

Winter Research Seminar

Goodies and baddies: Young children's independent writing

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Our research project: Early childhood and years 1 to 3 of primary school.

- Survey returned from 42 teachers in years 1 to 3 primary school.
- Interviewed 4 primary teachers
- Interviewed 33 children in years 1 to 3 primary classes in three different schools. Range of deciles



- This presentation based on our interviews with children and their explanations of their independent writing
- All teachers of these children included independent choice of writing topics for some days of the week. Generally after the weekend.



From the children's data:

- Values ...New Zealand Curriculum page 10 (for primary and secondary)
- Identity
- Enjoyment/creativity ... children given choice
- Motivation and engagement (several teachers indicated this in the survey)
- Thinking critically (Literacy Learning Progressions and Reading Standards)



Anne Haas Dyson (1977)



Children she observed used symbols of popular culture such as media superheroes “to achieve a sense of personhood and social belonging, of control and agency in a shared world” (p. 2).

This allowed children to “assume identities within stories that revealed dominant ideological assumptions about relations between people – between boys and girls, adults and children, between people of varied heritages, physical demeanors and societal powers. These stories reflected the immediate values and interests of some children – but distorted those of others” (p. 2).

Interviews with children in pairs



- Many wrote about and talked about Superheroes.
- “They save people”
- “They beat all the baddies up and they put them in jail”
- “They can fly”
- “Goodies. They save people”
- Barbie “She’s pretty and she can sing and I like singing. She helps others”

Sample 1 Scotty

Ben 10 is my Fveorat gaem

Ben 10
is my
Fveorat gaem

Ben 10 is my favourite

game.

From the Literacy learning Progressions Knowledge and skills after one year at school (working within level 1 of New Zealand Curriculum

Child can:

- Use vocabulary drawn from his own oral language
- Use developing phonemic awareness to aurally segment words into syllables
- Use developing phonemic awareness to aurally segment one-syllable words into individual phonemes
- Use his developing visual memory to accurately write some high frequency words
- Forming upper case and lower case letters correctly
- Compose simple sentences



- Work on
- Composing some compound sentences (using conjunctions such as and or but)
- Using capital letters and full stops
- Add detail
- Keep working on phonemic awareness

Sample 2 Milo (7)

*I am a superhero and I kill evil people
and I always win and the bad guys always
lose and my name is Xman.*

I am a superhero and
I kill evil people
and I always win.
(and) the bad guys
always lose. and My
name is Xman.



- His original writing shows he has joined five sentences into one over-long compound sentence.
- The teacher has done some editing to improve his structure.

Sample 3 Salesi



I went to the movies

with my ^{Aun}ante and I

watched the Green hugin

and they say FS ^{Words} WOODS ✓

Sample 4 Islay (6 years 1 month)

W adwom

ze
she

can

File
fly

and

ze
she

can

zaxpedl.



save people.



For Sample 4: Knowledge, skills and attitudes from the Literacy Learning Progressions

- Hold an idea in her head long enough to write it down
- Convey a simple idea
- Write from left to right then return sweep (directionality)
- Form letters accurately (some reversal)
- Draw on her own oral language vocabulary
- Hear and say initial and final sounds...
- ...And some dominant medial sounds in words
- Make a close attempt to encode words by using her developing knowledge of phoneme-grapheme relationships
- Use her developing visual memory to spell some known words accurately (can, and)
- Attempt to record sounds in sequence
- Attempt to use capital letters and full stops
- Title
- Compound sentence
- Read her writing to herself and others

