REWORKING THE SOIL:
EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION POLICIES AND THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OF ALL LEARNERS

by

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ABSTRACT

Commitment to individually authentic participation is an important element of successfully inclusive communities and societies. Not only characterized by diversity, such groups have organized themselves to draw upon that diversity for problemsolving and synergistic creativity.

At the same time, and sometimes in conflict with that belief, most societies identify particular skills and abilities as singularly important to legitimate adult participation and, therefore, as generalizable. These cultural tools are likely to dominate the established curricula of schools: mathematics, language, literacy, science. One method for ensuring that all citizens have access to these participatory tools is to entrench them in public policy. Well-meant though they might be, for some children such policies negatively impact their authentic participation. A tension arises, then, between the overall intent of the policy and the immediate lived experience. Reworking a policy implies an examination of whether or not the lived experience of those affected by the policy is congruent with the policy's deepest intent.

This work explores the impact of early literacy intervention policies on young children who struggle with reading and writing. Intertextual interpretation layers the writings of Charles Taylor and Jean Vanier with the experiences of growing up in a Mennonite community to illuminate conditions that support the development of authentic interpretive and representational modes.

DEDICATION

To Peter C. Schroeder,

who instigated this quest by compelling me to look twice,

and again,

at people who read differently.

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Dr. Peter Grimmett validated my first musings; his expertise in action research and his deep understanding of the impact of educational policy on practitioners provided focus and direction throughout the exploration. Issues of identity and culture were clarified continually by the input of Dr. Kelleen Toohey, while Dr. Rosamond Stooke prodded me to excavate the personal and theoretical situatedness of my work.

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Commonplace Book: October 17, 2005

Cabin Garden:
The soil isn't great up there on the mountain and they tell me I'll have to either spend my life "farming" or go with what grows naturally. A garden of fir and spruce will take some imagination! What flowers do I see in summer?: fireweed & trillium around my writing stump.

Spring: rhodos, azaleas?

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http://www.naturalhomemagazine.com/backissues/03-03/xeriscap.asp as retrieved on 17 Oct 2005 23:49:39 GMT.

If your soil is in sad shape, you may need to work in organic matter such as leaves, compost, or dried manure...

Then again, you might just want to reconsider your soil's "flaws." As landscape architect Tom Stephens points out...there is, in fact, no such thing as the perfect soil. "If you want to grow jewel-like alpine flowers, the 'ideal soil' is gravelly and low in nutrients....If you want a cactus garden, your plants will blossom in dry, alkaline soil," he states. The lesson: Learn to work with what you've got. Your heart may leap at ***azaleas***, but if your soil says daylilies, consider daylilies—or face the considerable expense and effort of reworking your soil, often every few years.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In order for societies to evolve adaptively, I believe it to be imperative that each member of a community be able to participate from a position of strength, and that a significant aspect of leadership in any social structure is to facilitate the identification, development, and contextualization of unique ability. This commitment to individually authentic participation is, I believe, a key element of successfully inclusive communities and societies. Such communities are not only characterized by diversity, they also have organized themselves to draw upon that diversity for problemsolving and synergistic creativity.

At the same time, and sometimes in conflict with that belief, I can see that most societies identify particular skills and abilities as singularly important to legitimate adult participation and, therefore, as generalizable. At least in North America, these significant cultural tools are likely to dominate the established curricula of schools; mathematics, language, literacy, science, and social responsibility come to mind. One method for ensuring that all citizens have access to these participatory tools is to entrench them in public policy. Well-meant though they might be, for some children such policies negatively impact their authentic

participation. A dissonance arises, then, between the overall intent of the policy and the immediate lived experience. For this reason, it is important that educational implementations be revisited. If the policy is intended to bring about inclusion, then an experience of exclusion by some students heralds a flaw in either the implementation or in the policy itself. Reworking a policy implies more than just tinkering. It is a thoughtful examination of whether or not the policy is doing what it set out to do. Often, this takes the form of examining performance objectives: Are we meeting targets for student achievement? While this may be important, another significant aspect is sometimes lost, that of examining whether or not the lived experience of those affected by the policy is congruent with the policy's deepest intent. It is hoped that this work will exemplify just that, analyzing the individual experience of some young children who struggle significantly with literacy acquisition at the same time that elementary schools are implementing early literacy instruction and intervention policies.

The children who embody the focus of this work are those who have been described as "dyslexic." For the purposes of this study, I will use that term to describe those children who struggle significantly in most aspects of literacy acquisition while often having a preferred mode of interpretation and representation; their "first language" may be music or art or dance, mathematics or mechanics or technology, or some other mode. Davis (1994) describes his own profound alphabetic difficulties as being co-specified by a perceptual "gift" that allows him artistic expression. It is the elementary school experience of just this type of child that I hope to address.

The dilemma I will examine is that which arises when I attempt to reconcile my opening statement about diversity with policies that focus educational programming on generalizable skills such as literacy. Embedded within this examination are several immanent assumptions: First, that personal authenticity in community participation and contribution is both vital and misunderstood; second, that elementary school practices and policies, as iterative of the wider society, marginalize children who struggle with literacy acquisition by organizing their days and their identities with reference to disability rather than ability; and, third, that structures and conditions in schools and classrooms can be altered to foster authentic community participation and contribution. Each of these assumptions will be examined in turn with the overall purpose of describing and recommending school practices that might better address complex learning needs, with the overall purpose of enriching community development as a whole.

Absence and Presence

We impact this world at least twice: once in the person we are becoming, and once more in the infinite possibilities for the person we are not. These two cohabit, interact, and mutually impact the ongoing evolution of society. While one is obviously present, the other is equally present in its absence: No one replaces the people we are, nor the people we might have been. We, alone, embody both possibilities.

The contingency of our becoming on the society in which we live has been long argued; likewise the contingency of our not-becoming. The corollary to this is

that the developing society is, in its turn, contingent upon the people we do and do not become: As I choose or reject actions from among those available to me within my culture, I impact the choices of those around me; the collective of these choices forms the culture, and so on. The culture and the self, then, are mutually specifying: we exist in a type of social symbiosis.

One function of this is that to limit possibility for even one person is to limit possibility for the entire society. And every society does limit possibility: laws define legalities; rituals reinforce values; educational offerings promote or restrict others; moral and ethical positions represent other types of boundaries. Freire (1997), however, argues that one of the characteristics of a free society is that the choices available to any one group or person are available to all, that systemic limitation of one party or group embodies de facto limitation for the entire community and, therefore, is not only immoral, but also irrational in that the limiting force is ultimately limiting its own development. He maintains that true revolution does not offer dominance to the oppressed; it does not suggest to the uneducated that they merely trade places with the educated. True revolution seeks liberation for all. It implies complete change in the culturally contingent possibilities of becoming and not-becoming.

It could be argued that in its early years the experiment that was America was a true revolution—a government of the people, by the people, for the people—in rejection of government of the privileged few, by the privileged few, for the privileged few. In its turn, Canada adopted similar principles related to individual liberation: the guarantee of free choice in religion, in speech, in occupation, in person.

Any individual's possibilities for becoming, at least in theory, were equal with the rest of the population's. It was posited that, within the restrictions announced by the law, possibilities for not-becoming were self- rather than culturally-determined.

In practice, however, within decades of their inception America and Canada found themselves in the confusion of constructing a cohesive culture among multiple values, religions, languages, and cultures. Dominance and oppression, despite laws to the contrary, continued. The possibility of fair democracy was elusive: How could people with such dissimilar backgrounds be presumed to have equal access to opportunity? Through the centuries, this dilemma has continued and, with wave after wave of immigration, the question has found renewed location: How can we hold to our ideals of diversity, yet, in an effort to build a cohesive, generative society, ensure opportunity for all?

For a significant portion of the North American population, the resolution of this dilemma has been presumed to lie in education. The public school system was formed and continues to exist to a large degree because, in a society that promises diversity, it represents access to a common set of cultural tools, thereby giving hope for equal opportunity. Almost a century ago John Dewey (1916/1944), expressed this well...

> There were many societies, but each, within its own territory, was comparatively homogeneous. But with the development of commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and emigration, countries like the United States are composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs....Common subject matter accustoms all to the unity of

> outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated. The assimilative force of the American public school is eloquent testimony to the efficacy of the common and balanced appeal (p.21).

For recently-arrived migrants, especially those millions who landed without education but with practical skills in farming, building, shopkeeping, tailoring, fishing, and many other trades and crafts, the school system provided for their children access to the centripetal force of complex knowledge required in the professions and the businesses that dominated the decisionmaking strata of North American culture. For many, the school system formed the axis around which decisions about becoming/not-becoming revolved.

Dewey's Dream

Policies for Democracy

This resolute adaptation to a new way of life, and the gradual evolution of the dominant society to absorb the presence of diverse newcomers, has resulted in a nation that is able to cohere and communicate across horizons of significance. Controlled change, reduction of chaos through gradual hybridization—even homogenization—of diverse peoples, has been one result:

> A society which makes provision for participation in its good for all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives

> individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 99).

North American public school education is greatly impacted by Dewey's theory that, given limited resources, there is better return from widespread investment in democratic normalization than from focused expenditure on the perfection of the few. Many of us whose families arrived in North America during the past century have been impacted by Dewey's dream and we continue to give life to his ideas: People of diverse backgrounds coming together to form a democracy.

In Canadian public schools today, belying current emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity, this original vision of social homogeneity continues to influence policy. Prescribed learning outcomes are linked from province to province. In British Columbia (BC), the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) results are analyzed demographically so that school goals can be formulated to address inequities. Performance standards hold teachers and students accountable for relative congruity of acquisition in the basic academic skills. The Fraser Institute ranks schools on a constant set of criteria: The general population finds offense when West Vancouver outperforms East Vancouver and school districts are encouraged to redress this injustice. We read, with a certain degree of pride, that "...Canada...stand(s) out for high standards of both quality and equity...with below-average impact of socio-economic background on student performance" and "In Canada...parents can rely on high and consistent standards across schools" (OECD,

2004). With Dewey and Freire, we might well argue that working toward such consistency is humanizing, based in moral excellence, and aimed at equal access to societal participation and contribution.

Policies for Equity or Limitation?

And yet, with each act of becoming, there are infinite acts of not-becoming. One purpose of public education is to increase the options for becoming that are available to individuals without regard for ethnicity, religion, culture, or ability. For some children, however, the options for becoming are not as open as they might be. The very policies aimed at equity, particularly those policies emphasizing literacy acquisition, limit possibility for some students. An example can be found in the education of the young children described at the outset of this chapter, those children who have profound difficulties in the acquisition of print literacy.

Until recently, I have not seen the drive toward early literacy acquisition as problematic; the zealous implementation of policies and practices designed to promote literacy for all has, for the most part, consumed my professional life for the past decade. Enlarging the opportunities for adult participation has seemed a worthwhile endeavor. As stated previously, the present study seeks to problematize this implementation by focusing on unforeseen implications for a small segment of the school population. The larger purpose is not to undermine the very good work of researchers such as Marie Clay, Richard Allington, Marilyn Adams, Irene Fountas, and Gay Su Pinnell, but, rather, to suggest that any policy, no matter how well

intentioned, will produce inconsistencies between intent and lived experience and, therefore, must be carefully revisited and adjusted.

In this case, a foundational premise is that the promotion of early literacy acquisition, though necessary, is insufficient. At this point, most readers will nod: Not many people would consider literacy acquisition a sufficient goal for the education of young children. However, four years ago upon my return to the public school system as a building administrator, I noted that for many students this had become, and continues to be, a de facto singular goal. With their educational programs restricted by the very policies that support equity and access, many young students with dyslexia find themselves focused on literacy acquisition for much of their school day. Their identity as students, and often their subsequent identity as adults (McNulty, 2004), is organized around this disability. Opportunities for community participation and contribution are, therefore, limited as alternate interpretative and representational practices, their preferred modes, remain underdeveloped. Life-time marginalization may result. In my mind, this represents an unacceptable loss to societal evolution.

Background to this Work

Developing an Understanding of Diversity

This concern formed, developed, and continues to be situated within personal history. In the mid-1990s I was working in our school district's central office as the "Literacy Helping Teacher." Though I was an intermediate teacher and teacher-librarian with a strong background in process writing and whole language methodologies, my experience in early primary literacy education was limited.

Because queries regarding early literacy instruction and intervention seemed to be driving much of my work, I decided it was time to return to university. I began working on my Master's degree, naively believing that my learning would be limited to some useful practices.

Initially, much of my study focused on reading response theory, an exploration of Rosenblatt's suggestion that the meaning of the text lies neither in the reader nor within the text, nor even within a space between, but in the mutually specifying relation that is inclusive of them both (Rosenblatt, 1985). One assignment was to explore Rosenblatt's ideas by interviewing an avid reader and reflecting upon the responses. I engaged in conversation with my eldest daughter, then sixteen and nearing the end of the tenth grade. As with conversation and most language-based learning, literacy acquisition had been very difficult for her. With determination, support, and practice, she had become a voracious reader, though, in my mind, an immature one, limited to simple vocabulary and concepts. The surprise came when, in response to my initial question, "What are you reading these days?" she casually spoke of her current engagement with *Middlemarch.* Further discussions revealed an intricate reading pattern: a different book scheduled into each day of the week. *Middlemarch* was read only on Thursdays, the day designated for difficult books; *Schindler's List*, as a artifact of World War II, was limited to Tuesdays; and so on. Years of detailed records itemized which title had been read each day, how many pages had been completed, and what percentage of that book was left. These detailed records allowed Marissa to calculate her average reading rate for any given work a few days into the book and, by extrapolation, to predict the finish date. With this

information she knew when to begin hunting for the next "Tuesday book" long before she had finished the last. Saturdays were left open for catch-up so that the schedule could remain intact.

Marissa's reading selections were varied: classic novels, historical fiction, nonfiction, light reading. She was able to retell each story and could articulate the personal responses engendered, all very surprising as I had not expected such depth from someone with apparent learning and language disabilities. My professor, on hearing about the intricate schedule, asked a few questions about Marissa's general behaviors and learning patterns, and then suggested I read the story of Temple Grandin as recorded by Oliver Sacks (1995). The similarities between this high functioning autistic woman and Marissa were remarkable and my daughter and I went on to read Dr. Grandin's story together. Looking for more information on high functioning autism, we worked our way through Donna Williams' autobiographies. Though I had expected Marissa to identify with various personality traits—difficulties with change, with noise, with anything social—she was fascinated by Williams' account of watching the air. "I do that when I get bored in biology class," Marissa said. She was surprised that I needed further explanation. "Well...you know...it looks like when the air is falling before it starts to rain."

In that moment my world shifted. It had simply never occurred to me that another's experience of the surrounding environment might be so very different from my own. Through reading response, my child and I became acquainted in new, deeper ways as the understanding grew that the traits that could so readily be attributed to learning disabilities could otherwise be interpreted as gifts with potential to enrich our

family and the wider community (Wiebe, 1998) if only we could construct a fully participatory culture. An eventual diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome assisted all of us in understanding the neurological differences Marissa embodied. As we began to operate within the assumption that her seemingly antisocial behaviors were actually adaptive, given her perception of the environment, we began supporting her strengths and putting less emphasis on "normalizing" eccentricities. Only then did Marissa gain the confidence to make her own sense of the social world. With perseverance, appropriate adaptations, and support, she developed strategies for making friends and worked hard at the subject areas she enjoyed. Now twenty-five, she has completed a college degree and is a library technician participating in society in ways we would not have thought probable a decade ago.

My research explored my shift from focusing on modifying what I considered to be Marissa's socially inappropriate behaviors to supporting the development of her strengths. I read numerous autobiographies of people with autism who pointed to their differences as "gifts" that allowed them unique perspectives on the world. Though they were never my focus, I also came across many people with dyslexia who held similar views (Bishop, 1997; Davis, 1994; Schmitt, 1994). Not exceptional achievers, it was their uniqueness itself they considered a gift. In light of my work with early literacy intervention, this struck me as interesting. We were working so hard to dispel illiteracy. How could dyslexia be interpreted as a gift?

After completing my degree, I revisited these particular writers. Each of them believed that they perceived the world differently from other people and that this perception was more holistic, richer, than that of the general populace. I began to

reread the stories I had written over the years about children with learning disabilities. Within these fictionalized characters I found evidence of the same thing. Disquiet with regard to our dogged pursuit of literacy was percolating.

Implementing Early Literacy Intervention Programs

Later that year I accepted a position as an Inservice Faculty Associate in Simon Fraser University's (SFU) Faculty of Education. Working in school districts throughout our province, my role was to facilitate collaborative teacher inquiry within the context of graduate diploma programs. One important objective was the building of professional learning communities that would facilitate the thoughtful implementation of early reading intervention methodologies.

I say "thoughtful" because those of us at the forefront of implementation came to the task with years of experience in holistic literacy methodologies and believed, deeply, that children should not learn to decode in isolation from the broader meaning of the text. Engagement in the text, the active construction of meaning, and the emergence of response, all happening within a rich literary environment, were beliefs entrenched through years of study, practice, and reflective dialogue.

Working with Dr. Judith Scott, then of SFU, representatives from school districts around British Columbia (BC) formed the BC Early Literacy Network. Eventually, through my position at SFU, I became chair of that group. Our enthusiasm ran high at our monthly meetings as we explored intervention strategies and resources, learned new methods for assessing young children's reading strategies,

brainstormed logistics for establishing guided reading groups, and delved into the theories and practices of Lev Vygotsky and Marie Clay.

We were almost certain, in those heady days, that every child would learn to read fluently if only we could provide the appropriate scaffolding. To our amazement, most did learn to read—our data and our experience suggested more rapidly than in our exclusively "whole language" classrooms (Abbotsford School District, 1997).

Because the intentions and practices of early literacy intervention seem so often to have been misinterpreted, it is important to clarify that we never rejected the principles that informed whole language pedagogy. We continued to conceptualize the acquisition of reading and writing as immanent to one another, to identify the reader as an active participant in creating meaning, and to ensure that the teaching of the alphabetic code was contextualized within the message of authentic text.

We simply infused that philosophy with synthetic instruction in phonics, reading strategies, and word learning within a small group coaching setting using carefully selected books that scaffolded problem-solving by being targeted at the children's instructional levels. Our goal was to prompt young children toward becoming self-monitoring readers who would continually check for understanding, self-correct errors that did not make sense, and respond personally to the text. In Marie Clay's words, our goal was to create readers with "inner control" of the reading task. (1991, pp 232-242).

By 2000, our tiny network of enthusiasts had grown to include representatives from twenty school districts and from several publishers, as well as professors from

two universities. More than fifty educators attended quarterly meetings, and three hundred participants attended annual summer conferences.

Opposition to our work came from many quarters. Whole language proponents accused us of "going back to basics" by adding synthetic phonics instruction and using contrived rather than authentic text. Phonics proponents criticized the fact that we continued to draw phonetic concepts from connected text rather than from sequentially articulated curricula. Resistance to our work grew as we became more fervent in our efforts to change practice around the province.

Though they questioned our methods, opponents could not argue with our results. Within a few years, our data suggested that our third grade classrooms no longer housed that large group of struggling readers "who would get it when they were ready." Young children seemed to be acquiring literacy more quickly than they had before (Abbotsford School District, 2000). With a rich literary environment intact, children were also becoming engaged readers and writers.

Within our school districts we began to push for "good first teaching for every child." Because teaching methods cannot be dictated—teachers have a de facto veto behind their closed doors—we encouraged districts to assess and report reading levels of individual children near the end of Grade One. Again, I underscore that despite this naïve concession to instrumentalism, we never relinquished our holistic ideals. We thought the data would convince teachers that guided reading practices, contextualized within a balanced literacy model, helped children become better readers, faster.

Simultaneous with these work experiences was Marissa's growth. Drawing upon support from extended family and long-time friends, she had completed high school and entered college. Though we sometimes fell back on them, in principle our family had collectively rejected previous behaviorist approaches toward her socialization, focusing instead upon our own behaviors in building a participatory community that would draw upon her strengths. What both Grandin and Williams had predicted proved to be the case: Participatory inclusion, based on acceptance, facilitated socialization more effectively than constant direct instruction in socially in/appropriate behaviors. Marissa was making her own sense of the world as she was encouraged to participate in it from a position of strength. In turn, our family was enriched by her passion for history and her attention to detail. At home, then, I was learning to value and incorporate diversity.

Experiencing the Dilemmas of Practice

I left SFU in June of 2001, returning to my school district as a building administrator. To my surprise during my absence the district had continued the march toward literacy for all. Guided Reading as a practice had been mandated, reading levels for students in Grades One, Two, and Three were being collected from all schools, my school offered Reading Recovery™, and the district had established Learning Centres for children who continued to struggle with literacy despite intervention at the school level. I was encouraged to see the progress the district was making in this important implementation.

But then I met a few students similar to Benjamin, the young boy you will meet in the pages that follow. The experiences of children who, because of their difficulties with text, were spending much of every school day focused on literacy instruction led me to question our singularity of purpose, particularly when our pursuit, for this small group of students, required the neglect of many other areas of study. My experiences with Marissa haunted my days as an ethical dilemma presented itself: To neglect literacy development for students with dyslexia was to contribute to further marginalization; to pursue it doggedly was to limit other areas of growth, a condition also contributing to marginalization. It seemed that our current options resulted only in loss for this particular group of students. The received definitions regarding best practice were inadequate to quiet my unrest and I needed, at the very least, a new set of principles against which to reference program decisions for individual students. I approached my shelf of personal journals and began rereading the anecdotes and responses I had written over the past decade, looking specifically for stories of children with severe reading and writing difficulties. Based on their experiences, I formulated the character of Benjamin, and through that fictionalized life, began to reexamine beliefs and practices.

The thesis that follows represents my quest to settle disturbing questions about community, diversity, opportunity, and education. I have organized this quest around children with dyslexia because this is one of the pressing problems of my day: How do I reconcile my beliefs that children must be valued for their strengths, that these strengths need to be developed—a life lesson learned hard as the mother of an adult child with autism—while attempting to ensure the social opportunity implicit in

heightened literacy skills? Is literacy for all, when that denotes severe limitation in educational programming for some, a justifiable educational objective? Alternately, is it justifiable to let go of such an objective? The focusing question of this work then becomes: "What structures and conditions in educational communities uphold ideals of diversity, while ensuring opportunity for all?" The specific example explored will be that of literacy acquisition.

Methodology

This work is intertextual in method insofar as it seeks to develop new understandings of the problem by presenting and interpreting various texts in relation to one another. As is usual in such intertextual interpretation, throughout my research knowledge emerged and new questions arose from within that knowledge. These questions drove further research. The final effect, then, is not one of a carefully structured research plan but more that of a narrative essay tracking my questions and my research as I search for resolution to my dilemma.

Though personal meaning certainly has emerged while processing these texts, I have presented many of the texts in a nonlinear format, hoping that individuals who read this work will see and convey relationships that are unique. The texts, then, invite the participatory community I want so very much to foster in schools. First, there is the historical text of my own childhood, an experience I have come to understand as inordinately happy in its situatedness within a supportive extended family and community. I have become convinced that my disquiet regarding marginalization is historically situated in the inclusive environment in which I was

raised. Second, there is the text of my commonplace book, a conglomerate of quotes and anecdotes that represents the holistic experience of being both an educator and parent by recording specific moments—snippets—of reading and living. In recent years, my commonplace book has been organized within complexity theory; hence, the page headings that reflect conditions of emergence as postulated within that position (Davis, 2005). Third, I have considered my fictionalized collection of "Telling Tales," stories that I have created based on people I have met during my thirty-year career as an elementary and university educator. None of these people will be recognized in any particular school; at the same time, it is likely that aspects of each of them can be found in every school. Finally, there is the large body of philosophical, methodological, and biographical texts that inform the theories and practices of professionals who work in schools. While moving through the process, I have selected those that illuminated emerging questions.

None of these texts then, involves "new" data. The interpretation of them with reference to each other has, however, resulted in information that is new, at least for me. Intertextual analysis examines the relations among parts and wholes. One cannot understand a part of the text without having a sense of the whole; that sense of the whole becomes clearer as one gains understanding of the parts. The result is indivisible, fluid, and ongoing.

Within the interpretive process, however, it is possible to isolate elements; we are able to change our lens. With regard to educational practice, the critical theorist at times delves into the pieces, gaining knowledge of the details that comprise the lived experience of people who work and learn in schools. At other times, he or she steps

back to consider those details in light of the more global purposes of education, in order to evaluate the integrity of the educational structure being built. It is this process that I believe we forgot in our determined and well-meant pursuit of literacy for all. This work, then, is an effort to redress that neglect by examining the experience of not/reading from various perspectives: theoretical, experiential, pragmatic.

Summary of the Chapters

As stated, various subquestions emerged during the research. The chapters reflect my efforts to resolve those uncertainties. Chapter One, "Introduction," looks at the dilemma historically in response to the query, "What is the context for our current policies regarding literacy instruction, and why are they personally problematic?" Chapter Two, "Examining Community," seeks clarification regarding the importance of inclusive, participatory communities. Opening with a description of the community in which I was raised, it explores the roots of my concerns regarding the violence of exclusion, the mutually specifying relationship between community and individual identities, and the benefits to community decisionmaking of collaborative inclusion. In addition, by drawing upon the works of Jean Vanier and Charles Taylor, it seeks to illuminate conditions that will promote community participation in general, with the hope, in subsequent chapters, of applying said conditions to the more specific example of educational practice related to children with dyslexia. Intertextual inquiry is used to meld the various perspectives on community and to develop principles for constructing communities that promote diverse contribution. Two interacting

conditions are identified and explained: (1) an initiating stance of recognition of equal value, and (2) a commitment to the ideal of authenticity. These in turn lead toward individual transformation and a culture characterized by action.

Chapter Three, "The Principal's Dilemma," draws a comparison between educational analyses related to literacy instruction and economic analyses of systems that "lock in" at less than efficient levels. It seems we are caught in a situation in which strong literacy skills are of benefit to many; therefore, there is little motivation to explore other modes for children who struggle. This chapter looks at dyslexia itself, investigating suspicions that current educational practice is inadequate in addressing the principles of inclusion established in the previous chapter. It opens by examining the deficiency models that dominate our explanations of the phenomenon of dyslexia, and then presents alternate explanations for its presence in our culture. A critique is presented of current practices that focus educational programs for young children with dyslexia on literacy development, to the exclusion of instruction targeted at strengths. The core of this critique is that people with dyslexia are doubly limited in their potential for community contribution: first, because literacy programs, though intense, cannot ensure that children with reading difficulties become more than competently literate; and, second, because these literacy programs dominate instructional time during their formative years, thereby ensuring that preferred representational and interpretive modes—for example, art, music, movement, mechanics, conversation, construction—remain underdeveloped. With poor literacy skills and underdeveloped aptitudes, people with dyslexia are high-risk for social marginalization. I believe this represents unacceptable limitations to the acts of

becoming both for people with dyslexia and for society as a whole. This focusing of educational programs on weakness is, I believe, symptomatic of our society's collective difficulty in understanding the importance of diverse perspectives and contributions to the culture-building process. As such, it is worthy of examination for the insight it may give us in strengthening the adaptability of our wider social structures.

If we are to increase rather than reduce social complexity, diverse strengths, including those embodied by people with dyslexia, must be developed and contributed in the community-in-the-making. This effort does, however, present us with a series of interconnected, nested dilemmas involving educational policies, programming, and life choices: Given limited time and resources, to educate for literacy involves neglect of other modes; to focus on other modes implies loss of literacy instruction. The personal dilemma of individual educators and students making decisions involving day-to-day instructional and learning choices is nested within the wider dilemma experienced by the public school system as it makes curricular choices. This, in turn, is nested within the dilemma faced by society as it attempts to provide an education system that balances individual interests with communal interests in an economically viable, effective way.

Chapter Four, "The Community-in-the-Making and the School," melds the conditions explored in Chapter Two with the concerns of Chapter Three. It seeks to apply previously presented theory to practice, focusing on the impact of the overall school culture in promoting community participation and contribution by students with diverse abilities who struggle with literacy acquisition. Of particular concern is

the development of "voice," the knowledge and confidence necessary for participation in the loci of discussion where community attitudes and positions are formed—Maxine Greene's concept of "community-in-the-making." This discussion is situated within the current emphasis on individual transcendence as measured through high-stakes, system-wide testing with its correlating narrowing of the curriculum, particularly for students with learning disabilities.

Chapter Five, "Commitment to Individual Authenticity," narrows the focus to classroom practice, seeking attitudes and actions that will assist teachers in looking beyond pathologies to see students as complex, interesting people with diverse perspectives, interests, perceptual paradigms, and representational preferences. The concept of focal practices is investigated, with emphasis being placed on the intertextual location as that in which difference is revealed and valued, and receptivity to uniqueness is announced.

