had changed demographically since the homes in the immediate areas were populated by families that did not have elementary aged children. Many of the students came from newer subdivisions which were up to two miles away; others were brought to school by a day care centre bus and by parents. When the children
left at 11:00 a.m., many were cared for by baby-sitters, older family members
and day care personnel. The class population ranged from eighteen to twenty
students. To be eligible to attend school, the children had to be five years old
by December 31 in the year in which they started school. This provincial
policy resulted in the children in my class having a twelve month
chronological age range.

The children were from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including
Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, and Caribbean. Many of the children were first
or second generation Canadians. In the first year of the study, approximately
half the children were identified as having English as a second language or
dialect (ESL/D). About a third of the children in the second year of the study
were identified as being ESL/D students. During interviews with parents
there was sometimes a need for a translator.

The children represented a wide range of academic abilities that one would
expect to find in a kindergarten class. In each year of the study there was one
child who was identified as having identifiable learning disabilities. In the
first year that child was assigned a full-time classroom assistant and, in the
second year, the student was observed and tested, resulting in the pupil
being identified as needing the help of a classroom assistant in grade one.
Neither child participated in self-initiated play until well into the school
year. The other children, from the beginning of the school year, demonstrated their levels of engagement in play.

Though interviews with the parents at the beginning of the school year, information was gathered about the interests of the children and the activities that they enjoyed at home. Also, parents shared experiences and activities that they did as a family, along with information about activities and organizations in which the children participated outside the home. They talked, too, about the children's experiences in structured environments such as day care and preschool. Two commonalities in our conversations included television viewing and reading to children. The parents all commented upon the importance of reading to their children.

The socio-economic status of the parents ranged from low to middle class. Most of the families had both parents residing in the same home. For the children who were from single parent homes, with the exception of two families, both parents came to the interviews together. All of the parents demonstrated that the children came from caring environments.

The dramatic play that was recorded occurred in a school environment, inside and outside the classroom. The children explored and experimented in the many areas of the classroom. For example, a variety of writing and reading materials were near the blocks, near craft materials and near the
water and sand. The children knew that most materials could be moved to where they were needed. The children, in most cases, were the initiators of their learning and my role was to assess what was happening and then to provide possible suggestions to enhance the learning. There was a time built into the day when the children could volunteer to share what they had done and receive feedback from their peers.

The children in the two observed years demonstrated that dramatic play often was used to explore and experiment. They showed me that when they were in the classroom, they often took on a role of being “as if” in “what if” scenarios.

**The Teacher-Researcher**

In my investigation, I took on the role of both researcher and participant, recognizing the reciprocal relationship of action and reflection as the essence of teacher-researcher (Burton, 1991).

For teacher-researcher inquiry, action is a necessary element. However, teacher-researchers must go beyond their actions and reflect in a systematic, disciplined manner (Burton, 1991). Actions provide information for reflection and this knowledge can inform future encounters with children. This relationship can result in educators being more reflective, using research to extend learning and teaching.
“If research is seen primarily as a process of discovery, then the day-to-day work of a teacher comes under the term teachers as researchers.” (Britton, 1983, 15). James Britton saw each teacher's lesson as an inquiry resulting in further discovery, "a quiet form of research, and that time to reflect, draw inferences and plan further inquiry" (Britton, 1983, 15). Britton quotes Michael Polanyi (1969): "Research is an intensely dynamic inquiring, while knowledge is a more quiet research."

Keeping a teaching journal has allowed me the opportunity to stop and reflect about my perceptions of particular incidents at school. From these internal conversations, some insights can be made, but often, more questions emerge, and these questions become the basis for further research in the classroom, in the literature and with colleagues. Nancie Atwell (1991) proposes that thoughtful practitioners ask questions about students' learning, observe their own classrooms, make sense of their observations and change in the light of their discoveries. Teachers, then, become more responsive to and more patient with their students' needs, resulting in their giving invitations to students to become partners in inquiries through collaboration, always pondering how and what their students are learning. Thoughtful practitioners act as teacher-scholars – reading, debating and writing about their discoveries.
For Schön, practitioners (teachers) have a special form of knowledge that they possess and use, and practice demonstrates this knowledge – 'knowledge-in-action'. Schön's term "reflection-in-action" develops in a manner that is said to be as rigorous as theory in the scientific research. Schön distinguishes between problem setting and problem solving, showing that practitioners must identify and redefine problems (Munby and Russell, 1989). This kind of practitioner, the most thoughtful practitioner, is the teacher who acts as researcher. When research becomes a regular part of the teachers' curriculum, their perceptions as teachers are transformed (Goswani and Stillman, 1988).

Glenda Bissex (1989) reminds us that research implies that the researcher is trying to prove something to someone else. The literal meaning of research is to look again, which Bissex says might not describe what teachers do. "We are not researchers in other people's classrooms, looking for proof or generalizing truths, but reflective practitioners in our own classrooms, searching for insights that will help us understand and improve our practice" (Bissex, 1988, 775).

Because ethnographic research "is rooted in the experience of those who were actually there and has profound implications for the classroom inquiry" (Martin, 1992, 21), teachers in their classrooms are in an excellent position to pose questions about learning – collecting data, analyzing that data and
posing more questions. “This gives them the confidence to adopt a critical attitude to outside experts, testing proposals against their own beliefs and experiences, accepting suggestions that they consider helpful but rejecting those that they judge to be inappropriate for their own particular circumstances” (Booth and Wells, 1994, 27).

In the 1940’s, Kurt Lewin suggested learning about social systems by trying to change them (McLean, 1995). He proposed “cycles of analysis, fact finding, conceptualization, planning, implementation and evaluation to simultaneously solve problems and generate new knowledge” (Brown and Tandon, 1983, 278). This process of linking practice and theory is called action research. This concept has been interpreted and re-interpreted, but action researchers are united by their belief in useful knowledge and developmental change (Brown and Tandon, 1983, McTaggart, 1991).

One of the characteristics of action research that distinguishes it from other teacher development is the ownership of the investigation. "Personally owned research is always oriented towards a solution to the present problem with respect to the act, although its effect may be to create new knowledge, new problems, and new questions by the way" (Boomer, 1988, 7). Boomer states that to learn deliberately is to research.
Stenhouse (1975) emphasized that teachers' work should be studied and that they need to study it themselves. All well founded research and development in education is based on the study of classrooms and an important aspect of curriculum development includes teachers taking a research stance concerning their own teaching, examining their own practice critically and systematically (Stenhouse, 1975), as extended professionals who reflect in and about their inquiry for designing learning experiences for the children with which they can learn (Schön, 1991, Stenhouse, 1975).

Boomer (1988) stressed that through action research, teachers can become experts of learning, reminding all students how to learn. Boomer sees "personally-owned" research as an alternative to "big R" research where researchers are detached from the problem. The principle of ownership is crucial, resulting in teachers having to think about their intentions, theories and ideas about what they will teach, and inviting students to do the same. Theory and practice are brought together in the classroom rather than elsewhere. The "big R" research can then provide vital information in the classroom where a problem is defined and owned (Boomer, 1988).

Another characteristic of action research is the dialectic relationship between practice and theory in the actual conduct of the exploration. Action research has been defined as "an act undertaken by teachers to either improve their own or a colleague's teaching or to test educational theory in practice"
(Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, 152). Schwab described the benefits of polyfocal conspectus, the transformation of theory into knowledge, "a habit of observation, selection and interpretation of the appropriate facts of concrete cases" (Schwab, 1971, 519). This becomes a process of discovery as new information is constantly added, examined and acted upon.

Ann Berthoff (1988) suggests that theory and practice should be in a dialectical relationship: theory and practice need each other. The use of theory can define what our aims and purposes are and help us assess what is going on and why something works. To the end, our teaching practices are informed by theory.

James Britton (1988) viewed research as a process of discovery where every lesson includes an inquiry, with a time to reflect, make inferences and plan further inquiry.

Teaching is something we do; research findings are something we come to know; development is the process by which we bring this kind of knowing into relation with this kind of doing.

(Britton, 1988, 17)

An important goal for inquiring reflective teachers is to become active, independent learners, which can result in their becoming inquirers in their
own learning (Booth and Wells, 1994). We model curiosity, problem solving and reflection for our students.

As an example, Booth and Wells (1994) described a course for graduate students, where they worked with a community of reflective inquirers in pursuing their own individual interests, developing expertise and conversing with others in a supportive environment. Often the participants experienced the inquiry process for the first time, which they then transferred to their own classrooms.

Jane Hansen (1987) describes a group of graduate students exploring inquiries through reading and writing, through sharing their journals, their observations and the reflections. Many participants transferred their learning into classroom investigations of their own students' learning. Booth, Wells and Hansen have demonstrated that we can investigate learning and teaching more significantly if learners are direct participants in the learning and teaching.

Nancie Atwell (1991) feels that, as teacher-researchers, we can model thoughtfulness for our students, demonstrating how adults can function as lifelong learners and that learning is a social activity. Schools become more thoughtful places when teachers invite students to become co-learners in inquiry, collaborating in wondering about what and how they are learning.
Finding ways to share learning with others in the field is a way for teacher-researchers to experience opportunities for giving voice to their own observations and theories.

Documenting one's learning is another aspect of the transformation from teacher to professional. Through sharing personal and professional stories, they learn about the ways in which teachers can be curriculum makers. Colleagues inside or outside of school can be led to rethink their own teaching as well by reading accounts of teacher-researchers.

Vivian Gussin Paley’s (1995) recent book, *Kwanzaa and Me: A Teacher’s Story*, documents the effects of participants in a multicultural classroom through recording their stories and her story. Through her other books as well, Paley has demonstrated how she “documented her teaching and her attempts to understand what it means to work with young children in ways that develop their understanding of the world” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1992, 389). In *Classroom Voices* (Booth, 1994), teachers in one Peel school (of which I was a member) reflected about their development as teacher-researchers. We shared, through collaboration with peers, an inquiry resulting in changes to our teaching. Through sharing their learning so others can learn, possible collaboration with other practitioners is put into place. The potential is there for new members to be added to the community of teacher-researchers. “By sharing stories about their classroom
experiences, teachers not only gain insight into their own practice, but they also contribute to the storehouse of knowledge about teaching” (Jalongo, 1992, 68).

**Looking Back, Moving Forward**

Educational change depends on and involves teachers' processes of learning (Fullan, 1982; Wells and Chang–Wells, 1992). Fullan (1992) stressed that change is a highly personal experience. “If educational change is to happen, it will require that teachers understand themselves and be understood by others” (Fullan, 1982, 117). An examination of teaching practices must include a look at the beliefs which underlie those practices. Changing what we do in the classroom in any meaningful way involves changing attitudes and beliefs but, before we can change those, we have to know what they are (Newman, 1987). To uncover our assumptions about learning and teaching, Newman (1987) suggests we need to delve below the surface of what we are currently doing. She says that uncovering our assumptions and examining 'critical incidents' often results in discovering a contradiction that creates a new understanding” (Newman, 1987, 730). As reflective practitioners in our classrooms, we search for insights about the complex of motives, beliefs and attitudes that influence our practices on particular occasions (Bisex, 1986).

It seems to me the switch into 'researcher' occurs at those moments when the unexpected occurs, when things haven't gone as we thought they should, or when our predictions are unconfirmed and we're forced to see a similar situation with new
eyes. It's generally when I'm unsettled about something that's happened and reflected on it that I become aware of another critical incident. The trick is to become adept at noticing those moments and doing something about them.

(Newman, 1987, 736)

By using a spiral of self reflection, planning, writing, observing and reflecting, the teacher-researcher demonstrates a commitment to the improvement of practices, the practitioners' understandings and the settings of practice (Kemmis, 1993). Words, ideas and experiences come into clearer focus for scrutiny. By examining the critical incidents which I recorded in my journal and by discussing my writings with colleagues, changes resulted in my own learning and teaching.

One main element of action research is reflection. Stopping to analyze what the teacher has taught is built into this type of research. For me, action research has resulted in my taking time to consider what I've accomplished and where it might lead next. Reflection is not just the act of looking back to what is known but it is based on the gathering and sifting out of visions while acting in the classroom. These images are systematically reflected upon, resulting in new meaning and, in turn, pointing toward new actions (Burton, 1991). The use of action research has resulted in my being more reflective. For example, I was able to think about what I had observed in the dramatic play in which I had participated. By my actions the children saw
that I valued play. My playfulness resulted in the children feeling able to invite me into their play. As I entered their dramatic play situations, I was concerned about my own interference with the play process and this question stayed with me through my research: Does an adult’s presence change dramatic play into something else? When does intervention become interference?

Play was an important part of my development as a child. I have vivid memories of play, especially dramatic play. My interest in drama stayed with me throughout my school years and continued from my first year of teaching. My work with older children through drama raised questions that I thought might be answered by interacting with five year olds.

In doing my research, I worked in many roles – teacher, researcher and play participant. Vivian Gussin Paley (1990, 1995) showed me through her many books that when working with five year olds in a kindergarten environment, a teacher can find ways to make cumulative records documenting children’s behaviour and learning. By documenting what the children did and said, Paley was able, when reflecting, to see the children as her teachers, leading to new understandings. She influenced my decision to be an active participant in the environment where I was collecting data.
Diana Kelly-Byrne’s (1989) work on make-believe play reinforced my decision to be an active participant. She made her own decision when she researched the play of two participants: the adult researcher and the child. In the professional literature, Kelly-Byrne is identified as the first to be an active participant in make-believe play over a period of time (Schwartzman, 1984). Both Paley and Kelly-Byrne helped determine my choice of methodology when working with young children in a play environment. As well, I was influenced by Shelby Anne Wolf and Shirley Brice Heath (1992). Wolf, during her two daughters’ preschool and early grade years, consistently documented the children’s learning to negotiate between the texts encountered in their everyday and make-believe worlds. Wolf was directly in the research as participant and researcher. Brice-Heath brought her expertise and, with Wolf, analyzed the data.

Karen Gallas (1994), a teacher-researcher in a grade one environment, described her journey by beginning with the story. She believes that narrative accounts best show the process of education. Her stories model using personal narratives as research. Gallas presents the data in raw form, then retells the specific event from her point of view to gain new understanding. Through the retelling, new discoveries are made and new questions raised. Like Gallas, I too share her belief about a teacher-researcher, when she says:
As a teacher—searcher, ultimately the process of inquiry begins with a question or with confusion. The journey I take to answer that question or see the confusion often leads to places I never intended to go.

(1994, 11)

The documenting of the dramatic play events was an ongoing series of learning experiences for me. Through trial and error, I discovered that writing a journal best served my needs for keeping records. Like Paley (1990) who discovered that, for her, tape recording the children's stories was a means for her to revisit these, I found my journals served a similar purpose. Dramatic playing with young children often involves a great deal of physical activity. Before beginning my research, I thought that I would be able to use taping and videoing as ways of collecting information. Through experimenting, I came to realize that these methods of recording would not work in my situation; I wrote in my journal. When using tape recording and videoing, I also discovered that the dramatic play was affected by these tools. Some of the children's attention was given to these, taking away from the spontaneity of their play.

Often I found myself running about the playground and I discovered that having small notebooks with me helped me write about significant happenings that I could develop later in the day when I wrote in my journal.
Diana Kelly–Byrne (1990) used journals when describing, as a participant, her play with a seven year old in *A Child's Play Life*. My journal entries were an important source for me, allowing me the opportunity to revisit some of our dramatic playing events. I will refer to specific entries and share some of my thoughts.

The dramatic play dialogues that follow occurred when the players took on roles of characters, first from literature, secondly from the film medium and, thirdly, from non-context media. Through my annotated and anecdotal journals, commentaries and summaries, a portrait will emerge about the importance of the teacher's role in dramatic playing with five year old children.

The design of my chart determining the three categories was based on the “Behavioural Categories Employed in Analysis of Fantasy Play” found in *Play, Exploration and Learning: A Natural History of the Pre–School*. An example of the chart is found in the Appendix. In using the designated categories for each event over the two school years from 1994 to 1996, three areas of influence for dramatic playing emerged (Hutt et al, 1989). Literature, film and non-context media were used most frequently in the children's dramatic playing in which I participated. I looked back at my written journals to examine what reoccurring themes emerged.
As Paley, Kelly–Byrne, Wolf and Gallas, I will begin first with my stories.

These stories will provide raw data for analysis and reflective understanding.

The following three chapters in Section 2 recall the stories, commentaries on the stories, and the summaries.
The dramatic play of the children was often based on stories that they had heard within and outside the school environment. For example, during book sharing, the children had listened to *Once Upon a Time* by John Prater. There were many pictorial references to nursery rhymes and fairy tales which the children wanted to talk about. Not only did they want to talk about known nursery rhymes, they wanted to recite them. This gave me the opportunity to make links between the printed word from a big book of nursery rhymes and their memorization of the poems. Interactions like this helped the children and me to build a community of literature learners who were creating a collective knowledge base that we could use in future situations (Smith, 1988). During the large block of activity time, several children, through different activities, identified ways to further explore their interest in nursery rhymes. For example, two children painted their version of *Mary Had A Little Lamb*. J brought his interest in *Hey, Diddle, Diddle* to our dramatic play. In all interactions, T designates the teacher.

