

PART 1 The BITOU 10 primary school literacy intervention

JET Education Services Conference:

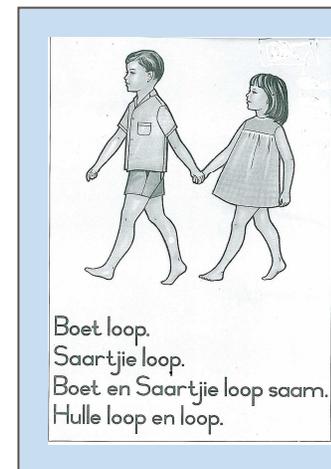
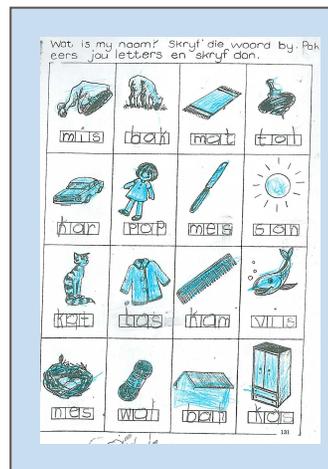
What's working in School Development

28 - 29 February 2008

By Marlene Rousseau

2002 Sept WCED Literacy Test

- Learner performance tests conducted in literacy and mathematics at Grade 3 and 6 levels concluded that with the exception of two schools, Grade 3 learners were performing, on average, 1 or 2 levels below the expectations of the curriculum, while Grade 6 learners were performing around Grade 3 level.



A Plant & Property prioritized *Wish List*

FIRST LIST

Upgrading of toilets & cisterns

Paint classrooms

Shelving & cupboards for 24 classrooms

Library shelving

KG playing area (2 areas) - Quads

OHPs & screens 3 & 3

TV, Video, Dish & cabinet

Lighting for assembly quad

Development plan

Andersen's Furniture

School Painting

Check electrical installations

Phakamisani

EXTENDED LIST

Science lab demo desk

IT facility or easier access to another

KDA - Kids Development Academy

Intercom for Classrooms

Clocks

Transport Security - alarm system

Additional desks

Improve entrance, parking, sign & flagpole

Maintenance kit

Sports equipment

Loud hailer

Create tuck shop facility & feeding school area

Mops & pails to keep classes clean

Repair Classroom Doors

Playground benches

Develop landscape (food gardens & Dustbins)

Development of Sports field

Cricket nets including Green Mats, Cricket pitch,

Sports scoreboard & line marker

Table tennis tables & equipment

Tennisette Facility

Sports posts, Sports railings,

Upgrade Netball/Basketball

Chess sets

Phakamisani

2004 Sept to Oct JET Mid-term Evaluation

- Purpose - to track the progress of the schools (post the baseline study) and to set priorities for the next stage. The evaluation recorded that significant changes had been made to school infrastructure, management of finances and books and noted that a greater sense of pride in the schools had been instilled in learners, teachers and principals.
- “There was no doubt the project has been instrumental in rejuvenating a number of schools, empowering them to escape from a situation of apathy and stagnation. Project activities all contributed to a sense of buy-in to the CSDI and worked to create a community of support between the schools.”

CSDI Mid Term Evaluation, Executive Summary (2004:27)

2004 Sept Grade 3 Literacy Test

- The same tests administered in 2002 were administered in 2004. With a few exceptions schools showed little improvement on the Baseline tests. This was not surprising given that Literacy curriculum intervention had commenced, in one primary school, three months before the test was written. However, prior to the test all the primary schools had received textbooks and reading material.^[1]

CSDI Mid Term Evaluation, Executive Summary (2004:27)

^[1] 35 000 textbooks and readers were delivered to the schools at the end of 2003, and a further 32 000 were delivered in 2004, in a joint funder/schools venture.

