

# Multimedia literacy practices in beginning classrooms and at home: the differences in practices and beliefs

Alison W. Arrow and Brian T. Finch

## Abstract

Multimedia literacy practices in the homes of young children are changing rapidly, but the use of them in the early years of education is moving slowly. This research was aimed to find out what teachers of 5-year-olds, in their first 6 months of compulsory schooling, think about the children's literacy practices at home, including the perceived use of digital media at home. We also wanted to find out what the teachers did in their classrooms that was similar or different to the students' experiences of literacy practices across several media. Parents of 76 children, and their teachers, from 10 classrooms in mid-high and mid-low socio-economic areas completed surveys. The parents' survey asked about the literacy-related experiences their children are involved in. The teachers' survey asked for their beliefs about the literacy-related experiences the children in their classrooms engaged in, on average, including the use of digital media. The teachers were also asked about the literacy practices in their classroom and their use of media. This paper describes the teachers' beliefs and the similarities and differences in practices between home and school, including literacy practices using digital technology.

**Key words:** home literacy, multimedia, homeschool, school literacy, beginning school, teacher beliefs

## Introduction

Contemporary childhood is not like the childhood that most teachers, and researchers, experienced. The modern childhood is a digital one (Zevenbergen, 2007) with a range of technologies that children interact with, both for day-to-day living and for play (Fleer, 2011). There has been a move in early childhood education for educators to recognise, and make use of, children's contemporary experiences, especially within the bounds of popular culture, when considering teaching and learning (Hedges, 2011; Hourcade et al., 2010; Levy, 2008; Marsh and Thompson, 2001; Marsh et al., 2005; Shegar and Weninger, 2010). There is less evidence of this shift in the early years of primary school education, where specific skills are valued over the experiences through which skills may be obtained (e.g. McNaughton, 2001).

There have been accounts of the complex relationships between home practices and school literacy and explanations offered for the differential achievements in school literacy according to socio-economic status (SES) (McDowell et al., 2007; Tunmer et al., 2006; Van Steensel, 2006). Indeed, Marsh (2010) has given a useful overview of the theories used to frame the disparities. This paper uses the new literacy studies concepts of literacy events and practices (Street, 1995), linked to Bourdieu's metaphor of cultural capital to explore the current situation in New Zealand.

Tunmer et al. (2006) labelled the forms of knowledge developed early on the continuum of literacy development, which develop within the context of home or early childhood education setting, as literate cultural capital. This builds on Nash's concept of the 'literate socialisation' (Nash, 2001, p. 15) of children; it also recognises that school-based literacy is based on the particular literate socialisation of the dominant group in society, that is, of the teachers themselves (Heath, 1983). Home literacy practices involve ambient, joint and personal activities that build situated expertise (McNaughton, 1995). The situated expertise may include the cognitive skills aspect of literate cultural capital, but such capital built from home literacy practices may not match the institutional literacy practices of schools. The challenge for teachers is to create an appropriate literacy 'frame of reference' (Dyson, 1999, p. 142), which includes relevant material and practices drawing on the situated expertise of the children in their classrooms and helping them feel comfortable that their identity is accepted. At the same time, teachers need to develop in children the school literacy expertise that education systems demand.

## Home and school literacy practices

We use 'literacy practices' to mean the generalised patterns of interaction with materials that have print elements that contribute to meaning-making and those that contribute to the skills and knowledge needed for accurate decoding of text. We take 'literacy events' to be the specific interactions, modes of communication and text forms that constitute literacy practices (Barton and Hamilton, 2005). 'Literacy media' refer to the forms

of technology that can be used for interaction with literacy and include both print in books and print on screens (as part of digital applications and games for devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers). Literacy events also refer to the engagement children have with television and DVDs that involves or encourages interaction with print. As different genres can be accessed across all media platforms, there will be a range of material that is read, which includes children's magazines, online or hardcopy; a variety of inexpensive picture books that are available anywhere from supermarkets to service stations; a variety of digital applications available as narratives and as sources of information; and television and DVDs.