J: Stand still, Mr. Crawford. [my arms stiff at my side.]
J: I change you into the dish.
T: Look, I'm a dish.
J: Change me into the spoon.
T: I change you into the spoon.
J: Come, dish, we have to run away.
T: Where are we going?
J: Over there [pointing].
Z: I'm a spoon, too.
J: Let's run.
Z: There's a monster after us.
G: I'm the monster.
[The dish and the two spoons run away from the monster.]

(December 1, 1995)

This was an example of the players, through dramatic play, developing a story through sharing knowledge, and together building a drama following unsaid, agreed upon conventions (Bolton, 1984). We were able to experiment with “what if” possibilities when being in “as if” roles (Weininger, 1976).

The following events give more evidence of some of the outcomes that result from dramatic playing when literature provides input. My role, as always, was to select books which provided the children with opportunities for exploring literature in a variety of ways. For example, when reading fairy tales, I always offered several versions. Indirectly, this showed the children that there are different ways to retell stories. With The Three Little Pigs they were exposed to five variations. In their dramatic play they experimented with retelling the story in different ways. The first event to be examined
involved the children's dramatic play after listening to two versions of The Three Little Pigs.

Event 1

From my journal, I include some of the dialogue and my immediate thoughts:

We read two versions of The Three Little Pigs today. C and J were making towers out of large plastic blocks. K suddenly said, twenty minutes into the building, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." They broke the house down.

J to Me: Mother Pig, come help your son. Let's make a house.
T: Yes, son. I'll help.
A: I'm a pig. Let's build.
H: I'm Sailor Moon. I'll build your house.
J: [As Tuxedo Mask] I'll help too.
J: Mother! Watch out! The wolf is coming!
T: We better hurry.
A: Here's blocks.
C: [as wolf] Roar! Roar! I'll break your house.
K: The wolf is here. My rose won't work. It only works on monsters.
[As Tuxedo Mask, in the cartoon, carries a rose.]
J: Mother, are you scared?
T: Yes.
J: [Takes plastic food and dumps it by the wolf. The wolf eats it up.]
J: Mommy, he's eating it up.

(November 6, 1995)

The children began their dramatic play by taking on roles of characters based on The Three Little Pigs and from the animated television program, Sailor
Moon. Sailor Moon, a girl, and Tuxedo Mask, a boy, are super-heroes who fight evil. H and K had, for several weeks, often taken on these roles when creating dramas. They showed how they could take the essence of the characters into a new story frame. J, K, H and I were the main players. The children demonstrated that they could create a problem and then come up with ways to solve it. The dramatic playing continued with Z suggesting that we build a house together. Another problem posed was that J was hungry.

J: I'll cook.
T: Don't you need some food?
J: Yes, cook some food.
Z: [brings dress-up clothes and a toy vacuum cleaner to the house]
J: Wait a minute. I'll be back. [He goes and gets a frying pan.]
T: [to a new player] Are you my son?
X: No, I'm a friend of the little pig.
[pointing to J]
Z: Here's the wolf. [brings a wolf mask]
T: Children, be careful of him.
J: Don't talk to strangers.
T: I'm going to visit a friend.
J: Bye, mommy. Watch out for strangers.
K: [comes to me] Mother, is there a lock on the door? The wolf is coming.

(November 6, 1995)

It was time for cleanup. During cleanup, J called me mother. J was showing me how he could stay in role as well. I was better understanding the importance of issuing invitations; how they were answered directed the dramatic playing. The players also were teaching me the importance of listening and responding to the many problems that were being posed in the
dramatic playing. During cleanup, J demonstrated that he could use writing for a specific purpose when in role.

J: [with a writing book] I'm writing a story.
T: For sharing.
J: No, call me pig two.
    [J takes the picture from the floor]
    I drew this picture. It's the wolf. Like him
    [points to A, who has been the wolf]
T: Are you taking it home?
J: Yes, mommy.
    [J stayed in role for the rest of the morning]

J, during sharing time, used his picture of the wolf to describe the dramatic playing to the other children in the class. Group sharing gave the children the opportunity to describe what they had done and to respond to comments and questions made by their peers. After cleanup and sharing, when we went outside, several children were still in role. The dramatic playing continued with other children joining us in role as the grandmother of the pigs and as a woodcutter. The problems continued to be avoiding talking to strangers and vanquishing the wolf. The children handled these issues by feeding the wolf imaginary food and, after eating it, the wolf became docile and went down on all fours. He no longer used English but growled like a wolf. The dramatic playing continued with the buying of food at a supermarket.

It was time to go in. J, getting on the bus, said "Good-bye, Mother Pig. I'll see you tomorrow." J was able to stay in role for the morning. Everything he did, he did as Pig Two. When he shared, J did it in-role, relating his picture to the morning activities. He took his picture of the wolf and placed it beside the head of C, who had been the wolf. He compared their features.
The other children accepted him as Pig Two. J became the catalyst for many of the dramas which happened. The other children came to see me as Mother Pig. The children showed me how they could use their stories – pigs, Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask – and bring them together to create new stories.

(November 6, 1995)

This session took place both inside and outside the classroom; our learning environment was not confined by four walls. On this particular morning the children had heard two traditional versions of The Three Little Pigs, illustrated by Edda Reini (1983) and James Marshall (1989). The children, in pairs, discussed the story with some prompting from me. Using pairs for discussion was a technique that resulted in the children being more directly involved. For example, the children, in pairs, contrasted the two texts before we recorded their ideas on chart paper as a large group activity.

Similarities:

- both had three pigs
- the pigs built houses
- the wolf died in both
- both started with "Once upon a time"
- both books had "I'll huff and I'll puff..."
- both books had a mother pig
Differences included:

**Edda Reini version:**
- all the pigs lived
- the wolf exploded
- the pigs found straw, sticks and bricks
- the third pig didn’t get turnips, apples or go to the fair
- the mother didn’t cry

**James Marshall version:**
- two pigs were eaten
- the wolf was cooked
- the pigs bought straw, sticks and bricks
- the third pig went to get turnips, apples and went to the fair
- the mother cried

Seeing the information being written modeled a purpose for writing for the children. This information was referred to later in the week when reading other versions of *The Three Little Pigs.*

The boys freely chose to explore *The Three Little Pigs* through their dramatization. The stimulus appears to have been C's comment about huffing and puffing and the action of knocking down the blocks. My invitation into the drama was J's statement about Mother Pig coming and helping her son build a house. On many occasions I found that my invitation was made through a statement referring to me as a character that would be involved in the dramatic play.

J, through his drawings of the wolf and the retelling of our drama through his reading of his blank page book, showed me directly how a child uses drawing and writing to conceptualize what he/she has done. When J held his picture of the wolf beside C and showed us how they were the same, our
belief in C as the wolf was reinforced. The wolf role became C's. This picture reinforced.

To build belief, I would have the children sketch who they were and write brief descriptions. J did this naturally.

The children used food symbolically in their dramas both inside and outside the room. Inside, the children used the available plastic food; outside, the children bought and ate imaginary food. A lack of concrete objects did not stop their dramatic playing. We, as players, did not need metaplay to talk about the imagined food and houses for we understood the “rules”.

It was interesting to note how the pigs thought food was able to neutralize the wolf and how C showed this by no longer using English, only grunts and growls. Through this magic they were able to have “good” triumph.

In the playground drama, the players found a way not only to take away the wolf's power but also to have him become a friend, an issue that the children often raised. Neutralization of the wolf was a way to bring equilibrium to the world. I regularly dealt with problems involving someone not being a friend and the extension of that resulted in exclusion from an activity. Taking my lead from Vivian Gussin Paley, we discussed the possible rule of “You can’t say you can’t play”. This rule was that another child could not be excluded
from the ongoing dramatic play. We discussed possible solutions when this problem occurred.

Being in role as Mother Pig allowed me to learn how to co-construct role belief. We were required, as players, to be observant, allowing us to help in the creation of the story. J showed me how one can stay in role and, in turn, helped me to stay in role as well. As the morning progressed, more of the children saw me as Mother Pig. J also demonstrated that he was able to retell our drama through use of his wordless and pictureless books. It should be noted that J took on the role of writer and, with an imaginary pencil, wrote the story as he told it before he shared it with the class.

The children reminded me that the fairy tales created by writers and these developed by the young players in their dramatic play basically were similar (Chukofsky, 1963). The five year old players showed me how the “as if” roles moved beyond the retelling of the story. Most younger children will not move from the original text in the retelling. But, as five year olds, the “what if” comes into play (Booth, 1994). The children in The Three Little Pigs drama created the problem of taming the wild beast.

As a player, I had my beliefs verified about the importance of dramatic playing and the role of the teacher in “facilitating the dramatic playing environment, helping children expand their themes and extending and
supplementing the language and the play with appropriate attitudes, approaches and strategies" (Booth, 1994, 25). The young players were helping me find ways to intervene, supporting and guiding by building on their creative ideas and doings (Courtney, 1991, Booth, 1994). Like Otto Weininger (1992), I believe that the teacher should not direct or organize the dramatic play, but observe and ask questions in the context of the dramatic playing. The teacher, to participate in the play, needs to stay in the role assigned by the dramatic play and not try to be in role as a teacher.

As a participant, I saw first-hand the importance of language in dramatic play. Through dialogue, ideas were experimented with, themes extended and problems solved. Through co-constructing, the players brought together their knowledge and extended it (Booth, 1994). The children confirmed, for me, the finding of Martlew, Connolly and McCleod's (1976) case study, who concluded that the play groupings (social versus solitary) affected the generation of narrative-like language. When playing alone the child in the study did not "verbally elaborate or extend imaginary play settings, use third person pronouns, or use language to plan characters' roles" (Pellegrini, 113). I had observed some of the children playing alone and saw in their "Three Little Pig" dramatic play that they used language to extend the settings, to create problems and to negotiate the story. They didn't appear to do this when playing alone. The dramatic play context seems to necessitate the participants' use of more explicit language. It appears that the children in
dramatic playing realize that ambiguous language does not lead to clear communication, resulting in their using more explicit language (Pellegrini, 1982, Martlew et al, 1976). Pellegrini (1985) states that children's narrative competence is one outcome of their exposure to children's literature themes.

J's pretend writing of our "Three Little Pigs" story reinforced the importance of the teacher recognizing the necessity of providing materials which can be used by the children to give meaning and context to their dramatic play (Weininger, 1992). J showed that he realized that he could make a permanent record of what he had experienced. He stayed in role when he created his text and during the sharing of it.

This event revealed to me that five year olds are able to create narratives and confirmed my belief in providing the children with a variety of texts. It confirmed the importance of dramatic playing for the players to experiment with language, resulting in their extending language learning.

Event 2

The next day, several children called me Mother Pig when they entered the room. I read Three Little Javelinas (1992) and another version of Three Little Pigs (1992). We contrasted and compared the two books. At the beginning of the activities, J came to me.
J: Mother, come, let's build a house. We need blocks.
T: I'll get some.
J: We need two more houses – a straw and stick.
T: What should we do?
J: You go up there [points to front of the room] and make a straw one.
T: Okay.
[I go to the front and make a straw house out of plastic blocks. I start building. F comes along.]
F: Mother Pig, what are you doing?
T: I'm making a house of straw.
F: That's not a good idea. The wolf will get you.
T: I'm doing what my son said.
[I finish. I go back to where the brick house is being built.]
J: I'm almost done.
C: The wolf will soon be here.
[C was the wolf yesterday.]
J: He's a stranger. He's bad. [relates back to Little Red Riding Hood]
C: Where's the wood house?
T: We don't have one.
C: Let's build one.
[We build together. C has taken on the role of a pig. He's building it in a new way.]
C: Mommy, I'm making you a house.
T: Thank you. What is it made of?
C: It's brick. It's strong.

(November 7, 1995)

C and T then built the needed house together. Meanwhile, J had found plastic food, dishes, cutlery, which he arranged by categorizing, for his house. J continued the theme of yesterday by telling Mother Pig not to talk to strangers. J then informed Mother Pig that he talked to strangers because he
was brave. Z and B arrived and B announced that he was Pig Four. Z and B decided to go shopping with B commenting, “Home made cooking, that’s what we want.”

[The pigs decided the house was too small.]

B: Let’s make it higher. [They all get blocks.]
D: Let’s make a trap for him.
T: What kind?
D: A booby trap.
J: What’s that?
B: It’s a trap so we can live better.

A made a trap. He placed plastic corn on the cob on a plank. He demonstrated how it worked. The drama continued with designing different traps and trying out the different ideas. Sailor Moon (H) and Tuxedo Mask (K) arrived. The pigs were not interested. B balanced a large holed plastic laundry basket between two planks.

B: It’s like a mousetrap.
T: The game.
B: Yes.
K: There’s two wolves.
H: I have a better idea for a trap.
Z: That’s a trap?
H: The wolf knows.
[The drama stopped. Several of the little pigs went to the library to exchange books.]

(November 7, 1995)

Building traps had been an intricate part of the dramas over the last two days. Being involved in the designing of the traps showed me that children
needed to try out ideas. There was a lot of talk about whether or not the traps would work: dramatic play is integrated learning.

This session reinforced for me that the children had built belief in both their roles and in my role. Before entering the class I was addressed as Mother Pig. Problem solving was demonstrated by the players assessing their needs and then coming up with a plan for executing their ideas, identifying their houses and how different players would take responsibility for different constructions. Actual materials were used to represent other materials. The children had no trouble with large plastic blocks being straw. The introduction of traps was another example of how, in role, the children and I explored the possible constructions. The children spent a great deal of time trying out different combinations of sizes of traps. Some children made maps (drawings) of their traps, they told me, so that they could build the same trap again. Within the drama, they demonstrated a need for record keeping.

B's use of a large laundry basket indicated that he could take ideas from another source and apply them within the context of the drama. Using a commercial game, *Mouse Trap*, with which he was familiar, and combining it with his building knowledge supports that concepts, particularly mathematical in nature, could be explored.
In looking back at the dialogues, there appear to be some inconsistencies, but these did not inhibit the dramatic playing. The need for a wood house was identified by J and C but, in both cases, they built brick ones. This did not stop the drama; it appears it wasn't important. The result was that we had three houses which became those of straw, wood and brick.

F's warning to Mother Pig about not building a straw house demonstrated integration of the knowledge of the text to the drama. J returned to warn us about not talking to strangers, giving himself the role of power by telling me he was brave and could talk to strangers. He also defined for me the role of the one who needed support. Often, when in role as teacher, I try to take on a role of the one not in authority. J represented the conversations of a phone call and I was surprised that he was able to pause and listen to the imaginary wolf. B's comment, about a trap which allowed us to live better, reinforced how a child makes generalizations that can summarize what drama is about. At this point in the school year, the morning class did more of their exploration through dramatic play. For the afternoon class, it was just beginning. Their dramatic play was different in the way the drama would stop while the players would try out different ideas. Often it took long periods of time for the players to agree and these particular players did not invite me in as a player, often designing their dramatic play around "baby", especially the "bad baby". I had read that girls would not use building materials unless the adult chose activities involving construction for them,
but I discovered that when adequate large materials were distributed throughout the classroom, girls would choose to build. Over the three years working with five year olds, I found that girls as well as boys chose to explore ideas through construction. Availability of materials seemed to make the difference.

The children, in their house building, designing and making of wolf traps, revealed that they did not separate their learning into disciplines. With the manipulation of the building materials, the children were exploring strategies for problem solving (Weininger, 1991). Over time, the children increased the complexity of their problems due to their mapping plans in their heads and on paper. Weininger (1991) states that when children construct with a variety of materials, they may come to understand how materials relate to each other and, in our dramatic playing, the children in role when building looked at height, shape, width, order, volume, area, surface and depth. Our construction decisions were an integral part of our dramatic playing.

In looking back, I find it interesting that J took a role of power and I was given a role of the one who needed protecting. J was able to be someone that he couldn't be in his everyday experiences outside dramatic play (Kelly-Byrne, 1989). As the powerful little pig, J was able to deal with the problems in a variety of ways and come up with possible solutions. Dramatic play,
then, can provide an environment for young children to explore a variety of roles.

As a player, I began to see that five year olds did not see story as having a separate life, but made the story a part of themselves (Wolf and Brice-Heath, 1992). Through play, they brought together their knowledge of the story and interwove it with other texts from their lives, often expressing themselves in nonverbal ways. Bruno Bettelheim (1975) discussed the importance of fairy tales:

> As with all great art, the fairy tale’s deepest meaning will be different for each person, and different for the same person at various moments in his life. The child will extract meaning from the same fairy tale, depending on his interests and needs of the moment. When given the chance, he will return to the same tale when he is ready to enlarge on old meanings, or replace them with new ones.

(12)

The children in Event 1 and Event 2 explored the meaning of *The Three Little Pigs* through introducing problems about traps and strangers, illustrating in their play how they could use their many experiences to make new texts and new understandings.
**Event 3**

The children and I continued to explore “The Three Little Pigs” theme but this time as wolves. I had read another version of the tale with the roles being reversed, so that in our dramatic play we continued to explore the theme of good versus evil.

