Literacy in Transition

An Evaluation of Literacy Practices in Upper Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

Volume 1 - Summary Report

Trevor H. Cairney, Kaye Lowe & Eira Sproats
Literacy in Transition

An Evaluation of Literacy Practices in Upper Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

Volume 1 - Summary Report

Trevor H Cairney, Kaye Lowe & Elra Sproats

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY Nepean
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background to the project</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy Practices in the Transition Years of Schooling</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on the transition years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties experienced in the transition years</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of transition on learning and behaviour</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy in the transition years</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing every teacher as a teacher of literacy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of the research</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages of the project</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary stage</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The secondary stage</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting stage</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data gathering procedures</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transition process</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The literacy practices of students in Years 6 and 7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting literacy</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and target groups</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and recommendations</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Options for Professional Development Concerning the Transition Years</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 1 Collaborative programming</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 2 Writing genres</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 3 Reading</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 4 Group work</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 5 Examining teacher beliefs about literacy, learning and teaching</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendices</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A Sample unit from the LINKS Program</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B Content Area Writing Demands</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Background to the project

The project was funded by The Department of Employment, Education and Training as part of the Children’s Literacy National Projects 1993-1994 under the Australian Language and Literacy Policy. The original project brief was titled Literacy in Upper Primary to Junior Secondary Transition (Project No 1).

The specific objectives of the project were to:

★ Provide a detailed description of the literacy practices of children in the upper primary and junior secondary schools

★ Identify how specific groups cope with literacy demands encountered in secondary schools, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, NESB children, rural and isolated people, economically ‘disadvantaged’, boys and girls

★ Evaluate strategies currently in place for helping students cope with the specific literacy demands of high school

★ Make recommendations concerning effective strategies to bridge the gap between the primary and secondary school

An advisory committee was set up as part of the terms of the contract to offer advice on this project. The committee met four times to review the progress of the work and to offer advice where appropriate. Its role was invaluable and the sharing of information served the project well. The Advisory Committee membership was as follows:

Dr Paul Brock, Special Adviser, Australian Language and Literacy Council, National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, ACT

Mr Mark Carey, Director, Australian Education Network, Springwood, NSW
The research team was made up of the investigators from the University of Western Sydney, Nepean and seven research assistants. The team was as follows:

Associate Professor Trevor H Carney (Director/Co-investigator of the Project)

Dr Kaye Lowe (Co-investigator)

Ms Liza Sunderlin (Project Co-ordinator June 1993 to January 1994)

Mrs Era Sproats (Project Co-ordinator March 1994 to November 1994)

\[1\] Ms Sunderlin left the project in January 1994 and was replaced by Mrs Era Sproats as the full time co-ordinator in March 1994
Ms Dina Petrakis (Part-time Senior Research Assistant)

Mrs Fay Gardiner (Part-time Senior Research Assistant)

Mrs Gay Parsons (Part-time Senior Research Assistant)

Ms Denise Bason (Part-time Senior Research Assistant)

Mr Wayne Sawyer (Part-time Research Assistant for writing evaluation)

The final report of this project appears in three volumes. Volume 1 is a summary of the project and its findings. Volume 2 is a complete report on the project including all data, a more detailed discussion of findings and a comprehensive overview of the methodology used. Volume 3 contains a full description of the 35 student case studies referred to both in Volumes 1 and 2.
Literacy Practices in the Transition Years of Schooling

Introduction

The title of this research project – *Literacy in Transition: An evaluation of literacy practices in upper primary and junior secondary schools* - states quite explicitly the subject of this research. Reflected in this title is a concern for the potentially differing demands of literacy across the primary to secondary school boundary criticised by many as being artificial and disruptive to learning and curricula continuity.

As Power and Cotterell (1981) point out the modern divisions that we have between primary, secondary and tertiary education grew out of a mix of ancient ideas about human development and learning, and the forces of industrialisation and democracy. As the provision of schooling for all children has become a reality in developed countries, the divisions between these three major levels of schooling have become most marked.

As a consequence, the transition from primary to secondary school has been a cause of concern for educators in all countries where this artificial boundary exists. This interest is not surprising given the common link that has been made between the transition from primary to high school and trauma and academic failure in children. Chronologically and developmentally, there is little difference between students in upper primary and lower secondary classes, however, the educational contexts vary greatly.

Research on the transition years

In Australia one of the most widely cited studies on the transition years is that conducted by Power and Cotterell (1979, 1981) entitled *Changes in Students in the Transition from Primary to Secondary School*. In this study of 62 primary schools and 72 high schools, the major concern was with...
extending previous research beyond a focus on the psychological and social characteristics of students, to an examination of curriculum issues specifically, they sought to analyse the views of teachers and students concerning the consequences of differences between primary and secondary school, to map changes in curriculum, teaching practices and the learning environment across the transition years, and to determine the extent to which student achievement, attitudes and satisfaction are related to the characteristics of the learner and the learning environment.

Power and Cotterell found that students arrived at high school expecting it to be more challenging and relevant to adult life. When their expectations were met they were generally positive, when they were not, they became negative.

A later study by Elhs, Low, Adams & Cooney (1987) sought to build on this earlier work of Power and Cotterell by investigating changes in self esteem, attitudes to school, and achievement of students from Year 6 to Year 7. The results of this study supported those of Power and Cotterell (1979, 1981), indicating that for most students, the transition to high school was a positive experience. One interesting observation was that the researchers found little contact between primary and high schools concerning curriculum matters.

The latter finding of Elhs et al. (1987) is an issue addressed within the Beazley Report (Beazley, 1984). This government committee of inquiry looked at education in Western Australia and made specific recommendations concerning student transition from primary to secondary (Year 7 to Year 8). The report recommended that a variety of strategies be considered to ease the transition from primary to secondary. These included:

- greater interaction between both school systems, for example, visits by secondary and primary teachers to each other's schools, and interviews with students and parents as high school begins,
- giving responsibility for the transition to a primary teacher,
- the introduction of planned orientation to the physical and social environment of the secondary school,
- the introduction of a properly structured induction program.

However, the report also recognised that there are significant curriculum variations from primary to secondary school and as a result recommended that more syllabuses be developed which span primary and secondary school (particularly up to Year 10). McGee (1989) suggests that there is evidence from the UK, Australia and the United States "that when there are no effective contacts between primary and secondary schools, and they..."
run no orientation programs, that adjustment to secondary school can be much longer than it needs be, that when adjustment is difficult, schoolwork is adversely affected, and that lower socio-economic students take longer to adjust than middle class students” (p 1)

**Difficulties experienced in the transition years**

One of the most important early references to the potential difficulties in the transition years was raised in the report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) entitled *Children and their Primary Schools* (1967) – the Plowden Report. One of the issues it addressed was the most desirable age at which transfer from primary to secondary school should take place. The Plowden Report stimulated Nisbet and Entwistle (1969) to consider this same issue just two years later with the sponsorship of the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The study concluded that there was little to favour either age 11 or 12 years as an age of transfer. The authors stated, “It was no longer an administrative issue in which age limits had to be specified. It became an educational problem what factors affect children’s adjustment in the process of transfer.” (Nisbet & Entwistle, 1969, p.16) The report went on to conclude that “there is no one ‘correct’ age but that the ideal arrangement would provide for a gradual change in curriculum and style of teaching over a transitional period of several years” (p 94). As a result, the report suggested the concept of a middle school to solve this problem.

In an early study of the transition years in Queensland schools (Whitta, 1975) a series of recommendations was made which addressed this. Whitta recommended that

- development of orientation programs should occur,
- primary and secondary teachers need to become more familiar with the objectives of both sectors of education,
- provision be made for friendship groups before, during and after transition,
- provision be made for increased participation in extra-curricular activities for students in their first year at high school.

More recently in Queensland the *Shaping the Future* report (1994) has recommended that where interfaces occur (e.g. preschool to primary, primary
to secondary) parties on both sides of the divisions have responsibility for ensuring a smooth transition and continuity of learning experiences. It also stresses the need to develop post primary programs for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who may need bridging courses before commencing secondary schooling.

**The impact of transition on learning and behaviour**

While the studies above were concerned with broad issues associated with problems in the transition years a number of studies have focussed more closely on the impact of the transition years on learning and behaviour. In an early study, Murdoch, (in Nisbet & Entwistle, 1969), surveyed children's reactions to the transition period by asking them to write an essay entitled "The story of your first few weeks in this secondary school, comparing it with your primary school". Murdoch found from an analysis of 552 essays, that "only about 11% of the boys and about 8% of the girls found transfer a wholly enjoyable experience. As many as 57% of the boys and 64% of the girls had experienced identifiable problems in adjustment". However, after a term or more in the secondary school, about 80% of the children then preferred it to their primary school. Murdoch adds importantly that "many of the children who were experiencing difficulties in adjustment mentioned that they were being less successful in their schoolwork [and] that children from higher social classes tended to adjust more quickly than the other children" (Murdoch, in Nisbet & Entwistle, 1969, pp 29-30).

Recently an Australian study has provided evidence that there is a "flattening of growth" in achievement across the secondary years (Hill, Holmes-Smith & Rowe, 1993, p28). This project (the Victorian Quality Schools Project) was aimed at developing strategies for schools which would lead to improved educational outcomes. The study used a stratified probability sample of government and non-government primary and secondary schools and involved 90 school sites. Data were collected from students, parents and teachers. Of interest to our study was the finding that there was a relatively slower rate of progress across Years 4 to 9. The report suggested that there exists "a discontinuity between primary and secondary schooling, for reading and spoken language especially, with a dip in the rate of progress of students in the first year (Year 7) of secondary school" (p. 9).
Another significant finding was that the bottom decile of students appeared to make minimal progress in reading and writing between Years 4 and 9. While it is difficult to establish causality between this slowing of growth and the nature of the schooling they experienced, it is consistent with other studies that suggest that the primary secondary boundary does cause discontinuities in learning.

In addition, the Hill et al study found that student attentiveness had a positive effect on student attitudes to learning and on achievement, particularly in English. Predictably then, students who experienced adjustment problems when entering Year 7 demonstrated even more marked difficulties in English.

A study by Ward et al (1982) supports this finding. Students who were rated as 'successful' and as social participants by their sixth grade teachers made successful transitions, whereas those rated as 'alienates' were unsuccessful. Students who were rated as 'dependent' had a mixed pattern of performance. It was the latter category of students that researchers suggested were most at risk. These students were involved in learning when working in a small group but less attentive in total class situations. They needed frequent assistance, feedback and other types of attention from the teacher and/or others to remain on task.

Ward et al also found that "female students were more positive about more aspects of school than male students, who were more positive about academic performance and mathematics" (p 17). Mekos (1989) on the other hand found from an examination of students' perceptions that "before transition, students with higher grades had more negative expectations while aggressive and disruptive students mentioned few concerns about the move. These patterns of perceptions reversed when students entered the seventh grade."

These studies highlight the differential effect that the transition years appear to have on students. Goodall (1981) suggests that simply taking some action will have an effect on students' ability to cope. He makes the observation that "it is an interesting possibility that the success of some special transition programs may not be due to how they cushion the impact of transition but to the fact that for once a group of teachers are taking a personal and organisationally sensitive interest in the students as people rather than learning units" (p 34).
Literacy in Transition - An Evaluation of Literacy Practices in Upper Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

Literacy in the transition years

While there has been considerable interest in the transition years, there has been far less attention given to studies of literacy practices from primary to secondary school. As mentioned in the above section, several studies have concluded that there is some slowing in progress in literacy as students move from primary to secondary school (Galton & Willcocks, 1983, Hill, Smith & Rowe, 1993, Nisbet & Entwistle, 1969).

One notable attempt to provide more information concerning the nature of literacy practices in the transition years was the Writing and Reading Assessment Program (WRAP) initiated by the Education Department of South Australia (1992). This three-year program was established to report on the literacy performance of students in South Australia's government, Catholic, and independent schools. The program had three interrelated components: an examination of the school curriculum to see what students were experiencing in literacy education, an assessment of performance through a series of classroom-related tasks, and a brief examination of the relationship between attitude and performance. The project provided a detailed description of all the writing and reading tasks students undertook in a two-week period in August 1989 for Years 6 and 10 in a total of 61 schools. While this study unfortunately did not sample the first year of secondary school, its descriptions provide an insight into the nature of Year 6 practices which can be compared with the findings for Year 10 as well as those for Year 7 in other studies.

The study suggested that the differences between primary and secondary literacy practices may be less dramatic than some research has indicated. Certainly, there is little evidence to suggest marked variations from Years 6 to 7. One of the obvious limitations of course with any conclusions from the WRAP project is that it did not describe Year 7 practices.

One aspect of literacy change across the transition years that has received little systematic attention is student interest in reading. One recent study that has addressed this concern was a collaborative study conducted by a group of university reading educators (Bintz, 1993). This study was motivated by the claims of some that reading interests decline in the high school years (Farr, Fay, Myers & Ginsberg, 1987, Pans, Lipson & Wixson, 1983).

