

mission to reprint the poem by Herb Warren that appears as a frontispiece. If you would like to read more of his wonderful poetry, the book *Herb's Poems* is available only from the Friends of H. J. Warren at Box 399, Camden, Maine 04843.

I have been blessed with a wonderfully supportive group of colleagues at the State University of New York at Albany: Jim Collins, Cheryl Dozier, KaiLonn Dunsmore, Ginny Goatley, Mark Jury, George Kamberelis, Donna Scanlon, Margi Sheehy, Sean Walmsley, and Rose Marie Weber. Along with Mary Unser and Linda Papa, they sustain my work.

Marie Clay's work on prompting children in Reading Recovery stimulated my thinking about teachers' responses to children's reading—and almost everything else in literacy teaching and learning. Jim Collins and Becky Rogers played an important role in developing my interest in and understanding of teachers' use of language. Becky and, more recently, Paula Costello have helped extend my interest and my thinking through sharing articles and discussions. Conversations with Cheryl Dozier and Barbara Gioia over the years of teaching together have also helped my thinking enormously.

In writing the book I have had helpful feedback and encouragement at various times from Ginny Goatley, Paula Costello, Becky Rogers, Cheryl Dozier, Gay Ivey, Jennifer Gray, and Jamie Conway. Similarly, no footnote can express my appreciation for the feedback and assistance from the wonderful editors at Stenhouse: Brenda Power, Philippa Stratton, and Martha Drury. Remaining inadequacies in the book are my responsibility.

Throughout the writing, I have been sustained, as ever, by my family: Tina, Nicholas, Emily, and Samantha. To them I must apologize for my frequent failures to engage them through the language I know to be most helpful. I hope they forgive this frailty.

The Language of Influence in Teaching

When I was in fourth grade, my teacher turned to me in response to one of my transgressions and said with relish, "By the gods, thou art a scurvy knave. Verily I shall bonce thee on thine evil sconce." An observer might have chuckled and forgotten this brief and trivial event. Its genius is easily missed. My teacher's playful use of language got my attention, stopping the inappropriate behavior, but at the same time it took the edge off the rebuke by making it playful, leaving my dignity intact (showing that he cared), and it showed me how valuable and interesting language can be—valuable enough to play with, powerful enough to change behavior without force. He also showed the possibilities for adopting other voices, drawing language from other sources, while incidentally reminding us of a topic we had studied in social studies. It would be foolish to argue that this single event is the reason I use language as I do in my learning, thinking, teaching, and social life. It would be less foolish, I think, to point to it as an example of a conversational current that left its mark on my social and intellectual being. As with most of the teachers it has been my privilege to study, I doubt that my fourth-grade teacher was aware of the implications of how he used language. He was just good at using it in ways that assisted our learning. Some of us have to think more carefully about the language we use to offer our students the best learning environment we can.

Recently, my colleagues and I had the privilege of studying how successful literacy teachers work their magic in the classroom (Allington and Johnston 2002b). We selected these teachers as successful both because their students did well on conventional literacy tests and because people who were familiar with their work recommended them, aspired to be like them, or wished to have them teach their children. Each was excellent in his or her own way, and each had areas with which he or she struggled, just like the rest of us. I became particularly interested in the powerful and subtle ways these teachers used language, and began to explore its significance. In this book I focus on those things teachers say (and don't say) whose combined effect changes the literate lives of their students. I use examples of apparently ordinary words, phrases, and uses of language that are pivotal in the orchestration of the classroom. I drew my examples initially from the teachers in our study, and I have added examples from the work of other researchers and from my own experience to elaborate certain points.

My initial interest was in how teachers' use of language might explain their students' success in becoming literate, as documented on literacy tests. However, I frequently watched teachers accomplish remarkable things with their students and at the end of the day express guilt about their failure to accomplish some part of the curriculum. This guilt was, in my view, both unfounded and unproductive. It was caused, in part, by the teachers' inability to name all the things they *did* accomplish. Consequently, my second goal with this book is to reduce this guilt by showing the complex learning that teachers produce that is not recognized by tests, policy makers, the general public, and often even by teachers themselves, but that is particularly important.

If we have learned anything from Vygotsky (1978), it is that "children grow into the intellectual life around them" (p. 88). That intellectual life is fundamentally social, and language has a special place in it. Because the intellectual life is social, it is also relational and emotional. To me, the most humbling part of observing accomplished teachers is seeing the subtle ways in which they build emotionally and relationally healthy learning communities—intellectual environments that produce not mere technical competence, but caring, secure, actively literate human beings. Observing these teachers accomplish both goals convinced me that the two achievements are not completely at odds.