A great deal of research into the transition to school literacy has focused on acculturating parents into the 'pedagogised' literacy practices (Street, 1995) of the school so that the children build the particular literate cultural capital valued by the school system. A range of homeschool, or family, literacy programmes have been developed over time (Van Steensel et al., 2011). The most recent typography of such programmes is that of Sénéchal and Young (2008) who distinguished programmes as being based on school-based involvement, homeschool conferencing or home-based involvement. The effectiveness of family literacy programmes is often limited by a lack of recognition of parents' informal pedagogies, particularly for minority families (Van Steensel et al., 2011) even though literacy activities are firmly embedded in the homes of most children. Home literacy practices reflect the habitus, or social and cultural identities, of those homes (McNaughton, 1995; Rogers, 2002) and not necessarily that of the schools. Many family literacy studies are based on the assumption that the homes of children classed as being low in SES are lacking in literacy experiences and practices. This research about the literacy practices beginning students are involved in at home is important for those who are interested in trying to build literacy that utilises learning from home literacy practices.

## Contemporary home literacy events and practices

Many children in the 21st century are immersed in a global culture that enables them to engage with "globally available narratives" (Marsh, 2006; Marsh and Thompson, 2001) that are developed from television programmes (such as *Teletubbies* and *Angelina Ballerina*), from toys (such as Barbie) and also from sources such as DVDs of concerts (such as the *Wiggles*). As part of these "globally available narratives", children engage with merchandise on the basis of the narratives. There are ranges of relatively inexpensive books, from conceptual to narrative based; there are websites with games, video clips and digital books; and there are digital applications for smartphone and tablet devices that range from digital books to edutainment games. In their use of different media, young children are able

to move from one mode of literacy media to another, seamlessly, from Google search to website to print book and back following the content across media forms (Davidson, 2009). These practices and events that children engage in at home build their emergent situated literacy expertise, are a part of their literate cultural capital and are valued by both the children and their families (Marsh, 2006; Marsh and Thompson, 2001) but not schools (Shegar and Weninger, 2010). For children to have such understandings acknowledged, their teachers need to be aware of the content of their students' popular cultural context and to perceive the relevance of the children's home literate cultural capital to 'school literacy'. In homes, media are treated as 'transparent' as children follow their interest across various platforms and manifestations of it (this is also reported within a pre-school environment by Shegar and Weninger, 2010), whereas in school, the medium matters and paper texts are valued most highly (Honan, 2012).

Although home and school literacy practices share the goal of developing the child's competence, the practices in the two contexts are inherently different because of the different social relationships children have with adults in the home from those with adults in the school classroom. Marsh (2009) identified these different relationships by noting how children are social and community readers in the home but are required to be individual readers once in the classroom. Additionally, the agenda or curriculum that the teacher is held accountable to leads to differences in the practices and expected child outcomes.

## Current study

This study aimed to gather up-to-date data on family literacy practices involving 4- to 5-year-olds in a society where media use is rapidly changing, establish whether New Zealand families have patterns of literacy practices in line with those shown in the literature (e.g. Hammer et al., 2007; Hood et al., 2008; Keels, 2009), identify beginning school literacy practices of some New Zealand teachers and investigate the extent to which teachers knew about or accommodated the literacy practices of their beginning school students. The two research questions the study was designed to gather data on are as follows: what literacy practices do young children participate in at home? What are the teachers' beliefs about children's home activities?

## Participants

### *Schools and teachers*

Participants in this survey study were teachers of children who were new to primary school and the parents of the children in their classes. In the New Zealand

compulsory school sector, most children start school on the school day closest to their fifth birthday. The class level that children enter is typically known as the 'new entrant' classroom and is broadly similar to the UK nursery level and the US kindergarten level. The New Zealand educational system classifies schools into decile levels, with the lowest decile schools having the largest percentages of children living in low socio-economic-level homes (e.g. decile 1 schools have at least 90 per cent of children from low socio-economic-level homes) and the highest decile schools having the smallest percentage of children living in low socio-economic homes (e.g. decile 10 schools have no more than 10 per cent of such children). Schools were selected from local schools to be generally representative of lower and higher socio-economic areas. Teachers of six classrooms in low socio-economic areas and teachers of four classrooms in high socio-economic areas participated in the research. The teachers consisted of one man and nine women, their teaching experience ranging from 3 years to more than 20 years altogether and from at least 1 year to more than 10 years at this age level.