The concept of “resistance” is used by Bintz in trying to come to grips with why interest in reading might decline as students move through school. He argues “much research on secondary reading suggests that most primary students nourish themselves on a regular diet of quality reading experiences.
yet by the time they reach high school, they lose much of their appetite for reading" (p 606)

Analysis of these data yielded three portraits of student readers: avid, passive, and reluctant. Avid readers were small in number. They had a love of reading and saw that this reflected the presence of a positive role model for reading and a personal interest. By way of contrast, passive readers did not seek out opportunities to read, and when they did, they read fluently but they felt they gained little information. Most students described themselves as readers who fell within this category. A third group of readers (reluctant) could read (poorly or sometimes well) but avoided reading whenever possible.

Bintz argues that for students who are passive or reluctant, the problem "is the fact that they have no voice in selecting. They regard such school reading as an imposition, inconvenience, and interference with current reading interests and demonstrate not an explicit reluctance to read but rather an implicit resistance to reading school-assigned materials" (p 612).

Bintz contends that reading instruction must be based on a proficient, not deficient, model of reading. He suggests that we need to focus less on student deficiencies and more on student strengths. To do this he points out that teachers need to value and legitimate what students are currently reading out of school.

Developing every teacher as a teacher of literacy

As well as interest in the nature of literacy practices across the transition years there has been much written about the need for all teachers to be concerned about literacy. One of the challenges in responding to arguments like those raised by Bintz is the challenge of convincing all teachers that they have a role to play in literacy. In the UK in 1975, the report of the Bullock Committee, A Language for Life, looked at the fundamental role of language in education and life itself as well as the current misunderstandings about language teaching, and concluded that all were teachers of reading. Morns (1975), in a review of the report, comments that the report "effectively revives the old maxim that, virtually, every teacher is or should be a teacher of reading" (p 26).
However, in contrast to such calls for widespread concern for literacy, one must contrast reports like that of Irvin and Connors (1989) which found that in the USA “reading instruction, when it is offered, is the sole responsibility of the reading teacher.” As a result the authors argue for a new acceptance by teachers of responsibility in this area. “The gap between current theory and current practice is indeed disturbing literacy instruction across the curriculum must become a priority in middle level schools” (pp 310-311)

Kefford (1981) explains the differential demands in writing tasks in the transition period “the sheer volume of writing demanded in Year 7, together with the pace at which most of it is completed, accounts for a deterioration in the quality of many pupils’ writing from Year 6” (p38). He outlines skills such as copying, summarising, notetaking, using writing to learn, rewriting and polishing, and asks “classroom teachers on either side of the boundary between primary and secondary [to] devise strategies that minimise the difficulties children encounter at what is already a traumatic point in their education” (p 41).

Literature across the curriculum is advocated by Lobban (1989) who argues that it has great potential for learning. Literature, according to Gunter (1981) can help students to derive meaning from the transition process “in matters as intimate as adaptation to new situations, people and roles, we cannot totally organise what the student shall learn but relevant literature can encourage confidence in the present, and understanding of coming life situations” (pp 49-50).

While these claims concerning the need for all teachers to take greater responsibility for literacy are difficult to refute, what is obvious from our review of the research is that relatively little is known (beyond anecdotal evidence) of the roles that teachers currently play in supporting literacy learning. In particular, there is a need for new knowledge concerning the support strategies that secondary teachers use to introduce students to the literacy practices of their subject areas. More knowledge is also needed about the ways in which primary teachers support and prepare Year six readers and writers.

Focus of the research

It appears from the literature that the impact of the transition from primary to secondary is marked for some students. There is also evidence to suggest that there may be discontinuities in curricula and teaching methods which
may cause difficulties for some students when adjusting to learning in secondary schools.

This project explored how literacy is defined by classroom practices from Years 6 to 7, what teachers believe about literacy and how these beliefs impact on classroom learning. In this technological age, traditional definitions of literacy are no longer adequate. While it is debateable whether literacy was ever a unitary skill, there is no doubt that this is not the case in our age (Luke, 1993, Welch & Freebody, 1993, Gee, 1990). For the purposes of this report, literacy is defined as a social practice which has many specific manifestations. There are many forms of literacy, each with specific purposes and contexts in which they are used. Literacy cannot be separated from the people who use it. To understand literacy fully we need to understand the groups and institutions into which we are socialised to use specific literacy practices (Bruner, 1986, Gee, 1990) – in this case, Years 6 and 7.

While the transition years have been the focus of a moderate amount of research, relatively little is yet known about the nature of the literacy practices that students need to acquire in upper primary and lower secondary. Furthermore, even less is known about the mismatches across the transition years both for literacy practices and the support strategies that are used by teachers to aid literacy learning. This research project explored these issues in depth.
Methodology

Introduction

The project commenced on 30th April 1993 and a senior research assistant was appointed on a full time basis to co-ordinate it. Six people, with at least 5 years classroom experience, were employed from August 1993 to December 1993 as research assistants to undertake field studies in 13 primary schools. Approximately 162 hours were spent observing in thirteen Year 6 classrooms. Four of the research assistants continued their involvement in 1994 and spent a total of 102 hours observing 177 lessons across a range of Key Learning Areas in four secondary schools. In addition, interviews were conducted with teachers, support teachers, principals, and 35 case study students. Artefacts ranging from school policies to work samples and report cards were collected.

The original brief stated that specific groups of students should be included in the project and so with this in mind four diverse communities were selected: high ethnic community, disadvantaged urban community, middle class urban community, and a rural community. Four secondary schools and 13 feeder primary schools were selected from these communities. Detailed descriptions of these school are available in Volume 2. An important component of this study is the compilation of 35 in-depth case studies of students across Years 6 and 7 (presented in full in Volume 3).

Stages of the project

The project was conducted in three distinct stages, the Primary Stage (also referred to as Stage 1), the Secondary Stage (also referred to as Stage 2) and the Reporting Stage. A summary of each stage follows.

The primary stage

This was carried out in 1993 and involved 13 Year Six classes throughout NSW. During this stage the following occurred.
A meeting of all participants within the Sydney Region was conducted

The literacy practices of 13 Year 6 classrooms were observed and described

Teachers, supporting teachers, principals, students and parents were interviewed

In depth case studies of 35 students selected from the 13 classrooms commenced

Artefacts including school policies, work samples, report cards and graffiti were collected

The variety of literacy learning contexts and experiences were described

The secondary stage

Work carried out in the Primary Stage extended into 4 Secondary sites. Case studies of 35 students continued to be compiled drawing on information across the range of Key Learning Areas. Teachers were interviewed, classes were observed and follow up interviews conducted with parents and students. A questionnaire involving Year 6 and Year 7 teachers was also administered.

Throughout these two stages a number of accountability strategies were put into place. The research team met regularly to discuss, comment on and make alterations to the observation folders, discuss field notes and observation techniques. Six researchers, plus the two co-investigators, shared their findings as the project evolved. These meetings served a debriefing function and informed the group of literacy related observations that may have become apparent in the field but were overlooked in the design of observation, interview and artefact cover sheets.

Reporting stage

Themes or trends were identified in the data collected from the primary and secondary sites. Implications were then discussed and recommendations made. The methods of data collection are diagrammatically represented below.
Volume 1 - Summary Report

PRIMARY STAGE

SELECTION OF SITES
13 Primary Schools

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS
13 Year 6 teachers
35 case study students

COLLECTION OF DATA
Observations
Interviews
Artifacts
Informal Discussion

CASE STUDIES COMMENCED

ANALYSIS OF DATA
What
What literacy was observed?

How
How was this supported?

Why
Why are these practices occurring?

TRANSITION

SECONDARY STAGE

IDENTIFICATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS
in four secondary schools

COLLECTION OF DATA
Observation of classes
Tracking of case study students
Interviews
Surveys
Artefacts

ANALYSIS OF DATA
Literacy Practices
Related Literacy Practices
Oral Genre
Supporting Literacy Practices

REPORTING STAGE
Report Writing
Identification of Issues
Implications and Recommendations
Participants

Classroom teachers and specialist teachers, principals, librarians, students and parents participated in this research project. Teachers came from both secondary and primary schools. A total of 122 teachers was included in the observations, 20 of these being from the primary school and 102 from the secondary. Principals in all schools were most co-operative and shared vital information pertaining to the operation, management and policies of their respective schools. Librarians, support staff and specialist staff also contributed generously.

Before this project commenced, students in the Year 6 classrooms were informed about the project and their permission to participate was sought. From those willing to participate, a number of students were identified for the in depth case studies. In the main, teachers were responsible for the selection of three students from their classes. These students were to be observed closely and interviewed. The criteria for selection included a range of abilities in literacy, differing socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, different personalities and attitudes to school. Another criterion that was considered was the secondary school the student would be attending in 1994. It was essential that the student attend one of the selected secondary sites.

Data gathering procedures

Data gathering procedures were discussed at meetings with all the research assistants and the two co-investigators. Research guidelines, interview schedules, artefact cover sheets were included in a folder and given to the research assistants to assist their observations in the classrooms. It was important to be aware that literacy had to be explored from many perspectives providing a 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) of classroom contexts. Meetings, therefore, were held regularly during both Stage 1 and Stage 2 so that the researchers could share experiences and the contents of their field notes and to make sure that many perspectives were covered. Data were collected in many different forms, and focussed both on classroom contexts and individual case study students (see Table on pages 19 and 20).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 (Primary)</th>
<th>Stage 2 (Secondary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Duration**     | **1993 3 months**  
| **Focus**        | **Observation of literacy practices in Year 7 classes** |
| **Techniques**   | **Compilation of information folder containing new guidelines for research**  
| **Focus**        | **Data analysis reviewed** |
| **Techniques**   | **Data analysed to derive major themes**  
| **Duration**     | **1 day/wk/site**  
| **Focus**        | **Compilation of information folder containing new guidelines for research**  
| **Techniques**   | **Data analysis reviewed** |
| **Focus**        | **Data analysed to derive major themes**  
<p>| <strong>Techniques</strong>   | <strong>Meeting with research assistants to modify/adjust observation folders discuss field notes and observation techniques to aid in the analysis of the data</strong> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Observation of group interactions</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis of data to find literacy practices</td>
<td>Advisory committee advice/suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Detailed field notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inductive analysis of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Meeting of research assistants to discuss changes necessary</td>
<td>Data organised according to Stage 1 themes</td>
<td>Use of framework that included headings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time allocated for specific literacy practices</td>
<td>Amount of time devoted to each literacy practice</td>
<td>What How Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of time devoted to specific literacy practices</td>
<td>Comparison of Stage 1 and Stage 2 to determine differences and similarities</td>
<td>Narrative description of field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collection of case study material</td>
<td>Analysis of Stage 2 case study data</td>
<td>Interviews artefacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Initial interviews of all students</td>
<td>Combination of Stage 1 and Stage 2 data on case studies</td>
<td>Quantitative analysis of time allocated during lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow up interview of students &amp; parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identification of similarities and differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Observation of interactions with peers and teachers</td>
<td>Data analysed to find comparisons from Stages 1 and 2</td>
<td>Data on case studies for same purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collection of artefacts reports work samples mimic analysis reading materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inductive analysis of all data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers' philosophy of literacy practices and support strategies</td>
<td>Analysis of teacher philosophy data and amalgamation into Stage 2 of the report</td>
<td>Case reports on background literacy practices in Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire Analysis of programs Interviews with classroom teachers and other support teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting literacy transition process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Observation of resources available Observation of teaching style and class organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy practices in Year 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As for Stage 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data analysis

Considering the wealth of data from the 13 primary sites and 4 secondary sites over a twelve month period, the analysis process was both complex and very time consuming. It was decided that the most appropriate way of analysing the data was a collaborative effort involving the entire research team. The data analysis was begun towards the end of the Primary Stage and again at the conclusion of the Secondary Stage. The analysis of data from Stage 1 was used to evaluate the project and determine the most effective means of administering the project during the second stage.

Using the principles of 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the various sources of data were analysed to derive the major themes evident. Grounded theory allows the researcher to identify key issues or themes that are evident within the data.

The quantity and quality of the data collected from numerous sites over an extended period of time by a team of research assistants, made the analysis process a complex and arduous one (see Volume 2 for a complete description of methods). The research team worked together to identify emerging issues/themes and trends. Considerable time was spent reclassifying the data in order to make constant comparisons, to test the themes, modify them and where necessary redefine them. On a number of occasions additional members of the research team were employed to do intense analysis of particular aspects of the research that became apparent in the course of carrying out the project. This occurred specifically in relation to analysing writing samples and the allocation of time devoted to literacy practices in the primary school.

Summary of findings

What follows is a summary of our findings from a number of sources including our detailed observations of 13 primary and 4 secondary schools, our 35 case studies, and finally, interviews and surveys of teachers, students, parents and administrators. We have summarised our findings under four headings:

1. The transition process
2. The literacy practices of students in Years 6 and 7
3. Supporting literacy development
4. Target group literacy in Years 6 and 7
Key findings are highlighted at the end of each section. Discussions of the issues emerging and our recommendations appear at the conclusion of this chapter.