Some years ago, I read Mary Rose O'Reilley's *The Peaceable Classroom*. Early in the book she observes, "I had gone off to be a

teacher, asking myself from time to time if it might be possible to teach English in such a way that people would stop killing each other" (O'Reilley 1993, p. 30). When I first encountered this confession, I was reminded of my own journey into teaching and filed both under youthful idealism. However, I happened to reread the passage while studying these teachers and realized I had been wrong. It is both realistic and fundamental. In one classroom, I noticed a student return from the library with a book. His teacher looked up and asked if he had found the book he needed for his project. His cheerful answer? "Not yet, but I found one for Richard." In another school, I watched a whole class of fourth graders engage in a deeply philosophical discussion of science and ethics for an hour and a quarter with little input from the teacher. In another, over the course of four months, I watched as a student, who had been classified as emotionally disturbed, was systematically made undisturbed, becoming a "normal" participant in class activities with none of his former outbursts. In the face of relentless testing pressures, these teachers were accomplishing some of what O'Reilley imagined—not without struggle, and not without soliciting the help of the students in their classes.

Exploring the nature of these teachers' skill, I have been particularly influenced by what children have to say. My colleague Rose Marie Weber says that as a graduate student at Cornell she was introduced to some first graders. One of the girls commented that her father was going to be a doctor of philosophy. The teacher observed that Rose was, too. The girl immediately pointed out that Rose couldn't be a doctor of philosophy, that she would have to be a nurse of philosophy. This is even funnier now that Rose is a member of the International Reading Association's Hall of Fame, but beyond the humor is something a little darker. This first grader could not imagine herself becoming a doctor. Doubtless, she also could not imagine her brother becoming a nurse. She didn't just make this up out of nothing. She made it up out of the linguistic—or, more broadly, the discursive—environment in which she was immersed.

Children, in their own ways, teach us about the language of our classrooms. We have to ask what discursive histories have made it possible for them to say what they say. What makes it possible for a student asked, "Who else would like that book?" to respond, "Probably Patrick. . . . He's, he's not the kind of guy who laughs, and he doesn't smile too much. And in this book, he might smile" (Allington and Johnston 2002,

p. 201]. Why does another student describe herself thus: "I'm on one of the lowest levels in this class. It really stinks. . . . Most of them [classmates] are above me. . . . I have Peter Williams and he doesn't care if I read with him and he always helps me out and stuff." How come a student in a different class distinguishes herself as a reader with, "I love to read mystery, adventure, suspense, and I like to read books about animals doing everyday things that we do (Johnston, Bennett, and Cronin 2002b, p. 194). . . . Barry likes to read about sports. And Amy likes to read about horses and dolphins. . . . Amanda's reading is very different from mine because hers usually have a happy ending. Mine are like never-ending stories." What classroom conversations lead to a student reporting that, "[recently] I have learned how to pronounce more words. . . . How to read more faster than before. . . . I'd like to learn how to pronounce more words" (Wharton-McDonald, Boothroyd, and Johnston 1999, p. 2)?

Teachers play a critical role in arranging the discursive histories from which these children speak. Talk is the central tool of their trade. With it they mediate children's activity and experience, and help them make sense of learning, literacy, life, and themselves.

An Example

Let me give a slightly more expanded example of what I have in mind. Consider the following transcript from a Reading Recovery lesson (Yons 1991, p. 209):

Mary: You said, "I will to my friend, the car driver." Does this word look like *will*?

Melissa: No.

Mary: What letters would you expect to see if the word was *will*?

Melissa: W, L.

Mary: What letters do you see?

Melissa: W, A, V, E.

Mary: Look at the picture. What is the boy doing? What is the car driver doing?

Melissa: They are waving to each other.

Mary: What do you think that word could be?

Melissa: Wave.

Mary: Does *wave* make sense?

Melissa: Yes. "I wave to my friend, the car driver."

Mary: Does "wave to my friend, the car driver" sound right?

Melissa: Yes.

Mary: Does the word look right?

Melissa: The letters make *wave*.

Mary: I like the way you figured that out.

Several things strike me about this exchange. First, the teacher did not directly tell the student anything. Second, the teacher systematically socialized the student's attention to different warrants (evidence and authority) for knowledge and the importance of noticing any conflicts among perceptions and information sources. Third, although the figuring out was collaborative with the teacher playing a primary role, her final comment, "I like the way you figured that out," attributes the accomplishment entirely to the student. This final step offers the student a retrospective narrative about the event in which she stars as the successful protagonist, a collaborative fantasy that makes it possible for the child to become more than herself.