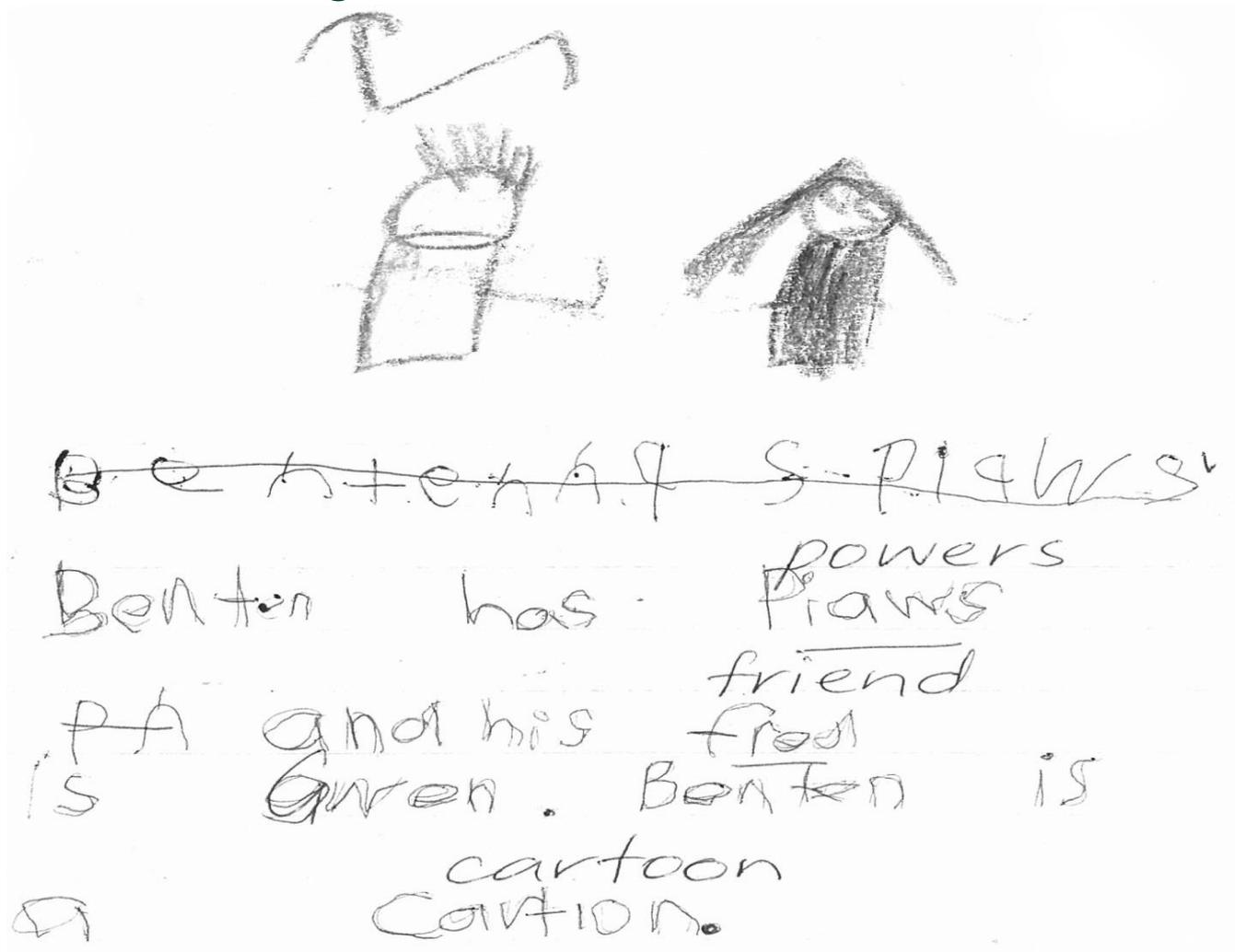


- This is technical detail. Discuss the story and the values. Refer to transcript. The two girls chose female characters (Gwen and Wonder Woman) who fought baddies.



Sample 5 Elvira

- What does this sample tell us about her writing skills and Knowledge?





- Values
- Identity
- Motivation



Dyson argues that educators can both foster and influence interpretive processes by children “if school curricula are ‘permeable’ - not impervious – to children’s playful appropriations and critical examinations of diverse cultural material”.

Dyson



- describes free writing time where children “took refuge” in stories that adults may see as unimaginative and derivative and even dangerous as they may involve complexities of power and identity. Dyson argues that “children’s imaginative play is all about freedom from their status as powerless children” their stories allow them “to fashion worlds in which *they* make decisions about characters and plots, actors and actions”

- Dyson, A. H. (1997). *Writing superheroes: Contemporary childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.