The transition process

Students' responses to the transition

Our data from Stages 1 and 2 and the in depth case studies confirmed that Year 6 students generally looked forward to Secondary school. However, some did express concerns. These included apprehensiveness about possible 'initiation' processes that they believed would occur, and concerns that the work would be harder - especially the reading and writing demanded. As part of case study interviews some students suggested that they believed they would not be able to choose their own books, that books would be very 'thick', and that they would have to do more writing than in Year 6. They also thought they would have to write very "long stories", "do a lot of copying from the board", "take down notes" and "do lots of assignments".

In addition, many of the case study students expressed the belief that they would "have a lot of homework", "no contract work", "difficulties changing classes", "harder maths and spelling".

On the positive side, students were looking forward to "having lots of teachers", the possibility of "making lots of new friends", the facilities of the high school, and in some cases the "new subjects" such as Metalwork and Woodwork.

The data confirmed that in virtually all cases student apprehensiveness was found to be unjustified and that transition was easier than expected. All students, except for two, responded positively to the move into secondary school, stating that it was "good" or "OK" and over half claimed it was "heaps better than primary". They all enjoyed having different teachers. Many felt that Year 7 was easier than Year 6. Over 70% said it was not what they expected and that it was easier than envisaged.

Interestingly, while there were two students who found high school difficult (especially at first), there were others who actually appeared
to benefit from the move to secondary school. In fact, three lower ability students surprised themselves and their parents with the ease with which they made the transition. One student who was placed in the lowest streamed class appeared to improve throughout the year as he discovered work that he could do, and new subjects that he enjoyed.

A number of case study students were concerned about the possible literacy demands of Year 7. However, having made the transition, more than half indicated that reading and writing in Year 7 was similar to that which they had experienced in Year 6. A small number (9%) thought that writing was easier than Year 6 and 14% thought it was harder.

Some specific differences in literacy practices were cited by students. Approximately one third of the case study students (31%) commented on the large amount of copying from the board and textbooks that they had to do in Year 7. Most students found that reading was the "same" or even "easier than in Year 6. Students commented on the increased amount of homework, most of which required the use of literacy. Almost all students who had been readers in Year 6 commented that they no longer had as many opportunities to read for pleasure.

In relation to the support of learners, students commented that teachers were highly supportive of student learning. Most students commented on the helpful individual assistance that most teachers offered in Year 7. Teachers were frequently observed moving around the classroom from student to student giving help and advice.

**Parents responses to the transition**

The Stage 1 findings indicate that parents were not confident that their children would be able to cope with Year 7. Most felt that they would need help, would have trouble working on their own, and would need very explicit instructions to be able to learn.

However, as the Stage 2 data show, having made the transition, the majority of parents (80%) felt that primary school had prepared their children well for secondary school. Most had found the transition relatively easy, but that the work was harder, and there was more
homework

**Teachers' responses to the transition**

Interviews with Year 6 teachers in Stage 1 indicated that most believed that their students would cope well with secondary school because they had been well prepared in Year 6. Only a few teachers thought there might be some students who would have difficulties adjusting, or that the less able students would not get the necessary support. One teacher expressed concern that some students would have trouble reading the text books, while another felt that the students would have real trouble coping with all the different teachers. On the whole, our data suggested that Year 6 teachers believed that there was a "huge gap between the expectations of primary and secondary school."

The majority of primary teachers also thought that secondary school teachers expected Year 7 students to read independently, to be familiar with a variety of writing genres, to use appropriate vocabulary and spelling, and to have good comprehension skills. More specifically, some suggested that students would be expected to know how to construct essays, write without a draft, take notes, complete summaries and have dictionary skills.

When the Year 7 teachers were asked how the students could be better prepared for Year 7, their responses included more use of rote learning, better handwriting skills, more remedial programs, encouraging reading for pleasure, more practice in reading, learning research skills, better grasp of language, better note taking skills, staying at primary until they can read and write, and being more independent learners.

In summary, most primary teachers believed that Year 7 would pose special challenges for students but that they would cope because they had been well prepared.

**Schools' responses to the transition**

One of the things that became obvious to our research team both in Stage 1 and 2 was that considerable efforts were made to ensure a smooth transition for all students. All schools had some strategies, and as our Stage 1 and 2 data show some had an extensive range.
The most common transition practices were visits to the primary school by secondary teachers, organised visits by students to the secondary school for orientation day, lessons taught in Year 6 by Year 7 teachers, mentoring programs - camps for Year 7 and Year 11, Peer Support Programs, liaison between Year 6 and Year 7 teachers, and meetings between primary and secondary to discuss programs.

It would appear that in 1994 all schools took positive steps to make the transition easier. It is apparent that considerable progress has been made in this regard in the past 20 years and that many of the recommendations of earlier reports (e.g., Plowden, 1967, Whitta, 1975, Beazley, 1984, Elts et al., 1987) have been implemented.

**Key Findings**

From the data collected, it appears that students do not have difficulty with the transition either from the perspective of the work required, the literacy demands, or the adjustment to a new and different learning environment.

The transition process is generally enjoyed by the students.

Parents and students generally expected more problems in the transition years than were ultimately experienced.

Teachers from Years 6 and 7 agreed that there is a need to implement a variety of strategies to improve the transition process, including:

* greater liaison and exchange of information between primary and secondary,
* greater use of National Statement and Profiles,
* fewer teachers in Years 7 and 8 and more specialist teachers in Year 6,

Year 6 teachers identified several strategies that they felt could improve the transition process, including:

* a basic checklist from Year 7 teachers identifying what was expected,
more consultation with primary teachers concerning English and literacy.
* higher work expectations from Year 7 teachers

Year 7 teachers also raised a number of specific issues, including the need for

* Year 7 teachers to be aware of the books read in Year 6 so as to avoid repetition.
* greater awareness of the 'language' of writing relating to specific genres ensuring a common usage of language across Year 6 and 7.
* Year 6 teachers to teach listening skills.
* students to practice writing without the need for a draft.
* the need to improve proof reading skills

The literacy practices of students in Years 6 and 7

The Stage 1 and 2 data and the 35 individual case studies indicated a number of interesting findings in relation to the specific literacy practices of Year 6 and 7. These will be described under a number of sub-headings which relate to broad aspects of literacy

Attitudinal differences

There existed a considerable difference in students' attitudes to reading from Year 6 to Year 7. In Year 6, 50% of the case study students claimed to enjoy reading and to read often. They enjoyed DEAR especially the free choice of reading material. Many students were observed in Stage 1 completely absorbed in their reading during DEAR time. Year 6 students were encouraged to read from a range of texts and make choices about what they read. During DEAR time the students brought their own books or borrowed from the class library. While there was a diverse range of materials read, literature written by Roald Dahl and Paul Jennings was common.

Year 7 students on the other hand did not appear to enjoy DEAR time. Only 4 students actually referred to it, and when observed in Stage 2,
they seemed to be reading textbooks and magazines. Very few students in any of the classes were observed reading novels. One of the four secondary schools did not have DEAR and another had just abandoned it because students failed to bring books to read.

Another difference in the attitude to reading was that in Year 7, 31% of students claimed that they did not have time to read anything other than the prescribed texts and novels and complete their homework. However, in Year 6, 91% claimed to read at home for pleasure.

In both Years 6 and 7 girls tended to read more than boys. In Year 6, 94% of girls claimed to read outside the compulsory reading set by the school, whereas 83% of the boys claimed to do so. In Year 7, the percentage of boys who read outside of the prescribed school reading decreased to 56%. Most girls (88%) continued to read, but it would seem that they too read less often.

**Key findings**

Students have far fewer opportunities to read for pleasure in secondary school, and there is less attention given to encourage this type of reading.

Students appeared to have more direct classroom access to a greater variety of texts in Year 6 and appeared to make good use of these resources. In secondary, there were few texts available for borrowing in classrooms, and students were rarely observed borrowing books for personal reading from the library.

Generally, girls tended to read more than boys and on entering secondary school the amount of reading by boys decreased considerably.

**Research**

Our observations in Year 6 classrooms indicated that research tasks (albeit frequently in the name of "projects") were frequently set. Most classes went to the library to research a topic or had a class library from which to borrow. More than half the Year 6 teachers said that they set research topics on a weekly basis. Many of the Year 6 teachers...
and librarians (7.5%) claimed to teach library and research skills

In all secondary schools library skills were taught, usually for a short time at the beginning of the year. Our observations of case study students in Year 7 confirmed that students used the library facilities.

Although research activities were observed in three of the four high schools, the setting of research tasks did not appear as frequently as in Year 6. Interestingly, there were no observations of books being brought to classrooms from the library. The students in Year 7 were also observed at times having trouble using the research facilities of the library. Even though teachers in Year 6 talked specifically about research and library skills, none of the students mentioned using the library for research compared to almost 50% in Year 7.

It would seem that the pattern in Year 6 was for research work to be conducted both in the classroom and at home utilising varied resources from the classroom, home, public library and sometimes school library. Research related reading occupied 33% of all reading time. In contrast, in Year 7 this occupied only 12.9% of reading time and students were more likely to do this type of reading in the library and at home, but less often in the classroom.

### Key findings

Students in Year 6 appeared to have been well prepared in primary school for the research tasks required in secondary school. However, the expectations in relation to carrying out research were found to vary from Year 6 to Year 7. In Year 6, students were expected to complete many and varied projects. In Year 7, there were fewer projects being undertaken and less follow-up support and guidance in completing them.

The library skills taught in Year 6 did not seem to support students in accessing information in Year 7, and as a consequence some struggled at first when attempting to use a larger and more diverse library.

### Reading practices

Our observations in Stage 1 indicated that Year 6 students read a
variety of books as part of DEAR, and whole class and group lessons in a variety of oral and silent reading activities. While almost half the Year 6 classes had set novels to read, students were able to choose individual titles for personal reading during lesson time. In one school, the teacher took some of the students with her to the book room to help in the choice. In Year 7 DEAR only occurred as part of school-based initiatives and as we have indicated above this was rarely effective. Novels were also set for English, and these were usually selected by the teacher.

Interestingly, the proportion of time devoted to silent reading was slightly higher in Year 7 (44.2%) than in Year 6 (29%), but this reflected the reading of content area textbooks, blackline masters or blackboard work (see Tables 1 & 2). In primary, the reading of literature was more common. Nevertheless, the overall proportion of time devoted to reading was lower in Year 7 than in Year 6 (20% compared with 28%).

### Table 1 Proportion of time devoted to specific literacy practices in all primary schools observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Inner City (High NESB)</th>
<th>Urban 'disadvantaged'</th>
<th>Urban Middle Class</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Tot Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Ave</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Genre</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Literacy practices</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2 Proportion of time devoted to specific literacy practices in all high schools observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
<th>A Inner City (High NESB)</th>
<th>B Urban Disadvantaged</th>
<th>C Urban Middle Class</th>
<th>D Rural</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Genre</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Literacy Practices</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our case study students all talked about the novels they were reading for English in Year 7. However, for more than half the case study students, set novels were the only complete texts read during the year. Students in Year 7 claimed to read magazines at home. Interestingly, their favourite author was still Paul Jennings. This suggested that little growth had occurred in this aspect of literacy from Year 6 to 7. Authors and serial publications, introduced in Year 6, were still being enjoyed in Year 7 including Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys, Goosebumps. Other choices included Tolkien, Stephen King, Dr Who, Science Fiction and Australian Poets.

In Stage 1, we observed that reading aloud by the students was a common feature of the primary classroom. Students were observed reading around the class, with a partner, with the teacher, and in small groups. Oral reading also occurred regularly in Year 7. Students read around the class and read with a partner. However, this practice was much more common in the rural high school (School D) than the other three high schools.

While oral reading was observed to occur as frequently in Year 7 (23.6% of the reading time) as in Year 6 (20% of time), Stage 1 and 2 data revealed that there was a significant difference in the type of material. Year 6 and Year 7 students were requested to read aloud. In the primary school, most of the oral reading was from novels, the class was studying or selected books (from the classroom library). Very few blackline masters or overheads were read aloud. While there was some reading from novels and plays observed in Schools A and D in Year 7, most of the oral reading was from textbooks (such as maths exercises), the board, worksheets, and overheads. Reading with a partner was observed only once, and this was in a peer tutoring situation.

Interestingly, over a third of the Year 6 students claimed not to enjoy reading aloud and more than half stated that they were not good readers. In Year 7, this seemed to be less of a concern and most students read out loud readily when asked. This may have reflected the type of material read and the nature of the oral reading task. This in part was supported by the comments of students from the support class in School B, who claimed that they were more comfortable reading in their English classes than in some of the other classes.

Traditional comprehension activities were observed in both Years 6 and 7. Similar activities were conducted and included answering set.
questions, cloze exercises and responding to worksheets. Often questions to recall details and information from novels were set. The only major difference seemed to be that while in Year 6 comprehension appeared to be a strategy to teach generic reading skills, in Year 7 it was used to reinforce subject area content. For example, in Year 6, comprehension work was often a component of a reading scheme such as Eureka or Blue Spectrum.