Chapter Six revisits the educational dilemmas of Chapter Three, with the purpose of developing a cohesive administrative approach to the focusing question of this work, "What structures and conditions in educational communities uphold ideals of diversity while ensuring opportunity for all?" The dilemma is examined once again, this time holistically through the filter of complexity theory, bringing together the philosophical, theoretical, experiential, and scientific information appearing in the previous chapters. The chapter considers schools as complex systems characterized by at least five conditions of emergence: internal redundancy, commonalities among group members that facilitate identity and cohesion; internal diversity, the differences that provide new information to the knowledge process; neighboring interactions that

bring ideas together to "bump up" against one another in a hybridizing process; enabling boundaries that constrain and intensify that interaction; and decentralized loci of control that are catalytic to multiple, interacting zones of change. This analysis concludes with six interacting recommendations for practice: (1) ongoing, effective literacy intervention for children with dyslexia; (2) community-based projects that develop multiliteracies; (3) changes in IEPs to ensure the development of strengths; (4) teacher professional development in focal practices; (5) the implementation of PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) and (6) continual, rigorous examination of the lived experience of children affected by the implementation of particular educational policies.

In any theoretical work it is important to stay grounded in experience. As a busy school principal immersed in the lives of children, families and educators, that is the easy part of this study. The more difficult task is to reference that experience with regard to the theoretical, to make decisions grounded not in political pressure, nor in practical expedience, nor in personal preference. The challenge is to maintain theoretically principled integrity within the thousands of decisions to be made on the run each day. This work represents the search for theoretical ground to better support educational programming for all children, including those pathologized as dyslexic.

Commonplace Book: March 12,2000

Neighboring Interactions

To reveal in all its purity the space in which discursive events are deployed is not to undertake to re-establish it in an isolation that nothing could overcome; it is not to close it upon itself; it is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it (Foucault ,1972).

"Well, we are bound to admit that the elements and traits that belong to a state must also exist in the individuals that compose it. There is nowhere else for them to come from" (Plato, *The Republic, Book IV,* 435e).

Tapestries

When I consider the story of my people, I see a dusty macramé hanging crookedly on a vast wall in the Gallery of Faiths. Dwarfed by prominent tapestries depicting stalwart heroes, overshadowed by gilded statues representing articulate creeds, one might be tempted to say that it does not belong, and yet there it is, on the wall, holding its place among the rest. Fanlike, from the tarnished ring that keeps it on its nail, stretch many cords fastened individually to a thick horizontal branch from which they descend separately until, as though by accident, a few of them converge to form a knot, and then divide again, only to join with others in another, perhaps larger, or smaller, knot. And so against the wall, each strand for a while shares space with another, and then moves on. Occasionally a line becomes frayed and errant threads entwine with a cord not their own, or maybe they simply curl and remain separate. The hanging itself continues down the wall, knotting and reknotting, seemingly without end, until the cords reach the floor, where they lie expectantly, awaiting the artist (Commonplace Book, March 1996).

JUST AS EACH OF US HAS ONE BODY WITH MANY MEMBERS,
AND THESE MEMBERS DO NOT ALL HAVE THE SAME FUNCTION,
SO WE WHO ARE MANY FORM ONE BODY,
AND EACH MEMBER BELONGS TO ALL THE OTHERS.
WE HAVE DIFFERENT GIFTS...
(Paul, writing to the church in Rome, 12: 4-6).

Telling Tales: Jane of the Jungle

Jane was a student who taught me much about the relationship between the individual and the community. Coming into the library in September of the fifth grade she announced that it was not necessary for her to get a book because she couldn't read anyway. Instead, she stood and talked to me about her artwork. She wanted to make a copy of the funeral mask of Tutankhamen: Did I know of any pictures and where might they be? After helping her, I did not think much more about it until weeks later when I saw an astonishingly accurate clay rendition of the famous mask displayed in the office window.

Jane's artistic ability was not limited to reproduction. With creativity and thought she often completed assignments through sculpture, drawing, or painting. For someone so young, her work was commanding and was often featured at local art shows. Nevertheless, despite several years of learning assistance, she could not read or write beyond a first grade level.

By Grade Six, Jane's reading and writing had improved little, though her artistic talents had continued to develop. Her classroom teacher and I decided to set up an extracurricular study group, inclusive of Jane, of passionate students who would explore an area of mutual interest. Our hope was that, as their curiosity and experimentation deepened, they would begin to construct a learning community that was not only respectful of, but also dependent upon, a variety of perceptual and representational styles. The group

decided to look at a variety of ways of expressing their response to the clearing of the Amazon rain forest. Jane was concerned. She could not read well and wanted nothing to do with a group of "smart kids." With the assurance that texts could be read to her, either in class or at home, and that she could represent her knowledge, images, and feelings in any way she liked, she agreed to join and participate. She was surprised after the first several sessions to find that she enjoyed the group and that her contributions during discussions were considered astute. With our guidance, the students decided to create a joint response in the form of a video. Jane contributed to discussions about the script while others recorded the words. She adopted a leadership role in designing and constructing a set, something that without her input would have been quite difficult. As they worked, they talked about their lives, their interests, their fears. Gradually, they came to rely upon and to know each other in deeper ways, interpreting the topic, their lives and the video as one event in the construction of self and of knowing.

Jane's literacy skills grew markedly. As she drew and sculpted others' ideas and they scripted hers, she came to see relationships that she had somehow missed. In turn, other students learned about spatial composition and form, about color and shape as Jane gave them instruction in creating sets and props. A space of mutual transformation had been announced.

CHAPTER TWO

Examining Community

Initial Assumptions and Intertextuality

The infusing premise of this work is that, in their implementation, some educational policies produce unforeseen effects that contradict the ideals of equity and access that supposedly inspired them; such contradictions arise from lack of clarity in those ideals and require reflection and analysis if they are to be satisfactorily resolved. This implies that particular texts—experiences, beliefs, policies, and practices as well as the elements that comprise them—must be examined in relation to one another. The example that focuses this work is the conflict that arises between the immanent purposes of comprehensive early literacy policies and the effect of their implementation for children who struggle with reading. The former promises inclusive opportunity to develop generalized social tools; their effect in the lived experience is often one of being excluded from opportunities to develop personally authentic social tools.

In examining this dilemma, it is important to understand that both the implementation of early literacy intervention policies and the critique of those policies are motivated by a desire to increase opportunities for cultural participation. It will be helpful, then, to clarify beliefs about community inclusion and participation.

In doing so, this chapter will consider several texts in relation to one another and will seek (1) to examine my concern that unique participatory and contributory inclusion is important to the emergence of the community as a whole, and (2) to generate principles for community construction that will inform such inclusion. Not until later chapters will I attempt to apply these guidelines to the more focused problem involving people with literacy difficulties.

In examining my assumptions, and attempting to derive principles for guiding respectful community interaction, I have turned to three sources that represent longstanding experience in constructing and maintaining salutary communities. The first is my own Mennonite community, the organized collective in which I was raised; the second is that of Canada's well-known communitarian philosopher, Charles Taylor; and the third is that of Jean Vanier, the founder of l'Arche, an international network of communities for people with intellectual disabilities.

The first text presents personal experiences that have constructed for me a commitment to—an identity of—inclusion. I find my responses toward perceived exclusion to be similar to those I have toward direct violence: visceral anger emerges as I see children and adults denied societal access and opportunities for contribution. Such responses, I believe, are deeply tied to childhood teachings. Though I have for years attempted to consider educational practice as somehow separate from the parochial setting in which I was raised, I find my thoughts returning to it continually as I work with students and as I analyze and write about the practices of educators. Arthur (1998, p. 354), in discussing these "constitutive communities," holds that they "define the sense of who we are and provide a largely background way of our being

in the world of thinking, acting and deciding....[W]e cannot easily shed what we are, since we are principally connected with these constitutive features of identity in a way which often resists articulation." My adult values are more clearly understood when I stop to reflect upon their source, to articulate their "constitutive features," and elucidate the situatedness of their construction. Rorty (1982, p. 166) charges that, "Our identification with our community...is heightened when we see this community as *ours* rather than *nature's*, *shaped* rather than *found*, one among many which men have made." In examining my Mennonite community as emergent within particular locations, influences, and ideas, rather than simply present, I gain from it an understanding of the complexity of the relations among practices and values that helped to make it cohesive and that brought together diverse people with a united purpose. I find that, within the internal struggle to determine what matters with regard to the education of children with dyslexia, a struggle in which I am engaged every day, this voice continually arises as significant. I find it necessary, then, to "reveal" that voice as a "space in which discursive events are deployed" (Foucault, 1972, p. 69), examining it with regard to the themes and practices that made it so lastingly influential.

Charles Taylor, in his philosophical analyses of community norms and relations, provides another important text. Given the ongoing critique of the inherent political ambiguity immanent to Communitarianism, one might question why I have relied so heavily on his work as an organizing axis in considering conditions of inclusion for students who have significant difficulties with literacy acquisition. First, while my question focuses on people with learning disabilities within the context of

the school, I am also interested in the broader issue of inclusion in community. Schools, and the work they do, do not exist in isolation. Rather, they are deeply interconnected with the systems, values, and practices of the cultures in which they are embedded. My quest is for educationally inclusive practices that are iterative of inclusive practices beyond the school. In rigorously examining the formation and expression of personal authenticity in relation to the forces and elements of community, Taylor has spent his life addressing this issue.

A second reason I am attracted to his work is that he is Canadian. He writes from within cultural influences that are similar to the ones that reference my decisions regarding educational programs. I find in Taylor a salutary analysis of modern and postmodern philosophies from a Canadian perspective, specifically, from that of a communitarian working within a pluralistic society that is heavily influenced by, but at the same time resistant to, American liberalist pressures. In education, this translates into persistent hegemonic pressure to reference decisions, particularly for students with learning disabilities, with regard to instrumentally derived data. At the same time, we are taught to be child-centered, to not let our practices dehumanize our students and ourselves. Taylor, in his clarification of the ethics of authenticity, provides a helpful stance in negotiating the inherent dilemmas of practice presented by a society that ascribes to both instrumentalism and humanization. I would posit that it is a uniquely Canadian stance, emerging from the necessary negotiation of space for both Francophone and Anglophone cultures, not only in the political sense but also within our national identity. Because he has so carefully analyzed conditions that lead to inclusion in the distinctly Canadian public sphere, I find his writing

applicable to the distinctly Canadian dilemma of considering instrumentalist voices within the context of a communitarian value system.

Third, Taylor's work is hermeneutic. His methodology is one to which I would aspire. Hence, at the outset of my quest, I believe that I have much to learn from him not only in terms of content, but also with regard to process.

Jean Vanier's *Becoming Human* (1998) is another text informing this discussion of community. Drawing upon a lifetime of experience in establishing l'Arche, he illuminates the ongoing internal battle between our juxtaposed yet interconnected desires for both personal independence and social inclusion. In doing this he provides a context for the ongoing social struggle between individual transcendence and communal interdependence. His conclusion that this struggle is both inherently human and ultimately irreconcilable underscores the importance of examining the dilemmas of practice implicit in the education of young children with dyslexia.

We move, then, to the first text, that of my childhood in an organized Mennonite community. Through the examination of this text-as-lived, I hope to illuminate the experiences that give context to my convictions about inclusion; I hope to articulate the horizon of significance that references my work.

The Importance of Community Participation and Contribution

Community and the Emergence of Collective Identity

Inclusion and identity.

On warm days, when your Uncle Abram is turning pasture to loam, the tempo of the tractor invites you to follow. You can balance, arms outstretched, on the upturned lip of sod, matching the precise curve of soil to your sole. Staying upright is delicate work. The ground is sometimes wetly rooted, slippery, sometimes sandy, dry. I am cautious, measuring with blackened toes the resistance of that edge. Cousin Ben runs on a neighboring wave and we laugh as his weight pulverizes unanticipated clay, surrendering him to dust. It is a sure thing we are filthy after hours in this brown sea. New earth smells comfortable. It is my parents', and the worms'; some day I will share it with them.

When the soil is right, planted things grow. Family legend held that my father, when he was small, convinced his many older brothers that an orchard could result from the pits he had gathered. He made believers of them by planting, tending, watching, watering. Thirty years later, my cousins and I haunted those trees, loving the story of childhood bravado, feeling our connection to earth and each other, drinking the food. My grandfather taught me, in the manner he had learned from his grandfather, to lay the fruit in the drying shed. I remember his cadence, his care, though I understood few of his words. In my grandfather's house, speech hovered on the margins. His silence composed me; his hand, rather than his talk, led me. He taught peacefully, rarely interrupting my understanding with explanation. I learned earth's fruits from this quiet shadow. I grew.

When I was four, my grandfather made me a table because my sister had been born and he thought I should have a gift. I watched from the barn as he carried it down the pounded pathway that connected his home to mine. I hid behind that great door as he presented it to my father. He did not look for me but entrusted his son with the words he wanted to say. I remember the two of them standing, cutouts against the tarpaper of the unfinished addition. They were just alike—Opa's hair white, my father's whitely blond; thin men, not tall, moving with easy comfort in their skin; the table was between them and they each held on until grandpa let go. He died when I was five; today, when I see that table in my family room, I remember his hands, his love and his teaching.

Cousins pulled me from my infant silence. They taught me baseball in the back pasture, the building and navigation of cesspool rafts, the enchantment of great haycastles. They terrified me with giant frogs, but also became my daring defenders.

The essential idea of those years, then, was family. In every house I entered I could count on a bite of food, a word of greeting or correction, a hug. We children ran among homes, barns, fields, woods—all was family. We ate apples from each other's trees, drank water from each other's wells, swung from lofts to land in each other's haypiles, rafted on each other's ponds. The houses were almost the same. The recipes were the same, the stories were the same, the values and rules were essentially the same. Our sense of social and familial connectivity was so strong that it might be stated that identity rested in the corporate rather than in the individual.

Mutuality: meeting needs and having needs met.

And yet, in forming a committed community, it was recognized by most that what would hold us together was not only our similarity but also our individual difference. A community could not exist without attention to the development of each person's unique giftedness. I do not mean "giftedness" in the sense we so often use it in schools, as a socially constructed "category created by tests and measurements" (Pinar et al., 1996, p. 463). I do not mean exceptional ability or talent or genius. Rather, I mean the unique qualities, characteristics, insights, knowledges, literacies, perceptions, and perspectives that are constructed, concurrently, within each-of-us-within-the-group as complex interactions work to form community.

When I was born, it was assumed that, should I choose to participate, eventually the community would know particular gifts because of my presence. As these would arise concurrent with the needs of the community, they would never be known as "my" gifts. But they were not wholly the community's either, because without me, these particular gifts would be absent. They were, then, situated not in me, nor in the community, but in the inclusive relationship that existed between us. The same could be said for every member. In each person, gifts developed within the interactions that comprised the community. Giftedness infused and co-specified the context within which it grew.

Because they were all necessary, no gift was to be considered less or more important than any other gift. If the community were healthy, and focused on living within the largesse of God, needs would be met. This is not to say that there would be no suffering. But needs for peace, for spirit, for comfort, for leadership, and, perhaps,

for safety and food and clothing would be met. If the community were selfish or rebellious or materialistic, if the community began to judge the worth of gifts and arrogantly value some as more significant than others, gifts would not arise in the members and the group would become spiritually and emotionally needy. It was incumbent upon the community, then, to maintain both its relationship with God and an atmosphere of nonjudgmental love among its members. It was important to restrict reliance on material wealth, and it was imperative to live in peace. My forebears lived in community in this way for centuries—denying the creature comforts of "the world," and accepting as sufficient the giftedness that became apparent within the group.

Sometimes gifts came in unexpected forms. It was presumed that every person, in as much as he or she brought unique gifts, also was a unique gift. In this way, all children, aging parents, the handicapped, the ill and the dying were considered contributing members. It was up to the community-as-a-whole to incorporate their particular experiences into the evolution of knowledge and belief.

The implications of this were many. As children, though we were encouraged to act in socially normed ways, we were also encouraged to be aware of and thankful for our own and others' characteristics that were distinctive. As we grew older, we were prompted to develop our special skills and insights, and contribute them freely. We were consciously taught not to expect to do everything on our own, but in humility to rely on the giftedness of our neighbors as they relied on ours. And we were taught not to judge the importance of gifts, but to interpret even those that were hardest to accept as having positive potential.

Collective formation of knowledge.

All of this emerged neither quickly nor in isolation. The meanderings of my people began in sixteenth-century Holland. As the humanistic followers of Menno Simons, they were driven from their homeland because they insisted that the common person could stand alone before God, without the mediating position of the church, its priests, the Pope, declared saints, or the Virgin Mary. Rejecting the hierarchical structure of the established church, with its embedded idea that only educated or "ordained" teachers could interpret scripture, they believed that scripture spoke to individuals differently and that the collective discussion and sharing of these ideas would result in a joint interpretation less likely to serve personal, human interests, and more likely to reflect the original intent of God.[1] Because church and state were so closely linked in the Holland of that day, this belief set them in opposition not only to the church but also to the law. Fleeing government opposition, they fanned out through Prussia, only to be sent to horrific deaths by the leaders of the Protestant Reformation who also insisted upon received authority. My forebears kept on moving. In each place that they settled, they made their living primarily through farming, and each time they departed, a few stayed behind and a few others joined until the collection of Mennonite family names embodied a path through the many countries and counties of Europe. During those years, members learned to rely on

[1] Historical details in this section have been gathered through family stories and have been verified using a variety of sources including the third edition of Cornelius J. Dyck's, (1993) *Introduction to Mennonite History*, Herald Press; C. Henry Smith's, (1927) *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, Mennonite Book Concern; as well as internet resources: *The Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* at http://www.mhsc.ca/ and *The Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies* at http://fresno.edu/dept/library/cmbs/

each other for such basic needs as safety and food. Theology and practice merged and emerged as a cohesive doctrine of material denial coupled with a commitment to nonresistance. At various times, splinter sects would escape the persecution by finding their way to America: the Amish of the eastern United States, the Old Order Mennonites of southwestern Ontario. In this way, the "new" world became a common knot for the disparate strands forming the tapestry of this earthy people.

Another such knot was formed on the vast Ukrainian steppe where various strands gathered in response to Catherine the Great's promises of religious and cultural freedom for any Germanic peoples who would drain and settle this potentially fertile region. Life in the Ukraine, though challenging at first, proved prosperous. Farming communally on reclaimed bottomland, villages and families grew affluent and large. Within a hundred years, the Mennonite presence in South Russia filled several massive colonies in the watershed of the Dnieper River. I remember my aunt's and others' stories of rich vineyards overlooking the Black Sea, of raising silkworms and weaving heavy fabrics, of carriages and well-bred horses. Some members became concerned that leadership had grown overly dependent upon wealth and position. They pointed to changes in stance regarding military involvement, that their young men becoming soldiers indicated a separation from dependence upon God, and they began to search through scripture for a return to basic interpretations of their faith. A schism developed and, after giving dire warnings of the evils of materialism and impending judgment, one group moved on, first south into the Crimean Peninsula, and from there to New York. In 1874, this rather narrow strand rested in Kansas, the birthplace of my mother's parents.

My father's family stayed in the colonies until, caught in the Russian purging of Teutonic people during World War I, and property confiscated and collectivized by the assorted armies of the Revolution, they escaped by train to Riga. My father was one year old when they arrived in St. John, New Brunswick on December 11, 1926. Canadian Pacific Railway took them to Winnipeg where distant relations took them in and helped them to settle.

Within ten years of their penniless arrival in Canada, my grandfather and his sons managed to buy a square half-mile of stumpy land just north of the American border, fifty miles east of Vancouver. Across the road, one set of cousins did the same and, down and up the connecting roads, other sets, until relatives and friends owned an area of about ten square miles. Following the traditions and doctrines of their ancestors, they set up life as they had done for generations, communally.

Central to that community, at the main intersection, stood the church and the store. My family's land abutted the store and lined the north side of the main road, equally divided into four narrow, deep farms. A common pathway linked back doors. Unlike other cooperatives, each nuclear family's income and property were considered personal. Needs and services, however, were shared. Uncle Abram was the eldest son. Brusque, active, and entrepreneurial he was the one accredited with having paid extortion fees to the Soviet officials who were holding the family's emigration documents. He was also a builder who organized a lumberyard and took charge of additions to family buildings. While everyone assisted when a house or barn had to be built, he provided the plans, calculated the materials, and oversaw the construction. A successful farmer, he also provided nieces and nephews with summer

work. No one expected him to be sociable, however; his efficiency in farming and building was matched by a lack of diplomacy in his relations with others. Uncle Peter, on the other hand, was extroverted and conversational. He founded a mill, supplying necessary feed for the animals while establishing a business that led the way for others to move beyond the farm. My grandfather was quite elderly. No longer capable of heavy work, he tended the family orchard. My father, the intellectual, went to seminary and university, becoming a "lay leader" who taught and preached.

Though much can be said about the male-dominated nature of this community, women, too, were acknowledged for their individual gifts. My Aunt Martha played guitar and sang. She also was very hospitable, continually welcoming strangers and neighbors to her table. As children, we ran through her kitchen, stole from her pantry, explored her attics on rainy days, and thumped noisily down her scarred staircases on battered cookie sheets, all with her laughter and blessing. Aunt Frieda was much different. Her house was spotless and barren—we children would not consider entering her porch, let alone her kitchen. Everyone acknowledged, however, the superiority of the milk and cream that came from her whitewashed barn. My mother was the storyteller. We sat as she told us tales of her childhood, and her parents' childhoods, and the histories of both hers and my father's families. She cited poetry and fables learned during her schooldays, taught us songs and skipping rhymes, and planned our parties.

All of this I came to know because we spent so much authentic time together, in common spaces, doing common things. We gathered formally and informally to sing, to study and discuss scripture, to pray, to play. At long tables in the church

basement, hundreds shared meals at weddings and funerals. We picked berries together through the hard heat of July. At Christmas, the massive feasts of extended family were combined with hours of stories, board games, songs, and performances. Arguments about politics and faith were common. We came to know, deeply, each other's dislikes and preferences, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses. And in all of that, our selves evolved in concert with our community. The processes were inseparable.

Most importantly, we spent a great deal of time in dialogue. Decisions, in both the family and the community, were made through discussion and consensus. A key principle was that of *gemeinde,* fellowship. Based in the humanistic roots of their faith, it was believed that God communicated not through selected individuals but to each person, individually. This affected the government structure of the community and the church. First, there were no pastors, a role commonly associated with mainstream churches. A group of lay preachers, identified through prayer and consensus as being gifted teachers, were chosen from within the group. During the week, they were farmers or shopkeepers or millers. On Sunday, they taught the congregation. Their word was not considered authoritative, but contributory. It was up to the individual to maintain a vital relationship with God. Second, church decisions were not based on the rule of the majority. Rather, an elected group of elders facilitated frequent membership discussions about not only policy but also the minutiae of community life. In these discussions, it was imperative that individual perspectives be heard as it was believed a better decision would arise when multiple ideas were stated. Ultimately, consensus on the issue was reached, often through an

idea generated in the group following the input of its members. The focus of these meetings was problem-solving, not victory of one predetermined idea over another.

The effect of this was that, once a decision had been made, ownership of that decision was strong because all members had had opportunity for input. At that point, submission to the group was expected, believing that individual interests had been adequately represented and that, should dissatisfaction with the decision arise, it could be revisited. About forty years ago church governance was changed to include pastorates and, within this hierarchical model, some of the early decisions about community practices were misinterpreted as norms. Sensing a lack of input, people began to reject the domination of the church over everyday conduct; immediately, the tight structures of community began to fragment. Today, though Mennonites residing in my childhood neighborhood attend church together, they live and work as individuals among the general populace. The collaborative process, then, was a significant element influencing Mennonite corporate identity.

Facilitating change.

Within common decisions, spaces, and events, the differences I experienced among the adults of my community enriched my learning, providing optional pathways and multiple tools as I began to develop agency, identity, and faith. My father assisted those nieces, nephews, and neighbors who chose to attend university. My uncles provided connections for those interested in constructing businesses. Our various mothers and aunts provided a variety of role models and taught us discreet skills: some ran the farms while their husbands worked in town; others held jobs outside the home; still others spent most of their time in the house; women were

responsible for raising and distributing the charitable and mission funds of the church. From within each of these perspectives, adults shared not only practical knowledge, but also spiritual understandings. We learned that truth was personal and interpretive, arrived at through discussion and reflection, not received. The willingness of adults to contribute diversely facilitated our resilience in light of sweeping cultural change and we children proved ourselves adaptable, moving out of our village into myriad positions in cities around the world. I do not believe that we could have done this had we not been taught to appreciate and value personal difference within the security provided by the presumption, perhaps naïve, of collective acceptance.

Presuppositions about collective identity.

In adulthood, I have had many experiences of cooperation and community. It is in examination of these initial events, however, that I find the formulation of a horizon of significance that has infused my life choices and must be made visible as a background to further study. Articulated, this horizon consists of a set of embodied, historically derived presuppositions about community participation and contribution.

First, it is my experience that participation in community provides a locus for personal growth that is inclusive of diverse needs and strengths. The underlying assumption is that needs and strengths are embodied within each human being, and each person, potentially, can participate in community by both contributing and receiving. The inherent value of each member, then, lies not only in contribution but also in providing a locus of need. In an interdependent community, the recognition of need provides the environment for the identification, development, and expression of giftedness. The most needy member, then, also has reason for inclusion.

Second, I arrive at this study with the assumption that community participation is important in the formation of knowledge. Determining direction, interpreting text, and understanding culture are all, in my experience, enriched through rigorous collective engagement. I was raised to believe that the individual voice, raised in self-acclaimed authority, is one to be questioned. At the same time, acquiescence of individual opinion is detrimental to the construction of knowledge. "Truth" is elusive and is best approached through commitment to communal argument and discussion.

Third, my childhood experiences have led me to believe that inclusion in a committed community is important in facilitating change. Within a decade of their arrival in Canada, having landed only three years before the onset of the Great Depression, my family was economically viable because it drew on the support of an established ethnic community. Despite limited language and skills, newly landed immigrants such as my father and his friends found their way to universities and into businesses from within that stability and quickly learned to meld into and draw upon the support of the wider Canadian society, eventually contributing to it. In turn, my generation, the first to be born in Canada, draws upon the diverse examples of adaptability provided by the previous generation and generally approaches life with a sense of trust in the goodwill of the wider society in wanting its members to thrive.

Having examined and articulated the influences on my embedded conviction that community participation and contribution are important, I turn to Taylor and Vanier for further discussion.

Community and the Emergence of Democratic Direction

Charles Taylor's "public sphere."

Charles Taylor furthers the significance of community participation beyond the microsocietal, underscoring its importance in positive decisionmaking at the governmental and macrosocietal levels. He suggests that it is within community that globally important ideals emerge and develop, specifically the discourses that inform contemporary democracies. Taylor argues that the dominant values of our culture are shaped through discussions—conflicts—about issues that are commonly held as important. In relation to this, he presents us with the helpful concept of the "public sphere," "the locus of a discussion potentially engaging everyone...so that the society can come to a common mind about important matters. This common mind is a reflective view, emerging from critical debate, and not just a summation of whatever views happen to be held in the population" (Taylor, 1995b, p. 263). He does not maintain that we will arrive at consensus on particular issues, only that a necessary, common course of action in relation to particular issues will evolve within an atmosphere of debate and open discussion. Such freedom to debate, he argues, is an essential function of the wider democratic community leading to promotive decisionmaking.

In Taylor's view, public sphere discussion emerged as an important element of liberal society during the rise of eighteenth century print media. "Books, pamphlets, and newspapers circulated among the educated public, carrying theses, analyses, arguments, counterarguments, referring to and refuting one another" (Taylor, 1995b, p. 261). Today, this public sphere has strengthened to become a

strong discourse, impacting practice and culture at local, regional, national, and international levels. Taylor describes it as being comprised of people voicing conflicting ideas and opinions that shape policy and influence government decisions without themselves necessarily being part of the governing bodies. The discourse emerges as ordinary citizens read newspaper editorials and respond with letters that either support or contradict, listen to television news and react with emails to the various networks, read articles and debate in university classes, argue over opinions. Gradually, as multiple conversations converge, diverge and re-converge, various positions on particular issues are clarified. Eventually, policy may be developed in relation to these positions. Sometimes, public opinion emerges as fairly cohesive.

An example of the evolution of public opinion.

An example of a relatively cohesive change in public opinion through activity in the public sphere might be helpful. In the 1970's as I emerged from adolescence into adult life, it was not uncommon for my peers to drink and drive. While this was considered immoral and dangerous, it was generally considered within the range of normal and predictable teenage activity. The justice system did not punish it particularly vehemently; crashes involving alcohol were considered "accidents" in which intent did not figure.