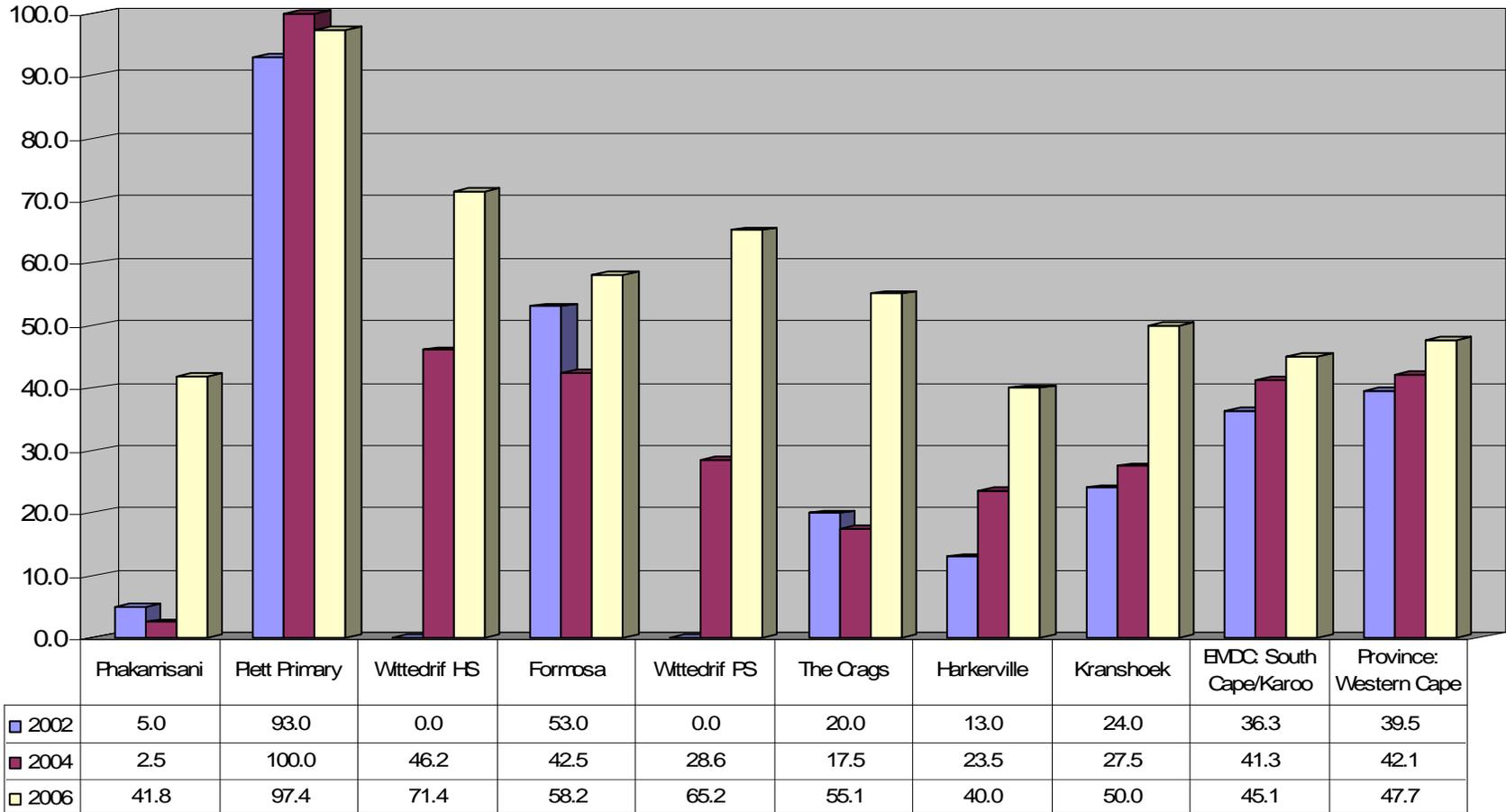
What the 2006 Grade 3
systemic test results show?

The results show a marked improvement.