Making Meaning: Making People

When a mother interacts with her baby, she *makes* something meaningful out of what the baby "says." The fact that there is not much to work with does not stop her from constructing a conversation. From "bem ba" she imputes a social intention and responds, "You want milk?" She acts as if the baby's noises are not random but are intentional discursive actions, and responds accordingly. Relationally she positions the baby as a sentient, social being—a conversation partner. In the process, mother and child jointly construct the baby's linguistic and social development and lay the foundation for future interactions with others—how the baby expects to be treated and to interact (Rio and Alvarez 2002; Scollon 2001).

The same is true, in a way, in the classroom. The teacher has to make something of what children say and do. She makes sense for herself, and offers a meaning for her students. She imputes intentions and offers possible worlds, positions, and identities. For example, suppose an independent book discussion group has deteriorated into chaos. The teacher decides to say something to the students. What does she say? Perhaps she says, "That group, get back to work or you'll be staying in

at lunch." On the other hand, she might say, "When you are loud like that, it interferes with the other discussion groups and I feel frustrated." On the other hand (yes, teachers have more than two hands), she might say, "This is not like you. What is the problem you have encountered? Okay, how can you solve it?" Each of these responses says something different about "what we are doing here," "who we are," "how we relate to one another in this kind of activity," and how to relate to the object of study. Each different response has the potential to alter the subsequent interactions in the class. The implications of these options are unpacked a bit in Table 1.1.

In other words, language has "content," but it also bears information about the speaker and how he or she views the listener and their assumed relationship. Halliday (1994) calls these the *ideational* and the *interpersonal* dimensions. There is always an implicit invitation to participate in a particular kind of activity or conversation. We cannot persistently ask questions of children without becoming one-who-asks-questions and placing children in the position of the one-who-answers-questions.

Table 1.1: Implications of Different Teacher Responses to Social Transgression

Teacher Comment Question Answered by Comment			
	That group, get back to work or you'll be staying in at lunch.	When you are loud like that, it interferes with the other discussion groups and I feel frustrated.	This is not like you. What is the problem you have encountered? Okay, how can you solve it?
What are we doing here?	Laboring.	Living in cooperation.	Living collaboratively.
Who are we?	Slaves and owner.	People who care about others' feelings.	Social problem-solvers. Normally admirable people.
How do we relate to one another?	Authoritarian control.	Respectful with equal rights.	Work out our problems.
How do we relate to what we are studying?	Do it only under duress.	[no implication]	[no implication]

Explicitness

Although language has its effects in many ways, the most common focus of attention in recent years has been on the explicitness of the language teachers use (Delpit 1988; Kameenui 1995; Pressley et al. 2001; Pressley and Woloshyn 1995). Of course, if students need to know something, they shouldn't be reduced to guessing by their teacher's assumptions about what they "should" already know. We often assume that students know things, or know them in particular ways, when they do not. We ask kindergartners, "What is the sound of the letter at the end of the word?," forgetting that many of them are unclear about the concepts *letter*, *word*, *sound* (as it applies to speech), and *end* (which requires knowing that letters are ordered left to right), and do not know that letters bear a complex relationship to speech sounds (Clay 1991). As Margaret Donaldson notes in *Children's Minds* (1978), "the better you know something, the more risk there is of behaving egocentrically in relation to your knowledge. Thus, the greater the gap between teacher and learner, the harder teaching becomes."

People who come from different cultural backgrounds often encounter difficulties in their interactions. I recently attended an Indian wedding. Among other blunders, as I proceeded down the reception line, I tried to shake hands with the women in the wedding party, which made them uncomfortable because it is not their normal greeting and because they were not used to such contact with men. Experiences of being in a cultural minority are good for reminding us that different people can do things in very different ways. It is especially easy for mainstream teachers not to notice how difficult it can be for students from a different culture to figure out how things are done here. Those of us in the mainstream are so used to not having to face such conflicts that we come to assume that everyone says and does things the way we do. Consequently, we don't explicitly detail how we do things because one of the rules of conversation is that you don't tell people what they already know (Grice 1975). Minority students often pay a high price for this assumption.

In other words, it is true that we are often less explicit than we might be, that we are confusing sometimes when we try to be explicit, and that being more thoughtfully explicit can be important. Nonetheless, there are many complications to explicitness. We cannot be explicit about everything. The rules of conversation require limiting our explicit comments to what our partner doesn't already know and to

what he might find interesting (Grice 1975). This means that deciding what to be explicit about requires some knowledge of our audience—and responsive teachers do have that knowledge of their students (Allington and Johnston 2002b; Johnston et al. 1995).