That changed. As traffic increased along with access to alcohol, the "carnage on the roads" increased as well. Public concern developed into concerted public pressure in the late 70's and early 80's. The American Automobile Association summarizes the process well. In their report, we can see how public opinion is shaped and formed into a politically important voice:

"In 1978, Doris Aiken founded RID [Remove Intoxicated Drivers] in Schenectady, New York, after a drunk driver killed a local teenager. In 1980, Candy Lightner founded MADD [Mothers Against Drunk Drivers] in Sacramento, California, after a repeat drunk driver killer her daughter. During the 1980's, MADD and RID brought drunk driving to the top of the social policy agenda. By focusing public attention on the innocent victims of drunk driving crashes, they effectively criminalized drunk drivers in the public eye." Internationally, this led to federal legislation and programs specifically targeting drunk drivers (Hedlund & McCartt, 2002, pp. 18-19).

Public opinion, then, provided a climate in which policy could be enacted. In turn, with the implementation of such programs, public opinion against drinking and driving strengthened. This interaction of policy and opinion can be tracked within this same issue in our province of British Columbia. In 1977, about 55% of passenger vehicle fatalities involved a driver whose blood alcohol contents were over 0.08%. Steep declines followed as public awareness and outrage grew through the 1980s and 90s. By 2002, the figure had leveled off at just over 30%, higher than in other regions of Canada and the United States (Government of British Columbia, 2003). In response to this stabilization, public sentiment has again increased. News stories of alcohol- and drug-related street-racing, outrage at our premier's conviction on a drunk driving charge, have led to renewed concern. At the same time, voices arguing for lenience toward and rehabilitation of youthful offenders continue to be strong, particularly in judicial circles. The conflict continues. In response, British Columbia's Ministry of Public Safety has joined with the Solicitor General to issue a discussion

paper the purpose of which is "to generate discussion and input" (ibid, p. 16) related to government action on this issue.

The importance of engagement in conflict.

It is just this type of debate that Taylor considers vital to any democratic community, stating that it is "...crucial that they [discussions] are carried on as arguments. If in each case, someone just passively accepts what another tells him...these events couldn't be plausibly construed as forming part of a society-wide discussion" (Taylor, 1995b, p. 262). To be uninvolved in such discussions, Taylor postulates, is to be a non-participant in liberal society and, by extension, in community: "A flourishing public sphere is essential to democracy" (Taylor, 1995b, p. 278).

Tracked historically, involvement in public sphere discussion on the part of members in a democratic community can be seen to have effected significant societal change including policies regarding suffrage, civil rights, health care, and taxation. Taylor recognizes that not all change emanating from democratic debate will be positive. He argues, however, that free debate, inclusive of diverse viewpoints and divergent opinions, is more likely to result in policies that are in the best interests of the whole than are the policies that emerge unilaterally. The benefits of participation in community, then, far from being limited to the personal and familial, can be extrapolated to include the societal.

Community and Humanization

Jean Vanier goes further in examining the importance of diverse community participation and contribution. He writes of the community as being the "garden" in which we develop our humanity, our freedom to express and actualize our deepest desires (1998, p. 37). My childhood experiences illuminate the localized benefits of diversity in community, and Taylor supports divergent opinions as affording political advantage to the wider society. Vanier, however, moves to the level of the philosophical ideal, arguing that within the struggle to create an inclusive community we find opportunities to explore truth deeply, to experience and express justice, and to engage in altruistic service toward the other (p. 131). In his view, community affords us a sense of purpose inclusive of but not bounded by the self and its interests, assisting us in the global, ongoing effort to clarify what it means to become human.

It is the complexity of the community that affords this location because it presents us with challenges to our current understandings and strengths. We do, for example, meet people we do not naturally like, people who perhaps do not affirm or value us, people we cannot understand or who do not understand us. "To be truly liberated, we have to make an effort to communicate with those we dislike, to try to understand and accept them as they are, and to experience our mutual humanity" (p. 142). A commitment to our community pressures us to live within such a struggle, not to disengage when we are hurt or fearful. We are forced, within the confines of our beliefs—the "enabling boundaries" of enactivist theory (Davis, 2005)—to construct strategies leading to forgiveness and to find, within our differences, the foundations on which mutuality is formed.

Participatory and contributory inclusion is important, then, from many perspectives. Personally, I have found it to give context to the formation of identity, to provide collective support in times of trouble, and to be powerful in facilitating change. Taylor argues that such inclusion promotes intelligent and equitable decisionmaking in the political sphere. Vanier develops this further, stating that the commitment to participation challenges us to look beyond our apparent interests to explore the deeper meanings of justice, truth, and service when we have little natural inclination toward them. A commitment to community enlarges our vision of what it means to be human. To be marginalized from participation represents significant loss both to oneself and to society.

Summary

I come to my work as an educator, then, with a well-developed horizon of significance in relation to the importance of community participation. Since childhood my identity has emerged from within the security of a community that remained cohesive for over four hundred years. Inclusion in this community has provided a locus for reliance on others and for contribution toward others, resulting in the emergence of an ideal that conceptualizes diverse strengths and weaknesses as existing in ecological balance. I have known this community to construct collective knowledge, and have experienced it as modeling and scaffolding cultural adaptation and extension in the past century.

Study has deepened my understanding of the importance of community participation. Not only is it influential in the experience of localized groups such as

my ethnic community, but it also is important in the emergence of global ideals. Democracy was born and continues to be shaped within community discussions. Participation in public sphere conflict is vital to our society's construction of freedom. Cultures emerge among the mutually specifying relationships announced within participatory communities.

Participation in community is also vital to the ongoing evolution of humanity. Over time, local communities and democratic ideals may disappear. Humanity, however, will continue to evolve. Participation in that ongoing social process is, according to Vanier, a significant part of what it means to be human. Marginalization from that process is a dehumanizing force leading to a sense of aloneness, to lack of purpose, a decontextualizing experience that isolates the individual.

Conditions of Community Participation and Contribution

For myself, then, I have come to see that community participation is important from many perspectives: personal, societal and humanitarian. A commitment to diversity of input, rigorously enacted, is important in the emergence of knowledge, to ongoing societal problem-solving, and to the formation of culture. In order to facilitate participation in educational settings, however, particularly for groups such as those with learning disabilities who may have experienced marginalization, I require definite guidelines. Once again I turn to Taylor and Vanier as they have philosophically clarified specific conditions that promote the inclusion of diverse peoples and voices in community formation. I will reference these to my Mennonite

roots with a goal of creating a set of guidelines that can be applied in multiple settings, including schools.

The Initiating Stance

We will first consider Taylor's discussion of the "initiating stance" to be adopted in our encounter with the other in community. He posits that, in principle, it is dismissive to suggest that positions and interpretations held by various people and cultures are equal, that such a suggestion flattens individuals and groups by devaluing their uniqueness. He believes that many of the problems in modernity arise from the presumption of equality without further examination. In that examination, however, in order not to prejudge, he argues that we must temporarily set aside this basic principle and approach the other with a presumption that the positions and interpretations we will encounter are neither superior nor inferior to our own, but are of equal value with them. He argues that in order for us to function interactively and promotively within the public sphere of a pluralistic society, it is important the we are both aware of and are able to step back from our personal horizons of significance, those background beliefs and assumptions that reference our experience of the world, including our interactions with and perceptions of the other. We move to a broader horizon, one that allows us to give recognition to others' backgrounds as standing alongside our own as possible backgrounds to valuation. "What we have is the presumption of equal worth: a stance we take in embarking on the study of the other" (Taylor, 1995a, p. 256). This conscious inclusion of "temporal distance" (Gadamer, 1989) from our personal horizons is imperative in our recognition of the other; only

arrogance, Taylor contends, would allow us to say that we have nothing to learn as we consider the beliefs and practices held by someone else. Included in this stance is the presumption that, with further experience and relationship with another person or culture, our personal horizons will undergo alteration. This melding, Gadamer's (1989) "fusion of horizons," is a process of social learning, of socially-situated emergence of knowledge. As we in the public sphere critically debate and consider, argue and discuss, our discourse requires this presumption of equal worth as the relational norm by which a liberal society comes to new understandings.

Now, Taylor is not a relativist. He does not believe that, over time, all ideas will prove to be of equal value in forming a society, or that our horizons of significance will become blurred to the point of disappearing. He is, however, presenting the recognition of equal value as the requisite initiating stance in our encounter with the other, with the implication that such a stance may change over time, with examination. He also implies that our horizons will meld, that hybridization of position will occur as we give fair consideration to others' values.

Vanier holds a parallel position, stating that the first principle of reconciliation in any community is the belief "that we are all of a common humanity. What this means in practical terms is that no one individual, no one group is superior to others...we have to lose our feelings of both inferiority and superiority" (p. 153).

Certainly a similar stance was taught as normative for the Mennonite community in which I was raised: "...but in humility esteem others as better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3b) was an instruction I memorized as a child—and of which I received numerous reminders, I might add. The author, Paul, was writing a

letter to the church at Philippi and, therefore, was writing in *koine* Greek. A look at the Greek roots, then, is helpful in understanding this teaching. English "humility" is derived from the Latin word, "humus," the ground. In the original Greek, the word is "tapeinophrosune" which means, "to consider yourself not far from the ground." "Humility," then is an appropriate translation. The word "esteem" is translated from the Greek word, "hegeomai," the same root as that of "hegemony." Relationally, then, as a starting premise we were to consider ourselves as lower than the other, to grant preeminence to him or her (Strong, Kohlenberger, & Swanson, 2001).

Consider the power of this in relation to Taylor's concept of public sphere discussions. As our initiating stance, we all step back from our personal understandings to grant supremacy to the horizon of the other. Acknowledging that our personal perspectives are incomplete at best, we attend carefully to the perspectives of the other, with a goal of achieving understanding and unity.

Taken in the light of practices within schools, I find this bears application to my work with students with dyslexia and with their parents. A vital part of the educational programming for these children is the collaboration that takes place in the creation of the Individual Education Plan. Here, we pool our ideas and develop a structure of goals, outcomes, strategies, and measures that reflects our conjoined knowledge of the child, the curriculum, and society. Often, staff members have the initial word, first in the form of the instrumentalized authority of psychometric testing, and then in the more lived experience of the classroom teacher. The parent responds. Sometimes the child has an opportunity to speak. The voice of authority is

generally the school with the parent providing clarification, corroboration or opposition.

With an initiating stance of equal value in mind, the structure of these conversations would be different. Staff members would come to the discussion with a temporal distance from their own points of view, seeking to gain information from the child and his or her parents with regard to the experiences of learning and of school. Interviewing and listening would be the primary modes of interaction, replacing the more common modes of reporting and recommending. That information, then, would be processed in light of staff members' understandings of the child, but with hesitancy, with the humility of considering the parents' and child's knowledge as at least equal with their own.

This will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. For now, suffice it to say that Taylor's description of the initiating stance and Vanier's insights regarding common humanity are helpful in constructing community, including the learning communities announced by schools for children with dyslexia.

The Moral Ideal of Authenticity.

A second element that is important to our understanding of community is Taylor's (1991) discussion of personal "authenticity," Polonius' "thine ownself," Vanier's "acceptance of self" (p. 99).

Taylor begins by challenging the notion that "authenticity" is internally determined, reminding us that knowledge of ourselves, as well as of the other, is constructed within social relations. Self-formation is dialogic: Those things we come

to understand as our identity are formed within our ongoing relationship with humanity and our environment. From birth we bring uniqueness into the community even as our association with it brings about much in common with our peers. Our values and beliefs, those things we know, emerge in relation to those things around us that are deemed to matter. We notice this or that about ourselves because society values particular traits, teaches us to recognize them, and when we do, we count these as identity. We become authentically committed to particular ideas and ideals only within the ideas and ideals of those around us. In dialogue with others, these may emerge as something new, but such change is culturally mediated and situated.

Taylor also contends, however, that we are evaluative beings, that this is part of what it means to be human. Contrary to relativist positions, Taylor posits that as we experience the values and ideas made present to us within our culture, we continually come to the conclusion that "some interpretations are better than others" (Grumet, 1995) and that we select from among the possibilities those things to which we will commit, those assumptions that form our horizons of significance. In his argument, then, such horizons develop within the relations formed among our ontogenetic initiators, our experiences within community, and our interpretations of those experiences.

Of course, not everyone shares our horizons; we disagree—often—on what matters. This struggle, both Taylor and Vanier contend, is a significant part of community participation. Diversity within this struggle is important both to the evolution of democracy and to our understandings of humanization as ideas evolve in relation to one another. Some ideas and ideals will emerge as more helpful than

others, but this commitment for each to become authentically engaged, to passionately represent our personal beliefs in the public conversation is, at least for Taylor, a moral ideal, an important aspect of unity.

Now, this is an interesting concept: The possibility for unity lies not in acquiescence in the face of disagreement but within authentic engagement in the face of said disagreement. "This above all, to thine ownself be true," then, involves a commitment to our personal ideas of what matters within the context of a struggle. Clearly, there is an inherent tension with the previous principle of approaching the other with an assumption of equal value. How do we hold our horizons of significance lightly, while at the same time representing them authentically within the public sphere? The understanding that our beliefs and selves are dialogically emergent, according to Taylor, allows us Gadamer's distancing as previously described. We authentically and with conviction present our ideas for discussion, not as authoritative, but with the understanding of granting equal value to all ideas presented. When all enter the public sphere with this attitude, all come committed to personal opinion, but only within the context of the larger commitment to the formulation of an even better idea.

This sounds very optimistic. Taylor clarifies that the ideas that emerge through such hybridization are not always better than their foundations. The possibility that they will be better, however, is what motivates us to continue the struggle. Diversity of horizons enriches the discussion; commitment to them, tentatively held, is a moral ideal.

As a democratic society, we are united in the principle of dialogue, knowing that the struggle will be difficult. Certainly, the stories from my childhood were fraught with this difficulty. Debates continually arose: What form of church governance will we establish? Should preachers be paid? In which language shall we worship, English or German? What type of music will we share? Which instruments? For the most part, those conflicts have been resolved. They have, however, been replaced by new ones: What positions will women hold in the church? What is our collective response to Third World poverty and disease, particularly given our privileged status within the North American middle class? What is marriage? We continue to disagree on these issues.

Where, then, is the unity afforded Taylor through his understanding of the democratic process? What is the "broader horizon" that unifies us? For my community, though its day-to-day interdependence has broken down, it continues to lie within a superceding commitment to the authentic moral ideal of *caritas*, loving action. As members of a community, overriding our differences is a shared horizon of consciously learning to demonstrate love in the world. We do this globally via our formal charitable arm, the Mennonite Central Committee (2004), as well as locally through community-based initiatives supporting the homeless, people with AIDS, and families in crisis. Based on our various experiences of that world, we disagree on how that love will be demonstrated. In being able to act lovingly toward each other, despite our disagreements, while engaged in the struggle, we grow in our understanding of what matters with regard to love. Provided we are reflective about our processes and our experience, the effort to act lovingly within a struggle deepens

our understanding of what love is, of how it is demonstrated in a pluralistic world. The struggle itself is integral to our learning and to our ultimate decisions.

Taylor's concept of authenticity, then, is helpful in giving context to diverse perspectives and ideas, both in his public sphere and my parochial community. Authenticity helps society to construct and understand democratic norms and practices while engaging in the struggle regarding what democracy is to be. Authenticity helps the Mennonite community to construct and understand loving action while engaging in the struggle regarding what loving action is to be.

But what about schools? Does Taylor's contextualization of authenticity as integral to the struggle for clarity within a larger purpose assist us in our attempt to find structures and conditions that support participation in educational settings?

In my experience, elementary schools focus curricula, instruction, and assessment on the acquisition of print literacy. It is our dominant horizon of significance. Let us step back for a moment from that specific horizon to the more inclusive horizon represented by the acquisition of skills necessary for effective communication. Print literacy is only one aspect of that horizon; other modes include listening, speaking, drawing, acting, and making music (Jewitt & Kress, 2003), all forms of representation and interpretation that are generally accessible to both children who have profound disabilities in literacy acquisition and children who do not. This stepping back from the dominant horizon of significance to one that we share allows us to grant preeminence to the dyslexic person just as they grant preeminence to our preferred mode of communication—a mutual space created for mutual understanding. Within that space we agree to engage in the struggle about

what communication is to be—How shall we best communicate with each other and with others? What does communication look like when it engages authentically diverse opinions, media, and modes—with each of us representing our viewpoint while granting initial recognition of equal value to the viewpoints of others?

As we create locations for such communication, within that struggle to communicate, we learn about communication. The struggle itself, once we incorporate authentically individual perspectives, will lead us to create and understand practices of communication. Such practices will emerge as we force ourselves into locations of communication within a commitment to authenticity. As long as we insist that people be print literate before engaging in communication, in other words, as long as our primary mode of communication remains print-oriented, such new norms and practices will not emerge. However, a commitment to authenticity in modes of communication while attempting to construct practices of communication invites the emergence of the very practices we are seeking.

It seems, then, that when we commit to both the moral ideal of authenticity and the initiating stance of equal value, particular social struggles exist that deepen the practice of the concepts over which we are struggling. Given these conditions, the struggle over what matters in terms of democracy is iterative of democracy itself, the struggle over what matters in terms of *caritas* is iterative of *caritas*, the struggle over what matters in terms of inclusive communication is iterative of inclusive communication.

Melding the Texts

What might we glean from these texts in relation to our question, "What structures and conditions in educational communities uphold ideals of diversity while ensuring opportunity for all?" Relying heavily on Taylor's analysis of community participation in pluralistic societies, and considering that in relation to my lived experience as a member of a Mennonite community as well as to Vanier's experiences while establishing diversified communities, two interrelated promotive conditions emerge:

1. An initiating stance of recognition of equal value: A joint commitment to a broad horizon of significance affords all the distance to hold an initiating stance of granting preeminence to the other. This says neither that all positions and interpretations will remain unexamined, nor that they will ultimately be deemed equal. Rather, our approach to the other must contain an acceptance of uncertainty, a readiness to begin our examination from a presumption of equal worth.

2. A commitment to the ideal of authenticity: People involved in the interaction maintain their authenticity, while engaged in the struggle to clarify what matters in terms of that broader horizon. This authenticity is inclusive of beliefs in relation to that horizon, as well as of personal abilities and weaknesses, giftedness and need.

With these conditions in place, Taylor predicts at least two consequences. First, personal transformation will be apparent as people's ideas of what matters evolve in response to the other. Because individual and societal change are mutually specifying, the culture will also change. Second, a culture of action will emerge.

Discussions characterized by both personal authenticity and a desire to learn from others will, according to Taylor, lead to local action regarding important issues.

I believe this explains the changes we noted in our family actions and interactions when we, as parents, changed our initiating stance toward Marissa. Once we began to interpret her autistic behaviors as "normal" but based on a different horizon of significance from our own, then we focused on becoming learners about that horizon. At that point, realizing the futility of trying to teach her the "rules of participation" when she had no understanding of the horizon against which they were derived, we stepped back from our personal horizon of significance—one of social conformity—and adopted a new horizon—one of social participation. At that point it became logical to just change the rules so that Marissa could participate. For example, rather than attempting to hold impromptu conversations characterized by polite interaction, we learned to construct the environment to suit her: things had to be predictable and quiet; conversations were more easily accomplished while walking side-by-side than while sitting across from one another; there could be no preliminary critique related to her physical appearance or social behaviors; the topic had to be announced ahead of time. Rather than saying, "How was your day, Marissa?" and expecting her to respond appropriately, I learned to say, "I'd like to hear about your day. Can we chat later?" giving her time to prepare for the conversation. This was one of many changes to the mode of engagement that facilitated Marissa's ability to participate in family culture.

In a form of committing to authenticity, we learned to organize family events around the convergence between our areas of interest and Marissa's areas of

perseveration. Hockey and history being her chief areas of knowledge, my husband attended, watched, and discussed many games with her. Guided by her, I planned and facilitated the historical trips across British Columbia and Canada that I had always intended to take.

As Taylor predicted, the change in initiating stance—accepting Marissa's horizon of significance as different from our own, but equally valid—while committing to authenticity in interest and perception led to the emergence of new practices that were more inclusive. Today, a decade after beginning the transformation of family practices to be more inclusive, our routines have evolved to the point where we move harmoniously in relation to each other. Changing the rules to suit the participants rather than attempting to alter the participants to conform to established norms had a profound impact.

Now I want to change the arena of participation we call school to better include people with dyslexia in cultural emergence. In schools as well as in our wider society, we often deal with diversity through pressure to conform: inclusion through homogenization. In doing so we lose out on rich ideas and possibilities that could inform positive social evolution. One of the dominant rules of engagement in our culture is that you must be able to read in order to be included. Policies solidify that position. In an effort to include a wider range of personal input, can schools announce a change?

Commonplace Book: October 1, 2002

Internal Diversity

Polonius to Laertes:
This above all: to thine ownself be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Shakespeare. *Hamlet.* Act I; Scene III.

Summary of Zollman's essay

In his essay, "Illiterate Like Me," Dan Zollman argues that illiteracy in Canada is an "urgent" problem that causes for many "political, economic, and social alienation." Zollman got a taste of what it was like to be illiterate when, at the age of twenty, and with little experience speaking or reading French, he moved to Quebec to study at Laval University. He found it difficult to survive as a university student. He had trouble speaking up in class, couldn't finish exams on time and so on. Also, his illiteracy made daily problems and simple tasks seem "insurmountable." Zollman also noticed that although he wanted to be an active member of the community, he was severely limited by his illiteracy. As a result of his illiteracy in French, Zollman felt like he was "divorced" from the community in which he lived and ended up resigning himself to the "passive existence" of being alienated. People who are most affected by illiteracy on a daily basis are left to feel like they have little power to make political changes that can affect their present situations. Unfortunately, the people who are illiterate will be subjected to "economic and political marginalization."
Marissa Wiebe, 99/10/01, English 101.

"I think that authenticity should be taken seriously as a moral ideal" (Taylor, 1991, pp. 22 & 23).

"Are you still teaching? Are there still some boys who can't read?"
"Yes, a few, and girls, too."
"...I had a hard life, but not being able to read, that was the hardest thing of all. Teach them to read.
Teach them to read" (last conversation with Grandpa, Christmas 1995).

"The dilemma arises from the need to reconcile participation in a larger collective life with the modern ideal of freedom" (Smith, 2002, p. 141)

Telling Tales: Benjamin trudges off to the Literacy Center

Benjamin stands at the counter waiting for the secretary to finish a phone call. From my office I observe him through the glass. He is gazing around the room, examining the various bulletin boards with their chaos of notices and newsletters, studying intently the back of the school motto that is painted on the hallway-side of the main office windows. Mrs. Jones', "Hi, Benjamin," startles him and he swings his head around to face her. He works hard to refocus.

"I'm going to my bus now," he states with his usual precision.

"See you this afternoon, Benjamin."

Even this brief observation of Benjamin draws from me an examination of my beliefs about the purposes of my work as a principal and the contingent alignment of practices that I would like to implement in this school.

Benjamin, you see, is in many ways unique. Certainly the social center of his class, he is articulate and outgoing, imaginative and artistic. Now barely ten, he is known for his creative interpretations of stories through the visual arts. His paintings hang in the display case in our foyer.

Benjamin is also the most resistant to print of any child I have ever encountered. Because of this, he has had extensive literacy intervention; thinking through his program, I'm confident we have done "all the RIGHT

things." In Kindergarten, seeing his initial troubles with print, Benjamin's teacher assessed his phonological awareness. Uncovering deficiencies, she intentionally focused on rhyming patterns and poems, blending and splitting phonemic segments through games and chants, clapping songs, identifying and creating word families, all balanced with daily synthetic phonics instruction. She also provided him with a richly literate environment: she read with him and to him from books carefully selected to stimulate his interest, introduced him to a buddy reader from an intermediate grade, encouraged him to record his thoughts in his journal using his artistic ability and nascent letter knowledge. Despite these efforts, by the end of the year he could recognize no letters consistently. Though past experience and research told the teacher that these interventions were successful in scaffolding other children toward literacy, Benjamin remained confused.

In Grade One, in addition to being assigned to a very strong classroom teacher, Benjamin was enrolled in Reading Recovery™. For thirty minutes each day he received one-on-one intervention in literacy. After twenty weeks, he was reading at only Level 3 of the sixteen levels generally allocated to Grade One, and knew only seven letters. Because of his slow progress, Benjamin qualified for a summer reading and language development program. At the end of July, he had made few gains.

In second and third grades, following a comprehensive psychological assessment, Benjamin was accepted into a district program for children struggling with literacy acquisition. Now in Grade Four, he is in his third year of spending part of each day in that class: each day he trudges to the office, where he lets the secretary know he is leaving, and then he boards his bus. Today, with mixed feelings, I watch him leave.

As a result of all this help, Benjamin is slowly cracking the alphabetic code. Last week he was sitting in the hall reading one of our school's thousands of little leveled books. I sat down beside him and listened to him work his way through this Level 20 story. Obviously engaged in the humor and flow of the tale, he read more fluently than I had expected, self-monitoring for sense, self-correcting his errors by relying on picture cues, checking for familiar word chunks, using his syntactic understanding to predict possible solutions to reading problems, and, occasionally, "sounding out." Though reading and writing more like a second grade student than one in grade four, he is gradually developing inner control over the chaos of reading.

At this point I know I should exult in the glimmering hope of success. I know that, as Benjamin's skills develop, he will gain improved access to participation in our increasingly literate society. I recall the words of my uncomfortably illiterate grandfather, at the end of his long and troubled life,

encouraging me not to give up when teaching children to read. And so I am well aware that I should be encouraged by Benjamin's steady progress.

Yet, on many levels, I am troubled as Benjamin's literacy deepens. What are we doing to this boy? We are making the decision to invest much of his time in an area very difficult for him. While I know he needs to learn to read, I also believe that he is unlikely to become fluently and capably literate. In observing him at work, it is becoming increasingly apparent that he has potential as an artist. But can we justify his artistic development at the cost of his literacy? Policy is clear: Literacy has priority. How is it that literacy has achieved such dominance over other areas of the prescribed curriculum? How do I justify bringing more balance to his program? And if I do, what should that look like?

CHAPTER THREE

The Principal's Dilemma

The previous chapter looked at the significance of community participation and contribution from the personal, societal, and humanitarian perspectives. Two principles supporting inclusion were examined: (1) our initiating stance in approaching the other must be one of assuming that his or her contributions will be of at least equal value; and (2), that each of us must participate authentically, sharing our ideas and gifts with passion, and our needs with honesty, knowing that our identities will undergo change as we interact with others.

To create inclusive communities, then, requires both determination and adherence to particular ideals. Generally, though not always, the results will be humanizing, with people coming to a deeper appreciation and understanding of each other as the culture and it members evolve in mutual specification. To be a non-participant, claims Vanier, is a dehumanizing experience because sharing in community, having an active part in human cultural evolution, is one of the deepest needs of individuals.

I would posit that policies aimed at universal literacy acquisition are based in such inclusive ideals: access to literacy is seen as preparatory to humanizing societal

participation. However, this chapter suggests that such a narrow view of inclusion does, in effect, exclude many people, practices, and modes, with the effect of limiting individual and cultural evolution. In our global effort to develop literacy many people and ideas tend to be excluded from important community conversations. Despite access to modern technologies that should counter this trend, this privileging of print literacy continues; for example, even years after its introduction, such a multimodal system as the Internet remains dominated by print literacy. One means of addressing this issue is to ensure that all children become literate. Our pursuit of this goal, unfortunately, has led to increased marginalization of children with dyslexia during the elementary years. Thus we find ourselves in a dilemma: to address adult marginalization in a world dominated by print, people with dyslexia need to acquire print literacy during childhood; in helping these children become literate, however, we have to focus their studies away from areas of natural strength. This hampers social participation and contributes to the isolation and marginalization we are attempting to ameloriate. The ideal of social inclusion initially motivating creation of the policy has been lost.

In any implementation, it is important that the foundational ideals are reiterated in the lived experience of the people affected by the policy. If the lived experience of children affected by comprehensive literacy policies is not one of inclusion, then the policy is defeating its purpose. Our focus question then arises, "What structures and conditions in educational communities uphold ideals of diversity, while ensuring opportunity for all?"

This question implies a tension among the goals we hold for children such as Benjamin. On the one hand, in order to facilitate future opportunity, we hold high standards for his education: his learning disability cannot become an excuse for allowing him to leave school unprepared for an adult world. At the same time, we know that the standards we hold for Benjamin, if he is to experience inclusion, must be different. But how do we have different standards for Benjamin without compromising his learning? How do we ensure that the standards we hold for Benjamin, though not equal, are of equal signficance? Are they "standards" at all, if they are not standard? Maintaining balance in this tension is delicate work.