### Parents

Parents of the children who were in their first 6 months of school in each teacher's class were also invited to participate in the survey research. Seventy-eight parents completed surveys, 43 from the low-decile classrooms and 35 from the high-decile area classrooms. Most parent respondents were mothers ( $n=74$ ), although a small number were fathers ( $n=3$ ), with one parent not indicating their gender. There were a range of languages spoken in children's homes, indicated by parents identifying what language, other than English, they used. Ten families indicated that *te reo Māori* (the language of New Zealand's indigenous population) was spoken to some extent, seven from the low-decile schools. There were three other language backgrounds among the low-decile participants and 11 among the high-decile group. Eight families used their language other than English for reading books and newspapers, six used their language for television and 19 families indicated that they used their language for singing.

## Materials and procedure

Participating teachers were provided with a survey to complete. They were also asked to distribute, and collect back, surveys from parents, which were returned in sealed envelopes.

### Parent surveys

This survey (Appendix 1) was adapted from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

learning-to-read survey (Mullis et al., 2007) and the parent interview from Marsh et al. (2005). There were four sections to the survey; the first asked how often parents and children engaged with literacy in a range of ways, such as reading environmental print, reading books, visiting the library, creating written artefacts such as lists or messages or teaching letters and words. The second section asked about the practice of school instructional readers such as how often children brought them home and what they did with them. The third section asked how much time children spent on reading, writing, playing, watching television and using a computer and other digital media. The last section asked parents demographic questions including the number of books and DVDs in the home.

### Teacher surveys

This survey (Appendix 2) was constructed to ask similar questions as the parent surveys, identifying the teachers' beliefs about, in particular, how much time they thought their students spent on activities, including the use of digital media, on an average day. Additionally, the survey had a section asking about literacy teaching practices the teacher engaged in and the use of digital technologies in their practice. Questions were also asked on teachers' knowledge of 'educational' television programmes and computer software or websites. Finally, teachers were asked about their own experiences with digital technologies and reading and writing activities.

### Interviews

Interview participants for each decile level were selected at random from those who indicated that they were willing to be interviewed. Research assistants carried out the interviews, which consisted of reminding participants what they had indicated on the survey and asking them to elaborate. Two teachers from the high-decile classrooms and two teachers from the low-decile classrooms were interviewed as well as a number of parents.

## Findings and discussion

### *Children's home reading and writing practices and family literacy*

This research gathered data on ambient literacy practices (e.g. by asking "do you write in the presence of your child?") because ambient practices contribute to establishing a communication disposition or orientation towards symbol and meaning as part of 'normal behaviour'. The parent responses, across the high-SES and low-SES groups, are provided in Table 1. Chi-squared analyses were carried out to examine potential differences

Table 1: Percentage responses for parent questions with significant SES differences

Survey question	Percentage response										$\chi^2(4)$
	4+ times a week		2–3 times a week		Once a week		1–2 times a month		Never		
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	
Reading	51.4	44.2	22.9	32.6	14.3	11.6	11.4	7	0	4.7	3.02
All written	82.9	69.8	11.4	23.3	2.9	4.7	2.9	2.3	0	0	2.12
Paper writing	14.3	25.6	51.4	32.6	14.3	25.6	20	7	0	9.3	9.88*
Environmental print	2.8	14.3	25.7	28.6	28.6	26.2	28.6	16.7	14.3	14.3	4.07
Reading picture books	80	51.2	17.1	20.9	0	9.3	0	14	2.9	4.7	10.95*
Parent reading school books	55.9	85.7	17.6	7.1	17.6	0	0	2.4	8.8	4.8	12.75*
Child reading other books	25.7	51.2	54.3	34.9	11.4	14	8.6	0	0	0	8.59*
Child reading <sup>a</sup>	2.9	16.3	17.1	23.3	37.1	41.9	42.9	14	0	4.7	11.46*

Note: high SES  $n = 35$ ; low SES  $n = 43$ .

SES, socio-economic status.

<sup>a</sup>Categories are >60, 30–60, 15–30, up to 15 and 0 min.

\* $p < 0.05$ .

in practices across SES groups. The parents' survey responses and analysis showed that across the SES groups there was ambient reading and writing by adults in the presence of these children and there were joint practices (adults reading out text messages and shopping lists), which demonstrated authentic literacy communication (identified as *reading* and *all writing* in Table 1). The parents who responded to the survey from lower and higher socio-economic standing had similar patterns of literacy practices but with some small differences. Children from low-SES homes tended to spend more time reading print material than children from higher-SES homes, as indicated by the frequency of child reading in Table 1. Additionally, although not significant, there was a trend to more frequent reading of environmental print (such as packaging) in low-SES homes. Thus, the particular engagements with creating and interacting with print varied, with higher-SES homes using a wider variety of print interactions.