The assumption that just being more explicit will make for better instruction assumes that language is simply a delivery system for information, a literal packaging of knowledge. It is not. Each utterance in a social interaction does much more work. For example, there are hidden costs in telling people things. If a student can figure something out for him- or herself, explicitly providing the information preempts the student's opportunity to build a sense of agency and independence, which, in turn, affects the relationship between teacher and student. Think about it. When you figure something out for yourself, there is a certain thrill in the figuring. After a few successful experiences, you might start to think that figuring things out is something that you can actually do. Maybe you are even a figuring-out kind of person, encouraging an agentic dimension to identity. When you are told what to do, particularly without asking, it feels different. Being told explicitly what to do and how to do it—over and over again—provides the foundation for a different set of feelings and a different story about what you can and can't do, and who you are. The interpretation might be that you are the kind of person who cannot figure things out for yourself. This is doubtless one reason why recent research has shown that most accomplished teachers do not spend a lot of time in telling mode (Taylor et al. 2002).

As teachers we have to decide *what* to be explicit about for *which* students, and *when* to be explicit about it. Oftentimes, as anyone with teenagers knows, being explicit is the perfect way to meet resistance. The back door is frequently more effective than the front. And of course explicitness doesn't account for some very powerful learning. Very little of our sense of masculinity and femininity, for example, comes about through explicit instruction in the appropriate behaviors, feelings, and values. Our involvements in gendered social-linguistic interactions have much more of an effect (Kondo 1990; Lloyd 1998). I will try (explicitly?) to untangle some of these details in our conversations through this book.

Speech Is Action

Speaking is as much an action as hitting someone with a stick, or hugging them (Austin 1962). A minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or judge, by

pronouncing two people husband and wife, make it so (to a point). A teacher naming a child "class poet," inviting her to try on that mantle, can also make it so. The child might then begin assiduously doing the things she thinks poets do. I recall a teacher in an urban high school working with a diverse group of students, responding to the poem one of them had written with, "You really are quite a poet." The student, who until that point had met little success academically, began carrying a paperback book of poetry around in his back pocket and writing more poems. By representing him as a poet, the teacher had opened the door for this student to entertain the possibility of becoming the kind of person who reads poetry and would welcome further interactions based on the premise that he is a poet.

Language, then, is not merely *representational* (though it is that); it is also *constitutive*. It actually creates realities and invites identities. Saying, "You are so smart" is very different from saying, "You are so thoughtful." The phrases invite different views of who I am, and how a person like me behaves. In a classroom, the phrases invite others to view and interact with me differently. Language works to *position* people in relation to one another (Davies and Harre 1999; Langenhove and Harre 1999). For example, a teacher might position himself as the giver of knowledge in the classroom, with the students as receivers of knowledge. A classic (and ubiquitous) example of this is the sequence in which a teacher asks a question to which he already knows the answer, a child answers it, and the teacher announces whether or not the child is correct. Teachers can position children as competitors or collaborators, and themselves as referees, resources, or judges, or in many other arrangements. A teacher's choice of words, phrases, metaphors, and interaction sequences invokes and assumes these and other ways of being a self and of being together in the classroom.

Similarly, the way a teacher talks can position students differently in relation to what they are doing, learning, or studying. The implications of talking about reading as "work" are different from referring to it as "fun." Similarly, telling children they can have free choice time, "but first we have to finish our reading," positions reading poorly simply by using the words "have to." Although language operates within relationships, language practices also influence relationships among people and, consequently, the ways they think about themselves and each other. Language even structures our perception—the sense we make of the neural impulses that come to our brain from our sense organs (Luria 1973;

Neisser 1976). There is no question that "discourse penetrates a fair way into the perceptual system" (Harre and Gillet 1994, p. 169). Just as we actively seek sensory information to inform our construction of reality, we actively seek new information to inform the narrative we are building about who we are and to ensure its genuineness.

In other words, the language that teachers (and their students) use in classrooms is a big deal. My intention with this book is to examine some of the ways in which it is a big deal by exploring words and phrases that turn up in conversations between teachers and their students. These words and phrases exert considerable power over classroom conversations, and thus over students' literate and intellectual development. In the rest of the book, I list various productive phrases and words used (or systematically not used) by teachers and explain why they are significant. I have clustered the words and phrases in what I hope are conceptually useful categories, even though some of them clearly belong in multiple categories. Although these words and phrases are mere fragments of interactions, I think of them as representative examples of linguistic families, in the sense that, though they have different surface forms, they share some common features and common sociolinguistic genetic material (Reichenbach 1998).