This chapter will address this tension by examining the marginalization experienced by people with dyslexia: How has it arisen historically, culturally, and educationally? It will suggest that policies have failed to acknowledge the strengths that often accompany difficulties with print literacy and will set the stage for the next chapters that will propose and examine educational practices that better support the ideal of inclusion.

The Global Impact of Literacy

Literacy as Access

There is evidence that along with global urbanization has come the greatest cultural homogenization since prehistoric times (Bowers, 1993). Satellite-facilitated telecommunications ensure the availability of common cultural images in West Vancouver's mansions and the favellas of Rio; a computer virus initiated in the Philippines impacts individuals in multiple nations; youth music travels the globe in

increasingly similar rhythms and instrumentation; in the face of fundamentalist resistance to this trend, world religions are encouraged toward the politically benign "god-as-you-perceive-him-or-her-to-be." In almost any nation, to be noted as "well educated" implies an ability to communicate in English

Coincident with this common awareness of things cultural has come divergence in participatory opportunity. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports, "The persistence of poverty is especially disturbing as it occurs during a phase of intensifying globalization encompassing and affecting all societal activities, not only the economic and financial fields. It has created unprecedented wealth and well-being, but predominantly for rich countries and wealthier segments of populations, while bypassing or even disempowering the poor, countries and individuals alike" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 3). In order to redress these inequities, UNESCO has developed a plan aimed at the global eradication of poverty. Prominent among their strategies is "Universal primary education: primary education in all countries by 2015." The acquisition of basic literacy will be the focus (UNICEF, 2000).

The Third World has accepted the challenge: Of the 122 developing nations reporting changes in literacy rates over time, 91 report that literacy rates among youth are significantly higher than among adults; the other 31 report either slight gains or stability (UNESCO, 2004). In an effort to improve economic and cultural opportunities for their citizens, these nations are cooperating with UNESCO to promote childhood literacy acquisition.

Canadian school systems are at the forefront of this drive toward universal literacy. Our students score among the highest on international literacy assessments (Ministry of Industry, 2001, p.16), and, counter to popular perception, national literacy rates show a statistically significant inverse relationship to age group (Human Resources Development Canada [HRDC], 2003)—our children are stronger readers than we are; we are stronger readers than our parents. To support and extend these achievements, nine of ten provincial governments have mandated literacy assessments for all students at various grade levels (Alberta Government, 2004). In Canada, literacy acquisition is considered essential.

In January of 2002, following disappointing student performance on the Year 2000 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the United States government adopted the controversial "No Child Left Behind" initiative. Its mandate is clear: to ensure that every American child acquires a basic standard of literacy before progressing to Grade Four.

That literacy has been given a primary location in our hearts and minds is borne out by the abundance of research data available to support various positions on instructional efficacy, to illuminate etiologies of reading difficulties, to clarify epistemological and ontological explanations of the nature of reading; on the day I type this, entering "literacy education" into Google invites 3,100,000 hits in 0.22 seconds. I do not exclude myself from that passion. For thirty years literacy instruction has been my professional focus. As a teacher, librarian, early literacy consultant, university faculty associate and elementary school principal, I have worked to develop children's ability to process and construct text, and teachers'

abilities to facilitate that process. I cannot imagine a life without books; writing is breathing; my livelihood is directly tied to the written word.

All this emphasis on literacy education and research underscores its status as a perceived and privileged solution to local and global problems of poverty and marginalization. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) lists the following among its findings:

1. The higher a nation's literacy skills, the more likely its population is to have healthier habits and lifestyles.
2. People with higher literacy skills tend to be more involved citizens who participate in their communities and in society.
3. Literacy is linked to economic success. Literacy levels determine the kind of jobs people find, the salaries they make and their ability to upgrade their work skills. Literacy also contributes to society's overall economic and social performance (HRDC, 2003).

Literacy acquisition, then, is perceived as a significant factor in an individual's and a community's ability to supply basic physical needs as well as higher-order social needs. The general public appears to share this understanding of the significance of literacy acquisition. No matter where I pose the question, "What is the one thing 'successful' schools must do?" adults respond, "Teach children to read." With all this support for the significance and benefits of literacy, is there any room for concern?

Literacy as a Technology of Exclusion

Interpreted conversely, the IALS conclusions suggest that a contemporary population characterized by lack of print literacy embodies less healthy habits and lifestyles, less involvement in community and society, lower employment and income rates, and less productive economic and social performance. It would seem that non-reading/-writing societies and nonreaders within reading/writing societies experience de facto exclusion from legitimate participation in global and local community life. Once print literacy is established as a cultural norm, those who remain non-literate tend not to be involved in the communal conversation. They cease to be heard in the collective decisionmaking.

Complexity theorists have given us insight into the types of systems that are resilient in the face of change: Adaptive systems are those that exist on the edge of order and chaos, those that have evolved by assimilating, over time, vast numbers of diverse elements without losing their stability. The more diverse the elements and information integrated within a stable system, the more likely that system is to adapt, rather than be destroyed, in the face of catastrophe (Waldrop, 1992). It concerns me that by focusing the education of large groups of people on the acquisition of print literacies, we may be failing to actualize the diverse and rich modes of communication that have existed for millennia. We have adopted, in the words of Jewitt and Kress (2003) "the implicit assumption that speech or writing are always central and sufficient for learning" (p.2). In doing so, we effectively have reduced the possibilities for diverse representation and interpretation of knowledge. People with dyslexia, often able to communicate in multiple modes other than print, face

exclusion from participation. The wider community, then, is denied their contribution to the processes facilitating the emergence of knowledge.

It is important and possible to redress these limited opportunities. Certainly such participation is important from the point of view of those who have been excluded: Other writers have argued this often and well while recording the life experiences of people with dyslexia (McNulty, 2003; Riddick, 2001). What we may fail to realize, however, is that such inclusion is in the best interests of all, that along with the economic and social benefits of literacy, and accompanying the efficiency and ability to communicate broadly, there is a coincident vulnerability that must be considered and addressed. Just as the alignment of computer platforms has made us globally susceptible to viruses, so uniformity in the representation of knowledge limits human adaptability to unforeseen issues, particularly when immanent to those patterns is an active detachment from surroundings, a censoring of sensation.

Literacy as a Limiting of Sensation

Rejecting the idea of consciousness as situated solely in the mind and in language, environmental philosopher David Abram (1997) analyzes the effects of literacy on the human sensorium in its mutually specifying relationship with the world: No longer dependent upon our senses for the location of food sources, and no longer requiring sentient vigilance in ensuring safety from predators, literate humans can reside within their urban settings, focusing consciousness on text-based activities. As livelihoods become ever more dependent upon information processing, this distancing-from-the-world increases. From childhood on, our bodies transfer attention

from our surroundings to the page or the screen or the pen, detaching us from our experience of the world. This separation, with its resultant lack of familiarity with the rhythms, sounds, and processes of nature, allows rational humanity to engage in such blatantly irrational activities as destroying the environment on which it depends.

Those of us who love reading nod in recognition. We may be either reading or writing, seemingly for a short time, when we notice that beyond our windows the sky has darkened, or the breeze off the lake has grown chilly, or the stomach is rumbling. Hours have gone by and we have lost all conscious connection with people, events, surroundings, even our own bodies. My youngest daughter has a passion for studying human physiology. At times I observe her studying her rather intimidating textbooks and watch as she unconsciously swallows, flexes abdominal muscles, curls and uncurls her toes while recreating the anatomical movements being explained in the text. Later, when I mention this to her, she has had no awareness of these actions. I experience a similar reaction as my heart rate increases rapidly, racing through the streets of Paris as lived through *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2003). Reading itself has become an "embodied action" (Sumara, 1996, p. 83-115).

Theorists who explore multimodal approaches to learning offer us hope that this limiting trend can be altered. Kress (2003) points to technological change as an opportunity to concurrently explore the effects of print literacy on modern culture and enhance diverse modes of communication—image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech, print, sound—within diverse media: books, magazines, computers, video, film, radio. He and other educators have developed methodologies for incorporating multiple modes and media of interpretation and representation into classrooms,

believing that the emergence of knowledge among diverse learners is facilitated when media and modes are likewise diverse. The implementation of such practices, however, will require a shift in thinking among those of us who have acquired literacy rather easily. One aspect of this shift is a need to reexamine our theories and biases about dyslexia, about people who have proven highly resistant to print.

Revisiting Dyslexia

The Deficiency Model

For the most part, a dyslexic profile has been attributed to a deficiency in the learner. After years of studies documenting word reading through functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (*f*MRI), Dr. Sally E. Shaywitz states, "In particular, dyslexia reflects a deficiency in the processing of the distinctive linguistic units, called phonemes, that make up all spoken and written words" (1996, p. 98). From evidence gathered during single-word and pseudoword readings, she postulates that dyslexic difficulties result from anomalies in the anterior area of the cerebral cortex, the area seemingly responsible in earliest childhood for processing speech sounds and categorizing impulses into phonemes. Without this basic phonemic awareness, the introduction of letters remains meaningless, with no existing schemata on which to build. Letter-sound association, then, becomes a slow, conscious process. For fluent readers, once the basic letter knowledge is acquired, dorsal and ventral areas of the brain activate and entrain themselves to the anterior area, linking to the phonemic processing to afford automaticity in processing letter-sound stimuli and word meaning (Shaywitz et al, 2001). Consciousness is freed to construct meaning from

and respond to the text rather than to process the shapes themselves. Her research also gives evidence that, for most people diagnosed with dyslexia in childhood, this processing of the text itself never becomes automatic, even after the person has become a functional reader. She draws the conclusion that the specific patterns of brain activity demonstrated by children with dyslexia involve functional differences that are persistent and complex; they are not "cured" by learning to read (Shaywitz, 1999).

Other researchers trace the causes of reading disability to auditory processing deficiencies (Farmer & Klein, 1995; Heiervang, Stevenson, & Hugdahl, 2002; Tallal, 1980), visual processing deficiencies (Livingstone, 1991; Lovegrove, 1980), motor dysfunction associated with deficiencies in the cerebellar region of the brain (Nicolson, 2001: Nicolson & Fawcett, 1990), or, most recently, integration deficiencies resulting from cortical anomalies related to the gene DYX1C1 (Ramus, 2004). Each of these researchers refers to the complexity of the condition; each expresses the tentative nature of his or her explanations; each assumes anomalies in brain structure or functioning that will prove consistent across people with dyslexic responses to text.

Toward An Alternative Model

Compounding evidence.

Confusing this deficiency model is evidence that many people who are resistant to print are in many other ways excellent, even brilliant, learners and communicators in other modes. Shaywitz refers to this as "the paradox of dyslexia"

(1996, p. 98). We think of such well-known figures as Stephen J. Cannell, writer and producer, who was diagnosed with dyslexia in his thirties after years of struggling in school. He eventually graduated two years behind his peers. His father and his daughter are also dyslexic (Cannell, 1999).

Another confusing issue is the size of the group impacted by dyslexia. Even with targeted instruction such as that afforded by such theoretically and pragmatically disparate approaches as Reading Recovery™, phonological awareness training, and Orton-Gillingham therapy, 15-20% of our population never becomes fully literate. Shaywitz' *f*MRI data and case studies indicate that those people with dyslexia who do learn to read through one or another of these remedial methods do so without the patterns of brain activity demonstrated by fluent readers, and they are not likely to develop the automaticity characteristic of good readers (Shaywitz et al., 1999). The implication of this is that 15-20% of the people in North America who are considered as being of "normal" intelligence demonstrate patterns of brain activity that are significantly and persistently different from the other 80-85% (Shaywitz, 1996; International Dyslexia Association, 2004).

Further compounding this is research that indicates that many people diagnosed with dyslexia, while resistant to some print technologies, are not resistant to all symbolic technologies: Some second language learners have shown more success in learning to read and write in Swedish than in their native English (Miller-Guron & Lundberg, 2000); others, having struggled with alphabetical spelling, have become successful spellers using sign language (Koehler & Lloyd, 1986). China produces a significantly lower rate of dyslexia than the English-speaking world (Siok,

Perfetti, & Jin, 2004). It appears that dyslexia may not be a state that characterizes an individual; rather, there are indications that it is contingent upon the culture and language system in which it is found.

Our deficiency-based explanations for dyslexia, then, are insufficient. We can see that resistance to print is often accompanied by intellectual ability, is too widespread to be considered merely anomalous, and may be interpreted as culturally situated and contingent. These observations usher me into a search for other explanations.

Dyslexia as embedded in literate systems.

Let us for a moment consider that dyslexia, though embodied by individuals, exists in their relationship with an inadequate literate system. How might we arrive at such a hypothesis? Is it at all reasonable or supported by evidence? How might it change the way we address issues of profound difficulties in literacy acquisition?

As stated previously, one argument for an inadequacy in symbolic systems themselves is found in differences in dyslexic patterns with reference to cultures: Swedish text has been found to be more inclusive than English text; for some people resistant to print, sign language is accessible.

We can also examine this hypothesis from an historical perspective. Writing is, after all, a relatively recent development in the time-span of humanity. It was De Saussure (1959) who articulated the intrinsic arbitrariness between the signifier and the signified. This was not, however, the case in terms of early alphabetic symbols. Traced back to Mediterranean roots, the alphabet evolved from direct pictorial representation (Fradkin, 2000). Throughout its earliest evolutions, letters remained

pictorially connected to the sounds they represented: Each letter resembled an object, the first sound in the word for that object was the sound represented by the letter. Not arbitrary at all, the system contained picture cues directly pointing to represented sounds. As nation conquered nation throughout Europe, however, this sound-picture link was not efficient because the names for objects differed with language and the symbols did not quite match. Gradually, the symbols evolved to represent sounds only; the same alphabet could represent multiple languages. In becoming this flexible, however, the alphabet lost its previously immanent pictorial references.

The developing alphabetic technology served Greek and Roman ambitions regarding the expansion of their civilizations. Simply by teaching letters and arbitrary sounds, information could be stored and transmitted in multiple languages. Under their influence, the alphabet spread and evolved in idiosyncratic permutations throughout the Mediterranean region. At the same time, it spread largely through privileged circles. The vast majority of people did not acquire literacy, nor were they expected to.

Perhaps as it spread, no one noticed that as it lost its pictorial cues the alphabetic system ceased to be inclusive. Somewhere in its evolution, the feedback cycle may have proved insufficient, non-representative. Perhaps a Greek poet, puzzled by his inability to learn the script that his followers could decode so effortlessly, failed to question the symbols that were being selected to represent particular ideas. Perhaps he put it down to his own deficiency; pride may have gotten in the way of the construction of a more inclusive sign.

At that time, no one would have thought a pattern of not-reading worthy of study. At that time, so few people were expected to learn to read that the anomalous 15-20% would not have been identified. No, that particular pattern became visible only when people began to anticipate a 100% literacy rate and entrenched data collection in policy. Only then did we come to suspect that certain people, no matter how carefully we taught or how hard they tried would never learn to automatically decode this arbitrary system and automatically recode it into language. By then, we had arrived at what Brian Arthur (Waldrop, 1992, p. 34-42) defines as system lock-in: the benefit to those who could learn this system outweighed the input of those who could not and the increasing returns for those who mastered it ensured its perpetuation despite negative feedback. Literacy had already become a privileged mode by the time we began to hear of problems. Perhaps people requesting other cues simply were ignored, left out of the evolutionary process.

Literacy emergence and Arthur's concept of system lock-in.

Again, unsettling questions emerge: Could such a phenomenon have happened? Could representational systems incorporate the interests of the many while categorically disregarding the interests of the few?

Economic theory gives us a place to start in this examination. Arthur (Waldrop, 1992, p.40) presents multiple examples of self-organizing systems that have locked in at less than efficient levels because individuals heavily invested perceive such increasing benefit within the current state that they resist the information provided by their feedback mechanisms even though responding positively to them might bring about promotive change. Two such examples are the

QWERTY keyboard and the internal combustion engine: though more efficient technologies exist they have failed to become generalized because too many people benefit from the system as it stands. Change in these technologies implies great expense in retooling, retraining, and re-educating the population. Maintaining them is widely perceived to produce increased gain. There is not enough incentive to change; change, in fact, bears the risk of great loss if a newly introduced technology ultimately is rejected.

It is possible to consider the development of dyslexia in light of theories about system lock-in. Millennia ago, the majority, having no trouble developing and acquiring the tools of literacy, originally fail to perceive the inherent system inefficiency. By the time the pattern is noted, the dominant majority has grown accustomed to tremendous personal advantage; it is left to the excluded minority to change their behaviors in order to fit in. The onus for change, then, is placed on the minority in the system, those who are unable to easily and fluently construct literate patterns. They realize that attempting to learn to read, and focusing on it to the detriment of the development of preferred representational forms, will never result in their joining the dominant majority. To give up on literacy acquisition, however, involves greater marginalization, so they continue to invest their time and effort in learning to read. They persist in their strategy because they perceive ultimate gain in doing so, and great risk in not doing so.

Had the inadequacy of the system been noticed earlier, prior to lock-in emerging, perhaps some other system would have developed. Once a system has

locked in, however, feedback for change tends to be ignored. It is left to incoming elements to adapt to the system that exists.

Perhaps this explains what is so often our human approach to social diversity: rather than changing our social expectations and systems to accommodate new people, ideas, or profiles, we expect individuals to adapt to the system that is in place. This is what we expected of Marissa; this is what the education system tends to expect of children with learning disabilities. Though we may adapt their programs to fit learning preferences, the intended outcomes remain the same: IEPs focus on literacy development and omit other forms of interpretation and representation. The child in such a situation complies.

Changing Strategies

Given this analysis, one might predict that people with dyslexia would never step out of the pattern to assume another strategy. Seeing the social and economic advantages of literacy, they would continue to struggle toward mastery of the dominant mode, neglecting the development of other, more naturally preferred skills. As argued by Gee (2000) "The most striking continuity in the history of literacy is the way in which literacy has been used, in age after age, to solidify the social hierarchy, empower elites and ensure that people lower on the hierarchy accept the values, norms and beliefs of the elites even when it is not in their self interest (or "class interest") to do so." Lived experience, however, informs us that some people do step outside this received position.

Consider Robert's story. As a child, he loved to construct things mechanical. Unable to learn to read, at the age of ten he left school for the family farm, all the while developing his skills as a metal worker. Later he became a trucker. One day his universal joint broke forcing him off the road for an extended period while mechanics went through the elaborate procedures of dis- and re-assembly. Frustrated with the delay, and wanting to avoid it happening again, he used his visualizing skills to "walk his way through" the problem; subsequently, he developed a wrench that exerted appropriate leverage, dislodging the u-joint quickly and easily, thereby shortening the repair time significantly. After successfully marketing this tool, he invented many more. Eventually, he sold his multimillion-dollar company; he never became fluently literate.

Johnny is an artist I first met at the annual sidewalk sale on Ste. Catherine's Street. There, among the music and the food and the vendors from some of Canada's finest shops, I found his striking hand-colored stills of Montreal's people and places. An exceptional achromatic photographer, for thirty years he has supported himself and his family through his art. He left school and Scotland at the age of sixteen, having failed to learn to read or write at more than at a rudimentary level. "I knew I was smart, though. I just couldn't think like everyone else. I kept seeing things differently. I decided to leave it all behind and do things my own way," he says. One day he borrowed a camera so he could take some pictures to send home to his mother. "It was love at first sight," he recounts. "I couldn't write letters. With a camera I could tell my stories." Johnny, like Robert, offers hope.

The Principal's Dilemma

I need hope. There are days when I perceive myself as the protector of one of Arthur's inefficient, locked-in systems: I continue to promote literacy education as facilitative of societal participation, all the while knowing it is a less than efficient participatory tool for some children. As a member of the dominant, privileged majority, I continue to benefit exponentially as literacy moves its way around the globe. Benjamin, seeing the privilege afforded by literacy, continues in his strategy of struggling to acquire literate ways of thinking. Because of his "deficiency," however, as this system of thinking becomes ever more privileged and dominant, he incurs greater and greater loss: His local exclusion assumes global proportions as increasing numbers of nations assume the dominant strategy. And I am responsible for Benjamin's choice. I helped him make it at the age of five; it could be argued that I made it for him. For either of us to switch strategies, given the strength of the social context in which we are embedded, is to risk greater loss: for both of us, there is the risk that Benjamin will find no other way of participating, that his exclusion will increase. There is, seemingly, no way out. I send Benjamin off to his classes and he willingly goes, both of us knowing that we are neglecting the development of his strengths. Some day, like Robert or Johnny, he may be afforded the opportunity to step out of this strategy. Some day, after his school days are past, an accident may present him with his version of the broken u-joint or the borrowed camera. Then, without the pressure of school, having already accepted the ineffectiveness of his strategy, Benjamin may finally reject it for something else. That is unlikely as long as he is within my sphere of influence. Rather, Benjamin will continue to be excluded

from many of the culturally significant conversations. He may come to see this as his normal role in society.

Benjamin, of course, is not alone. As another example, let us consider Tristan, a seventh-grade student in our neighborhood school. He cannot read and has great difficulty attending to instruction. Recently, his class was discussing the effects of advertising. Tristan stood up and improvised an entertaining and insightful ten-minute monologue of an advertising executive convincing teens to take up smoking. His fellow students caught the satire, laughing as he produced one illogical argument after another. Yet, much of his time is spent with a learning assistance teacher, working through a torturous list of decontextualized literacy programs, in an effort to increase his access to literate communication in our society. Despite his known gifts, his disability has become the organizer of his school day.

It is this narrowing of the curriculum for children who learn and know differently that most troubles me. While I agree that it is necessary for Benjamin and Tristan to acquire basic literacy skills, to do so at the expense of other learning is insufficient. I agree with Abram Schmitt (1994) when he says that there are more creative ways of conceptualizing, even cultivating, the characteristics associated with what we have come to call learning disabilities. He considers his own dyslexia a kind of gift that allows him to experience the world with great visual intensity. This has benefited him in becoming a successful psychologist and university professor.

Stephen Cannell (1999) concurs: "Despite my obvious weaknesses, I view dyslexia as a gift, not a curse. Most dyslexics are good at right-brain, abstract thought and that's...my strong suit...I'm very visual. This means nothing in school, but when

I write my books or scripts I'm seeing everything in my imagination. I write quickly. I go like the wind....Writing is not the problem (though spelling is). I have no problem downloading. It's inputting where things get jumbled."

Work of this sort has been attempted before. Baldwin (1999), intent upon helping us see links between disabilities and giftedness, writes, "Giftedness may mask a learning disability, and a learning disability can and often does hide a child's giftedness" (p.103). While I agree with her general purpose, I argue, strongly, with the suggestion that one human characteristic has the active capacity to "mask" or "hide" another human characteristic. This renders us completely passive in our perceptions of the other. Rather, I suggest that particular ontogenetic characteristics evolve in mutually specifying relations with the social environment; we then interpret the apparent behaviors as indicating either learning disabilities or giftedness. I further suggest, with Schmitt, that a single ontogenetic characteristic may be constructed concurrently as both giftedness and disability, depending upon the situation. Giftedness and disability, rather than masking one another, may be one and the same characteristic evolving differently in different situations. Different areas of the brain and body, sensitively dependent upon initial conditions (Gleick, 1987, p. 311), develop differently. The cortical ectopias and microgyria of the cerebral cortex noted by Ramus (2004), while perhaps serving as an explanation for the reduced dorsal and ventral activity in the brains of dyslexic people, exist in relation with their heightened visual and spatial ability. As complementary sides of the same coin, they cannot exist except in their mutuality.

It concerns me then, that so much time may be spent attempting to create and strengthen patterns of brain activity that are problematic for children who are highly resistant to print, while those that are both unique and strong may be neglected. In reflecting on his experiences of creating social locations for people with cognitive disabilities, Vanier (1998) encourages us to identify and articulate that which is unique about a person. Based on his work with the people of l'Arche, he concludes that it is important for individuals to understand and develop their uniqueness as part of the ongoing process of becoming human and, within that humanity, of constructing a healthy society. So much of socialization involves normalization, learning received codes of conduct and morality, acquiring knowledge and skills already associated with a culture. An important element in the evolution of a free society is the distinct input from individuals. This is what assists a society in adapting successfully to changing environments. Different people perceive differently, respond differently, construct different solutions to societal problems, see possible problems where others do not.

Benjamin is talented in the visual arts. With most of his school day devoted to literacy intervention, he has little time for artistic development. At this pliable age, I believe that he should be learning to draw, paint, and represent in multiple media with considerable skill. He should be developing an expectation of legitimate community participation. However, because he struggles with literacy, vast chunks of his day are spent away from other students, focusing on something that is extremely difficult for him. Are we depriving him of the opportunity for excellence by focusing on his weaknesses? Are we limiting his contribution to community?

Some may argue that my concerns are unfounded, that we live in an age of the acceptance of multiple learning styles and intelligences, that adaptations entrench multiple forms of representation, that instruction has been differentiated, and that learning has never been assessed in such diverse ways. While this may have been the trend a decade or even five years ago, and while that still may be the case in intermediate and secondary classrooms, primary education has undergone a tremendous shift in response to the pressure of a resurging emphasis on accountability combined with legislation and expectations regarding early literacy acquisition. As stated previously, my own efforts have contributed to this shift and I continue to believe that early intervention for children at-risk for reading failure is important. However, when this intervention dominates a child's day to the exclusion of most other modes of representation, then the implementation of restrictive policies needs to be reexamined. As a school principal, I am expected—legally required—to implement the policies of the government. My dilemma rests in my concern that some of these policies when implemented without individual consideration—literacy policies being among many—are immoral, contrary to deeply held ideals about diversity and community participation.

Nested Dilemmas

This very personal dilemma is nested within the wider, ongoing dilemma of an education system driven by historically- and culturally-situated policies and expectations regarding equity and access. We expect that diverse learners will develop specific cultural tools deemed vital to success within the wider society. As

discussed earlier, print literacy is globally regarded as just such a tool. Resources for learning are not limitless and curricular choices must be made: For an education system to neglect what is widely seen as a foundational tool of the representation and interpretation of knowledge would seem imprudent. Lisa Delpit (1988, 1992, 1999) for example, has written at length about the "institutionalized racism" that teaches to lower performance standards for urban children of color than for middle-class children who are white. She argues that while it is vital to include students' home culture in the classroom, its accessibility is not sufficient for justifying it as the organizer of their education. To do so limits their potential for participation in the wider society (1992, p. 301). In the same way, it can be argued that to limit print literacy for children designated as having learning disabilities is to limit their potential. My argument is that focusing on the development of print literacy to the exclusion of excellence in other, more natural modes also limits potential. We must, in the very least, admit to this very real choice we are making for children.

This educational dilemma, in turn, is nested at the macro-level in the ongoing "need to reconcile participation in a larger collective life with the modern ideal of freedom" (Smith, 2002, p. 141). Individuals, social and educational systems, nations, and humanity continue to struggle with the need to both act cohesively and to develop atomistically. In Vanier's words, "In the fulfillment of the need for belonging is a certain surrender of the self to the group, the community, and the culture....But to go further in the search for human fulfillment and inner freedom we need to reflect on the certitudes of the group, even to question them and to take the risk of going against the grain" (1998, p. 49). The struggle over what matters in terms of education for

children with dyslexia, then, is representative of the larger struggle immanent to mankind and each of its systems. Most of us want to belong, to participate communally. At the same time, we wish to make a personal statement, to excel, to contribute from our best. Of course, we work on our weaknesses, but it is in creating from within our strengths that life becomes a joy. I want for Benjamin the excitement of learning at the edge of his strength, of developing that which is already easy and enjoyable into something great. Print literacy likely will never be that for him. It will be an important tool; it is not likely to become his song.

In planning Benjamin's program, what we may fail to recognize is that our conceptualization of literacy as confined to print is rather narrow. Kress and others challenge this limitation, embedding their arguments for multimodal literacy in semiotic theory. Any sign carries meaning, Kress argues (2003), and the interpretation and representation of signs across multiple modes broadens our notion of literacy to one that includes the "writing" and "reading" of music, sound, image, gaze, and gesture, to name a few. Print, though powerful, is only one of these modes. Our narrow programming for children with dyslexia is a de facto censoring of potential for communication across diverse modes. We say to all that we do not value the perceptual paradigm Benjamin brings to our school each time he misses art because he is being transported to a location that can target his literacy needs.

The alphabet itself is iconic of the technologies that emerge when we fail to include diverse perspectives in community conversations. There must be ways for society, by means of its education system, to address dyslexia by committing to the development of unique strengths thus ensuring the inclusion of diverse voices in

promotive social evolution. This leads us once again to our two basic principles for inclusion: (1) our initiating stance in approaching the other must be one of assuming that his or her contributions will be of at least equal value; and (2), that each of us must commit to participating authentically, sharing our ideas, needs, and gifts with honesty and passion, and encouraging others to do the same. If we hold to these two principles, Taylor predicts, our collective ideas of what matters will evolve. In that atmosphere, a culture of action will emerge. In the next two chapters, we shall examine these principles and possibilities with regard to policies affecting the education of children with dyslexia.