Zevenbergen (2007) argued that for the current generation of children, their digital use should be considered as their habitus, a digital habitus in which children

grow up with learning dispositions that differ from the generations before them. The learning of literacy, for example, will be influenced by the way that technologies convey print to them. Fleer (2011) provided examples of different usage of technologies (e.g. for life support and leisure), illustrating different forms of digital habitus that children bring with them to the classroom. Children make use of the funds of knowledge they develop through their interactions with globally available narratives within popular culture, for example *Sponge Bob Square Pants* or *Ninja Turtles* (Hedges, 2011) or Disney characters (Fleer, 2011). The amount of time spent by children on particular activities, on average, indicates that these children use a range of technologies (e.g. TV, computers and DVDs) but make use of the television as their main source of global narratives and that in most cases they are interacting in these narratives with siblings, usually older, and with adults (Table 2). Thus, the children in the study spent time involved in a range of activities, with a range of technologies across families, which were engaged with in a range of contexts that may be ambient, joint or independent.

Table 2: Percentage responses for time spent on activities at home on average per day

Question	Percentage response					Who with, mostly
	>60 min	30–60 min	15–30 min	Up to 15 min	0 min	
TV	30.8	38.5	14.1	6.4	9.0	Older sibling(s)
DVD/video	15.4	16.7	12.8	15.4	38.5	Adult
Computer	3.8	12.8	19.2	17.9	46.2	Adult
Video games	6.4	3.8	9.0	10.3	69.2	Older sibling(s)
Using a phone	0	1.3	0	9.0	87.2	Adult
Reading	10.3	20.5	39.7	26.9	2.6	Adult
Being read to	1.3	10.3	50.0	38.5	0	N/A
Writing/drawing	15.4	23.1	34.6	20.5	2.6	Adult
Inside toys	33.3	30.8	19.2	15.4	1.3	Younger siblings
Playing outside	69.2	21.8	5.1	3.8	0	Older sibling(s)

Note: combined socio-economic status groups,  $n = 78$  (some questions were not answered by all recipients).



### *Teacher beliefs – mismatches and contradictions*

In our data, just as in Honan (2008), teachers were unaware of the variety of home activities reported. We deduced the value that teachers placed on home activities from their open-ended survey responses and have not separated them into SES levels as there were no differences in expectations or teacher responses. Teachers appeared to not value the screen viewings of children by indicating that they only discussed such viewings when children mentioned them in oral language. When asked in open-ended survey questions about the value of all texts for children's literacy learning, the responses referred only to print books as being valuable for beginning literacy learners. The teachers had thought about using digital technologies for literacy learning but were hesitant about the use of them and were only able to name one or two digital media activities each, for example, *Starfall.com* was named by four of 10 teachers; two of the teachers were unable to name any.

Teachers overestimated the time children spent on activities such as television viewing, DVD viewing and on-screen games. Eighty per cent of the teachers thought that children spent more than 60 minutes watching TV, on average, and 40 per cent thought that children spent 30–60 minutes per day watching DVDs. As illustrated in Table 2, parent responses indicate that children spent much less time doing any of these things than the teachers believed. Additionally, 90 per cent of the teachers thought that children played video games, when 70 per cent of parents said that their children did not.

Teachers also underestimated the time children spent on practices relevant to classroom activities, such as writing or drawing and reading or pretending to read. Eighty per cent of the teachers thought that children were read to for up to 15 minutes, and 60 per cent of teachers thought that children wrote for up to 15 minutes. Overall parent responses indicate that most children spent more time doing all of these things than teachers thought they did. This misperception of family literacy practices by teachers could lead them to believe that the gap in practices between home and school is greater than it actually is. Although the repeated viewing of a favourite screen narrative at home and the repeated reading of a print narrative at school can be seen as belonging to the same literacy practice, the teachers' beliefs illustrate a focus on the differences in literacy events between the school focus on print narrative and home practices such as experiencing narratives on a screen and reading screen material. If teachers foreground the differences between literacy events, they will not perceive the common literacy practice and consequently not make links between the two for the children within the classroom.