My explanations of the significance of these language examples draw on a range of related disciplines, principally discursive psychology (Harre 1998; Harre and Gillet 1994), narrative psychology (Bruner 1994a; Eder 1994; Fivush 1994; Miller 1994), discourse analysis (Davies and Harre 1999; Wood and Kroger 2000), and conversational analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1997). Consistent with these disciplines I assume that each conversational exchange between teacher and student(s) provides building material for children's understanding of a wide range of literate concepts, practices, and possibilities, and helps shape their identities, as each exchange "becomes a fragment of autobiography" (Davies and Harre 1999, p. 38). Readers who are familiar with these disciplines, however, will realize that, from the get-go, I take many liberties. For example, I treat these language fragments as if we can make sense of them outside the immediate context of their use. Of course, we can't. I will try to redeem myself along the way, particularly at the end of the book. In the meantime, I ask that you humor me. (If you are not inclined to humor me, please go to Appendix A for a little more explanation.)

Noticing and Naming

Language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge.

HALLIDAY 1993, P. 94

When people are being apprenticed into an activity of any sort, they have to figure out the key features of the activity and their significance. Babies go through a "Wazzis?" (What's this?) stage when they discover that things have consistent names. (Of course they are also learning how to take control of social interactions by asking questions—and learning the fun of doing so.) Noticing and naming is a central part of being a communicating human being, but it is also crucial to becoming capable in particular activities. Becoming a physician requires learning what signs to notice, what to name particular clusters of signs, how to distinguish one drug from another, and how different drugs relate to different patterns of signs. Becoming a teacher requires knowing how to tell when learning is going well and when it is not, what children's invented spelling indicates about what they know, what it means when a child does not participate productively, and so forth. As teachers we socialize children's attention to the significant features of literacy and of learning in different domains.

This pattern recognition is very powerful. Once we start noticing certain things, it is difficult not to notice them again; the knowledge actually influences our perceptual systems (Harre and Gillet 1994). It

turns out, too, that there are different ways of naming the same thing. Different schools of healing notice different things and give symptoms different significance. Different schools of teaching do the same. Two teachers with different frameworks of teaching have different names for when a child does not spell conventionally. In some societies there are many words for mental events, in others few. In some communities it is common to talk about and identify feelings. Feelings, too, are socialized—we learn what they are, or rather, we acquire meanings for them. Our bodies respond to events, and in our interactions with others we learn what to make of those emotional responses—what to call them and what sense to make of them, and even whether or not they are something we should talk about. We also learn their relevance. With our assistance, children are expanding and learning to control their own attention, and the attention system is in many ways a “gatekeeper of knowledge acquisition” (Gauvain 2001, p. 70). For this reason I particularly want them to notice language and its significance.

Although noticing and naming things is a central part of apprenticeship, we also learn things without naming them or even really being aware of them. Language is the perfect example. We acquire language, and by the time we arrive at school, we have remarkable facility with it. At the same time, we are largely unaware of it. It is not that children have no awareness. They have been able to lie and tell jokes, for example, for some time, which means they know they can use language to consciously make something different from reality. However, many children graduate high school with little change in their level of awareness, leaving them unprepared to manage the effects language has on them and on others. This leaves them at the mercy of advertisers, politicians, authors, and so forth. It also leaves them unaware of the effects their discursive histories have had on them. Failure to understand these relationships means that they cannot take up issues of social justice perpetuated through language. It is our responsibility to help children notice these things. We can’t notice everything, though, and teachers help mediate what is worth noticing and why. This responsibility is worth sharing. Who better to assist than the children themselves? The more they notice and bring to the class’s attention the better, and the less the teacher needs to wear the mantle of the one-who-says-what’s-important.

From here on in the book, I unpack examples of teachers’ talk, showing their effects on individual students and classroom communi-

ties. The examples of teacher talk appear as subheadings followed by an analysis of their significance.

❁ “Did anyone notice . . . ?”

Part of inviting children to notice is helping them see what kind of things might be noticed, and to name the things being noticed. For example, Did anyone *notice* . . . any interesting words? . . . any new punctuation? . . . any words that are a bit alike? . . . any new ways of arranging words on the page? They can also benefit by attending to their own behavior as they are invited to in, Did anyone *try* . . . some new words they liked? . . . some new punctuation? . . . a different kind of writing? . . . a different kind of reading? Did anyone . . . create a new character? The idea in such questions is to normalize the practice of trying out new possibilities—stretching beyond what one already controls. To notice—to become aware of—the possible things to observe about the literate world, about oneself, and about others can open conversations among students who are noticing different things.

❁ “I see you know how to spell the beginning of that word.”

When a child has spelled *farm* as *fo*, what is to be said? The most important piece is to confirm what has been successful (so it will be repeated) and simultaneously assert the learner’s competence so she will have the confidence to consider new learning. Marie Clay (1993) refers to this as attending to the “partially correct.” Its significance cannot be overstated.