Commonplace Book: April 20, 2001

Internal Redundancy

School shootings a hot essay topic

Dave Curtin (2000), Denver Post
Higher Education Writer

"The essay question was: Who speaks for your generation and what are they saying? In nearly every case, students responded that no one spoke for their generation, since they each spoke for themselves," Gores said. "I think it's a reflection of our society and the isolation these young people often feel. Columbine is the manifestation of that isolation."

A classroom is a cacophony voices. The loudest often come from the unseen. I hear the curriculum guide calling from the shelf, "Teach me! Teach me!" Parents yell from their places of work, "Make my child employable." "Show us results," screams the school board from its executive table. And the principal whispers as he passes by my closed door, "Don't make waves." The roar is loud above the hum of students working and learning and it sometimes masks the silence of Emma. (Commonplace Book, Sept. 2001)

During this century school curricula have become somewhat standardized worldwide, suggesting that a single concept of contemporary society may be moving toward global dominance. This phenomenon of curricular similarity is not restricted, to, say developed countries, where one might expect some degree of standardization. Curricular differences between developing and developed countries are not as great as one might expect, a phenomenon supported by the use of expatriate teachers, especially in so-called developing countries (Pinar et al., 1996, p. 793).

All people need focal practices, interpretation practices. This is particularly so in a society where narratives of experiences are caught up in media forms, rather than in intergenerational stories learned in the context of family events. Without intergenerational ways of knowing, learning and interpreting, we MUST rely on other forms. That's why I think it's crucial that all children become more than competently literate: they must become comfortably literate, able to take risks with their own representation and interpretation practices (Sumara, 1999, August 8).

Telling Tales: Liberalism and Schooling

In the summer of 1983, I find myself teaching in a high-ceilinged classroom with starkly white walls. The terra cotta floor, slowly-turning fans and open windows relieve this moist heat called February. Facing me, in two concentric arcs, are fifteen students who range in age from eleven to fourteen. A few of them are American; most are Brazilian. They have been selected for this class based on the strength of their English and I have been assigned to teach them reading.

This is no ordinary school. Designed, funded, and administered by American expatriates intent upon securing the best education for their children, its curricula are intended to prepare students for international influence. Some of the parents are missionaries. These are not the poverty-stricken longsuffering martyrs of stereotype. Rather, supported by old money, many represent influential families' philanthropic efforts in the developing world. Their graduate degrees are from Stanford and Harvard. They speak of "this little painting by motheh's Cousin Nohman" and you realize that the Rockwell you are studying is original and personally dedicated.

Because of the connections with moneyed Americans, wealthy Brazilians entrust their children to this institution. Wolney, at fourteen already showing promise of the award winning film director he will become, sits in the second row. At one point, *National Geographic* (Starbird, 1981)

featured his father, identifying him as the world's foremost producer of coffee. In addition, the family owns vast sugar plantations and holds international patents on coffee picking machines. Wolney pals with Mario whose family controls a heavy equipment corporation. He is benefiting considerably from the massive Amazon clearcuts. Others in the class are similarly stationed. Their fathers are developers, landowners, financiers. They keep flats in the world's major cities and, when their children ask to visit Disney World, they summon their pilots as readily as others of less wealth might call chauffeurs.

By seventh grade, these rather young children are decidedly clear about their educational goals. After three weeks in the basal reader assigned to the course, they question whether it is worthwhile to read any more of these stories. They fear that they do not represent "the best" of English writing and they are wondering if I could recommend something more intelligent. I ask if they have read Shakespeare and Ivan, at age eleven a fluent speaker of five languages, says that he has had a particular interest in studying the sonnets for quite a number of years and is willing to bring his collection. We start with these, and later discuss our way through England's 19th century. With public school naiveté I wonder why they work so diligently and they remind me that soon they will be negotiating business deals with international leaders who will be familiar with these writers. They do not want to appear ignorant. On a field trip, I eavesdrop as Wolney and Mario discuss the domestic impact of a recent

corporate takeover. These inheritors of received leadership wear their mantles of responsibility heavily. In this nation of unstable government and unfettered capitalist individualism, the livelihood of thousands of people depends upon the depth of their knowledge.

Years later, as I study the plans of Plato (1987), Locke (1693/1996) and Wollstonecraft (1792/1992) for the education of children in liberalist societies, I revisit days spent in that small classroom. My role was to instruct these future gentlemen in "virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning" (Locke, 1693/1996, p. 102). They were expected to present themselves in a composed manner in all situations, to speak well in multiple languages, and to manage people. Their lives were a tribute to the ordered excellence promised by Descartes (1960) when he argued for personal transcendence. They spoke with the authority acquired by those who are accustomed to being heeded; I never heard them whine. Their skills in the classroom were matched on the soccer field, in the pool, and on the tennis courts, a testament to years of private tutoring and sheltered practice.

Like Locke, Brazilian society is convinced that the careful education of their "nobility" is necessary for order: "The well educating of their children is so much the duty and concern of parents, and the welfare and prosperity of the nation so much depends on it, that I would have everyone lay it seriously to heart...though that most to be taken care of is the gentleman's calling. For if

those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order" (Locke, p. 8).

In Brazil, as in Locke's 17th century England, the political structure ensures that education for station is necessary. And the education system ensures the survival of the political structure. Trusting in the liberalist belief that individual transcendence of the few will lead to order for the many, they have disregarded Plato's warnings that academic excellence and political power should not be tainted with wealth. As he predicted, the perfected few tend toward greed.

New Year's Eve, 1983: I sit in the summer warmth of that school auditorium listening as Ivan plays with perfection his violin. The lighting is low, the atmosphere serenely tasteful. Occasionally, a rapid counterpoint of gunfire interrupts from the favella that scars the downward slope of our hill. That warren of poverty houses those dispossessed by falling sugar, coffee, beef prices—refugees of the dying north, scripted by greed and drought, recorded by Freire. The beneficiaries of the land's largesse sit comfortably in upholstered chairs, trusting in shards and barbed wire to protect their Dior drapings, their guarded limousines cooling on the drive. For another year they have paid almost no taxes, and this without significant creativity; they have spent nothing to offset healthcare costs for the children of the un- and self-employed. During this same year we have endured nineteen armed robberies on our block.

Transparent garbage bags have given scavengers the opportunity to assess before opening. Everywhere, diseased beggars have reached out for alms. Gangs of uneducated homeless youths roam the neighborhoods. A young mother died on my sidewalk, under my blanket, the result of gunshot wounds received during a midafternoon mugging. Had my daughter's flu not kept me from my daily walk, it might have been me.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Community-in-the-Making and the School

To recap, in previous chapters I have explored the nature of community participation through a very specific educational dilemma. My search has taken the form of reflective interpretation along pathways that are theoretical, historical, and experiential. Several informing ideas have arisen. One is the understanding that a tension exists between the ideals that motivate literacy policies and the lived experience of the children and educators affected by them. Another is that cultures are not received intact but continue to emerge from within mutually specifying relations announced in participatory communities; diverse participation in the processes that give rise to cultural norms is important not only to the individual but also to the richness, resilience, and adaptability of the emerging society as a whole. Next is the idea that people in North American society who have predilections toward representational and interpretive modes outside reading and writing tend to be marginalized from these important social processes as many public sphere activities continue to be dominated by print. The expectation for this exclusion may be established early in school when children with so-called learning disabilities experience a policy-driven narrowed curriculum focused on literacy acquisition, often in isolation from other students. A fourth important point is that it is both prudent and

possible to redress this marginalization by reworking our policies and practices to more clearly embody their intent. This latter point is the focus of the chapters that follow.

In considering our question, "What structures and conditions in educational communities uphold ideals of diversity, while ensuring opportunity for all?" it is important for us to remember Foucault's assertion that, though we may isolate the location of a discourse in order to analyze it, that in no way suggests that the discourse itself exists in isolation (Foucault, 1972, p.69). So it is with schools and educational practice. As stated previously, schools are deeply interconnected with the systems, values, and practices—the horizons of significance—of the cultures in which they are embedded. In considering conditions of community, then, it is important to consider not only the school-as-community, but also the mutually specifying relations that impact the school within the wider community, Maxine Greene's ongoing "community-in-the-making" (Greene, 2000b, p. 274).

I say this at the outset because I believe it to be necessary. In the thirty years I have been working in schools I have noted and participated in the growing phenomenon of "school-as-community," or, "the community of learners." Believing that knowledge is socially constructed, we have actively promoted connectivity among students and teachers through cooperative learning, community schools, small group reading intervention, and site-based inquiry. While some educators have promoted these and other collaborative strategies primarily as a means of improving results on quantitative assessments (DuFour, 2003; Stevens & Slavin, 1995), an underlying motivating purpose for many others has been socialization (Johnson &

Johnson, 1999). Among such educators, Noddings' (1992) challenge to care and support children in learning to care about "...passions, attitudes, connections, concerns..." (p.47) has been taken seriously. Student learning, though very important, has not been considered as an entity in and of itself, somehow disconnected from the experiences that support it and the contexts in which it is developed and applied.

While we have been engaged in this endeavor, and perhaps have convinced ourselves that this is what the community in general expects of schools, changes have been happening in the expectations of the surrounding culture. These changes have serious implications for learning communities, particularly as they impact instructional practices related to print literacy.

A Shifting Horizon of Significance

From Process to Product: Getting Results

Within the past decade, a shift in emphasis has taken place among policy makers and educational leaders. In response to perceptions of overall mediocrity in literacy skills, the school system's primary focus has been subtly transferred from a nurturing, culture-building stance to one of individual achievement as measured against government mandated standards and assessments focused on particular subject areas. A study of Rick DuFour's work with the National Staff Development Council illuminates this shift. In 1995, his article, "The Principal as Staff Developer," (DuFour, 1995) encouraged site-based administrators to involve their teachers in collaborative professional inquiry: to examine their beliefs, create investigative questions, plan and implement strategies, and then gather information in relation to

goals for student learning that they had established jointly. He stated that the principal's responsibility was to create a supportive environment in which teachers were willing to take risks that might not result in success at the moment, but would make for better educational attitudes over the long-term. The underlying premise of the article was clear: "All too often, school improvement efforts focus on a search for the magic bullet—the new programs and procedures that will transform a school. ... It is time to recognize that there is no magic bullet. Programs and materials do not bring about change, people do."

In 1996, DuFour was given a byline in the *Journal of Staff Development.* His column was called "Community" and through the first several years he elucidated the ideas presented in his 1995 article, giving theoretical and practical accounts of how principals might support teacher inquiry groups. In 2002, the name of his column changed to "Leading Edge." Results-based decisionmaking and mandated staff development became dominant themes. By 2003, though still intent upon teacher inquiry and collaboration, DuFour's tone had changed considerably: "There is *clear consensus* among leading educational researchers as to the *best practices* for improving schools," and, "Educational leaders have a professional obligation to align the practices of *their* school with the *best thinking* in the field, and there is no justification for not fulfilling this obligation [italics added]" (DuFour, 2003). No longer are teachers engaging in personally meaningful inquiry within a risk-free environment; rather, administrators have taken ownership of "their" schools because of an externally motivated obligation. Practices no longer belong to those change-bringing "people" but are now the "practices of the *school.*" And, while in 1995 the

magic bullet was missing, by 2003 it had apparently been found, relabeled as "best practice." A cursory glance indicates that DuFour is still advocating for teacher research and that he has always supported successful learning experiences for children; however, the context has changed from one that is teacher-driven and principal-supported to one that is obligatory, authority-referenced, and administrator-mandated. Most significantly, the shift has taken the focus from the context for learning and teaching, from the community aspect of supporting learning, to leading edge results: "By concentrating on teaching, the instructional leader of the past emphasized the inputs of the learning process. By concentrating on learning, today's school leaders shift both their own focus and that of the school community from inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results" (DuFour, 2002). To improve results is our obligation; the product is somehow separate from the process.

It is interesting to note that DuFour (2004) himself catches and addresses this shift. In a recent article, after setting his context by pointing to the pressure he experiences, as an educational consultant, to assist schools and districts in improving government test scores, he writes, "Leaders who reject the idea of appeals to the heart as too 'soft' for the data-driven, results-oriented schools they hope to create need to re-think their assumptions," and "...the best way to get results is to engage in an ongoing process of reminding people that their work is important....Leaders make a mistake when they appeal only to the head. The best leaders realize that ultimately, they must appeal to the heart."

Why is this important?

Narrowing the Curriculum in a Liberalist Context

What we are seeing in DuFour's column is the public sphere struggle over what matters in schools and curriculum. People feel this moral obligation to ensure that students leave school well prepared for what is perceived to be success in adult life; hence, the emphasis on individual student achievement. At the same time, DuFour has a deep-set understanding that, should this drive toward achievement result in the dehumanization of the nation's citizens, the greater educative purpose is lost: We are fearful of creating another Brazil with all the social problems inherent in unfettered individualism. Like many of us, DuFour is struggling with the pressure of this liberalist shift. For one thing, it is coming at a time of economic conservatism; overall school funding is being restricted at the same time that spending on assessment is increasing. Decreased funding translates into program cuts; assessments ensure that those cuts take place in areas not tested. The result is a narrowing of the curriculum within schools: "Mathematics, reading, science, and middle- and high-school social studies are on the rise. The arts, foreign language, and elementary school social studies are by contrast in decline" (Von Zastrow, 2004, p.14). The very subjects that embody alternatives to literate representation and interpretation for students with dyslexia are the subjects that are being honed from the curriculum.

What we see emerging is a gap in learning opportunities. Those students with a predilection toward representation and interpretation in print literacies receive considerably more support in developing their preferred cultural tools than do those students who are attuned to other modes. Thus, the development of the abilities

through which the latter group would best contribute to the emergence of knowledge and culture is hampered.

Bridging the Gap

Perhaps our education system needs to change its focus: We need to give more attention to the representational and interpretive preferences of people with dyslexia by providing them with learning opportunities in arts and technology. Perhaps society as a whole needs to change: Caring adults could provide more opportunities for situated learning. Perhaps, through public sphere discussion of the problem, both society and education will undergo mutually specified change.

Taylor notes that community participation increases when people are engaged in the struggle about what matters in relation to a common horizon of significance. Negotiating the tension of conflicting values is a clarifying enterprise. Until now, we have passively accepted that the horizon of significance in terms of education is print literacy—children must learn to read and write—and we have actively implemented this horizon of significance through multiple programs. In the past decade, this has resulted in intervention programs targeted at small children deemed to be at-risk for reading failure.

Lack of literacy tends to be co-specified with lack of access to community participation (HRDC, 2003). As clarified in earlier chapters, my particular concern is that this excludes people with dyslexia from the important discourses of the community-in-the-making. We are currently locked into a situation where people with dyslexia, because of its persistence and despite massive intervention, not only do

not learn to read and write very well, but the educational time involved in the interventions ensures that other strengths are not developed very well either, at least not early on in life when identity as participant is initiated. Community participation is, then, doubly hampered.

How can we address this in schools and in the community-at-large? We have learned that particular conditions facilitate community participation. Most important, in the mind of Charles Taylor, is the interactive struggle over what matters in relation to a common horizon of significance that is inclusive of the diverse horizons of the group members. We have seen this both in the public sphere with its discussion of what matters—of how we shall live—in terms of democracy as well as in terms of my childhood community with its ongoing discussion of what matters in terms of *caritas*.

Generally speaking, based upon the evidence of evaluative practice, public consensus seems to be that the horizon of significance against which we determine what we shall do in public elementary schools is the construction of print literacy. Hence, we spend a great deal of time discussing what matters in terms of literacy with adults and children and teaching toward what we believe to matter. As discussed, this approach does not adequately address the needs of students with dyslexia. Following Taylor, if we hope to become more inclusive in our community participation, we need to jointly step back from that horizon of significance to a broader horizon that is inclusive of both the horizon of literacy and the representative horizon of people with dyslexia, while maintaining a justifiable educative purpose.

I have suggested that such a broader horizon is possible in the concept of communication. Rather than insisting that the primary purpose of the school is to

support the acquisition of skills and practices related to literacy, we need to introduce to public sphere discussions the assertion that the primary purpose of the school is to support the acquisition of skills and practices related to communication involving multiple modes and media. With this slight shift, both readers and nonreaders can enter the discourse from a position of having something of value to contribute.

Facilitating the Discourse

The Form of Community Participation

But, what form shall this discourse take? Taylor insists that, in order to achieve any sort of clarification about what matters with regard to a particular horizon of significance, there is a need for public struggle. Earlier we learned that it is possible to construct particular situations that are iterative of the horizon of significance we are attempting to address. Given particular conditions, the struggle about democracy was iterative of democracy; conversations about love were iterative of love. The conversations themselves invited the learning we hoped to address. In this case, we hope to develop the tools of communication while engaged in the struggle over what matters in terms of communication. How shall we go about doing this?

First, let us remind ourselves of the particular conditions that create such an iterative environment:

1. An initiating stance of recognition of equal value: Upon entering the struggle over what matters, a joint commitment to a broad horizon of significance affords all the distance to grant preeminence to the other as an initiating stance.

2. A commitment to the ideal of authenticity: People involved in the interaction maintain their authenticity, while engaged in the struggle to clarify what matters in terms of that broader horizon.

Second, let us discuss the form that such a discourse might take. It is all very well to discuss theoretical conditions, but if we hope to implement such locations in schools and in communities, we need pragmatics.

The most obvious answer is to enter into a campaign of writing articles and letters, authentically presenting a point of view in opposition to the "literacy for all, at all costs" trend. This might invite just the type of discussion Taylor advocates. However, I believe it much more powerful to live the alternative, to create it locally and experience it, and then bring that experience into the public sphere discussion. In order to do that, we must announce locations for discussion that result in action, action within our sphere of influence.

Maxine Greene (2000a, p. 13) calls such dialogic locations "spaces for freedom." Here, educators keep their questions about student potential open and take intentional action against barriers to "learners' becoming." She suggests that such locations may be created through engagement in participatory projects that have room for multiple interpretative and expressive practices. "It is clear to many that the commitment to a project, an undertaking shared with others, feeds into the growth of identity and, at once, voluntary participation" (p. 12). Within such projects, students, parents, educators, and members of the wider community address curricular and social issues by engaging in conversations about what matters and then designing imaginative responses. Specifically, in inviting discourse about what matters in terms

of communication, participants practice promotive communication while designing participatory learning experiences to invite and support unique development. Perhaps Greene's projects can stand up to our conditions of participation.

An Example of Multimodal Exploration: The Multiliteracies Project

Organizing loci of educational research in cities across Canada, The Multiliteracy Project explores methods of helping children "transform what they know into modes of representation that allow for a full range of human experience" (Kendrick & McKay, 2004, p. 109). Arguing that print literacy is a mode privileged by society and by schools, they work to break that dominance by introducing into classrooms and developing in children a variety of modes for "conceptualizing and expressing meaning" (p. 110). Building on the work of Kress (2003), they point out the inadequacies of linguistic representation in expressing the richness of children's knowledge: that drawing and motion and drama allow for complex representations and interpretations that text media cannot facilitate.

As a participating school, Charles Dickens Elementary (2005) in Vancouver, BC, is exemplary of the multimodal approach. There, teachers work in teams to facilitate learning among children organized in multi-age groupings. Hands-on approaches to science and social studies are evident in the students' artistic representations of concepts and processes. Through these depictions children are able to "capture sensory modes such as sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch in a way that language cannot" (Kendrick & McKay, 2004, p. 123). Not only does this enrich

conceptualization for all students, it offers an invitation to that those students who struggle with literacy to participate in authentically preferred modes.

An Example of Maximizing Participation: Gold Key Project Schools

Another example of a school-wide community-based project comes to mind. Russia's Gold Key Project was the focus of a seminar at Simon Fraser University in the summer of 2000 (Kravtsova, 2000). This program is apropos because it meets Taylor's criteria by facilitating inclusive community-based discussion about what matters in terms of representational and interpretive practices involving multiple systems of making meaning that are inclusive of print without being limited to print. It also utilizes a project format such as that suggested by Greene as a powerful vehicle for supporting the emergence of knowledge. As such, it holds promise for meeting the representational needs of people with dyslexia.

Before the year begins, the staff and parents of School A meet to determine major pageants that will contextualize instruction for the coming year. Central to these discussions are the modes of representation and interpretation that serve as vehicles to knowledge emergence. After several meetings, it is decided that one of the projects will be the creation of a 17th century Russian ball: each student and adult will use research and imagination to develop a character and will attend the ball, participating in role. Costumes, settings, and menus will be designed and constructed collaboratively.

Soon work begins. Requiring months of preparation, the students need support as they research the general cultural context of 17th century Russian aristocratic

society as well as the specifics of dance, music, costumes, food, and decor. They need assistance as they conduct the research necessary for choosing and developing personal character roles. Once the research is complete, they need help creating, choreographing and learning the dances, designing and making the sets and the costumes, getting into role, and organizing the final event. The support comes in the form of more knowledgeable others—parents, community members, older students—who provide scaffolding so that individual students are able, by the end of the pageant, to work independently.

At the SFU seminar, Dr. Elena Kravtsova, the project's director, displayed artifacts from this ball: included was a pair of red leather dance slippers researched, designed, cut, stitched and beaded by an eight-year old child in response to an authentic 17th century portrait. This child had focused on creating and becoming the woman she perceived to be represented by that portrait. Her communication skills, including print literacies, were strengthened as she created her own story based on her research. Then, with the support of others, this young student reified her imagination by designing and making the costume, including the shoes. Her classes for that term—literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, Fine Arts—were contextualized by the upcoming pageant and the preparation for it. Information was gathered, processed, and transformed through interrelated modes. As the young child worked with others, creativity emerged to reshape the information gathered from texts and pictures. Eventually, thought was given to gesture, mood, intonation, color, line, and movement, as the child lived her knowledge during the pageant itself.

It is important to underscore that in both of these schools, the learning experiences are planned collaboratively. Discussion about details is the norm and input is invited from all participants. Diversity in ability and perception is consciously fostered. Skills in reading and writing, though important, stand alongside spatial, graphic, and musical abilities. In this way, the cultures of these schools emerge as children and adults create environments in which diverse modes of perceiving and representing are not only honored but also expected. Multiple modes of representation and interpretation are consciously taught, monitored and developed with the expectation that students will apply their developing abilities creatively. Students with preferences for modes other that print literacy develop a variety of interpretive and representational tools, and they are accustomed to community participation using these tools.

How do these educational settings better meet the needs of dyslexic students than those dominated by print literacies? In answering this question, we revisit the conditions of participation and contribution clarified earlier.

Conditions of Participation and Contribution

The initiating stance.

Using our conditions of participation as a reference, it is possible to suggest reasons why these projects work so well in fostering participation among diverse students and adults, and why they hold particular promise for meeting the needs of those with dyslexia. In their approach toward their students and each other, the adults who work in these schools have stepped back from the horizon of significance of

print literacy in order to focus on scaffolding students as they develop their abilities to communicate, learn, and participate in the evolution of knowledge through multiple interpretive and representational modes. Kress (2003) argues that such modes are, and have always been, present in every learning situation. For the most part, however, many are ignored in contemporary classrooms. Implicit in these schools' validation of multiple communicative modes is the transformation of their driving question from "How shall we support these students in becoming capably literate?" to "How shall we work together in scaffolding students as they become contributing communicators?" This initial step allows for flexibility in developing conditions important to diverse participation in the struggle over what matters. For students with dyslexia, this implies an opening in which to shift from an emphasis on redressing their deficiencies to active discussion about how the project can build their strengths. The initiating stance allows that all modes are important and have potential for enriching the emergence of collective meaning.

Looking specifically at the Gold Key Project, the model for such diverse participation is evident in the planning phases as discussions about programs include participants plus members of the wider community. Planning sessions are exploratory, inviting imaginative and pragmatic ideas that are then discarded or adapted and developed. No single voice determines direction.

During the implementation phases, the approach toward students is likewise inclusive. Specifically, adults consciously approach pupils with the attitude of learning from and about them rather than addressing a predetermined curriculum. All areas of knowledge and diverse representational preferences are considered vital to

the success of the project. Though Dr. Kravtsova did not specifically mention the involvement of students with dyslexia, in a private conversation she responded to my questions about the inclusion of students with learning disabilities. Like the other students, their learning is scaffolded based on individual strength and need. With so many adults in the building, individual support is readily available as children develop diverse practices of interpretation and representation. Adults and students work together within the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991): There, the students' current knowledge is made visible. In order for such assessment to take place, the stance of the more knowledgeable other must be, "Teach me what I need to know about you so that I can facilitate the experiences that will help you learn." The child, then, holds an equal part in determining instruction. This is precisely the stance suggested by Charles Taylor as facilitative of public sphere participation: Learn about the other from the other before introducing your personal value system.

Adults in both the Multiliteracies and Gold Key programs have stepped back from a horizon of significance related to the acquisition of print literacy to one of valuing multiple meaning-making systems—visual, actional, and linguistic (Jewitt & Kress 2003)—including but not limited to those related to print. In this way, literacy development is neither ignored nor aggrandized; rather, it is specifically addressed, but within a broader context.

The adoption of a project format allows for the acceptance of a joint horizon of significance in which the knowledge of all participants is necessary and valued. Students teach adults about themselves and about the content they are addressing.

Adults scaffold necessary skill development from within their own abilities, interests, and areas of knowledge. Contribution, then, becomes authentic as students and adults understand that the formation of knowledge is reliant upon the participation of all.

A commitment to the ideal of authenticity.

While it is important for all to step back to a broader, common horizon of significance in order to perceive each other as valued contributors, it is also important for participants to maintain their personal authenticity while engaged in the struggle to clarify what matters in terms of that broader horizon. This authenticity is inclusive of beliefs in relation to that horizon, as well as of personal abilities and weaknesses, giftedness and need as defined and discussed in Chapter Two.

In a school, it is common for the instructors and other adults to represent their beliefs about curriculum and representational forms. Given inherent power differentials, an environment where students are invited, even encouraged, to participate in setting direction for learning is less common and, therefore, requires systemic support and structuring.

Within these project-based programs, the authentic questions and communication methods of the students form the basis for the curriculum as they design and produce charts or pageants, ask and research their own questions, seek the assistance they need in order to learn, and engage in processes of reflection that facilitate the emergence of knowledge. In order to participate in this way, it is essential that students develop voice. The more Gold Key students and adults contribute and draw from each others' diverse interpretive and representational styles, the better will be the sets, costumes, music and dances of 17th century ball. The more

the students and staff and Dickens do the same, the more fully representational will be the artistic renditions that line the halls. All talents and abilities are necessary to student success.

If a school hopes to develop the authentic abilities of students with dyslexia, it is vital that a culture of honoring their specific strengths is announced and implemented. This requires the construction of a public venue in which the contribution of their strengths has authentic value to the culture of the school as well as to the wider community-in-the-making. In scaffolding the development of all students' strengths, in creating a culture that is enriched by diverse, authentic contribution, locations are created in which students with learning disabilities in literate modes can become comfortable with their abilities in other modes, and to value their own as well as others' unique strengths and passions.

Making it Happen

Schools that hope to support the emergence of diverse voices and strengths will need to announce systemic and cultural change. Recognizing and articulating the problem is a necessary first step. Then, a collaborative approach to solution-finding will also be necessary. Current practice will need examination with regard to its alignment with beliefs, and analysis for marginalizing attitudes and actions will be required. While not neglecting literacy development, schools intent upon creating an inclusive, multimodal culture will need to step back from the dominant horizon of literacy acquisition to the more inclusive horizon of developing diverse

communication practices and tools. A community-based project format absorbing significant portions of the day in cooperative, multimedia projects may be the result.

The contextualizing culture has not yet accepted this as a valid curricular approach for the elementary school. Though multiple meaning-making systems are apparent all around us—digitized movement and music, internet non-print visuals, dance, and drama—policies dictate that the effectiveness of elementary education continues to be measured by abilities of students to read, write, and calculate. Therefore, schools that hope to announce change will need to connect deeply with the larger community in the struggle over what matters in addressing this broader horizon. As announced on their website, "Dickens staff and parents wholeheartedly advocate on behalf of our school to the Vancouver School Board so that the 'Dickens philosophy' can be maintained and strengthened for our neighbourhood students and for parents..." (Charles Dickens Elementary, 2005). Participatory projects appear to be one location through which community members come to look on each other as being uniquely valuable; they begin to trust their voices and contribute them authentically to community formation. In such an environment people with diverse dis/abilities, including people with dyslexia, will find room for engaging in the collective evolution of culture and knowledge through mutual transformation. Once established as a norm in the school, perhaps such expectation will transfer to the wider culture.