A commentary on the Gr 3 - 2006 Literacy tests results

- Very significant learning gains were achieved in Bitou schools on the WCED Grade 3 reading test between 2002 and 2006. Table 1 shows that the unweighted mean score for all 8 primary schools increased by 28.1 percentage points, from 31.8% in 2002 to 59.9% in 2006. This represents an 88.5% increase on the 2002 mean.
- This dramatic improvement compares very favourably with those for both the district (8.8 percentage point increase and 24.2% increase on 2002 scores) and the province as a whole (8.2 and 20.8%, respectively). From a starting point 4.5 percentage points *behind* the provincial mean, in 2006 the mean score for all Bitou schools stood a full 14.8 percentage points *ahead* of the provincial mean.
- Every Bitou primary school showed a good increase, ranging from 4.7% for Plettenberg Bay Primary (which, off a baseline of 93% is good), to the spectacular 736% achieved by Phakamisani, and the stellar performance of Wittedrif Primêr where the percentage point increase is nearly twice that of the next best performer

Chart - Literacy Gr3



The Literacy Intervention – a time line

The project's second phase commenced in 2003 & was principally concerned with curriculum delivery. I was approached and asked to provide reading support to the primary schools.

- 2002 to 2003
 - Bitou 10 Book Project – Ordering new textbooks and RNCS familiarisation
 - Classroom visits to observe language teaching in the Grade 1 to 6 classrooms
- 2004 – July to Nov 2002
 - Wittedrift Primary – On site school visits over a 7-week period, over 3 terms
- 2005 – Term 1, 2 & 3
 - The Craggs and Phakamisani - On site school visits over a 7-week period, over three terms, per school
- 2006 – Term 1, 2 & 3
 - A Literacy Course Workshop Program and classroom visits
 - Training of 3 Big Moms in The Craggs
- 2007 – Term 2 & 3
 - Bitou 10 Interschool Magazine
 - A cross-grade reading program at Formosa targeting the weakest Gr 6 readers
- 2008 – Term 1, 2 & 3
 - Bitou 10 Interschool Magazine
 - Training of new *Big Moms* at Kranshoek and Wittedrift Primary

- The first steps in all learning tasks are the most significant. They shape our confidence, our views of our chances of success and give us some idea of the effort we are to make.

Accomplishment is the result of persistence and practice fuelled by desire. Children are born learners; their longing to grasp things, physically and mentally, is almost insatiable, especially in the early years. Unless they are social restrained or hampered by too many failures, they are good learners.

- *Margaret Meek (1996) Information and Book Learning, Thimble Press*

Grade 1, Wittedrift Primary

In Nov 2005 each child made a book about her or his family. Each day the children added a page to their books. Each child composed a text and drew a picture for each page and told the teacher what text to write. The Gr 1s, who had had very little prior opportunity to read, learnt to read by making their own books.

Shahieda se storie

- Page 1: Ek is lief vir my ma. Ek is lief vir my pa. Ons speel lekkker saam. Ons gaan saam see toe en ons swem.
- Page 2: Ek is lief vir my ma. Sy maak lekker kos vir my. Sy hou van drukkies gee. Sy hou van lekker kos en van dans. My ma gee vir my 'n soentjie.
- Page 3: My pa is lief om huise te bou. Ek is lief vir my pa. My pa bly in die Kaap.
- Page 4: Ek is lief vir my suster. Haar naam is Koekoes. Sy loop Hoërskool. Ons teken lekker saam. Sy koop vir my sjokolade.
- Page 5: Ek is lief vir Ouma en my broer. My ouma kook vir my 'juice' en sjokolade.
- Page 6: Ek is ses jaar oud. Ek hou van blomme. My maatjie is Vernonia. Ons speel wegkruipertjie. Ons braai by Paster se huis.
- Page 7: Dit is ek. Ek staan en kyk na die blomme. Ek hou van my ma se tuin. My ma is lief vir my. Sy bak lekker koek. Ons gaan Paarl toe met die jeug.
- Page 8: Ek is lief vir skoolloop. Ek hou van my juffrou. Sy is mooi.
- Page 9: Dit is my Krismis boom. My Krismas boom is mooi. Wanneer die skool sluit is dit Krismis.