Focusing on the positive is hardly a new idea. It is just hard to remember to do it sometimes, particularly when the child’s response is nowhere near what you expected. Indeed, the more we rely on expectations and standards, the harder it is to focus on what is going well. I recall being asked once what third graders’ spelling *should* be like and wondering how knowing that might help or (more likely) hinder someone’s teaching. Certainly, teaching to normative expectations will mean lots of positive feedback for some students (but not necessarily any new learning) and lots of negative feedback for others. Much more important is noticing—and helping the students notice—what they are doing well, particularly the leading edge of what is going well. This leading edge is where the student has reached beyond herself, stretching what she knows just beyond its limit, producing something that is partly correct. This is the launching pad for new learning.

Noticing *first* the part that is correct, or makes sense, is a perceptual bias we need to extend to students. For example, if we ask a student to find a word in his writing that is not quite right and then to mark the piece in it that is right, we can ask him to explore other ways of spelling the part that is not quite right, isolating the problem. We can apply the same principle to a wide range of social and literate practices, such as analyzing group learning processes (as we shall see). I cannot overemphasize the importance of this discursive practice. Children with a solid sense of well-being are less likely to tell stories containing references to negative consequences or negative feeling (Eder 1994). Socializing children's attention to where they are being successful is also likely to develop their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura 1996) or what is increasingly called "agency" (see Chapter 4).

❁ ***"Remember the first week when we had to really work at walking quietly? Now you guys do it automatically" (Day 2002, p. 105).***

Often teachers draw children's attention to their learning histories. Showing children that they have changed as community members, learners, readers, and writers reveals that they are in the process of becoming. This category of questions includes ones such as, "How have you changed as a writer?" and "What do you think you need to work on next?" The advantage of drawing attention to change in learning and behavior is that children can then project learning futures. As we shall see in the next chapter, once children have a sense that they are constantly learning, and are presented with evidence of that learning, teachers can ask not only about the detail of their learning histories, but about the detail of their learning futures, and the plans they have for managing those learning futures.

❁ ***"What kind of text is this?"***

Asking students to classify a text implies that there are other kinds of text to notice. It opens a conversation about classifying things, including articulating the logic of the classification. For example, you might ask how particular texts are alike or different: "Have you read any other texts like this?" "What is a different text that is on this same theme?" Indeed, Kim Duhamel asked her students to think about what kind of book they were reading, and to "sort yourselves by genre" (Ivey 2002, p. 67), a request that led to discussions of different genre and negotiation

of genre boundaries, and an expansion of everyone's understanding of the structure of texts.

In a similar way, Tracy Bennett asked her students, who were studying mysteries in order to write their own, "How are the Bailey School books different from the Boxcar books?" In the ensuing discussion, which included references to TV mysteries, the children explored the different structures of the books and elaborated a chart they had on the organization of mystery stories. In the discussion, Tracy said, "Okay. Talk to us in terms of the elements. So in the beginning, the author introduces the character and then the setting is presented, then certain events take place where clues are provided. That's what I mean by talking in those terms" (Johnston, Bennett, and Cronin 2002a, p. 154). Again, naming and noticing go hand in hand, the naming making it possible to have focused discussions with less confusion.

❁ ***"You know what I heard you doing just now, Claude? Putting yourself in her place. You may not have realized it. You said, 'Will she ever shut up?' Which is what Zinny is thinking." (Johnston, Layden, and Powers 1999, p. 20).***

This comment draws to the consciousness of the student and attention of the class, a productive cognitive strategy that would otherwise have slipped by unnoticed. Children, and adults, often accomplish things without any awareness of what they have done. Automatic, fluent performance like this is a very efficient use of mental resources because it doesn't use up our limited conscious space. The downside is that when we encounter problems to which we do not respond so automatically, we can't recall what we did and consider it as a strategic option for the new situation. This comment to Claude describes the mental event and opens the possibility of discussing its significance. It makes the hidden mental skill of the individual into a future resource for both the individual and the community.

This comment actually does a couple of other useful things. It points out (implicitly) to Claude that what he did was a sensible thing to do, as a reader, and offers him the chance to claim competence and agency. It also opens the possibility of discussing the story from Zinny's point of view, and noticing that stories are always presented from a point of view and that some points of view are not given as much prominence as others. In other words, it opens a central conversation for critical literacy.

❁ "I want you to tell me how it [group discussion] went. . . . What went well? . . . What kinds of questions [were raised]?" (Johnston, Bennett, and Cronin 2002a, p. 150).