In Stage 2 comprehension strategies were observed across all Year 7 Key Learning Areas. These activities included traditional comprehension activities such as multiple choice answers (in a Science lesson), complete-a-word (in Geography), find-a-word (in Design and Technology), and the traditional question and answer format which was typically answered either in a separate book or on a worksheet. Such activities when done in English were very similar in Year 7 and Year 6. For example, circle the word that does not belong, unjumble words, quiz and word find, cracking the code, draw a sign, wonderword. Comprehension activities which might be regarded as "new model comprehension" (Moy and Raleigh, 1984), that is, more conducive to an actively engaged response, included sequencing exercises in English and French and cloze exercises.

The use of reader response strategies also varied across Years 6 and 7. There appeared in Stage 1 to be a more challenging array of response activities offered to students. Even fairly low level cognitive activities such as find-a-word were based on students' own reading. Reading response activities were often in the vein of imaginative recreation (see Stratta, Dixon & Wilkinson, 1973) and were primarily done as part of English. They were also often part of a contract relating to a selected text. Such activities included make a bookmark, make a book jacket and blurb for a book, story map, wanted poster.

**Key findings**

Reading in Year 7 was very much oriented to content area learning, whereas in Year 6, it was typically focussed on the teaching of generic reading skills.

The range and diversity of activities was not significantly different from Years 6 to 7.

Reading was a critical component of all lessons across the KLA's.
Overall, the type of reading experiences in Year 7 were slightly narrower and more teacher directed than those of Year 6 where students had more choice in the ways they used literacy.

Writing practices

Our Stage 1 and 2 observations confirmed that writing was a common practice both in Year 6 (24.8% of all class time) and in Year 7 (19.5% of all time). In Year 6, reasonably equal proportions of time were devoted to the three major categories of writing described in the data analysis (see Volume 2, Chapter 4).

Table 3  Proportion of time used for specific writing practices observed in Year 6 classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Practice</th>
<th>Time Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting/transcribing/copying</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer pieces</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended discourse</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although formal handwriting lessons were not a common feature of the Year 6 classroom, students often copied spelling lists, poems or work from the board as a handwriting exercise. Other writing in this category included completing title pages and headings and the copying of lists of words for spelling or vocabulary.

Short answer pieces consisted of cloze exercises, summaries of plots from novels, answers to comprehension questions, note taking and summarising.

Extended discourse in Year 6 frequently involved prose narrative in the form of imaginary-fiction and writing about personal experiences (often in the form of a recount). Other forms of extended discourse were journal writing, descriptions (in such KLAS as Science or HSTE), poetry, reports, responding to literature, instructions, and opinions. Students also wrote such things as advertisements, dialogues, plays, and material to be read out at assembly.
Writing was observed a little less frequently in Year 7 (see Tables 1 and 2), but more significantly, the allocation of time across the three major categories varied significantly.

**Table 4** Proportion of time used for specific writing practices observed in Year 7 classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting/transcribing/copying</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer pieces</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended discourse</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were no formal handwriting lessons observed but there were many observations of Year 7. Hence writing in this category consisted of students copying work from the board, textbooks and overhead projector. Short answer pieces made up by far the largest proportion of the writing in Year 7. Worksheets in all Key Learning Areas, comprehension exercises, cloze passages and vocabulary exercises involved short answer responses. Within extended discourse, the most dominant form was prose narrative. Such responses drew on fantasy, imagination and recreations of literature. However, given the figures above, in absolute terms, narrative writing was observed infrequently. Hence, there was a contrast with Year 6 writing with less extended discourse and more short answer pieces (see Table 5).

**Table 5** Comparison of proportion of time devoted to specific writing practices observed in Year 6 and Year 7 classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 6</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting/transcribing/copying</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer pieces</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended discourse</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other forms of extended discourse involved personal experiences written in journals, reports requiring a personal response to literature and on a few occasions students were asked to use higher cognitive skills and draw conclusions.

While the form of writing varied greatly in both Year 6 and 7, it was apparent that typically extended discourse writing was for the teacher as examiner.
Key findings

Writing was a common feature of all classrooms observed and took many varied forms. It accounted for 24.8% of the observed class time in Year 6 and 19.5% in Year 7.

Opportunities for extended discourse - writing which involved the writer's intellectual engagement - were less evident in Year 7. Short answer responses dominated the writing experiences of students in Year 7. In Year 6, students were exposed to a more even spread of experiences in all three categories.

In both Years 6 and 7, the teacher was regarded as the audience and the writing was primarily teacher directed.

Spelling

Our Stage 1 observations confirmed that the teaching of spelling was common. In all but two Year 6 classrooms, spelling was formally taught. Lists of words were assigned on a weekly basis accompanied by word building exercises and rules. Frequently, dictation at the end of the week was a component of the spelling program. Dictionaries were used in many classrooms as an aid to spelling.

As well, revision of spelling was common in extended discourse with almost all such work written as a rough copy and being proofread and edited before being published. Throughout the process emphasis was placed on achieving conventional spelling. Nevertheless, in Year 6 more than one third of the case study students stated that they had trouble with spelling and that this in turn affected their writing.

In Year 7, spelling was dealt with incidentally and in a less structured way. Words were taught in context and usually related to the terminology or language specifically associated with the Key Learning Area. Conventional spelling patterns were demonstrated or highlighted by the teacher in more than 25% of the lessons observed. Students kept spelling lists in almost all Key Learning Areas, and on three occasions spelling test were observed. One interesting observation was that some English lists contained less complex words than those dealt with in Year 6.

There were many more comments on student's spelling in their books.
in Year 7 than in Year 6. Work in Year 6 tended to be “conferenced” first before being entered into books. Students were expected to correct their spelling in Year 7 and case study students stated that the emphasis given to correct spelling was not nearly as great as in Year 6. There was no obvious difference in the emphasis given to spelling aids such as dictionaries, with these being evident and used in most Year 6 and 7 classrooms.

**Key findings**

Responsibility for conventional spelling was given to the students in Year 7 and was discussed in the context of other learning, whereas it tended to be “drilled and skilled” in Year 6 as an English task.

Students efforts were supported differently in Year 7 than Year 6. Students were directly “taught” spelling in Year 6, whereas in Year 7, it was much more closely aligned with the content being taught, and was dealt with incidentally.

It is was interesting that it was in Year 6 that students expressed concerns about their inability to spell and that spelling interfered with their writing. In Year 7, their anxiety was less apparent and spelling tended not to restrict writing to the same degree as teachers focussed more on content.

**Vocabulary and grammar**

In Year 6, vocabulary and grammar work was often part of contract work. Students were asked to complete exercises such as find-a-word, word definitions, crossword puzzles and synonym and antonym exercises. Teachers drew attention to words in particular contexts and students looked up word meanings in dictionaries. In addition, vocabulary work was done incidentally as the need arose.

In Year 7, content based vocabulary in all subjects was observed to be important and emphasised by the teachers. They explained the vocabulary of their KLA and often responded to students’ answers by changing the students’ terminology. The focus in Year 7 tended to be
on enriching students' vocabulary through introducing and exploring word meanings. On several occasions the origins of words were discussed.

In spite of the varied purposes for vocabulary work from Year 6 to Year 7, the strategies used to reinforce vocabulary knowledge were remarkably similar.

**Key findings**

Vocabulary is specifically taught in Year 6 and not necessarily connected with the content being covered.

In Year 7, control of the vocabulary of a particular KLA is deemed by teachers as essential to the mastery of that particular topic. Vocabulary is regarded as being content specific and is taught accordingly.

**Teacher reading**

In Stage 1, Year 6 teachers were observed frequently reading aloud to students. They read mainly narratives to the class, but were also observed reading poetry, reading from factual texts (e.g., a book of quotes of famous people), and in a few lessons from other KLA reference materials. Year 6 teachers felt that reading aloud to the class and sharing novels with them was an important aspect of literacy learning.

In Year 7 teachers read aloud about half as much as the Year 6 teachers. The type of material read also varied considerably. In Year 7 teachers typically read from textbooks, the overhead projector sheet, the blackboard or worksheets. On only two occasions were teachers observed reading aloud the novels the classes were studying. Their reasons for reading also appeared to be different. Often they read because there were no student volunteers or because they wanted to highlight a set of instructions. Lessons where reading was done for pleasure were not observed.
The purposes for reading to students varied considerably from Years 6 to Years 7. In Year 7 it was mainly to impart content knowledge or inform students, in Year 6 it was often to instil a love of literature and reading.

**Computers**

There were very few computers in the Year 6 classrooms observed in Stage 1. Most classrooms were equipped with only one computer. Only five classes out of the 13 used computers regularly to publish the students’ work. One school used some literature software, and the students were observed helping each other as they used it. During the case study interviews a number of issues were raised but very few students mentioned computers. Only two students showed an active interest in computers and this was primarily as keen players of computer games.

Year 7 students tended to have greater access to computers and computer rooms with at least 20 computers in them. However, again very few students spoke about the significance of using computers for learning. A few students were observed using the OASIS system in the library and Design and Technology work was completed on the computer. In these isolated cases teachers were involved directly assisting students with their use.

**Key findings**

The use of computers by students is not common in either the Year 6 or Year 7 classrooms.

Students in Year 6 have less access to computer resources in schools, particularly hardware.
Assessment

In Stage 1, Year 6 teachers used a range of assessment procedures to evaluate literacy. When investigating artefacts and asking probing questions, it was found that most teachers used such strategies as informal observations, listening to students read, administering formal and routine tests (such as cloze passages and spelling tests), and examining work samples. They also observed students writing and conducted conferences. The criteria for assessment varied. Some teachers took an "error-hunt" approach and looked specifically at spelling, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation in writing. Others focused on content and context and examined writing for aspects such as degree of creativity.

Assessment in Year 7 was more formal. Students were frequently tested at the beginning of Year 7 on their reading ability and were graded accordingly. Throughout lessons, students were often reminded about tests and the importance of assessment, although not surprisingly, this was focused on assessment of learning content not literacy. Special assignments were set as an evaluative measure and formal tests were conducted across all KLA's - most requiring a significant degree of reading. Year 7 students completed half yearly and yearly examinations. Informal assessments were completed using comprehension exercises, writing activities, tasks relating to novels, reading aloud in class, spelling tests, marking of books and homework.

Year 6 parents were informed of their child’s progress through interviews, letters, phone calls and written reports. Similarly, in Year 7 reports were sent out twice a year and the schools held regular Parent/Teacher interviews. Contact was made with the parents by phone or letter where necessary.

Year 6 reports tended to detail specific aspects of language and literacy learning including writing, spelling, handwriting, talking, listening, reading (oral) and comprehension. Most schools gave a grading for performance and effort. Year 7 reports tended to be not so specific in the categories assessed. Comprehension, writing and language, speaking and listening were mentioned in one school, but usually language and literacy were under the heading English. One school identified "ability to read competently", and "ability to write for different audiences" as significant competencies. Marks, class average and position in class were generally reported. Comments were of a general nature and related to student personalities or effort. One school
highlighted the students' literacy problems and offered suggestions for remedying them.

**Key findings**

Assessment in Year 6 tended to be varied and ongoing. It tended to be incorporated into classroom routines and not specifically carried out in isolation. Assessment in Year 7 was more formally carried out in order to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of content material. It was dependent primarily on marks for a range of assessment tasks and regular topic tests as well as half yearly and yearly assessments.

**Homework**

Our Stage 1 observations confirmed that regular homework tasks were set in ten of the thirteen Year 6 classes. Expectations were minimal and the homework involved the learning of tables or a spelling list, looking up the meaning of words, completing projects, or reading a special book for home reading. In a few schools homework sheets were given out on Monday to be completed by Friday. Homework tasks often centred on Maths and English. In one class, daily homework was written on the board and could be done during class time when other work was finished.

During Stage 2 of the project these same students when in Year 7 commented that there was more homework than in Year 6. Homework was set in almost all KLAs across all secondary schools. Homework tasks were often set at the end of the lesson. Students were assigned three main kinds of homework: finishing off work started in class to be ready for the next lesson, specific exercises (especially in Maths) to be done for the next lesson, and assignments set to be completed by a specific date. Novels for English were expected to be read at home, and Maths was cited by students as the KLA with the heaviest homework commitment.
Key Findings

It appears that students were assigned far more homework in Year 7 than in Year 6. In Stage 2 many of our case study students commented that this was the main reason that they now had difficulty finding time to read for pleasure.

The homework set was often completing unfinished work and as time consuming as it was, it was frequently ‘busy’ work and inconsequential. It frequently involved the use of literacy, but the literacy demands were not great.

Talk

Talk is closely related to literacy. It is commonly associated with reading and writing, is evident as students negotiate meaning and is integral to the support that teachers and peers offer to literacy. The most common form of talk in Year 6 was discussion or brainstorming, and this occupied over 50% of all classroom sanctioned talk observed. This occurred either as a whole class activity or in small groups which reported back to the whole class. Discussions often focussed on social issues, books read, or involved the sharing of ideas by teachers and students.