Announcing community-wide projects can facilitate change in thinking. Organized communities can create space for reworking policies to more effectively meet diverse needs. Ultimately, however, the individual within that system must also

be able to articulate and act upon beliefs about the value of diversity. The transformation of individual teachers within the system is the subject of the next chapter.

Commonplace Book: July 6, 2004

Decentralized Control

Social insects--ants, bees, termites, and wasps--provide us with a powerful metaphor to create decentralized problem-solving systems composed of simple interacting, and often mobile, agents. The emergent collective intelligence of social insects, swarm intelligence, lies not in complex individual capabilities but rather in networks of interactions that exist among individuals and between individuals and their environment. The daily problems solved by a social insect colony include finding food, ...spreading alarm, etc. Many of those problems have counterparts in engineering and computer science (Bonabeau, et al, 1999).

"I have often said that I want to change the world and I want to change school practices that I find demeaning or marginalizing. I see the power imbalances of school and I wish to re-create the practices. However, I feel that at times my lenses as a teacher cloud my vision..." (Kong, 2004, p. 133).

Four characteristics of successful teachers in multi-cultural classrooms are:

1. Know and appreciate your own culture.
2. Have a variety of experiences in cultures "different" than your own.
3. Embrace ambiguity and be open to receiving new ideas and experiences.
4. Practice resourcefulness and creativity.

(Dr. Carolyn Kenny, SFU, EDPR 390, June 2000.)

Telling Tales: Maureen's Commonplace Book

My first encounter with Maureen is on a warm July day, at the beginning of a ten-day intensive course, when she walks into my class. The course is entitled *Addressing Student Differences*. As we sit around the table, Maureen tells us that she has come to learn strategies for working with Jenny, a girl whose dyspraxia has affected her ability to speak. She has been coming to the resource room for several years and her academic progress has been good. However, though her speech is improving, much of what she says is still unintelligible. Maureen is wondering how she can work with Jenny's therapist, parents, teacher and classmates to help Jenny communicate.

Later that morning, as Maureen begins to write about Jenny, she describes her lack of willingness to take risks in attempting speech, her marginalization due to this lack of speech, and Maureen's own frustration at having spent years seeing almost no progress in Jenny's vocalization. She is concerned that Jenny is not working hard enough, that her parents do not practice with her the way they should, and that the speech therapist will not give her more time because she is so resistant to remediation. Later that evening I note that nowhere in this first story does Maureen write about Jenny, the girl. I do not know whether Jenny is musical or athletic, whether she reads interesting books, whether she plays video games. Everything she writes is referenced to what Jenny is NOT able or willing to do.

The overall purpose of this summer course is to gain, through reading and responding to autobiographies, an "insider's perspective" regarding the lived experience of people pathologized as having special needs. I want these teachers to gain an ability to see their students as more than people with disabilities, to develop an understanding of the relationship between perception and judgment, a habit of attentiveness to the humanity of the child, the moral space to take an extended look—and, only after seeing more, to make pedagogical decisions.

This is no easy task. As Parlett states (1991, p. 213), "Everyday professional practice includes much that has been overlearned, skills and perceptual judgments that have become habitual, and procedures that have been totally integrated into people's 'automatic' repertoires." As teachers, we have become accustomed to the intense speed of the classroom. Judgments are made quickly, in the interests of behavior management and instructional efficiency. Seldom in the course of the day is there opportunity for protracted assessment, reflection, and decisionmaking. To a great degree, many of us have come to rely on our tacit knowledge of children, of learning processes, and of instructional strategies rather than thoughtfully attending to the individuality of the child. In the rapidfire cycle of perception-judgment-teach-perception-judgment-teach we have lost the understanding that our perceptions and, therefore, our unexamined judgments about appropriate instruction are as

much a product of us as of the child. Accustomed to identifying deficiencies, we may tend to see, first, the pathology and make instructional decisions based upon it, using strategies proven effective with others, before we know the child in his or her complexity.

It is my goal, in the next two weeks, to develop our attentiveness. We begin by reading Temple Grandin's autobiography, *Thinking in Pictures: and other reports of my life with autism* (1995). A successful businesswoman and professor of animal science at the University of Colorado, Grandin has used her autistic giftedness to become the world's leading designer of animal handling facilities. As we read, we record our responses in a commonplace book (Sumara, 1996). Extrapolated from an idea in Ondaatje's (1992) *The English Patient*, the commonplace book represents an intertextual location (Pinar et al., 1996, p.436) that contains, in addition to our reading responses, poetry that is significant to us, stories of our past that come to mind as we read, ticket stubs from plays we have attended, letters from friends. We find connections among these artifacts and begin to represent these connections through writing, drawing, and talking, creating new text that develops within the relations among the words, thoughts, and experiences.

Maureen, more than most of the students, is enthralled by the notion that a person with autism can lead an independent, highly productive life. Writing in hyperbole, she expresses her surprise that Grandin considers autism

a gift that has facilitated her financial and academic success. It has never occurred to her that apparent disabilities have positive potential. Connecting this with Jenny, she wonders what strengths she has developed as a result of her lack of speech. On reflection, she fastens into her commonplace book a poem that she wrote many years before: Writing as a single mother in a foreign country with three small children, she expresses in this poem her frustration at arriving home and finding no vegetables other than a lone, wilted carrot. She imagines the dismay on her own mother's face if she were to know the state of this kitchen. She expresses her sense of unpreparedness for a life so dissimilar to her upbringing, of her difference from the families in her neighborhood, of her lack of voice in dealing with her daughters' teachers who cannot seem to empathize with her situation. This bit of poetry explicates her frustrations at never being able to meet others' expectations of her and of her consequent withdrawal. She now connects these yellowed lines with her description of Jenny and constructs parallels between her own marginalization years ago and Jenny's separateness now. Perhaps she, too, is overwhelmed by the demands being placed on her. Perhaps she, too, simply wants to be accepted for who she is. Somewhere in this process receptivity develops, openness to learn about this child beyond the label so prominent in her file.

CHAPTER FIVE

Commitment to Individual Authenticity

As described in the previous chapter, schools and communities can do much to establish educative contexts that develop the distinct abilities of people with dyslexia. When educators collectively step back from the dominant horizon of literacy development to a more inclusive horizon that scaffolds the development of diverse communicative tools and modes, an environment is created in which authenticity in representational and interpretive practice can be valued and nurtured. While such contexts are communally derived, the scaffolding of students into full participation in this culture rests, to a great degree, with individual teachers who work alongside their pupils, attending to their strengths, and designing promotive learning experiences in relation to those abilities. Even in structured, project-based environments, it is the classroom teacher who brings information about particular students to the collaborative planning process. Much of capable teacher practice is tacit, reflexive rather than reflective action, determined within a seemingly instinctive choreography that responds, in the moment, to students and situations. If teachers are to scaffold student participation in the community-in-the-making, they must sense, perceive, judge, and act quickly and promotively. In this chapter, I hope to explore possibilities for interrupting the transparency and speed of this sensation-perception-

judgment-action cycle through the infusion of practices of attentiveness that will assist teachers in understanding the uniqueness of children, their perceptions of the world, and their educational needs and abilities. Only when this happens will the conditions described in the previous chapters be met.

The Importance of Cognitive Differences

For the purposes of this study, dyslexia is defined as involving not only difficulty with reading, but also an individual experience of the world accompanied by preferences for alternate modes of interpretation and communication. Stephen J. Cannell (1999) describes it well and I quote him again: "Most dyslexics are good at right-brain, abstract thought and that's...my strong suit....I'm very visual." Other writers concur, describing dyslexia as a type of gift involving aural and visual processing (Davis, 1994; Schmitt, 1994). Teachers of children with dyslexia then, need to go beyond personal preferences and academic demands to become attentive to what Carspecken (1996) characterizes as the "primordial" experience of the world (p.19) that influences children's learning. I believe that only then will we become open to designing programs that develop the unique strengths of these and other students.

There can be no doubt that my curiosity regarding the holistic experiences of children with learning disabilities began when my eldest daughter first spoke of sitting in biology class and "watching the air" whenever she felt bored. This was not some distant writer who might or might not be telling the truth; this was not a stranger diagnosed with an exotic disorder. This was my daughter. I had lived in the same

household as she, eaten at the same table, taught her the habits of society, read her stories, put her to bed—for sixteen years. Yes, it had been a very difficult decade and a half. Still, I had thought that I knew her. And here she was, talking to me about swirling light that looked like snow, and about watching the air fall before it began to rain. I was dumbfounded.

At first, I limited this difference to the sensations gathered by my daughter and other autistic spectrum children. I went about changing the norms of our household to better suit her needs for solitude, for soft light, for order. Because I found it so difficult, this preoccupied me for quite some time. Eventually, however, I began to think about how this difference in sensation impacted Marissa's total being, her holistic interaction with life, her emerging cognition through the years as her perceptions informed memory and processing. From there I began to extrapolate to the many children I had taught over the years. How many had sensed our space in markedly different ways than I had? How many had found it difficult to read because the light was too bright or too dull? How many had been unable to sit because the environment was too noisy? How many had had a markedly different experience in the classroom than I thought they had had?

I began to wonder if success in school were very much a product of having an experiential profile similar to the teachers'. And, if this were the case, then it could be that the people who became teachers, generally those who met with success in school, might perpetuate the dominance of said profile. If such a situation existed, then students experiencing the world significantly outside of that profile would not likely succeed. The physical or cultural environment alone might prove rather challenging

in being either too stimulating or too enervating. Should Marissa become a teacher, for example, she would enforce a much quieter, less mobile classroom than I design. Perhaps children like her would be privileged in that setting. Given her difficulties in large groups, however, she is unlikely to become a teacher. As it stands, most of her public school teachers were more tolerant of noise than she; most created brilliantly decorated spaces that confused her; most allowed a great deal of movement; most were not able to "handle" her.

But there were exceptions: Myra was a very quiet, orderly woman. She taught in conversational tones and was very organized and predictable in her assignments. Her "Shape of the Day" always matched the year's posted timetable; her previews and overviews were prescriptively followed; her duo-tangs were color-coded! She could not understand the concerns that I and other teachers had about Marissa. "Marissa is a good student," she would say, "and she is learning to get along with others. Stop worrying." That year, for the first time, Marissa learned mathematics. She also learned systems for organizing her work and keeping track of long-term assignments. At the end of each day she was peaceful and communicative. In June, her report card showed excellent marks.

Given Marissa's success in her class, three years later I requested Myra as my younger daughter's fifth grade teacher. Unlike Marissa, Kathryn found the year "boring." Always the social being, she was not "allowed to talk." School was predictable, "no fun."

In later years, Myra became a learning assistance teacher. Her quiet orderliness is proving to be highly successful with students who struggle. She does not wish to go back to classroom teaching.

I do not believe that Myra consciously worked at seeing something in Marissa that I could not see. She never spoke of any sort of struggle in helping Marissa learn. She was, it seemed, genuinely puzzled by my stories of Marissa's troubles in earlier grades and of our conflicts at home. Rather, I believe that Myra operated on tacit knowledge based on her holistic experience of the world. This tacit knowledge was different from others who worked with Marissa because Myra's experience of the world was different. Hence, the classroom she enacted was different from those enacted by others.

Still, both Myra and I are called upon to teach many different types of students, including those who have difficulty reading. Insisting that they all learn within environments that give comfort to us, I believe, is counterproductive to a healthy society. But how can I work with my students to create a learning environment that is helpful to all of them? How can I possibly know the types of holistic experiences they will have in the environments we create? How can I become attentive to the worlds in which they walk and begin to understand the learning environment as they sense and perceive it? How can I design learning experiences that help me to know them, their perceptions, and their preferred representational and interpretive practices?

Attentiveness to the Other

The Social Construction of Attentiveness

It is my experience of knowing Marissa that has caused me to question most judgments that I make about students and, for that matter, about myself. Eight years after her diagnosis with Asperger's, I still catch myself attempting to make decisions for Marissa, rather than trusting that her sense of things will guide her to make decisions that are beneficial both to her and to the community. It is as though I lack knowledge of the complete fabric of her life in relation to the world as a whole. Invariably, my supposedly well-informed suggestions are based on my idiosyncratic, incomplete experience and are, therefore, more likely to cause chaos than bring order.

From the data I have gathered (Wiebe, 1998), I am assured that Marissa experiences the world in ways that are significantly different from my mine. Her hypersensitivity to the environment has been apparent from birth. Because, as with all complex systems, her development is sensitively dependent upon initiating conditions, it has impacted her ability to process language, and as a consequence, the formation of her personality and the mutually specifying formation of cognition and perception (Hoffman, 2000). And that heightened experience, ontogenetic in nature, has influenced the type of world she has enacted. I see this in her relationships. When her friends come to our house, there is no gaggle of laughter and gossip; they do not listen to loud music or scream in the hottub as my younger daughter and her friends do. They never have. Rather, they sit quietly in the dimly lit livingroom, discussing literature or various historical events. When they go to movies, they come directly

home. Their jobs involve solitude: a nighttime position stocking grocery shelves, a librarian in training.

When Varela speaks of "enaction" (1991), he assumes an indissoluble connection between the evolving world and our human experience of that world. He argues that we bring forth our world in our perception of it; at the same time, the world brings forth the perceiving us. There is no separation, only interaction, relationship, mutuality. To argue causality is futile as there is no means by which we can distinguish the world we perceive from the existential world that influences the formation of our perception. They are fully interactive and constitutive.

The world as I know it, then, is the product of ongoing relations involving my ontogenetic experiential paradigm interacting with the physical and social environment. To argue that Marissa's world is the same as mine is, then, vain. The world in which she lives brings her forth and she continues to bring forth the world in which she lives. Yet each of us is immanent to the world of the other. There can be no division. The individual experience of that world, however, remains idiosyncratic and hidden. Only through events of mutual interpretation do we glimpse the experience of the other. Borrowing from Ondaatje (1992), via Sumara (1996), I have come to call such intertextual events the common place.

If I am to teach my students well, my classroom, like my home, must become a common place where various experiences of the world are made apparent, understood, honored, and developed.

The Disciplined Construction of Attentiveness

Prior to my discoveries about Marissa, much of my teaching was based upon tacit knowledge, my embodied, unexamined way of being. Assuming that everyone's experience of circumstances was similar to mine, if their actions were significantly different I assumed it was because they had faulty judgment. For example, when Marissa shrieked that the family gathering was too noisy and that she was, therefore, leaving, I would insist that she stay. I assumed that she was being obstreperous. In my opinion, the room was relatively quiet. After I learned that her perceptual experience was significantly different from mine, however, I slowly came to the adjunct understanding that her judgment was sound; her behaviors were reasonable given her experience of the world.

And so I have come to question my interpretation of others' actions. I have found it necessary, in order to gather further information, to create a space between my perception of my students and the judgments I make about them. As an educator, I believe this drive toward attentiveness to be an issue of morality: I am called to teach all children to the best of my ability and in order to do that I must know them. This requires an act of will that affects my interactions both with children and with society as a whole. I therefore conclude that, while my initial realization of a need for attentiveness was socially engendered through my relationship with Marissa and the interpretive practices that accompanied that realization, this subsequent, disciplined halting of judgment is a chosen, moral space, a conscious—and often difficult—decision in keeping with Taylor's request for a stepping back from a personal horizon of significance to make room for attention to the value of the other.

With discipline, this moral space can become integral to an educator's belief system; it can become tacit. The following journal excerpt may serve to illustrate:

February 21...

...the other day I listened to myself talking with teachers about addressing "breadth and depth" of subject matter. The words rolled easily off my tongue—tacit knowledge through which I have referenced my long-term planning for many years. Even as I continued talking, I began to think about students with learning disabilities, my beliefs about distributed cognition and the important contribution that struggling readers who are otherwise abled make to the learning community. My thoughts moved to Marissa who explores everything in depth and in isolation first, making broader connections only after a focused topic is thoroughly understood. It occurred to me that I should examine whether my long-term planning for breadth and depth was consistent with my understandings of communal giftedness. I reread what I had written in my thesis:

> Breadth and depth of knowledge are notions connected with the rationalist ideal of 'the educated citizen.' Created in classical times by the philosophers of Athens, it was enshrined in the schools that educated the noblemen of the British Empire. Philosophers such as Peters (1973) and Scheffler (1995) have promulgated it in more recent days. This position argues for a concept of education that is normative with

defensible criteria based not in lived experience but in a disembodied, decontextualized ideal.

Underlying this position are particular epistemological values. Peters, for example, dichotomizes between instrumental knowledge and educational knowledge, believing that the learning of a particular skill for the purposes of work cannot rightly be called educational because it relies on external rather than internal motivation (1973, p. 84). In his mind, the educated person pursues learning and discourse because they are enjoyable and he or she is drawn to them as a way of life. Typically, he argues, those subjects with the most intrinsic value have the least instrumental value (p. 88).

But perhaps this view represents a bias against people pathologized as learning disabled—those who are dyslexic, autistic, attention 'deficient'—whose passionate learning pursuits often take an instrumental route (Grandin, 1995; Schmitt, 1994; Williams, 1995). Tending to learn the abstract by means of the concrete—by building, or calculating, or drawing—with an emphasis on situated product rather than on intrinsic reward, many of their school experiences are considered to be of lesser educational value than those deemed more 'academic' (Wiebe, 1998)...

...or, worse, perhaps their learning is compromised because teachers, on perceiving their particular disabilities, make judgments based on these biases rather than upon knowledge of the child gained through informed attentiveness.

In examining the underpinnings of my casual reference to "breadth and depth," I have learned that these educational ideals form much of the so-called intuitive knowledge that I bring to teaching practice and that, at the same time, they may interfere with my struggle to become more attentive. I strive to instill in my students disciplinary breadth and attempt to scaffold habits of learning that are intrinsically rewarding and motivating. These are honorable goals. However, in coming to me as received values built upon social consensus, these goals must be examined with regard to their potential for privileging certain learners over others. In attending to the particular learning needs of those children who perseverate on particular subject areas, or who are product oriented, or who prefer to dwell on the spatial rather than the conceptual, I must heed Parlett's (1991) warning that "the emergence of a single image or definition reduces complexity" (p. 229). It is very easy for me to justify spending great amounts of time scaffolding a savant child toward breadth, or a dyslexic child toward linearity, or a hyperactive child toward stillness. However, as I become attentive to the idiosyncratic complexity inherent in each person and to the collective complexity necessary to resilient social systems,

those decisions become much more difficult. No longer intent upon the "normalization" of behaviors, my focus shifts to the nurture of particular characteristics that make each person unique. I become attentive to the emergence of diverse strengths within the context of community.

As I put these thoughts into language, as I reflect, rehearse, and practice, I gradually learn to see what I could not see before. I believe this to be bell hooks' (1994) praxis, "thinking and acting upon the world in order to change it." It is hard work but necessary if I hope to overcome received judgments about others and about myself.

Constructing Habits of Attentiveness

A beginning.

Habits of attentiveness may be born within a socially effected interruption in consciousness; they may continue to grow through reflective practice; in order for them to become entrenched in the classroom, however, particular interpretive strategies are required. Marie Clay (1993) presented a potential breakthrough with the issuance of her *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement.* Through a structured analysis of the errors and self-initiated corrections that children make while oral reading, teachers learn to hypothesize with regard to the linguistic patterns that inform children's construction of meaning from text. They are, then, better able to scaffold the child toward using a balanced system of strategies to solve their own

reading problems. Instruction becomes more effective as teachers better plan their personalized responses to individual students' holistic experience of reading.

Most importantly, through the analysis of Clay's "running record of oral reading behavior," teachers learn that students come to their schoolwork with markedly different semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic knowledge, as well as with varying strategies for accessing and synthesizing that knowledge. And so, through the use of running records, teachers become more attentive to students' individual and changing patterns of textual processing. Over time, some teachers find that this increased information deepens their understanding of the manner in which literacy infuses human cognition. This knowledge, which incorporates a growing understanding of the constitutive nature of literacy within their own cognitive processes, appears to be catalytic to the creation of learning experiences that invite students' legitimate participation in a community of literate practice. As a consequence, literacy learning becomes contextualized, meaningful, and students progress more rapidly than they did with decontextualized methodologies. At this point, I would argue, understanding of reading has become embodied, tacit. Rather than consciously including reading in their students' lives, they simply enact, with their students, lives that include reading.

I call the *Observation Survey* a *potential* breakthrough because practice is required before many teachers use it as deeply as they might. At first, submitting to the minimum expectations of policies that require instrumental data, they may consider only the accuracy of reading against the difficulty of the text. Their interest lies in the rate at which the child progresses through "levels" of text. With practice

and coaching, teachers extend their attention to gathering, beyond scores that reflect the child's linear progress, information about the engagement of the child while interacting with the text. This, I believe, is the beginning of moral attentiveness—thinking not about the child's performance against preestablished standards but attending, rather, to the quality of each child's holistic experience.

For many of the teachers with whom I have worked, this understanding has seemed revolutionary to their teaching. Discovering that children are idiosyncratic in their experience of text has led them to the possibility that children are also idiosyncratic in their experience of the world. It has invited them to question the forms of teaching that they have taken for granted prior to this learning: Can they have been teaching effectively knowing so little about their students? Could other students have learned to read if they had been taught within the contextualized settings these teachers now create?

For teachers, the thoughtful implementation of the running record has caused the same sort of interruption of assumptions that my experiences with Marissa have created within me: a questioning of the tacit knowledge that we bring to our work. In halting temporarily the implicit cycle of perceiving, judging, and responding we soon come to see a need for additional practices of attentiveness, practices that inform us more deeply about children's processes of knowing and lead us to change the environments in which they learn, environments that include our own interactions with them.

Practices of Attentiveness.

Learning to attend, while significant for everyone in relational settings, is particularly important for educators. Working quickly with students in situations that require continual judgments about learning and teaching, teachers are required to make effective decisions rapidly and continually. Often, the rapidity required leads to "efficient" judgments that are momentarily expedient rather than serving the long-term interests of the child and, therefore, the community. Many of my judgments about students are built on unexamined, dehumanized assumptions; subsequent instructional decisions, then, are based on implicit information.

Within a homogeneous population, it might be said that the presumed is well informed enough to support salutary judgments—instructional decisions made are at least relatively helpful as the motivations and responses of students evolve within an experience similar to the teacher's. When, however, there are significant differences in the experience of the child, whether because of ontogenetic or cultural differences, the unconscious judgments of the teacher may not be as well informed or helpful. It is necessary, then, to make decisions with conscious judgment. But how are these to be made thoughtfully within the rapid exchange of the classroom? How are educators to infuse "full engagement" (Buber, 1970) into that space between sensation and perception, allowing them to see the child differently than unexamined judgment would allow?

Schön (1987) calls for reflection-in-action—a breaking of the action in order to think about that action—followed by reflection with a more knowledgeable other upon the reflection-in-action, believing that this type of learning will gradually impact

memory, bringing about change in the unconsciously-informed action through an altered disposition of thoughtfulness. Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2000, p. 24) observe that the difficulty of this type of "reflective practice," especially for new teachers, is in attempting to both act and monitor that action simultaneously.

What teachers need are particular, embodied practices that bring this sort of thoughtfulness into the everyday action of teaching. Only through the decision to construct an environment of conscious observation will teachers become able to make better-informed judgments about children. As educators, such practices are those actions of being that allow us to center our attention, from many perspectives, on individual children, while continuing to recognize the interplay of mutually specifying relations active within the learning community. Our purpose is to reveal and invite the formation of relations both within the classroom and in our lives beyond school walls. Concerned not only with children's academic learning, many-layered approaches illuminate preferences, pasts, and diverse perceptions of the world. This said, it must be noted that there is a difference between adding such practices to one's life and making them a way of life. The former is, merely, another methodology that one may forget to operationalize. The latter, however, implies that they become an expectation; they are immanent to relationships and constitutive of conversations; they imply "being prepared to have the order of one's life rearranged" (Sumara, 1996, p. 9). If we are to truly understand children, we must be prepared to change, infusing our days with interpretation. Such practices, then, imply the active development of an attentive disposition. In the busyness of day-to-day teaching, how do we find location for this type of learning?

Practices of Attentiveness in Daily Life

We begin, I believe, by adopting a learning stance in relation to the people closest to us, the initiating stance characterized by Taylor as one of valuing authenticity and wanting to understand the other. This curiosity brings about an active selection, a conscious enactment of the interpretive location. Consider, for example, the experience of Beth with her son Kenneth who has multiple learning disabilities, including dyslexia. He has a few fixations, one of which is airplane technology. For her, this is an irritation because as a businesswoman she is forced to spend a great deal of time flying. She is fearful during flight and does not want to talk about it when she gets home. She sees his fixation as something she wants to extinguish so that they can talk about more important things: success in school and making friends. She routinely turns their conversations from airplanes to the neighborhood children, making suggestions to him as to what he can do in order to build relationships. He is not interested. He wants to know what kind of plane she has been on, where she landed, the configurations of the engines on the wings, where she sat. What she seems not to understand is that the boy's interest in flight provides them with the potential for an interpretive location. By opening up a discussion with Kenneth about flying, she could announce an opportunity for him to share his knowledge, his own experiences with flying, and his attempts at using language. She could compare her own experiences with his, thus coming to know more clearly his idiosyncratic experience of the world. He, in turn, would have opportunity to learn more about her. The social relationships she so badly wants for him could begin with her. Through the

caring excavation of a single area of passion approached from the child's point of view, adults and children can come to know one another more deeply.

This is seen in the growing receptivity of Maureen to her student, Jenny. Rather than considering this child only through the lens of her own hopes and expectations, Maureen is beginning to look at her through the lens of observation and desire to know. For it is in the desire to know, rather than merely to react and to control that teachers find the motivation to develop attentiveness.

Reading Response as Attentive Practice

In the classroom, adopting a learning stance with regard to our students may involve more than the selection and enactment of randomly arising interpretive opportunities. We may have to construct such locations explicitly. Reading together, and responding to that reading by connecting to past experience, provides another opening for coming to know differently.

A story from my journal.

As I enter this fifth grade classroom, I find myself noticing the more salient differences. One student has bandages over one eye; two others are seated apart from the others, near the front; several students represent cultural minorities; there is an equal distribution of girls and boys. As the students begin to settle into their chairs, I listen to their chatter and their laughter, noting that it is all very similar to the many classrooms I have entered before.

I have been invited into this classroom to help with reading assessment. The teacher and I listen to each child read, take a running record, discuss with each child the strategies that he or she is using in solving reading problems, and leave each of them with a response assignment. Though on entering the classroom I notice superficialities, deeper differences gradually surface: Some of these children are struggling with the English language itself; others are battling the mysteries of print; the child with the bandage is an able, insightful reader; another has been pathologized as hyperactive; some are able to take the simple story and construct the inferences that allow them to apply the message to their own lives while still others scarcely pick out the details; some are bold in reading to me, a stranger, while others hesitate. In response, some write paragraphs, others itemize events; some draw stick figures, others create elaborate drawings; one makes a chart, several make mind maps and webs; one leaves the page blank because she cannot find her glasses. And we have just begun. Though we have learned a great deal, during discussion the teacher points out that we still know nothing about these students' personal interests, their attitudes and perceptions, their families, their passions.

On the second day, the teacher and I hope to use reading response strategies to illuminate difference, to announce locations in which we might begin seeing students beyond their approaches to literacy. The story we read aloud is a simple fairytale set in China. Written by Kenneth Smith (1991),

"The Magic Princess" recounts how the young daughter of an emperor sets out to protect a precious cherry tree by building a wall around it. Over the years, as her concurrent love and anxiety about the tree's welfare grow, she orders the wall to be built ever higher. Eventually, this wall of protection cuts off sun and rain, and the tree dies, leaving the princess with only a handful of fruit. Realizing the folly of her overprotectiveness, the princess plants the seeds of the final cherries, hoping they will grow. She vehemently promises that there will be no more walls.

After the students have listened to the story and we have discussed it enough so that all seem to have comprehended the events, we begin to get at the theme of the dangers of being overprotected. The teacher and I invite response. Silence testifies to the students' confusion. We prompt again, with a slight shift in focus. This time the stories begin to come: It turns out that, while few of them have felt restricted by protection, many of them have felt the need to protect. They chat with each other about their connections, scratch their ideas onto one side of their papers, discuss these first thoughts with a friend, and then begin to draft a response. Later, some of them relate their stories, recorded either in print or graphics, to the class. Colin, who could not read the story independently and who subsequently has drawn rather than written his story, tells about the mint-condition first-edition comic collection he is building. He cannot afford classics so he is calculating which new ones might be valuable

in the future, purchasing them at first issue prices, storing them in special cases, and never reading them. The teacher, knowing that Colin is affected by dyslexia, is surprised to hear about his interest in any reading material; she makes a note to buy comic books for the classroom library. We learn from Tanjeet that she received a special doll from her grandmother who has since died. She feels the threat of younger sisters who want to play with this special toy. This reminds Dallen, who has had trouble coming up with an idea, of a stuffed bear he received for this first birthday. Sonja tells the class about her guinea pig, and her family's anger when she hit the family dog for having nipped this precious pet. One by one, the stories emerge...their stories of the things they value, the efforts they go to protect them, the intricacies of family. The murmurs begin: "I have a toy like that, too; my brothers are always getting into my stuff; you have THAT comic; can I see you hockey cards some time? A few of them tell how their overprotectiveness has cost them the joy of the item itself. Kevin had a fish that he hid in a closet to protect it from his cat. It died, he thinks, for lack of sunlight and friendship. Kyle writes that his love of skateboarding is dying because his protective mother will not let him go alone to the skateboard park. A classmate invites him to use his ramp.