The teacher survey data showed that the teachers' expectations, attitudes and perceptions about children's out-of-school activities were not accurate. Although the

curriculum discourse values home literacy environments as important and needing to be acknowledged, the teachers had not explored them or enacted that valuing, for example, the teachers were uncertain about the amount of time students use computers at home (three teachers thought children spent more than an hour a day on the computer, and four teachers thought they spent no time on the computer). Levy (2009) found that children are initially able to make use of print on computer screens without fully decoding it, prior to beginning formal reading instruction, and that once they began formal reading instruction, they lost confidence. This confidence was lost both in being able to read print and in the actual use of a computer, in the school context. That is, children's digital funds of knowledge and digital habitus were not made use of in the school classroom. Home and school literacy practices were seen as distinct by the children where the home practices can, and do, revolve around digital technologies (Davidson, 2009) and popular culture (Fleer, 2011; Marsh, 2006; Marsh et al., 2005). The results of the current study support this disconnect between children's digital funds of knowledge and non-school habitus, digital or not, and the literate cultural capital expectations of teachers.

### *Teacher practices*

Teachers' own home literacy practices showed engagement with digital technologies in their households, in contrast to their professional literacy practices. The teacher survey data in this study show that their households regularly used social media (nine out of 10 teachers) and computers (all teachers indicated they did so daily). In the teachers' own social fields, they possess the literate cultural capital associated with use of digital media, but within the professional field of early school literacy, the traditional print on paper held status, and electronic media interactions were not deemed relevant. Although New Zealand schools typically run websites that include some student work, the teachers of beginning students in this study did not connect their personal literacy practices with those they used in classrooms. Teachers may have a different schema for media use than families do, not seeing their own practices as using literacy through digital media, creating a mental 'digital divide'.

Further evidence of the separation between the twin fields that teachers operate in came from the teachers' knowledge of digital content. When asked to indicate, from a supplied list, the titles of contemporary and long-running television programmes for this age group that they were familiar with, the teachers identified a small number of titles each (an average of eight programmes out of 23 listed) of which those with the highest frequency counts had been showing for a number of years (e.g. *Bob the Builder*, *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer*). It is likely that children initiating a conversation about any other programme would not

receive a knowledgeable response. Alongside the lack of awareness of how children spent their time, and their use of different technologies, the evidence suggests that these teachers were not familiar with the popular cultural contexts of their students.

When technology is used for literacy instruction in primary classrooms, the focus is often on teaching students on how to use the technology, rather than using the technology for literacy (Honan, 2008, 2012). The main reason for this appears to be that teachers assume that children come into the classroom as blank slates requiring teaching about how to use the technology, regardless of their year level (Honan, 2008, 2012; Marsh, 2006). Alongside this is the value that teachers place on traditional print-based literacy practices and the 'canon' of children's literature (Davidson, 2009; Marsh, 2006).

This study found that children participated in a range of practices across a range of media. These practices were ambient, joint and occasionally independent uses of media for literacy and communication. The teacher beliefs and their knowledge about children's home literacy experiences illustrated a gap between what children did and what teachers thought they did, as well as between what parents valued through providing the opportunities for such practices and what the teachers knew and valued about them.

## Policy rhetoric, compliance measures and implications

In New Zealand, there have been a number of literacy initiatives put into place, since the late 1990s, to improve the literacy outcomes of New Zealand children at the start of schooling. The compulsory sector education system in New Zealand has been subject to neo-liberal policies for the last 20 years (Codd, 2005; Peters and Marshall, 1996), along with some other jurisdictions, so that primary teachers are now being held increasingly accountable for the literacy achievement levels of the students in terms of National Standards in reading and in writing. As Luke (2002, p. 200) noted, this managerialism creates a "systemic proclivity towards print literacy", which may make teachers less likely to acknowledge digital literacy practices from home. The rhetoric of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, in its "principles of effective pedagogy" (along with frameworks such as those by Alexander, 2008), nominates "making connections to prior learning and experience" through making connections "to home practices and the wider world" (Alexander, 2008, p. 34). However, accountability pressures on teachers and schools constrain the ways in which this aspect of the curriculum's pedagogy is enacted.