J: Mother, mother, I need you.
T: Coming.
J: I'm the little good wolf.
   [We had just read earlier The Three Little Wolves and the Big, Bad Pig (Trivizas, 1993)]
J: You're the Mother Wolf.
B: [B arrived.] I'm a pig.
J: I'm a little wolf.
B: Me, too. We'll build the house together.
   [We did. H came along.]
H: I'm the grandma pig.
J,B,T We're wolves.
H: I'm the grandma wolf.

(November 8, 1995)

I was followed by the grandma, who transformed into the Big Bad Pig. He growled and came into the house.

T: What should we do?
B: Let's set a trap. [puts food all over the floor]
J: Why is the food on the floor?
B: It's the trap.

B puts up another trap – a plank with a plastic laundry basket on top. I went off to another part of the room where children were building with plastic blocks and cans.
What are you doing?
C: Mommy, we're building a house for you.
[Later on, C becomes the Big Bad Pig.]
C: I'll huff and I'll puff.

(November 8, 1995)

He went around the house pushing the blocks. The other children that he was working with tried to lure him to their trap of pizza. He didn't opt in. J came to me with a letter in scribble writing.

J: Mother, it's a letter.
T: Could you read it, please?
J: It says: "Watch out for the Big Bad Pig. He'll make you wiggle and jiggle and eat your blood and you will die. If you get into trouble, call your mom and dad."

(November 8, 1995)

Inside, J used The Three Little Wolves to explore another way of looking at The Three Little Pigs. He and the others kept designing traps in role and the children remained more and more in role, comfortably changing, depending on the environment. The beginning conversation showed this: pigs to wolves, an easy transformation for me too. E, today read his version of The Three Little Pigs. The book had blank pages and in many ways it was a retelling of his dramatic play. He incorporated many of the versions he had heard and created a new story. He also found ways to involve his audience, stopping to
have the children predict and talk about his retelling. E modeled J's previous retelling.

During dramatic playing in this session, they transferred new information into their story. The book taught the children that one could change roles and explore a familiar story in a new way and the players readily moved into their new roles. H changed from Grandma Pig to Grandma Wolf after J, B and T informed him that they were pigs. They transformed previous knowledge from earlier dramas into a new drama involving wolves representing “good”. The making and setting of a trap reappeared as a way to capture the Big Bad Pig. There were two dramas going on involving building, trapping and the Big Bad Pig and, for both dramas, I was the mother. This role for me was sustained over several days.

A child, through writing, can play with language – wiggle and jiggle – and introduce other story lines, referring to a previous version of Jack and the Beanstalk. J reinforced that children naturally integrate their learning, and taking the lead from the children taught me how a community of players can evolve if the adult is attuned to the invitations that the children present.

Courtney (1989) defined transformation as change from one thing to another. In our dramatic playing the children transformed from child pig to wolf as
the setting changed. B's experimenting with different traps revealed that he could use one idea and transform it to another situation.

The five year old players' transformations resulted in "coming to know", for being in role as pigs and wolves, they acted out ideas both old and new in a reciprocal playing. The players came to know more about storying and about exploring possible outcomes based on an hypothesis. "The transformation is given power by its human context, resulting in the issues becoming deeply embedded in us" (Courtney, 1990, 26).

**Event 4**

The dramatic playing began with the little wolves building homes to be safe from the Big Bad Pig. Sailor Moon, who transformed into Mega Monster and Tuxedo Mask, became part of the drama as well.

I next went to the house centre where F and P were involved in dramatic play based on Cinderella.

F, P: We're playing Cinderella.
F: We're changing it.

(November 10, 1995)
They put books (their writing) into a purse. Then F and P engaged in their dramas by themselves. I sat and watched for approximately five minutes and there was no interaction. They kept their separate ways in separate dramas.

When outside on the playground, J came up to me and initiated dramatic playing around Santa Claus. For the past week there had been new snow and the weather was probably an influence on our dramatic playing.

J: I change you into Santa Claus.
T: Ho! Ho! Ho!
J: Merry Christmas, Santa!
[Several children come over.]
All: Have you gifts?
T: Ho! Ho! Ho! Yes!
E: Thank you for the truck, Santa.
X: Thanks for the doll.
E: I'm now my toy. I'm a truck.
T: That's amazing. Come with me, truck.
J: Santa, did you bring your reindeer?
T: Yes, all eight are here.
J: Can I come and ride with you?
T: Oh, yes. Jump in.

(November 10, 1995)

Along with J, nine other children got in the imaginary sleigh and flew about the playground delivering presents. All of us went down the chimney and quietly put the toys in the stockings. C decided to be the tree, giving us a place to put the gifts. We went back up the chimney and flew away. Santa and his guest flew around the playground until it was time to go in.
Santa reminds me of belief – belief in magic, belief in changes, in transformations. This happens more and more. Many of the children as they left for the morning, said “Good-bye, Mother Pig” or “Good-bye, Santa!” I’m interested in finding out more about how F and P define their dramas. P has been away for two and a half weeks. Just before she went away, she and F began doing Cinderella dramatic play. I know that there is a lot of metaplay happening. At this point, I’m not hearing the dialogue. Often I come from other parts of the room after the preamble has occurred. J definitely has often become the director/catalyst of dramatic play. Catalyst is probably the better word.

(November 10, 1995)

Interestingly, over the week, Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask, two characters that represented “good” in the animated show Sailor Moon, had come in and out of The Three Little Pigs dramas. They helped build the houses and were readily accepted by the other players exploring variations of The Three Little Pigs. In the current session, Sailor Moon transformed into Mega Monster, who came to represent evil in The Three Little Wolves dramas. As a fellow player, I found it was not difficult to accept these characters from another source into our dramatic playing. When the children didn’t want to include a suggestion given through dialogue from the new players, the other players’ response was to carry on as if the players who controlled the dramatic playing hadn’t heard what was said. Usually the reaction of the new player was to watch and listen and then move into the drama with appropriate responses that continued the storying, or they simply moved off and continued in another drama.
The snippet of the Cinderella dramatic play that I observed was done mostly through the "parallel play" mode. When I moved to other parts of the class, more direct interactions occurred. At this point, the girls were more comfortable when an adult was not present when they explored variations of Cinderella, influenced by the Disney video of Cinderella which recently had been released. F's declaration that they were changing it told me that they were risk takers in their explorations.

As mentioned in my notes, the power of magic for five year olds was evident in their Santa dramatic playing. Over the previous few months, some of the dramatic playing revolved around who had magic and how it gave the possessor either good or evil powers. Good magic triumphed over bad magic in many of the dramas. In looking back at the dialogue, I find it interesting to note how E moved from having an imaginary truck to being the truck. Transformation often appears in dramatic playing, as when C moved from being one of the children who went down the chimney to being a Christmas tree. Many five year olds move from one role into the next, easily keeping the story moving within the understood rules. Over the next month, many dramas were created involving Santa.

The three dramatic playing settings were examples of children creating imaginary worlds, organizing the scenes that they invented based on their knowledge gained from the real world (Meek, 1991). A prevalent feature of
Children's dramatic play in our culture is for the players to be characters in the story. As five year olds create their dramatic playing environment, they fictionalize themselves, exploring both the imaginary and real worlds (Meek, 1991). The environments that the children and I created in our dramatic play were as real as those we meet in day-to-day lives. Like Meek (1991), I feel that there is a connection between being “lost in a book” and in the imaginative world of making dramatic playing. The children were able to create stories with episodes for the three pigs and three wolves over several days, taking on the role of the authors of their own stories.

Through reading aloud to children, I introduced them to the language of books, which is different from speech (Meek, 1991). Through hearing stories, the children “discover text and discourse in the sustained, cumulative building up of related episodes: how one thing follows and is related to another” (Meek, 1991, 111). Through being read to children come to understand the symbolic use of language in creating new worlds and use this knowledge in their dramatic play.

Stories also provided the children with a variety of ways to come to terms with their emotions. Through their dramatic playing the children were telling and retelling stories, helping them cope with complex problems and the rules and interactions with adults (Meek, 1991). The children that I
played with showed me how they were able to use their story knowledge to make new stories.

**Summary**

The several dramas that occurred during the week of November 6 in which I participated helped me to more clearly understand Gavin Bolton's theory of the game of drama. He suggested that playing games and dramas have "the same structural basis, that in bringing a sense of order to the randomness of day-to-day living, they nevertheless build on structures embedded in our real social interactions" (Bolton, 1984, 81). My role of Mother Pig existed only in terms of the other roles of the players. There was a mutuality of agreed needs (Stenhouse, 1981). I could function as Mother Pig only as long as the other players continued to allow me that function. Dramatic playing requires the players to be themselves functioning in what the situation requires of them (Bolton, 1984). We, as players, adapted to the dramatic playing situation.

Our work revealed that play is a kind of communication within a frame. Gregory Bateson (1972) showed play to be a socially situated act, defined by "the production and exchange of paradoxical statements about persons, objects, activities and situations and the various relationships involving these" (Kelly-Byrne, 1989, 11).
Play framing is arrived at by certain interpretative acts, like the exchange of messages, signals, or cues (Bateson, 1972). Bateson described this as meta-communicative in nature and other anthropologists and linguists as well have stressed the "ritual of theatre" and socio-dramatic play as meta-commentaries on the "rules underlying the structures of familiar socio-cultural life or experienced social reality" (Turner, 1882, 104). When children act out adaptations and extensions of children's literature spontaneously, they effectively act in two frames, the play within the literature story, and the play based on their social experiences and knowledge. Bateson described differences in the two frames as "exchanged cues and propositions about codification and about the relationships between communicators" (Bateson and Reusch, 1951, 209). In play, the meta-communication messages expressed in actions were not always what they seemed (Bateson, 1972). Bateson's example was "the playful nip denotes the bite but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite" (1972, 180).

In J's statement that Mother Pig should not talk to strangers but it was all right for him because he was brave is an example of the paradox of the framing. J replayed a story from literature and transformed his own role from one with little control to one who had control. The roles were reversed. "The message or frame subsumes the whole process, indicating that the behaviour engaged in by the players is at once real and not real" (Kelly-Byrne, 1989, 10). We, as a pig family, were acting out the interactions that a
family might have but, on the other hand, we were doing it in the "as if" context. This does not devalue what we are interacting, for serious versus non-serious are dimensions not appropriate for the framing. Bolton points out that the playing frame is like a picture frame; one can make judgments on the contrasts and comparisons of things within the frame. One cannot say that a painting within the frame is serious but the wallpaper on which it hangs is not. This image emphasized, for me, the importance of assessing the actions of the play. For many centuries, play was looked at as trite and non-serious since it was created in the "as if" world. Having the opportunity to be in the dramatic play as a player allowed me to see the ways in which stories and ideas are developed when in the "as if" state, how the children in role went about exploring ideas. The trap construction readily showed me that children integrate their learning, that children can maintain two narratives with their corresponding language, roles and symbols and integrate them. The players with whom I engaged kept the ideas of the literature story conquering evil as well as trying out different explorations of materials through shape, texture, categories and function. I have found over the last three years that the children are often in role when exploring concepts, particularly ones that have scientific and mathematical characteristics.

Through this interaction as player, I saw the importance of literature as giving children the materials and processes to enable them to experiment with their own worlds. Stories from literature provide children with new
possible worlds “to reshuffle for transit and testing in the actual worlds of children” (Wolf and Heath, 1992, 18). I saw directly the importance of providing a wide selection of stories. Providing different versions of The Three Little Pigs demonstrated to the children that the creator has power to reinterpret and change others’ words and ideas. The children who created their Three Little Pigs dramas showed clearly that they could integrate their knowledge of stories and concepts from the real world to create new stories. In role as Mother Pig, I was able to experience and come to a concrete understanding of the importance of learning that happens within dramatic play.
Chapter 6
Television’s Influence on Dramatic Play

For many of the children in our kindergarten environment, most of their experiences with storying were drawn from the medium of television. The children generally had a vast knowledge of television programs, especially the animated ones. Also, several children had plastic action figures and corresponding settings that were spin-offs from the programs. The children’s parents, in interviews, often mentioned that these materials were used by children to create new stories individually and with peers and siblings. Generally, the children brought a knowledge base of the animated stories to school and used this base in their dramatic play. Viewing the same programs resulted in a shared understanding of the general themes found in the many episodes.

Over the three years that I spent working with five year olds, I discovered that each year the children used these programs to explore the concept of “good versus evil”. Early in the school year, several of the boys in the afternoon class took on the roles of characters based on Batman and Robin, influenced by the animated series and the videos and movies.

The boys, in role, had been solving the problem of making a Batmobile with blocks big enough so that all the players could fit in. Eventually the children
solved this by adding more blocks. One of these, in role as Batman, with a wooden block to his eye (representing a telescope), said, "Here comes Riddler".

Ff: Let's get him. We need a riddle.
Aa: You have to trick him.
     [A riddle is pretended to be said and there is make-believe hitting and kicking.]
Ff: We got him. Back to the Batcave.

We all went back. One of the Robins looked out and told us Two Face was approaching. Similar things as above happened. This dramatic playing went on for about twenty minutes.

In my notes I observed that the boys were becoming better able to organize their play and fewer and fewer negative physical interactions were occurring.

A final note indicated that the boys were solving more problems that emerged when in role. Throughout the year the children used animated programs to explore ideas. They created new stories by building on knowledge that they already possessed. In this chapter, several elements are shared to further reveal how television programs influence five year olds' dramatic playing.
Event 5

A journal entry early in the year shows that I was reflecting about the cartoons that I had viewed to gain a better understanding of the basis of the stories that the children developed in their dramatic playing. I wrote:

I'm seeing less of dramatic playing of **Power Rangers**. Occasionally I hear the children talk about them. I heard C talking about the program being bad. He said, "His mommy told him". Many of the children agreed. The media attention has filtered down to the children. I have begun talking about how, as actors, we show fights. I feel that it's important to have the children play them out publicly. **Power Rangers et al** focus on the universal evil versus good.

(October 14, 1995)

R, a little girl speaking a few words of English learned in six weeks, stood on the playground and pretended to have a gun.

R: **Zap! Zap! I zap you. I'm the Pink Ranger.**
T: **I have a shield.**
R: **[She fell down, then jumped up in her Pink Ranger pose and we continued.]**

(October 18, 1995)

The above reflection relates that R's source was one not familiar to me and emphasizes the importance of listening to the children.

Q, R and N were playing **Sailor Moon**. When I came along the girls emphatically told me they were acting, not fighting. I reassured them that I understood. Somewhere in their experiences, someone had told them that they couldn't fight or use weapons. We talked about how actors work.
Q, through actions, told me how Sailor Moon got her power and how she transformed from a girl to a super-hero. It was interesting to see girls in roles associated with boys. Most of the characters in Sailor Moon are female. The five year old boys are watching this program as well. So far, little reaction to the program in their play.

(October 20, 1995)

A few days later I was invited into Sailor Moon dramatic playing with boys, and in our play I learned new things about Sailor Moon.

[H came to see me.]

H: I'm Sailor Moon. [He raised his arms.]
H: Sailor Moon. [He then spun around several times. He turned to me.]
H: That's how you become Sailor Moon. You can be Sailor Phoenix. Do what I did.

T: Sailor Phoenix [raised arms up and spun]

[H, as Superman, comes up.]

K: I fight bad men. Are you bad?
H, T: No.
K: When I fight bad men, I'm bad.
H: Here's the locket.
K: I break it.
H: What will we do?
H: [went to a book - picture] It says: "Say a magic word and he will die." [H then said a word.]

K: I can freeze you [blows]. Turn to ice.
H: I have hot water.
K: I have a strong one.
H: I have a stronger one.
K: I need hot water to get my energy back. I have to have it back.

T: I'll help.
K: It doesn't help.
T: [turning to H] What should I do?
H: I don't know what to do.

(October 25, 1995)
Watching programs that the children talked about helped me gain a clearer understanding of their story knowledge. For some children, film is their main source of storying and this knowledge is often used in their dramatic play. For example, originally I thought that the children's source for the “Three Musketeers” was from the movie that had recently been released on video. When going through the listings of new animated shows, I noticed the “Five Musketeers” and, after viewing it, realized the source of the children’s information. It helped me answer some of the questions I had about some of their dialogue and actions not matching my knowledge base of “The Three Musketeers”. Viewing cartoon shows, for me, is entertaining and also reveals the sources the stories that the children bring to the classroom.

My interest in animation helped me realize that I had made an error in my journal about R being the Pink Power Ranger. Hearing a radio interview two days later about a new cartoon series, Sailor Moon, made me understand that she was not a ranger but a sailor. This new information was sketchy and led me to ask the children if they could help me learn more about Sailor Moon. They were very helpful, and confirmed the importance of asking learners for assistance. Often they have information that can extend the teacher’s knowledge base. They need only to be asked.