It is a beginning. Before our time is up, we are catching glimpses of who we are beyond our obvious abilities and disabilities. The skateboarder, Kyle, is more than the "A.D.D. kid" who must sit near the front of the class. Sonja, long

the girl who misses class for doctors' appointments, is suddenly a child who loves and cares for animals. Tanjeet, like many other children of the diverse cultures represented in the class, has special connections with the memory of her grandmother. And they know that I once attended seventh grade in this same classroom, and that my father attended school here some seventy years before. We are beginning to form humanizing connections.

After class, the teacher and I begin to reflect on what has happened. We talk about the children, not as "given objects with certain properties, but persons about whom and with whom we must decide how to live our lives...This is the sphere of practical understanding, the sphere of living our lives together with children and thoughtfully asking after what is best for them and for us..." (Jardine, 1988, p. 185). As we plan for upcoming lessons, we consider the representational preferences, personality traits, and complexity of relationships that are beginning to become apparent.

Ongoing Practices of Interpretation

As we attend to the everyday conversations and events in the lives of children, and as we create locations, such as those afforded through responsive reading, that invite receptivity, we begin to see the humanity of our students, and they begin to see us as more than teachers. "Narratability means that events and lives are affirmed as being worth telling and thus worth living. Being narratable implies value and attributes reality" (Frank, 2002). Taylor's call for the initiating stance of equal value

has been operationalized through reading response, one of the most valuable tools of the attentive teacher. In this commonplace location, interests as well as representational preferences are revealed and validated.

In order for that knowledge to become educationally useful, however, further mediating intertextual practice is required. We need to make our own sense of things through narrative writing, ongoing conversation, drawing, journaling, painting, sculpting, creating music. As we do so, we become attentive to our own processes of learning and to the lived implications of the knowledge we have gained. No longer content with acting upon received knowledge, we realize that we are able to make our own meaning about teaching and learning, and that these processes are deeply personal and embedded. As we develop our own voice we, in turn, begin to lead children through such experiences and to attend, in the interest of informing ourselves, to their unique representational and interpretive preferences and their idiosyncratic responses.

Through multimodal intertextual practices that mediate reflection-upon-action, teachers begin to experience the excitement of creative engagement. Like the artist who represents and enacts life using a brush, or an instrument, or a series of movements, the teacher represents and enacts life using particular strategies. These become the tools by which knowledge comes to be, rather than the knowledge itself. As teachers explore their own preferences in representing the changes they are noticing in their students and in themselves in relation to the changes they are enacting in the environment, they become able to walk inside of their knowledge and to draw from the children to impact that knowledge.

Speaking personally, I find that keeping a commonplace book creates links among observations of students, professional and theoretical readings, lived experience outside of school, and multiple conversations. By recording snippets of readings and of life and then writing about the connections among them and existing knowledge, new ideas form, imagination is activated, and I become able to look at students, teachers, and situations in unexpected ways. Writing allows me to step back, to examine experience, to think about things rather than to merely live through them. Writing also implants new ideas more fully than simply pondering them, as I am able to go back and review my thoughts about teaching, reinterpret them in light of new experiences and apply them in new ways in new circumstances. Writing allows the sharing of ideas with other people, the gaining of perspective afforded by their responses. In addition, it provides a viewpoint along the trail of experience—a larger perspective, a look backward, a look forward, a place for conversation.

But writing is only one among many practices that embody attentiveness. Other teachers prefer to sketch as they process classroom experiences. One friend scratches cartoons throughout the day, recording the facial expressions and gestures of students, interpreting the images on the walls in relation to student learning, and recording bytes of conversations in the customary "bubbles." Later, he revisits these events on his own and with his students, gathering and analyzing their responses to classroom instruction and events, and rethinking his lesson planning in light of that knowledge. Still another revisits her teaching through poetry. Using metaphor, rhythm, and stanza, she focuses on individual student responses to the events of the day, recalling details and reconsidering her instructional practices in relation to them.

People unacquainted with teaching and with children might wonder why such locations of interpretation are necessary. Surely, if one wishes to become more attentive to others, one should be able to do it without the conscious struggle implicit in focused analysis.

I believe we must accept that changing one's responses to students, in the moment, is extremely difficult. It requires a complete reworking of premises as well as of habits. It requires a disciplined denial of automatic response and a rigorous substitution of conscious decisionmaking during many daily interactions.

So, when I think of "discipline" in learning to see differently, I think in terms of continually infusing my life with practices that focus my attention on the experiences of others as revealed within the everyday event, engaging in responsive activity with other teachers and with students as well as with members of my own family, and setting aside the time to engage in interpretive practices. What is essential to this work is the conscious enactment of intertextual locations: Only as Beth and I talk about Kenneth over the course of several months do we begin to see him differently; only as I explore my relationship with Marissa in the context of a writing community do I become attentive to her perceptual paradigm; only as we write and confer with and about the children in the sixth grade classroom, do the teacher and I begin to attend to individual student preferences that remain otherwise obscure.

The personal determination to walk more thoughtfully in that space between perception and judgment is formed within contextualizing social relations. This leads me to conclude that neither the social context nor my individual choice is sufficient in the cultivation of an attentive disposition. It takes my full participation within the

contextualizing support of a community of practice to enact an environment of receptivity.

And so we return to the importance of participation in the community-in-the-making. The teacher cannot act in isolation, any more than the community as a whole can somehow act without the individual teacher. The two are immanent. Attentiveness, then, while individually enacted, is necessarily part of a wider educative process.

Charles Taylor concurs, urging us as a society to step back from our personal horizons of significance to a broader horizon in which we are afforded the distance to value the position and beliefs of the other, to become attentive and committed to their authenticity as well as to our own, and within subsequent discussions, to come to a merging of experience as we impact each other. As individual teachers, it is necessary for us to approach individual students, including those affected by dyslexia, with an initiating stance of equal value—each student's primordial experience of the world is as valid as every other student's. Each child has the capacity to enrich the community if only we will attend to their authentic gifts and make room for them to contribute idiosyncratically to the community-in-the-making. But this will require decentralized loci of discussion—for me, I must write about the students I am having trouble understanding. I must talk with them and about them; conversations clarify my understanding of how their unique gifts might be scaffolded toward contribution.

Making a Difference in the Classroom

As practices of attentiveness begin to inform instructional decisionmaking, the entire fabric of relations within the classroom may change. Consider, for example, various approaches to the annual Science Fair. Traditionally, individuals or pairs of students research a topic and construct a problem to be explored. They work in isolation, in competition with their classmates, to complete the project and, hopefully, to earn a spot in the regional or national Science Fairs. Recently, however, our local Science Fair committee decided to include a Classroom Investigation category. This opens the door for a classroom community to explore ideas and submit findings. Organizing the group through a single project, the classroom teacher does not need to incorporate internal competition; rather, he or she can configure the group as a community, drawing upon individual preferences in modes of interpretation and representation.

Following study and discussion about participatory communities, one staff member decides to do just that. Prior to beginning a collective scientific investigation, the class spends several months engaging in a series of lessons and discussions regarding individual giftedness and community participation. As they complete tasks cooperatively in their various subject areas, students engage in "group processing" (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), talking about themselves and each other, identifying particular preferences and strengths that they bring, or might bring, to this community. By the end of the first term, each student consciously identifies her- or himself as embodying at least one skill or characteristic needed by the whole class. Some examples are "an internet expert," "a coloring expert," "an encouragement

expert," "an editing expert," and many more. The responsibility of each person is to share his or her expertise, teaching others to do what he or she is already able to do. With thoughtful facilitation by the teacher, the class has developed a participatory culture of contributing to and drawing upon the authentic expertise of others when engaged in their work.

Joshua, a child who struggles with literacy, has been identified as a "power expert," because he has worked with his father on many mechanical projects. Emma, also a struggling reader and usually very quiet, shyly suggests that she is very good at cleaning up, and that she really likes putting things away and wiping up glue and paint. The class identifies her as "the mess expert." The teacher notes this with interest. Emma has many strengths including an ability to draw. She lacks confidence, however, and has chosen something that can be contributed safely, as adjunct to the academic work. While this is a valuable contribution, silently the teacher makes the decision to work with Emma in developing her ability to participate during group activities. She has done this throughout the fall, quietly assessing students for particular preferences in mode of learning and representing, identifying and building cultural tools.

With this knowledge in mind and a collaborative culture in place, the teacher believes the class is ready to approach Science Fair. She constructs heterogeneous cooperative groups and begins a study of Simple Machines. Out of this study, each group designs an experiment to explore one aspect of the class-developed global question related to force and motion: "What is friction?" They share their simple research designs with the class, perfecting them through a collaborative process. Back

in their groups, they begin to conduct their experiments, gather data, analyze results, and prepare a class presentation. As they work, they consult the list of experts, draw upon the abilities of the class, and assist and instruct others. Joshua, for example, makes suggestions from his background knowledge of piston action. Eventually, each of the questions has been explored, the results have been presented to the class and further analyzed in light of other group findings, and the final display has been prepared for the school-wide and regional Science Fairs. Each person has contributed significantly to his or her group's exploration and has had opportunity to contribute to every other group.

This particular class functions within a presumption of the equal value of individual ability. Based in this belief system, the teacher facilitates authentic participation in the classroom community. At the same time, she does not ignore the reading disabilities of Joshua and Emma. She ensures, however, that the time spent instructing them in specific literacy skills does not interfere with their science projects and that dyslexia is not the defining characteristic within their identity as students. Though literacy intervention is proactive and intense, the construction of their abilities is also proactive and intense. Teacher attentiveness, then, is significant in creating an environment that upholds ideals of diversity while continuing to offer opportunity for literacy development.

Commonplace Book: September 30, 2004

Enabling Boundaries

SCHOOL REGULATION; BC Ministry of Education
Governance and Legislation Unit D-59 September 15, 2004
Authority: School Act, sections 5 and 175

5. Power and duties of principals, vice principals or directors of instruction

(7) The principal of a school is responsible for administering and supervising the school including

(a) the implementation of educational programs,
(b) the placing and programming of students in the school,
(c) the timetables of teachers,
(d) the program of teaching and learning activities...

> ...it's crucial that all children become more than competently literate: they must become comfortably literate... (Sumara, ibid)

From: Min. of Ed. Field Services
To: rwiebe@sfu.ca
Date: Fri, 07 Jan 2000 13:50:24 -0800
Subj: FW: Intervention

...The Counselor took some of the ideas back to her school and talked with their Learning Assistance Teacher about using the IDS [Independent Directed Studies] Policy to recognize the work the students in their GOLD [Gifted Learning Disabled] program were doing...

Through a phone call and further discussions, the counselor could see how the IDS policy would allow their GOLD students to receive credit for taking one or more of the Learning Outcomes from any course, such as En11, En 12, etc., and reporting IDS credit for these students. This meant that the students could take their regular En 11 or En 12 courses for 4 credits each and now also receive credit for IDS En 11 (additional 2 credits) and IDS En 12 (additional 2 credits). **All their learning and work could be recognized for their GOLD class work through the IDS policy...**

This is one of those examples of the need to highlight policy that is already in place, giving schools permission to use policy to recognize all learning ...

Pam Harknett, Graduation Program; Ministry of Education; Student Assessment and Program Evaluation Branch; e-mail: pam.harknett@gems3.gov.bc.ca

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
like harmony in music.
There is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society...
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Telling Tales: Summary of Timothy's Reading Intervention

Fortunately for Timothy, his second grade teacher, Vivian, was a problem-solver. Concerned that this boy could not read in September, she studied his file, noted a referral for assessment and approached his former teacher who stated that Timothy had "learned nothing" in Grade One. "He's dyslexic for sure. And there's no home support. Get him tested."

Next, Vivian went to Timothy's house. She learned that Dad was a long-distance trucker who was often gone. Mom worked full time. Her elderly, disabled parents-in-law lived with the family. There was little time for Timothy, but the family agreed they would get him to school early four mornings per week for reading instruction.

The Intervention

We met one-on-one for thirty minutes, four times per week for sixteen weeks. Initial assessment clarified that Timothy came to grade two with quite a few skills. He had good phonological awareness: he could identify and produce rhymes, isolate and identify the initial and final consonants of words, and tap rhythms of syllables. Directionality was in place, and he could follow and predict a story line. He knew several letters. Timothy had two strategies for solving reading problems: He could "sound out" some letters, and, when he could get enough information about the storyline, he could make relatively

accurate guesses. However, he was not integrating his cueing systems enough for crosschecking, and he was reading only at Level Three, something I would expect of early first graders.

Each of the sessions was comprised of the following routine elements[2]:

1. Reading familiar books (five minutes).

In the beginning, by his own admission, Timothy chose only those books that were "easy." Basically, they were stories he had memorized. He was happy when he could get through a book quickly; he focused on speed rather than sense. A transition took place after Session 4, when he was able to put away some of the books that were well below his reading level. His attention to meaning became evident as he commented on both the author's word choice and the illustrator's style. From that point on, reading seemed considerably more enjoyable.

2. Running record (ten minutes).

Each session I introduced a new story and Timothy read to me while I recorded his errors and self-corrections. As he reached 90-95% accuracy in decoding, provided he had a good understanding of and personal response to the story, I would increase the level of difficulty of the book. During the first session, at Level 3, Timothy consistently overused visual and semantic cues, failing to check for meaning in his guesses. Reading was slow, characterized

[2] Elements of this guided reading lesson were adapted from the work of Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (1996).

by finger pointing, and he constantly asked for teacher assistance. His chief mechanism for controlling the reading task was avoidance—he took a very long time to read very little. During Session 3 he discovered that previewing the pictures helped him to gain enough meaning to predict difficult words. After that he started to use "an active process of search and check" (Clay, 1991, p. 309), involving the integration of all of his cueing systems. By the fourth session, he had begun to read with proper phrasing, to create different voices, and to comment on the author's word choice. He even borrowed from the text, muttering "Beans, beets, barley, and bones," as he created his own story, clearly enjoying the words for their own sake.

3. Teaching Point (five minutes)

After each running record, I would work on one skill with Timothy. This I usually determined ahead, based on what I knew about him and the problems I predicted he would meet in the text I preselected for the running record.

4. Story writing and working with words (five minutes).

In each session, we worked on significant phonetic patterns. We used magnetic letters to review onsets and rimes, blends, vowels and suffixes. Then, Timothy created a short story of one or two sentences in response to the book that he had read during the running record.

In our earliest sessions, Timothy relied on his knowledge of letter sounds to help him predict spelling. As we progressed, he began to demonstrate visual memory. The first indication of this was his continual confusion of "when", "went" and "whent" in which Timothy's visual imprint of "when" was inappropriately extrapolated. While this is readily identified as an error, it was a confusion based on an overuse of his visual cueing system and, therefore, indicative of developing strength. Another indicator of this was Timothy's increased writing speed, accompanied by an improvement in his ability to spell high frequency, non-phonetic words. Other signs appeared during our latter sessions, when Timothy made self-corrections in writing including one in which he changed "wotr" to "watr," even though, phonetically, "o" is a more likely choice.

5. Cut up sentence (5 minutes).

Each day I copied one sentence of Timothy's story onto a long strip of paper. Then I cut it apart and shuffled the words. Timothy had to reconstruct his sentence and glue it into his book. During our last session, Timothy silently and quickly put his sentence together. Earlier, this task was laborious.

Results: Strategic Reading and Changes in Attitude

At the end of the sixteen weeks, Timothy's oral reading indicates that many processes are in place: self-monitoring of the sense of the story,

realizing mistakes, searching for new information, making attempts based on that information, and choosing from among various choices to come up with accurate responses. He also uses various strategies before vocalizing an error, indicating progress toward inner control (Clay, 1991, p. 305): voice-pointing; a cautious use of pictures; rereading; predicting; guessing based on the initial letter; attention to syllables; and the familiar "sounding out."

Timothy uses these strategies consciously. For example, when asked what he does when he comes across a section that he cannot read he responded, "I sound it out. I read it back. I divide it into syllables." The errors that he makes are grammatically and semantically correct. He also reads with "authority" (Johnston, 1992, p. 188), commenting on the author's choice of words, suggesting changes that he would make if he were the author, and talking about the types of illustrations that could have been added to improve the story. In the first session, Timothy struggled with each unknown word. By now, however, he approaches text with the knowledge that it carries meaning and is not merely a collection of words. He uses that knowledge to help him with unknown words.

Perhaps the most powerful changes that Timothy has demonstrated are those associated with his attitudes toward reading. He has gone from saying that he hates reading to saying that "reading makes me smarter" and "I am a good reader." He has also become more engaged in his reading. In several early

sessions he referred to reading as "work." Later, he began to enjoy himself, laughing at the stories and commenting on the author's choice of words. Several times, he has made connections between current and past books, indicating that he remembers the stories and that they are becoming part of his frame of reference when responding to text. He is now choosing books according to their topics and illustrations rather than according to length. He is also taking his books home and reading to his grandfather.

CHAPTER SIX

The Principal's Dilemma, Revisited

In previous chapters, we have examined how particular attitudes, policies, and practices in schools marginalize children with dyslexia, organizing their days and programs through their disabilities, weakening their opportunity to contribute to the evolving community from a position of strength. We have further seen that other attitudes and practices have potential for altering this situation, for maximizing the participation of children with dyslexia. Generally, if we challenge ourselves to practice attentiveness toward the authentic abilities of our students and structure the community in such a way as to invite their contribution, participation should increase.

Informing our understanding of community membership are Taylor's analysis of the public sphere, my childhood community experiences, and the principles of community put forward by Jean Vanier. From these we have developed an understanding of the importance of community involvement to individual identity and to societal adaptability, and have derived two conditions of participation: (1) an initiating stance of equal value for diverse horizons of significance, particularly differences in perceptive, interpretive, and representative modes, and (2) a

commitment to authenticity in contributing from strengths, and in acknowledging need by drawing from the strengths of others.

Various researchers have informed our understanding of the intricacies of dyslexia: studies suggest that it is culturally and linguistically situated; that it involves complex and persistent differences in brain activity that impact, not only literacy acquisition, but also perception and processing; that a dyslexic profile often includes a preference for other modes of interpretation and representation; and that people with dyslexia require ongoing, targeted instruction if they are to become functional readers and writers. We have explored the marginalizing effects of interventions that focus on weaknesses but provide no venues for the contribution and development of strengths, and have seen that community-based projects can serve as vehicles for facilitating a more inclusive environment. We have also examined teacher attentiveness as a critical factor in announcing change.

It would seem then, that the stage is set to change our approach to Benjamin's difficulties in literacy acquisition. In suggesting this, however, it is necessary to understand that we are doing much more than planning an isolated program; rather, we are introducing an unfamiliar element into an established system that is situated in culturally pervasive, long-established values and practices. This system did not arise by accident or happenstance. Rather, like all elements of human society, it evolved within a complex network of beliefs and intentions.

Those who propose a social theory of semiotics find issue with the idea that the relationship between the words we use, the sign, and the idea or item of reference, the signified, is arbitrary (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p.12). Rather, they argue that the user of

any sign has selected from among many available to him or her and has infused it with particular contextualized meaning in the form of idiosyncratic images, gestures, and emotions. The receiver of the message absorbs some aspects of the user's meaning and attaches others. Signs, then, are never static in meaning; representational features such as words and sounds are continually undergoing re-creation through the subtle influence of intentional users. The language of our school, then, the language that identifies students as "disabled" or "dyslexic" is also purposeful. The attitudes immanent to these labels are neither arbitrary nor easily changed. They seem to center around an approach toward diversity that requires individuals whose experience is outside the norm to take at least the first step toward assimilation as prerequisite to inclusion: Taylor's suggested attitude of approaching the other with a desire to learn and know, to gather ideas and possibilities to inform personal and cultural evolution, is not inspired by these terms.

Likewise, social constructivists argue that the specifics and generalities of our communities and cultures are created as members interact with each other and with existing elements that they may variously utilize, adapt, or ignore. In being considered and reconfigured in this way, knowledge and values are not merely received and reiterated; they undergo continual reconstruction. The world that humans enact, then, is always in the process of being recreated. It is neither arbitrarily nor randomly changing, but permeated with intention.

The public sphere as described by Taylor is subject to these forces of social construction; likewise my Mennonite community. Social constructivists point out that every time we, as participants, select from among the actions available to us, the

cultures of our communities change slightly. Though at times we may feel that our actions are determined by outside forces, indeed we do make selections from among the choices available to us and we do reinterpret these elements with idiosyncratic meaning. Rather than being either a received culture or a random event, our society is very much a creation of the people who exist within it.

Within the socio-constructivist viewpoint, then, the culture of my school is also neither arbitrary nor received. Though the curriculum is prescribed, and though practices remain somewhat standardized within our region, individual attitudes and actions in response to that which already exists impact the whole which, in turn, influences individuals. Changing particular actions and attitudes, then, has the potential to change the whole culture and, in turn, the individuals within that culture. There will be resistance and, though much of that can be predicted, all the effects of it cannot. "Announcing change," then, is not as simple as it might seem. Innumerable interrelated elements will be affected and will impact the entire effort.

Interpreting "School" as a Non-linear Adaptive System

While sociolinguists and social constructivists give us insight into the societal forces impacting systems, they are limited in providing insight regarding interaction patterns of the many unforeseen elements that are outside of our control, yet exist as part of the systems in which we live and work. Complexity theorists provide another lens for analyzing forces within systems, particularly systems that include many random elements. These they categorize as non-linear systems (Waldrop, 1992) in which every action has the potential to impact the entire system in unpredictable ways

because the contingent interactions among the many random elements are incalculable. A human system such as a school, because of the many unknowns, can be classified as a non-linear, complex system. Because it is continually changing, being recreated as put forward by socioconstructivists, complexity theorists would further characterize it as an emergent system; that is, it is a learning system from which knowledge is continually evolving in response to new information. I recognize my school as a non-linear system. I am reminded of its interdependent, unpredictable status when chicken pox decimates the First Grade reading assessment schedule, or my carefully created "to-do list" is derailed by parental panic over possible job action mentioned on the morning news. These random events impact parents, children, and staff members in multiple, inter-related ways. Furthermore, this non-linear system is emergent. We are continually and collectively changing our practices to assimilate "information" that arrives in the form of new students and staff, curricula, theories, and methodologies.

Though complexity theorists agree with constructivists that intention infuses human action, they are not comfortable with the word "construction" applied to any complex system. They argue that we do not so much consciously construct our world as we enact it within a network of relations. While we may make particular choices within the interplay of complex relations, a great deal is outside of our conscious control. The "construction" of knowledge, then, is a term that is too narrowly intentional. Rather, complexity theorists refer to the "emergence" of knowledge from within the situated complexity of human intentions in relation with elements in the world around us (Davis, 2005; Sumara & Davis, 1997).

Based on their analysis of multiple systems, particularly biological ones, complexity theorists describe emergent systems as being characterized by particular conditions that serve to maintain stability while facilitating ongoing change. Should the overall balance within the system be compromised, the system itself may disintegrate. A brief analysis of the focusing question from the point of view of complexity theory, then, may be helpful.

Five Conditions of Emergence in Non-linear Adaptive Systems

Internal Redundancy

Emergent systems are characterized by internal redundancy. That is, there is enough in common among the elements within the system that they adhere. Compromising the internal redundancy of a system destabilizes it, initiating disintegration. In human terms, some form of group identity must be present if people are to work together. Any introduction of programs and ideas will need to attend to values, beliefs, and characteristics that are critical to group identity.

In schools, a significant aspect of this group identity is related to literacy. Though kindergarten students may differ physically and socially, before long they share the ability to sing "A,B C,D, E,F, Gee...", to recognize their printed names, and to "write" a note underneath a picture. Much of our collective activity involves reading and responding to text: Authors' Circle, Reading Rascals[3], Reading Buddies, and many more programs intentionally label us as participants in a literate culture. Our

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[3] This program, unique to our school, is coordinated and conducted by parents. It involves kindergarten students, their parents, and younger siblings in reading and responding creatively to books.

students readily identify themselves as authors; they discuss the latest Harry Potter; they "surf the 'Net" for information. Much of the internal redundancy within a school system is attached to members identifying themselves as literate beings.

An inclusive community announcing change must attend to issues of internal redundancy. To extinguish or deny our collective identity as literate beings is to destroy much of what keeps us together. In creating a community that is more inclusive of people with dyslexia, though it cannot become the organizers of their day or their individual identity, we cannot deny the importance of this unifying ability. Rejecting print literacy as a goal for Benjamin would be impossible within our literacy-laden system. Furthermore, weakening Benjamin's access to literacy is tantamount to denying him access to group identity. Rather, we must do something to ensure that he can function within a literate society. In addressing my dilemma with regard to his program, three interrelated responsibilities emerge: (1) maximizing instructional time by ensuring good first teaching for every child, (2) facilitating access to high quality, effective intervention, and (3) ensuring ongoing support.

Good first teaching for every child.

In the first years of school, children such as Timothy require diligently scaffolded support; they need explicit, synthetic instruction and individualized coaching in phonological awareness, in the phonetic structures of the alphabet, in mechanisms for self-monitoring sense and comprehension, in multiple strategies for solving reading problems, and in metacognition. This requires ongoing dynamic assessment of reading behaviors and in-the-moment adaptation of instruction in response to their attempts. Early primary teachers must be educated to identify and

categorize children's accuracies and errors, to respond promotively to their specific attempts at solving language and reading problems, and to design learning experiences that invite problem-solving within a carefully scaffolded environment. They must know how to create an inviting environment in which reading experiences are contextualized through writing, literary response, and multiple forms of representation. Timothy proved to have no pervasive learning disabilities. With minimal support, he became a capable reader in a few weeks. Had he received competent instruction in kindergarten and first grade, it is likely he would never have required learning assistance time in Grade Two. The hours devoted to his intervention could have been allotted to a truly struggling reader.

An important role of the principal, then, in meeting the needs of students with dyslexia, is to ensure that all children receive excellent instruction in the earliest grades so that the resources allocated toward children with learning disabilities are actually applied to children with learning disabilities rather than to children who do not read simply because they are inadequately taught in their first years of school.

Unlike Timothy, Benjamin experienced a balanced, supportive program in kindergarten and Grade One. His teachers were attentive to his particular learning preferences; his mother worked with him at home. All the other children in his class learned to read, though some did not read fluently until well into grade two.

Early intervention in literacy development.

Policies regarding early intervention underlie my dilemma as I reconsider Benjamin's daily trudge to the bus. At the outset of this study, I was considering recommending that, because of its marginalizing effects, Benjamin receive no

intervention at all. Now, however, I will take a different approach: Functional literacy will assist him in developing identity with the group. From that point of view, then, I feel secure in stating that intervention is necessary. However, should that intervention defeat the overall purpose of group identity, the program will lack integrity with the system as a whole. Removing him from the site, then, in an effort to promote inclusion is contradictory. This must end. Intervention, however, must continue.

Shaywitz (2003) describes in detail the types of interventions that have proven effective in addressing the literacy needs of children with dyslexia. Beginning as soon as a problem is identified, preferably in kindergarten, effective interventions for children with dyslexia are designed to be intensive and long-term. They are infused with both synthetic and analytic support in the development of phonological awareness and focus not only on reading but also on spelling so that emergent skills can be applied both receptively and expressively. Drill in discreet words and patterns takes place daily until sound-symbol-meaning relationships become somewhat automatic. Because reading is so much more that decoding, one-on-one dynamic coaching such as that offered by Reading Recovery™ also takes place in daily thirty-minute blocks: Comprehension, word attack, and response strategies are prompted and reinforced as the child reads text that has been carefully selected for content, reading level, and embedded reading problems. Every day, students reinforce their learning by rereading familiar text. Classroom instruction reinforces the strategies being learned outside of class and contextualizes the learning by building the interest and entertainment value of reading and writing. Parents, teachers, specialists, and the student are in continual communication, analyzing what is working and what is not.

How is this to be arranged within our building? Clearly, a collaborative approach is necessary: a careful plan developed in consultation with district specialists, the school-based team, Benjamin's parents, and Benjamin. As Learning Assistance time is limited, a teacher assistant may have to do part of the work; some of it may happen outside of regular school hours; outside experts may visit our site to provide intervention.

Ongoing support.