During our Stage 1 classroom observations group work and student/student interaction were frequently observed in Year 6. Students were encouraged to consult with each other on literacy matters. In all classes there was some formal group work. Students were often assigned to groups and roles were defined by the teacher, while on other occasions students formed friendship groups. In seven schools, group work occupied a large proportion of the day.

Discussion was also common in Year 7 classes (observed for 42.9% of sanctioned talk time), but class discussion rather than group work, was more common than in Year 6 classes. Where seating allowed, there was some informal discussion during lessons, and in a few lessons, especially practical subjects, students were directed to work together. However, usually in Year 7 classes teachers required students to work on their own and not talk to others. In spite of this, at times students were observed helping each other in literacy related tasks such as...
assisting one another with spelling, with unfamiliar words when reading, using computer programs, and seeking information in the library.

In both Year 6 and 7, almost half of all classroom talk was by the teacher. However, there was variation in the type of teacher talk from Year 6 to 7. In Year 6 classes directive/disciplinary talk (correcting, warning, threatening etc) occurred for 22.8% of all classroom talk time. In Year 7 this rose to 33.3% overall and was high as 63.1% at the inner city School A (see Table 6).

Teacher talk devoted to explanations or the offering of information was more limited in the secondary school (23.8% overall compared to 26.7% in Year 6). However, the contrast was even more marked in School A with this type of instructional talk only accounting for 10.1% of all talk time. This was associated with serious discipline problems which frequently meant that learning was disrupted. This became frustrating for some students.

Table 6 Comparison of proportion of time devoted to specific oral genres for primary and secondary schools by community groups

All figures represent % of time observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Inner City (High NESB)</th>
<th>Urban Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Urban Middle Class</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Sec</td>
<td>Prim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive/Discipline</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question/answer</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured Discussion</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>33.75</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appeared to be difficult to conduct class discussions in some Year 7 classes because of the behaviour problems and disruptive nature of some students. Class discussions that were held centered on an idea, concepts or revision of content. It appeared that classroom organisation (for example, the arrangement of furniture) often impinged upon the type of talk that occurred.
Another interesting finding was that Year 6 teachers allowed more interaction between students. Teacher/student interaction involved the whole class and often students sat together on the floor and "talked" with the teacher. Praise and encouragement by the teacher was evident and freely given on an individual and class basis. Teachers were often seen talking to small groups or individuals, while the class was working.

Year 7 teachers tended to offer students individual support as they walked around the room supervising work. Advice was offered and individual students were praised and encouraged. No informal whole class "chats" were observed. Some attempts were made but quickly abandoned when behavioural problems erupted.

In summary, teacher directed, question and answer type lessons were predominant in Year 7. Year 7 teachers spoke more than the Year 6 teachers and were observed giving directions, disciplining students or explaining content to be covered. In Year 6 the emphasis seemed to be on teacher and student sharing together.

**Key findings**

It appears from our observations and the case studies that it is necessary for students to respond to two different sets of teacher expectations relating to talk. In Year 6 students are expected to participate and interact with one another. In Year 7, students are more likely to be expected to answer the teacher's question and complete their work with as little interruption to other students as possible.

The amount of teacher vs student talk varied considerably. The Year 7 teachers would frequently talk at the class and respond to students on an individual basis. The Year 6 teachers tended to discuss and negotiate more with students.

**Supporting literacy**

As well as describing the literacy practices encountered in Year 6 and 7 classes our project was concerned with the description of the forms of support that teachers offer students as they read and write. Our concern was with
the role of the teacher, the responsibilities expected of students to support each other, and the resources used to support literacy and its use for learning

**The role of the teacher**

Our observations of Year 6 classrooms and our detailed case studies confirmed that Year 6 teachers tended to fill the role of facilitator far more often than explicit teacher. They were not seen by students as offering as much direct support as were their Year 7 counterparts, who taught content more directly. In Year 7, students regarded teachers as the experts in their particular content areas and most students felt they were well supported by their teachers.

Year 6 students were encouraged to seek support from their peers and they frequently worked in groups and shared their knowledge. Across the thirteen Year 6 classes, teaching styles varied considerably. In six classes, teachers directed the work 40% of the time. In the other classrooms, work was teacher directed approximately 20% of the time. In Years 6 and 7, teaching styles did not reflect the needs of the students but were more a reflection of teachers' personalities and individual teaching styles.

Observations revealed that time was not a crucial factor in the organisation of the learning experiences of the Year 6 students. Lessons seemed not to be constrained by time and they proceeded until finished. However, most teachers expressed concern that there did not seem to be enough time to meet all the literacy needs of the students. In the Year 7 classrooms, teachers were often heard reminding students of the need to get on with their work because the period was almost over. Time tended to be an important consideration, affecting what happened in the classroom.

In four Year 6 classrooms, teachers worked collaboratively for some lessons. Students with specific needs were often observed receiving additional support from the Support Teacher or the ESL teachers. In Year 7, there was some collaborative teaching but it was only in special classes designed for students with special needs, usually in literacy.

**Key findings**

It appears that there is a different set of beliefs underpinning the relationships between teachers, students and learning in
Years 6 and 7  Year 6 teachers tend to be less focussed on content and more on the processes involved in learning. They seem to appreciate the importance of social interaction as crucial to learning and consequently their relationships with students reflect this belief.

Year 7 teachers appear to be focussed on content and ensuring students complete the prescribed curriculum. They are more constrained by their classroom environment, the school routine and timetable.

In terms of the Barnes-Shemilt (1974) Transmission-Interpretation model of teaching, it is clear that the Year 6 teachers fall towards the “Interpretation” end of the spectrum. That is, they tend to define learning as a process of assimilating and accommodating new information and experiences. Year 7 teachers, on the other hand, fall towards the “Transmission” end, interpreting teaching as instruction, and learning as the acquisition of (usually) decontextualised skills. This finding is consistent with Barnes’ and Shemilt’s original 1974 findings concerning Secondary Schools.

**Student responsibility**

Year 6 students appeared to have more choice in their literacy work, and seemed to take a more active role in the ownership and selection of what they read and wrote. Responsibility extended into aspects of their schooling including running the student council, conducting school assemblies and being valued decision makers in relation to school life. Almost all the schools had some form of Peer Support or Peer Tutoring and the Year 6 students played a critical role in the success of the programs.

In Year 7 there seemed to be fewer opportunities for students to be responsible for their own learning or to be seen as decision makers in what happens in the school. They tended to work alone and carry out the instructions set by the teacher.

In Year 7, students generally did not have the opportunity to select their reading material. In only two classes, were the students given a choice of what they might read for English. The work in Year 7 in
some subjects seemed to be much the same as work completed in Year 6. Some case study students commented that "the work was not as hard" as they thought it would be, that it was "the same as they had done last year", that they had "read the book in Year 6", or that "it was easy". One of the Year 7 teachers commented that he felt they were "treating the Year 7's like babies, giving them too many worksheets, wonderwords.

Key finding

There appears to be a reduction in opportunities for many students to take responsibility for learning and the content covered as they move from Year 6 to Year 7.

Library facilities

The library is a common site for the use of literacy. Library lessons were held every week in all primary schools. The librarian was often the Release from Face to Face Teacher as well, and so taught library and research skills to Year 6 students during that time. During library lessons students were involved in research, they were read to and they borrowed books.

Over half the Year 6 students (57%) stated that they borrowed books from the school library. Almost all of these students borrowed novels. In Year 6 there was no mention of borrowing factual texts. Some students claimed not to borrow because they had a lot of books at home.

One secondary school had weekly library lessons. All schools had a few lessons at the beginning of the year to inform students about the library resources and how to access information. Primary teachers would often take students to the library for research and reading lessons. The librarian was not always involved. The library was used by some students during lunchtime. Students were involved in playing video games, chess and reading magazines. Boys tended to be involved more in these pursuits while the girls tended to borrow books.

There was a significant decrease in the number of students borrowing books in Year 7, (only 38%) compared to 57% in Year 6. This may
simply reflect the more limited opportunities that high school students have because of the lack of weekly library lessons. Almost half these students (48%) borrowed factual texts to assist with their research. The library had become far more of a place to access information and students also sought information via computers. All the students who did not borrow stated that they did not have time to read.

Key findings

The borrowing habits of students varied from Years 6 to 7. Students tended to borrow more fictional texts in Year 6 and factual texts in Year 7.

Overall library borrowing rates declined in Year 7.

Resources

Year 6 classrooms were well equipped with a variety of texts. Students had access to non-factual texts during DEAR and extensive collections of children's literature were found in most classrooms. Teachers bulk-borrowed from the library, they shared their personal collections, or made available a class library. Collections ranged from 60 books to over 300 per room. More than half the classrooms had dictionaries, encyclopedias and factual texts. Some had atlases and thesauruses as well. Reading schemes were used by eleven of the thirteen schools.

The walls of the primary classrooms were covered with students' work and commercial posters. Displays included stones, poems, TV surveys, photos of events and excursions, theme work and art work. There were also copies of school and class rules, ment charts and checklists for process writing.

Interestingly, the blackboard in Year 6 was not utilised a great deal (certainly compared with Year 7). Teachers wrote spelling lists, work to be copied and, in four classrooms, the work for the day was written on the board. There was very little use of the blackboard as an explanatory tool.

The Year 7 classrooms were fairly devoid of resources. Many teachers and classes used the same room, so teachers brought their resources.
with them. Commercial charts and rules for behaviour, use of machines etc., were displayed in some rooms. Very little student work was displayed. Novels were displayed at the back of one room where DEAR occurred, but many of the books were old and not borrowed by students. In rooms where practical subjects were taught, the teachers displayed work and charts relevant to their subject area.

In Year 7, the teacher relied a lot on the use of the blackboard or whiteboard. Notes for students to copy were written on it, points were illustrated, and problems explained.

Textbooks were frequently used in Year 7. Almost all subjects used worksheets as a way of presenting work to the students. Textbooks were also part of virtually every subject, which was in stark contrast to Year 6 classes which did not appear to use them at all. Instead, there was extensive use of worksheets and workcards.

Parents were a vital resource in some of the primary schools especially the country schools. In six schools, parents came to the Year 6 classroom to assist with a variety of tasks; for example, conferencing, computers, reading assistance. In eight of the thirteen classes, students commented that their parents helped them with their homework and project work.

Parental support was utilised in only one secondary school. They did not directly work with Year 7 students but attended computer workshops. Parents claimed they assisted their children at home with research projects, locating information, and checking school work. One parent typed her son's assignments and one stated that she regularly corrected her son's spelling.

### Key findings

There is a dramatic difference in the classroom environment from Year 6 to Year 7. Whereas in the primary classrooms student work was displayed and the room made to look inviting, secondary classrooms were generally barren. It would appear that students moving from room to room and the problems with vandalism make it difficult to display students' work and resources. Unfortunately, this does little to enhance the nature...
of the learning environment

The use of textbooks and basic aids like the blackboard vary from Year 6 to Year 7. Whereas secondary teachers use textbooks constantly and make use of the blackboard in almost every lesson, this was not the case in the Year 6 classes observed. Worksheets were used extensively in both primary and secondary.

Year 6 teachers were more inclined to use parents to assist in classrooms, perhaps because they had the opportunity of getting to know the parents over an extended period of time. However, there also appeared to be a perception that the parents of secondary students were not interested in involvement in high school, nor were their children keen to see them there.

Literacy and target groups

The provision of support to students from specific target groups was one of the concerns of this project. However, this has been a constant source of anxiety for the research team. Throughout the project, the specific target groups have been relatively 'invisible' and special provisions for them far from obvious. A reading of our report could suggest that we have not focussed attention on NESB, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, South Pacific Islander, isolated communities and children with special needs. However, this was not the case. At every stage of our research, we have attempted to both observe students from specific target groups (see Volume 3 for a sense of the diversity represented in the case studies) and the support strategies used by teachers to assist their literacy and learning. Evidence of differences compared with 'mainstream' students has been difficult to find. Our discussion of differences in literacy and support follows.

The needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students were addressed in 3 of the 13 primary schools by the Aborigina Student Support and Parents Association (ASSPA). This program is funded by DEET and involves parents and Aboriginal aides, and provides homework centres. Even though there were Aboriginal students in four of the schools in which we observed, there were no Aboriginal students in any of the Year 6 classes. While no attempt was made to exclude this target group, funding was not provided by DEET to explore the needs of this group. As a result, we did not include the presence
Volume 1 - Summary Report

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a selection criteria

One secondary school had an Aboriginal Officer and the students met with her on a one to one basis whenever needed. However, the number of Aboriginal students represented in Year 7 classes was relatively low and there was no apparent difference in the treatment or programs received by Aboriginal students compared to other students.