This little sequence has several important aspects of noticing and naming. First, Tracy was drawing students' attention to the process of group discussion, which, as we shall see, is critical for both managing and arranging for productive learning zones. Second, asking what went well draws attention first to the productive (agentive) aspects of the process in order to reinforce a solid foundation and build a productive community learning identity. Reviewing the experience as a positive narrative about the group process builds an affinity for this sort of experience. Third, she draws attention to the idea that there are different kinds of questions, just as there are different kinds of text, different kinds of writers, different kinds of words, and so forth, and that noticing them and talking about them is an important part of being literate.

❁ "Write down a line you wish you had written."

This request turns children's attention to the qualities of words while it implies (insists, actually) that they all, obviously, want to write wonderful words—to be authors. It opens the possibility that they might be able to write such words, particularly if teachers notice choice words in children's writing or speech. For example, "I notice that your lead is like Patricia MacLachlan's lead in *Through Grandpa's Eyes*" names the concept of lead and shows that it is something that other, perhaps more renowned, authors do, just like the student. At the same time, it gives a name to something, a lead, which can become a topic for subsequent focused discussion.

On another occasion, after rereading a sentence in a read-aloud the same teacher said, "Oh, I love that line" (Johnston and Backer 2002, p. 44). With this comment she does what she asks her students to do. She continues socializing her students' attention to language, opening it up for analysis, but she also expresses a clear emotional response to the language. Studies of teaching often mistakenly neglect teachers' emotional responses. They are important. Even babies use the emotional indicators of their social partner as an important source of information about the environment (Repacholi 1998). Although loving the line is a verbal expression of an emotional response, all interactions are laden with affect, and children attend to these expressions as much as to any other source of information.

❁ "What are you noticing? . . . Any other patterns or things that surprise you?" (Johnston and Backer 2002, p. 181).

In Joan Backer's fourth-grade class at the beginning of each day, a student (or some students, or Joan) picked out a word for the day and wrote it on a small white board along with its meaning and diacritical markings—words such as *quagmire*. Early in the afternoon, she covered it up and asked the children to spell the word on index cards. She then put them all up on the chalkboard ledge so they could look at the different ways people had spelled it. She asked them, "What are you noticing?" and then, "Any other patterns or things that surprise you?" (Johnston and Backer 2002, p. 181). She was asking children to examine the logic of words and their spelling strategies, but the assignment to choose an interesting word for the day in the first place had children looking for interesting words, noticing novelty. This alone will expand their range of language. She might have asked them, as another teacher did, to notice also any unusual uses of words. She did ask them in their discussions of poetry, "Are there any favorite words or phrases, or ones you wish you had written?"

Notice how both of these comments assume something about "you"—that you are (obviously, so I don't need to say it explicitly—nor can you contest it) a noticing kind of person. You are (equally obviously) the kind of person who wishes to write interesting things. These are loaded invitations to construct particular identities, which we will return to in the next chapter.

Children becoming literate need to learn the significant features of text, how it is organized (letters, words, arguments, structure, punctuation, and so on), how it relates to spoken language, how to recognize the little tricks authors use to compel readers, when to use which sort of written language, and so forth. However, no learner can afford to be dependent on the teacher for everything that needs to be noticed, so teachers have to teach children to look for possibilities. We draw children's attention to different patterns in texts, words, and sounds, how print is different from illustrations, how it is laid out on the page, and so forth. We will also teach them ways of using these patterns when they notice them, but first they have to notice them. We cannot show them every pattern or feature, and even if we could, we might not want to because we want them to become adept at noticing them for themselves.

When children in class can't help themselves from noticing and pointing out patterns, teaching becomes a whole lot easier. The teacher

no longer is the source of knowledge. For example, a second grader in Ellen Adams's class observed, "Did you ever notice that lots of books have wolves in them?" (Adams 1995, p. 115). A first grader in Chris Murphy's class noticed her use of "chitty-chatty" as she drew their attention to the noise level. He pointed out the phonetic similarity of the words and noticed the smaller units of chit-chat. These examples indicate that, in classes like these, children learn that what they notice matters, and that it is a valued topic of conversation. This means that when they notice something, it is worth bringing up for discussion (even at odd times).

Starting with the child's observations rather than the teacher's has many advantages. In studies of infants it is called "attentional following," and infants whose mothers do it develop stronger vocabularies than infants whose mothers constantly try to get their child to attend to something they deem important—requiring "attentional switching" on the part of the infant (Dunham, Dunham, and Curwin 1993; Tomasello and Farrar 1986). When children notice things, instruction can begin with a joint focus of attention because the children are already attending. I once watched Joan Backer do an excellent lesson on handwriting without actually doing a lesson. She explained to her fourth graders that she was having a problem reading some of their handwriting. With a chart of the alphabet in cursive, she invited them to help her plan some instruction to improve their writing, asking them what to start with. She took notes on chart paper as the students brainstormed the problem. In the process, they discussed which were the difficult letters (and what made them difficult), which letters were easily confused (and what made for the confusion), and, for instructional efficiency, which were the most frequent letters (disagreement required a committee to investigate further), and which groups of letters had a lot in common and therefore would get the most instructional mileage. In the process, the children were socializing each other's attention to features of handwriting, and Joan merely cleaned up the details. Classifying the letters also required naming them in terms of their salient characteristics.