The issue of “no fighting” versus “fighting” in dramatic play is one that often is addressed in kindergarten classes by having a rule imposed banning
fighting. The usual result is that the representation of fighting goes underground; the children find other ways to be in role. My experiences have resulted in the children and I discussing the issue and coming up with ways that the players can represent scenes involving fighting. Addressing this in their dramatic play often results in determining other ways to solve the problem. Interestingly, the majority of characters in Sailor Moon are female, and the girls in the afternoon class identified with these super-heroes. Five days later, I was introduced to Sailor Moon in the morning class by two boys.

Sailor Moon being a girl was not an issue for H. I had overheard other boys in dramatic play on different occasions discuss whether boys could portray female roles. It depended on the child who was perceived as leader in the particular drama and what his/her views were. For H, it was not an issue. K's statement about being bad when fighting bad men characterized much of his play for several weeks. As a super-hero, he would use bad power in combating evil. This later changed and, for K, this was some of his first dramatic play with a peer. His experience interacting with peers before coming to school was limited. I found that H created a “cliff hanger” for us by his statement, “I don’t know what to do”; this needed to be solved. The solutions that evolved often led to a new problem. K and H both had many book, television and video experiences. They both brought a knowledge of how stories work and they showed me their understanding through dramatic playing.
For many of the children with whom I interacted, cartoon series on television formed part of their culture at home (Brice Heath, 1983, Bromley, 1996). Their language knowledge has been influenced by the medium of television. The children were viewers of cartoon series and, for many, this was their main narrative experience (Bromley, 1996, Pompe, 1996). However, the children, through this medium, were language learners, acquiring skills such as prediction, text acquisition and comprehension (Meek, 1991).

The children's knowledge base of Sailor Moon indicated that the viewer is an active meaning maker as is a reader (Pompe, 1996). I have come to realize that children bring many texts to the classroom and valuing these texts and building on them in the classroom becomes one role of the teacher. As a participant in the children's dramatic playing of Sailor Moon, I was able to see that the children already knew a great deal about the conventions of narrative and language (Bromley, 1996). Having viewed many of the same shows, we, the participants, did not need to spend time on establishing the context for the dramatic playing. The development of our story revealed the many opportunities that dramatic playing gives for the development of collaborative learning (Bruner, 1986). This culture was the stimulus for our dramatic play, providing the base of our sharing and negotiating (Bromley, 1996). My early experiences with our Sailor Moon dramatic playing emphasized the importance of valuing and drawing upon the experiences and the knowledge gained at home.
Event 6

The following day, the boys continued their Sailor Moon dramatic playing.

The drama's problem involved the magic crystal, for whoever possessed it had the most power. The dilemma of the mystery crystal was continued in J's castle dramatic playing.

J: Your majesty, the castle is ready.
   [He had just built a castle out of cans. I go over.]

J: Your majesty, welcome to the castle.

Z: Here's the map.
   [holding a piece of crumbled paper]

T: Where's my Queen?
   [Z points towards I. She makes a face and shakes her head. J comes over with a sheet of scribbled writing. He reads greetings to the king. K comes over.]

K: I'm Tuxedo Mask. I live with Queen Beryl.

T: I'm the king. I live in the castle.
   [Z made a sign with "NO" written on it. He puts it in the castle.]

J: Here's your chain, your majesty (looks at the sheet on the castle).

J: No breaking. [reads sign]

K: When you were away, I was in the castle. I fight over evil. [goes in]

K: I'm looking for a crystal.

T: I haven't seen a crystal.

K: Do you know what it is?

T: No.

K: It's a special Sailor Moon crystal.

T: Where are you going?

K: I'm going to find a crystal.

C: I'm Queen Beryl. Can I come in?

T: Yes.

K: I have the crystal.

H: Drink this. It will put you to sleep.
   [holding an eggshell to me]
The dramatic playing continued with the issue being power. K addressed this problem by touching the can that made up the castle’s wall and saying that he was giving it energy gained from eating good food. New characters like Tuxedo Boy were added. The following day the power of magic theme continued. H’s first task was to get other players together. He invited K and me into his dramatic playing by saying, “You have to play Sailor Moon with me. I can’t play alone.” H and K moved our dramatic play along by writing out magic chants.

H and K went and got paper to write.

H: I’m going to write my magic words to turn Mask back into our friend. [H wrote numbers and K wrote his name]
J: I’m Tuxedo Mask. [reading from his writing] [H sat at the table and wrote.]
K: I’m still Queen Beryl.
T: [to K] What can I do?
H: I’m writing the magic words. He writes:
   OPO1  NO101  YOB  1  O1Pb
This spell will turn Me back to a kid again.
K: I tricked you. I’m evil.
H: Sailor Phoenix, I’m still looking for the crystal. This magic pill can work on its own. Do you want your power back?
T: Yes, please.
H: Press this.
   [points to 01 on his page of writing]
T: There’s Tuxedo Mask hiding in the house.
H: Let’s use the words and take his power.
T, H: Power, power, evil, evil. We take your power.
K: You can’t take my power. I’m getting stronger. [K goes off.]
H: It’s magic. [takes his toque]
K: I'm back to get you. I'm stronger.
T: Let's join hands. We're stronger. [to H]
K: No, you're not.
H: He's took all our power.

(October 27, 1995)

The next morning I watched an episode of Sailor Moon, gaining new information about the characters. Having this knowledge enabled me to be an active participant in the Sailor Moon dramas. H and K daily went into Sailor Moon characters and often I was invited to take on a role. The boys showed me how an object can take on a different meaning, demonstrated in the following incident.

Sailor Moon (H) is in this role most of the time. He moved around the room looking for the real crystal. I was given the dubious role of Queen Beryl. H brought over a puzzle and took a piece out and touched my forehead.

H: This gives you memory of the past.
T: Oh! I'm starting to see.
H: What do you see?
K: [K, as Tuxedo Mask, arrives.]
T: I see Tuxedo Mask as a little boy. He's . . .
K: Zap! I take your memory away.

H returned and touched another puzzle piece to my head. Then a struggle of power went back and forth between H and K, with Queen Beryl in the middle. Both suddenly went off to find the real crystal first. Many trick crystals appeared. Many of the dramas involved characters being deceitful.

(November 3, 1995)
The *Sailor Moon* dramatic playing in the afternoon usually was done by girls. From the beginning, I was assigned the role of Queen Beryl. Often our playing was outside. Much of the play revolved around who had the most power.

M: [to me] We want your energy.

T: I need yours.

M: You take my energy. [aside: metaplay]

T: I take your energy (with my hands out)

[M and Q fall to the ground.]

M: I tricked you. I'm taking your energy.

[jumping up]

M: When I say "crash", your energy is gone.

[aside: metaplay]

M: Crash.

[I fall to the ground. Q comes over to see me.]

Q: Come with me, Queen Beryl.

[takes me by the hand]

Q: Let's have tea. We're friends.

T: Can Queen Beryl and Sailor Moon be friends?

Q: Yes. Let's go to your house.

T: Okay. Follow me.

[We pass M.]

M: I'm in jail.

Q: I'm going to Queen Beryl's house.

T: We're here.

This was interesting. Q had two enemies come together and be friends. This was an interesting way to bring two opposing sides together.

(November 29, 1995)

The following day, R, an ESL student, invited me into dramatic play dealing with power. As Sailor Moon, she carried outside a magic wand she had made out of arts and crafts materials. Coming up to me she said, "You freeze." I
went into a rigid position. R kept pointing her wand at me and said, “You freeze more.” Keeping her wand out, she said, “You can’t move. I’m leaving.” She left and stood on the bridge and yelled, pointing her wand. “You’re water. You’re water”. R, first-hand, taught me how a child can use dramatic playing to experience power over an adult.

In the event on October 26, much of the focus of the dramatic play was on the finding of the real crystal that gave power. Even when the play moved away from the crystal, the drama’s focus returned to the crystal’s power. The seeking of the object symbolizing power kept the dramatic play moving. It seems that dramatic play allows children to explore the idea of having control through power for, in their daily lives, the roles often assigned to them by society are those of subservience.

K, as Tuxedo Mask, referred to himself as Queen Beryl. In the cartoon series, he is a friend of the Sailors and helps them fight evil. K had chosen to change this role: “when he fights bad men, then he is bad”. K’s comment about giving energy to the cans because he got it from food was a demonstration of how a child can bring factual information into dramatic play and integrate it into the action. “No” came from a need to prevent the castle from being knocked down. Over the previous days, children not participating in the dramatic play were destroying the structures.
The two dramas merged into one and all players accepted the results. There was no need to stop and discuss what was happening. Often, two dramas merged and then quickly separated. K, checking to see if I had realized that C was Queen Beryl, wanted to know if I was truly involved. I think he wanted to be sure that I was one of the players. When I could answer him, he and I continued to create our story.

On October 27, K’s opening comment about not being able to play alone reminded me of the importance for five year olds of having a friend to “play” with. K’s perception was that he was unable to play unless he had someone to play with. Sometimes I dealt with the isolated child who felt that they could not participate in activities unless he/she had a peer with them. Younger children often will play by themselves and do not verbally express the need to be with someone else.

K’s spell that he wrote in random letters and numbers was used in different ways, reminding us that magic often appears in five year olds’ dramatic play. As well, he taught me that the recorded symbols could have different readings.

K, by not buying into the second spell, created a new problem for H and for me. No matter what we did, K still had more power. This reminded me of a medieval drama last year on March 3, 1995, in which one boy became the
dragon. My magic was not powerful enough and, no matter what I came up with, he countered in role. Another player, as Hero-Man, made a machine out of Lasy blocks that would throw water on the dragon but this didn't work. Other players came up with new ways. The dragon was directing our drama that had one character in role in which he/she could not be defeated. In my notes I wrote, “C, as a dragon, made something clear to me. When working with older children, often the problem that was presented to move on the drama was an abstract idea. C was a loud, flame-throwing dragon. The problem was not abstract; it was real: “How do we bring the dragon under control?”

Watching programs that the children view has always been important to me as a teacher. I find that I learn things about the contexts of the children’s culture. In terms of animation, I remain an avid fan of this medium, and in watching many episodes of Sailor Moon, I gained insights into the general schema used in each half hour segment, and feel that I am a better player with credibility for the other players.

R, on November 30, indicated that she was exploring power through dramatic play and her confidence using a new language was clearly revealed. In this fictitious world she, as Sailor Moon, could control another player, an adult. I was one of the first in our class with whom she was involved in dramatic playing. She quickly moved to playing with peers.
The children, in their roles of power, had opportunities to express both positive and negative emotions (Singer, 1995). The children made sense of their worlds and learned to keep a balance between attachment and affiliation with others along with a desire to experience a sense of individuality and power (Smilansky, 1990, Singer, 1990). When in role, I have observed children imitating an adult image which fulfills their need to identify with adults (Weininger, 1979). Sutton-Smith (1979) felt that these experiences allowed the children to image and enact the lives of others, resulting in their expanding their role repertoires.

The children playing the same roles over several days resulted in the dramatic play episodes being spontaneously reformed, new in some respects (Smilansky, 1990). Dramatic playing with different role players gave the children the opportunity to view different interpretations. The children gained a sense of main themes and possible extensions (Singer, 1995). Smilansky's (1990) three roles of actor, observer and inter-actor apply to the children's dramatic playing of animated television programs. The children, as actors, took on characters from the cartoon shows and used their knowledge to create dramas within the given framework of their roles and themes, learning discipline and self-control. Through observing the other participants, the children's conceptual world was widened (Smilansky, 1990).
**Event 7**

The following episodes occurred several months after Event 6. The children from the afternoon class were often engaged in dramatic play based on *Sailor Moon*. The following event illustrates that the children have continued to explore power and control.

Y: Hey Queen Beryl, you can't hurt me. I'm Red Power Ranger.
T: I have my shield up.
Y: I can hurt your shield.
[Several children run over.]
T: I have more.
Several: We have more.
N: We're taking your energy.
T: No, no, don't take my energy.
N: We have.
T: I'm returning to my place.
[An pursuit occurs across the playground to the baseball diamond. Y runs and picks up a piece of ice and runs off shouting.]
Y: I have your crystal. I have your power.
Several: We have your crystals.
S: Here Queen Beryl. Here's a crystal.
[Several others hand me crystals.]
S: You have the power.
T: I turn you into mice.
[Some children role play mice. Others stay as Rangers and Sailor Scouts.]
N: Your power doesn't work on me. I take your energy. [with arms crossed]
T: Don't! Don't! I am! It's gone.
[S runs to me and give me the crystal.]
S: Come Queen Beryl. Come with me.
[I follow him.]
S: Look your castle's destroyed. Come everyone, let's build a new one.
T: Thank you.
S: See Queen Beryl. It's O.K.  
[Time to go in.]

(February 13, 1996)

Two days later, the children continued their Sailor Moon dramatic playing.

In the following example, they used building with materials to expand their playing.

Y: Queen Beryl, we're living in your house. It's ours.
T: I want my house back.
N: You can't have it. You have to find a new house.
R,N: Go away Queen Beryl, We have your house.
Y,V: and your crystals. You have no power.
T: No power! No house! Where can I live?
S: Here. There's a house over there (pointing). It's the only one left.
N: It's made of sticks.
T: A stick house. I'm used to my brick palace.
Y: I'll blow your house down.
N: Just like the wolf.
S: Come on Queen Beryl. It's the only house left.
[I go towards the table in the house center. I move in. Suddenly all four leave the block house structure and blow my house down.]
Y: Ha, ha, Queen Beryl. You have no house.
N: It's O.K. I'm a Queen Beryl, too. I'll help you.

(February 15, 1996)

It was interesting how the children integrated The Three Pigs into our drama.
about Queen Beryl not having a house and how the four main players recently moved into dramatic playing, including negotiating.

A few weeks later the children continued to create dramas that involved Sailor Moon and building. The following event demonstrates the use of their imaginations to create the concrete symbols. The sailors were often joined by Power Rangers played by boys with the main goal of defeating Queen Beryl.

[I approach the house (bridge of creative playground equipment).]
M,W: We’re locking the door.
T: I’m using my crystal.
W: It’s old. It has no energy.
M: We have the new crystals. They have the power.
T: What! I want in.
M,W: You can’t. Go away.
[Q comes up to me and whispers.]
Q: Here’s a new crystal. It has more energy.
T: I now can get in.
M,W: Run, run! Queen Beryl is here.
[Q comes in.]
Q: I’ll help clean up. It’s a mess.
T: I know. How could they do this to me?
Q: They’re bad.
[Several more Sailor Scouts and Rangers come.]
Several: We’re taking you to jail.
N: Yes you have. You killed people.
T: Oh, that.
Several: To jail. Lock her up.

(February 28, 1996)
The dramatic playing continued with the main theme being control. Several children used the power from their crystals to change Queen Beryl into forms such as a frog or duck. The following day, in my journal, I reflected about M's and W's dramatic playing. In looking at my entry, I tried to bring some observations together. As a teacher-researcher, I realized that some of the children's drawings were examples of dramatic playing.

The children created monthly self-portraits and these portraits were useful to me as a concrete source of their development. The children had few teacher-assigned activities, but this was one of them. But the children changed the activity to correspond to their needs.

J's drawings were examples of drawing as dramatic play. When he produced his first drawing on September 28, he drew himself as the broken Humpty Dumpty. J began with the wall, and as he built it, block by block, he told the others at the table that he was making Humpty's wall. He and I went over the instructions about this being a self-portrait from head to toe. J said that he understood but that he was Humpty Dumpty. Throughout our first months together, he showed a strong interest in "Mother Goose" rhymes. He often brought Mother Goose collections to be read, often painting his interpretations of these. This was where I first noticed that some of J's drawings would fit into play and specifically, dramatic play. A few times, he and another child would paint together on the same page, each becoming a
character in a setting they created and they would pose a problem which they would resolve (Burk, 1969). As they co-created the story they added more and more to the paintings. Basically, they did many scenes, painting over whatever was there. The criteria of dramatic playing with the creation of an environment, characters and action resulted in the exploration of ideas and knowledge in a world of make-believe.

As J created his wall, he talked about how he was going to climb it, and he reminded us that something was going to happen. At this point, we joined him in reciting the poem. With a crayon at the top of the wall he moved it down to draw Humpty at the bottom. Several children commented that he was broken. J reassured us that it would be all right. J then proceeded to draw one of the King's men. J told us the King's men would put him back together and that he would again climb up the wall. J demonstrated, through this particular picture, that drawing can be dramatic play.

Many of his monthly self-portrait drawings revealed that J's drawing was play: dramatic play. November 30 had him on safari. He had a great interest in jungle animals, shown through his book choices, in his three-dimensional constructions, in his writing and in his dramatic playing. December's drawing had him as Jack and his sister as Jill. Interestingly, he brought Jack and Jill to an urban setting. J's dramatic playing in December sometimes involved other "Mother Goose" rhymes. For example, he and
others, including me, created dramas based on “Hey Diddle, Diddle”. As mentioned above, an important aspect of the creation of his drawing was the dialogue with others near him who helped fuel the drawing. J controlled what went on the page but others helped him explore possible outcomes.