Scale of Writing Development

- Level 1:** Child attempts to write in scribbles or draws patterns.
- Level 2:** Child copies words he or she sees around the room.
Child writes 'made-up' letters - often scattered anywhere on a page.
Child pretends to write.
- Level 3:** Child copies words he or she sees around the room.
Child writes letters and 'made-up' letters - in a line across the page.
Child writes in left to right sequence, top to bottom of page.
(Child often reverses letters)
- Level 4:** Letters don't match sounds, but child can explain written message.
Child writes strings of letters (still with some reversals)
- Level 5:** Child writes words or makes statement about drawings
Letters have some connection to sounds.
Child writes lists.
Child separates words with space or marker.
- Level 6:** Child writes sentences, in a left to right sequence. Child invents spelling.
Message is understandable (decipherable).
- Level 7:** Child writes the start of a story.
Child uses both phonics and sight strategies to spell words.
Child writes several short sentences.
Child rewrites a familiar story or follows the pattern of a known story or poem
- Level 8:** Child writes a story with a beginning, middle and end.
Revisions include adding to the story.
Child uses basic punctuation more purposely and consistently.
- Level 9:** Writing includes details, dialogues, sense of humour or other emotions.
Spelling becomes more conventional.
Child willingly revises.
- Level 10:** Child willingly revises & edits.
Child writes creatively & imaginatively.
Child writes original poetry.
Child writes clearly: the message makes sense.
Child uses commas, quotation marks & apostrophes.
- Level 11:** Child uses a variety of strategies for editing.
Child uses a variety of literary techniques to build suspense, create humour etc

Source: **Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL, A Resource Book for K-12 teachers**, by S Peregoy & O Boyle, 2005, Pearson Education, p 200.

Scale of Reading Development

- Level 1** Child listens to a story but does not look at pages.
- Level 2** Child watches pictures as adult reads a story.
- Level 3** Child talks about each picture - attends to picture, less so to the story.
- Level 4** Child participates in reading by supplying rhyming words and some predictable text.
- Level 5** Child memorizes a text and pretends to read a story.
- Level 6** Child still memorizes texts but also starts recognizing and reading words.
- Level 7** Child reads short texts more slowly, word by word.
- Level 8** Child reads familiar stories fluently.
- Level 9** Child reads unfamiliar stories haltingly, with a little adult assistance.
- Level 10** Child uses context clues, sentence structure and phonic analysis to read new passages in an effective and strategic manner.
- Level 11** Child seeks out new sources of information
Child voluntarily shares information with other children.
- Level 12** Child reads fluently from a variety of books and other materials.

This is a guide – children will often show evidence of working at one or more of the above descriptions.

Source: **Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL, A Resource Book for K-12 teachers**, p 201, by S Peregoy & O Boyle, 2005, Pearson Education;

Look at Liz Waterland's useful scale. Liz Waterland was a teacher and then a principal. Her steps are almost the same but she adds a bit more detail - steps 7, 8 and 9. In steps 7 and 8 the child is still retelling the story. In step 9 the child is now reading a text.

Geskryf deur Amore en Lucretia

'n Onderhoud met Beyonce

Op die naweek het Amore vir Beyonce en Usher by 'n partytjie ontmoet. Daar was ook ander sangers by die partytjie. Baie mense was bly toe hulle vir Beyonce en Usher ontmoet het. Dié onderhoud het in die Sarie verskyn.

Ons vrae vir die onderhoud:

Amore: Hoe oud is jy nou?

Beyonce: Ek is 25 jaar oud.

Amore: Wat is jou beste cd?

Beyonce: Crazy in Love.

Amore: Wat is jou ma se naam?

Beyonce: Candice.

Amore: Waar het jy skool gegaan?

Beyonce: In Amerika.

Amore: Watter soort motors ry jy?

Beyonce: 'n BMW en Ferrarie.

Amore: Wat was jou naam op skool?

Beyonce: Beyonce.

Amore: Wat was jou beste sport op skool?

Beyonce: Sing en dance.

Amore: Wie was jou beste onderwyser?

Beyonce: Mnr Scholts.

Amore: Waar was jy al?

Beyonce: Ek was in Hollywood en London en Pareis.

Amore: Van watter plek is jy?

Beyonce: Ek is van New York City.

Karakters: Auntie Bettie

Mnr Stone, die pa

Ricardo, sy seun

Toneel 1: Auntie Bettie en Ricardo

Auntie Bettie: Jy! Kom hier... Ricardo dis jy wat my R250 gesteel het.