Similar points could be made about the inclusive discourses in the *Literacy Learning Progressions* (Ministry

of Education, 2010) and *National Standards* (Ministry of Education, 2009b), which include references to "students' cultural identities" (Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 9), to "indirect experience through television, movies and video" (Ministry of Education, 2009b, reading standard after 1 year at school), to "strong, respectful relationships between the school and students' families" (Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 91) and to "incorporating the students' home practices into classroom practice as bridges to understanding" (Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 21). The official documents acknowledge specific home literacy practices associated with ethnic religious culture but make no mention of home literacy practices involving popular digital culture despite there being New Zealand evidence of children's engagement, at least with television narratives (Wylie et al., 2004). In contrast, the current early childhood curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), emphasises the social aspects that occur around literacy learning and communication, with little reference to what it means to develop literacy (McLachlan and Arrow, 2011). The contrasting nature of the two curriculum documents means that children will often experience a disjointed transition from early childhood to compulsory primary schooling through a change of emphasis from literacy as social practice to a focus on achieving specified literacy skills when using Ministry of Education supplied texts. Although the New Zealand curriculum does not foreground home literacy practices, it does reference them. The curriculum statements do not explicitly constrain teachers from drawing on digital texts in their classrooms, but both the accountability measures of National Standards (and published league tables) and school cultures operating in the shadow of the standards emphasise a narrowing view of literacy and print materials as the best ways to achieve national norm levels.

Research projects in the United Kingdom, which brought teachers' own literacy practices as writers and readers into the classroom (Cremin, 2006; Cremin et al., 2009), encouraged teachers through professional development to explore ways of using the popular cultural knowledge of their students to create literacy learning. If New Zealand teachers were able to see the knowledge, strategies and skills of decoding from print and encoding into print as not bound to particular 'approved' narratives or media, they would be able to widen the range of materials they use. Helping teachers to investigate and reflect on the pleasures and agency that children experience through their home literacy practices could enable their classroom practices to include a wider range of literacy engagement. School cultures need to give teachers permission to use screen reading and writing incorporating popular culture, while being conscious of the dominant value reproduction that it also performs.

Further research to produce evidence of children's emergent literacy engagements with digital media, building on the level of detail gathered by Levy (2009), would provide teacher educators and teachers

with knowledge of the kinds of understanding that children employ in their home literacy practices. Such evidence would form a basis for exploring and evaluating ways to use digital media and print in a classroom to extend children's emergent literacy.

## Conclusion

The gap between teachers' personal digital literacy and their professional paper literacy practices and their lack of familiarity with the popular culture of their students creates a gap for the children, which separates school practices from those at home. Whereas the parents' reading of school readers shows that home practices did incorporate school literacy materials. For the situation to move closer to the rhetoric ideal of 'bridging the gap' or 'porous boundaries' (Marsh, 2010), policy-makers and schools need to clearly indicate that digital texts are part of a multimedia school literacy and that they also contribute to children's literate cultural capital.

## Note

1. Such initiatives have included the development of the *Literacy Learning Progressions* and *National Standards for Reading and Writing* and the production of two handbooks for teaching, *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4* (Ministry of Education, 2003) and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5–8* (Ministry of Education, 2006).

