A Curriculum Whāriki of Multimodal Literacies

Wadestown Kindergarten’s Centre of Innovation Research

Final Research Report prepared for the Ministry of Education

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Wadestown Kindergarten was privileged to be chosen as one of six early childhood centres to participate in the third round of the Ministry of Education’s Centre of Innovation (COI) project. This project saw the kindergarten entering into a three-year research project investigating the impact of multimodal literacies on teaching and learning.

This journey has seen us focusing on an innovation and interest of ours. We are grateful that we have been given an opportunity to explore our interest and ideas around multiple literacies in more depth. This journey has been an exciting one, and one that by no means could we have travelled on our own. We are grateful for the huge support we have received. So we would like to acknowledge and thank a number of people.

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Executive summary

Wadestown Kindergarten’s Centre of Innovation (COI) action research project was undertaken from 2005 to 2008. The aim of the project was to explore the nature and roles of different literacy modes in communicative competence and in shaping the ways in which children view and operate in the world. We also examined how literacy modes are mediated by the people, places and practices in the kindergarten, home and wider community.

The three research questions were:

- What does multimodal communicative competence mean in an early childhood setting?
- How do multimodal literacies interact and support each other at individual, interpersonal and community levels?
- What is the role of people, places and practices in mediating children’s use of multimodal literacies?

The action research approach involved the teachers, research associates, and the senior teacher in gathering data about multimodal literacies at Wadestown Kindergarten, and discussing and analysing the data within the research team and with parents. The approach had elements in common with “participatory action research” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It helped strengthen the Wadestown Kindergarten community of practice and engaged people in examining their knowledge and understandings; it was practical and collaborative; it involved collaborative critique; and it aimed “to help people investigate reality in order to change it” (p. 567).

Data included:

- case studies of six children, drawing on pedagogical documentation used in each child’s assessment portfolio, video recordings of each child’s literacies over 18 months, and baseline and final interviews with parents;
- a parent focus group meeting to discuss ideas about multimodal literacies;
- video recordings and analysis of curriculum events where multimodal literacies were evident;
- interviews with parents, teachers, research associates and the senior teacher, and discussions with children.

This data was discussed by the research team and analysed thematically in relation to the research questions. The analysis was framed within key theoretical ideas from social semiotics, a field concerned with the study of sign and symbol systems and how these operate in society. In particular, we drew on the notion of Kress (2000) and others that the properties of different literacies offer differing capacities or affordances that facilitate different kinds of communication and learning. These affordances are not only linked to the material properties of a literacy mode, but also to contextual dimensions, including how literacies are valued in a context, and the way affordances may be specific to a child or group of children or a particular situation.
What does multimodal communicative competence mean in an early childhood setting?

We drew predominantly on the parent focus group discussion and a particular example of a child’s (Joe) spatial motoric competence (as manifested in his bike riding interests and activities) to explore the permeability of boundaries between what constitutes traditional print-based and verbal literacies, non traditional literacies (such as creative arts, and new literacies such as ICT) and what some would regard as “non” literacies (such as spatial motoric competence). We argue that spatial motoric competence represented significant features of Joe’s ways of knowing and communicating, in particular a practical “know how” in relation to dynamics of motion and space. We drew on other studies to suggest that there may be linkages between spatial motoric competence, cognitive functioning and specific abilities such as the ability to make sense of text. We showed how Joe’s bike riding interests and activities acted as a key strand of support which the mode of communication was able to be mapped onto. The example also illustrated the immense value of drawing on parents’ “funds of knowledge”, in particular in interpreting and analysing the research data, and discussing family experiences and values.

We used this example and our readings to put forward our main argument that we need to take a broad view of literacies as modes of communication, conceptualisation and meaning making. We argued the importance of becoming aware that we in early childhood education may favour certain semiotic modes at the expense of others. In order to support all children to become multiliterate communicators, we need to notice and understand children’s favoured semiotic modes so that we can support and expand them. We argued that understanding will be enhanced through pedagogical discussion with parents.

How do multimodal literacies interact and support each other at individual, interpersonal and community levels?

Our investigation of the interactions amongst literacies explored the affordances that different modes and modal combinations offered individual children, and the broader roles different modes may play in helping shape learning and learners in the kindergarten context. In particular, we examined:

- the affordances offered by drawing for three children, its combination with other modes, and the role of drawing as a channel for learning and communication. For these three children, drawing was used to portray states of being and complex conceptual ideas. It was through discussion with the child and/or parents that we learned of its complexity, and how children’s competence related to home values. Drawing seemed to have particular properties that enabled exploration of emotional states of being and conceptual ideas to be portrayed “at a glance”. Drawing was interwoven with other modes: for example, with gesture and explanation by one child, with writing and graphic conventions by another.

- different usages made of drama, its combination with other modes, and its spread to engaging various members of the kindergarten community. Drama offered children affordances for social learning as children negotiated roles, collaborated and improvised together, and
explored what it felt like to be in role; for cognitive learning such as making conceptual shifts in positioning others within role; and for enjoyment and creative imagining. Both fantasy drama and social-realistic drama were used and offered considerable opportunity for children to explore the world. We did not study the use of drama as performance and the associated affordances, although we see such uses as worthy of investigation.

• ways in which one child’s interest-driven enquiry drew on a range of modes and modal combinations and involved various members of the kindergarten community. This child’s interest acted as a powerful mechanism for learning and for integrating different modes, including construction and design, and use of digital technology as a tool for communication and enquiry.

In general, these different modes conveyed meaning in different ways, and when used in combination, augmented the ways in which the children communicated, and strengthened children’s thinking.

The role of people, places and practices in mediating children’s use of multimodal literacies

Our third research question took us from investigating the affordances of particular modes and modal combinations to considering the affordances of particular environments and practices. We found some characteristics that seemed to have helped the teachers to establish a culture of contribution and enquiry that flowed through into the curriculum. Affording teachers at Wadestown Kindergarten held and conveyed an openness to the contributions and potential contributions of all participants. They were sensitive to children’s preferred literacies and developed an awareness through the COI research of the capacities of different literacy modes to facilitate communication and conceptualisation in different ways. They also conveyed a genuine interest in and enjoyment of children’s enquiries and endeavours, and acted to reinforce these.

A dominant commitment to a pedagogy built on relationships underpinned the curriculum. Teachers listened “with all their senses” and encouraged children to be listeners too. Through the course of the project, teachers made it more possible for parents to contribute to interpreting children’s learning and development, where the traditional teacher as “expert” in this field was replaced by a teacher who was open to learning from the insights and experiences of parents and whānau. This occurred through discussion focused on pedagogical documentation both within a parent focus group meeting and a semi-structured interview with parents in their home context.

The kindergarten also had very extensive material resources to support differing literacy modes and support children to develop their ideas.

Implications

Notions of literacy

Our study has highlighted a range of literacy practices and how they function. We believe that it is important for those of us with responsibility for early years education, including primary and early childhood teachers, to become conversant with different conceptions of literacy, because of the
implications these different views have for children’s learning. Understanding how children use and combine different literacies needs to be a prominent part of the way teachers are encouraged to look at young children.

**Literacies within family contexts**

Our investigation of family literacies identified the value for teacher understanding and their support for children’s learning of being open-minded about family and community contributions to the life of the early childhood setting, and of having pedagogical discussions with parents aimed at finding out about parent views and interpretations of pedagogical documentation. Semi-structured interviews with parents were an especially powerful means to investigate literacies within a family context. These discussions required teachers to be open to learning from parents. We suggest that pedagogically framed “interviews” with parents could be prioritised as a core pedagogical tool, and held with all families after teachers have got to know the child well.

**Cultural literacy**

We did not investigate literacy practices and traditions within diverse ethnic communities, how to access and learn from diverse ethnic communities, or how to integrate diverse cultural understandings and practices within the curriculum. Nor did we examine how the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi were reflected in the literacy practices of the kindergarten. We suggest it would be worthwhile to investigate notions of cultural literacy, and explore pedagogy and environments that may help diverse cultural literacies to flourish.

**Teachers as enquirers**

Our findings suggest that an enquiring teacher shows an openness, a willingness to examine their own and kindergarten practices in a critical way (alone and with others) and a preparedness to give things a try. Teachers explore ideas of being multi-modal themselves, and become aware of their own preferences.

Central to the research process was the idea of facilitating dialogue between theory and practice so that each served to inform and deepen understanding of the other. Our experience of the COI project also pointed to the value and importance of gathering and analysing documentation and data from the kindergarten and home setting, finding out about divergent views through formal and informal means, using a range of methods, and analysis that was done alone, and within a group, including with parents. The use of video was a particularly powerful medium for analysis, allowing curriculum episodes to be revisited and scrutinised from different angles. We argue that if we are to build a “culture of enquiry” for all teachers, we also need facilitating environments to enable such a culture to flourish, including tools for enquiry and access to professional expertise.
Introduction

The research reported here is of a three-year action research project in Wadestown Kindergarten. We analysed the nature and roles of different modalities in communicative competence and in shaping ways of viewing and operating in the world, and how these are mediated by the people, places, and practices in the kindergarten and wider community.

Aims and rationale

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki*, recognises communicative competence in young children as not only verbal, but as including: “an increasingly elaborate repertoire” of nonverbal forms of communication, e.g., the language of images, art, dance, drama, mathematics, movement, rhythm, and music (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 72).

The title metaphor of *Te Whāriki*, in which the construction of curriculum is likened to the process of weaving, is a metaphor we first drew on in our original application to illustrate our ideas about how multiple literacies could contribute to the kindergarten curriculum. To illustrate the metaphorical weaving of curriculum, we used the photos below, which show an actual weaving being created at the kindergarten, an enterprise involving children working with and alongside other children, and with and alongside parents to create a mixed-media, woven hanging. We used the photos to represent the way we see *Te Whāriki* positioning children and families, alongside teachers, as key players in the weaving of the curriculum whāriki.

**Figure 1** Weaving a wall hanging at Wadestown Kindergarten
As explained in our application:

The weaving is for us a metaphor of the way we envisage multiple literacies helping facilitate the contributions of our learning community to the curriculum whāriki. The vertical strands of the weaving . . . represent multiple literacies. Through these strands the contributions of children, teachers and families are woven. The more literacies (vertical strands) used, the more extended this enables contributions to be, with each strand serving to support others. (Wadestown Kindergarten, 2005)

The decision to focus on multiple literacies was based on research team members seeing modes such as gesture, drama, music, dance, drawing as playing a key role in the way children experience and make sense of the world and communicate. Alongside this were the common concerns within the research team about the privileging of print-based and verbal literacy, and more recently technological literacy, at the expense of other modes. As Kress (2000) argues, a focus on verbal literacies alone “…has meant a neglect, an overlooking, even a suppression of the potentials of all the representational and communicational modes…and a neglect equally, as a consequence, of the development of theoretical understandings of such modes” (p. 157).

As the project progressed, as we read more extensively, and as we discussed our ideas about multiple literacies amongst ourselves, with other colleagues, and with a focus group of Wadestown parents, we were increasingly drawn to the term multimodal literacy in preference to the term multiple literacies. The term mode can be seen to denote the form in and through which meaning is made and communicated. Incorporating the reference to modality we think gives fuller expression to form as well as function and helps to make the form–function relationship more visible.

Our focus on multimodality draws on the work of Gunther Kress and colleagues, and the notion that different modes offer different capacities or affordances (Kress, 2000) to facilitate different kinds of communication or learning. These different capacities or affordances may make different modes better suited to some tasks than to others (Kress & Jewitt, 2003). Investigating the affordances of a mode involves both how the material properties of a mode link to the capacities they offer as well as how contextual dimensions (“[the] social, cultural and historical side”) help define how affordances are constructed (Kress & Jewitt, 2003, p. 15).

A key interest in our study is the way that different modes children use in communicating and meaning making, interact and support each other. The term multimodal literacy also lends itself to the idea of communication and meaning making involving different combinations of modes and their interrelationship. As Kress and Jewitt (2003) point out, “in communication, modes rarely, if ever, occur alone” (p. 2).

Our interest in the development and use of different modes, or literacies, has not only been to do with their communicative function, but also with how the use of particular modes may impact on the way children make sense of the world. We have become increasingly interested in how learners and learning are changed and shaped by the differences in mode and by the dynamics of different modal combinations.
Wadestown Kindergarten

Wadestown Kindergarten is one of 59 kindergartens within the Wellington Region Kindergarten Association (WRKA). It is nestled in the small community of Wadestown, close to Wellington city. Kindergarten families are predominantly high socioeconomic and New Zealand European/Pākehā, with some children of British, Māori, Niuean, or Indian ethnicity. The kindergarten is a sessional kindergarten with 30 four-year-olds attending in the morning, five sessions a week, and 30 three-year-olds attending in the afternoon, three sessions a week. All teachers are qualified and registered. At the time of application to become a COI (September 2005), we were a two teacher team (Yvette Simonsen and Mandy Blake) who had been together for just over a year. We became a three teacher team when joined by André La Hood a little over a year into our COI project.

The kindergarten programme is regarded as special for its exploration of multiple literacies within the use of a project approach. In the period prior to becoming a COI, concentrated time had been taken to deliberate over values and beliefs about teaching and learning. There was a shared interest in project learning, the place of family and community within teaching and learning, and the use of ICT (information communication technologies) for representing different modes of communication. We were committed to delivering a programme that focused on the coming together of these three strands.

In early 2005, the teachers participated in professional development about Kei Tua o te Pae. Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars (Ministry of Education, 2005) with Victoria University of Wellington College of Education (VUWCE). They began to work with Maggie Haggerty from VUWCE who, along with Linda Mitchell, then at NZCER, became research associates for the COI research. Through professional reading and discussion, we were introduced to the term multiple literacies, coined by The New London Group (1996). The group provided “a cogent and convincing argument that being literate in a multiliterate world is being able to access and use a range of design elements in making and creating meaning through integrated multimodal texts” (Limbrick & Aikman, 2004, p. 12). The group work led us to query the meaning of being ‘literate’ as print-based and verbal, and challenged more traditional views of ‘literacy’.

Research questions

We formed three research questions, which have been refined during the course of the project (see below). At the end of the project, these were:

1. What does multimodal communicative competence mean in an early childhood education setting?
2. How do multimodal literacies interact and support each other at individual, interpersonal, and community levels?
3. What is the role of people, places, and practices in mediating children’s use of multimodal literacies? In particular, what are the roles of family and peers, and the role of significant people and influences in the kindergarten and its wider communities, especially teachers?

We reworked these research questions during the course of the COI project as the research team became more critical and analytic about the meaning of terms being used.

Question 3 originally read, “How does an emphasis on multiple literacies within pedagogy, drawing from the concept of ako and involving project work, build community and children’s communicative competencies?” For a start, this question read like “gobbledygook” to teachers and families who heard it, so we always had to explain it and change how we presented it. Secondly, the concept of “ako”, featured in the original question, is complex and we came to think it needed deeper exploration than we were able to give. Bol Jun Lee (2004) argues that if the term ako is disembedded from the Māori pedagogical context of which it is part, there is a risk it will be used in ways that are superficial or reductionist. She suggests that the term ako has been co-opted by the mainstream education scene in New Zealand “as if it’s the latest fashion”, and adds that fashions are often only ‘‘style deep’, they come and go’’ (p. 563). We became increasingly aware that the concept of “ako” from Māori pedagogy needs in-depth investigation for us to do it justice.

Project work mentioned in the original third research question also did not become a central focus in the research. The benefits teachers saw in the project approach and their interest in it did play a significant role in teachers’ interest in investigating children’s use of multiple literacies. Amongst the connections we discussed between the project approach and multiple literacies was the Reggio Emilia project’s often quoted reference to the one hundred languages of children (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998) and to a pedagogy of listening, requiring teachers to listen with all the senses (Rinaldi, 2005). While neither the discourse of “ako” nor that of “the project approach” became a key focus in the research, we acknowledge both as important and see them as fruitful concepts to investigate and frame further research.

Our choice to frame question 3 around the role of people, places, and practices in mediating children’s literacy learning readily links with the idea in Te Whāriki that curriculum is provided by the people, places, and things in the child’s environment (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11). We use the term practice to incorporate activities, tools, and resources. We see a focus on practice as particularly appropriate in light of the practice-orientation of action research and the COI programme.

Outline of the report

This was an action research project in which the teachers and research associates worked together and with the wider community of children, families, and community from Wadestown Kindergarten to investigate the research focus on multimodal literacies. The report is structured around the three research questions, and also includes discussion of what it means to be a Centre of Innovation from the perspectives of different participants, and some implications for policy and practice.
Chapter 2 discusses the use of action research methodology, the video and narrative documentation that was gathered about learning episodes where multimodal literacies were evident, and data gathered to explore different perspectives on various modes in communicative competence. The research team’s approach to data analysis is discussed.

In Chapter 3 we discuss our theoretical positioning, the thinking of those who have been a key influence, and the concepts that have shaped our understanding and helped us further develop our ideas developed during the COI project. This includes a discussion of the ways in which the work of Gunther Kress and his colleagues has contributed to our thinking, particularly the idea that different modes may offer different capacities or affordances to facilitate various kinds of learning (Kress, 2000). We were also helped by Margaret Carr’s ideas on affordance, especially her focus on the particularities of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) setting and the New Zealand context (Carr, 2000). This chapter draws on data to address the first question of the meaning of multimodal communicative competence in an ECE setting.

Chapter 4 focuses on the second research question. We identify a range of modalities, and analyse the interplay among different modalities and their roles in helping to shape learning and the learner. We gathered substantive documentation about modalities of drawing, oral language, play-drama, and gesture, and somewhat less substantive documentation about modalities of writing, dance, and movement. (The latter documentation was only less substantive because of time constraints in gathering and analysing data. There were abundant examples of these modalities and others within the kindergarten.) This chapter also draws on data to explore Kress’s ideas of different modalities offering different capacities or affordances (Kress, 2000) to facilitate various kinds of communication and learning. These different capacities may make different modes better suited to some tasks than to others, either separately or in combination.

Chapter 5 discusses literacy as a social practice. During the course of the project we came to recognise more fully how multimodal literacies necessitate an understanding of the sociocultural networks of which they are part. Our investigation focuses on the role of family and peers, significant others in the kindergarten and its wider communities, and the role of teachers. We discuss ways in which these mediating influences came together in the kindergarten context.

In Chapter 6 each member of the team offers some individual commentary on the experiences and insights they gained from being part of the round three COI programme. The accounts are a mix of looking back and looking forward, analysis and reflection, practical and theoretical, personal and professional. They highlight ways in which our involvement in the project helped shape both our teaching and research practices. The discussion includes a focus on factors and systems which helped us progress.

The conclusion (Chapter 7) highlights insights from the project and suggests ways in which the key findings contribute to the growing body of research on multimodal literacies, and to forging “different possible pathways” to curriculum and documentation. It highlights some policy and practice implications, and discusses ideas for further research.
This chapter discusses the methodological approaches used in this study, primarily the use of participatory action research processes. These processes emphasise collaborative working and shared ownership that is also characteristic of the approaches to pedagogy at Wadestown Kindergarten. The transformational possibilities that open up when teachers are learners too, and children, parents, and whānau can all be experts, are central to our study. We investigated ways in which a participatory “interweaving” of contributions to curriculum, assessment, planning, evaluation, and documentation could serve to strengthen learning and empower the learning community and its members. We also highlight the use made of videotaping as a tool for documenting learning episodes, and for critical reflection and discussion. In this chapter, these processes of data collection, ethical considerations, and data analysis are discussed.

**Participatory action research**

The research approach sought by the Ministry of Education is action research, with COIs investigating their innovative practices in relation to teaching and learning in order to further develop their innovation. Although action research cannot be thought of as a mechanical process, it is generally thought to involve a spiral of self-reflective cycles of the following:

- planning a change;
- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change;
- reflecting on these processes and consequences;
- re-planning;
- acting and observing again;
- reflecting again, and so on. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563)

In reality, these stages are not neat and separate, but may overlap as participants respond to their experiences:

> The criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully but rather whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563) [Original emphasis]
McTaggert (1996, p. 248) argued that:

The Lewinian spiral has created serious confusion about the idea of action research, the fundamental feature of which is collective reflection by participants… It is a mistake to think that slavishly following the ‘action research spiral’ constitutes ‘doing action research’. … Action research is not a ‘method’ or ‘procedure’ for research but a series of commitments to observe and problematise through practice a series of principles for conducting a social enquiry … We can say that the spiral makes explicit the need for acting differently ‘within the study’ as a result of progressively learning from experience.

In our study, we did not use mechanical “spirals” of action research. Rather, we gathered data about multimodal literacies at Wadestown Kindergarten, discussed and analysed the data within the research team and with parents, and linked our analysis to our readings and interpretation of theoretical ideas. In this way we were able to generate deeper and more complex understanding about the nature and manifestation of multimodal communicative competence, and the role of people, places, and practices in mediating multimodal literacies. The insights teachers gained contributed to more responsive and meaningful interactions with children and families and a more critical approach to practice. Teachers said that they had greater appreciation of children’s literacies and subsequently explored these within pedagogical documentation.

A rationale for using action research methods is to focus in an educational setting on educational improvement and involvement as two core aspects (McNiff, 1992). We would characterise our proposed approach as having elements in common with “participatory action research” (Kemmis & McTaggert, 2005). It aimed to be a participatory approach, by engaging people within the Wadestown Kindergarten community of practice in examining their knowledge and understandings; to be practical and collaborative, taking place within the kindergarten setting and including teachers, children, research associates, parents/whānau, and kindergarten association staff; to involve collaborative critique; and to be “reflexive”, “aiming to help people investigate reality in order to change it” (Kemmis & McTaggert, 2005, p. 567).

Mattsson and Kemmis (2007) described action research as “praxis related”, or related to changing the “informed and committed action” (p. 186) of individuals at particular times and in particular places, and at changing structures and patterns of activity that contribute to injustice. In our study, we aimed to offer opportunities to consolidate, deepen, and strengthen pedagogical approaches, and to contribute to understanding of multimodal literacies and the need for more inclusive practices in an ECE context.