Ricardo: Nee, Auntie Bettie. Ek het nie Auntie Bettie se geld gesteel nie

Auntie Bettie: Kom saam met my. Ek gaan nou tot by jou pa.

Mnr Stone, jou kind het my geld gesteel!

Mnr Stone: Auntie Bettie, ek gaan maar self die saak uitsort.

Ricardo, hoekom het jy aunty se geld gesteel?

Ricardo: Ek het nie die geld gesteel nie, pa.

Toneel 2: Ricardo het pak gekry

Mnr Stone: Bly stil! Jy steel mors ander mense se geld!

Ricardo: Maar – is nie ek nie, pappa.

Mnr Stone: Bly stil, nou gaan jy 'n pak slae kry!

Pa slaan vir Ricardo

Toneel 3: Auntie Bettie kry haar geld

Auntie Bettie: Jammer, Mnr Stone, ek het my geld in my laai gekry.

Ricardo, ek is so jammer. Ek het jou onnodig beskuldig.

Ricardo: Jammer Auntie Bettie, ek is bly om dit te hoor.

Maar my pa het my klaar geslaan.

Mnr Stone: Jammer dat ek jou geslaan het.

Ek wens ek het in die eerste plek na jou geluister.

Toneel 4: Ricardo is bly

Ricardo: Dankie pappa – omdat ek hoor nou dat ek is onskuldig is.

En dis die einde van ons drama

Rules for working in class

Have a go!

If you can't read it, **have a go!** Ask someone. Or guess!
If you can't understand it, **have a go!** Ask someone.
If you can't write it, **have a go!** Ask someone to help you

Everyone in this class is **smart!** Everyone! You know so much that we could never write it all down, even if we tried!

Everyone makes mistakes – this is how we learn!

If you are struggling, **don't panic!** We all struggle at some time in our life. If you keep doing it, it will get better . . . That's how our brains work!

If you don't understand something, **talk** to one or two other learners. When we **talk with others** our understanding often grows. If this does not help, talk to someone else.

Don't ever be afraid to ask questions. **Questions are good!**

When you feel have spare time and feel 'lus' why not go to the reading or writing corner – where you can read or write?

When you write something you **must read it to someone!**
All writers need an audience.

Strategies for learning

1 Learners need to work collaboratively:

Say to your learners:

“If you don't know something, or are not sure, ask somebody to help you. Then check with another person what does s/he say?”

This applies to everything you do in the classroom (except tests!)

2 Focus on what the learners can do

During the 1970's and 1980's most teachers were trained, at colleges, what their children could not do. Today, we need to look for **what learners** can do. Give positive feedback, often e.g. *You are doing well!*

Encourage them. Say to your learners, even the weak ones,

I want to tell you what you can do: e.g.

- *you can read your name*
 - *you can read this word (point) and that word (point)*
 - *you can read lots of 3-letter words*
 - *you can read this really long word (point)*
 - *you can read this book (even if it is a Gr 1 book)*
 - *you are making good progress, it will continue to grow, so keep reading*
In this way you BOOST their self-confidence. They will want to keep trying!
- ### 3 Encourage learners to be FASCINATED, NOTICE & TALK about words and language
- When you and your learners are busy **reading or writing**, point out words. For example, focus attention on: how words are spelled; what words are tricky to spell; punctuation marks: when and why we use them; interesting words
- For example:
 - Ask if they know **synonyms** e.g. my darling: *sweetie, honey, precious, truelove*
 - Use a **rich language** in class. For example, enjoy using **idiomatic expressions**:
e.g. Have a heart! (*Be kind*) You're going great guns! (You're doing well)
My eyes nearly popped out of my head when a read your story!
(*I'm very surprised*)
 - Focus attention on **rhyming words**:

PTO

Factors contributing to the 2006 reading results

<p>The teachers are determined to improve the children's reading and writing</p>	<p>Teachers now plan together, share resources, discuss problems and problem-solve together</p>	<p>The children are exposed to the test genre - they play and practice writing tests</p>
<p>The only way to improve reading and writing is to do a lot of <u>interesting</u> reading and writing and use methods that empower</p>	<p>The service providers work and support teachers in their classrooms. We teach and model ways of working, in classrooms, whilst teachers observe their children</p>	<p>The interschool magazine is a tool to promote reading and writing</p>

PART 2 What I Observed in
Bitou 10 classrooms in 2003



Methodology
in
Grade 4 to 7 classrooms

1. Often reading lessons encourage passive reading and little thinking

- Learners seldom read books other than a class reader.
- On average, Gr 4 – 6 children read 2 books a year. This is far too little: children only develop reading competence when they read frequently.