## References

- ALEXANDER, R. (2008) *Essays on Pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- BARTON, D. and HAMILTON, M. (2005) 'Literacy, reification and the dynamics of social interaction', in D. Barton and K. Tusting (Eds.) *Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power, and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 14–35.
- CODD, J. A. (2005) Teachers as 'managed professionals' in the global education industry: the New Zealand experience. *Educational Review*, 57.2, pp. 193–206.
- CREMIN, T. (2006) Creativity, uncertainty and discomfort: teachers as writers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 36.3, pp. 415–433.
- CREMIN, T., MOTTRAM, M., COLLINS, F., POWELL, S. and SAFFORD, K. (2009) Teachers as readers: building communities of readers. *Literacy*, 43.1, pp. 11–19.
- DAVIDSON, C. (2009) Young children's engagement with digital texts and literacies in the home: pressing matters for the teaching of English in the early years of schooling. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 8, pp. 36–54.
- DYSON, A. H. (1999) Transforming transfer: unruly children, contrary texts, and the persistence of the pedagogical order. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, pp. 143–173.
- FLEER, M. (2011) Technologically constructed childhoods: moving beyond a reproductive and critical view of curriculum development. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36, pp. 16–24.
- HAMMER, C. S., LAWRENCE, F. R. and MICCIO, A. W. (2007) Puerto Rican mothers' beliefs and home literacy practices. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 38, pp. 216–224.
- HEATH, S. B. (1983) What no bedtime story means: narrative skills at home and school. *Language in Society*, 11, pp. 49–76.
- HEDGES, H. (2011) Rethinking Sponge Bob and Ninja Turtles: popular culture as funds of knowledge for curriculum co-construction. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36, pp. 25–29.
- HONAN, E. (2008) Barriers to teachers using digital texts in literacy classrooms. *Literacy*, 42, pp. 36–43.
- HONAN, E. (2012) 'A whole new literacy': teachers' understanding of students' digital learning at home. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 35, pp. 82–98.
- HOOD, M., CONLON, E. and ANDREWS, G. (2008) Preschool home literacy practices and children's literacy development: a longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100.2, pp. 146252–271.
- HOORCADE, J., PARETTE, H., BOECKMANN, N. and BLUM, C. (2010) Handy Manny and the emergent literacy technology toolkit. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37, pp. 483–491.
- KEELS, M. (2009) Ethnic group differences in early head start parents' parenting beliefs and practices and links to children's early cognitive development. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 24, pp. 381–397.
- LEVY, R. (2008) 'Third spaces' are interesting places: applying 'third space theory' to nursery-aged children's constructions of themselves as readers. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 8, pp. 14643–66.
- LEVY, R. (2009) 'You have to understand words ... but not read them': young children becoming readers in a digital age. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 32, pp. 75–91.
- LUKE, A. (2002) 'What happens to literacies old and new when they're turned into policy?', in D. E. Alvermann (Ed.) *Adolescents and Literacies in a Digital World*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 186–203.
- MARSH, J. (2006) 'Global, local/public, private: young children's engagement in digital literacy practices in the home', in K. Pahl and J. Rowsell (Eds.) *Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies: Instances of Practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 19–38.
- MARSH, J. (2009) 'New literacies, old identities: young girls' experiences of digital literacy at home and school', in C. Jackson, C. Paechter and E. Renold (Eds.) *Girls and Education 3–16: Continuing Concerns, New Agendas*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- MARSH, J. (2010) 'The relationship between home and school literacy practices', in D. Wyse, R. Andrews and J. Hoffman (Eds.) *The International Handbook of English, Language and Literacy Teaching*. London: Routledge, pp. 305–316.
- MARSH, J. and THOMPSON, P. (2001) Parental involvement in literacy development: using media texts. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 24, pp. 266–278.
- MARSH, J., BROOKS, G., HUGHES, J., RITCHIE, L., ROBERTS, S. and WRIGHT, K. (2005) *Digital Beginnings: Young Children's Use of Popular Culture, Media and New Technologies*. Sheffield: Literacy Research Centre, University of Sheffield.
- MCDOWELL, K. D., LONIGAN, C. J. and GOLDSTEIN, H. (2007) Relations among socioeconomic status, age, and predictors of phonological awareness. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 50, pp. 1079–1092.
- MCLACHLAN, C. J. and ARROW, A. W. (2011) Literacy in the early years in New Zealand: policies, politics and pressing reasons for change. *Literacy*, 45, pp. 141–148.
- MCNAUGHTON, S. (1995) *Patterns of Emergent Literacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MCNAUGHTON, S. (2001) Co-constructing expertise: the development of parents' and teachers' ideas about literacy practices and the transition to school. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 1, pp. 40–58.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (1996) *Te Whāriki: He whāriki matauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2003) *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2006) *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5–8*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2007) *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2009a) *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1–3*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2009b) *National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. (2010) *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.