**Roles and relationships within the research project**

Early in the project we developed a relationship agreement, setting out roles and responsibilities of teachers, research associates, the kindergarten employing association, and parent representatives. An overall aim was to draw on the expertise, experience, and networks of each participant, while building capacity and confidence through all stages of the research. This included developing the research design as part of the application to become a COI, designing
research instruments, making ethics application, planning and implementing the action research, deliberating over and analysing data, and writing the final report.

Lynette Wray (as senior teacher, WRFKA) provided support to teachers. She worked in collaboration with teachers and research associates, participating in interviews and analysis of data/video recordings, and planning and analysis of action research cycles. She provided an avenue for workshops and dissemination through WRFKA.

Amanda Coulston (as general manager, WRFKA) provided management support and acted as a critical friend.

Three groups were set up to contribute to the research project.

**Research group**

In the initial stages of our research, the teachers and research associates introduced the project to the kindergarten whānau and community through a parent information evening. From this meeting we established a research group which included representatives of all the participants in the COI project: teachers, Yvette Simonsen and Mandy Blake; research associates, Maggie Haggerty and Linda Mitchell; Association representatives, general manager, Amanda Coulston and senior teacher, Lynette Wray; and parent representatives, Ali Spencer, Nikki Shaker, and later in the project Alex Macdonald. The role of the research group was to oversee the research process, including developing relationship agreements, policies, consent forms, research instruments, information pamphlets, and regularly meeting to discuss research progress and process.

**Advisory group**

An advisory group was set up to provide feedback on the research design, instrument, and final report. Advice, feedback, and critique were offered by the group at the beginning and end of the project. Those included in the advisory group were Amanda Coulston (general manager, Wellington Kindergartens), Lynette Wray (senior teacher, Wellington Kindergartens), Sophie Alcock (COI co-ordinator for the Ministry of Education), Huinga Jackson-Greenland (Te Kura Māori Victoria University of Wellington), Ali Spencer (Wadestown Kindergarten parent representative), and Nikki Shaker (Wadestown Kindergarten parent representative).

**Pedagogical discussion group**

We instigated a pedagogical discussion group, which met for sessions that were scheduled at different stages throughout the project. The purpose behind this group was to meet and discuss research-based theoretical readings relevant to the research focus in order to:

- investigate the thinking about and use of concepts and approaches relevant to our project, such as “multiple literacies”, “pedagogical documentation”, and Māori concepts such as “āko”
- keep up to date in our knowledge of relevant research and theory
- develop a wider view and understanding through the process of discussing different perspectives on the same material.
Members of the group included Wadestown Kindergarten teachers, the two research associates, the WRFKA senior teacher, and parent representatives.

The discussion group met about twice a year throughout the project.

**Data collection**

We collected baseline data over a range of areas, and also used this data to plan the action research. We gathered comparable data over the term of the COI project, enabling us to track development in relation to our research focus alongside the professional development, insights, and actions that occurred. We developed the methods for data collection described below through discussions by the research group of teachers, research associates, parents, and the senior teacher. The methods were finalised after further discussion with our advisory group, and after application to the NZCER Ethics Committee. Interview schedules and discussion questions are contained in Appendix A.

We used a range of methods that enabled us to triangulate information.

**Case studies of six children**

We carried out case studies of six children, gathering pedagogical documentation used in the child’s assessment portfolio, and video recordings (see below) of their literacies over 18 months of the COI project. The children were chosen from three-year-olds who were likely to remain at the kindergarten until school age. Parents of all eighteen eligible three year olds were invited to participate. Thirteen parents (of eight boys and five girls) volunteered. Teachers discussed children’s preferred literacies with these parents and the reasons for needing to select only six children. Final selection was made by teachers on the basis of gender balance and obtaining a range of literacies.

Parents were interviewed at the baseline and final phases of the project about their child’s strengths as a communicator and family values and strengths (see Interviews below).

**Parent sessions**

A preliminary session was held with parents in which members of the research team explained the project and the research questions. Subsequently, a parent focus group meeting was held at the start of the project to discuss ideas about multimodal literacies. There were around 30 participants from 60 families. As a catalyst for discussion, parents were shown videoclips of children involved in various activities and practices involving communication and meaning making. They were asked to consider which activities and practices they saw as constituting a literacy and why, their aspirations for their own child as a communicator, and how the kindergarten might support multiliterate communicative competence.
Video recordings and analysis of curriculum events

Video recordings were made of a sample of curriculum events where multimodal literacies were evident. Maggie Haggerty, one of the research associates, had explored the use of video feedback in curriculum development in five case study centres in New Zealand (Haggerty, 1998; 1999).

Maggie Haggerty made recordings at the start of the project, and later supported the teachers to make further video recordings at intervals throughout.

We invited different groups from the kindergarten community of practice (teachers, researchers, children, Association, parents, and whānau) to discuss the video recordings. Cameron (2005) has shown how the use of videos of practice in early childhood centres in Hungary, England, and Sweden can stimulate discussions about understandings of practice. Observing and commenting on video-recorded practice “renders familiar practices ethnographically both visible and “strange” and so accessible as a subject for discussion and reflection” (Cameron, 2005, p. 24). In our project, having different groups from the kindergarten community of practice seemed to heighten questioning of taken-for-granted interpretations where interpretations varied, and contributed to understanding. Discussions were made richer as different participants offered comment about the situations being observed. Experience and knowledge bases varied: teachers were able to provide background knowledge of children and their experiences outside of the videoed episodes; parents knew the child from their own home context; and the research associates and senior teachers had “outsider” perspectives. At times one participant noted a different point of interest, which contributed to the group gaining a deepened understanding.

Biggs (1983) compares the process of self-viewing with being able to step outside the self and suggests it is the ability to distance the self from one’s own behaviour that leads to increased choice and change:

A space emerges between the viewer and the object of attention, the self as actor. This distance leaves room for an area of . . . free play around the object of attention which means it can be more easily described in different ways and from different points of reference. Immediately that one is distanced from events, questions arise. . . One becomes aware of alternatives to the existing state of affairs . . . (p. 221)

The use and analysis of video-recordings and stills from the videos served the following purposes:

- evidence of literacies and the context and interactions in which they occurred
- critical reflection to inform the action research
- a means of providing a focus for people from the wider Wadestown Kindergarten community to contribute to discussion about literacies modes in early years
- a means of providing a focus for dissemination purposes. Through preparations for dissemination tasks there was also an opportunity to re-think and reflect on developing ideas
- a means of providing a focus for parents of case study children to discuss their child’s use of different communication modes.
Interviews

Interviews and discussion with separate groups of children, parents, teachers, research associates, and the senior teacher were held at the baseline and final phases of the project. Two people from the research team (e.g., a teacher and a research associate) undertook each interview.

At the baseline phase, the research associates gave some training in interview techniques. As part of this training, NZCER guidelines about probing and prompting in research interviews were discussed and copies provided for each interviewer.

In the final phase, after analysing interview transcripts we decided to review how we each approached the role of interviewer. The main areas where there was room for improvement in this role were in prompting and probing to elicit more information and thoughts, and in more careful listening. For example, we noted the value of asking for an explanation to prompt a mother to recount how her child’s use of graphic conventions came about, and its significance. We also noted that in some instances the interviewers offered their own opinions rather than eliciting the views of the parent being interviewed. In these instances, parents tended to simply agree with the interviewer rather than give more expansive responses. We addressed this issue for the final round of interviewing by returning to the NZCER guidelines on probing and prompting.

Specific questions for each group were developed:

Parents. At the baseline phase, case study parents were asked to discuss their own child’s portfolio1 and video clips with the interviewer (a research associate and teacher). The focus of the discussion was on what messages these documented examples gave the parent about their child as a communicator and learner, and about communication that was valued and fostered within the family. At the final phase, a similar process was followed but the focus of questions was on changes that the parents had observed, and parent views of how the family and kindergarten experiences had contributed to their child’s communicative competencies.

Teachers. At the baseline phase, teachers were asked about their understanding of the term competent, multiliterate communicator, their pedagogical strategies, their interest in theory and its connection to practice, and challenges and aspirations.

Research associates and senior teacher. At the baseline phase, research associates were asked about their understanding of the potential of multiple literacies, the influence of theory, their views of Wadestown Kindergarten’s pedagogy, and challenges and aspirations for the COI project.

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1 A collection of narratives, artefacts and photographs selected for their significance in reflecting a child’s interests, learning and development, their participation within the kindergarten community, and their wider family context. Portfolios are used for assessment and curriculum development purposes by teachers, children and families, to facilitate interchanges with families, and as an account of a child’s time at the kindergarten.
Children. At the baseline phase, teachers used the child’s portfolio and video clips as reference points in conversations. Teachers found that these informal conversations elicited children’s views more readily than did formal interviews. Teachers had conversations about things relating to multimodal literacies; for example, talking with children about their use of a particular literacy, asking about their intentions, asking children to explain what was happening, and talking about experiences at home. One case study child (Ben S) was also asked by his parents to participate in their parent interview.

**Focus group discussion**

At the baseline phase, parents and whānau were invited to meet for discussion in a focus group. Video clips of children involved in activities and practices involving communication and meaning making were shown as catalysts for discussion. The group was then divided into three small groups, with discussion in each group facilitated by the research associates, teachers, and the senior teacher (working in pairs) around the meaning of multiple literacies. Focus group questions are included in appendix A. The following diagram was shown as a further catalyst for discussion. The diagram was intended to explore both what participants regarded as the key meaning-making properties of different literacies, and the social dynamics involved in defining what counts as a literacy. We asked parents to consider the documented examples in relation to the diagram.
Identifying multiple literacies: What “counts” and why? What doesn’t and why not?

Orthodox print-based literacies

Nontraditional literacies
connections to traditional notions of literacy range from relatively close, through to substantively different; place in literacy discourse is contested to varying degrees, in various quarters

Would/how would you site…
Oral language? Drawing? New technologies?
Music? Dance? Construction and collage? Cultural literacy?

Literacies on and beyond the border
How do we define the border? What does and doesn’t count as evidence of a literacy?
Do/how do literacies and interests differ?
Do/how do they overlap?

The small groups reported back to the whole group, which then discussed ideas about “What counts as a literacy and why?”

**Pedagogical documentation and teachers’ evaluative conversations**

At intervals throughout the project we collected samples of pedagogical documentation involving both individuals and groups that demonstrated multimodal literacies and were relevant to our research questions. We also drew on some of the regular discussions between the teachers and Maggie Haggerty where the focus was on planning and evaluation linked to multimodal literacies. These helped us to better understand the affordances particular modes offered individual children and groups. We used the research questions as our reference points.
Ethics

Ethics approval was gained from the NZCER Ethics Committee. The ethics application paid special attention to the naming of participants, gathering “consent” from children and parents, and the use of videotape within the project.

Under the terms of the COI project, Wadestown Kindergarten is named and information disseminated about it. Teachers and research associate names are also used. However, the real names of parent and child participants are used only if these participants wished this. Parents were asked to give consent for their child and the use of their child’s name or a fictitious name.

Participants had access to written information and opportunity to discuss and understand the project and the implications before being asked to give or decline consent. Teachers also talked to the children about the project, to explain why we were videotaping. We talked to a child as well as their parents if we wished to use documentation involving the child in dissemination activities. We thought it was important to provide parents/whānau with the option of giving consent for each publication of any individual item related to their child, since parents may be happy with one purpose but not another. We considered that extra care needed to be taken to discuss with families any issues about publication of photographs or videotapes of their child, so that informed decisions could be made about consent. We agreed not to make videotaped episodes available on a public website.

We were also aware that the use of video for critiquing practice can result in tensions between a) safeguarding the psychological safety of individual participants and ensuring them sufficient support and b) pushing forward the process of critique. Maggie Haggerty was experienced in working with video in this way, looking out for distress and finding positive strategies to work through any distress if it occurred.

Data analysis

We developed the following process over some time and with some trialling to assist us in analysing the data.

First, we worked out how we could group each of the types of data so that we could bring the data together in a way that was meaningful for the research questions, make comparisons and contrasts, and think about interpretations. The initial categories were:

- evidence of notions of literacies (for example, What counts as a literacy, and why? What doesn’t count as a literacy, and why not?)
- evidence of literacies and relationships between them
- evidence of roles of literacy in community building;
- evidence of children’s literacies in taking on a “tuakana teina” role
- evidence of literacies in ako. (The concept of ako does not distinguish between teaching and learning, but emphasises the enterprise of learning, and how this operates in a given setting or
community. Ako is a concept that helps us understand and facilitate the shifts that can occur in who leads or contributes to learning interests: children, teachers, parents, or whānau.)

In the final analysis phase, to reflect our changed research questions, the last two categories were changed to: one category:

• evidence of the role of people, places, and practices in mediating children’s use of multimodal literacies.

We allocated each member of the research team responsibility for analysing data from two case study children and to act as a resource person for leading discussion about these children. Initially, for each child we sorted transcripts of interviews and focus groups, sections of video, and excerpts from documentation, into the categories, using colour coding of transcripts and highlighting relevant sections of video recordings. We brought each of the data sources for that category together, and wrote down our ideas about how we might interpret it.

Next we brought our analysis to the research group (teachers, senior teacher, research associates, nominated parents). We discussed what we had found, how we interpreted this, and what else we needed to know. Every person in the group contributed their ideas.

As an example, in analysing data from Miro (a case study child), we found consistent evidence of Miro’s strengths and interest in oral communication, print-based literacies, art, dance, and constructing. This came through in the videotape, interview with parents, and documentation from her portfolio. Miro’s mother, Alex, was a member of the research team. She added to the interpretation with rich examples from home, and her discussion of the home environment showed how these literacies are reinforced at home. Through our discussion as a research group (including Alex) we started to see in the examples that Miro’s literacies were both an entity within themselves, and also an avenue for thinking, development, and deepening of understanding. We found Miro seemed to have a predominant and keen interest in the question “How does this work?” and she explored this interest through different literacies and within relationships. This analysis made sense to all of us including Alex. We decided to watch out for a focus on enquiry about and reflection on thought processes in documentation from other children as well as Miro.

The discussions that we had as a group enabled us to reflect on the data in a critical way and to explore the data in depth. The parent interviews and involvement in the research process added to the complexity of analysis. Parents contributed their understandings, interpretations, and insights about their child’s literacies, and discussed home experiences. Some parents provided pedagogical documentation from home. Yvette has commented (see Research team reflections) on the challenge for her and Mandy as teachers to work out how to have such meaningful discussions with all parents, and how to build a culture where all parents can share examples of their child’s learning with teachers.
Limitations of the study

The study contributes to an understanding of the nature of multimodal literacies, and the people, places, and practices that support these literacies. The link to research literature enabled us to make connections with other studies and theoretical ideas, and strengthen interpretations.

However, the study focused on particular literacies that children in the study manifested, and is therefore limited in its scope. It is also limited through its use of data from only one kindergarten, located in a mainly high socioeconomic community. It would be useful to undertake further research of multimodal literacies in a range of different settings.

We would have liked to follow case study children through the transition to school, but were not able to do so. Nevertheless, the research has raised questions about the extent to which, and how, schools provide for different modes of literacy alongside reading, writing, and numeracy. Such questions could usefully be considered in further research.
3 What does multiliterate communicative competence mean in an early childhood education setting?

This chapter focuses on our theoretical positioning and identifies key concepts and experiences which influenced and shaped our understandings of what multiliterate communicative competence might mean at Wadestown Kindergarten. We discuss the theoretical ideas that helped form and support our opinions and that greatly contributed to our interpretations and analysis of data. We then look at one child’s approach to communication and meaning making and how this further shaped our thinking.

The journey to becoming a COI was marked by many significant developments within the learning programme. Prior to becoming a COI, we (the kindergarten teachers) had spent concentrated time deliberating over values and beliefs about learning and the ways in which these were documented. We shared a common interest in project learning. Our ideas had been strongly influenced by the work of Malaguzzi in Reggio Emilia, specifically in regards to the idea that “a child has a hundred languages” (Edward et al., 1998).

A strong facet of the kindergarten became the ways in which projects facilitated avenues of expression and how these were documented. Family and community involvement within this was central. We were also interested in the work of Howard Gardner and the notion of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991). This, too, foreshadowed our COI focus on multiple literacies. We were becoming increasingly intrigued by the multiple ways that children communicated and made meaning and wanted to investigate this further.

Our COI focus on multiple literacies links to the Communication strand of Te Whāriki which highlights domains beyond the print-based or verbal literacies that have tended to dominate literacy discourse. There is reference to a number of possible ways to communicate and represent experience such as, “images, art, dance, drama, mathematics, movement, rhythm and music” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 72).

In the course of the research we have sharpened our focus on literacies as ways of conceptualising and knowing, not only as ways of communicating.

In the early stages of the research we were greatly influenced by the work of The New London Group who coined the term multiple literacies. They identify five modes of meaning: linguistic; visual; audio; gestural; and spatial (The New London Group, 2000). These literacies are responsive to the changing social and cultural contexts in which we live. In their interconnections they support multimodal ways of making meaning. Kress and Jewitt (2003) identify image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech, and sound as modal resources for meaning making. As the project progressed we became particularly interested in the work of Gunther Kress, whose focus
on multimodality, like others within The New London Group, is part of a broader theory of social semiotics, a field concerned with the study of sign and symbol systems and how these systems operate in society (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwin, 2001).

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) suggest that different conceptions or approaches to literacy can be classified on the basis of two key dimensions: modal and social. They propose two corresponding continua to help to map the distinctions along these two parameters. The first continuum, which focuses on modality, distinguishes between literacy seen only as involving print-based texts and the notion of multimodal literacy involving texts of different modes. The second continuum focuses on the extent to which literacy is viewed as a social practice. Lankshear and Knobel describe this as extending from literacy understood as “the generic capacity to encode and decode alphabetic print”, to literacy seen as “competent handling of texts that are meaningful to ‘insiders’ of particular sociocultural practices and discourse communities” (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996, pp. 1–9, cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 73). In this project we look at literacies as multimodal and investigate the idea that communication and meaning-making practices may be particular to an individual child or group of children and to particular situations and contexts.

We think the notion of insiders is a useful one for helping to understand the relationship between a given mode or text and its community of users (discourse community). The usefulness of this notion was illustrated in a parent’s final interview. Lucy, Kate’s mum, recounts a situation in which Kate and a friend construct and enact a dramatic play script. As the ones who are working out how the drama is to go and piecing it together, Kate and her friend can be seen as the “insiders”. And, as Lucy points out, a child who is new or an “outsider” to these particular dramatic conventions does not necessarily understand how the process works or how to take part:

…I notice there’s a lot of, she’ll say to her friend just pretend that you say to me blah, blah, blah, blah… and then the friend has to say blah, blah, blah, blah and then [the friend] will say just pretend that I say to you blah, blah, blah and then Kate’ll say blah, blah,blah, blah….they sort of discuss it as they go and then they do it. They’d talk about it and then they do it and then they’d talk about it and then they’d do it. It’s a very sort of stilted way of playing. But, and then she’ll get a friend over who hasn’t been doing that with her at kindy and doesn’t understand what the just pretend means and it can be really frustrating for her. They’ve obviously sort of developed a way of doing it that they understand and when she plays with other people it’s quite hard.

**Modes and their affordances**

Drawing on Kress’s (2000) notion of the affordances of different modes, we have been investigating the idea that the properties of different literacies offer differing capacities or affordances that facilitate different kinds of communication and learning. As Kress and Jewitt (2003) point out, investigating the affordances of a mode is not only a matter of focusing on how the material properties of a mode link to the capacities the mode offers. Such an investigation also involves contextual dimensions, in broad terms how “the social, cultural and historical side” define how affordances are constructed (Kress & Jewitt, 2003, p. 15). In our project we are also
interested in the micro-context and the way affordances may be specific to a particular child or group of children and to particular situations.

Hull and Nelson (2005) focus on how affordances are defined by the *materiality* of a mode. They describe as a “crucial conceptual tool”, the idea that “images, written text, music and so on each respectively impart certain kinds of meaning more easily and naturally than others” (p. 229). Hence, writing, for example, may “lose the music of speech” (Schafer, 1986, cited in Kress & Van Leeuwin, 2001, p. 89), but written text generally offers more opportunity to consider and edit a communication than does a conversation. Writing tends to require us to sequence what we apprehend, while visual representation can enable us to present what is apprehended simultaneously. Digital technology affords us the capacity to work interactively and three dimensionally.

Writing’s permanency and usefulness as a memory aid is, for example, capitalised on at Wadestown Kindergarten in the popular practice of list-making. As illustrated in Figure 3, lists are often used to establish the sequence of turns. In this instance the list is for turns on the red and blue bikes and one of the children, Hugo, has come up with the idea of writing the words red and blue in colour, a useful strategy for helping children work out which list to put themselves on. Hugo’s idea to combine colour coding and alphabetic writing provides a simple example of the way different codes can be brought together to complement and support each other.

**Figure 3** \[A turn list for riding the red and blue bikes\]

This is a turn list to have goes on both the red and blue bikes. Hugo came up with the idea of writing the words red and blue in red and blue. Elizabeth decided we should cross out the names when each person had finished their turn.

Mandy recorded Hugo’s idea along with Elizabeth’s suggestion of crossing out people’s names once they have finished their turn, at the bottom of the list. In this way, Mandy signals that the ideas the children have contributed are valued and by displaying the list in a public space at the kindergarten, she makes this valuing more visible to other children and families. The visually arresting size of the list (child size) is also communicationally significant. The list therefore
represents an interweaving of visual, written, and spatial elements, an illustration of Kress and Jewitt’s (2003) point that “in communication modes rarely, if ever, occur alone” (p. 2).

The affordance of a mode is socially determined through the value a society or group attributes to it. Kress (2000) highlights as do others (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Marsh, 2006) the dynamics of power at play in the privileging of one literacy or mode or modes over others. A ready example is the privileging of written text by Western society and its academic institutions (Marsh, 2006). As Hull and Nelson (2005) point out, this notwithstanding the innumerable examples, historical and modern, of the visual being included as part of the written, as for example in children’s illustrated story books, scientific treatises that rely heavily on detailed diagrams, and everyday workplace documents that intermix illustrations, photos, diagrams, and words. This is also despite a long history of music, dance, drama, and the visual arts as forms of communication and representation.