2. Despite a wide range of reading methods that teachers can use in reading classes, I have only observed one.

- All Grade 4 - 7 learners read aloud, simultaneously, using the same text.

The outcomes are:

- Hesitant readers are 'hidden' and unnoticed
- Good readers are not challenged intellectually
- Teachers look increasingly harassed: the sound of 30 to 40 voices reading simultaneously assaults the ears. This is sometimes called 'barking at print'.

3. In all schools, after reading a text

- there generally are **no discussions** or **post-reading activities** that help learners explore texts more deeply

4. Learners often are not given time to think and talk about what they read

- Most importantly, learners are not given opportunities to explore how texts ‘fit’ with and link to their prior knowledge
- This link is critical. We build new knowledge on what we already know. Our knowledge base expands through extending our cognitive networking capacities.
- The concept of ‘schemas’ is useful to consider.
- If the purpose of reading is to increase understanding and knowledge, each child needs to activate her/his schema.
(A schema is an organized chunk of knowledge and/or experience, often accompanied by feelings.)

5. In only 1 class did I see a teacher discuss a text with learners. I have not heard learners talk about:

<i>Does the text make you remember or think about any other text you have read?</i>	<i>Is the text interesting? What part did you find interesting?</i>
<i>What do you already know about this topic?</i>	<i>Did you enjoy the text? Why? Why not?</i>
<i>What are your questions about the text / topic?</i>	<i>Does the writer use interesting words? What are they? What's your favourite line?</i>
<i>What would you like to ask the writer? What is the writer's attitude towards readers? What makes you think this?</i>	<i>What else would you like to know about this topic?</i>
	<i>Is the text good, or not? Motivate your response.</i>

6. Many teachers assume readers understand a text because it has been read

- But there is **no guaranteed relationship between reading and understanding.**
- It is possible to read a text - yet have no or little understand of what you have read.

7. Critical Literacy – developing independent thinking

Learners meet a wide range of texts in the textbooks they read. Some texts may be well written and interesting. Others may not.

Although teachers cannot ensure their readers always read texts of a high standard, we certainly can teach learners to think and **talk honestly, with intelligence** about the texts they read.

8. Reading lessons tend to focus too narrowly on reading

- I seldom see lessons where reading, thinking, talking and writing are interwoven.
- Dance, movement, drama, song and art can all be used – to express ideas, thoughts and feelings of a read text.



What are children reading?

9. In reading lessons learners seem to only read textbooks

- Why aren't learners reading popular magazines, books, comics, TV guides, interesting sections in newspapers, e.g. sports pages, pop star columns, the words of songs, community newspapers etc?

What are children writing?

10. Learners have far too few opportunities to write

1. By this I mean free, independent writing – where learners write to learn – **to formulate their thinking and ideas**
Learners should be writing:
 - to note down/record their prior knowledge
 - to frame the questions they have about a topic/text they have read or are studying
 - to state what else they would like to know about a topic
 - to record what they have learnt in today's lesson
2. There seem few opportunities to express creative ideas
e.g. poetry, journals, their dreams, song writing etc

11. Unintentionally, often the learners' potential to express themselves is limited

- Learners who are told to write 3 or 4 sentences about a topic cannot develop their ideas, logic or fluency when writing.
- There simply is no need to do this when writing 3 sentences, neither is there much need to think!

12. I see very little learner writing and learner art on display in classrooms

- Whose work 'shines' on classroom walls?
- Most wall space is filled with teacher aids and posters.

- I would like to conclude by stating that **teachers often work hard.**
- These points, in isolation, are not so harmful. However, when a number of them are found in one classroom, their impact is to **SERIOUSLY restrict and limit opportunities for learning.**

We long to have children who enjoy reading . . .