The "noticing" question above has a second part to it that is important for other reasons: "Any other patterns or things that surprise you?" The frequent use of "any other" keeps students looking for multiple possibilities, building flexibility, which we will return to later. But the "surprise" part is particularly important. We especially want children to attend to their feeling of surprise, which is a good indicator of conflicting patterns or theories. Such conflicts offer great locations for concep-

tual learning because they require us to rethink things that we take for granted (Schaffer 1996). Feelings of discomfort or uneasiness can be useful indicators, too. Often, we smother these feelings rather than deal with their source such as when we witness a social wrong.

Marie Clay points out that attending to these feelings is also about building internal control and a self-extending system—a learning system that is self-motivating and self-checking. When children run into trouble while reading and the teacher says, "What's wrong? Something didn't make sense, did it? What can you do?," the teacher is helping them notice those internal signals and contemplate how to respond to them, a system that will continue to operate when the teacher is not there. Helping children use their intuition to learn more about themselves and the world might also help with another phenomenon. According to Winston Churchill, "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened" (Brashares 2003). Attending to these bodily feelings of surprise and unease might help us reduce this problem.

Noticing and naming has important implications for critical literacy. Ultimately, children must notice how naming is done, who is named in which ways, and who gets to do the naming. I recall a conversation at our dinner table about the word "skank" in which we discussed what it means, who uses it, why, and what the male equivalent might be. We might call this noticing our naming. We also have to help children, and ourselves, understand how names (as categories) come to be associated with particular definitions. For example, I asked one child, "Are there different kinds of readers in this class?" He responded, "There's ones like the people who's not good and the people who are good" (Johnston 1999, p. 30). His response should give us pause when we say something like, "I am so proud of how you are making sense of what you read and checking to see if the words look right. That is just what good readers do" (Lyons 1991, p. 214). Although the comment points to the strategies the student is using—importantly what the student is doing well, affirming that this kind of problem-solving identifies someone as a good reader—it validates the use of a good-bad binary as a sensible descriptor for readers. It leaves open the question of who the bad readers are and how you can tell. A good-bad continuum is not the only way to name readers and writers. In fact, I asked one fourth grader to identify the good writers in class so that I could then ask her about her criteria for distinguishing good writers. Her response was simply, "I

don't like to think of it that way." This is tantamount to saying, "That's not a good question and I won't be part of the discussion that it leads to. It's not normal to talk about writers that way." It is the moral equivalent of telling someone of higher social status that they just told a racist joke. Chloe, along with children from similar classrooms, thought that readers and writers come in categories of interest, style, and genre. I know this will be a bit controversial, but perhaps it is better if we say simply, "That is just what readers do."

Through our noticing and naming language, children learn the significant features of the world, themselves, and others. These understandings influence how they treat each other and their environment. For the sake of a just society, I am particularly concerned about children's naming of themselves and others and their awareness of the sources and consequences of those namings.

Extension

To explore this idea of noticing and naming, I recommend books such as Katie Wood Ray's *Wondrous Words* or Ralph Fletcher's *What a Writer Needs* in which they name the details of the author's craft. For example, apply what is discussed in this chapter to the following section from *Wondrous Words* in which a student, Ian, is stuck. In the process of helping him imagine a place to go as a writer, Katie Wood Ray offers to help. They look at his notebook and have the following exchange:

Katie: Ian, this statement you wrote here, this statement says to me that you have a vignette or a snapshot thing in mind. It sounds like there must be a lot of little scenes in your head about those special times with Jazz [his dog]. Am I right?

Ian: Yes.

Katie: I think you could probably play with that structure some and see what happens. You know, a piece about you and Jazz, sort of like Cynthia Rylant's that we looked at, *When I Was Young and In the Mountains* [1982]. Remember how we talked about how it was written with all those little snapshot stories? (p. 259)

She imagines some vignettes as possibilities that jog Ian's memories. Then

Katie: OK, great! You'll need some way of tying them all together eventually, maybe a repeating line like Rylant uses. (p. 260)

She then opens some ideas that get Ian's interest as places to start, and leaves him with a plan:

Katie: I'd do two things, then. First, I'd reread *When I Was Young in the Mountains* to see again how Rylant did this kind of text. Then I'd start a list in your notebook of ideas for little scenes you might write of you and Jazz. OK? (p. 260)