Also key to the affordance of a semiotic mode is the amount of work that a culture or social group puts in to developing the mode into a highly articulated system of communication (Kress, 2000). One nonlinguistic example of this is the use of touch for the visually impaired, in a language such as Braille (Kress, 2000). The use of body movement, in the sign languages of the speech and hearing impaired, is another (Kendon, 2004).

**The case of digital literacy**

The technological developments of recent years and a corresponding focus on digitised literacy practices have been an impetus in calls for profound changes to notions of literacy. The work of the New London Group, for example, was greatly influenced by and coincided with the explosion of new technologies (Makin & Whiteman, 2007). Hence, for example, arguments for broadening notions of literacy were put forward on the basis that young people, “will be leaving school and emerging into the labour force needing a range of skills and knowledge which will equip them sufficiently well for employment in technologically driven, globalised societies (Luke & Luke, 2001, in Marsh, 2006, p. 495).

In the New Zealand context, the dissemination activities of Roskill South Kindergarten COI have played a key role in bringing to the attention of the early childhood sector, the affordances that new technologies can offer learning and teaching (Ramsey, Breen, Sturm, & Lee, 2006). Roskill South Kindergarten COI showed to powerful effect how young children could become capable and competent users of digital technology. Ramsey et al. suggest that the children’s use of ICT “added another (predominantly visual) mode of communication and representation [which] enhanced their dispositions to use other modes: to speak, write and draw [and] provided a ‘way in’ to communicate in a range of modes” (p. i). They refer, for example, to the inclusion of photos enabling children to read pedagogical documentation which they had featured in, or were interested in. The usefulness of the digital camera is made special mention of in Roskill South’s COI report, featuring in every chapter. Ramsey et al. suggest that the visual modes of communication that cameras give access to are not only valuable in their own right, but serve children as a “transitional language as they become more competent in their first English language
or in English as an additional language” (p. 49). Jo Colbert (2006) illustrated how ICT could enhance the story-telling practices of kindergarten children.

The capacity to construct texts which draw on a range of modalities, to integrate words with images, sound, music, and movement, has not only given rise to new digitally afforded capacities, but has also led to a resurgence of interest in different representational and communicational modes. The term resurgence is significant, for as many writers have pointed out, the multimodality of digital texts is not necessarily to do with modes of communication and representation that are new in themselves (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Kress, 2000; Kress & Van Leeuwin, 2001). Makin and Whiteman (2007) argue that underlying the concept of multiple literacies is “a focus on symbol systems that have been part of human practice for thousands of years…These systems include those of the creative arts, as well as those of traditional and new literacies” (p. 168). Hill (2007, p. 60) makes a similar point when she suggests that children in early childhood have “always used” construction, drawing, or illustrations, sound, and movement to represent meaning, and that newer multimodal technologies add to children’s choice of medium.

Joe

In the next sections of the chapter, much of our discussion focuses on Joe, one of the kindergarten children whose documented examples of meaning-making activities were discussed at the parent focus group session. Joe’s were the examples that seemed to the research team furthest from traditional verbal or print-based literacy. Joe’s were the examples that challenged our thinking about the relationship between different ways of knowing and the practice or enactment of multiliterate communicative competence at the kindergarten. As the following episodes illustrate, Joe’s use of his body and what we have come to describe as his spatial motoric competence, represent significant features of Joe’s ways of knowing and communicating.

It started on our first day of videoing. We were recording curriculum episodes for later analysis as literacy events. Maggie had the camera trained on Aidan, who had been working at the collage table making a “Narnia sword” and was now heading for the sandpit to show his handiwork to his friends. Joe was nearby doing “wheelies” on one of the kindergarten’s bikes, i.e. cornering on two wheels rather than three. “Did you get [video] that?” Joe asks Maggie. Maggie answers “No, sorry”, she had been videoing Aidan. “Ok,” Joe cheerily replies, “I’ll do it again.”
When we commented on Joe’s cornering skills to his mum, Megan, at pick-up time, Megan proceeded to detail Joe’s bike riding activities outside of kindergarten: Joe normally rode two-wheeler bikes, had spent hours practising up at the school playground and at the BMX track at the local park. The following day Megan emailed the photo below of Joe riding at motorcross. The photo brought about a “lane change” in how we viewed Joe’s riding. We had no idea of the extent of Joe’s bike riding skills or that Joe’s bike riding included motor bikes.

Figure 4  Photo of Joe cornering on two wheels

Figure 5  Photo of Joe riding at motorcross
Over the next couple of weeks, the interest teachers took in Joe’s bike riding opened up increased opportunities for conversations. The significance of such conversations was brought home to us by Joe’s response to Yvette’s mat time question asking children their favourite thing that happened that day. When it came to his turn, Joe said: “When you asked me about my bike.”

Members of the teaching team noted that Joe himself seemed to grow in confidence and become considerably more conversational. It was as if conversation as a mode was coming in “on the back of” Joe’s bike riding interests and activities. Returning to look at Joe’s portfolio we noticed that three months earlier when Joe had asked to share something with the other children at mat time, it had been to show them the helmet, gloves, and goggles he wore when he travelled to kindergarten on his dad’s bike. Alongside photos of Joe out front “in the spotlight” at mat time and Joe dressed in helmet, goggles, and gloves, Yvette (teacher) had written: You told us how your gloves looked after your hands and the helmet was for your head. The goggles stopped things getting in your eyes! When Mandy suggested we pass the gear around you suggested you should model it. Thanks for sharing your motorbike knowledge with us Joseph. In terms of our metaphor of a multimodal curriculum whāriki, we see Joe’s bike riding interests and activities as acting as a mainstay or key strand of support which the mode of conversation was then able to be mapped or threaded onto.

Over the following weeks we began looking more closely into Joe’s bike riding experiences, asking ourselves how these might be contributing to his understandings about the world. We were particularly intrigued by the practical “know how” (Rye, 1949, p. 70) that Joe possessed when it came to dynamics of motion and space. This practical know how is illustrated in the following figure which shows the strategy Joe used to get the kindergarten bikes into the shed at packing-up time. This is documentation Mandy had written up in Joe’s portfolio. In capturing Joe’s strategy in a photograph and explaining Joe’s idea in writing, Mandy represented the strategy in two further modes.
Another of numerous instances of Joseph’s preoccupations with matters of space and motion was when Yvette asked him if he could bring his bike to kindergarten so the other children could see him riding it. Joe’s immediate response was practical rather than social. He gave the circumference of the playground a careful scan, as if mentally executing the circuit. “No” he told Yvette, he would not be able to do it because, as he demonstrated with his hands, there would not be enough room to turn.

Six months after Joe started school, his dad Martin emailed us a number of times with further news and photos of Joe’s bike riding activities. Martin’s first email began, “I’m not sure if you are still interested but…” When assured we were, the news that followed included photos of further motor, kinaesthetic and spatial exploits, and information about Joe being the subject in digital media, which included Joe being profiled on the motorcross website and being featured in an online magazine.
When Joe’s dad Martin emailed us his response to what we had written in this chapter, he pointed out that like Joe, he had mastered the dynamics of motion and space “at a young age”. Now an engineer, Martin referred to his own interest and skills in reading and writing as “coming much later”. He also wrote that his father, who was a coachbuilder, “used to get upset when people he did work for said “you have great hands”, my dad insisted it was not his hands but his brain that allowed him to perform such tasks”. In his concluding comments Martin added:

> Children are naturally going to communicate about things they are interested in, if there is no interest shown by their peers or teachers then I believe they will become quiet and reserved… Joe obviously wanted to share what he could do… and it was well received.

Studies in multimodal literacy (e.g. Hill, 2007) suggest a variety of ways in which the sort of spatial, motor, and kinaesthetic understandings Joseph demonstrated are significant from a communicational and representational standpoint. Kita, who writes in the field of gestural studies, emphasises the importance of what he refers to as “spatio-motoric thinking”, the process he suggests gesture emanates from. Kita (2000) views spatio-motoric thinking as a process or mode of thinking that is independent of, “but often tightly coupled to” the process of oral language (cited in Kendon, 2004, p. 79). Lakoff (1987) argues that it is our early experiences of moving our bodies in space and of interacting with the material world that forms the basis of our ability to develop abstract concepts through metaphor (cited in Kress & Van Leeuwin, 2001, p. 75). Kress and Van Leeuwin (2001) add that “this means that our ability to match concepts with an appropriate signifier is based on our physical experience of the relevant phenomena” (p. 75).

Spatial, motor, and kinaesthetic abilities and understandings of the sort Joe demonstrated may seem somewhat removed from traditional written literacies. But perhaps connections between Joe’s spatial motoric competence and an ability to make sense of text become more apparent when we consider what is involved in the construction and interpretation of digital texts,
involving hypermedia. Hypermedia or hypertext is defined as “a collection of [verbal] text, sound, video and/or images linked electronically to one another (and possibly to other hypermedia)” (Felker, 2002, cited in Papson, Goldman, & Kersey, 2007, p. 316). Papson et al. (2007) suggest that because hypertext is spatial in design, this means that the processes and systems fundamental to constructing or interpreting hypertext, as for example in utilising websites, are navigational. As they put it, “navigational choices determine the hypertextuality of a piece” (p. 315). Consider, they suggest, the challenge facing the website user to be able to keep track of where they are within a website, particularly in a site that contains a large number of pages. Or the associated challenge for web designers to devise navigational devices within the architecture of the site to assist the user through this process. Papson et al. (2007) suggest viewing the “pages” of a website “as canvases” and as a set of visual relationships (p. 309). Like other observers (e.g., Marsh, 2006), they highlight that there are different decoding and encoding processes at work here from those involved in written text.

Studies from several disciplines highlight linkages among differing literacies. According to Allen (2005, p. 43) “recent developments in the study of the brain demonstrate the interdependency of the functions of sight, hearing, sound and movement especially, but not exclusively, in the early years (Ratey, 2001)”. Cognitive neuroscientist Elkhonon Goldberg (2005) points out that different parts of the brain are involved even within language itself. Drawing on studies which show that damage to different parts of the brain will impair language in different ways, Goldberg explains that damage sustained to the motor cortex damages the part of the brain involved in mental representations of skilled movements. It is near this part of the brain, suggests Goldberg, that the meaning of action words (verbs) is stored. Damage near the visual cortex Goldberg reports, can affect our use of object words (nouns), because our mental representations of objects are mostly based on vision.

It was beyond the scope of our project to explore the implications of neuroscientific research concerning the neural mechanisms or neural activity related to the use of various modalities. Nevertheless, we wish to signal this as a potentially fruitful line of enquiry, for as Van Oers (2003) suggests, human development is “a process that is driven by a multiplicity of forces of biological and sociocultural nature” (emphasis added) (p. 9).

Conclusion

What does multiliterate communicative competence mean in an ECE setting? Our experiences with Joe suggest the need to take a broad view of communication. Anthropologist Ruth Finnegans (2002), for example, proposes this sort of usefully broad definition. She describes communicating as “a multiplex and versatile process” and identifies humans’ communicative capacities as encompassing “their powers of eye and ear and movement, their embodied interactions in and with the external environment, their capacities to interconnect along auditory, visual, tactile and perhaps olfactory modalities, and their ability to create and manipulate objects in the world” (cited in Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 228).
We have come to more fully appreciate how permeable the boundaries are between what constitutes traditional literacies, nontraditional literacies, and “non” literacies. We are more conscious of the ways in which what constitutes a literacy can be different in different contexts and different situations.

The unfolding of events with Joe and his family reinforced the need for us to consider the meaning of multiliterate communicative competence in relation to a particular child or children. Not only did these experiences emphasise the importance of focusing on what multiliterate communicative competence means in relation to individual children at Wadestown Kindergarten, they also highlighted the importance of being able to connect with how children’s communicative competence operates outside the kindergarten context, particularly within their families.

The “funds of knowledge” parents brought to the project were significant (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, pp. x), in particular the views and perspectives parents brought to interpreting and analysing the research data. The photos emailed to us by Joe’s mum and dad were significant. They illustrate the capacity of digital cameras to broaden the channels of communication amongst children, families, and teachers and between home, kindergarten, and the community.

Our experiences with Joe have made us more aware of and prompted us to question the way that certain semiotic modes are favoured as ways for children to communicate, think, and theorise, while others are not. We have asked ourselves what if we had not connected with Joe’s bike riding. Would this not have meant significant missed opportunities to recognise some of the key ways Joe uses to know, learn about, make sense of, communicate with, and represent the world? Through teachers recognising and responding to Joe’s preferred literacies, Joe was enabled to participate more fully as a member of the kindergarten community.

We continue to reflect on the extent to which documenting children’s strategies in different modes, such as occurred when Mandy included a photograph and written description of Joe’s chain-of-bikes strategy in his portfolio, may help to build multiliterate competence. For example, we wonder whether putting Joe’s idea into words may have helped Joe understand his idea from a linguistic plane and therefore differently. Kress (2003) describes this process as “transduction”:

[Transduction] is not the process of transformation, the process which works on a structure and its elements in one mode, but of transduction, a process in which something which has been configured or shaped in one or more modes is reconfigured, reshaped according to the affordances of a quite different mode. It is a change of a different order, a more thoroughgoing change. (p. 47)

Lenz Taguchi (2006) points out the preferred avenues of thinking and theorising for some young children will be the body and construction rather than drawing and language. She advocates:

...guard[ing] against favouring certain expressions we personally like over others, thus normalising those we prefer while dismissing other expressions that might actually constitute a better way of meaning-making for certain children in a specific context. (p. 276)
As Leland and Harste (1994) put it, the challenge facing educational settings is to ensure that their provision “expands the communication potential of all learners through the orchestration and use of multiple ways of knowing for purposes of ongoing interpretation and inquiry into the world” (p. 339).
How do multimodal literacies interact and support each other at individual, interpersonal, and community levels?

In this chapter we focus on the affordances that different modes and modal combinations offer individual children and on the broader role different modes may play in helping to shape learning and learners in the kindergarten context. The chapter is in three sections. The first section focuses on the affordances of drawing for James, Noah, and Miro as individuals. Our discussion includes a focus on the way drawing as a mode is combined and interacts with other modes, as well as the role drawing plays as a channel for communication and learning between James and Noah. In the second section we foreground drama. We look at how case study children Ben S. and Heather use and connect with drama differently. We look at instances where drama is combined with other modes, and we look at the way in which a dramatic play episode spreads out to the wider kindergarten community. In the final section we focus on how one child’s interest-driven enquiry drew on a range of modes and modal combinations and involved various members of the kindergarten community. The input of the children’s families and other kindergarten parents concerning the uses children make of different modes provides a further and important focus in all three sections.

Section one: Foregrounding the affordances of drawing in the curriculum whāriki: James, Noah, and Miro

We begin with James, a brief encounter between James and Noah, and an episode that involves an interweaving of drawing, talking, and gesture. The episode started with James responding to a question, which Maggie (relieving teacher) asks him in passing, with the thumbs out gesture, pictured in the photo below. Intrigued, Maggie copies the thumbs out gesture and asks “What does this mean, James?” James replies that it means “I don’t know.”
James proceeds to demonstrate a virtual vocabulary of gestures. The “thumbs down” gesture in the next photo, James explains as “Not true…You are not telling the truth.”

James then starts to interweave drawing, alongside gesture and explanation. He portrays “this is scary”, first as a stationary, mime-like pose; then as the drawing “being scared.”
James produces two further drawings in quick succession: “being shy”, and “a lion being fierce”. He names both, without prompting, as he draws.

With his next drawing, “being brave”, James offers a fuller verbal explanation of the detail it contains, to help make sense of what the picture involves: “This is being brave. There’s a thing going in there, but he’s not crying. It’s a pincher thing.” Without this fuller supplementary information, what is pictured would be difficult to understand.
James then demonstrates “being brave”. He strikes a pose that looks to us to be a re-enactment of a pincher thing going into his arm. We are still unsure whether the “pincher thing” related to the world of superheroes (a popular focus in many of James’s drawings), or whether it was to do with some child, possibly James himself, receiving a real-life injection.

By this time, Noah has followed Maggie to the table and has also started to draw. Maggie makes an effort to connect Noah in to the proceedings by looking at Noah as well as James when she asks: “So I wonder how you would do [the gesture for] ‘yes I like it’?” Noah says nothing, but demonstrates the gesture.
Seeing James’s drawing “being scared”, Noah proceeds to draw one that is quite similar. This drawing is markedly different in style and focus from Noah’s first.

Figure 16  **Noah’s drawing ‘Being scared’**

Noah’s next drawing, he tells Maggie, is “a boy sleeping”. As Maggie reaches for the camera to photograph the drawing, Noah starts covering the paper with black crayon. Puzzled as to why Noah is doing this and somewhat dismayed to see the figure in the bed fast becoming indiscernible before she can get to photograph it, Maggie comments: “I can hardly see the boy now.”

Noah explains: “It’s the dark” and moments later adds: “I’m brave when my light is turned off.” The combination of drawing and telling, when Noah adds his explanation to the events unfolding on paper, is powerful. As Wright says, it is as if at the foot of a storyteller or narrator-animator and being taken inside the child’s “frame of experience” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 53, cited in Wright, 2007, p. 42).

Figure 17  **Noah’s drawing ‘A boy sleeping’**
During the time Noah and James are at the table they do not talk or interact directly together, but drawing seems to provide an avenue for connection. This can be seen in the way Noah connects with the themes of James’s drawings, “being scared” and “being brave”, and in the way he starts to use drawing, as James has, to explore themes to do with the emotional or affective domain. The first figure Noah draws looks to us to emulate James’s “being scared” both in style and subject. Both boys depict ‘being brave’ similarly, as a pictorial narrative of a testing event. Noah’s explanation suggests he is the subject of his drawing; he is the one “being brave” in the face of an emotionally testing event. James too may quite possibly be the subject in his drawing, but this is not altogether clear. The contrasting heights of the two figures James draws would suggest, though, that the one suffering at the hands of “the pincher thing” is a child.

When Noah is called away, James continues drawing. After a further drawing of “crying . . . bad crying….’cos that really hurts”, James’s focus shifts from drawing such “states of being”. Now James draws “a shadow”; and next, a mirror: “This is looking in the mirror. There are two people.”

The ease with which James was able to use drawing to portray the concepts of shadow and mirror image intrigued us. We were particularly fascinated by the role the medium of drawing itself was playing in facilitating James’s exploration of these phenomena. It seemed as though it was in and through the visual medium that James was doing this. Drawing seemed to operate as a vehicle or tool and to have particular features or properties that served as enablers. In our later reading we found a connection between the idea that drawing was offering James particular capacities, which we recognised, but were struggling to explain, and the notion of different modes offering particular affordances (Carr, 2000; Kress, 2000).
Kress (2000, p. 196) says:

Frequently even when the cognitive and conceptual achievement of visual representation is acknowledged, it is assumed that it is, nevertheless, a translation from or via language. But there is no pre-existing linguistic account. In other words there exists a mode of representation and of communication in the visual medium, independent of the verbal. The visual functions at one level as an independent and relatively autonomous semiotic mode, in which meanings are transported, made and remade…This mode does not depend on language for its transmission.

The mix of fascination and amazement which the research team experienced through witnessing James’s fluency with different modalities was later echoed in comments made by two parents, after they viewed his documentation at a focus group meeting. We thought the level of interest these and other parents showed in the documentation significant, and were fascinated by some of the parallels between our discussion and that offered by parents. For example, the way Parent A in the following transcript compares the complexity and challenge of having to describe the phenomena of mirrors and reflection verbally: “You just say it shows my reflection, but at the same time that’s not really describing it”; with what was achieved by a drawing: “With a few stick lines, in a few seconds.” We see close parallels between these comments and the ideas we had been exploring concerning the particular affordances of a given literacy:

Parent A: If someone did ask you to describe what a mirror was, you would actually have to stop and think…

Parent B: Yeah you would.

Parent A: You just say it shows my reflection, but at the same time that’s not really describing it. He was able to do it with a few stick lines in a few seconds.

Parent B: And also in drawing the expressions, he grasped the concept and did a very similar thing.

We also see it as significant that the documentation that engaged these parents was not their own children’s documentation. As we have noted elsewhere, the level of interest parents showed in the documented examples of children’s activities they were asked to consider at the focus group session ran contrary to the commonly held view that parents will only ever be interested and fully engage with documentation that involves their own child (Haggerty, Simonsen, Blake, & Mitchell, 2007).

When James’s mother Justine talked to us about James’s use of gesture, she told us that her response to James’s use of gesture and dramatic play had been to “go with it … like he might decide that it’s Number One’s (James’s toy dog) birthday today, so we’ll bake a cake. And it’s not, but we’ll do it anyway.” James’s drawing, Justine explained, is something he has spent a lot of time doing: “He will sit and just…and just be into drawing.” A key factor in the origins of James’s drawing was the input of James’s dad, Grant, and his architectural drawings and models:

At home all we ever really did with the kids was draw and build. Maybe because of what Grant does…building and drawing at his board… He would be in the office downstairs…but
the boys would go down all the time when they were little and he would explain what he was doing.

The influence of Grant’s architectural activities on James’s drawing is clearly apparent in the sketch below, which Justine showed us. James drew this soon after starting school, straight after watching his dad produce a concept design for a client.

Figure 20  James’ rendition of his dad’s sketch

Miro

Miro was another case study child who drew prolifically. During the first interview Alex and Iain, Miro’s mum and dad, brought one of Miro’s drawings out to show us. We consider the drawing significant not only because of its communicative and conceptual complexity, but also because it is Miro’s mum, Alex, who brings the drawing to our attention. And it is through her explanations and insights that we learn of its complexity. Alex first explains to Yvette how the drawing came about and how Miro responded when asked what her drawing was about:

Miro goes to gym on a Monday, and she’s meant to hoist herself up to the bar and then spin around, and she just couldn’t do it. She wouldn’t do it, so she drew this yesterday. And I just said to her today, ‘What’s this all about?’, and she said, ‘I don’t know how to swing over the bar at the gym.’
Yvette asks: “Is that a thought bubble?”

Alex responds: “Yeah, that’s a thought bubble. I showed her how to do those. A few weeks ago, I showed her [what] to do—we talked about a dog, because a dog was walking down the middle of the road and she said ‘What’s that dog doing, just walking down the middle of the road?’, and I said ‘What’s that dog doing?’ And we had this conversation about ‘Do dogs think?’ and ‘What do dogs think?”