As summarized in earlier chapters, Shaywitz' research supports the hypothesis that with ongoing intervention Benjamin's current gains in reading ability will continue and he will eventually become functionally literate; those gains will likely plateau, however, when he fails to develop the automaticity required for comprehending difficult text. At that point, Benjamin will require instructional adaptations. Voice-activated and -producing technologies, scribes and readers, and teachers' aides may be needed if he is to continue to master the content of the curriculum and maintain his sense of connectivity with the group. At the same time, the interventions addressing basic literacy learning likely will need to continue.

It is possible to envision a program that will support Benjamin and other students with dyslexia in developing their literacy. What is important to reiterate is that, within the framework provided by complexity theory, the purpose of this intervention is to enhance group redundancy in an effort to improve the stability of the system as a whole. Change will not be supported if important elements of redundancy are threatened. Practices that jeopardize collective identity, then, are counterproductive and need to be altered or eliminated.

Internal Diversity

A second condition that supports ongoing emergence in complex non-linear systems is internal diversity. The elements of the system, while sharing significant values and traits that can be characterized as redundant, also represent significant difference. If redundancy is the quality that motivates cohesion, diversity is the condition that provides new information to the process of creation. However, it is also the quality that challenges system stability; attention to redundancy becomes increasingly important as diverse elements are introduced.

Upon reflection, I recognize internal diversity as the motivating concern of this study. I believe that, though distinct abilities, perceptions, preferences, modes, and cultures are represented in our school, for the most part they remain unidentified and undervalued. In their earliest experiences in society outside the home, children such as Benjamin learn that the abilities they embody, unless these are accompanied by capable literacy, remain relatively untapped. Benjamin, for example, unless he learns to read capably, will likely be able to participate only marginally in public sphere conversations that continue to be primarily print organized.

Sumara's hope, then, that all children become not only competently literate, but also comfortably literate—capable risk-takers in interpretive and representational practices related to print—is an unsubstantiated hope at this time. Benjamin's idiosyncratic contribution to the community-in-the-making will be limited or even lost if his instruction is bounded by such an aspiration. If diverse contribution to emergence is the goal, once we have ensured that Benjamin is experiencing the best

literacy teaching we can offer, we must step out of our predictable strategy of pursuing literacy at all costs and expand our boundaries to include alternative strategies and objectives.

A related but slightly altered hope for Benjamin is that he can become competently literate and, at the same time, comfortably interpretive and representational in practices that are organized through modes other than print. His abilities in the visual arts already are beginning to address this need: When he urgently desires understanding, he represents his ideas through drawing. In order for his representational practices to become fully realized, however, Benjamin requires scaffolded instruction by more knowledgeable others. A problem exists in that many classroom teachers, at least those at the elementary level, do not have the skills required for providing this. Compounding the issue is Benjamin's schedule. He misses art class while in his literacy class across town. His classroom teacher, given the diverse needs of other children, does not believe it is wise to schedule art first thing in the morning as this is "prime learning time" and it is, therefore, dedicated to literacy and mathematics instruction. The result is that Benjamin focuses on literacy and mathematics learning for most of his day.

My concern as principal is to set in motion for Benjamin, and other students with dyslexia, an individualized and enriched program that addresses not only weaknesses but also develops strengths so that as Benjamin enters the adult world he enters as a full participant in the community-in-the-making, in public sphere discussions. Believing that diverse perceptual and representational profiles are vital to judicious democratic decisionmaking, the current exclusion of the voices of people

with severe and persistent reading disabilities is not only dehumanizing from the perspective of individuals so impacted, it is also detrimental to society as a whole.

In Charles Taylor's mind, the struggle over what matters—over how we shall live—is necessary to the evolutionary process immanent to democracy; complexity theory supports this need for diverse input. In order for such a discourse to be continuously responsive and adaptive, it must be inclusive of dissimilar perspectives and cultures. While attempts at cultural inclusion have been somewhat successful, people with learning disabilities continue to be marginalized. As discussed previously, the reasons for this are at least two-fold: First, narrowed curricula ensure that non-literate interpretive and representational preferences remain underdeveloped; second, society as a whole has not developed an expectation of non-literate inclusion in public sphere discourses. Because of this, Benjamin's educational program should be designed to both strengthen his idiosyncratic interpretive and representational practices, and increase the community's ability to invite and include his unique contributions.

Like other children with dyslexia, Benjamin has developed perceptual and representational preferences outside of the mainstream. Unfortunately, as Stephen J. Cannell says, his personal acuities "count for nothing at school." While programs such as those offered at Prince of Wales Secondary (see Commonplace Book, above) and the Gold Key schools offer alternatives, many children remain locked in decontextualized remedial experiences that do not develop their unique abilities. Benjamin's Individual Education Plan (IEP), with its exclusive emphasis on literacy achievement, is iconic of the situation.

One might argue that current interest in differentiated instruction has begun to address the problem. As a staff, we have read and discussed Mel Levine's *A Mind at a Time* (2002) in an effort to better understand and meet the instructional needs of Benjamin and others with learning disabilities. We have also examined Tomlinson's work (1999; 2001) in this area. While these theorists go a long way in helping educators become attentive to children's individuality, they continue to have a utilitarian approach to the recognition of unique strengths: They encourage teachers to notice diverse learning patterns so that literacy development can be addressed in unique ways. In other words, they are not interested in the development of diverse representational and interpretive practices; they are interested in developing literate practices through diverse methods.

The insights offered by these theorists are invaluable in helping children with multiple learning profiles develop the skills and knowledge necessary to the internal redundancy described above. Also, they are beneficial in developing teacher attentiveness to cognitive and experiential differences. They cannot, however, address the broader goal of developing the strengths inherent within the differences they describe. While I am concerned with developing Benjamin's weaknesses through his strengths, I am also concerned with developing his strengths in and of themselves.

And so, while the IEP in Benjamin's current file identifies his artistic and visual abilities as possible bases for addressing literacy needs, they are not mentioned as areas requiring targeted instruction and development. His IEP, and those of other students with dyslexia, must be altered to reflect not only literate development but also the development and contribution of unique strengths. Outcomes from the Fine

Arts curriculum, for example, should serve as organizers for a significant portion of Benjamin's IEP. In order to effect such change, discussion about what matters in relation to each student's learning must be facilitated. This brings us to another condition that is characteristic of emergent systems.

Neighboring Interactions

While redundancy may motivate cohesion, and diversity might facilitate input of information, they are insufficient to ensure both system stability and emergence. It is necessary for diverse elements within a complex system to intermingle, interact, and infuse each other if redundancy is to be maintained while contributing to a creative process. In school, while literate events may give us a sense of unity, and while diverse modes and cultures are present to give us a sense of diversity, unless they begin to "bump up against one another," there will never be hybridization. As a hybridized culture becomes familiar, it embodies the new redundancy, allowing for the introduction of additional diverse elements. Without neighboring interaction, however, diverse elements may simply exist disparately.

Locations for interaction.

How might we create locations that promote such interaction? I believe that the projects suggested by Greene and implemented within the Gold Key schools represent just such a venue. They announce discussion, problemsolving, and creativity, and require many different representational and interpretive modes. In doing something as difficult as creating their own characters and costumes, children are given opportunity to explore their own preferences, but are also forced to seek

advice from others. Complex projects require complex processes as literate and other arts continually interact in interpretive events: Mechanical and artistic abilities bump up against one another during set design; choreographers work in collaboration with researchers in creating historically-informed dances. Likewise, the collaborative Science Fair project described in the previous chapter promotes neighboring interaction. "Experts" collectively combine their knowledge within a problem-solving environment. Literacy development infuses the projects, but not in isolation from other tools. Multiple talents are utilized and contributed, impacting each other and the culture in predictable and unpredictable ways.

Conditions of interaction.

As we structure locations for interaction, the conditions of participation clarified earlier again serve as guidelines in improving our overall communication:

1. An initiating stance of recognition of equal value: Various modes and talents are presumed to be of equal worth in supporting the emergence of knowledge.

2. A commitment to the ideal of authenticity: Individuals within the interactive environment contribute uniquely, thereby enriching the diversity of information available to the processes of learning and problemsolving.

This area, I believe, is the one most lacking in my school. Diverse elements are present, but they are not consciously and reflectively being prompted to interact. Because of this, the system tends to reproduce itself and simply absorb difference rather than be significantly changed by it. We accommodate Benjamin and adapt *his* program but we do not arrive at our interactions with him with the expectation of learning from him and, therefore, undergoing personal transformation. This

expectation needs to be fostered; announcing locations in which we intentionally contribute to and learn from each other is one way of facilitating such a change.

Enabling Boundaries

A fourth condition that characterizes emergent systems is the presence of enabling constraints: while creating particular locations invites neighboring interactions, boundaries increase the likelihood that they will take place. The elements within the system cannot simply escape; they are forced into proximity with one another. For example, a pond biosphere represents a complex system that is circumscribed by its banks. A chemical introduced to the system is contained there along with the myriad other elements; fish cannot simply swim away, they must interact with this new "information."

The school system is full of such boundaries and, if other conditions are in place, they may prove to enable creativity. One such framework is the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities. We are required to conduct a collaborative review of these annually, and to report on student progress with reference to them each term. Though we may resist creating the types of interactive locations such as the community-based or Science Fair projects mentioned previously, we cannot resist IEP meetings. They are mandated.

They are also redundant. People are familiar with both the process and the intent so it is a structure with enough stability to support change. With attention to other conditions of emergence, the IEP process could be revamped to be more inclusive of diverse voices, thereby increasing the likelihood that previously unknown

solutions to educational problems would emerge. The program for children with dyslexia needs to be carefully planned in order to maximize instructional time, provide diverse opportunities for scaffolded learning, and create openings for authentic contribution. An individual teacher working alone cannot provide the type of support students with dyslexia need. Even the school cannot meet these needs if the staff works in isolation from family and community. Developing the IEP for a child with dyslexia can be seen to provide opportunity for inviting the input and ongoing support of many invested people. Much as care teams develop plans for children with physical, emotional, or cognitive challenges, so support teams can come together to plan carefully scaffolded instruction for children impacted by severe challenges in literacy acquisition.

The IEP structure also enables the identification of multiple areas of strength. Rather than merely being mentioned, these can be reinterpreted as organizers for selecting outcomes from the prescribed curriculum that can be addressed through the educational program. Benjamin's current IEP, for example, refers to his visual ability as being something that might be utilized in supporting his developing literacy. However, it can also serve as a target for instruction. By selecting outcomes from within the Fine Arts curriculum, Benjamin could legitimately spend some of his day receiving focused instruction in the visual arts. Just as literacy intervention is facilitated through the IEP process, so "art intervention" might be facilitated if only we would recognize it as important.

Decentralized Loci of Change

The enabling boundaries of the IEP can also be utilized to facilitate a fifth condition immanent to stable, emergent systems, that of decentralized change. Systems characterized by both stability and creative emergence, rather than being controlled centrally, tend to have multiple catalytic locations that assist interaction and serve as centers of transformation. Small changes, introduced in multiple locations, maintain the overall cohesion of the system while ensuring transformation of the system as a whole. Carefully planned, the IEP process can develop for the child areas of support within the classroom, the school, and the wider community. It can also introduce new ideas and methods to a wide variety of people within a problem-solving situation. These people then disperse to their areas of influence, igniting changes throughout the system.

As mentioned earlier, IEP meetings for students with dyslexia often involve reports and recommendations from psychologists and teachers, with parents providing input in response to data and questions. The school system sets the outcomes; the parents are expected to—in my experience, they generally want to—provide support toward those outcomes. The flaw in this system is that educators, people who spend relatively little time with these children over the course of their lives, dominate the discussions. As "the experts" in literacy development, we are granted the de facto hegemonic voice. If we are to invite change for the child, the school, and the community, it is important to alter this process to make it more inclusive.

PATH.

I propose an alternate model based on Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest, 1993; see also the Appendix for a schematic), a framework more commonly used in structuring the transition meetings of people with multiple physical and cognitive disabilities. PATH is an eight-step process designed to articulate a vision and then work chronologically backwards to outline the actualization of that vision. In addition to the child and the school-based personnel, many people are present during PATH sessions: Depending on the contacts of the child these might include parents, grandparents, and siblings; a social worker; a baseball or drama coach; the classroom teacher, principal, and special education assistant; an invested member of the child's religious community. These are people already connected to the student rather than new contacts who gather for this process. The idea is that they come together in order to define and commit to the type of ongoing, situated support this child will need in becoming a participating member of the community. Generally, it is implemented over the course of several years.

For example, if a team were to generate Benjamin's PATH, it would be important to include those members of his extended family who already have assumed supportive roles. It would be particularly important to include his father, also dyslexic, who holds an insider's perspective regarding the challenges and opportunities that Benjamin may experience in coming years. Benjamin is involved in a local art club and his instructor should be invited. The learning assistance teacher would also attend, as would his classroom teacher and an administrator. Because he attends a designated community school, the director of programming would

participate, as should a counselor from the middle school who will receive him in sixth grade. Benjamin and his parents would be involved in creating this team and inviting people to the planning session. From the outset, expectations would have to be clear: The agreement to participate involves not only the planning of the PATH but also the hands-on implementation of it over the next several years. Though some commitments such as that of the classroom teacher might be short-term, most are more than collaborative and instructional; they are also relational. Invited members would need time to consider whether or not they could commit to such a long-term investment and those who could not should not be present. For example, this is not the venue for the reports of pathologists who meet with the child for assessment but disappear from the lived experience of enacting their recommendations. Such reports, though valuable, can be delivered prior to PATH development. This is a gathering of people who intend to plan, in collaboration with the child and other caring community members, their own involvement in actuating the collective vision for this child.

The initiating stance.

Each person comes to this meeting, then, understanding that everyone's contribution is important and necessary, catalytic to other connections that might support the child in the future, and a locus for announcing change. An outside facilitator leads the discussion and a graphic recorder documents it using innovative, colorful drawings on mural paper[4]. The facilitator ensures that the dominant voices throughout the process are those of the child and the people most closely connected to

[4]An example of a completed PATH mural is available at http://www2.povnet.org/kicns/path

him or her. The educators in the group, because they are the transient participants in this child's life, take on contributory, rather than leadership roles. As the meeting progresses, participants suggest and accept specific tasks, some small, others large, that are recorded on the mural. An annual review will hold everyone accountable for the commitments they have made.

Should this process be implemented with children affected by dyslexia, the focus would be to envision and develop pathways to inclusive communication. As in Taylor's public sphere discussions, each person would have to step back from presumed horizons of significance—for example, parents from academic achievement, educators from literacy—in order to adopt the more inclusive horizon of communication suggested earlier. Then, with everyone considering carefully the ideas submitted by others, the plan could emerge.

Commitment to authenticity.

Throughout the process, it would be important for all participants to authentically represent their thoughts, their interests, their uncertainties, and their abilities, to commit to authenticity. As we are hoping to reinforce system redundancy by building literacy while developing diverse interpretive and representational practices and venues, members of the PATH team need to be attentive to the child's interests and strengths, and aware of the match between those and their own potential contributions. What is important in the realization of the PATH is that the child is well supported over long periods of time without putting undue strain on individual adults. When a teacher or parent assumes responsibility for multiple areas of development, the load sometimes becomes very heavy. If everyone within a small

group of committed adults supports the child in developing one area, a great deal can be accomplished. In Benjamin's case, the grandparents might pay for extra art lessons and take him on occasional fieldtrips to galleries and museums; the art teacher might plan enriched sessions, a neighbor could commit to reading textbooks onto tapes, and the principal could ensure class placements with teachers who are most able to support the development of Benjamin's representational preferences. The community school coordinator could program after-school instruction in various interpretive arts. Parents, together with the learning assistance teacher, could focus on accessing assistive technological tools. Benjamin could commit to daily reading and spelling practice. The classroom teacher, then, is freed to emphasize literacy instruction with the assurance that other representational and interpretive needs are being addressed and validated. None of these tasks is overwhelming, yet the cumulative result when a group of adults commits to their own and the student's authentic abilities and predilections is a great deal of individualized attention involving diverse opportunities for situated learning.

To suggest that all of the instructional needs of children with dyslexia will be met through the careful construction of their PATHs would be simplistic. However, the process does facilitate diverse approaches as PATH team members move into their specific roles and locations and develop their relationship with the child within these decentralized venues and situations. It is important to note that decentralization does not imply disconnection. Rather, in order for a process to be considered decentralized, multiple means of connection must be established or the efforts will lack cohesion. The power of the PATH process is that it is collaboratively

constructed, collegially implemented, and collectively reviewed. Taylor contends that as discussions and interactions take place in decentralized locations through differentiated media, unique perspectives arise and are made apparent. These can then be brought back to a central location for consideration and clarification. Without the mediating locations, however, the centralized discussion lacks experiential depth.

So it is with the education of children. As different people work with the child, and see the child functioning in diverse situations using multiple modes and forms of media, the collective discussions bring about the attentiveness to uniqueness discussed earlier. The community notices the abilities and interests of the child; the community, together with the child, decides how these can be developed and contributed.

PATH and school programming.

In schools modeled after the Multiliteracies and Gold Key projects, decentralized loci and media forms are represented within the regular programs of the school. The PATH team can access these, shaping them to the particular needs of the child. Representational and interpretive practices, then, can be developed within the school as well as within the community-at-large as the child contributes to school-wide projects with the support of invested adults who contribute to the learning of the child and his or her peers.

We must continually remind ourselves that the situating context for this inclusion is participation in the community-in-the-making using well-developed strengths. As PATH team members, including children with dyslexia, are involved in activities together, they impact each other. The common place invites mutually

specifying relations; that is, character and abilities are formed with reference to one another. The representational and interpretive practices of people with dyslexia begin to be seen in the wider society as they are drawn into discussions, learning teams, and community projects. Gradually, the seeming importance of their literacy skills fade as multiple skills and abilities are brought to the wider community where they are contributed, valued, developed, and honed.

PATH and emergence.

The process is one of emergence. People who join a PATH team, or engage in school- and community-wide projects that are intended to be inclusive, do so with an expectation that society as a whole will be changed. Within the enabling boundaries of the project or the PATH, diverse people develop relationships, recognize similarities and differences, and learn from each other. New "ways of being" emerge as previously excluded voices begin to impact the attitudes and practices of people connected to them. Those of us whose perceptual profiles are limited to "normalcy" begin to understand that ours is not the only way of interpreting or representing the world; within that small space of not-knowing, transformation takes place.

In the case of people with dyslexia, the process of creating the PATH requires the communication skills we want to develop. As the PATH mural is developed, multiple modes and media are utilized: sketches, colors, outlines, gestures, stories, images, words in speech and print. The child involved in the PATH sees these modeled by more knowledgeable others and contributes to the process using his or her preferred skills. Later, the child takes the PATH mural home, posting it on a bedroom wall for continual reference. Because of its size, it dominates a wall, serving

as a constant reminder of all the people with whom she or he is connected. Over the years, as the PATH is reviewed and reconfigured, the use of symbols becomes more sophisticated. The child, then, experiences the authentic use of the very representational and interpretive modes he or she prefers. Because literacy is also utilized, the child comes to see this difficult form as one of many; the weakness is situated within areas of strength.

Within the context provided by the PATH and its invested team, the child's IEP becomes a map of immediate goals, objectives, strategies, and indicators of progress toward the overall vision of comfortable, confident communication. Literacy goals are included among other important goals. What is unique is that people not often associated with IEP construction and implementation are involved, allowing for the possibility that the child will receive the support necessary for excellent progress in multiple areas of learning.

One of the most powerful effects of team commitment to the nurturing of a child is the connectivity inherent in the process of working with that child to design, implement, and reflect upon learning experiences. Along with the inability to process text, people with dyslexia often experience marginalization. Given that participants are committed to attentiveness and caring, not merely delivery of instruction, the team approach provides a level of connectivity that many children with learning disabilities do not know.

Reworking

In reconsidering the question prompted by Benjamin's trudge to the bus—"What structures and conditions in educational communities uphold ideals of

diversity, while ensuring opportunity for all?"—I have resolved my dilemma sufficiently to come away with a few pragmatic recommendations in relation to the education of children with dyslexia. Though, as a school administrator, I was confused at the outset by seemingly conflicting values and policies, I find experiential, philosophical and theoretical support for the following:

1. ~~Ongoing, effective literacy intervention for children with dyslexia~~. This recommendation is consistent with the need for internal redundancy in emergent systems. Given that the dominant identifying characteristic of people in schools is literate ability, it is important that Benjamin and others with dyslexia receive high quality, focused literacy instruction. Though initially I was concerned about compromising diversity, I now realize that diversity and redundancy are not mutually exclusive but exist in balance. This said, removing children from their contextualizing community in an effort to promote identity is contradictory. Intervention must take place within the school that the child attends, and it must pose minimal interruption to regular class instruction, particularly in those curricular areas that represent the child's particular strengths.

2. ~~Community-based multimodal~~ projects. **While** internal diversity is **clearly** present in our school, we have few organized locations that have been consciously designed to support "neighboring interactions." While we may acknowledge diversity in learning preferences and in cultural tools, I realize now that it is important to take leadership in creating events and opportunities for diverse personalities, cultures, and modes to not only get to know each other but also to rely on each other for information in problemsolving situations. Projects such as those at Charles Dickens

and the Gold Key schools provide a venue for preparing children to participate in the public sphere discussions described by Taylor. There they learn the initiating stance of valuing the input of others, as well as the principle of commitment to personal authenticity. There the debilitating lock-in described by Arthur is defeated.

3. Changes in IEPs. Our district's IEP frame includes a box for listing student strengths. Generally, we use those abilities as foundations for addressing weaknesses. This is an insufficient approach. From now on, I want to see specific outcomes, plans, and strategies for developing those abilities into areas of excellence. And I want to see those plans implemented and evaluated.

4. Professional development in practices of attentiveness. While we pay much attention to instructional practice when considering areas for professional development for teachers, practices of attentiveness are often ignored. Teachers need time and instruction if they are to develop an awareness of the diversity present in their classrooms and to learn to observe for modal preferences, cultural nuances, and latent abilities. This education needs to be inquiry-based and collaboratively driven, as suggested by the earlier writing of DuFour.

5. The implementation of PATH. This holds great potential for improving the connectivity of children with dyslexia while addressing their need for development in multiple modes of interpretation and representation. Because PATH facilitators are available, this takes relatively little effort on the part of the school. It could be categorized as a "quick fix."

6. Reworking policy. Adaptive systems are characterized by effective feedback mechanisms. Within the complexity of educational systems, the creators of

policy are unlikely to predict all the ramifications for individual students. Sometimes the lived experience of people affected by policy is deleterious to their well-being, or, as we have seen, in conflict with the motivating intent of the policy itself. Other policies, over time and changing contexts, become completely dysfunctional. When creating policy, then, it is important to embed a comprehensive feedback system. A commitment to gathering and interpreting the stories of people affected by the implementation is one method for doing that. Where that has not been done, it is left to the individual to thoughtfully reconcile the demands of the implementation with the best interests of the child. At both the systemic and the personal levels, then, it is important to rework your ground.

As a child in the wake of my uncle's tractor, I learned to navigate the breakers left by the first pass of his plough. Staying upright was delicate work, a function of good balance and attention to footing. By the second pass it was easier, smoother sailing, and so on until plough gave way to harrow and then to rake and that brown sea was smooth and ready for planting. I learned that reworking the soil took time and patience, and a variety of very sharp tools. And no matter how hard you worked the first spring, the next year there were more rocks, and sod needed turning, so you had to do it again. Each year it got a little easier.

Yet no matter how carefully you prepared the earth, you had to pay attention to what that field was prone to grow—sunlight, drainage, soil composition. It was easier to plant raspberries than to spend your life resenting the gravel.

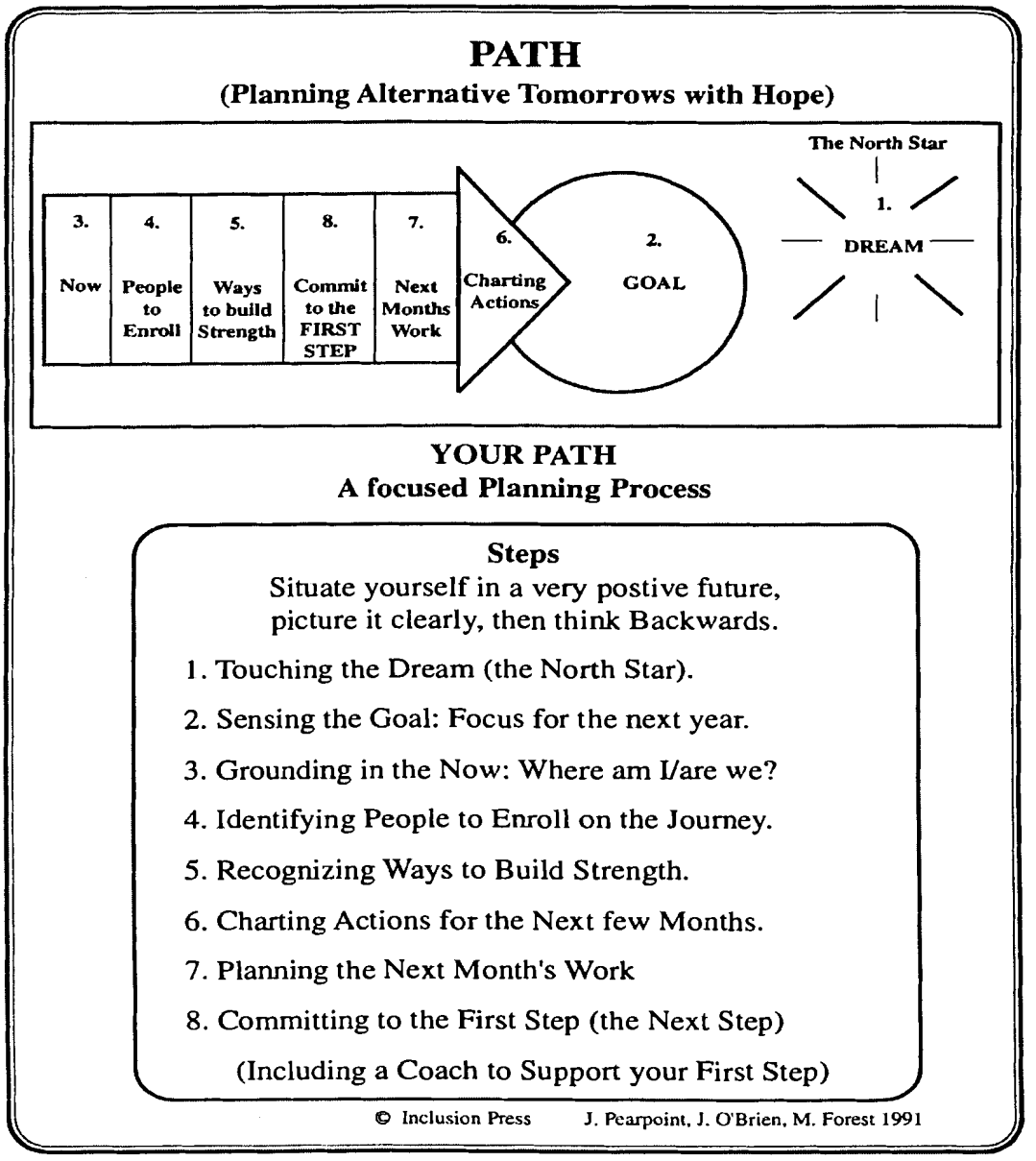
A Final Thought

Must we consider that those characteristics we have collectively labeled as learning disabilities do in fact emerge within our systems because, at an unadmitted, preconceptual level, we know that it is in difference that our survival as a species rests? Perhaps some primal memory warns us that we need multiple perceptual profiles: Someone needs to hear, smell, see, with greater acuity than the rest of us. Just as we require highly literate people, we need people like Robert who visualize mechanical systems, and people like Benjamin who represent the world graphically, and people like Marissa who are hypersensitive to our natural space to remind us that humans interact not only with each other but also with all species and systems, with the earth we have been and will be again. C.S. Lewis (1997, p. viii) believes that as we move toward social excellence, we will develop unique strengths, becoming less alike while valuing and relying upon each other more; emerging diversity is characteristic of a healthy, educated community. Socialization is interpreted, not as a process of conformity, nor as a commitment to individual transcendence, but as the process of learning to collectively nurture, value, and exercise diversity as expressed through the creation of knowledge, driven by nature, emerging within relations among members. We need to know that there is something unique that arises in us-within-the-community. We must perceive an authentic reason to participate.

In the common place we come to know and create that which is uncommon. It is there we catch the counterpoint of what might be if we were to commit to the symphony that is humanity. Let us teach our children to expect that place.

APPENDIX

Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope[5]



[5] Schematic used by permission. Further resources and training for inclusion are available at http://www.inclusion.com

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