This was not so in all of J’s self-portraits. For example, April’s drawing was influenced by the weather, his bringing of an umbrella, and a strong interest in worms on the pavement. This drawing was an accurate portrait of himself as he came into class on that particular day. May’s drawing was one of he and his sister playing outside as themselves. Drawing as another activity in which five year olds engage produces different results. In looking back at these self-portraits, I realize that drawing can be dramatic play depending on the child and how he/she interacts with the materials and with peers.
When inside, M and W created a drama around babies. They played with two other girls and one took the role of mother. This was a changing role as the girls made structures out of cans, wooden blocks, and plastic blocks. They spent a lot of time in metaplay discussing how the story would develop.

In the autumn, M and W chose to limit the membership of their dramatic play to peers. In the playground, they invited me into their event. During sharing time the girls talked about the roles they undertook, about what they did and how they affected the other players.

We drew our monthly self-portraits. The children, as they were doing them, told stories of what was happening – drama on paper.

By February 9, the girls as Sailor Scouts had been joined by the boys as Power Rangers. Much of the dramatic playing continued to be about taking Queen Beryl’s power and controlling her, even transforming Queen Beryl into other forms through magic. They continued to find ways for good to triumph. Interestingly the boys had chosen to participate in the dramatic playing by giving themselves roles from a male-dominated live animated series that was shown on television. Seldom did the boys take on roles deemed as female. For the morning group, this was less an issue. I wondered if it had to do with the makeup of the classes: the morning class had five girls and fourteen boys while the afternoon class had nine girls and
thirteen boys. The five girls in the morning class appeared more passive than the girls in the afternoon. The numbers of boys and girls might have influenced the role choices.

The players demonstrated how natural objects could easily be integrated as props. Finding pieces of ice led to the players being able to hold "real crystals". There also was some exploration with the properties of the crystals within the dramatic playing, and the two realities came together. S, in the drama, moved the story into how Queen Beryl's house could be rebuilt. I'm still amazed that how problems are presented in the playing and how they are reacted to by the other players determines what happens next. The children understood the unwritten rules of behavior, something not discussed as they participated more with others, their dramatic playing more fluid, with fewer interruptions.

On February 15, the children, using the house toys, had set up some aspects of the dramatic playing. The concept of where one lived drove the playing. Two media sources came together - books and television. N and T made the link to the Three Little Pigs. Looking back, one would think it had been planned, but it wasn't. Children can use their intertextual knowledge to create new stories. At the end, N became Queen Beryl to take on a new role of caring. This often occurred when one child became the helper, the comforter, different from the cartoon world. They seemed to take on the role
of an adult who tries to make things better. I wonder if this is another way children try out the role of comforting and solving problems. Throughout the play, Queen Beryl constantly was set up in a role where she was less powerful.

M and W have taught me many things. They often gave me a reality check with the importance of waiting for an invitation. At this point, February 29, I was often asked into their dramatic playing. The playing that I was not invited into was the play in which they were trying out new ideas. Now, they chose to share their explorations in large group sharing. They told and showed us how they came up with their ideas and talked about what they might try next. They were developing as creators of texts. M and W reflected about what they had done and organized their comments to help others understand some of the processes they had experienced. M and W also used their writing as another way to record aspects of their dramatic playing.

The children's building in role during their Sailor Moon dramatic play again revealed their mathematical concepts. They were very familiar with the different types of materials and often in dramatic playing incorporated building activities to provide symbolic properties and to drive on the drama.

The cartoons that the children were viewing had moved on from presenting environments divided along gender lines (Pompe, 1996). Earlier ones such as
Ninja Turtles often appealed mainly to boys. In Power Rangers the superheroes were both male and female and in Sailor Moon most of the superheroes were female. I found that over the three years that I was in a kindergarten environment, the girls chose to engage more in dramatic playing influenced by super-heroes.

M and W had discovered that not only did the teacher have knowledge but that others in our community had knowledge to share (Bruner, 1996). The two girls passed on knowledge and skills in a sub-community where there were teachers and learners. The teacher could take the form of a person, a book, or television cartoon (Bruner, 1996). Bruner (1996) concluded that it was principally through interacting with others that children make discoveries about their culture. M and W demonstrated in their dramatic play that they were arriving at new discoveries.

**Event 8**

This conversation emerged with the whole group during sharing time. It took me several minutes to gain context. It was initiated by U, a Caribbean child. I note this only because of how the conversation starts. I'm glad that I waited to see how the conversation evolved.

U: You can be the black cat or white cat. The black cat is the boy.
Q: The white cat is the boy.
U: Oh, yeah.
M: The black cat is the girl. You can be anything you want. It's your own business.
T: How do you know boys were white cats and girls were black?
Aa: White cats are boys. Girls can do what boys do.
W: Because it talks like a boy and a girl talks like a girl.
Bb: Because it tells on the TV.
T: What has black cats and white cats?
Q: On Sailor Moon, there's a new cat.
T: I know Luna is a girl, and a cat, and she's black. What's the new cat's name?
Q: It's Artemis.
T: Look Artemis is on our Greek God sheet. He was the god associated with the moon.
Bb: There's moons on the cats.
Q: It's in the middle of their heads.

Unfortunately, it was time to go home to get some more context. Several children had put coloured dots on their foreheads representing Sailor Moon, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, etc. I noticed that they were holding a matching circle on a stick. I was not sure initially of the origin of the comments. It was interesting that we could go back to Greek gods. The children were surprised that the Sailor Moon names were based on Greek and Roman gods.

(May 1, 1996)

Two days later, my journal entry dealt with how the children identified themselves as characters and discussed role and gender.

The children inside and outside are playing out their retelling of Sailor Moon. I know that the children will be focusing on this when they start putting coloured sticky circles on their foreheads. They choose colours that identify Sailor Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Neptune. As the weeks have gone on, the children are building more props. Many of the structures that are built are built out of big blocks. These structures are props for the Sailor Moon dramas. With this group of children they
extend their stories out to the playground. Walls do not get in their way. Many of the children stay in role throughout the afternoon. When they share their creations in sharing time, they do it in role. If I forget and call them by their register name, I'm gently reminded who they 'really' are. My assigned role continues to be Queen Beryl. I overheard a conversation today by a group of children saying that boys can pretend to be girls and girls can pretend to be boys. They talked about me playing a woman. M said "It's okay; it's just pretend."

(May 3, 1996)

About two weeks later, I was invited to participate in a conversation in which the girls and I recorded the names of new characters and colours resulting in each of us being able to take away new information. The girls used their phonetic knowledge to record their writing in a transitional format. The following was our conversation.

W: I'm Sailor Shark.
M: We're changing Sailor Moon. [laughs]
T: Mmm, writers and actors and actors do that often. Could you help me?
M, W: Yes.
T: I get the Sailors and their colours mixed up. Could you help me?
W: Sailor Moon, light red.
M: Sailor Mars, dark red.
W: Sailor Mercury, blue and Sailor Jupiter, green.
M: Sailor Venus is orange.
T: Thanks. This will help me. I need to see things to help me remember.
W: Mr. Crawford, Sailor Shark is orange and Sailor Lion is yellow.
M: There's Sailor Bear. He's black.
W: And brown. There's Sailor Pizza?
[Both laugh.]
T: What colour goes with Sailor Pizza?
White. And there's Sailor Raindrop.
M: She's blue.
T: You've come up with five new characters.
M: Yeah, and Tuxedo Mask is now Mr. Crawford.
T: What about Queen Beryl?
W: She's not here.
M: The bad ones are moms and dads.
W: Two moms and five dads. The dads are bigger.
M, W: We've changed Sailor Moon.
M: My brother says you can change things.
M, W: We're going to play. Don't watch.
T: No, I won't. When I try something new, I like to try it out alone.
W: We'll get you when we're ready.

The girls, during sharing, chose to share their new characters for their take-off of Sailor Moon. The two started to come up with more take-offs. Several children offered their own take-offs. The two presenters appeared to be pleased that they could change the stories. It will be interesting to see where the girls go tomorrow.

(May 5, 1996)

The conversation on May 1 reminded me the importance of adults listening to children. I could have entered and ended the conversation, but through waiting and listening, I learned of the context that the children were using. Sailor Moon continued to be a source for their dramatic playing. This was an opportunity to make a connection with the books of Greek and Roman myths that we have been reading. It reminded me of the importance of valuing the knowledge that they bring to the classroom. U also felt that he changed media characters to accommodate his ideas and feelings. M and W continue
to show me that in their dramatic playing it is important that they have power. "We can do anything we want" and "You can't stop us" states it clearly that in their dramatic play no authority figure can interfere with their actions. Interestingly, several children transformed into tigers, and over the past three years, several children have had tigers become a part of their dramatic playing. Tigers seem to represent power and strength and often the players developed a language that only tigers could understand.

On May 15, M and W, their experimentation with new characters gave them the possible opportunity of trying out new ideas, but it was important to do this in privacy. Once they had experimented alone, they willingly shared with the class, resulting in several members of our learning community coming up with new characters and possible stories. M's and W's ideas were stimuli for other children who were discovering that they had control of their learning outside of dramatic playing. The knowledge gained in dramatic playing was used in learning associated with the world of school.

M and W had discovered that they could make their own ideas permanent and visible. In making their list, they could make decisions about what they wanted to write (Meek, 1991). They demonstrated that they were learning that writing gave them power. Bromley (1996) looked at research and found that the content of some of children's writing was influenced by viewing television programs. For many young learners, writing is a communal
activity, not a solitary one (Smith, 1988). The girls reinforced for me the importance of control in their writing and in their dramatic playing.

**Summary**

Margaret Meek (1991) in *On Being Literate* reminded me of influences in my own literacy development. She said, “For all that my growing years were full of books and texts, there were also other voices” (235). For me, during my first seven years, radio and movie theaters presented other voices. At seven, the world of television introduced me to still more voices. Texts extend beyond books and young learners interact with texts that now include ones found on videos and computer programs (Meek, 1991, Bromley, 1996). As an educator, it is important to understand the impact these media have in providing children with a knowledge of storying.

*Sailor Moon*, during the 1995-96 school year provided me with a text that many children brought to school. During the two previous years, *Power Rangers* was a dominant influence overshadowing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

*Power Rangers* and *Sailor Moon* programs draw “on some fairly crude versions of traditional mythic material – forces of good and evil held together in recurrent conflict, the battle an arena within which that conflict is resolved, a plethora of monsters and enlarged, distorted hybrids of the
natural world within quasi-mythological antecedents” (Whitely, 1996, 63). However, the children brought their ideas to their dramatic playing. The players who joined in the Sailor Moon and Power Rangers dramatic playing gained membership in this community by having viewed the programs. With fellow players, a co-constructed fictional world was created, experienced and maintained. The five year old learners created imaginary worlds inside and outside the classroom. The children took on the role of creator of new stories. Dramatic playing of Sailor Moon and Power Rangers saw the children reflecting on previous knowledge, thinking of the possible outcomes and using these to come up with new actions. Dramatic playing provided opportunities for collaborative learning. Using the child’s knowledge of narrative, other than that gained only from books, legitimized the young learners’ thoughts in the classroom, providing more possible avenues from which to enter into dramatic playing with peers. Learning that happens in most environments is communal, a sharing of a culture (Bruner, 1986, 1996). “It isn’t that a child must make his knowledge his own, but that he must make it in a community of those who share his sense of culture. It is this that leads one to emphasize not only discovery and invention but also the importance of offering and sharing” (Bruner, 1986, 127).

The children showed through their dramatic playing many examples of discovery and invention. Through their writing, their properties and their original ways in which the stories were augmented, the young players led me
to understand the importance of their discoveries and inventions. Being a player, I was able to see first hand how they offered to share with fellow players. This kept the dramatic play functioning as a positive experience for those involved.

Through our dramatic playing, I saw the children practice and recompose important cultural narratives playing different roles and creating different possibilities. Some believe that dramatic playing is a vehicle for the beginning development of narrative thought, the ability to mirror events, to put them into stories, and to form possible settings as the foundation for action (Bruner, 1996).

When working together in being “as if”, meanings are achieved through consensus. Kenneth Burke's (1969) theory of dramatization has humans as symbol users; people exist in a symbolic and physical world, and the symbolic universe is parallel to the dramatic play world (Courtney, 1989, Burke, 1969). Burke's theory of symbolic action was conceived in a dramatic paradigm: scene, act, agent, purpose, and attitude. In our dramatic playing of Sailor Moon and Power Rangers, the actions occurred in a social scene, conducted by the players with an idea of what was acceptable to the setting; the Sailors and Rangers used available means to complete the action and maintain power which was done for a purpose – usually to defuse Queen Beryl.
The Sailors and Rangers as super-heroes gave the children characters for dramatic playing that put them in power roles. *Sailor Moon* was the first recent animated series that had mainly girls as the lead characters. More dramatic playing of super-heroes was now performed by girls. In the literature of the past, much has been written about the tendency for boys to use super-heroes for the basis of their play and girls to use domestic knowledge and experiences (Paley, 1984). In the “Power Rangers”, both male and female characters assumed similar roles. In my three years in a kindergarten environment, I observed boys and girls equally engaging in super-hero play. The main difference that I observed was that some girls tried to come up with enemies who then became friends – a happy ending. Vivian Gussin Paley (1984) shares similar findings in her observations of dramatic playing.

In their dramatic playing, the children are like the characters in *Power Rangers* and *Sailor Moon*, using special talents to solve problems that adults are unable to solve. They always are making their world a better place to live by defeating evil (Whitley, 1996). The special talents that the children have are usually associated with magic. Vivian Paley (1984) observed: “Magic weaves in and out of everything the children say and do. The boundaries between what the child thinks and what the adult sees are never clear to the adult, but the child does not expect compatibility. The child himself is the ultimate magician” (Wally's Stories, 29). It is important that
the other voices in their world are honoured in the classroom (Hilton, 1996, Meek, 1991).
Chapter 7
Childhood Archetypes in Dramatic Play

The children often brought roles like monsters, knights, dragons and snakes to their dramatic play. These characters represented ones that the children had heard in stories and viewed on film. The dramatic play in which I participated sometimes had these characters. The child players used these roles as vehicles, often to create new dramas.

On September 25, J came up to me and our dramatic play began.

J: I change you into friendly monster. [I then did some actions showing my transformation. J, still as a chick from an earlier session, took my hand.]

J: I want to show you the playground. [We moved about. I took on the role of someone seeing the playground for the first time. J showed me how to climb the ladder.]

J: Don't be scared. Take one step at a time. I'll show you the slide. Sit down. Take your turn.

The dramatic playing perhaps was a way for J to revisit what it was like to be in a new environment. He had been in school for less than a month.

Playing can help players explore experiences that they already have experienced.
The following events are samples of child players creating texts to explore ideas. I learned, as a player, that they could embed present knowledge in their new stories.

**Event 9**

The incidents revealed childhood archetypes in dramatic playing that were observed and recorded near the end of the school year. In their play the children demonstrated characters for creating and developing stories. The incident below involved two dramas coming together.

[When outside on climbing apparatus.]

J: Captain, captain, come.
T: Coming, Sailor.
J: I'm not Sailor. I'm Pirate John Austin.
T: Aye, aye, Pirate John Austin.
[F and P come over to J and me.]
F: We're polar bear sisters.
[Earlier in the library, they took out the same factual book about polar bears. We looked at the books together and talked about what polar bears do]
P: We off in the water.
[They swim away.]
J: Captain, let's look for treasure. I have the map. Follow me.
[We go over the creative climber then slide down to find the treasure. F swims up.]
F: The pirates are bad. They made our water dirty.
T: Can I help?
F: Clean up our water.
J, T: We'll try.
F: Please. We want to live. 
[We go off and clean up the water. E comes to me.]

(April 29, 1996)

E came to me and invited me into another drama. This incident showed how his knowledge base was used in expanding our dramatic playing.

E: Come with me to space.
T: Where are we going?
E: To university.
T: What's that?
E: It's like Venus. It's 200 miles away from Venus. It's like Venus. It's very cold.
[I follow him to the planet.]
E: Remember, it's very cold.
T: I'm hungry. Is there any food?
E: Yes, I'll get some. It grows here with no seeds.
T: Yum. It tastes good.
E: Yes, it's like fruit punch.
T: It's very cold.
[The bell rings.]

It was interesting how the different dramas crossed over. Also, I saw a definite example of the children directly applying what they saw and discussed in sharing a book, for example, Polar Bears (Baker, 1990).

(April 29, 1996)

The children in our dramatic play taught me how they use what they already knew, gained from a variety of sources, to develop the plot. A few days later, J wrote a book about knights and castles which he shared with the class.
When we went outside, J invited me into the drama by saying, "Dragon, stay away from my castle". The two polar bears from the previous dramatic playing lumbered by the castle communicating in grunts and growls. J, in role as a knight, ordered me to be put in the dungeon. He then decided the dragon would be "good".

J: I'll teach you to be a nice dragon.
T: How do I do that?
J: You need to be strong.
[I show my muscles.]
J: Then you have to be patient.
[I stand quietly.]
J: That's good. And turn down your fire.
[I return to the main castle.]
J: Come, we'll have coffee.
[Follow him to an area that becomes the room where we have coffee.]
J: Come, dragon. I'll show you your home.
T: I've lost it.
J: Come. [We go down the slide.]