Alex continues:…”and how people think, and how people speak, so there’s speech bubbles and thought bubbles. So she’s obviously used that, and I said ‘What’s that?’ and she said, ‘That’s me thinking about falling off the bar.’…. You’ve got the grumpy face, because she’s there at the bar and she doesn’t know what to do.”

Miro’s use of the graphic convention of the thought bubble (Figure 21), taught to her by her mum enables Miro to bring additional dimensions of action and reflection into her drawing. In this way the drawing features a combining of modes, what Wright (2007) refers to as children’s proclivity to cross channels of communication. Further crossover occurs through Miro combining drawing with writing. While not particularly extensive in this particular drawing, the combination of drawing and writing is one Wright highlights as very common in many young children’s drawings. In Miro’s pictures she identifies herself by positioning her name above the figure.
Alex and Iain’s interview offers rich insights of a family culture of conversation and questions. For example, the way Alex responded to Miro’s question: “What’s that dog doing, just walking down the middle of the road?”; with a question, rather than an answer. The conversation Alex and Miro then went on to have was also based around a succession of questions. Iain, during the first interview, summed up the family culture of oral communication as “articulate, declarative, forms strong arguments, deductive, enquiring…”

Miro, too, had an orientation to enquiry and analysis, strongly evidenced in her conversations. As Alex and Iain observed in the second interview: “I mean another child may have gone and got dressed up in fairy clothes, [but] before dinner tonight she sat here and asked where the first cow came from…she wanted to know the theory of evolution.” We found this orientation to analysis illustrated in the “how to” investigative themes of a number of Miro’s drawings.

Later, in reflecting on Miro’s drawing and her interview with Miro’s parents, Alex and Iain, Yvette writes:

I was ‘blown away’ with this drawing. Here Miro was thinking about thinking and representing this through her artwork—a symbolic representation of her metacognition! Miro’s drawing was affording her an opportunity to visualise herself mastering a situation. This drawing was a catalyst for a shift in thinking for myself, in terms of how I saw Miro as a communicator and the role that drawing was having for her as an active meaning maker.

This episode also highlighted for me the importance of having these meaningful discussions with parents and whānau and making time to do this in order to gain insights into the child’s world. When reflecting on this I was reminded of a passage I recently read from a book titled Insights: Behind early childhood pedagogical documentation in which Fleet, Patterson and Robertson (2006) explained the importance of pedagogical documentation in building relationships between educators and families. They spoke primarily about the documentation provided by teachers for families but what I saw and recognised through this example was that the parents were sharing samples of pedagogical documentation with teachers about Miro’s thinking and learning that led to a greater ‘shared’ understanding about her literacy. The background information given to us from Miro’s parents about the picture added to its meaningfulness. I was challenged to question how to do this for the wider community. How do we have those meaningful discussions with families to gain insights into children’s learning? How do we build a culture of shared understanding where families feel they can share examples of their children’s learning with teachers?

During the first interview, Alex told us when Miro was asked by a friend “Do you like drawing?”, she replied “Yes, I’m a very good artist.” However, in the second interview, which took place after Miro had been at school for four months, Alex and Iain comment that she is “probably doing less drawings…since starting school, she’ll rattle off some really quick figures, quite basic…little bodies with little dresses and sort of very basic detail, but it’s almost like it’s a symbol for a person…she’s not doing a work of art, she’s just sort of doing these sorts of things. Her thing now is that she just reads and reads and reads and reads.”

Alex and Iain went on to suggest that perhaps in this new environment Miro was finding the level of new learning required “quite taxing”. They spoke of the challenge Miro faced in learning how
to write, saying that the classroom teacher had observed that initially Miro’s stories were not being finished. Alex and Iain thought this could be because Miro “used to do the picture first and it took most of her time and then the story would be a couple of rushed sentences” and suggested to the teacher “tell her to do the story first and picture later”. The question of how children’s modes of strength or preferred modalities fare when they get to school is one we think worthy of further investigation.

Section two: Foregrounding the affordances of drama in the early childhood curriculum: Ben, Heather, and companions

There is a wealth of research which considers the affordances drama offers young children. A key theme in much of this research concerns the cognitive and social learning potential of taking on the role perspectives of others. A number of writers who focus on drama as social process have highlighted the role drama plays in children’s developing sense of identity (Greenwood, 2003; Guss, 2005). Greenwood (2003) suggests that role taking offers participants the chance to encounter situations and motivations outside their own experience through empathy as well as through analysis. In other words, the idea that drama can provide a way of knowing things not just in and through the cognitive domain but in and through the emotions. Other writers have pointed to the social learning involved in the complex process of negotiations amongst peers, which collaborative narrative improvisations involve (Sawyer & DeZutter, 2007).

A considerable body of research has focused on identifying elements in children’s dramatic play that contribute to print-based literacy. Sawyer and DeZutter (2007) identify a number of connections between drama and verbal or print-based literacy:

- opportunities to explore, enact, and/or improvise on pre-existing or familiar stories
- opportunities to engage with and operate on both the roles of different characters in a story and the elements of plot (e.g., motivations, tensions, resolutions)
- opportunities to explore notions of real or fictional, pretend and fantasy.


The opportunities drama offers children most obviously include taking up different character roles. Drama also offers the opportunity for different modes of talking. Wolf and Hicks (1989) found children using three different kinds of talk during dramatic play episodes—narrative, character dialogue, and stage managing—and that children as young as three were moving between these three different voices or perspectives, and showing an awareness of their different functions (cited in Sawyer & DeZutter, 2007, p. 25). We found children moving in and out of “on stage” and “off stage” roles. For example, one dramatic play episode we videoed, involving the arrival of “Bubattee” the new baby, began with the identification and allocation of roles (baby, mum, “grandfather”, “builder dad”; and “an adult”). In another play episode Jake “breaks” the
drama to remind Rosie about arrangements they made previously about props: “Hey Rosie, remember that this is the biscuits.”

The episodes we discuss in this section of the chapter feature a number of the affordances identified above. We also share examples which illustrate the interconnections frequently forged between drama and modes such as music, dance, and movement.

**Narratives, gesture, and drama: Ben**

Drama was a key activity for a number of the case study children, but most noticeably for Ben S. Ben’s dedication to the dramatic was evident right from the first day he started kindergarten. The teachers (Yvette and Mandy) recall that when Ben first arrived at kindergarten, he introduced himself as Bob (the builder). His nanny called him Bob. And for some time the other children actually thought he was Bob. As Ben settled in to kindergarten, Yvette and Mandy began to discover that there were a number of other characters Ben played. Ben’s repertoire of favourites initially comprised several characters from popular media: Bob the Builder, Molly the Morepork (storybook character), Pingu (TV cartoon penguin), Woody (character from the movie Toy Story), Buzz Light Year (character from the movie Toy Story), and Fireman Sam (TV character). One year later Ben’s repertoire had begun to favour more real-life roles, rather than characters, in particular those of builder/handyman, “troubleshooter”, and policeman. Being a policeman was his number one favourite, for many months.

Every day Ben came to kindergarten, the first thing he did was to look for the police helmet. As the teachers pointed out, other children didn’t tend to wear the helmet. It seemed to be generally regarded as Ben’s. It was not only children who picked up on Ben’s attachment to the police helmet. There were also parents who noticed this. Catherine, one of the case study parents, said in her interview “I remember Ben S. in that police hat. Every single day he wore that.”

**Figure 22  Ben as policeman**
Ben’s capacity to stay in role and to think and act in character seemed to us quite remarkable. The examples are many. Being Molly the Morepork, for instance, involved acting like a bird, so that when Ben was being Molly, he could often be seen moving from point A to point B around the kindergarten, flapping his arms (Figure 23). On another occasion, Ben as Pingu the Penguin, needing help to tie his laces, asked Yvette: “Can you tie my flippers?”

Figure 23  Ben flapping his arms

Ben’s ability to remember to make the necessary conceptual shift of perspective when in a particular role was in evidence on the first day of the case study videoing. Ben arrives at kindergarten this particular day, in the character of Molly, with a badge. Jane, Ben’s mum, has made the badge to help let everyone know “who Ben was being” that day.

Figure 24  Ben with character badge

When Yvette asks about the badge, Ben stays in the role of Molly, telling Yvette it is Molly’s mum, who made the badge “Molly’s mum did all of it”, not “the real” producer, his mum, Jane. This is not to say that Ben did not or could not draw boundaries between real and pretend. This same day Ben had also brought a parcel from home, addressed to Buzz Light Year, a parcel Ben tells Mandy: “Molly brought in.” However, when Yvette later wonders aloud to Ben: “What is it? Who’s going to open it? Is it to be opened?”

“No,” Ben answers, “It’s just a toy one.”
Later that day when the roof awning above the sandpit became unhinged, Ben who is still in the character of Molly, but who also loves being a handyman and builder, fetches a ladder from the shed to sort out the problem. Having readied the ladder, Ben is momentarily diverted away and returns to find his place on the ladder taken by close friend and companion, Aidan.

At this point Molly the Morepork (aka Ben) is faced with the question: What if a morepork were to find an intruder in its territory? How to respond? Greenwood (2003) refers to this as the “what if” speculation that is set up by the contextual frame of drama. “I pecked him,” says Ben in the interview. And laughs. Well actually thankfully not quite. Despite what it might look like in the photo (Figure 25) beak did not make contact with bottom and did not go further than Aidan’s clothes!

Figure 25  *Molly (Ben) pecking*

Ben’s numerous changes of character seem to have been a challenge to keep up with even for Jane and David (Ben’s parents).

In the first interview, Jane tells us:

> We used to forget who he was on a regular basis. [He would] always correct us.

Not only would Ben remind them who *he* was; but who *they* were.

Jane described the way, when Ben was in role, he would nominate roles for his family. When Ben was Woody, Jane was Bo Peep:

> Usually he’d remind me: ‘I’m Woody, Bo Peep.’

Likewise, when Ben was Molly, his mum was Molly’s mum and his younger brother was Louie the Tui (a story book character in the sequel to Molly the Morepork). And so on.

While Jane did not think Ben’s characters were something attributable to them as parents, she said: “We did encourage it in some ways. [For example] sometimes we’d act out where Woody
went up on Toy Story the story where Woody and Buzz are on top of the bed in Woody’s space. With his laser on…”

To us it seemed that the family’s culture of literacy was one in which the scripts of stories featured strongly and this was reflected in Ben’s proclivity to using characters and scripts in drama.

**Dramatic improvisation, costume, dance, music, and movement: Heather**

Heather, unlike Ben, took a less scripted and more of an improvisation approach to drama. Costume was often an important element of these improvisations. Heather would regularly put her quick-thinking and improvisational skills into creating and using costume and props.

In the second interview, Catherine, Heather’s mum, spoke of how costumes were a priority for Heather and reminded Yvette how Heather had spent the first three days at kindergarten in the spaceman costume. Costume, music, and performance also featured prominently in Heather’s activities at home. Catherine gave examples of how Heather liked to match costumes and props to music:

[Heather] would sort of get all the props she needed for each song, so there was a song about the doctors so she could have her medical kit and put that on for the doctor song, and then there is a song about swimming and she would get her togs on and her goggles and spread a blanket down for a pool and swim, and then a song about a pilot, so she had a hat that wasn’t a pilot’s hat but she decided it was a pilot’s hat for the flying one.

Heather’s ability to create props by using and adapting materials in innovative, creative and versatile ways, is illustrated in the photos below, which André (teacher) took one day while Heather was listening to a Hi-5 CD. On this occasion Heather used blocks, as skis (Figure 26), surfboard (Figure 27), rowing boat (Figure 28), stage and guitar (Figure 29), to accompany her movement improvisations and depict the actions of the songs.
Music was a particularly important mode to Heather, so choosing and organising the music was often a key component of her mixed media compositions.

Alcock, Cullen, and St George (2008, p. 1) point out that:

> The ancient Greek word for music, musike, includes rhythm, movement, poetry, dance, drama and all the temporal arts. ‘Music, language, dance, chant, poetry and pretend play all have a partly common origin’ (Molino, 2001, p. 173).
Weaving drama through a curriculum whāriki: collaborations and improvisations

In the following episode, drama is woven through the curriculum whāriki in a collaborative improvisation involving various children. This episode, “A flood”, begins with one child’s (Ben S.’s) observation about “flooding” at the kindergarten. It eventually drew in both teachers, Miriam, an Education Support Worker, and most of the children. In this particular episode, the mix that seems to galvanise the drama includes:

- the rain at kindergarten
- the flooding recently on the news and discussed at kindergarten by children and teachers
- previous “flood” play
- Ben’s inclination towards trouble shooting roles
- Yvette’s questions, which seemed to act as a catalyst for Ben to move into dramatic mode.

A period of flooding had been reported in the papers and on TV. This has been discussed by the children and teachers. On this day there has been a great deal of rain at kindergarten. Ben has been examining a number of damp patches and puddles:

   Ben: It was raining so hard today that we’ve got flooded.

Ben’s initial interest in the flood seems to take the form of a theoretical focus on how floods work. Yvette also encourages Ben to consider the implications of the flooding for the kindergarten community and in particular, their safety. Yvette’s use of the word “we” helps position Ben, alongside her, as part of community. She invites him to take a role and become a player in finding solutions:

   Yvette: So what’s going to happen next?
   Ben: I don’t know.
   Yvette: Are we safe from the flood Ben?
   Ben responds: Yeah I think so but if the flood gets higher and higher we might be under the water. It looks like we might be under the water. It looks like we might be under the water, when it goes higher and higher.
   Yvette: Will it go over our head? How are we going to keep ourselves safe?
   Ben: Just don’t worry. Don’t worry . . . So I’m just in charge here . . . I’ve just got to . . .

Identifying Ben’s theories about how floods work, and the extent of his interest, became clearer as we revisited the videos and dialogues. The next dialogue includes Ben’s interest in how floods dissipate.

   Ben responds: Yeah I think so but if the flood gets higher and higher we might be under the water. It looks like we might be under the water. It looks like we might be under the water, when it goes higher and higher.
   It might be like when the flood clears it will be still when the sun comes out it will still be a wee bit like this. . .when the clouds come out it will still be a wee bit . . .
It will go down down. [Uses hands to demonstrate the flood moving down. Gestures and sound effects of an explosion.] It will blow up.

Yvette: What will blow up?

Ben: The flood.

Ben’s ideas are unconventional by adult standards and may be difficult for adults to immediately apprehend. It was through revisiting the videoed episodes and documented dialogue that we came to more fully appreciate the extent of Ben’s theorising. Ben’s theories were about the level of flooding and how floods worked, how children and teachers might be able to keep themselves safe at the kindergarten, and dissipation of water levels. This prompted us to think about what might have happened had the focus been on the observational theoretical realm rather than on the dramatic realm.

Throughout these conversations Ben uses gesture extensively. He uses it for practical purposes such as indicating the level of the flood. He uses it to help him convey his ideas, for example to demonstrate the movement of an earthquake. He also uses it for dramatic effect as per his use of the theatrical convention of a staged head-hitting gesture to convey dismay. At certain points Ben also combines sound effect with gesture in his demonstrations, for example to demonstrate the explosion that occurs when floods disappear by blowing up.

Figure 31  Ben demonstrating the movement of an earthquake

Figure 32  Head-hitting in the style of a theatrical gestural convention

At one point in addressing the concern about safety, Ben picks up on a suggestion another child makes that if the water gets too high:
Kane: We’ll just have to go in there (pointing inside).

Ben agrees: Yeah. So we might have to go inside.

However, when Heather enters the drama, a little later, in the midst of Ben’s theorising, and offers a suggestion which is humorous rather than practical, Ben dismisses this as “not a very good idea”:

Heather: Emergency.

Ben: Hold on. Hold on. There’s a flood so I’m just talking to Yvette.

Ben: What else can I think?

Yvette echoes: What else can you think?

Heather: Make some glue to stop the children running out.

Ben: I don’t think that’s a good idea.

Heather: Yes it will [inaudible] stick to the floor and then it will dry then we will have to chop them [inaudible]. Laughs.

Ben: That’s not a very good idea.

It is Yvette who affirms and tunes into Heather’s way of engaging in drama, her quick thinking improvisations, her liking of costumes and enjoyment of humour:

Yvette: Are you safe?

Heather: Yep I have gumboots. And waterproof tights. And a waterproof skirt. And a waterproof hat.


In the meantime Ben picks up on Kane’s suggestion to keep children inside because of the flooding outside and goes inside to alert Mandy (teacher) to the situation: “I’ve just got to talk to Mandy about it.” Ben enlists Mandy’s help to shut and lock the outside door. His next challenge is letting other children know what is going on and getting them to “buy into” the drama. Two children head outside (into the flood), failing to respond to Ben’s caution: “Do you want to get all wet?” Mandy comes to Ben’s aid. She gives a fuller explanation of what is going on and lends support and authority to Ben’s idea of establishing the outdoor area as the flood zone:

Mandy: So if you stay out you are going to get wet ’cos that’s where the flood is.

Mandy enters into the make believe and her support seems to play a significant role in the children’s preparedness to be conscripted into the flood drama. Children start crossing the threshold into the flood zone by “swimming” (Figure 33). Mandy observes with a laugh: “Oh look, there’s a fish.” Ben, too, starts to enter in to the humorous turn of the drama, enjoying the antics of the other children as they take up roles as fish, divers, and swimmers. Both Mandy and Ben laugh outright, when Mandy draws Ben’s attention to Miriam, the Education Support
Worker, who is “backstroking” her way toward the outer reaches of playground (Miriam’s figure may be just discernible, through the plastic window of the awning, in the photo in Figure 34).

Figure 33  Children ‘swimming’ into the flood zone  Figure 34  Miriam, the Education Support Worker ‘backstroking’

Figure 35  Three children as self designated Divers and Heather as a fish  Figure 36  Heather ‘swimming’ in the flood zone

From the initial conversation between Ben and Yvette, the flood drama progressively spreads to become one in which many of the children and all the adults participate. Within this bigger drama, we note instances where opportunities arise, sometimes through teacher support, for different sorts of scripts, ideas, and styles to be accommodated; for example, through Yvette’s affirmation of Heather’s orientation to improvisation and humour and her focus on costume and props. We witness Ben, with Mandy’s encouragement, starting to tune in to the humour, when the improvisations of others take over and his life-like dramatic action script starts to take quite a different turn.

We note the widespread understanding and accommodation within Wadestown Kindergarten as a community (children and adults) of the children’s different interests in and styles of drama. This was evidenced by a general readiness, amongst children and adults alike, to enter into the drama and respond to children as their nominated character.

Parker Rees (2007), studying verbal and gestural conversations between adults and babies in the United Kingdom, highlights the importance of adult communication partners being sufficiently
“tuned in” to the different communication modes children are using (p. 7) and “the pedagogical importance of adults’ enjoyment of these conversations” (p. 4) (emphasis added).

Guss (2005) distinguishes between children’s engagement in what she terms “social realistic” drama and fantasy drama, arguing that the former is more tied to imitative roles and that the latter is potentially more “transformative and trangressive”. We found the differentiation a useful one when considering Ben and Heather’s different sorts of engagements with the dramatic. For example, in the contrast between Heather’s humorous and what Ben seemed to regard as “trangressive” suggestion of gluing children’s feet to the floor to prevent them from going outside and drowning in the flood, and Ben’s absorption in real-life roles and adhering closely to character. However, we are not convinced that children’s engagement in fantasy is, as Guss seems to suggest, superior to children’s use of the dramatic to explore life-like situations. We see enormous richness, for example, in Ben’s theories as to how floods worked and his efforts to come up with “real-world” solutions to the problem of flooding at the kindergarten. Nor did we find the distinction between social realistic and fantasy agendas as clear as Guss seems to suggest, since a number of episodes we witnessed feature considerable crossover and intermixing of both genres.

Conclusion

The examples discussed in this section offer glimpses of affordances drama offered individual children. These included affordances for social learning as children negotiated roles, collaborated and improvised together, and explored what it felt like to be in a role, for cognitive learning such as making conceptual shifts in positioning others within role, and moving between role perspectives, and for enjoyment and creative imagining. The examples illustrated how these affordances could be influenced and changed through the input of others (children and adults), and the availability of props and resources. These episodes suggest an interconnectedness in the way drama operates across individual, interpersonal, and community spheres within the kindergarten. The examples discussed in this section are limited and do not include examples of the spontaneous dramatic performances children regularly stage for each other, for teachers, and for visitors. Nor do they include large-scale teacher-orchestrated drama performances, though these do not tend to be a prominent feature at this kindergarten. As a consequence, we have not explored the use of drama as performance and associated affordances as fully as we would have liked. For example, such affordances could include opportunities for children to learn particular scripts. We see such uses as worthy of investigation.

Section three: Galvanising multimodality in the early childhood curriculum

In this section we look at how Jack’s interest in clowning galvanises an enquiry which draws on many different modes and modal combinations. We present the documentation of Jack’s explorations into clowns and clowning in the form of a diary, much as it appeared in Jack’s portfolio, to show how his enquiries progress over time.
**Diary of a multimodal clown**

We don’t know where or when Jack’s interest in clowns started, but in September 2007 when Zappo the clown visited the kindergarten, Jack was in the front row. And when Zappo called for a volunteer, Jack was it.

8 February 2008

Five months later Yvette documents in Jack’s portfolio that he has spent the morning being a clown. He gets his face painted, dons the kindergarten clown costume and practises clown moves. When Yvette shows Jack the photos she has taken, he asks if they can be emailed to his mum and dad. Jack dictates an email message to accompany them (Appendix A).
That same morning Jack tells Yvette he wants to have a circus. Yvette suggests to Jack he “brainstorm” his ideas about what he thinks he’ll need. As a start Jack says he thinks he needs to learn how to be a clown. Mandy later helps Jack to look up circus websites, including the website of Harry the Clown, a clown Jack saw at a kindergarten friend’s birthday party. When the website information is printed out, Jack comes up with the idea of putting the morning’s findings together in one folder. This becomes his clown book.