So,
where
does the problem
lie?

Theories I draw on

Political factors / Critical theory

Critical perspectives recognize that just as children come to school from different cultural backgrounds, they also **bring different primary, home based discourses to school** with them. Children's **discourses embody their language as well as behaviors, values and beliefs** and serve to associate these with particular social groups. (Gee, 1987). When children come to school they are often confronted by a **secondary discourse** that differs significantly from their primary home based discourse. **Language and literacy learning is facilitated** when there is a **close match** between home and school discourses and hampered when there is a large gap. (Gee, 1987). Critical theorists posit that these differences help establish and maintain the hierarchical power relationships in schools, communities and in larger society.

So literacy learning becomes more than reading and writing. It goes beyond meaning based on a printed text. **Early literacy leaning and the ways in which it is facilitated in school systems becomes a powerful force in identity formation.** Children build images of themselves both as autonomous individuals, as full, marginal or non-members of the classroom community.

Crawford, Patricia A (1995: 82) [Journal of Research in Childhood Education](#), Vol. 10, No 1.

Theories I decline

Connectionist theory – a PART-TO-WHOLE philosophy

‘A connectionist theory of learning is based on the belief that “knowledge is built upon the elements, pieces or components of our experiences” and “that it consists of learned relations among them” Adams Marilyn (1990:196). A connectionist theory is **part-to-whole philosophy** that is hierarchical in nature. The idea of associative learning is central to this perspective and carries a number of implications for both theory and practice. The belief that learning can be reduced to certain base elements results and the development of a skills-based curriculum that is directed by a predetermined scope and sequence. Priority is placed on learning the code as a means to fluent reading and increased comprehension. The code is learned through direct, explicit and early instruction in sound-symbol relationships. The connectionist belief in associative learning results in an **emphasis on reading automaticity**, which comes about through **overlearning**.’

Crawford, Patricia A (1995: 77) [Journal of Research in Childhood Education](#), Vol. 10, No 1.

Theories I decline

Part-to-whole philosophies are hierarchical in nature. The belief that learning can be reduced to certain base elements results in the development of a school's based curriculum that is directed by a pre-determined scope and sequence e.g. direct explicit instruction in sound-symbol relationships emphasizing reading automaticity e.g. word recognition which comes about through over learning – letter forms, **grapheme-phoneme associations** and spelling patterns. (M Adams,1990)

Balanced curriculum – Goodman charged that this is a repackaged form of behaviorism (1992). The act of reading can be broken down into a series of isolated skills that can be arranged into a hierarchy, taught directly and then brought back to the whole.

Theories I draw on

Emergent literacy perspectives

- Emphasizes the relationship between reading, writing and spoken language development
- Happens best through active and meaningful engagement with written language
- Children's literacy is characterized by a procession through a series of developmental stages
- Because authentic literacy experiences are valued, children spend a lot of time transacting with real books and writing original texts.
- Children are encouraged to write often and freely. Invented spellings are honoured and regarded as part of the children's ongoing processes of making sense and gaining proficiency. (Crawford , 1995: 79)

Bissex, G.(1980), Heath, S.B. (1983), Goodman, K. (1986, 1992), Graves ,R.. (1994)

Theories I draw on

New Literacy Studies

- * Lang and literacy are socially constructed
- Lang and literacy are culturally specific
- There is no set of universal, invariant developmental stages
- Literacy is based on the intent to make sense of social events
- Young readers and writers engage in the same types of literate processes, though at different levels of experience as those of older children and adults

Barton, D. (1994)

Theories I am currently interested in

Jamie, a first grader, writes a text and then reads it to the children who sit near him.

Sat on Cat. Sat on hat.
Hat Sat on CAT.
Cat GoN.911 for Cat.

After first grader Jamie reads his story about Cat and Hat, a classmate Edward G, says appreciatively: "It sounds like a poem." But another, Mollie, objects: It doesn't make any sense." After a spirited attempt to explain his story about the fatally wounded cat to the exasperated Mollie, James explodes: BUT IT'S MY DECISION" and then laments, "I don't get it. She *don't* get it. I don't got no more friends."

AH Dyson (1993:10) Extract