One group that obviously did gain special support as a consequence of schooling was that of students from isolated and rural communities. School D provided them with access to resources not available at home (or even near to home) and more individual attention was available to students, especially those in the small primary schools. However, it is fair to say that the treatment they received was no different than that available to other students in the same classroom. It needs to be noted that one disadvantage faced by small rural primary schools was the lack of Support Teachers (STs). There were no Support Teachers in the rural schools we visited, with the exception that one had a special class for students with learning difficulties. Library facilities and supplies were up to date and well stocked. The Small Schools Travelling Library supplied additional books. One secondary school in particular was involved in two major literacy programs: "Literacy and Learning" and "Frameworks." Peer tutoring and Remedial Classes were established in this school.

Attempts were made in a number of schools to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students. Seven of the 13 primary schools received Disadvantaged Schools Program funding in 1993. Most of their submissions for funding had a literacy component. The programs included Empowering Through Literacy (narrative and report writing), Writing Skills Improvement, Functional Literacy, Early Intervention, Reading and Genre Writing, and English for Everyone. Most of these programs were designed for all students within the school, and so did not focus specifically on the needs of Year 6 or transition. One added advantage for DSP schools was that they received substantial grants for the purchase of additional books and resources.

In catering for the needs of students with learning difficulties, Support Teachers were employed in all schools except those in the rural areas. Many were employed on a part-time basis, although in some large schools were employed full-time. Support Teachers carried out their duties in a variety of ways - withdrawing groups of students for special classes, assisting in classrooms, advising teachers. In some schools they organised specific programs which included
a support tuition program linking in with Home Help.

- a peer Tutoring Program (involving Year 6 students reading to Kindergarten,

- support of the Reading Recovery Program

Teachers also said they utilised the school counsellor and other teachers to assist students with difficulties. Year 6 students also offered peer support to students with specific needs. Special programs and classes were evident in Year 7, including

- a peer tutoring program for reading,

- a special reading class,

- a class for behavioural problems (this involved 2 teachers and 9 students),

- remedial classes for students in the lowest strand (involving reduced student numbers and less subject teachers)

Within Year 7 classrooms, there was little distinction made between students and their ability or capacity to carry out the prescribed tasks. Little group work was observed. If students had problems the only form of specific assistance was withdrawal from the mainstream. In such classes learning was usually well controlled with little choice of reading material or writing tasks. In most classes students read the same book irrespective of reading ability, background, special needs or interest.

Students from non-English speaking backgrounds were catered for in seven of the 13 primary schools with ESL teachers. However, few adjustments were made to the teaching/learning style of the Year 6 teachers to accommodate the language and cultural diversity of the students within the classroom. The ESL teachers were used in a variety of ways. Mostly they were employed to assist new arrivals and children in the early years. The role of the ESL teacher varied from school to school. Some were involved in team teaching, others withdrew students from school to school. Some were involved in team teaching, others withdrew students for language lessons.

The ESL teacher was only observed helping the NESB students in three classrooms. In one classroom, NESB students acted as interpreters and explained activities to other students. A Community Language Teacher was attached to three schools and helped with interpretation work for parents, teachers and students.

Two schools had books in other languages in the library. In one school,
Arabic was offered to all students in the school with the intention of raising cultural awareness.

Two secondary schools had ESL teachers. In one school, the teacher was new and worked with Year 7 students helping a teacher with Maths, English and Science while he got to know the students. In the other school, the ESL teacher worked with the English teacher and a special withdrawal group of students in English.

Only one observation was made of NESB students receiving specific instructions in addition to those given to the whole class. On this occasion, the teacher took her time in a French lesson to explain the meaning of the words in English first before translating them into French. The teacher claimed that "many NESB students do not understand the English meaning of some words, let alone translate them into French."

What was overwhelmingly obvious from our observations and the experiences of our case study students is that few adjustments are made for NESB students. The school with the greatest discipline problems was School A which had 85% NESB students representing a variety of first languages with Arabic dominating (41% of these students). In spite of this diverse population, little was done which was different from other schools with far more homogeneous populations. Not surprisingly, much of classroom time was devoted to discipline. As the results outlined above show (p 41), at this school teachers talked more often and used more disciplinary language (63 1% of all teacher talk) and less explanation (10 1%) than at any other school (see Table 6). Such a pattern can only serve to disadvantage students more who are already at a disadvantage because they are using English as a second language. While it needs to be stressed that many of the teachers in this school would see themselves as powerless to address what they see as a situation caused by the behaviour of difficult students, this cycle needs to be broken. A telling piece of evidence is that the teacher talk of the primary feeder schools for this high school was consistent with that at other schools. In fact, one school actually had a lower proportion of teacher disciplinary talk than any other primary school (see Table 7). This indicates that the language used by these students' primary teachers was quite different from that experienced in high school. This suggests that the problems being experienced in Year 7 may well be reflective of a school system and teaching styles that simply do not address the specific needs of NESB students.
Table 7 Comparison of proportion of time devoted to oral genres per primary class observed

All figures represent total class time observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inner City (High NESB)</th>
<th>Urban 'disadvantaged'</th>
<th>Urban Middle Class</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive/Discipline</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question/Answer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured discussion</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings

While additional assistance existed in most schools to cater for specific target groups, little evidence was found of adjustments being made within Year 6 and 7 classes to reflect the special needs of these students. This was particularly marked in the secondary schools due to the greater use of whole class lessons and teacher directed discussion. Extra support was usually provided through withdrawal or the provision of specialist staff.

The target groups were observed to "fit" within the classroom routine and very few measures appeared to be taken by class teachers which recognised the specific needs of these students.

At one secondary school the failure to address the needs of NESB students was particularly marked. This was associated with significant and debilitating discipline problems. Teachers used far more discipline related language and spent less time explaining and assisting learning. While it is difficult to establish to what extent the behavioural problems reflected or caused this situation, it was obvious that change was needed in the way learning was structured and supported in this school.
Conclusions and recommendations

One of the clearest (and in some senses surprising) conclusions that we can draw from our study is that the transition from primary to secondary school did not cause major problems for the vast majority of students observed in this study. One of the possible reasons for this is that in all schools in which we worked, active efforts were made to ease students across the primary/secondary school barrier. It would seem that schools and school systems have taken note of earlier reports which suggested a range of specific actions to improve the transition process. While the structural changes suggested by reports like the Plowden report (1967) such as creating middle schools have not been introduced, most of the other recommendations of this and other reports (e.g. Whitta 1975, Elts et al., 1987) have been implemented. For example, most schools now conduct orientation programs, use peer support, transfer information from primary to secondary (and vice versa), and use a variety of cross school visitation programs for staff and students in Years 6 and 7.

Our findings are remarkably consistent with those of Power and Cotterell (1979) which found differences in student perceptions of the environments from primary to secondary school, and Elts et al (1987) which found that the transition was a positive experience for most students.

Like Power and Cotterell we also found little evidence of perceived difficulty in adjusting to this different environment. Similarly, students in our study arrived in secondary school expecting it to be more difficult and challenging than primary. What we were unable to do in this study was to test whether student satisfaction declined over time as Power and Cotterell suggested occurred later in the year. There was no evidence to suggest that this was the case over the period of our visitations, but further interviewing in late Year 7 and early Year 8 would have been interesting if time had permitted.

Recommendation 1

Schools should be encouraged to continue the use of a variety of transition programs, the most effective of which would appear to be:

* the exchange of information between primary and secondary schools concerning curriculum literacy expectations, resources used, and special programs for students in various target groups.
A second significant finding in our study was that literacy is a dominant practice in both Year 6 and 7 classes. In fact, students spent 58% of their class time engaged in literacy in Year 6 and 45% of their time in Year 7. This represented more time than for any other school practice. However, while there was a similar high volume of literacy across the transition years we found that there was variation in the specific literacy practices in each year. For example, students in Year 6 wrote far more pieces of extended discourse than in Year 7 (39% compared to 28% of all writing), while Year 7 was characterised by more short answer pieces (45% compared to 33% in Year 6). Interestingly, this was far higher than that observed in the Writing and Reading Assessment Program (WRAP) conducted in South Australia (Education Department of South Australia, 1992).

There was also considerable variation in the type of reading across the grades. In Year 6 research related reading was the most prevalent form of reading (33%), whereas in Year 7 this represented only 12.9% of all observed reading. There were similar amounts of oral reading and comprehension,
but as the above description of findings details this varied in form from Year 6 to 7. In Year 6 oral reading was often from literary texts in group situations, whereas in Year 7 it was often from textbooks or the board as part of the whole class. An interesting contrast occurred in silent reading. This was more common in Year 7 (44.2% of all reading time) compared to Year 6 (29%) but it was more likely to be from textbooks in Year 7 and literature in Year 6.

Another overriding difference across the transition period was that literacy was taught far more in Year 6 as a skill in its own right, whereas in Year 7 it was more often used as a vehicle for learning. For example, comprehension sheets and cloze exercises were equally prevalent in both years, but in Year 6 they were often literacy instructional tools, while in Year 7 they were used to reinforce learning in specific KLAS. The latter finding is also consistent with previous work that has suggested that all secondary subject teachers must also be teachers of literacy (e.g., Irwin & Connors, 1989). While there is evidence that some attention is paid to spelling, vocabulary and grammar, more needs to be done. Above all, students need specific support as they grapple with a variety of written genres as they engage in extended discourse in a range of Key Learning Areas.

**Recommendation 2**

There is obviously a need for professional development in literacy for both primary and secondary teachers. Some of the existing programs such as LLIMY (South Australia), Frameworks (Cambourne & Turbill) and Content Area Literacy Learning (Curriculum Corporation) may have a role to play for secondary teachers, while a large number of relevant programs exist for primary school teachers. However, there may be a need for a new kind of course for primary teachers that places more stress on the use of literacy for learning, rather than simply the learning of literacy. The following specific issues need to be addressed:

* secondary teachers need to be more aware of primary literacy practices so that students have opportunities that go beyond Year 6 experiences.

* primary teachers need to look more closely at literacy’s role as a vehicle for learning.

* secondary teachers on the other hand need to consider whether additional attention needs to be given to instructional support for
including a range of interactive strategies that are more sensitive to the complexities of literacy

* secondary teachers need to be more aware of primary literacy practices so that students have opportunities that go beyond Year 6 experiences

Another significant finding from our work is the failure to observe many compensatory measures being taken by classroom teachers to acknowledge or meet the needs of specific target groups. This suggests that teachers still teach primarily to the 'middle' of their classes. This was particularly marked in the inner city high school which had 85% NESB students (School A). McGee's (1989) finding that lower socio-economic students take longer to adjust to secondary school than those from middle class backgrounds may be relevant here. Certainly, there were far more problems in this secondary school than occurred in its primary feeder schools the year before, and the only two students who actually experienced problems transferring to secondary were in School A.

There is also evidence to suggest that students who have specific learning styles may be more successful than others at making the transition from Year 6 to 7 (Ward et al., 1982). The finding that generally students were treated the same in our study, irrespective of special needs, raises the concern that some students might be destined to have difficulties purely because of their specific differences. This is supported in the literature by the finding that students of lower ability make slower progress when they enter high school (Paredes, 1990), although it needs to be said that we saw little difference based simply on ability in the case study students that we followed. The failure of teachers to make adjustments for NESB students (and indeed other target groups) may also reflect factors as diverse as the failure of teacher education programs to address the specific needs of various target groups, or simply the constraints of the curriculum to teach content within set time frames. There has been progress in relation to teacher education in some states. For example, in NSW no teacher will be employed from 1996 who has not done at least one core special education subject as part of their training. As well, there have been a number of significant professional development programs developed to focus on target groups (e.g. the ESL in the Mainstream Course in NSW). More recently, the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia has been attempting to negotiate the introduction of a common post graduate diploma in language education and applied linguistics across Australia's universities. This is seen as a major professional development opportunity for teachers. The development and implementation of the ESL Scales nationally may also have an impact on this area.
Recommendation 3

Universities and employing authorities in Australia should be encouraged to negotiate the development of a plan for the preservice and ongoing professional development of teachers in the following areas.

* understanding of the need to develop sound partnerships between the school and community and the skills to be able to establish such a relationship
* understanding of the needs of NESB students, students with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
* the ability to structure learning environments that meet the needs of the above target groups.
* knowledge of the cultural diversity of school communities and the skills to be able to respond to and acknowledge this diversity.

Another finding which concerned our research team was the repeated suggestion by our case study students that the work load in secondary was such that they no longer had time to read literature for pleasure. While this is only one form of literacy it is an important literacy practice which should be encouraged. It would appear that the use of DEAR in the secondary school is largely ineffective. It is our belief that schools need to give more attention to this important literacy practice. It is dependent on teachers understanding the value and purpose of such a program. It also needs a commitment from staff and availability of resources if it is to be implemented effectively.