11 February 2008

Jack shows the clown book to his mum, Jo, who says how much she enjoyed getting the email and photos and how she has now sent these on to family in Canada. When Jo sees Jack’s reference to unicycles in his brainstorm of ideas, she reminds him that they have a friend who has a unicycle and they agree that the next time they see their friend, they should take a photo.

Figure 41  Jack shows the clown book to his mum

Over the following months, Jack’s clown book, becomes the first in a series of three. These books usually reside at home, but are sometimes brought to kindergarten and shared with others.
The books become the repository for numerous clown-related artefacts, including:

- further information Jack obtains online
- copies of material from his kindergarten portfolio
- a tiny paper clown figurine painstakingly cut out from a toy catalogue in the collage area;
- clown “colourings in”
- a collection of clown drawings Jack gathers from family, friends, teachers, and sundry others;
  and much much more.

13 February 2008

Jack announces to Yvette: “I need to practise being a clown again. I’ve been thinking about my costume.” Jack wants to find “a honker thing” for a nose. He suggests the computer would be a good place to start the search. On the clown sites Jack and Yvette visit Jack discovers an array of options for noses (Figure 43), as well as for hair and shoes.
The clown sites also contain some interesting historical facts about clowns, which Jack asks to have printed out for his clown book. He is particularly fascinated by why clowns traditionally had white faces (Appendix C) and over the next several days enthusiastically shares the information with people he thinks will be interested.

When he revisits the information on Harry the Clown in his clown book later that same day, Jack tells Yvette he would like to get in touch with Harry. He wants to show Harry photos of him as a clown and to “tell him I am a real clown now too”. Jack dictates the following email message:
Hi Harry

My name is Jack. I am 4 years old and I go to Wadestown Kindy. I want to be a clown. I practice being a clown every day. I would like to learn about clowns and wonder if you could tell me what it is like to be a clown. Do you have a clown costume and do you have a clown round nose? I would like to buy a clown nose that honks. I have given you a photo of me as a clown. Do you think I am good looking in this costume? Maybe one day I would like to meet you again. I met you at Jonathan's party and you were very funny. It sure is hard work being a clown but I want to be funny too.

From Jack the clown!

(Typed by Jack’s teacher Yvette as Jack dictated to her!)
15 February 2008

To Jack’s and the teachers’ delight, Harry responds:

On 15/02/2008, at 12:22 PM, HARRY the CLOWN wrote:

Hi Jack,

It was great to get your Email Jack, you look like an awesome Clown! Very Good Looking!!! What is your Clown name? have you got one yet? You could think of a good one it's quite fun...

I thought of these...

Jack-a-be the Clown
Jabo the Clown
Wacky Jacky the Clown
Smiles the Clown
Jack-jack the Clown

I do have a clown costume... I have red trousers, a stripy shirt, red braces, a red hat, stripy socks and big shoes. I have to buy some more shoes because my ones are starting to get holes in them.

I do have a clown nose... but it doesn’t honk... that would be very funny if it did though! It is quite hard being a Clown ... But I love it! I love to see kids laughing and having fun!

It was good to see you at Jonathan’s party I hope to see you again

Harry the Clown
18 February 2008

When Jack and Yvette subsequently price clown costumes on the websites and find they are pretty expensive, Jack decides to take up Yvette’s suggestion that perhaps he could make his own. He starts with two tissue boxes and footwear.

Figure 45  **Jack’s clown shoes**

Later the same morning Jack emails Harry to let him know which of the clown names Harry suggested, Jack most liked, asking Harry where to get clown noses and shoes and seeking Harry’s opinion on the tissue-box shoes.
Harry’s same-day response contains the details of a number of websites and a suggestion that Jack could perhaps check out his mum’s wardrobe as a possible source for shoes. To our knowledge this was not a suggestion Jack picked up on.
By this time Jack’s interest has found its way into the daily painting of clowns. Clown costume is a key theme in these paintings, as illustrated in the painting sequence below in which Jack “dresses” the clown.

Figure 46  Jack painting a clown and costume

21 February 2008

If I was you I would look for Big shoes in your mums wardrobe... You could fit a pair of your shoes into a bigger adults pair...that might work...or you could check out these sites (But they are expensive!!)

www.clownsoport.com
www.jollywalkers.com
www.costumesinc.com
www.sillyfarm.com
mooseburger.com

I get my nose from ‘silly farm’ or ‘Pricilla mooseburgers’ website.
The teachers notice that Jack’s daily painting varies from day to day, although sometimes the differences are only slight.

**Figure 47  A selection of Jack's daily clown paintings**

Opportunities to use the whiteboard and a new interactive whiteboard are also utilised by Jack as opportunities for further clown paintings.

27 February 2008

When Jack’s grandparents come from London on a visit, there is a shopping expedition with granny which results in a trip to a Salvation Army second hand store and a clown puppet becoming part of Jack’s collection. When granny and grandad return to England they send Jack his very own clown costume.

**Figure 48  Jack showing his recently acquired clown puppet**  **Figure 49  Jack modelling his new clown costume**

5 March 2008
Jack’s experimentation with different clown costume ideas continues. Today Jack enlists Mandy’s assistance to construct trouser straps out of string to enable him to transform the “hoop dress” (one of the kindergarten dress-ups) into a pair of clown pants.

6 March 2008

The next day Jack arrives with modification plans for the hoop dress trousers. He has brought braces to replace the straps made the day before out of string. When Yvette has difficulty getting these braces attached, Lou, Moya’s father, is quick to lend a hand.

Figure 50  ‘Hoop dress’, braces and Jack’s clown pants

Highly delighted with his new outfit, Jack suggests making this day “clown day”. Paddy joins him and together they have their faces painted and put on a clown show.

Figure 51  Jack and Paddy ‘being clowns’

71 April 2008

Clown props continue to feature. Today Jack brings balloons from home telling Yvette: “A clown can do many tricks you know Yvette…I can’t tie balloons but I just like to have them because I’m
a clown.” A couple of weeks later when David, Ben’s dad, is making balloon animals for the afternoon children, Yvette remembers back to Jack and the balloon tying. She puts a hat aside for him. It seems to be well received.

Figure 52  **Jack with balloons**

8 April 2008

More clown-related artefacts arrive from home. Amongst them is a New Zealand Symphony Orchestra programme featuring musical clown, Melvin Tex. Music plays a major role in Jack’s activities and in those of his family. As Jack explains to Yvette: “I saw [the clown] at an orchestra that my dad was at. My dad is in the orchestra that Melvin Tex is in.”

Figure 53  **Jack showing Yvette the programme featuring Melvin Tex, the musical clown**

A face painting book Yvette gets out later in the day gives Jack the idea of trying out a new clown persona: the sad clown. Jack gets Yvette to paint his face exactly like the one in the book, making sure it matches right down to the last detail. “Don’t forget the tear drop,” he tells her. Jack follows up by searching out a matching wig and then sets to work to practise getting his facial expression exactly right.
20 June 2008

It probably goes without saying that when Jack turned five and made the traditional graduating birthday hat on his last day at kindergarten, no-one was surprised to see that it had a clown on it!

Jack’s interest acts as a powerful mechanism for learning and for integrating different modes. At times Jack’s previous experiences with particular modes form the building blocks of his enquiry. For example, Jack draws on the expertise he has gained from the hours he has spent constructing and designing, in the clown costumes he creates. Jack’s decision to convert the hoop dress into a pair of clown trousers and his associated quest for suitable shoulder straps, for instance, is reminiscent of a project weeks beforehand, when Jack spent several days perfecting nonbreakable handles for a new bag he had made. The use of new media also becomes mapped onto Jack’s existing repertoire. Sometimes this happens through Jack’s own initiative and sometimes with encouragement, suggestions, and assistance from others. A ready example of this is Jack’s use of digital technology which, with Yvette’s assistance, he is building expertise in. Emails, websites, and search programs become tools of communication and enquiry for Jack to return to.
Conclusion

The modes featured in this chapter suggest that different modes may offer different sorts of affordances based on their materiality (how they are constituted). This was illustrated for example, in the capacity of drawing to portray a story ‘at a glance’ and in the use of gesture to imitate movement. We suggest that particular modes help to engender particular ways of knowing, such as the role drawing played in helping facilitate James’ ‘visual understanding’ of the phenomena of reflection and shadow. This idea warrants further investigation. We observed children making frequent use of modes or modal combinations they had existing strengths or interests in. We also observed that combining modes often enabled children to strengthen and/or diversify their communication and meaning making. The interconnections between modes were complex. Children’s access and use of particular modes and modal combinations seemed influenced by many factors, not only at an individual level, but also at an interpersonal and community level. For example the way children influenced and learnt from each other, from teachers, families and other adults. In this chapter we have touched on some of the ways in which teachers support and extend children’s use of different modes and modal combinations, and on the significance of parent input and the home context. These are key elements which we focus on more fully in the next chapter.
Throughout the project we have kept coming back to ask what the conditions are that invite children to use a multitude of ways to express their knowledge, their thoughts, and their questions (Taguchi, 2006). This has taken us from considering the affordances of particular modes and modal combinations to considering the affordances of particular environments and practices. These affordances incorporate the role played by particular people and relationships. Kei Tua o te Pae identifies the learning community in an early childhood setting as “children, families, whänau, teachers and others” (Ministry of Education, 2005, 1, p. 3). We have examined the roles and relationships of each of these agents, paying particular attention to the children, families, whänau, and teachers who participate in the local kindergarten community.

Through this analysis we aim to contribute to understanding more about the dynamics of teaching and learning, especially how literacy learning happens and the affordances offered within an ECE setting.

**Affording teachers**

Rinaldi (2005) emphasises sensitivity along with openness as key elements of the Reggio Emilia project’s commitment to what is termed a pedagogy of listening, a listening not just with the ears, “but with all our sense (sight, touch, smell, taste and orientations)” (p. 20). We found these ideas useful when we were thinking about how teachers and adults might facilitate multimodal pedagogy.

In reflecting on the drawing episode involving James and Noah (pp. 29–34), for example, we came to thinking about the role of the adult as listener, and the implications of being there or not being there to hear the explanations James and Noah offered as they were drawing. Being there certainly enabled the adult to more fully appreciate what the drawings were intended to communicate. As Wright (2007) points out, the combination of telling and drawing is important. Wright says of the role of the adult, that “whether the adult is simply observing or actively engaging with the child during the drawing process, the very presence of an adult serves as a form of facilitation” (p. 38). The idea that the mere presence of an adult or teacher may serve as form of facilitation got us thinking about the compunction teachers sometimes feel, that they have to be talking in order to be teaching. Wright cautions that “the observer can protract (or perhaps even thwart) the [drawing] process. Consequently, dialogue between adult and child must be sensitively considered” (p. 38).

Jack’s clown enquiries discussed in the last chapter show how teachers gave Jack support and encouragement to pursue and express his interest in clowns in and through a wide range of modes and media: conversations, writing, diagrams, paintings, drawings, emails, websites, the electronic whiteboard, dramatic performances, costume making, and design. Yvette positioned herself as
fellow enquirer alongside Jack in pursuing his interest. When Yvette opened Harry’s first email one day after the kindergarten session had finished, she was so delighted that Harry had replied, she rang Jack’s mother, Jo, immediately. “We’ve heard from Harry the clown!” she exclaimed. We believe that children know when teachers are genuinely interested in their own enquiry, and that teachers’ interest acts to reinforce a child’s interest.

Greater sensitivity to children’s preferred modalities and teachers’ heightened awareness of the affordances of different modes as avenues of enquiry have helped to further consolidate the commitment to children’s project work which was a feature of Wadestown Kindergarten prior to the COI project. The heightened awareness has strengthened the positioning of children’s individual and collective interests and enquiries as the staple of kindergarten curriculum.

**Relationships pedagogy**

As Peters (2009) points out, reciprocal and responsive relationships are “at the heart of the Te Whāriki curriculum” (p. 23). The role of the teacher is relationship-based, taking part within a social context that is inclusive of the participants within the kindergarten environment, and incorporates relationships formed with parents, whānau, and people from the community.

Gooouch (2009), discussing relationships in children’s play, gives examples of two exceptional early years teachers where “play is led, directed and orchestrated by the children. The adults support and maintain play rather than hijacking or redefining the purposes of action” (p. 139). The examples above from Wadestown Kindergarten illustrate how teachers enabled children to follow their own interests within play.

Teachers’ efforts to encourage children to listen and to enable children to be listened to were also a regular feature of their interactions with children. Yvette often says: “I wonder what so-and-so means” or “I wonder what so-and-so is trying to say”, as a way of giving an opportunity for a child to restate what they are saying, or another child to listen. Both Mandy and Yvette ask children to “hold their thoughts” when several children are talking at the same time. André uses gesture to orchestrate children having a turn at expressing themselves.

These interactions convey an underlying idea that children can get their views across if they are given opportunity to contribute and reinforcement for their contributions.

**Children’s relationships with each other**

Children are also encouraged to learn about the use of different modes by learning from each other. This process of children learning from and teaching each other about the use of a particular mode is evident, for example, in Aidan and Ben’s interactions when they work jointly together to write Ben’s name on a list. Aidan, who is doing the writing, first asks Ben how he spells his name. When Ben launches in on spelling out the letters of his name too quickly for Aidan to keep up, Aidan offers Ben a bit of coaching in the art of giving spelling instructions. Aidan starts the spelling again from the beginning, on the letter he is writing, and models slowing the pace: “B----- --e”.
A little while later their interactions centre on listening, checking, writing, self-correcting, and explaining. At this point, Aidan, who has misheard what Ben has said and mistakenly written an “m” in Ben’s name instead of “n”, decides something is not right:

Aidan checks with Ben: Did you say “m” or “n”?

Ben: ’n’.

Aidan: Oh (Aidan tries to correct the ‘m’ by rubbing it out with his finger). That was a mistake.

Shortly after this, Ben contributes some writing terminology, i.e. the terms “capital” and “spell”, and gives instructions and a demonstration on how to form the letter “t” correctly:

Ben: You’ve got to spell ‘t’.

Aidan: t…t. (He writes ‘T’.)

Ben: No, not a capital ‘T’. What you do ‘t’, what you do, you go down, and th[en]… (Ben traces the letter ‘t’, first in the air, then on the table top.)

Aidan: Oh yeah I know that.

While this is going on, Yvette, who is videoing, keeps mainly in the background. At one point when Aidan becomes confused because Ben carries straight on from spelling his first name, to spelling his last name, Yvette does offer assistance: “So now you’re spelling Stirling, Aidan. So it’s ‘t’ after ‘s’.”

When Ben gets to the “i” in his last name and is unsure what letter comes next, he looks over to Yvette and asks “And then…what is supposed…?” Yvette answers: “An “I” “. Ben and Aidan both look expectantly up at Yvette for the next letter. “What else?” asks Ben. This time Yvette doesn’t tell them the letter. Instead she encourages them to see what they can come up with. She answers with the question, “What next?” There is a brief pause until Ben lights upon the resourceful idea of using the sign-in sheet (where his name is written) to check for the remaining letters of his name. In addition to highlighting the affordances of a print-rich environment, this episode highlights the importance of providing children with sufficient space to work together and encouraging or scaffolding children to take individual and “collaborative autonomy”.

When considering how such affordances come about, the context surrounding the list is significant. This particular list was initiated by Ben, Aidan, and Heather in the middle of their play drama of the arrival of new baby (Ben). The list had a purpose of the children’s choosing. As Ben tells Yvette, the list is “so we know who’s tomorrow being a baby”. Hence the list connected to and was part of the children’s dramatic play. The activity of writing names is not occurring as an end in itself, although teachers would see gaining greater proficiency in writing and writing names as an anticipated outcome and clearly intend to foster this. In general, the writing of names at the kindergarten tends to occur as part of some sort of practical purpose such as on a painting, coat peg, locker, or photo board, rather than an end in itself through templates or writing drill.

Teachers make the point that there is quite a history of list making at the kindergarten. It is a practice teachers instigate, regularly model, and actively encourage. Hence, rather than seeing the
children’s list writing as an isolated or one-off strategy, teachers think it better understood as something of an embedded kindergarten practice. List making, for a variety of purposes, is part of kindergarten culture. Lists are regularly drawn up for activities that require turn taking, such as going on the swings, riding bikes, and using the computer. Maggie recalls being asked by Aidan to make a list of the children who come down the slide backwards. The list-writing episode is one of many examples we could use to illustrate the way print-based literacies become woven into everyday activities at the kindergarten. For us the episode also illustrates that a focus on multimodal literacies can provide situations that generate, complement, and support print-based and oral communication in ways that are meaningful for children.

**Relationships with families/whānau and community**

As the COI research has progressed, parent input and the ways in which parents and whānau engage with teaching and learning have developed. The developments are mainly in the ways that parents and whānau participate in the education programme, bringing social/cultural capital and interests from home, and contribute to interpretation of children’s learning and development. Teachers say they have become more aware of transformational possibilities as they have viewed themselves as learners as well as teachers, and children and their whānau as experts. Learning has been strengthened and those involved in the learning community have been empowered to contribute more extensively.

**Parents and whānau contributing to the education programme**

Early into the project, teachers questioned whether families were being “welcomed” on teachers’ terms or theirs. Was the environment one in which families felt they could contribute? The following scenario encouraged teachers to recognise the importance of being open minded about family contributions that did not totally conform with their ideas about “good” pedagogy and practice. In this scenario, allowing a nonconforming contribution by a grandmother was enjoyable, enriched children’s learning, supported her grandchild to feel safe and secure, and enhanced family relationships.

Yvette reflects:

Jacqui had just started kindergarten and her grandmother came with her every day to help her settle into this new space. Grandma Betty had a keen interest in crafts and helped out at the children’s programme at the local church. Grandma Betty suggested that she could bring crafts in to do with the children, as a way to be present for Jacqui and also to help out throughout the sessions. We thought this was a good idea. Grandma Betty offered a range of craft activities for the children to engage with. They were ‘structured’ in nature, requiring a process of ‘direction’ and ‘instruction’ from an adult in order to complete the task. This was not consistent with current ideas about interest driven learning experiences, or activity based learning in early childhood. We discussed this as a teaching team. A range of options were available. We decided we would like Grandma Betty to continue with her interest in crafts and we decided to observe the ways in which the children interacted with them. Foundational to our thoughts was our underlying value of relationships. We did value the fact that Grandma Betty wanted to be a part of the kindergarten, and we did want her to participate and share her skills and knowledge. We didn’t want this to be compromised or for Grandma Betty to feel uncomfortable so we decided to see what would happen.
Over the following weeks and months we began to notice the way that not only Jacqui responded to Grandma Betty’s presence (in terms of her feeling safe at kindergarten) but also how other children began to value her presence. Grandma Betty very quickly became a ‘star’ in the programme and as she carried her craft box into kindergarten a line of children would soon be following her, questioning ‘What are we going to make today?’ Children willingly chose to participate, and Grandma Betty was able to share her skills with the group, many learning craft skills such as gluing, sticking, organising, sewing and designing. Alongside this was Grandma Betty’s enjoyment. She seemed to take pleasure in being involved and sharing her skill, and we began to appreciate having Grandma Betty with us. She gave careful thought to the crafts that were prepared. As different kindergarten projects and interests arose Grandma would often tailor her craft making activities to fit in with the children’s interests, e.g. during a project on the ‘jungle’ Grandma Betty made animal masks with the group. She quickly became very much a part of ‘what happens at kindergarten’ for many children. Grandma Betty through her crafts supported children’s learning.

Deans, Brown, and Young (2007, p. 2), whilst referring to drama within the education programme, state that “reflection in action is evident when the teacher adopts an open-minded, flexible approach informed by regular self-monitoring, that allows the children’s ideas to direct the emergent story”. We would go a step further in suggesting that it is also allowing family ideas to contribute to activities and learning experiences within the environment. Within the Grandma Betty scenario, teacher reflection, flexibility, and open-mindedness were required. The discussion between teachers enabled teachers to reflect on and challenge their own pedagogy and to see benefits of welcoming Grandma Betty’s input. As the teachers reflected on this, they came to realise that the underpinning value of their teaching philosophy was the idea of the nurturing of relationships. Groom (2003) talks about looking beyond the physical environment to other aspects, to think about meaningful work practices, and enriching human interactions that affirm existence. What potentially could have been a dilemma turned out to enrich the teaching and learning programme at the kindergarten and in turn strengthened relationships. This example encouraged teachers to think about the limitations they can put on families based on their pedagogical views on how learning should happen.

Parents are more likely now to notice possibilities for contributing, and to offer their input, rather than needing to be invited to contribute by teachers, as is exemplified in Jack and Tom’s story below.

We introduced Jack and his interest in clowning in Chapter 4. From early on we discovered that Jack loved to perform. Jack’s interests seemed to cover a range of areas and one of those that seemed most prevalent was his interest in music. His family has a strong musical literacy and interest. Jack’s father Tom plays in the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and from a young age Jack, too, had a strong “leaning” towards music. At age three he began to play the violin and about a year later began to play the cornet.

Yvette reflects on an investigation of the famous children’s musical story “Peter and the Wolf” which engaged Jack and his family:

Over a period of approximately four weeks we had been investigating the story, characters and instruments with the children at group time. Tom became aware of our current interest in
‘instruments’ and our discussions about ‘Peter and the Wolf’. He wondered whether we would like him to bring in some of his brass instruments to play for the children. We automatically jumped on this opportunity! There was much anticipation in the week leading up to this event! Jack told us that he and Dad would play together!

The day arrived, and what a grand affair! Jack and Tom arrived both dressed in tuxedos, Jack with a black bow tie and Tom with a white one, just as Jack had told us. Their dress expressed the importance of the event. Everyone was seated indoors. Jack and Tom made their entrance from outside. Tom began with a fantastic rendition of a solo trumpet piece which resonated throughout the Kindergarten. The audience were captured! Both Tom and Jack entered. They played an array of brass instruments together, explained what each instrument did and shared their musical knowledge with us. It was really a special occasion. Jack’s confidence in music was evident, and reflective we’re sure of the confidence of other family members. This experience was captured on video and watched the days after. Jack and his friends re-lived the experience and it was a topic of conversation for the weeks after.
What an amazing privilege to have had Tom and Jack share their talent with us. This is an example of the many opportunities that are before us, if we but only tap into them. What a waste it would be if we do not use these valuable resources from home that are readily available.