(May 2, 1996)

We ran across the playground. (We did a great deal of running in this particular dramatic playing.) J suddenly stopped and began to talk in a soft voice to portray someone from a distance.

J: Listen. [He then talks in a soft voice.] Help! Help! The bad guys are here. [Now, in a normal voice] There's trouble in the castle. Let's go.
[We go running across the field.]
T: Look. There's prisoners in the dungeon.
[Three children are standing, pretending they are tied up in the dungeon. The two bears
are trying to chew the ropes. F, as herself, comes out of role.]

F: Only polar bears can release men.
[She then goes back into role as a growling bear.]

J: He's escaped.
[The drama ends as the bell rings.]

The drama occurred at recess. We had recently been going out at this time. Several grade one and two students that I had taught moved into side by side dramas, asking if they could play.

(May 2, 1996)

The next day, J invited me into dramatic playing using his knowledge of pirates gained principally from watching Disney's Peter Pan. My journal entry on that particular day talked about how J's learning was often integrated through dramatic playing. The children were my teachers.

This morning when I got off the bus, he said, "Good morning, Dragon", in reference to yesterday's drama. What I learn from J is how he uses his knowledge of story and drama techniques. He's always spontaneous. He uses these techniques in his writing, painting, crafts - in all, his essence. He has taught me the importance of belief. "Who I think I am at a particular moment is who I am, and who I am dictates my movement, my talk, my being." It's interesting that J has begun to do this again. He had gone in other directions. It was always happening. It was that I was less involved. This same phenomena is happening in the afternoon, but with at least half the class. The afternoon class generally is younger than the morning class.

(May 3, 1996)
We had been together for eight months. In looking back, I see how the children have grown together as dramatic players. For example, J showed me the importance of young learners gaining knowledge and ideas from their many explorations. J explored his ideas about pirates and knights in his painting, building, writing, and reading. He also brought his knowledge gained by viewing videos (especially Disney) and television programs (especially animated). J brought this knowledge and learning to his dramatic playing resulting in it becoming richer. He showed by his choice of characters that he had thought about his decisions from Disney's Peter Pan. He was able to say why he wanted to play a certain type of pirate and, as important, why he didn't want to play Sneed. J stayed in role most of the time at school. He was not J (he often reminded me of this), but a pirate.

The two polar bears, F and P, and the spaceman, E, emphasized for me the importance of providing a variety of resources. All three used information gained from factual sources to develop their roles in their dramatic playing. The girls sought out books that I could read with them that gave them more information. They were very excited when they found two identical books on polar bears. For them, it was important that they each had the same information. Their interest in polar bear resources continued for over a month and their exploration of this knowledge was demonstrated usually in their spontaneous dramatic playing.
E, the spaceman, arrived in kindergarten as an independent reader. He often chose to read Greek myths that were in books found in the classroom. He also had a great interest in space and, for me, his dramatic play about space represented how he used this information to create a new world.

The directions that J gave went beyond the one suggestion that he would have given earlier in the year. He moved the dramatic playing from dealing with the fiercest dragon to one whom he can entertain with coffee. J demonstrated how he used dramatic techniques spontaneously, taking on the voices from the castle in a quiet voice to signal that there was distance involved. When we arrived back, F used metaplay when she came out of role to tell us that only bears could release the prisoners. All the players honoured this direction. Their dramatic playing revealed that they were aware of or were developing some knowledge of the art form of drama.

It was interesting that J and about five others in the morning class had returned to using dramatic playing in their exploration of ideas. There had been a decrease in their dramatic playing that I had observed. I wondered if my being away during parts of March and April because of illness had affected them. The majority of the afternoon class often engaged in dramatic playing and this had increased over the school year. The afternoon class children's birthdays were mostly in the latter half of the school year.
The dramatic play in the morning class indicated how they took characters like dragons, knights, alligators, and pirates and developed narrative worlds for them to live in. I found, in the two previous years, that these same characteristics appeared often in the children’s dramatic playing. For five year olds, there seems to be an appeal to play out these characters in dramatic play settings that they mutually create.

Cathy Pompe (1996) came to realize, as I did, the influence of videos on the story repertoire that the children brought to school. For five year olds, their main source was Disney videos. What the children chose to do at school often was influenced by the most recent Disney video (Pompe, 1996). Often the videos were the common shared knowledge that the children brought to school (Whitley, 1996). These are the collective narratives that the children often bring into their dramatic play. The videos and television cartoon shows are where the children gained some information about narratives and characters such as dragons and pirates.

The children used their knowledge to create their own stories through dramatic playing. Like Susan Engel (1995), I found that fantasy stories of young children were developed through their playing. The players, being co-creators, did not need to spend much time establishing the setting. They spent more time with the elaboration of the story through gestures and talk (Engel, 1995, Paley, 1990). Through fantasy talk in their dramatic playing,
The children could enter each other's worlds and demonstrate their knowledge of different aspects of storying. I observed that the children appeared to move between gestures and words (Engle, 1995).

The children, through their stories involving archetype characters, created a narrative structure which helped guide their dramatic play (Wells, 1986). Like Engel (1995), I, too, found that the dramatic playing storytelling was highly coordinated. J, for example, showed me that children do take on authorial tasks and do co-ordinate their roles, resulting in an interesting story emerging. The creation of stories had close links with dramatic playing (Paley, 1990). J's stories from his dramatic playing sometimes were a rehearsal for the stories that he wrote and illustrated. The children, through their stories involving archetype characters, demonstrated how they were becoming storytellers through their dramatic playing.

**Event 10**

The children in the following incidents continued to develop stories using their knowledge of how stories worked. The young players discussed the form that the dramatic play had taken for each of them.

[Outside at recess.]

J: You're the dragon. I'm Peter the Knight.
T: Roar! Roar!
J: I'm going to tie you up. [He does.]
J: Come with me. We're off to the castle. [pulls the imaginary rope]
T: I'm magic.
J: You're tied up.
[Several children that I taught from grade one and two come over.]

All: Take him to jail.
Kk: To the alligator jail.
T: I'm going to use my magic.
Rr: I'm taking your magic. (comes over with a plastic container, opens it, then closes the container)
Kk: They're going to eat you.
Rr: We have more power than you.

I overheard several of the grade one and two pupils talk about how they did this in kindergarten and how they liked to do this. They readily went into role. It will be interesting to watch what evolves, if anything. Several of them talked about the roles that they played last year or even two years ago.

(May 7, 1996)

Two days later, I participated in another knight/dragon dramatic playing and noted the conversation after we were out of role. Dreams, reality and imagination were discussed.

I was a patient in a knight/dragon drama initiated by J. Several of the junior kindergartner pupils, newly arrived five year olds, joined us. The dragon and the knights were involved in finding treasure. After the drama, one child said "You're now Mr. Crawford." We were standing away from where the drama occurred.

J: We just had a dream.
[pointing to where we had been]
A: It was real. The dragon was real.
Dd: We used our imaginations.
We was the knights.
This conversation amazed me. All three were accepting of each other's point of view. In the end, they all agreed that it could be real, a dream, and imagination. This 'surprise' reinforced the importance of listening and recording.

(May 9, 1996)

The next day, we again moved into a knight/dragon drama with J being Peter the Knight and I was a scary dragon. Immediately, Dd came and transformed me into a nice dragon. Dd moved the playing by announcing the discovery of baby dragons.

[We run over.]
J: Oh, look. They're cute.
C: Oh, they're sweet.
Dd: Yeah, they're getting bigger.
J: They're growing.
Dd: Look out. The mother's coming.
J: Run.
[All of us run away from the imaginary mother dragon.]
J: Run, friendly dragon. She'll get you.
T: I'm running.
J: Look, there's more baby dragons.
Dd: Should we touch them?
J: Where's the mom?
T: I hope she won't chase us.
Dd: Let's go away.
J: Sh! Sh!
[We all tiptoe away.]

It was interesting how their knowledge about mothers and their young was integrated into the drama. There was no pause – no metaplay. As we went back into the drama over several days, the story became richer.

(May 10, 1996)
The former kindergarten pupils who joined us in our dramatic play answered some questions that I had. They still were able to take on roles easily and were able to take the lead from the kindergarten pupils who initiated the dramatic playing. They didn’t dominate the playing but moved into the playing as they did when they were in kindergarten. Their comments on their memories of the stories and characters which they had created as five year olds showed me that they did carry some essence of these with them. As older players, they still could move into role easily without prompting and the time it takes to build a belief system.

Dd verbalized that he knew that he had created this world through his imagination. The dramatic play world we had been in could be thought of in terms of a dream setting. They were aware of their creations, were able to reflect on them and discuss them while removed from the action. The professional literature for me was made real by the children’s reflections.

The May 10 dramatic play marked an increase in playing involving imaginary characters. In this playing, imaginary baby dragons became the focus of playing. Through the playing, the boys indicated their knowledge of the stages of development of animals from eggs. The children often revealed how they had mastered concepts and ideas through their dramatic playing. The imaginary creatures were real to us as players. We were able to have the imaginary baby dragons become our mutual focus. There was a collective
belief resulting in our storying beginning to explore the relationship of the young and mothers. The boys also illustrated the amount of factual knowledge that they had about this topic. They reminded me of the importance of listening and observing as ways for a teacher to see learners in action exploring ideas and concepts.

Our collective belief about the baby dragons helped us develop our story. The role of protector given to the mother dragon established how the children could use stories to understand their world (Engel, 1995). The players revealed their knowledge about eggs and mother instinct, which they used in inventing their dragon world. The children demonstrated that they were storytellers who could make their world develop as they desired (Engel, 1995).

Outside, the story about the dragon the boys made clear how the meanings of the images could vary depending on the uses we made of them. The boys used remembering, dreaming, living and imagining, which are states of mind, to refer back to the action (Courtney, 1989). Remembering brings back images that we have created, dreaming connects images from the past, present and future, living connects images with the present and imagining connects images with our inner and outer worlds (Courtney, 1989). The boys accepted other interpretations of the dramatic playing. The players demonstrated that dreaming, remembering, living and imagining can work
together. These states of mind, I came to realize, are in operation in our
dramatic playing. They contributed to the storying that evolved. The children
continued to explore through being archetype characters, resulting in their
dramas becoming more complex.

Event 11

A few days later, the pirate dramatic playing continued with the polar bears
being players as well. The story had a bear, alligator and a pirate. Much of
the initial action involved defining who we would be.

J: Come! Come!
    [We went to the bridge of the playground
equipment.]
J: Stand there. [points to the middle]
    I turn you into a pirate eating alligator.
T: Growl! Growl!
    [F comes up from behind. She touches me
with her polar bear claws.]
F: Gr! Gr! You! Water, yucky.
T: Oh, no! It's polluted.
J: Turn me into a kind pirate.
T: Abracca, cadabra, yimmy yo.
    I turn you into a nice pirate.
J: Look! I'm a pirate. Run from the alligator.
T: Grrrr! I'm coming.
F: Grrrr! Grrrr! Me too.
K: Turn me into a pirate too.

(May 14, 1996)

At this point, I had to deal with some problems that had developed in other
areas of the playground. Later on I rejoined our dramatic playing. J continued the dramatic playing by feeding the hungry alligator pirate bones. J, through his dialogue, created a problem which was the alligator having a stomach ache. We headed to the hospital to find a doctor. When G would not take up J's invitation to be the doctor, J went into role as the doctor with the flow of our dramatic playing not being affected.

[J becomes the doctor. He checks me over and goes into my pockets of my coat. J looks at my arms.]

J: Okay, okay. Did you eat pirate bones?
T: Yes, I did.
J: Oh, no. There's bugs in the pirate bones. They're mean bugs.
[reference to a book called Bugs]
T: Doctor, can you help me?
J: Here's the pill. Take it. Swallow.
T: Oh! Oh!
J: It's working. No more bugs.

(May 14, 1996)

J demonstrated how, in taking on the role of the doctor, he and I could create a scene about visiting the doctor using our present knowledge base. The following day, J and I, performed our ritual of transforming each other into role. As pirates we found a treasure and pretended to pull it on board. Once on board the treasure was opened, revealing a skeleton. The skeleton then spoke.
[J takes on the voice of the skeleton.]

J: Put me back. Put me back.

[J takes on his normal voice.]

J: I'll give him a bit of treasure.

Look, he's gone.

T: Look at the treasure that's left.

J: I'll turn you into a dragon.

Turn me into a knight.

T: Fright, night, I turn you into a knight.

[K and H join us.]

K: I'm the lord of the night.

H: I'm a knight too.

All 3: Follow us, dragon.

J: We'll find a house for you and your babies.

K: Look, there's eggs.

H: They're hatching.

J: They're baby dragons.

H: Look, it's the mother. It's your mother.

T: [to me]

Do you mean these are my brother and sisters?

H: Yes.

K: Look. Be careful. [picks them up]

J: Let's take them.

T: Come on children.

H: They're following us.

[We go to another part of the playground where there is a circle of stones.]

H: [Look, it's another nest. Come children.

Sleep here. [puts a blanket over them]

J: You're an angry dragon.

[I go into role.]

J: Cut! Cut! Cut! You're a kind dragon.

[I go into role]

J: Cut! Cut! Cut! I want action.

H: [looks under the blanket] The dragons are gone. [looks again]

Oh no, they're here. I didn't see them at first.

[The bell rings.]
I found J's "Cut! Cut! Cut!" an interpretation of his knowledge of the power of the director when storying. His taking on a character, the skeleton, emphasized for me how players can take on a variety of roles resulting in continued construction of the drama.

(May 5, 1996)

The following day, J made a knight out of a tube and added details out of construction paper – a face, a sword and a cape. J gave the role of James the Knight to his structure and I was changed into a dragon. The dramatic playing revolved around who was the strongest. J ended this session by defeating the dragon and saying, “And the dragon was never seen again.” J was often making properties to bring to our dramatic play. His interest in maps and in how one became an intricate part of our pirate dramatic play, follows. J, during activities, made a treasure map. When we went outside, he took it with him.

J: Stand still. I turn you into a sea monster. I'm a knight, Prince of the Night.
T: This is my water. I'm guarding a treasure
J: [J goes to the castle (playground equipment). He looks at the map.]
J: Come. Follow me.
E: I change you into a friendly dragon.
E: Come with us.
J: [We chase after J. J stops. He points to the series of rectangles on the map.]
J: Follow these.
J: [We follow. Now, there are seven of us.]
J: Sh! Sh! The treasure is in the sea monster's cave. You stay here ([o me] Tiptoe. Tiptoe.
J: [Five children went across the field following J. J keeps looking at the map.]
J: [pointing to the ground] Look, here's the X.
E: Dig the treasure up.
The players ran until they arrived at an agreed upon safe area and the treasure was opened, revealing gold. Our dramatic playing continued with leaving the ship and encountering a sea monster. The power of magic was an important element of our last scene.

[J pretends to break a lock.]

[Then J was a different voice.]

J: I turn castle into a gold ship. Let's go.
[We all follow.]

J: Look, there's the wizard.
[He talks in another voice.]

J: The gold is bad. Leave.
[We all clamor off the ship.]

E: Come help me.

Fight the sea monster. He's after us.

All: What can we do?

E: You go there. Go to the other side [pointing to different people].

J: He's trying to hurt me.

T: He's still struggling.

K: He hurt me.

E: I'm using my magic. He now fits in my hand.

J: Look.

T: I see him.

E: He's still dangerous.

T: What will we do?

E: Throw him in the poisonous river.
[He runs across the field and tosses him in.]

K: Look, there's more gold. Come!
[We run. The bell rings.]
Previously J was using props. Today, the map that he created was what moved him into the beginning of the story. J chose to share this with his group about thirty minutes after the dragon play. He talked about how he drew it and what the different symbols meant. It became a representation on paper. J talked about it as a piece of writing. J demonstrated truly ‘integrated learning’.

(May 17, 1996)

The dramatic playing on May 14 made clear for me how young children can return to roles that they have previously taken and continue to develop themes that they have previously explored. They have accepted the belief systems and the young players did not need me to help them build belief. Often, in fact, it was the reverse. The children helped me re-establish my belief system in my role.

F reconfirmed for me that the children can decide when it is the right moment to merge dramas. She read the scenario that there was a mean alligator sharing the same water as her. The next step for her was to join with the alligator to chase away the two pirates. F demonstrated how a child, through her dramatic play, learned to follow the conventions mutually agreed upon by the players.

When I left the dramatic playing to attend to situations that arose, the dramatic playing continued. I, as only one of the players, was able to come in and go out of the action as the children did. The recording of our dramatic
playing was done in the context of the daily life of a kindergarten class. Often, I had to do other things in terms of the many facets involved in the role of teacher. Our dramatic playing gave me the flexibility to enter, leave, and re-enter.

When I re-entered the pirate-alligator dramatic play, J introduced a new problem: the alligator became sick and was in need of a doctor. He gave an invitation for another child to be the doctor and, when this wasn't accepted, he, without pausing, moved into this role. J used his previous knowledge of the alligator eating too many bones and what happened in Bugs to come up with his diagnosis. J revealed to me how a dramatic player uses both knowledge gained inside and outside the dramatic play to create the text of a created story.