This is consistent with the findings of Bintz (1993) whose work was motivated by the claims of some that reading interests decline in the high school years (Farr, Fay, Myers & Ginsberg, 1987; Pans, Lipson & Wixson, 1983). The concept of "resistance" that he developed is of interest to our findings. Like Bintz we found that students appeared to be losing much of their "appetite for reading" (Bintz, 1993, p. 606). His three portraits of student readers (avid, passive and reluctant) were also found to be identifiable in our study. Like the teachers in the Bintz study, many of the secondary teachers that we observed appeared to believe "that the problem of reading and reading failure was caused by students' low interest in school reading [and] that tightening classroom control over reading, forcing them to read, and holding them accountable are necessary to solve the problem" (p. 612).
Bintz argues that it does little good to force students to read materials that they have no voice in selecting. If this is done, school reading becomes an imposition, and students begin to use shortcuts as a form of active resistance to avoid specific types of literacy. Most of these behaviours were identifiable in the students from High School A.

**Recommendation 4**

Secondary schools should attempt to address the falling away of student interest in reading for pleasure. This might be addressed by:

* recognising the material that students read outside school as legitimate,
* building a component of literature sharing into Year 7 English classes,
* creating class libraries in English ‘home’ classrooms,
* encouraging secondary KLA teachers to read with and to their students,
* encouraging secondary English teachers to recommend books to their students,
* introducing (or giving more attention to) wide reading programs as part of the English syllabus,
* ensuring that books chosen for use in Year 7 have not been read in Year 6.

A further finding from our case studies was that the literacy demands of secondary school were in many cases less demanding than those in the primary school. While this may be an advantage for those students who experienced difficulty in primary (and there is some case study evidence to support this) for many students this must inevitably have the tendency to hold them back, not allowing them to be pushed into what Vygotsky (1978) calls the Zone of Proximal Development. This may in part explain the ‘flattening’ of student literacy growth that Hill, Holmes-Smith and Rowe (1993) found in their study in Victoria. Rather than growth being slowed because literacy demands are too high, growth may be slowed because students essentially experience the same type (and difficulty) of literacy practices in Year 7 as they did in Year 6. This finding is also consistent with those of the WRAP Report in South Australia and requires further investigation.
Recommendation 5

Year 7 teachers should be encouraged to conduct detailed analyses of the literacy practices of their Year 6 feeder schools and their new Year 7 students. This should include:

- readability of text and reference books used,
- literature used in English,
- the types of literacy tasks assigned across the curriculum,
- student independent reading lists,
- reading and writing expectations of Year 6 teachers,
- student literacy standards, using measures sensitive to the complexity of reading practices,
- the variety of written genres used in Year 6,
- the use of literacy in Year 6 homework tasks.

A surprising finding was that computers are rarely used in Year 6 classrooms. While usage is still relatively limited in Year 7, greater opportunities are provided. It would appear that students are simply not being given the opportunity to use computers in the primary school for much more than games. In Year 6 classroom it was rare to find more than one computer in each classroom, and this was not used frequently or for a range of purposes. In secondary schools more computers were found but these were usually in laboratories and were only available for limited numbers of periods in Design and Technology subjects.

Recommendation 8

There should be an increased emphasis given to the use of technology in classrooms. This could be achieved through strategies which include:

- encouraging university faculties of education and educational employing authorities to jointly review the preservice and inservice technology needs of teachers and implement a cohesive plan for increasing teacher computer literacy.
* the allocation of additional computer resources as a matter of some urgency for all Primary Schools. As a minimum requirement this should consist of permanent access to computers in all classrooms, a ratio of no less than one computer to ten students, a software library, and access to the electronic 'super highway' for each primary school.

* funding should be provided to fund several pilot program development projects which link preservice and inservice teacher education with the ongoing computer literacy needs of students in primary classrooms.

Our study has shown that literacy is a dominant part of classroom activities in both Year 6 and 7. Literacy is quite pervasive and is integral to learning across the curriculum. What was apparent from our work was that it varies from Year 6 to 7. The literacy practices across the transition period have commonalities, but there are also distinct differences.

Surprisingly, these differences did not seem to cause significant problems for most students in terms of their adjustment to secondary school. However, our results do raise a number of concerns in relation to the many specific target groups who traditionally have experienced difficulty with school learning, including literacy. Our work has indicated that few adjustments are made in literacy for students with specific needs. This issue alone is worthy of further study. Little appears to be done to promote literacy and reading for pleasure. Resources were found to be minimal and did not instil a desire to read but rather a need to read to access specific content information.

On a positive note, the ease with which students make the transition to high school appears to be testimony to the many excellent transition strategies that have been implemented in Australia in response to a range of reports on this topic in the last two decades. It is obvious that great progress has been made in this area and hence schools and teachers are to be commended for this progress. Nevertheless, further professional development is needed. In the final section of this report we outline options for using this report and its findings to implement effective professional development for primary and secondary teachers.
Options for Professional Development Concerning the Transition Years

It is obvious schools have done a great deal to ease transition from Years 6 to 7 and the strategies adopted are working. Very few of the students with whom we made contact over an eighteen month period experienced difficulties making the transition. The fears students in Year 6 often expressed such as the initiation process, the note taking and the homework did not emerge as the real issues of the transition process. In fact most students felt extremely positive about the variety of subjects and teachers available, the possibilities of meeting new friends, and the constant moving from room to room. They did not have difficulty with the transition either from the perspective of the work required, the literacy demands, or the adjustment to a new and different learning environment. The real concerns appear to be in relation to how literacy is defined. That is, what is done in the name of literacy, and the mechanisms that exist to support literacy growth.

The following workshops are offered as a vehicle to encourage Year 6 and Year 7 teachers to work collaboratively to explore appropriate and exciting ways of addressing the literacy demands across the transition years.

Workshop 1: Collaborative programming

Introduction

The following activity is based on the Links Program (1994). This program involves a collaborative team effort of Year 7 teachers from Holsworthy High School and its feeder schools. Teachers meet over three planning days to discuss strategies and write units of work. The units are taught in English lessons in Year 6 during the latter part of the year and then extended into
into the first weeks of Year 7 the following year

At the end of the year, secondary teachers assist in Year 6 classrooms during planned lessons on the Unit and the following year Year 6 teachers reciprocate

Teachers meet to review the program and share ideas. During discussions, expectations, curriculum outcomes, understandings and knowledge about literacy and learning are shared. The program is relevant, explores quality teaching methods and ensures continuity as students move through the transition years.

If using this workshop it is suggested that schools branch out into other Key Learning Areas during the year.

This overview is extracted from an unpublished paper by Michael Fischer, (1994) Head teacher English at Holsworthy High School. It is used with his permission.

What

Plan a collaborative unit of work

How

Participants Year 6 and Year 7 teachers

Set reading to be completed prior to first meeting. Participants to nominate a section of the report based on Year 6 and Year 7 observations. For example, one person might read Literacy Practices from Stage 1 and Stage 2, another might read oral genres etc.

Discuss and brainstorm the range of literacy practices mentioned in the report

Identify a range of literacy outcomes for Years 6 and 7 from relevant state primary and secondary syllabi

Explore how the strategies that have been identified in the report support the achievement of these outcomes.
Negotiate a topic for exploration during the final 5 weeks of Year 6 and the first 5 weeks of Term 1 in Year 7

Use the model developed in the Links Program as a starting point (See Appendix A)

Set aside time to review and adapt this model prior to teaching it. Arrange a mutual time for class visits to assist with the teaching of the unit.

Workshop 2: Writing genres

Writing was a common feature of all classrooms observed and took many varied forms. It accounted for 24.8% of the observed class time in Year 6 and 19.5% in Year 7.

Opportunities for extended discourse (writing which involved the writer's intellectual engagement) were less evident in Year 7. Short answer responses dominated the writing experiences of students in Year 7. In Year 6 students were exposed to a more even spread of experiences in the three categories of writing.

In both Years 6 and 7, the teacher was regarded as the audience and the writing was primarily teacher directed.

What

This workshop is designed to explore the various writing genres used in Years 6 and 7 with the intention of extending what is currently happening to include greater opportunities for extended discourse across a range of writing experiences and for more diverse audiences.

How

Participants Year 6 and Year 7 teachers across a range of Key Learning Areas.

Preparation Participants are requested to bring samples of students'
writing to be shared

**Pre Reading**  Writing in Stage 1 and Stage 2 of this report

**Ask**  How does this report compare to what is currently happening in your classroom?

**List**  the variety of writing genres you have used in the past week  
Brainstorm these

**Complete**  the *Content Area Writing Demands* table (see Appendix B) 
Teachers attempt to indicate how often each form of writing is used in their subjects  
Share results of the questionnaire

In terms of the writing categories introduced in the report (see p 32) have teachers categorise the forms of writing used in their subject and to identify for whom this type of writing is usually written (Audience) 
(see Appendix B)

**List the students' writing samples** according to these categories

**Discuss**  what you understand about the writing experiences of students across Years 6 and 7

**Read**  the related writing sections of the relevant state English Syllabi

**Ask**  What is expected of students in Year 6/Year 7 re writing experiences?

How can these experiences be improved?

**Workshop 3: Reading**

This workshop consists of three sections

- Exploring teachers' beliefs about reading as identified in the strategies used,
- Improving the resources and facilities available to support reading,
Compiling a list of texts and authors covered in primary and secondary schools to avoid unnecessary repetition.

The purposes for reading to students varied considerably from Years 6 to Years 7. In Year 7 it was mainly to impart content knowledge or inform students. In Year 6 it was often to instil a love of literature and reading.

Our report indicated that students have far fewer opportunities to read for pleasure in secondary school, and there is less attention given to encouraging them to read. Students appeared to have more direct classroom access to a greater variety of texts in Year 6 and appeared to make good use of these resources. In secondary, there were few texts available for borrowing in classrooms, and students were rarely observed borrowing books for personal reading from the library.

Generally, girls tend to read more than boys, and on entering secondary school, the amount of reading by boys decreased considerably.

Reading in Year 7 was very much oriented to content area learning, whereas in Year 6, it was typically focused on the teaching of generic reading skills.

However, the range and diversity of activities was not significantly different from Years 6 to 7. Much of what was done in the name of literacy in Year 7 had been integral to the work completed in Year 6.

Reading was a critical component of all lessons across the KLA's in both Year 6 and 7.

Overall, the type of reading experiences in Year 7 were slightly narrower and more teacher directed than those of Year 6, where students had more choice in the ways they responded.

Part 1

What

In this workshop teachers will explore their understandings and beliefs about the reading process. Ways to promote recreational reading, particularly for boys, will be addressed as will the issue of replication of texts from Years 6 to 7.
**How**

Pre reading

Year 6 teachers read the Stage 2 section on reading and the Year 7 teachers read the Stage 1 section on reading

**Ask.** List the possible assumptions these teachers have about reading

**Combine** the two lists and **compare** what is understood from the perspective of Year 6 reading experiences and Year 7 experiences

**Identify** the strategies that serve to promote an interest in reading

**Ask** What does your school do to promote recreational reading?

What does your school do to promote reading for boys?

How can schools improve students' reading?

**Part 2**

**What**

In order to promote reading it is essential that the resources and the support structures that exist within the school be considered. This workshop is an opportunity for teachers to examine the facilities, particularly the library, as a means of stimulating an interest in reading

**How**

Read the section on Supporting Literacy Practices in Volume 2 of the Report

**Preparation** A librarian from each of the school sites is requested to do a 5-10 minute "show and tell" explaining how the facilities are promoted and used by the Year 6/7 students

**Setting** A library (primary or secondary)

**Ask** What can we do to improve the existing facilities, share resources and promote an interest in reading? Other resources should also be considered such as the use of computers (See relevant section of
Volume 2), and support services (See relevant section of Volume 2)

**Brainstorm a list of practical strategies**

**Part 3**

**What**

This workshop is designed to have teachers of Year 6 and 7 students compile a list of texts covered in order to avoid unnecessary repetition

**How**

Year 6 and 7 teachers prepare a list of texts and authors covered in the curriculum

Teachers of Year 6 students compile a list of favourite authors and a comprehensive list of books read by students throughout the year

**Share** the lists and discuss other alternatives and ideas for responding to texts

**Refer** to the section on Reader Response in Volume 2 of the Report

**Workshop 4: Group work**

**What**

This workshop is designed to have teachers consider the role of group work in learning and how best to accommodate such a strategy within their classroom routine

**How**

Working in **pairs**, **divide** Stages 1 and 2 into sections

Each pair **reads** through the nominated section **identifying** what could
be regarded as constraints to group work in the Primary and Secondary contexts

List these constraints, for example, lack of space, discipline problems

Regroup and combine lists. List constraints on the board and next to each constraint list possible ways of overcoming or dealing with the problem. Discuss

Arrange for teachers to spend time in classrooms observing those who feel comfortable using collaborative group work

**Workshop 5: Examining teacher beliefs about literacy, learning and teaching**

In the recommendations of this report, a number of issues are identified including the following:

- Secondary teachers need to be more aware of primary literacy practices so that students have opportunities that go beyond Year 6 experiences.

- Primary teachers need to look more closely at literacy's role as a vehicle for learning.

- Secondary teachers on the other hand need to consider whether additional attention needs to be given to instructional support for specific literacy practices.