Gould and Pohio (2006) give light to Te Whāriki and current pedagogy, highlighting that children are empowered when we hear and respond to their voices and the voices of their community. It was clear to us, as we watched the video footage of Jack and Tom sharing their instruments that Jack was so proud to be performing with his Dad. This scenario is an example of parent contribution, parent partnership and of family engagement. Without welcoming and valuing this contribution teachers would not have discovered the richness of this musical literacy evident in this family. A focus on multi modal literacies has encouraged teachers to view parent contributions in a broad context. If we value the multiple ways in which children communicate we too must value the multiple ways in which whānau contribute and communicate their knowledge to the teaching and learning programme. Teaching and learning as a result has been enriched. This is a progression from where we began: where parents were once invited, they now offer.

**Parents interpreting children’s learning and development**

The Effective Provision of Preschool Education study (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004) found that children had better cognitive and dispositional outcomes when ECE services encouraged continuity of learning between ECE settings and homes, and where a special relationship in terms of shared educational aims had been developed with parents.

The insights parents provided about children, and the discussions we had together, enabled us to better understand and interpret the origin and meaning of children’s literacies, and how they are valued and encouraged at home. Asking questions and being ready to learn from parents, as well as teachers sharing their professional perspectives with parents, has become part of the culture at Wadestown Kindergarten that enables parental input into pedagogical discussion.
One powerful way in which we found out about parent views and home experiences was through our discussions with case study parents. These were planned as semi-structured interviews, and began with us asking parents their views of a video recording of their child, and then of their child’s portfolio. Families offered interpretations and perspectives on their child that were different from those of the teachers and research associates, and emerged from the different knowledge that parents had of their child and the parents’ own “funds of knowledge”. The families also contributed data from their home contexts that enriched and added new dimensions to the data gathered in the kindergarten.

Ben M.’s parents, Andrea and James, had watched a video episode of Ben swinging on the kindergarten swings at the same time as he held a lengthy conversation with Yvette. The episode lasted for almost 10 minutes, ending with Ben volunteering to show Yvette his “special flip jump” on the monkey bars.

Andrea is an occupational therapist. She explained her understanding of the progression in competencies that Ben was making through his physical actions, and of the concept and complexity of sensory integration. Here, the interactions between literacies and the ways in which literacies support each other, features that we discussed in Chapter 4, were highlighted by James and Andrea:

. . . he got on the swing himself, and he started swinging himself, and he maintained it, and Yvette said ‘You are swinging quite high now Ben’. . . . And equally [his progression] was shown by the flicks he was doing. I mean physically he is pushing the limits of jumping… The thing that I thought was quite interesting from an occupational therapist’s perspective was how he was swinging and talking and talking, so that was a sensory integration element2. . . I just thought it was an interesting thing that he was doing something quite physical . . . and he was able to have that long conversation, detailed, while he swung, while he is getting quite a lot of sensory input, like quite a lot of physical balance sensation and physical movement. That he could do these two complicated things at one time and that was quite an achievement.

Ben’s father, James, commented on another kind of integration, this time between Ben’s physical competencies and his long attention span. “With the physical side of things he is very agile, and if we went on to the . . . cricket and the ball and the eye contact he is there. But I agree with you [interview participants] that he did have sustained conversations on the swing, and the other thing was his [long] attention span.”

James linked Ben’s mastery in physical domains with paying attention, a disposition that is likely to equip Ben for subsequent learning. Brooker (2002), for example, has shown that involvement (being absorbed, focused, committed, and curious) is associated with success at school.

Andrea’s analysis from an occupational therapist’s view focused on Ben’s competent physical undertakings that seemed to provide a platform for other communication to take place. She raised useful questions about the complexities of integration and perhaps the need to master one dimension in order to be able to integrate it with another. There seems to be a link to the views of

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2 Andrea explained “sensory integration” as the “coming together of social, cognitive, physical, and other [accomplishments]”.
Miro’s parents, also discussed in Chapter 4, who thought that the new learning required in the school environment (reading and writing) came at the expense of practising other learning (art). At times it may be that children may need to focus more fully on one literacy as their competence develops.

This is one of many examples that illustrate the importance of taking time to process ideas, to look a little deeper, to share learning “snippets” with whānau, to ask questions that encourage interpretations and insights, and to gather further information about what is happening here for this child. At times teachers experience a “pressure to perform” in documentation, that so many articles of documentation need to be gathered for each child within a period of time. These external pressures seem to be inconsistent with what the teachers are trying to achieve. This raises questions about the purpose of documentation and how it is seen. Documentation can showcase learning and development, and it can also act as a tool to aid thinking about teaching and learning.

**Literacies within family contexts**

McNaughton (1995) has suggested that it is through family activities that children “develop ideas and values about literacy practices and activities and their personal and social identity” (p. 17). We found examples of this, where parents clearly enjoyed, encouraged, and responded to their children’s literacy practices. Many parents seemed to go to some lengths to affiliate with their child’s literacy mode and, to a degree, in a number of instances to share an interest in, or aptitude for these literacies. While McNaughton was referring to print-based literacies, we suggest that linkages between family activities and ideas and values about literacy practices occur across a wide range of literacies.

Linkages between children’s favoured literacy modes and family literacy practices were touched on in Chapters 3 and 4. They were exemplified in Joe’s spatial motoric competence and his family’s interest in, resourcing and encouragement of motor bike riding; in James’s interest and competence in drawing and the influence of his father’s architectural activities; and in Miro’s “orientation to enquiry and analysis” that was reflective of the “culture of conversation and questions” that Miro’s family practised.

In this section, we further explore some of the ways in which family literacies and activities boosted and supported those of their children, and how these in turn contributed to ideas children had of themselves. Examples of Ben M. and his physical and sporting competence show strong linkages with a family orientation to sporting and physical practices.

Ben’s family appreciated Ben’s capabilities and modelled, encouraged, resourced, and supported Ben to develop physical and perceptual confidence through sporting activities and resources:

James: We have a cricket bat downstairs and he smacks it around the place. . . . And he’s got what he thinks is a little golf club, he calls it, he smacks that as well.

James and Andrea were interested and participated as a family in organised sporting activities and informal physical play and games. They talked of swimming lessons, going to the playground, hitting a bat and ball around, taking Ben to cricket matches, watching cricket on television, and so on. The parents themselves had an orientation to physical sports:
James: In terms of sport, I played rugby and cricket all through school and you know, love them both, and I play squash now so in terms of ball games and racket and bat skills that was something that I was interested in ... Andrea played hockey and cricket.

Ben’s parents and his grandmother regarded Ben as highly competent physically and confident about his abilities:

Andrea: But physically we see him just progressing in terms of being very coordinated, getting a lot of feedback from other parents saying you know he is fantastic with a ball and bat and you know that he has got good hand eye coordination and my mother commented to me the other day that he has become more confident in the physical element.

James commented that Ben becomes absorbed in his interests and he and Andrea enable him to pursue his interest single-mindedly:

James: He is almost like a one man band you know when he is playing with something, that is the thing that he plays with and plays with all the time. And so with the cricket thing ... when he is outside that is pretty much what he wants to do all the time is play cricket, or if he is inside, you know we play cricket downstairs as well and most people won’t let their kids play with balls inside, but we have to, we haven’t got much choice.

Is this similar to ways in which Jack’s family and teachers enabled Jack’s interest in clowns to be sustained over time and across places (see Chapter 4)? We think that the willingness of adults to offer opportunities for children to follow their interests in a single-minded and impassioned way across different contexts may be a condition that supports children to develop competency in a literacy mode. This relates, too, to the emphasis of Wadestown Kindergarten on projects emerging from children’s interests that extend over time and take children into different contexts. Projects allow a purposeful focus that is not interrupted at the end of the day.

Another example of the way in which a family literacy or practices within the home contribute to and support children’s expression was illustrated through Kate’s development of an orientation towards humour.

Kate used and enjoyed drawing and was also very interested in drama. Her time at kindergarten involved a lot of dramatic play. Imagination and language played a key part in Kate’s drawing and drama. However one characteristic of Kate or an interest of Kate’s that we became particularly interested in was her use of humour. Kate also enjoyed playing with words. In an interview with Lucy and Andy (Kate’s mum and dad) they highlighted that this was something they, too, had noted. They explained that Kate “got the idea that there are more ways to communicate than just your words, like she says to me ‘Mum, you’ve got your angry eyebrows’”. An observation that we made that also illustrates this enjoyment with words was made when Kate began to sign her name in backwards (as a print practice at kindergarten, children have the option of signing themselves in each day). Over a period of approximately a week Kate chose to sign her name in backwards (e-t-a-k) and called herself Etak! Again, it was during our interviews with parents that we discovered the full extent of where this humour had come from:

Lucy:
… the backwards thing (writing her name backwards) at one stage she was talking about ycul and we had started working out everyone’s name in the family backwards and ycul is Lucy backwards and for quite a while they were calling Andy, what was it? Ydna….everyday when he got home they’d go ydna, ydna. And Kate’s etak.

This play with names extended to her interactions with her peers. Lucy goes on to explain: “Like this morning ... at school she said, she saw Heather and she said hello Heather Miller and then Charlie Plimmer walked past and she went ‘hello Charlie Miller’. You know they just thought ‘weirdo’, but she knew that she was calling everyone by the same surname today and that’s that was going to be her joke…”

Yeah so she is a jokester. She does love to play with words and rhyme.

Kate enjoyed joking in situations and seemed to find a funny side of many things. She enjoyed “nonsense/silly stories” and would often involve these in her conversations with her peers and adults. It became evident to us, as we watched Kate interacting within the kindergarten, and after discussions with Andy and Lucy, that there was a real family culture of humour. They explained: “There’s a lot of, there is a lot of silly humour in the house...so there’s a lot of figuring out what a joke is you know...executing that…and she has got into jokes. Like it’s, it’s quite recently that she can tell a knock knock joke and things like that properly.” Kate’s jokes would find their way back to kindergarten and she would test them out on the children and adults within the environment.

We also discovered that a key player in Kate’s developing interest in humour was her older brother. A big brother who, as Lucy and Andy explain, “in terms of humour, accents, that sort of thing...you would get, you know Mr Bean videos and them mimicking...he would take the lead on that and she would follow”. At kindergarten, Kate would often quote her older brother and share stories of the nonsense rhymes and jokes he had taught her.

These findings about linkages between family literacies and practices and children’s competencies have implications for everyday practice. They highlight the importance of finding out about parents’ understanding of their child, the value parents place on literacies, and the family literacy practices that are closely linked with those of their children.

Jonathan, another of the case study children, illustrates a coming together of affording practices and relationships, parent involvement, learning from parents, and affording environments. In particular, we draw attention to Jonathan’s use of material resources available within the kindergarten environment, how interviews with Jonathan’s parents offered insights about Jonathan’s interests and dispositions, and the involvement of Jonathan’s dad in the kindergarten. We suggest that these factors together contributed to Jonathan’s growing self-esteem and confidence.

Jonathan had a strong interest in the visual. During his time at kindergarten it became increasingly clear that Jonathan was very keen on using technology to explore images and ideas in order to make sense of his world. The digital camera became an important tool for Jonathan to explore the environment with. It was interesting to note that he seemed particularly interested in capturing images of his family including finding old photos where his sister (who came to Wadestown
kindergarten before him) was present, photos of himself, and of Michael, Jonathan’s father, who spent much time being at the kindergarten.

As with many children at kindergarten, Jonathan became interested in face painting. Face painting has become a culture of the kindergarten, as a way to explore character and as another prop for dramatic play. Jonathan seemed to really enjoy this. He would often choose to have his face painted as a character such as a “puppy” or a “Wiggles™ character” although he never seemed to be “tied” to a particular character. We wondered what face painting afforded for Jonathan. We do not really know, but as Yvette reflects:

Was it that he could be in role? It was interesting to note that when Jonathan did have his face painted he didn’t necessarily act out the character he was, or involve himself in dramatic play opportunities. Was this a place of comfort for Jonathan? When face painting you don’t necessarily need to verbalise your thoughts or act them out, you could ‘just be’. One thing we do note is that when face painting there are always lots of children around! Part of the process is waiting for a turn, talking through what you are going to be, and participating within a group. At these times Jonathan seemed to enjoy the connections he made with others while participating.

One example was the day Jonathan sat for 40 minutes while friend Phoebe painted his face. This is also an example of the task persistence that is evident in many of our observations of Jonathan. During an interview with Angela and Michael they shared that: “He’s quite happy in his own space and in his own activity…he could sit and do four different jigsaws in 40 minutes and not want to communicate with anyone and not actually want, wouldn’t be bothered but he’s just so focused on the activity and that’s the same with the computer, the camera… Football, he has been known to kick a football on a big field for an hour. Just kick it and run and kick it and run… He’s very content playing games by himself and it’s almost like he gets so focused and he just loves repetitive tasks…”

Halliday (1975, in Leland & Harste) express that language is just one part of a culture’s semiotic system, and that there is a combination of aesthetic, cognitive, and psychomotor elements that come into play when we think about children’s abilities. In thinking about Jonathan, this seems particularly pertinent as oral language was quite often not the mode that Jonathan would choose to operate in. Angela shares her insights by saying: “It’s just Jonathan, it’s just the way he is but he is quiet, I mean you know, like all kids they’re all sort of cute but because of this strong, silent personality people are quite drawn to him. They find him quite interesting…We’re not worried about it…you know they all get there and he’ll get there at his own pace and that kind of thing. He’s quite a determined strong, you know, he’s a really neat sort of kid…”

Our interview with Michael and Angela highlighted for us their valuing and acceptance of Jonathan’s individual learning style and development:

I often wondered [about] the repetitive nature of his tasks and his play, if that’s the way he learns. I mean a certain amount of passion is quite, you know like…behaviour is a way that children do, and they need to be, to pattern that behaviour in… You know when you’re talking about kicking a ball or you know, an example, they actually have to gain the skill.
Michael was a huge part of the kindergarten community. He spent a large amount of time at kindergarten and was a regular part of most sessions. On a day-to-day basis he would involve himself in the programme, in all sorts of ways—working or playing with children, involving himself in teaching and learning, tidying the gardens, doing handyman jobs, running errands, etc. He built strong relationships with the children and families at the kindergarten. It wasn’t long before Michael’s presence became a regular “part of what happens here”, and something really valued by all within the community.

Te Whāriki states that “The wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 42). When children sense that their families are valued, what is the impact on their sense of belonging within the learning environment? We wondered what the impact of Michael’s presence within the environment had on Jonathan’s sense of belonging. Te Whāriki supports the notion of whānau engagement, suggesting that the acceptance of whānau within the learning environment contributes or adds to a child’s sense of belonging, wellbeing, identity, and security. We had originally noted that Jonathan was a quiet boy, yet during his time at kindergarten we watched a quiet confidence grow within him. This confidence was evident when Jonathan headed off to school and was highlighted to us when Yvette asked Michael how Jonathan was going at school. Michael recounted that early after starting school, Jonathan had said to him on the way into school “You can leave me at the gate.”

Environments that afford

The emphasis in our discussions so far has been on ways in which the relationships and practices of participants involved in the kindergarten context have mediated children’s use of multimodal literacies. These relationships and practices take place within an environment that is well resourced to support learning and development. The environment includes interpersonal resources: an environment that is welcoming of contribution and participation by all comers, where a culture of enquiry and engagement has developed over time; where a culture of pedagogical discussion has become established; where children are collaboratively involved in pursuing their own interests and supported to do this; and where there is time and space for children and adults to work together or individually.

The kindergarten environment also has very extensive material resources to support differing literacy modes and support children to develop their ideas. Te Whāriki Ministry of Education, states that the learning environment “should offer a wide variety of possibilities for exploring, planning, reasoning and learning, with space arranged to encourage active exploration, providing both new challenges and familiar settings so that children develop confidence” (p. 83). Resources and equipment that support multimodal expression in a variety of ways, for example, musical instruments, props, books, art, ICT, costume, constructive materials, physical equipment are readily available throughout the kindergarten. This is illustrated, for example, in the large number of resources available to Jack to encourage him in his clown investigations: ICT (computers, Google™ access, email, camera, printer), paint, collage materials, costume, face paint, paper, pens, props, and books. It is interesting to also note the role of the teacher within this, and how
teachers can encourage children to notice the resource options that are before them, such as when considering the prices of clown shoes online, Jack discovers they are quite expensive. Yvette suggests that he could perhaps make himself a pair of shoes. Jack acts on this idea and chooses to make his shoes out of a pair of tissue boxes at the collage table.

There seems to be value in having the range of resources readily accessible at all times. Heather’s mother, in her interview, recalled that when some of the dress ups were temporarily removed and put in storage Heather had really missed them: “I remembered how the first thing she did… she wore that [space suit] for about three days and I wondered… actually having that hood on and being covered in something actually made her feel secure…” cause she wore that non stop, and then the dress ups went away because… there was another project in that space… and so the dress ups were not there for quite some time…and I guess I would say in a way that it’s a pity for children who do want to express themselves that way, that they couldn’t do that.” This comment caused the teachers to consider the impact that such decisions could have on children’s preferred modes of expression.

**Conclusion**

Our investigations of the roles of people, places, and practices in mediating children’s use of multimodal literacies illustrated that the notions of “affording teachers” and “affording environments” are useful concepts. In essence, affording teachers at Wadestown Kindergarten held and conveyed an openness to children, parents, whānau, and communities, and to their contributions and potential contributions. Affording teachers were sensitive to children’s preferred modalities and had an awareness, augmented by the COI research, of the capacities of different modalities to facilitate communication and conceptualisation in different ways. They also conveyed a genuine interest in children’s enquiries and endeavours, and acted to reinforce these. In combination, these characteristics seem to have helped teachers to establish a culture of contribution and enquiry that flowed through the curriculum. Children conveyed a deep sense of satisfaction in being able to work on projects of interest to them, and extend their work across time and space.

A dominant commitment to a pedagogy built on relationships underpinned the curriculum. Teachers listened “with all their senses”, and supported and encouraged children to be listeners too. Carr et al. (2001) have used the expression “a permeable curriculum” to describe a curriculum that is “porous, open to contribution from all comers” (p. 31). Perhaps the greatest transformation at Wadestown Kindergarten was in making it more possible for parents to contribute to interpreting children’s learning and development, where the “traditional” teacher as “expert” in this field was replaced by a teacher who was open to learning from the insights and experiences of parents and whānau. Listening to the input from parents and whānau acted to tangibly change teachers’ expectations of children and their views of the role of home experiences. In particular, teachers were made aware that sometimes children had deeper and different skills and interests than showed at kindergarten.

Making time for parents, whānau, and teachers to talk together in a parent focus group meeting and a semistructured interview situation were useful forums for enabling a depth of contribution
from parents and whānau. These discussions were focused on pedagogical documentation, in which there was keen interest.

One challenge is for teachers to take time to have these deeper discussions with all families, alongside the informal conversations that occur on a daily basis. We suggest that, in recognition of their value, such deeper discussions could be given priority within early childhood settings. In this event, other work might need to be reduced so that the workload is manageable.
Anne Meade (2007), in her discussion of the COI programme and the links between theory and practice, argued that teachers and educators in COIs “move from intuitive practice to higher level professional practice in their area of innovation by researching and by theorising. They generate research findings and theories to fill previous gaps between their premises and outcomes. Simultaneously, they become more adept at articulating their pedagogy, and more focused on investigating the effects of what they are doing for children and their families and whānau” (p. 5).

Practices that assisted Wadestown Kindergarten COI members to engage in critical reflection and theorising are considered in this chapter. We aimed to establish a culture of critical enquiry and learning primarily through the process of pedagogical documentation, but also through discussion of research-based and theoretical readings, and our own writing. We came to notice that just as different literacies offered particular affordances for communication and learning for the children at Wadestown Kindergarten, in a similar way the processes for critical enquiry offered capacities for different kinds of critique, reflection, and insight. We start by examining this idea of the different affordances for critical enquiry that were offered by the modes and tools that we used for supporting enquiry. We also draw links between the teachers as “multiliterate and enquiring” and their work to encourage these attributes in children.

In the second section, the teachers, senior teacher, and research associates contribute their own individual reflections regarding their insights, and highlight their own learning and their views of multimodal literacies.

In the conclusion, we consider implications to support all teachers to become enquiring and critically reflective practitioners.

Affordances of pedagogical documentation

We use the term “pedagogical documentation” in the way it is used by Dahlberg (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, pp. 147–148) as both content and a process. Pedagogical documentation as content was documented data gathered about children and events where literacies were evident. It included videotape recordings, written narrative stories, still photographs, written notes, samples of work, and transcripts of interviews with parents. These different types of data had their own qualities that made each better suited for somewhat different purposes.

Case study parents were asked about the value of video recordings compared with profile books (which included narrative stories, photographs, commentary on learning and development, and planning). From parents’ perspectives, both forms offered insight into their child within the kindergarten context when they were not there. Video recordings had the advantage of being a “live” in-action form of documentation. Portfolios showed children’s development and learning over time and place.
On videos:

The video was interesting to see, because [we were not present] when the video was done. That was what we learned. Because when we are present we’re out of sight or not, there’s still in her mind the knowledge that we’re near. And that’s a different dynamic. (Neil)

On portfolios:

I find it really interesting seeing things that have happened when I’m not there. Seeing things that we know nothing about because she often doesn’t tell us. . .She’s often not terribly good at saying what’s happening at kindy, and if she does it’s often unintelligible. (Lucy)

This is the most useful format for knowing what happens at kindy, because I ask Ben what’s happened at kindy . . . and you get very little response. (Andrea)

The video recording followed a child through a kindergarten session. The continuity over a half day revealed something of the child’s state of being:

He seems very happy though. That’s ultimately I think [most important]. The video suggests that he just, he loves it there and he’s very comfortable in his space I think. (Angela)

The video also allowed parents to analyse interactions. For example, Angela noticed ways Jonathan interacted with a friend:

There was quite a nice communication exchange with Sam without any words at all and that was over the trampoline. They actually switched places a couple of times almost naturally taking turns without saying ‘It’s my turn, get off.’ They didn’t have to say anything, they just kind of, one pulled themselves up and one jumped off and then the other pulled themselves up and they kind of knew so, and that was interesting. They didn’t need any more words. . .They got the result they wanted without even talking to each other. (Angela)

However, in largely unedited form the video was lengthy and could be tedious to watch:

With the DVD you get a lot of stuff that you don’t need to see. You know five minutes of something which the first time around you were really fascinated by, but then [it is repetitive]. (Andrea)

The portfolio offered stories over time as the child engaged in a variety of tasks and interactions:

The thing I found most interesting was. . . seeing him help another child doing something. . . I was fascinated by the portfolio because it’s a photographic record of what I don’t see and I think it’s good to see him interacting . . . and doing something different, like for example the bubbles. (Angela)

I think it’s an outstanding piece of work on your behalf as professionals. . .We like the idea that each page captures a vignette, it’s a ‘slice of life approach’. I think that’s useful, because you can dip into it. The fact that it’s focused around the interpersonal aspects, we thought was good. (Neil)
The portfolio is a real snapshot and there’s a lot of variety. . .I think one of the messages for me is that his learning is taking place through lots of different activities and we don’t always see . . . You know you come in and the activities are set up, but I think to myself, ‘I bet he doesn’t even go near those things’. (Andrea)

Portfolios were also shared with the child.