In our dramatic playing, we moved back into the pirate-alligator drama and then transformed into the knight-dragon drama. This moved us from looking for treasure to looking for a home for the imaginary babies. J verbalized his role as director when he shouted "Cut! Cut! Cut!" showing the control that he had on the way in which the dragon was to be portrayed by me. H demonstrated how he, through his statement, moved along the drama. By not seeing and then seeing the young, he momentarily created a mystery with which we, the other players, were ready to proceed. He changed the
direction by finding them, coinciding with the bell ringing. H took on the role of finding closure for the dramatic playing on this particular day.

The next day, J brought closure to dramatic playing when by saying "And the dragon was never seen again." J used properties that he had created to dramatize the story. These were extensions of himself; he began with one figure, then two, then brought these to his dramatic playing over a period of time, the result being that the dramatic playing became more complex. J reinforced for me the importance of creating large blocks of time for learners to explore ideas. This, I have discovered, applies to all ages. Choice, large blocks of time, the value of individual and mutual learning, as well as time for reflection, are ingredients that I have found help with all learners' growth.

On May 17, J returned to treasure maps. He had used an imaginary one in past play but, on this occasion, drew one with many details. This concrete map became a reference during times in the development of our story. It also gave J control of much of the action. The map, the introduction of the wizard through J taking on his voice, and the different problems given through the dialogue maintained the dramatic elements. Even when the problem was solved, for example, with the destruction of the sea monster, the playing did not stop, but continued with the statement, "There's more gold!" These players were gaining insights into how stories work. In turn, they taught me
that dramatic playing is important in providing an environment for exploring the creation of stories. This event reinforced for me one importance of dramatic playing: giving children an environment to try out ideas over a period of time. In this space, the children are able to make modifications and expand on their thinking.

Like Myra Barrs (1988), I found that maps created by children can enhance dramatic play. In Maps of Play, Barrs (1988) documented how different maps were used by two boys in developing their play with action figures. Like J, the boys came to realize that their markings on paper had meaning. J was learning that he could create properties to be used in his dramatic playing. His map represented beginning writing (Meek, 1991). This map came to life when all the players gave it meaning.

That the map would tell the location of the treasure was an example of the creation of knowing reciprocally with others (Courtney, 1990). The mutuality that was present in our dramatic playing helped us in our belief of who we were. We attended to the other players and to our character roles, resulting in deepened belief in who we were and who we were playing (Courtney, 1990). The children taught me the importance of mutuality in the building of belief; it occurred because the players brought knowledge and beliefs to the dramatic playing. They also communicated their knowledge to the other players, and the players transformed new information gained from others.
Our transformations resulted in learning (Courtney, 1990) when players came to know more about relationships through exploring archetypal characters. Like Courtney (1990), I believe that "what is transformed in dramatic action is learned (25)."

Event 12

J's use of maps continued in our dramatic play. He demonstrated that maps could take different forms as shown below.

[J comes running into the classroom with a pamphlet, an advertisement for a store, waving it up and down.]

J: Mr. Crawford, look.
T: What have you got there, J?
J: It's a map.
T: It is. What is it a map of?
J: It's for treasure. It's a map of how to get to the store.
T: Where did you get it?
J: I got it from my dad.

(May 21, 1996)

During activity time, J took his map that he made on Friday (17th) and coloured it in. He chose green for the land and blue for the sea. He had A help him do this. When we went outside, he used the map for the beginning of the drama. He talked to another teacher about his map and then came over to me.
J: Turn me into a pirate.
T: Hocus, pocus. Yummy, tummy.
I turn you into a pirate guard.
J: I now turn you into a dragon. No, alligator.
   [J goes off. E and K join in.]
E: I turn you into a mean dragon.
   [J looks on.]

He kept glancing at his map. At this point, some problems developed on the playground that I had to attend to as blood was involved. I didn’t get back to the dramatic playing.

J has found a use for maps, both self-made and published. He showed again how this prop can be a catalyst for dramatic play. It will be interesting to see where he goes from here. I didn’t see the class after recess as I had planning time.

(May 21, 1996)

The next day I read to the children the picture book, *The Evening King*, by David La Rochelle and illustrated by Catherine Stock. After the book was finished, the children engaged in the following discussion:

B: You can use your imagination wherever you want.
J: You can be a pirate, a knight.
   The playground can be a ship.
E: It’s strange how you can turn your stuffed toys to animals.
O: You can use your imagination to fly up to a planet.
I: You can pretend your toy is a car.
B: When you use your imagination, you can be anybody you want and do whatever you want.
X: You can make an imagination sword and play with it.
K: You can be whoever you want.
B: When you make imaginations, it makes stuff fun.
E: When you use imagination, you can be anyone you want. Like a mouse.
X: You can make an imagination sword and change it.
O: You can go like the little boy [pointing to the book] and do anything you want and make things whatever you want.
I: You can pretend the grass is a bed.

(May 22, 1996)

After our discussion, the children went to activities: J, Ee and E built a pirate ship out of large wooden blocks; J pulled out a page from a Lego building kit and transformed it into a map with the other children accepting this prop as part of their dramatic play. The children developed their story around the building of the ship and the adding of props like food and treasure. After everything was in place, J changed the Lego picture from a map to a pictorial record of all the things that were made. I was invited into a new drama by H.

[H comes to me with an envelope.]
H: Here's a letter from your mom.
T: Thanks.
H: Open it and read it.
[I open it. It has random letters and pictures -- a map. He reads it.]
H: Dear Sonny. We're moving. You can come with us. We're leaving a car for you. Come and join me and your dad. Follow the map.
[H shows me where the car is.]
T: I wonder where the key is. It's locked.
H: It's in the fridge. [I go to the fridge.]
H: Here's the key.
[hands me a plastic potato chip,
[I unlock the door.]
H: Can I come too?
T: Yes, I'll open the door.
[He climbs up into the imaginary car.]
T: Let's go. Can you hold the map?
H: We go east . . . then west . .
[We move about the classroom.]
H: We're here.
T: Mom and Dad, I'm here.
H: There's no answer.
T: I'm here.
H: They tricked you. Let's go back.
[We retrace our journey. J left his ship and went to make a complex flag out of construction paper. He then made a map similar to I's. She had made one out of construction paper.]

(May 27, 1996)

That afternoon, the following were responses to the same book I had read to the morning group.

Aa: Imagination is very important. You can pretend what you want to pretend.
Ll: You can use your imagination, like Barney.
N: Sometimes, I like to imagine.
Ll: I use my imagination on my swing set.
M: I use my imagination to be an acrobat on my cousin's trampoline.
Y: You can use your imagination to be a pirate.
Cc: Pretend that I'm a pilot on my mom's and dad's bed.
V: I can pretend. I can go on a ship.
M: Once there was a boy at our daycare. He daydreamed.
Cc: It means you're dreaming about being someone else.
W: Last time, Daniel was daydreaming.
Bb: Daydreaming is good because you can do it in real life.
Aa: It's good. You don't hit anyone when you're daydreaming. You say it in your mind.

(May 22, 1996)
The children's comments about *The Evening King* revealed that they had some awareness and understanding about imagination and its role in their dramatic play.

The last dramatic play event that I will share revolved around robots, spacemen and rocket ships. The children used the above archetypal characters to develop a drama that contained excitement through problems that the characters came to solve. J, after our dramatic playing, demonstrated how he used our story as background knowledge to write his story. This was an example of one of the learning outcomes of dramatic play.

J: Change me into a robot.
T: Wooma, wooma, rubba, rubba
I change you into a robot.
J: I change you into a robot. Dabba, dabba, you a robot. Follow me. [done in halted speech]
T: Wait for me.
J: Hurry up.
T: Where are we going?
J: To the ship.
[We climb up on the playground equipment.]
J: Robot, change me into a spaceman.
T: I change you into a spaceman.
T: I'm coming. I'm a little on the slow side.
J: Look over there. [points to the other side of the playground] An alien is coming.
[At this time, K and E join us.]
K: I'm the Prince of the Night.
E: Ha! Ha! You can't move.
[throws pretend water on the robot]
K: I'll fix that. [waves his hands over me] You can move now.
K, A: Hurry, the alien is coming.
[We move under the apparatus.]
E: We're trapped.
J: The computer won't work. [taps on boards]
T: Can I help?
K: You're a machine. We'll use some of your wires.
J: It's working. The computer is working.
E: We can get out.
K: More aliens are coming. Let's go.

[The drama continued.]

When we came into the class, J then wrote down our dramatic play. He told the story in a string of letters. It was about the alien coming to the spaceship. He then went to the crafts area and made a detailed spaceship, continuing to talk about the aliens.

(June 3, 1996)

The Evening King became a source for dramatic play which I set up in the following pattern. There was a double page spread of what the boy imagined and on the following single page, how he would appear to a passerby. For example, the first double spread was of him as a pirate combating other pirates. The single page illustration showed him on a picnic table holding a toy sword. This format was the stimulus for our conversation about imagination. Children from both classes stressed that they were in control. That is, they could go to another planet or become a pirate. B and Aa summarized in their statements the importance of imagination in dramatic playing. The children’s comments showed that they were aware that they could use objects to represent other things. E’s comment about stuffed toys being animals and T’s about the grass as a bed were examples of this. X also
showed that some children realized that an object can have no physical existence.

The children’s responses disclosed that the children realized how versatile their imaginations are. Several of their comments stated that you can create imaginary environments anywhere. The daydreaming aspect of our conversation revealed to me that the children had made the connection of how we can create worlds in our minds. This reminded me of some articles, for example, Jerome Singer’s (1995) Imaginative Play in Childhood, that I had recently read presenting the idea that daydreaming is a way for adults to engage in imaginary play. The children’s ideas about imagination were applied when they moved into working together in dramatic play. In the classroom, much of the dramatic play was with at least one other player. Solitary play in this context, for me, was pretend play.

H used a technique that I’ve used with other children: a letter that introduced the possible action, characters, and settings for our dramatic playing. In role, H realized some of the uses for letters and maps. He also introduced the use of characters with whom the players never interacted as well as the idea of being tricked. H, in our playing, again reminded me of how children come up with theater-like devices to drive on our stories.
J's many ways of representing maps brought me back to the literature about children representing objects. Previously, he had an imaginary map and one that he made; on May 21, he used a published map; on May 22, he used a picture of Lego constructions to represent a map. J used a published map, a picture of Lego sets, a child-made map, and an imaginary one to represent a map. J, in our dramatic playing, brought the ideas in the professional literature alive.

The last example of our dramatic playing, on June 3, summarized for me how in our co-constructed environment, we explored ideas and shared knowledge. The issue became “What happens when a computer won’t work?” One solution was to use some wires from the robot, to make it run. Knowledge about machines was drawn upon, and this drama emphasized the importance of dramatic playing for providing an environment where the players are in control to explore ideas and concepts.

Howard Gardner (1982) believed that in five year olds’ dramatic play, narrative language, rather than properties and persons, was the agent for imaginative activity. The children at this point have also discovered narrative structures. The children, in their pirate dramatic playing, demonstrated that they could solve a problem from the story in a plausible way. Younger children are not able to do this (Gardner, 1982, Pellegrini, 1985). The players in our dramatic play revealed that they had acquired a
first draft knowledge of our language. Gardner (1982) identified the age of five as a time when children can create and develop complex narratives which might include several characters involved in a series of actions. The children that I played with demonstrated this often in their dramatic play.

The children in stories exhibited literate behaviour, which is defined as the production and comprehension of decontextualized language and the ability to tell and comprehend narratives (Pellegrini, 1985, Gardner, 1980). In their dramatic playing, the children used decontextualized language to convey meanings independent of text. They also were able to produce and understand the stories that they created together. The children illustrated that imaginative language was present in their dramatic play. In our dramatic play the function of a person or object was different than in real life (Pellegrini, 1983, 1985). The Lego page became a map and then a record of what the players had built. The “players linguistically encoded symbolic transformation to avoid ambiguity” (Pellegrini, 1985, 110). Children’s narrative competence grew from children’s exposure to and the enactment of children’s literature and every day social interaction themes (Heath, 1982). The children that I interacted with in dramatic play brought home to me how they were developing as language learners. Dramatic play is a powerful learning environment.
Summary

Being a member of a community of dramatic playing, I have observed that much of our learning is communal. Each player constructs his/her knowledge in a community in which all share a mutual culture. In our environment, the children verified for me the importance of discovery, invention, negotiating, and sharing in creating our culture in a school setting (Bruner, 1986). In The Culture of Education, Bruner (1996) says that a culture appears to be communal systems of ‘standing for’. Bruner emphasized “without meaning making, there could be no language, no myth, no art – and no culture.” (1996, 165).

The children also made clear that each of us brings a representation of the world and, in our dramatic playing, we respond to others’ representations and arrive at new mutual meanings (Bruner, 1996). The meaning making needs to be active (Wells, 1986, Vygotsky, 1978) and, in turn, we begin to play more roles that are defined by our cultural dramas (Turner, 1982). A characteristic of dramatic playing in our classroom was meaning making through storying. Factors affecting this characteristic were age (Vygotsky, 1978) and the environment in which dramatic play occurred.

In our mutual dramatic playing, stories were developed that involved characters in action with intentions in settings using certain means (Burke, 1969, Bruner, 1986, 1996). In our dramas, an imbalance between any of
agent, action, scene, goal of instrument was the 'engine' of the narrative (Bruner, 1986). The imbalance drove our dramatic playing. For example, touching the young dragons resulted in an angry mother in pursuit of us. There was an imbalance to the setting: one species touching the young of another. Kenneth Burke’s theory of the symbolic action to literature was concerned with rhetoric, grammar, and symbolism: in dramatic playing, rhetoric is demonstrated when the players construct meaning together; grammar in dramatic playing appears as a form that helps create expectations for the members, and symbolism is a type of action where the children show their feelings and natures (Kelly-Byrne, 1989). This trio, rhetoric, grammar, and symbolism, was central to Burke’s theory of symbolic action and can be used to describe dramatic playing. Burke, for me, emphasized that action, a behavior structured by symbols, occurs in a social setting. Richard Courtney summarized Burke’s theory of the self and society: the person is a social entity. “Meanings arise from the consensus between human actors, who are symbol users; the meaning of symbols (social meaning) is only given through interaction. This human reality is socially constructed and meaning is relative to the self” (1989, 125).

Being “as if” in dramatic playing puts the players into the position of exploring the “what if”. In much of our dramatic play, shared in this section, the children in being ‘as if’ pirates and knights explored the “what ifs”, for example, when the mother dragon came or “what if” the water was polluted
for the polar bears. "Being as if" and "what if" are events that interrelate with each other (Weininger, 1992, Courtney, 1989). For five year olds in a school setting, the being "as if" / "what if" is explored with one or more players. Weininger (1992) points out that imagining "what if" is an activity in the child's mind and being "as if" is usually with other children. Being "as if" and "what if" give dramatic playing the energy to run the engine that creates the stories.

Our dramatic playing demonstrated for me Augusto Boal's (from Bolton, 1984) concept of metaxis, an interplay between the actual and the fictitious. For example, we, the players, were in the playground as others responding to an imaginary mother dragon. Dramatic playing behaviors are those that are demonstrated through action by the players inventing, anticipating, creating, and reflecting. As an educator, dramatic playing helped me see that it is a vehicle for learning. Children, from their dramatic play, come to understand their environment. Using materials and situations in dramatic playing leads to an understanding of symbolism, which, according to Otto Weininger (1992), appears to underlie thinking. To encourage dramatic play I, as a teacher, provided a changing variety of materials for properties that extended the play. I, as a player, learned how to interact with five year olds in co-constructing dramas.
The children in this section chose non-specific media characters. In becoming these characters from film and books, they explored, experimented, and created, causing me to conclude that they explore, experiment and create inside the drama. Their actions indicate that much learning goes on and that it is not isolated from other learning. Often, dramatic playing integrates their learning from many sources within and without the classroom. They brought learning into their dramatic play, explored it with others, extended it and took their new knowledge, which is used in other learning situations, into the classroom. For me, having the privilege of being a member of a community of dramatic players for several years resulted in my realizing how important dramatic play is for young children’s learning.
Dramatic play can be compared to the structure of a story. Burke's (1969) 
dramatic paradigm: scene, act, agency, purpose, and Gardner's (1980) story 
description of setting, of character's position, of introduction of a problem 
that the character encounters and ways of overcoming problems are two ways 
of describing the components of a story developed through dramatic playing. 
Providing children with stories through the sharing of picture books gives 
them more models for their knowledge base. Also, valuing the stories that 
they bring from different media to the classroom again expands the sources 
for the children to draw upon. In their dramatic playing the children assign 
roles, identify settings, create problems and provide possible solutions 
(Pellegrini, 1982). Structural similarities between dramatic play and 
narratives were considered (Gardner, 1980). Dramatic play provides an 
environment for developing narrative skills and story comprehension. 
Pellegrini and Golda (1992) observed that "Kindergartners' and first graders' 
story comprehension is improved when they reconstruct the story" (451) 
through dramatic play. Stories are characteristic of problem solving motifs 
(Gillis and Hardacre, 1993). In dramatic playing, the children are
constructing narratives and are engaged in problem solving activities. Dramatic play places the children in situations removed from the activities of everyday life, resulting in the players bringing in a variety of skills and strategies. In some early learning environments, they would be specifically linked to subject areas. In my research, I have observed that the children do not separate learning into compartments. I saw how important it is to provide opportunities for children to explore their learning through dramatic play.