- Both primary and secondary teachers need new strategies to assess literacy practices as part of the teaching and learning process, including a range of interactive strategies that are more sensitive to the complexities of literacy.

In order for these issues to be addressed, teachers need to consider what they believe about literacy, learning, and teaching. It is these beliefs that drive what occurs in the classroom, including how the learning environment is organised, how teachers interact with students and the types of assessment that is conducted.
What

To examine teacher beliefs as they are reflected in the literacy experiences made available to students in Years 6 and 7.

How

Working in pairs, take a section of Stage 1 of this report and its corresponding section in Stage 2 and identify the differences in literacy practices from Year 6 to 7. Ask participants to identify the differences in terms of what is revealed about the teachers' beliefs about literacy, learning and teaching.

Regroup and discuss.
References

NSW Department of School Education (1992) The Following-on Project, Department of School Education Sydney

Alvermann, D E, O'Brien, D G, & Dillon, D R (1990) What teachers do when they say they're having discussions of content area reading assignments A Qualitative Analysis Reading Research Quarterly, Vol 25, No 4, pp 296-322

Atwell, N (1987) In the Middle Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents Heinemann Portsmouth, (NH)


Beavis, C A (1981) Secondary Teacher looks at a Primary School English in Australia, No 56, July

Beazley, K E et al Education in Western Australia Report of the Committee of Inquiry (Beazley Report) Perth Ministry of Education


Carney, T H & Munsie, L (1992) *Talk to a Literacy Learner Programme* Sydney UWS Nepean


Education Department of South Australian (1992) *Writing Reading Assessment Program (WRAP)* Adelaide Education Department of South Australia


Epstein J, & Salinas K (1991) New Directions in the Middle Grades *Childhood Education* Annual Themed Issue


Farr, R Fay, L, Myers, J & Ginsberg, M (1987) *Then and now Reading achievement in Indiana 1944-45, 1976 and 1986* Bloomington (IN) Center on Reading and Language Studies

Fischer, M (1994) *The Links Project* Unpublished paper describing a program at Holsworthy High School


Furniss, E & Green, P (Eds) (1991) *The Literacy Connection* Melbourne Eleanor Curtain


Geertz, C (1973) Thick description Toward an interpretive theory of culture In C Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures*, New York Basic Books


Glaser, B G & Strauss, A L (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory strategies for qualitative research* Chicago (IL) Aldine

Goodall, J . (1981) *Leap into the Unknown or All in their Stride? Transition — Years 6 to 7* *English in Australia*, No 56 July


Gregory, T B & Smith, G R (1987) *High Schools as Communities The Small School Reconsidered* Bloomington (IN) Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation


Lincoln, Y S & Guba, E G (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* California SAGE Publications Inc

Gunter, A (1981) *Between Two Schools A Question of Judgement Reflection on the Transition Workshop* *English in Australia* No 56 July


Horner, J & Moore, F (1981) *Research into Reading A Study of Reading in the Transition between Primary and Secondary Schools in Tasmania* *English in Australia* No 58 December


Irvin, J L & Connors N A (1989) *Reading Instruction in Middle Level Schools*
Results of a US Survey  
*Journal of Reading*, January, Vol 32, No 4

Jensen, C (1984) *Transition from Primary to Secondary School* Sydney Inner City Education Centre


Keeford, R (1981) From Narrative to Note-taking  Differential Demands in Writing Tasks Year 6 to Year 7  *English in Australia*, No 58 December


McGee, C (1989) Crossing the Divide  Transition from Primary to Secondary School  *Set, Research information for teachers*, No 1

Mekos, D (1989) *Students' Perceptions of the Transition to Junior High  A Longitudinal Perspective* Paper presented at 1989 Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development  Indiana, USA

Mertin, P , Haebich, E , & Lokan, J (1989) Everybody will be Bigger than Me'  Children's Perception of the Transition to High School  *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, Vol 6 No 2

Moffett, J (1981) *Coming on Centre English Education in Evolution* Montclair,NJ Boyton Cook
Moffett, J (1968) *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* Boston Houghton Mifflin

Morris, J M (1975) *Reading in the Later Years. Reading A Journal for the study and improvement of reading and related skills* Vol 9 No 2, June


Pans, S, Lipson, G & Wixson, K (1983) *Becoming a strategic reader Contemporary Educational Psychology, 8 (3) pp 293-316

Paredes, V (1990) *Sixth Graders in Elementary and Middle Schools A Longitudinal Study* Austin (TX) Austin Independent School District, Office of Research and Evaluation


Power, C & Cotterell, J (1979) *Students in transition* Adelaide ERDC


*Secondary Literacy Across Curricula, (1993)* Queanbeyan (NSW) Queanbeyan Education Resource Centre, Dept of School Education


Tasmanian Education Department & the National Curriculum Development Centre (1982) Improving Reading The Transition from Primary to High School (Language Development Project) Hobart Tasmanian Education Department

Thomson, J (1987) Understanding Teenagers' Reading Sydney Methuen


Wilson, S (1983) The use of ethnographic techniques in educational research Perspectives on Case Study 4 Ethnography, Geelong (Vic) Deakin University Press

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample unit from the LINKS Program

Humour

About the unit

This unit has been designed for use in classrooms where students are mostly working towards Level 3 outcomes as identified in K-6 English Syllabus and Support Document.

The teaching and learning activities are also appropriate for students working towards Levels 2 and 4.

This unit explores the concept of humour in its many different forms including poems, rhymes, riddles, stories and narratives. It also looks at how humour is developed through literary and media texts.

The learning experiences provide students with opportunities to develop skills and understandings in speaking and listening, reading and writing.

Level 3 Statement

Students who have achieved level three interpret and communicate familiar ideas and information for particular purposes and known audiences. They explore the features of different types of spoken, written and visual texts and experiment with ways of shaping their ideas to suit topics, purposes and audiences.

Students can use a range of types of spoken texts for different purposes in the classroom and school. They usually use language that others understand and are capable of adapting their language to suit their purposes.

Students can read texts produced for young readers. They recognise and discuss some relationships between ideas, information and events in these texts and in some visual texts. They have a grasp of simple symbolic meanings and stereotypes and of the purposes and characteristics of different types of texts. They can find ways of understanding written and visual texts and use methods demonstrated by the teacher for finding information sources and using them.

Students write longer texts using ideas and information about familiar topics. They recognise and can use many of the linguistic structures and features of a small range of text types. Students experiment with ways of planning, reviewing and proofreading their writing demonstrated by the teacher and make attempts at spelling new words.

Unpublished program developed at Holsworthy High School (NSW). Used with permission.
Overview of the unit outcomes

**Values and Attitudes**

Students will
- show interest in stories and information about other places, times, cultures
- create jokes, rhymes, funny stories to entertain themselves and others
- respond imaginatively to texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talking &amp; Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Text and Context**
3.1 Recognises that certain types of spoken texts are associated with particular contexts and purposes
3.2 Interacts for specific purposes with people in the classroom and school community using a small range of text types
3.3 Recognises common patterns used in different kinds of spoken texts
4.1 Considers aspects of context, purpose and audience when speaking and listening in familiar situations
4.2 Interacts confidently
| **Text and Context**
3.6 Identifies simple symbolic meanings and stereotypes in texts and discusses their purpose and meaning
3.7 Recognises common patterns used in different kinds of written texts
3.9 With teacher guidance uses several strategies for identifying resources and finding information in texts
**Learning to Read**
4.7
3.10 Reading independently using self correction strategies such as:
- reading on
- referring back
- sounding out
- using contextual knowledge
- using contextual knowledge
4.10a
4.10b
4.11
**Grammar**
3.12 Identifies and uses the linguistic structures and features characteristic of a range of text types to construct meaning
| **Text and Context**
3.13 Recognises that certain text types and features are associated with particular purposes and audiences
3.14 Experiments with interrelating ideas and information when writing about familiar topics within a small range of text types
4.13
**Learning to Write**
(Handwriting & word processing)
3.15a Uses joined letters when writing in NSW Foundation Style
3.15b Uses word processing programs to edit texts
3.16 Experiments with strategies for planning, reviewing and proofreading own writing
4.15a
4.15b
**Spelling**
3.17 Consistently makes informed attempts at spelling
4.17
**Grammar**
3.18 Controls most basic features of written language
4.18

*English K-6 Syllabus & Support Document pp 59-65 Board of Studies NSW North Sydney 1994*
HUMOUR 6 - 7

6 Jokes and Riddles for Radio

Jokes/Riddles

* Paul Jennings and others
* Short Story
  - Manilla
  - Novel
* Snoopy
  - Garfield
  - etc

Cartoons

Authors

Other Media.
  - e.g. TV or Movie

Funny incidents instead of movies
  - School Magazine/
  - Newspaper

Possible act and film

6 & 7

Visiting Show
  - e.g. Umbilical
  - Brothers

6 Radio Play
7 Theatre Sports

6 Possible Audience

6 Lumenicks
Dahl

Poems

Selection
  - The Baby Rap
  - Puppy Poem
  - Frogs are better than Dogs
  - Roger McGough

67

6 2nd Unit
Wks 5 - 10

Volume I - Summary Report
## TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR 6</th>
<th>YEAR 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Share funny anecdotes and retell funny stories</td>
<td>* Brainstorm What makes me laugh? e.g. joke sharing What makes our class laugh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Brainstorm Why do we laugh? What is funny? What is humour? What is a sense of humour?</td>
<td>* Class Mind map to be displayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Mind Map (see appendix)</td>
<td>* Mind Map (see appendix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Funny incidents Year 6 funny incidents - get ready to write for our magazine later in unit</td>
<td>* Mind Map (see appendix)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Poems</strong></th>
<th><strong>Poems</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Limericks - read and discuss Write own using models</td>
<td>* Baby Rap and a selection of more difficult poems read respond record on tape perform illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Revolving Rhymes (Dahl)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Authors</strong></th>
<th><strong>Authors</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Paul Jennings and SHORT STORY selection read, re-tell study structure write own short story guided reading</td>
<td>* Matilda (novel humorous writing how to be a parent make up funny accidents Matilda can do to parents cancanatures stereotypes illustrations character study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td>* Wide reading - directed humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Note:** The content provided is a structured list of teaching and learning activities for Year 6 and Year 7, focusing on humor and storytelling. The activities include sharing anecdotes, brainstorming about laughter, creating mind maps, reading and discussing poems, and exploring various authors and their works.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR 6</th>
<th>YEAR 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jokes/Riddles</strong></td>
<td><strong>Examine part of The Cartoonist (Betsy Byars)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* discuss differences</td>
<td>- describe cartoons drawn or drawn by them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* find a funny joke/riddle and retell to class</td>
<td>- create own comic strip characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* look at several different models of riddles - write own jokes, riddles</td>
<td>- turn comic strip into story, tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>- true passage with comic strips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cartoons</strong></td>
<td><strong>Drama</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* independent reading of a caney of cartoons, comic strips</td>
<td>* 'Meanwhile Back at the Ranch'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* class survey of favourite TV cartoons</td>
<td>- select a play and perform it on radio station/assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* cloze passage with comic strips</td>
<td>* Visit to H H S - view Theatre Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* write a sequel to a comic strip</td>
<td>- view visiting show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drama</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other Media</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* 'Meanwhile Back at the Ranch'</td>
<td>* Produce items to be published in School Magazine - e.g. funny incidents, jokes, riddles, cartoons, short stories, limericks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- select a play and perform it on radio station/assembly</td>
<td>* View variety of appropriate contemporary comedy - e.g. <em>Mr Bean</em> 'Best of Red Faces', <em>The Simpsons</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Visit to H H S - view Theatre Sports</td>
<td>* View film - e.g. <em>Cool Runnings</em>, <em>Mrs Doubtfire</em> - viewing for enjoyment, entertainment, class survey re funniest scene in movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- view visiting show</td>
<td>* Fun drama games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Media</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Produce items to be published in School Magazine - e.g. funny incidents, jokes, riddles, cartoons, short stories, limericks</td>
<td>* View variety of appropriate contemporary comedy - e.g. <em>Mr Bean</em> 'Best of Red Faces', <em>The Simpsons</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* View film - e.g. <em>Cool Runnings</em>, <em>Mrs Doubtfire</em> - viewing for enjoyment, entertainment, class survey re funniest scene in movie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: Content Area Writing Demands

**CONTENT AREA WRITING DEMANDS**

Tick the types of writing and written material used in your content area
Feel free to add others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>surveying texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graphs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diagrams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flow charts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timelines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line drawings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paintings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photographs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maps-contour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maps-road</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maps-world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sketches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cartoons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alphabeticalising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>application forms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEAR/USSR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>table of contents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>researching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poetry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>factual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspapers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wonderwords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crosswords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ledgers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>data bases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spreadsheets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>definitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer's writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encyclopedia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textbooks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recipes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job sheets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timetables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pamphlets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jokes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program guides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excursion activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advertisements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public notices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glossaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speeches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draft writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemical formulas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physics formulas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maths formulas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = Frequently  S = Sometimes  N = Never