He’s very proud of it and he loves to look at it. He loves to. He continues to love the photos. But it looks like you’re doing heaps of projects and things so it’s pretty cool. (Angela)

From a research team perspective, portfolios offered a capacity to document in different situations over time, and analyse learning and development, progression, and complexity. But unlike video recordings, individual items presented a static view, because the episode for documenting had already been chosen and “set” within the frame of analysis chosen by the recorder.

Videotape recordings on the other hand, as Maggie writes in her reflections (pp. 89–90), were able to “capture the multidimensional”, provide “modes and modal combinations that are able to be more fully captured in a video text”, and capture activities in “real time”. We refer the reader to Maggie’s reflections, which present a discussion about the affordances of video as a medium.

Pedagogical documentation as process involved the whole research team, working as individuals, in pairs, as small groups, and with the whole team and parents. We examined and discussed the documented material, holding an overall focus on the research questions, but retaining an openness to other ideas and questions. For example, as individuals we would examine a videotape of one of the case study children, and then come together as a group to discuss what we had seen. At times the process surprised us by illuminating aspects of interactions that we may not have noticed if we had not had a record of them and taken the time to examine them. Often we went over the same material again and again, often seeing an aspect we had not noticed before.

An example was the ways in which the boys ignored Heather’s and Yvette’s attempts to get listened to in the list writing episode discussed on p. 69. This prompted us to discuss the power dynamics at work here and whether gender was a factor. Gender and power dynamics are issues that we decided need to be further investigated.

Our experiences reinforced the value of analysing data over and over to reach new interpretations both alone and in discussion with others. It seemed that over time the participants became more open to the interpretations of others and to the value of seeking alternative interpretations. These analytic processes have become more embedded within pedagogical practice for these participants.

Affordances of reading and writing

In the early stages of the project, we set aside time in “pedagogical discussion sessions” to discuss research-based and theoretical readings relevant to the research focus. The purpose was to:

- investigate the thinking about and use of concepts and approaches relevant to our project
- keep up to date in our knowledge of relevant research and theory
- develop a wider view and understanding through the process of discussing different perspectives on the same material.
Each member of the discussion group (teachers, research associates, and senior teacher), was asked to come to the discussion session, having read the two readings under consideration. Later we extended this to each coming to the session having prepared a “one pager” of written comments beforehand, on key points we got from the reading. We were introduced to the idea of using written “one pagers” as a manageable way of getting ideas on to paper, by the Bush St COI research team, at a Ministry of Education hui of round three COIs (Mayo, Henson, & Smith, 2008). The way we used the idea of the “one pager” was not to prescribe the commentary—it included, for example, points that made sense to the participant, aspects that had not been thought of before, questions raised by the reading, linkages to own experiences, and food for thought in relation to the COI research. Each person in turn presented their views from their written “one pager”, and the group discussed the contributions.

The readings brought us into contact with new theoretical ideas and research studies. We used these in the study, drawing particularly on theoretical ideas about the nature of affordance, and on research studies investigating multimodal literacies. Yvette’s comments offer a glimpse into how the readings offered a platform against which to gauge ideas and perhaps confirm or intensify thinking, and a springboard for thinking differently or more deeply:

One of our research questions is to investigate how different literacies interact and support each other. Within this focus group example³ I can see parents are grappling with the same thing we as researchers are, they are beginning to notice the interwoven nature of literacies. As I continued to reflect on this example I was reminded of a segment in a book I am currently reading titled *Insights: Behind early childhood pedagogical documentation*, in which Fleet, Patterson and Robertson (2006) promote the sharing of pedagogical documentation with families. They suggest that through doing this stronger relationships are encouraged and a new type of relationship can be developed with families, ‘a relationship that centres on shared understandings of children’s learning where an ‘intellectual’ partnership with children is formed. This enables parents, teachers and children to reflect and search for meaning together’. (Fleet et al., 2006, p. 356)

The sharing of this example encouraged critical thinking. As we unpack ideas together we are generating a critical culture of investigation within the kindergarten, we are encouraging the concept Fleet et al (2006) call the interrelationship between pedagogical documentation and community. I am now challenged to think about the ways we can continue to have these meaningful discussions with parents. (Yvette, Milestone 4, March 2007)

The act of writing the “one pagers” seemed to encourage each person to thoughtfully process and synthesise the reading, and the social practice of having a turn to discuss their thinking within a larger group allowed points of difference and similarity to be uncovered, and new ideas and interpretations to be made.

Writing was also one of the ways in which teachers documented children’s processes of learning. For example, Mandy’s written documentation alongside the photographic documentation of Joseph’s strategy of linking the kindergarten bikes so they could all be pulled along together was discussed on p. 25. We wonder whether putting a strategy in a different mode is useful for seeing it in a different way.

³ An example of the parent focus group discussion about the nature of “literacies”.

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In summary, we suggest that the readings offered “food for thought”. The process of group discussions, in which each person had a turn to present, seemed to facilitate learning by enabling divergent and similar views to be foregrounded. Writing had a capacity to facilitate a deliberative, processed, and reflective kind of learning. Writing assisted teachers and researchers to enquire into theory and practice and to convey ideas in a focused way. Writing drew attention to Joseph’s strategies in ways that photographic documentation alone would not have.

**Teacher as enquirer**

Finally, we conjecture that when teachers become critical and self-reflective within themselves, and value critique and being open to other perspectives as a way to understand children and their own practice, they are also more likely to value and encourage such attributes within children. When teachers are competent in multimodal literacies, they are better able to resource children to become competent also.

**Research team reflections**

**Yvette**

I began teaching at Wadestown Kindergarten, April 2003. Prior to this I had held a strong interest in the multiple ways that children communicated. The work of Malaguzzi was something I was particularly interested in, coupled with project learning that has been at the forefront of the work undertaken in Reggio Emilia centres within Italy (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998). Howard Gardner’s (1991) ideas of multiple intelligences as well as research undertaken by De Bono (1999) (particularly the seven hats of thinking), seemed to fit with my developing philosophy and I spent a few years exploring these within the early childhood centres I was involved in.

When I arrived at Wadestown Kindergarten my ideas continued and combined with Mandy’s. She, too, was interested in project learning and together we worked through ideas on what this might look like for us as a new team. ICT was a particular passion of mine and together we pursued the ways in which this could be used to document children’s learning through the project approach. This was a catalyst for much change in terms of the ways in which we presented stories of learning. As we furthered our interest in project learning at Wadestown Kindergarten we began to “notice” the many languages that children were accessing to represent and communicate their ideas. Near to our time of applying for the third round of COIs Maggie introduced us to the term *multiple literacies* and we began to explore ideas presented to us through the work of The New London group who offer a broader view of literacy. This term *multiple literacies* drew me back to concepts and ideas I had already explored. I saw children’s learning and communication as multifaceted but was interested in delving into these ideas deeper.

It is interesting to reflect on the ideas that we held in the initial stages of our journey. I suppose, for me, my ideas of multiple literacies were still firmly aligned with “the hundred languages of children”, that multiple literacies was about avenues of expression. Over the last three years our ideas have been honed, as we have gathered data, read literature, and made connections with other research. The COI programme has given opportunity for us to deepen our understandings of multiple literacies. From the onset, the journey has been one of much discovery, enlightenment, and exciting discoveries, in which our ideas have morphed. The writings of Kress (2000, 2003), as
already explained, had a huge impact on the developments of our ideas. In reflecting on our views of multiple literacies I can see the progression in thinking as I now view multimodal literacies as ways of conceptualising and knowing, not only as avenues of expression and communication.

Goodfellow and Hedges (2007) explain, “it is through participating in inquiry that practitioners develop their capacity to think critically, reflect deeply and, in the process, develop new understandings” (p. 203). For me, participating in this journey has been one of excitement, development, and growth. Through becoming a teacher-researcher, and through participating in the COI programme, we have been given the opportunity and time to critically reflect on our practice, to reflect on our relationships, to explore what it is we do at Wadestown Kindergarten, to recognise and analyse what we are seeing, and to act on our findings. For me, the insights that we have gathered have encouraged me to look at the ways that this can be made evident for all children and families. Family involvement has for us been an important part of our research journey. Through this relationship and through the furthering of these relationships we have been offered many rich insights. Miro was a catalyst in our initial ideas about family literacies, and a catalyst for me to begin wondering how we could connect with families on a deeper level. We reflect on the ways in which families have contributed to the project, and how parent engagement in the programme over time has deepened, as the research findings have impacted on our ideas and teaching practice. It definitely has impacted on the ways in which I connect with families within the programme, hold conversations to draw out their views of their child’s learning, and respond to their voice. We are excited by this and look forward to continuing to build this community of learners.

A huge thing for me has been developing my confidence presenting our findings to the wider early childhood community. This has been a transformative experience for the whole teaching team I think. As we have furthered our ideas, we have become excited by the stories we have been able to share. I recall an article by Smiles and Short (2006) that we read along our journey about transforming the teacher’s voice through writing, suggesting that sometimes we have to reach beyond our immediate connections to broader spheres, and writing is an avenue for this. It has been a highlight to be able to participate in dissemination and for us (the teaching team) to develop confidence in writing for publications.

**Mandy**

Over the past few years that I have taken part in this research, I have been both inspired and challenged. Inspired by all the readings I have read, the insights that others have shown and taught me, and the changes I have seen, now that I am viewing literacies in another lens. The shift in lens is away from an emphasis on traditional print-based literacies, to a lens that is wider, incorporating many literacies; for example, art or climbing or twirling or dancing. I look at what the possibilities are for children’s learning and development that emerge from these wider literacies.

In turn my challenges have been great too. I have had to shelve some of my prior beliefs about the nature of literacies and documentation. At Teachers’ College I learnt to use a checklist of abilities, e.g. the child could write their name, hold a pencil correctly, write from left to right. I am now doing more documentation about different literacies that incorporates a story around the episode, and might include input from my discussion with the child’s mum. I have been stretched and
pulled in regards to my thinking and introduced into a whole new world of ideas and terminology. But what a trip it has been, and will continue to take me on, over the following years.

I can easily see that these literacies are in action and that they have their place on the same plane as the more “traditional” print-based ones, but I am also constantly battling with the way that I was taught to believe before. For so long we were told that reading and writing were very important for future education, our own and that of the children we are teaching. And they are still important but through this study we can see that they are not the only and most valid way of getting a message across that you are trying to communicate. And in turn as a truly visual learner who prefers other options than just the written word, I have been encouraged to know that other children with a similar learning style to me will now be able to express themselves in a variety of modes.

I have also learnt a lot of new ideas in regards to family literacies. Through all the discussions around Miro’s and James’s families, and our thoughts and insights after the whānau interviews, all of these put together showed us that the children do use literacies that are prevalent and supported in their families and home life too. After attending Ben M.’s interview and hearing more about the family’s love for supporting Ben in his sport, and ‘physicalness’ with so much time and patience, I could see that they were supporting this style of communicating that they could see within Ben. I had never before looked at the ‘physicalness’ of children’s play in this way.

And also the same with Kate’s family. Being in the interview with Kate’s family augmented my knowledge of her and her history. I found out about the humour that occurs daily within the house, saying everyone’s names backwards, games of eye spy. It made my knowledge of her much richer. I could get the jokes. And also the art in their house…surrounded by Grandma’s paintings. And there always being paper out for Kate and her brother to use and create with, and then seeing this at kindergarten with Kate regularly being involved in creating at the collage table. When you hear directly from home, you know so much more about the family.

In regards to my thinking when I am writing up stories, I think I am still on a journey with this one. I am sometimes seeing places where I could add my thoughts and this feels like it fits just right, but other times I wonder if that would be too much. I’d like to use this as an opportunity to weave in some of the research and theory I’ve been introduced to even if it’s only for my own professional development. Something for me to keep working on, finding the right words to use.

One area I have enjoyed the most about this research is in regards to presenting to all my peers. I love the moment when you are telling a story, or explaining a case study example and people go “oh yeah that is like…” and they name a child to whom they can relate this topic straight away. So many of them are also realising that there are more ways to communicate and many of them come up to us afterwards and say it is so great to hear that these research findings are getting out there. Many of them talk about their communities and how they want their children writing their names and working on the alphabet, and when they hear us talk they say that they will go back to their centres with this information to share with their families.
André

To be honest, when I first joined the teaching team at Wadestown Kindergarten I didn’t know anything about multimodalities/multiple literacy theory. The thing that I knew that came closest to it was the concept of “multiple intelligence”. I could understand and get my head around this because I saw evidence of this theory in action as I observed the children in my care who were all full of wonderful potential but all with different abilities. I also thought that this theory was pretty similar to others including that of the research into children’s schemas where children are “categorised” into different ways of learning/behaviour and fully focused on exploring these interests to make sense and to fully understand their current interests. The way I try to view most theory is to fit it all together like a puzzle and take bits and pieces from different places as I believe it is the learner who should direct the teacher. There are always exceptions to any rule.

I was a reliever when I started and didn’t know what was happening. It wasn’t until I read through some articles, talked to you all and saw what you were doing—interviewing parents, videotaping children—that I understood how you were going about the research. I saw what was going on here: I actually found the emphasis on multimodalities was part of the centre, how things were, part of the culture. So coming into Wadestown Kindergarten was a real eye opener and quite a steep learning curve. Professionally it has been a great experience learning what was a new approach to teaching and learning. In particular, a project approach was something I had not followed through in depth. It has a lot to do with the kindergarten being a community of learners. Everyone has a part; parents and grandparents come through and contribute time and resources. Probably I am now more into letting children direct learning. I noticed a bit of that in the literature. I support children when they need certain things but I don’t lead the direction. I give children more choice, such as at mat time when children now stand up and say their piece, rather than me planning five songs and two stories, and then finish. I exert a bit of control, like a conductor, otherwise it would be chaos. This offers children opportunity to find their confidence in a group.

I am still learning a lot and don’t claim to be an expert on our research and what I have learnt so far. Someone asked me the other day what we were doing for our research when I went to pick my son up from his crèche. This question always makes me feel quite nervous as I don’t want to seem like a moron and give a bad answer, so the way I answered this teacher’s question was to ask her if she had heard about Gardner or Kress and their work. She told me she had read a bit so I told her about our research and methodology and a brief outline of our work to date. This seemed to get her interested and she is now keen to come and visit and see our work first hand.4

Lynette

As part of professional development I was involved in facilitating on computers in early childhood programmes in 2004 and 2005. I became aware of a broadening of the concept of literacy to include children’s developing competency at deciphering messages from print, visual images, movement, and sound, often when these are being delivered simultaneously. ICT was seen as

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4 This teacher did come to visit the kindergarten and saw the work first hand.
providing opportunities for children to develop an understanding of how to make meaning from different mediums.

My understanding of multiple literacies deepened through initial discussions with Yvette, Mandy, and Maggie as we worked together on a Kei Tua o te Pae project. As we revisited the team’s documentation on their Medieval project, the multiple ways that children involved in the project had explored, made meaning, and then shared their understanding about particular aspects of the investigation that interested them, became increasingly evident and included sewing, painting, drawing, and construction both with boxes, collage, and outside in the sandpit. This early documentation also highlighted the value that the teaching team placed on whānau participation. Throughout the Medieval project, the teachers’ understanding and valuing of different modes of sharing meaning making continued to grow. This awareness and valuing meant that teachers were more responsive to different children’s modes of communication. In turn, this responsiveness validated the mode of communication for individual children and their whānau and also seemed to support children to further develop their favourite mode and to try out others.

I remember a particular episode that we used early in the project involving Charlie’s dancing. Charlie was a quiet child at kindergarten, but his interest in expressing himself through dance and demonstrating his competence with this form of communication developed as the teachers supported his literacy. As his confidence grew, he opened up opportunities for other children’s engagement in dance. His sense of himself as a confident, competent communicator was enhanced by the value that other children, his whānau, and the teachers placed on his dancing. The team was also beginning to explore the use of video in documenting aspects of children’s learning that were difficult to show in traditional ways and the benefits of videoing short dance episodes enabled Charlie’s competence to be revisited and shared with his wider whānau who then came to kindergarten to see him dancing. This episode is also an example of a concept the COI research explored further around the affordance of different literacies—the affordance dance offered Charlie as a mode of expression and communicating with others enhanced his image of himself as a competent and confident communicator.

Engaging in pedagogical discussion, both about the research data and the articles we read, with the teaching team and the researchers was an effective way to explore and further develop our ideas and understanding. These discussions were very precious as time was limited. The research has deepened and broadened my understanding of the Communication strand of Te Whāriki and the role that a focus on multimodal literacies can have for children who are developing and refining various forms of communication in order to make meaning and convey their understanding to others.

The COI research has also highlighted that when teachers engage in depth with whānau about their child’s learning it has very real benefits for children’s further learning and teachers’ ability to enhance this. The building of strong relationships with the case study children’s whānau was supported through discussions at the kindergarten and also through the interviews held at parents’ homes. Our challenge is how to incorporate this engagement more effectively with more whānau in our very busy centres.
But perhaps the most significant outcome of the research for me as a senior teacher was to witness the continuing growth of the teaching team. Yvette, Mandy, and André were already reflective practitioners, but their ability to articulate their developing pedagogy of multimodal literacies and their COI journey to the ECE sector and beyond, has grown enormously. The journey has been one of huge growth, not only about multimodal literacies and the implications for teaching practice in our early childhood centres, but also in meeting the challenges offered through being involved in such an in-depth action research project for three years. I appreciate immensely the expertise and commitment that Maggie and Linda have shared so willingly with the research team.

**Maggie**

I have enjoyed being one of the research associates for the Wadestown Kindergarten COI project. For me the project brought together long-time personal interests in early childhood curriculum, learning and teaching, ideas about literacy, and the use of video as a pedagogical and research tool. It is the affordances of video as a medium and its role in helping us to engage in critical enquiry that I would like to focus on in these reflections.

Video’s capacity to capture the multidimensional is something that captivated me when I first started videoing in early childhood centres, about 20 years ago. I remember referring to this once in a presentation as video’s capacity to capture the “un-write-downable”.

The “un-write-downables” we looked to video to provide in the Wadestown Kindergarten COI project included the modes and modal combinations able to be more fully captured in a video text. Video gave us better access to the dynamics of action, the use of body language, gestures, and facial expressions, and qualities such as the intonation, timing, and emotional tone of a voice; or the intensity, direction, and duration of a gaze. Video not only helped us to more fully appreciate the affordances of different modes, but also the extent to which modes are used in combination.

Video enabled us to capture activities children were engaged in that happened too fast or were too intricate for us to fully apprehend in “real time”. Playing and replaying sections of the videos, as we frequently did, allowed us opportunities to “unpack” some of the detail and helped alert us to things we had previously missed. This is what happened, for example, with Ben M.’s participation in a dramatic play episode about the arrival of a new baby. Our initial impression was that Ben had been “flitting in and out” of the drama and had we been writing up this observation this is probably how we would have portrayed him. It was only after viewing the footage several times that we became aware that Ben had maintained a connection to the dramatic play and that he was observing from the periphery, at times out of camera frame.

Etienne Wenger (1998) says, “We pay attention to what we expect to see, we hear what we can place in our understanding, and we act according to our worldviews”. Events such as us misconstruing Ben’s involvement in the drama became the catalyst for useful discussions about what did and didn’t get videoed, what we did and didn’t notice, what we tended to privilege, and why. This particular episode led to a discussion about children on the periphery of the action often being “simply not noticed” (Meade, 1987) and prompted us to give closer consideration to the role of watching and listening as ways of learning. Rogoff, Paradise, Mejía, Arauz, Correa-Chávez, and Angelillo (2003) say that “intent participation” need not involve direct action, but may
involve “keenly observing and listening in anticipation of or in the process of engaging in an
endeavour” (p. 178). There is, they suggest, a key distinction between observing with the
expectation of future involvement and observing incidentally. *Kei Tua o te Pae* (Ministry of
Education, 2005) draws attention to children “initially visible on the periphery of photos” later
being drawn in to interests and activities (Ministry of Education, 2005, Bk10, p. 10).

The use of video lent itself well to the kind of collaborative interpretive analysis (teacher
researchers, senior teacher, research associates, and parents) that became central to our work. In
the course of these collaborative viewings and discussions we were frequently alerted to things we
had bypassed as individuals and to different perspectives or interpretations of the same event or
situation. Video worked well in allowing viewers more direct access to data they could interpret
for themselves. This was illustrated, for example, by parents in an interview, talking about what
they had been able to tell from their child’s body posture in the video. Parents’ knowledge of their
child and the knowledge of the family context parents brought to their viewing, added key
dimensions to our analysis.