Notes from March 1, 1996, are an example of a dramatic playing interlude that demonstrates how the children explore their learning.

Four boys were building a large structure out of large blocks.

T: Hi. This is an interesting structure.
Aa: It's a pirate ship.
V: We're pirates.
[All the pirates have made swords out of Lasy.]
Y: You better watch out. We're mean.
T: I live in town. We're trying to sleep.
Y: Pirates don't sleep. We never sleep.
Ff: We make messes.
[If begins to spread the plastic food around the area of the ship. I go to my house in another part of the room and return.]
T: Please be quiet. The babies are crying.
[M and W have been observing and have been in role as babies. They had built a house out of cans and blocks.]
W: The pirates are scaring us.
M: Daddy, do something!
T: I've asked the pirates to be quiet.
Aa: We're sailing away.
V: To find food.
T: Not treasure?
Aa: No, food.
Ff: We've run out. We have hundreds on our ship.
[They sail off.]
T: Come children, let's go home.

Two dramas merged, then parted; the building often was the vehicle for the dramatic playing. Two years ago, many of the dramas were involved with pirates, and over the three years in my kindergarten experiences, pirates, space and super-heroes have often appeared in their dramas. Pirates might be popular again as there is a new video out of Treasure Island featuring the Muppets.

The above snippet indicates that the children were experimenting with Burke's dramatic paradigm and Gardener's story description. The scene or setting was a pirate ship docked by a community; the agency or characters' positions were that of pirates, a father and his children. The agency or problems were not enough food, and the noise keeping the town's citizens awake. Ways of solving a problem were indicated by the pirates being asked to be quiet and the babies demanding their father do something. The children were able to develop a story and create situations for which possible solutions were given. For example, the pirates had a problem of not having enough food and, to solve the impending hunger of the crew, they went in search of a new supply. Both groups, as part of their dramatic playing, made structures
that were a part of their learning. The children were in role as they played; the building was not separate from the dramatic playing. Much problem solving was observed, for example, in terms of space, symmetry, ordering, using number for a purpose. Mutual co-construction of the text was important in dramatic playing. The players in the pirate and baby dramatic playing reinforced for me how important it was that the children developed the text by listening to what was transpiring. The children indicated they understood the “rules” of dramatic playing (Vygotsky, 1978, Sutton-Smith, 1976, Bolton, 1986). The players used dramatic playing to create a story about when noisy, hungry pirates come to a community and came up with possible solutions. As well, they explored ways of assembling structures: houses, a ship, weapons. In being “as if” roles, the children created an environment that had drama characteristics that allowed them to explore ideas separate from the outside world while still reflecting aspects of that world.

In looking back at the many events recorded, it becomes clear that five year old players enhanced my learning. They showed me the importance of having large blocks of time available, that they could stay in role in our approximately one hour and fifteen minute blocks. Some children needed time at the beginning to explore possibilities before choosing the activity that they would engage in. Wien (1996) in *Time, Work and Developmentally Appropriate Practice* states that time organization, as a production schedule
in school settings, is one of the most assumed elements. Natural, spontaneous activity is more productive for children's development (Smilansky, 1990, Vygotsky, 1978, Elkind, 1988, Kamil and DeVries, 1993). The children have verified for me that, along with large blocks of time, learner choice usually results in positive learning outcomes. Through observing, talking and participating the teacher can find possible ways to enhance future learning. The young learners need to be active participants with the teacher in designing and implementing the activities (Wien, 1996). The children daily illustrated that they had “story” knowledge basics gained outside the school environment. All of the children brought narrative knowledge from their television viewing and their listening to stories read to them by their parents. This knowledge base needed to be honoured and built upon. By talking to the children and their parents, I was able to develop a vision of their interests, resulting from my viewing the programmes that they were watching. By doing this, I was able to better understand the “rules” of our dramatic playing and become a participant, not just an observer. For a teacher to be more effective, having the knowledge and understanding of the “story” base that the children bring to school can result in significant interventions, in learner growth. In summary, Mary Hilton stated the importance of accepting other voices when she said “Building collaboratively and effectively on each child's grasp of literature behaviour means admitting the child's voice and thoughts into the classroom as a legitimate and respected part of growing consciousness and becoming the central cultural
material with which to work (Potent Fictions, 11). The children and I added to our knowledge base through our involvement in the texts of stories that I had chosen and shared. Working inside texts allowed us, as co-learners, to experience the stories together. The children helped me to see that we could construct meaning together. Exploring strategies that a community of readers and writers use when talking about books extended the children's knowledge base. Their understanding of story was illustrated in their dramatic playing. At the beginning of the year, uninterrupted dramatic playing lasted on average from five to ten minutes and by the end of the year it was over an hour, demonstrating that the children with many ways of looking at text extended their dramatic playing (Pellegrini, 1985, Gardner, 1980, Kelly-Byrne, 1990).

The children understood that the dramatic playing was fueled by their imaginations and they were able to distinguish different realities. In their discussion of The Evening King, the children demonstrated that they were aware of being "as if" and in the "what if". The child players were eager to share with me. When they thought I could be a player, I was invited into dramatic playing and learned some of their systems. It was important that the children saw me as an adult who could play and follow the "rules" within the dramatic playing.
The children could work within frames (Bateson, 1969) of the dramatic playing, competent in meta-communication about how they created and experimented with texts (Kelly–Byrne, 1990). Learning through dramatic playing when valued by the teacher, results in their taking more risks. When children feel comfortable and competent in a mode of learning like dramatic playing, the result is that the children will master new concepts (Kelly–Byrne, 1990).

In summary, when the children see themselves as active participants in an environment where there is ample time, a variety of materials and an educator who values them as co-learners, there is a likelihood of learner growth. I found that by waiting to be invited, I as player, was able to build a trust and was able to honour what each of us brought to the dramatic playing. Once the children saw that I valued dramatic playing, I was often assigned or given roles. As an adult player, I tried to learn the cultural rules and follow these (Kelly–Byrne, 1990). It was important for me to reflect and analyze regularly through my journals. These reflections helped me gain more insights into the importance of dramatic playing for learning. Dramatic playing takes a great deal of mental and physical energy; often I was exhausted at the end of our sessions. Dramatic playing made clear to me how children can apply their knowledge of storying in creating new texts. They verified for me that, in dramatic playing, the children integrate many skills and materials. They demonstrated, as five year olds, that they could co-
construct and usually respect what the others brought and contributed to dramatic playing. As a participant in dramatic playing for three years, I was able to see the importance of one's beliefs in the classroom. My beliefs have developed through many experiences beginning in childhood and continuing through my adult years. From my early years, choice in what I did and how I did it was always important. In the classroom I tried to move away from sole adult choice of the curriculum to learner negotiation. Over the years, the children have shown me the importance of actively involving them in the choices which are made. This appeared clearer to me when working in a grade three-four-five family grouping, and Sarah, a nine year old, said that being given choices about what she could explore resulted in her being more interested. Over several weeks, she and another child set up a classroom store after conducting research such as interviewing merchants about how they operated their businesses and potential customers about what they might buy. In working with the two girls, I was able to discuss with them their learning and provide them with suggestions to consider. I was also able to introduce strategies and skills that could be useful in extending their learning. The five year olds taught me that they were able to verbalize clearly why certain choices were more appropriate than others. They reminded me of the importance of having an adult listen to and consider young children's ideas. Dramatic playing was an environment that promoted learner choice and was where I could participate in my belief about learner choice.
Over the nine and one-half years when I was a teacher in the central Arctic, the children's experiences were often gained through storytelling and later, by television when this medium was introduced into the communities in which I worked. It was important for me to observe, listen and question. Five year olds demonstrated, through their dramatic playing, that they brought knowledge of storying to school. Through talking and listening to them and their parents and grandparents, I began to develop a belief of building relationships between the home and school. Before going to the north, I expressed the idea of close communication between the home and school but did not truly understand what it meant until I interacted with people who had very different experiences than myself. I had to find ways to practice my belief that you begin with children where they are. My northern classroom experiences helped me when I interacted with parents and children in multicultural classrooms.

The kindergartners' knowledge base was brought to our dramatic playing. It was important that I had a knowledge of the stories that they brought to our playing and valued the children's references to these in developing new texts.

My recognition of the developmental outcomes of play resulted in my identifying dramatic play as having legitimate classroom strategies. Documenting the children's learning growth through detailed anecdotal records and portfolios of some of their products was a way to demonstrate
that dramatic play was a valued learning environment. Dramatic play is seen as one of the most complex ways of playing (Garvey, 1977). An indicator of the developmental component of dramatic play is that, with increasing age, the players evolve a narrative structure that has a relationship between dramatic actions and the plot (Sachs, Goldman, Chaille, 1984). Several readers have shown that the level of narrative organization can indicate play maturity (Wolf, and Grollman, 1982, Echler and Weininger, 1989). Over a school year, I have observed and documented how the stories that are created in dramatic playing become more complex. The children, for example, extend dramatic playing stories through painting, through writing and through the construction of two and three dimensional representations. As they were making the products, they were telling and extending some of the stories created in their dramatic playing. Dramatic play can serve as a place where stories are incubated. One of the main research techniques that I used was direct observation, which allowed me to focus on an individual child’s behaviour (Gull, 1994, Worthan, 1990, Hart, 1994, Genishi, 1982). I was able to document the development of a child’s learning and the process used for acquiring new information. Young children often cannot explain themselves adequately through language; therefore, observation of actions in a natural environment gives evidence of learning (Gullo, 1994, Worthan, 1994, Hart, 1994, Lally, 1992, Genishi, 1982). An important consideration for educators is the skill of the observer in interpreting the information to be used to understand each child’s stages of development. Regular observations gave me
needed information to assure that there was a match between each child's development and educational goals and materials (Gullo, 1994, Worthan, 1990).

Observing children in dramatic playing over an extensive period of time was one way in which I gained information indicating individual progress in the curriculum. Observations are a major part of my ongoing assessment which measures each child's progress over time. I documented individual progress in the curriculum and made changes when needed to meet individual needs. The children that I interacted with saw learning as a whole, and most of them were freed from the idea of subject designations. Through their choices, they explored areas by applying what they knew to new concepts and new ways of looking at things.

For about a month, two boys daily went to the water table to explore many containers of various sizes and using three primary coloured solutions. They were in role through dramatic playing as, for example, workers at a restaurant or scientists in a laboratory. Many of their experiments involved recording observations by the players over several days: sometimes they decided to record their ideas pictorially, and in transitional writing. The boys set the agenda; sometimes I was involved in the dramatic playing by being assigned a role. Much of my assessment was made by recording my observations and check lists while watching outside the play and by
recording my observations after I was out of role. These observations were then used in compiling my assessment and evaluation statements describing the progress of the boys over time (Gullo, 1994, Hart, 1994). The statements were descriptors of where the children were “at any given moment with some learning sequence” (Gullo, 1994, 22). The boys’ actions and responses to each other and to me offered a great deal of information about their development. They were involved with me in choosing products that they had created during our dramatic playing to save in their portfolios. For example, the boys chose to keep records about whether the coloured solutions would heat up overnight.

Ongoing assessment helped me explain the growth of learners in terms of the curriculum. Through long term ongoing assessment I was able to see how dramatic playing promoted learning as a whole.

My experience with documenting dramatic playing reinforced my belief in the teacher as learner, as teacher-researcher, as active participant in the dramatic play of five year olds. This role of researcher as participant resulted in more direct involvement and has been an asset, not a liability (Kelly–Byrne, 1990). Being inside the dramatic playing gave me a more direct opportunity to understand the structure. Most previous researchers, (Gardner, 1971 and Smilansky, 1990) worked on play in experimental situations, but in my research, I went inside the action, similar to Kelly–
Byrne when she was involved with one child in fantasy play. Our dramatic play was mutual co-construction and I would be naive to think that I did not affect our storying. The nature of dramatic playing resulted in all the players having input into what happened.

I found that, for this type of research, recording in a journal was the most effective method. Initially it was difficult to accurately record but, over time, I mastered writing down our dialogues. I now realize that my past experiences and belief systems influenced my documentation. Acknowledging one’s biases as Schwartzman (1978) points out is what a researcher must do when he/she is a participant. Conducting the research over three years gave me an adequate time frame to examine, reflect and question what I had recorded. The time frame was important as it gave me the opportunity to perfect my recording skills. Being a participant in dramatic play was only one of my roles as teacher in a kindergarten environment.

I found that the environment in which we operated was important in terms of having a variety of materials; some of these remained constant while some were replaced. Establishing that the materials did not have fixed areas for exploration resulted in the players bringing materials located around the room into their dramatic playing. Once the children saw themselves as active participants, along with me, in where the materials were and how they were used, they took more risks with their learning. In working with all ages of
learners, I have discovered that ownership is an important element that aids in learner growth. Classrooms are not natural play environments. My role as teacher was to build an atmosphere where the children felt comfortable playing. Modeling my learning was important. The children saw me, for example, painting, writing and building. I, as a member of the class, sometimes signed up to share what I had created. To build trust, I have found that doing is more powerful than telling. Once invited, this extended to our dramatic playing.

Dramatic playing of five year olds has indicated that this is an environment in which they can create worlds that result in their growth as learners. I saw first hand that drama can cross subject areas (Bolton, 1986, Courtney, 1989). My research has confirmed the importance of dramatic action for older learners, for in working with older students, I can see the importance of drama as a unifying vehicle for breaking down the barriers of curriculum by subject area. In using drama with older students, it will be important to involve them in choosing the being “as if” and “what if” roles. Moving away from teacher directed to co-learner directed will be useful in seeing drama as a unifier of learning like dramatic playing is for five year olds. The integration of learning is a powerful lesson that I have discovered first hand.

My research has resulted in the realization of the importance of dramatic playing for learner growth in early childhood classrooms. Dramatic play
offers a teacher an environment where the participants together can explore ideas and concepts. I have learned that it is important that the children see that the teacher exhibit behaviours that indicate that he/she values dramatic play. Only when children see the teacher as a possible participant will an invitation be given to join the dramatic playing. Once in the dramatic play environment, it is important for the teacher to learn the “rules” and to honour them in the development of the dramas.

Within the dramatic play, the teacher can observe learner growth. Through keeping ongoing records of the numerous incidents, the teacher can collect evidence to substantiate the children’s development. The teacher, as teacher-researcher, identifies questions to examine and uses the collected data to help arrive at some conclusions and to identify other questions to pursue. In gathering data, it is important that the teacher-researcher identify biases that he/she brings to the classroom. Being aware of these results in the teacher examining written records and observations with a more critical eye. The teacher has many responsibilities in creating an environment that values dramatic playing.

It is important that the teacher has a knowledge of “storying” in relation to children’s development, particularly language. Dramatic playing results in an exploration of how language and stories work. Providing the children with a variety of stories and talking about them gives the children more
knowledge and examples to consider. Valuing the texts that the children bring with them from home and using them to explore and build new creations is another role for the teacher. Many children's principal experiences with story outside the school setting is through electronic media. Extending their knowledge of stories is another role for the teacher. Through dramatic play the players can use their story knowledge to explore and create new texts. As a participant, the teacher can see from inside the development of the learners. Large blocks of time ensure that the players have more opportunities to explore and experiment.

Giving the children time blocks of more than an hour in length, results in their being able to try out ideas, and develop problem solving strategies. When the children are active participants in their learning, they develop different ways to examine, question, modify and extend ideas and concepts. Through their problem solving, the children integrate school subject areas. For them, learning is a whole. Dramatic playing provides an environment in which the players draw on available ideas and materials that result in the development of the story. Arriving at new ways of seeing something often occurs through talk. Dramatic playing is rich with talk that allows the players together to construct meaning.

For a teacher, dramatic playing in the classroom can act as a bridge between home and school. For many of the children, dramatic playing is an extension
of some of the activities that they do at home. Building on these can result in the teacher showing that he/she values the knowledge and the ways the children explore ideas.

Dramatic playing gives the teacher of young children an environment where the children and adult participants can develop as learners. This environment promotes social exploration and experimentation, resulting in the development of skills and strategies. Dramatic playing provides a teacher of young children with many opportunities to experience integrated learning. As the children develop as learners, so does the teacher.

Over the last three years, my patient teachers, six groups of five year olds, have helped me realize the importance of dramatic playing for learning. Dramatic playing creates a variety of environments for trying out ideas, building on our knowledge and creating new texts for all of us. Dramatic playing is a significant way for making sense of our world.
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204


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212

Videotape

APPENDIX

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**Dramatic Play Chart**

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224