It was sometimes a challenge to achieve a balance between capturing children’s activity
authentically and sufficiently fully and the “watchability” of the video. Ochs and Capps (2001,
cited in van Oers, 2003) suggest that the attempt to balance authenticity and coherence is
characteristic of every narration. Our research agenda kept us mindful that too much in-camera or
post-camera editing can mean missing or distorting crucial moments. However, relatively unedited
tracts of video footage can make for challenging viewing. There are limits to what even the most
devoted of parents will engage with. On the other hand, although video footage of children
watching and listening, for example, does not generally make for engaging viewing, it was
important for us to become more alert to the amount of watching and listening happening with
particular children as well as more generally in the kindergarten. The tensions between
authenticity and considerations of audience are complex, but given that teachers can encounter
similar tensions with pedagogical documentation, it would seem useful for the early years’
education field to explore this further.

I have learnt a lot from the opportunity to discuss and analyse data with colleagues in the research
team and have relished the opportunities we have had to explore and discuss ideas and readings
together. Another highlight has been the opportunity to be a relieving teacher at the kindergarten
for half a day per fortnight for much of the first two years of the COI project. I gained such a lot
from the time I spent alongside children, teachers, and families, and am enormously grateful for
this enriching “cross-sectoral” opportunity.

*Linda*

The process of working within the Wadestown Kindergarten COI project has deepened my
understanding of the roles that differing literacies may play in communication, conceptualisation,
and knowledge creation. My shift in thinking has been away from a predominant focus on the
form that literacies take, such as expressive arts, or mathematical thinking, or visual arts, and the
competencies gained through participating in a particular form, towards an appreciation that each
literacy is unique in the affordances it offers. It was theoretical ideas about the notion of
“affordance” as the way particular capacities of a literacy may facilitate different types of
communication and learning that were introduced to us through the work of Kress (2000) and Carr (2000), that got me and the rest of the research team thinking down this track. And so, not only can ECE open possibilities for children to be artists or scientists or mathematicians or writers or sports people, but through participation in differing literacy modes, children and adults can also create and convey understandings that contribute to a richer society. Richer because it is multidimensional, and recognises and values different ways of contributing.

I have always been struck by Mason Durie’s speech to Hui Taumata in 2001, where he talked about education as preparing people “to actively participate as citizens of the world”. I think multiliterate competence can support this goal. Mason Durie was speaking about Māori educational advancement. One of the goals for Māori education, he said, was enabling Māori to live as Māori, to have access to te ao Māori. Cultural literacy is one area that we did not consider within our project, although we discussed it in the early days. I think it is timely to investigate notions of cultural literacy within an ECE setting, not only because we need to take some responsibility for enabling children “to live as Māori”, but also because of the ethnic and cultural diversity among children today.

I enjoyed being one of the research associates for this project. I enjoyed the opportunity to analyse data from Wadestown Kindergarten alongside the rest of the team, and I was immensely struck by the power of video documentation as a tool for analysis and a catalyst for discussion with families. The interviews with families confirmed my beliefs that parents have knowledge of their own children that we in ECE rarely tap into in any depth. The project showed that interviews, focused on pedagogical documentation about the child and a desire on our part to find out, is one way in which we might do this.

Conclusion

Our experience points to the value and importance of:

- reading and discussing theoretical and research-based literature
- gathering and analysing documentation and data from our own setting and from families
- finding out about divergent views through formal and informal means, using a range of tools and methods
- analysing documentation by oneself and within a wider group, and including parents in analyses.

These activities supported a culture of critical enquiry that flowed through into interactions and practices within participants’ spheres of influence.

If we are to build a “culture of enquiry” for all teachers, we also need facilitating environments to enable such a culture to flourish. A facilitating environment such as we had in this COI project included professional expertise and access to readings; tools for documentation, especially access to ICT—video cameras, photographic equipment, computers, printers, and scanners; and time to experiment with different ways of documenting, get together as a group, hold the discussions, analyse the documentation, and talk with and interview parents. These should be available to every teacher in an ECE setting.
7 Conclusion

The COI project furthered our thinking about the affordances of diverse literacy modes, how literacy modes interact and develop, and characteristics of environments that may support and promote multimodal literacy learning and development. In this conclusion, we discuss some implications of our study and areas where further investigation is warranted.

Notions of literacy

The very different understandings and use of the term literacy are summarised in Lankshear and Knobel’s continua (2003, p. 73): one continuum identifies the range of modes literacy is considered to encompass, from print-based and monomodal to multimodal; the second continuum identifies a range of ideas about what literacy practices are and how they are seen to function. Here the range is from the idea of literacy being limited to the encoding (writing) and decoding (reading) of alphabetic print, to seeing literacies as the social and cultural practices and systems people use for communication and meaning making.

We continue to deliberate over the usefulness of the term literacy in describing the modes through and in which children make meaning and communicate. We believe it important that those of us with responsibility for early years education (i.e., in both early childhood and primary sectors) become conversant with these different conceptions of literacy, because of the implications these different views of literacy have for children’s learning. We find it concerning, for example, that the recently developed draft Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, 2007) takes a very narrow view of literacy in the early years, looking at reading and writing in isolation and putting too much emphasis on a narrow range of skills.

A sociocultural view, which recognises social, cultural, and literacy practices as interconnected, helps to highlight the variability in what is seen to count as literacy. Consequently such a view opens the way for considering “other possibilities”, for teachers, for example, to consider the different possible modal pathways and modal combinations children can use for communication and meaning making. Likewise having a broader conception of text allows for a greater range of possibilities for children to engage with and design texts that involve a variety of modal combinations; e.g. graphics, animation, and music. The notion of affordance is useful in considering the capacities of particular modes and modal combinations.

On the other hand, we are also aware that using the term literacy can sometimes get in the road of peoples’ understandings at the expense of the bigger picture ideas. When literacy is more narrowly conceived, the challenge can become how not to get caught up in circuitous or fruitless debate over terminology. The point we want to make is that understanding how children use and combine different modalities of communication and meaning making is not a sufficiently prominent part of the way teachers are encouraged to look at young children.
Our findings concerning children being given space, support, and opportunities by families to use and participate in particular literacy modes leave us with some unanswered questions about how important it is for children having opportunities to immerse themselves in particular modes in order to consolidate or extend their expertise in the use of that mode. Miro’s parents suggested, for example, that in the school setting Miro may have set drawing aside in order to concentrate on reading and writing. At the same time we have continually observed instances of modal combinations supporting learning opportunities for both. We suggest this would be a particularly fruitful area for further research.

**Literacies within family contexts**

Our investigation of family literacies and family contexts opened our minds to significant new learning. In particular, we have identified the value of being open-minded about family and community contributions to the life of the early childhood setting, of building a culture where contributions are welcomed not simply by invitation or solely on the teachers’ terms, and of undertaking pedagogical discussions with parents aimed at finding out about parent views of their child and other children, family experiences, and parents’ interpretations of pedagogical documentation.

Within focus group meetings, parents discussed documentation of literacy events and explored notions of what constitutes a literacy. These parents were highly interested in the discussions and contributed their views of the learning and development that was taking place. Significantly, the documentation was not about their own child. This is an illustration of the breadth of parents’ interests and that parents can be willing to engage with documentation about children other than their own.

The parent interviews were a particularly powerful means to investigate literacies within a family context and comprised a departure from fairly common “top down” ways of working with parents, where teachers predominantly share their pedagogical knowledge with parents. This type of pedagogical discussion required teachers to be open to learning from parents. The gains from the approach included greater insights into family contexts and how children’s literacy strengths have developed and are supported at home, a “bigger picture” understanding of children’s learning and development, and closer connections with families. These gains potentially flow through into teachers and parents being more ready to share experiences and discuss educational aims, and families being more willing to volunteer their expertise within the education programme. They also seem to enable teachers and parents to be more aware of multimodal literacy resources and opportunities within the early childhood setting, home, and community. We also view interviews as a potentially useful means of contact and communication for parents/whānau who do not regularly bring their child to the early childhood setting.

The interviews were focused on interpreting pedagogical documentation about the parents’ child, documentation that was easily accessible and appealing, i.e. a videotape of the child at kindergarten, and a portfolio book that included narrative stories, photographs, samples of work, and interpretation of learning and development. The portfolios and videos also showed children and whānau as participating members of the kindergarten community. There were no time constraints, and the interview conversations were intensive. The interviews were undertaken in
home settings, where we also met with older and younger siblings, and where the child was usually proud and delighted to see their teachers. The teachers already knew the child well. This framing is different from the “home visiting” that used to be done some years ago before children started kindergarten, where the teachers’ aim was for them to find out about the home and family and tell parents about the kindergarten and what to expect. Perhaps the title “home visiting” evokes a somewhat deficit connotation of teachers “inspecting the home”. We wonder whether the term family visits might help to avoid this.

Our experience of the value of pedagogically framed “interviews” raises a question about how such interviews might be held with all families. We acknowledge the pressures of holding interviews and visiting families at home when there are many children and poor staff:child ratios in an early childhood setting. Nevertheless we suggest that “family visits”, set up and framed for pedagogical discussion after teachers have got to know the child well, may serve as a core pedagogical tool. In this event, the value and time that is necessary for holding interviews could be weighed up in relation to other practices occurring within the early childhood setting, and given priority.

**Cultural literacy**

We did not investigate literacy practices and traditions within diverse ethnic communities, how to access and learn from diverse ethnic communities, or how to integrate diverse cultural understandings, and artefacts within the early childhood curriculum.

*Te Whāriki* is a bicultural curriculum, and includes a specific statement that:

> In early childhood education settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9)

The question of how “the cultural heritages of both partners to the treaty” are to be reflected in the literacy practices of the kindergarten has not received the prominence it warrants. This is acknowledged as a limitation of our study.

*Te Whāriki* also emphasises its support for the cultural identity of all children, and the importance of celebrating cultural differences. In population terms, New Zealand society is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse. Māori, Asian, and Pacific populations are increasing as a percentage of New Zealand’s population, with Asian populations almost doubling from 2001 to 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). In addition, childhood is becoming more “transnational” through migration and through “flows of products, information, values and images that most children routinely engage with” (Prout, 2003, p. 9). It is therefore important that teachers understand and access knowledge, skills, and understandings that children bring from their cultural communities, since culture-bound ideas about children’s experiences are inadequate to do justice to the diverse realities of children’s lives.

Durie (2001) speaking of a framework for Māori educational advancement, described one of the goals of education in New Zealand to be about preparing people to actively participate as citizens of the world:
Quite apart from the increasing urbanisation of New Zealand, the shrinking globe will bring the cultures of other lands and communities to Turangi and Taupo, and in turn these towns will be only a stone’s throw from London and New York. (Durie, 2001, p. 4)

It is reasonable to expect that all children are equipped to participate in New Zealand’s bicultural and multicultural society.

Theoretical conditions for approaching pedagogy through a culturally inclusive lens are offered within *Te Whāriki*. Terreni has pointed out that *Te Whāriki* “not only reconceptualised curriculum in terms of cultural pluralism and inclusion, but also shifted early childhood pedagogy to a more socio-cultural orientation” and that “This theoretical orientation is one which in itself, is more culturally inclusive” (Terreni, 2008, p. 70). Our work on literacies within family contexts, and on the value of reading and pedagogical discussion, suggests some ways in which we might also access “funds of knowledge” from ethnic communities, invite community contribution into the life of the community, and think critically about pedagogy from a cultural lens. We believe it would be worthwhile to further investigate notions of “cultural literacy”, and explore pedagogy and environments that may help diverse cultural literacies to flourish.

**Teachers as enquirers**

As the COI project progressed, teachers found that the role of enquirer became more central to their practice. Our findings suggest that an enquiring teacher shows an openness, a willingness to examine their own and kindergarten practices in a critical way, both alone and in combination with others, and a preparedness to give things a try. Teachers explored ideas of being “multimodal” themselves. They became aware of different modes of expression and encouraged children to access and explore these in learning. They also became aware of the privileging of modes (modes they are comfortable to operate within and/or value), and became more responsive to using resources that would support the exploration of other modes. Teachers developed an understanding that they don’t need to “know it all” and as a result tapped into resources around them that would support the teaching and learning taking place. Within the team setting, different teachers offer and contribute different ideas, ways of doing things, and ways of interacting. One challenge is how to utilise team strengths so that each teacher’s practices can complement and enhance those of the others.

Central to our research process was the idea of facilitating dialogue between theory and practice in such a way that each serves to inform and deepen understanding of the other.

**Figure 56 Theory and practice dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Practice</th>
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Video and other forms of pedagogical documentation were useful tools in this process through the rich texts of practice they were able to provide. The value of research and theoretical literature as a means of informing practice, and in turn documentation, has been highlighted within this project. As teachers have read literature and participated in pedagogical discussions it has brought new ideas and ways of thinking to their attention. This in turn has impacted on the things they notice within learning experiences, the way they respond, and the way they subsequently document these
experiences. The documentation of kindergarten practices and the use of theoretical literature is a valuable tool for enquiry. It allows teachers to think deeply, not only about the learning that is taking place for the child, but also their role in children’s learning and the learning for them as teachers. When thinking about multiple modes of learning it is important to consider how documentation is presented and how we can make visible children’s differing modes of expression. For example, we note that the use of video allows us to capture motion, movement, drama episodes, facial expression, gesture, or sound, which cannot be as easily illustrated or captured through words/photos.

**Implications for the early childhood sector**

The COI findings have illustrated the value for teachers of engaging in reading and pedagogical discussion focused on their practice, with support from an “outside” researcher. The need to articulate their own everyday practice in written form and in presentations also propelled the teachers to grapple with their ideas in depth, and deliberate and draw out key messages in ways that could be understood. Presenting to other practitioners also opened teachers to external challenges about their views and practices, to other ways of looking at the same data. According to feedback, other practitioners related well to the concrete examples from the Wadestown Kindergarten setting, and learnt from the teachers’ and research associates’ presentations.

These findings have implications for the wider early childhood sector. Conditions are needed to support all practitioners to become enquiring teachers. Our findings support the usefulness of opportunities for practitioners to gather and examine documentation from their own setting, and to present their pedagogical work and thinking to other teachers. This also includes working closely in a pedagogical sense with families and communities. These things are hard to do in isolation from structural support, which includes time, space, and tools to undertake such work, and access to research and professional development advice that is focused on the interactions and environment within teachers’ own early childhood setting.

More broadly, investigation within the field of multimodal literacy may support teachers to become more aware of their own literacy preferences and more knowledgeable about affordances offered by other literacies. A focus on multimodal literacies offers potential to create a more inclusive community where the literacies of all children are valued and supported.
References


Appendix A: Research instruments

Video recordings of curriculum events

Video recordings were made of a sample of curriculum events where multimodal literacies were evident, as follows:

- two half days (sessions) of videoing at the start of the project to gather baseline data
- half a day videoing for each case study child (three days) at the start of the case study
- further videoing at intervals throughout (intervals to be determined within the action research process) both generally and in respect to the case study children.

Maggie Haggerty and teachers made the recordings. The group was led by Maggie who is practised in video recording.

The video recordings and stills from the videos were used to revisit, analyse, and discuss curriculum events associated with multimodal literacies.

Case study parent/whānau interview (baseline)

Teacher asked parents/whānau to look through their child’s portfolio and video clips before the interview.

*Interviewer to note that there are no right or wrong answers. The focus of the questions is on the child as a communicator. By this we mean, your child expressing him/herself not just verbally, but also nonverbally, e.g. through dance, art, construction.*

*Interviewer to say to parents/whānau that if they wish to make any of their responses confidential to the research associates, they can do this.*

Portfolio

1. Please show me the material in the portfolio that was especially interesting and useful to you.
2. How did you use it?
3. What did you like about it?
4. And what about your child as a communicator, what did it tell you?
5. What were the messages the portfolio gave you about your child and her/his learning?
6. Did the portfolio confirm your existing views, or did you see something new?
Now let’s talk about the video.

7. What did you find in the video that was especially interesting in relation to your child as a communicator?
8. What did you like about this?
9. And what about your child as a communicator, what did it tell you?
10. What were the messages the video gave you about your child and her/his learning?
11. Did these video clips confirm your existing views, or did you see something new?

General

12. What do you see as your child’s strengths as a communicator?
13. What do you see as your family strengths in communication?
14. What forms of communication do you value as a family?
15. What do you do to foster these in your family?
16. In terms of the teachers and what is provided at Wadestown Kindergarten, what things really help your child’s different kinds of communication? (These may be things the teachers do, equipment and resources, other children, and may be different for different kinds of communication.)
17. Do you see any tensions or differences between the sorts of things you value and foster at home and what is emphasised at kindergarten?
18. What do you think it means to be a competent communicator at this age?
19. What do you think a kindergarten would be doing if it was supporting communication?
20. Do you have any suggestions about anything Wadestown Kindergarten could do more of or do differently, to foster communication better?

Teachers’ interview (baseline)

1. What does being a competent, multiliterate communicator look like at Wadestown Kindergarten?
   a. What does this mean for children?
   b. What does this mean for you as teachers?
   c. What does this mean for the wider community?
   d. Looking forward, what do you envisage being a multiliterate communicator will mean for children when they are adults?
2. What strategies are you currently using to:
   a. build multiple literacies?
   b. use multiple literacies to build community?
3. Why do you think these approaches are valuable?
4. What evidence do you have so far that these approaches are beneficial for children and their learning/communicative competencies?
5. How did your interest in multiple literacies begin? (Prompts: What concepts and theories helped you progress your thinking? What helped develop your practice?)
6. What changes have you made to your philosophy and teaching practices through following this interest?
7. What are your current teaching and learning strengths in relation to multiple literacies and building community?
8. What are your challenges and constraints in relation to multiple literacies and building community?
   a. How could you address these through action research?
9. What are your aspirations for Wadestown Kindergarten and community through the COI project?

Research associates and senior teacher interview (baseline)

1. What is the potential of multiple literacies:
   a. in early childhood settings?
   b. in a school setting?
   c. in adulthood?
2. Looking at the practices and environment at Wadestown Kindergarten, what are your initial impressions of the types and levels of multiliterate communication?
3. What are the challenges and constraints to developing multiliterate communicative competence at Wadestown Kindergarten?
   a. How could these be addressed through action research?
4. How do you see your role as professional development facilitators throughout the COI project?
5. What concepts, theories, and experiences influenced:
   a. your thinking about multiple literacies?
   b. your practice in relation to multiple literacies?

Case study children’s perspective (baseline)

Different ways to find out case study children’s views were used. Multiple literacies are community building. Camera is a visual literacy tool and is a tool for children gaining ICT competency. It could be a way of capturing concepts about multiple literacies.

The child’s portfolio and video clips of the child are reference points.

Child to show researcher their favourite bit/s from each.

Researcher also to make comments about things that are related to multiple literacies that come through strongly, e.g. dancing, singing.

Ask child:

1. So what was happening here?
2. How does doing “x” make you feel?
3. How could I learn how to do that? Show me how to do “x”.
4. What do you know about “x”?
5. Do you do “x” at home?
6. Who else do you know at kindergarten who likes doing “x”?
7. Do you do “x” with them?

Parent and whānau focus group questions (baseline)

1. Thinking about these video clips and your own children, what does being a competent, multiliterate communicator mean at ages three and four?
2. What are your aspirations for your child to be a multiliterate communicator as a three- and four-year-old? (Each person to answer in turn.)
3. What are your aspirations for your child to be a multiliterate communicator as an adult? (Each person to answer in turn.)
4. How do you think a kindergarten might best support these multiple ways of communicating or multiple literacies?
5. Do you have any suggestions about anything this kindergarten could do more of or do differently to foster communication better?
Identifying multiple literacies:
What “counts” and why? What doesn’t and why not?

Orthodox print-based literacies

Nontraditional literacies
connections to traditional notions of literacy range from relatively close, through to substantively different; place in literacy discourse is contested to varying degrees, in various quarters.


Literacies on and beyond the border
How do we define the border? What does and doesn’t count as evidence of a literacy? Do/how do literacies and interests differ? Do/how do they overlap? What examples would you position on or beyond the border?
Case study parent/whānau interview (final)

Parents/whānau were given their child’s portfolio and a recent video before the interview. They were asked to look through these and identify what was significant for them.

a) What were your impressions of:
   1) the video clips; and
   2) the portfolio. . . What did each tell you about your child that was significant to you?

b) What, if any, changes did you see in your child between:
   1) these video clips and the previous video clips; and
   2) the last time you talked to us about the portfolio and the portfolio as it is now?

c) What changes have you yourself noticed in your child since our last interview?

d) What do you see as your child’s particular strengths as a communicator? How have these changed over time?

e) What, if any, challenges do you think your child faces as a communicator? How have these changed over time?

f) How does your child’s strengths compare with the strengths of other siblings and family members?

g) How do you think your child’s strengths as a communicator came about?

h) Do you see these strengths as having been supported within the family, through, for example, particular activities or experiences? If yes, in what ways?

i) What aspects do you think were supported through your child’s kindergarten experiences? Probe: environment? teachers? other children?

j) In terms of your aspirations, what aspects would you like to see your child develop further?

k) Is there anything else you would like to add? Māori
Appendix B: Jack’s portfolio: Email to Mum
Appendix C: Jack’s portfolio: Finding out about clown

I must add Jack that each day you have come to Kindergarten (since the day we sent the email) you have asked to have your face painted like a clown!

13/2/08

Today Jack when you came to Kindergarten you said to me “I just need to practice being a clown again. I’ve been thinking about my costume”. As we talked you said to me “You know what I also need Yvette? A honker thing. I realised that clowns beep on their nose and it goes ‘honk honk’. I asked you if you have seen one of them and you said you couldn’t really remember but it could have been in one of your dreams! I said to you “I wonder how we could find out about clown costumes?” You replied with “Well the computer could tell us and well maybe we could just look it up on there!”. What a great idea! We set to work. Sure enough we found a clown site where you could buy anything from a nose to hair to shoes! Remember Jack how you found some really cool shoes! They were red ones with “big bubbles on them”!

The tricky thing was (no pun intended) that this was from a store in America! We tried to find something a little closer in NZ with no luck. We decided to keep looking. I suggested that you might like to make some of your costume items yourself!

You decided to carry on with researching clowns and we discovered some really interesting facts from some of the websites we visited. You asked to print out some of these things for your clown folder so we did!

You discovered Jack that the white face clown is the oldest clown in history! There wasn’t very good light in the theatres all the way back when clowning began, so the clowns painted their faces white so the audience could see them better!

You thought this was very interesting! You told lots of people throughout the day what you had discovered!