- MULLIS, I. V. S., MARTIN, M. O., KENNEDY, A. M. and FOY, P. (2007) *PIRLS 2006 International Report*. Boston: International Study Centre, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.
- NASH, R. (2001) Cultural capital and competent children. *The First Years: New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education*, 3, pp. 13–16.
- PETERS, M. and MARSHALL, J. (1996) The politics of curriculum: busnocratic rationality and enterprise culture. *Delta*, 48.1, pp. 33–46.
- ROGERS, R. (2002) Between contexts: a critical discourse analysis of family literacy, discursive practices, and literate subjectivities. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37, pp. 248–277.
- SÉNÉCHAL, M. and YOUNG, L. (2008) The effect of family literacy interventions on children's acquisition of reading from kindergarten to Grade 3: a meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 78, pp. 880–907.
- SHEGAR, C. and WENINGER, C. (2010) Intertextuality in preschoolers' engagement with popular culture: implications for literacy development. *Language and Education*, 24, pp. 431–447.
- STREET, B. (1995) *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy Development, Ethnography and Education*. New York: Longman.
- TUNMER, W. E., CHAPMAN, J. W. and PROCHNOW, J. E. (2006) Literate cultural capital at school entry predicts later reading achievement: a seven year longitudinal study. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 41, pp. 183–204.
- VAN STEENSEL, R. (2006) Relations between socio-cultural factors, the home literacy environment and children's literacy development in the first years of primary education. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 29, pp. 367–382.
- VAN STEENSEL, R., MCELVANY, N., KURVERS, J. and HERPPICH, S. (2011) How effective are family literacy programs? Results of a meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 81, pp. 69–96.
- WYLIE, C., THOMPSON, J., HODGEN, E., FERRAL, H., LYTHE, C. and FIJN, T. (2004) *Competent Children at 12: A Report to the Ministry of Education*. Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- ZEVENBERGEN, R. (2007) Digital natives come to preschool: implications for early childhood practice. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 8, pp. 19–29.

#### CONTACT THE AUTHOR

Alison W. Arrow, Institute of Education, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand.  
e-mail: a.w.arrow@massey.ac.nz

## Appendix 1: Indicative survey items

### You and your 5-year-old at home: the things you do

We want to find out what kinds of reading and writing parents and 5-year-olds do at home. There are no right or wrong answers; we want to know what things you do. Tick one response to each question, please. Think about your 5-year-old child when answering.

#### A. What adults do

1. How often does your child see you doing your own reading?

Once every day or more	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	1 or 2 times a month	Never
------------------------	---------------------	-------------	----------------------	-------

2. How often do you write in the child's presence? [e.g. phone text, email, list, Facebook message]
3. How often do you read such messages aloud to your child?
4. How often do you make notes on paper to plan an activity in the child's presence? [e.g. shopping list, to do list, holiday plan]
5. How often do you teach your child how to print letters or words?
6. How often do you, together with the child, read the instructions or brand name on packaging?
7. How often when you're reading a children's picture book to your child do you **both** talk?
8. How often do you read picture books to your child at bedtime?
9. How often do you read picture books to your child in the daytime?
10. How often do you tell stories?
11. How often do you sing songs/play word games?
12. How often do you visit a library with this child?

#### B. Thinking about school reading books

1. How often does she/he bring reading books home?

4 days a week or more	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	1 or 2 times a month	Never
-----------------------	---------------------	-------------	----------------------	-------

2. How often do you read school reading books to the child?
3. How often does the child read school reading books?
4. How often do you talk about words? Talk about pictures?



5. How often do you talk about the story/things in the story?
6. How do you feel about reading these books from school?
7. How often does your child read OTHER books?

### C. What your child does

1. How much time does your child usually spend each day doing the following? Please provide an approximate estimate in terms of 15 minute units for each activity. (Think about today or yesterday as a guide, if one of them was a typical day.)
2. How much time does your child usually spend each day watching TV?

More than 1 hour	30–60 mins	15–30 mins	15 mins	None
------------------	------------	------------	---------	------

- |  |
|--|
| 3. How much time does your child usually spend each day watching a video or DVD?                               |
| 4. How much time does your child usually spend each day listening to music, including whilst riding in a car?  |
| 5. How much time does your child usually spend each day playing outside?                                       |
| 6. How much time does your child usually spend each day reading/pretending to read?                            |
| 7. How much time does your child usually spend each day being read to by someone else?                         |
| 8. How much time does your child usually spend each day using a computer?                                      |
| 9. How much time does your child usually spend each day playing video games e.g. PlayStation, Xbox or Gameboy? |
| 10. How much time does your child usually spend each day playing inside with toys?                             |
| 11. How much time does your child usually spend each day writing/drawing?                                      |
| 12. How much time does your child usually spend each day using a phone?  |
| 13. Who does your child watch TV with, most of the time?   |
| 14. Who does your child watch a video or DVD with, most of the time?   |

### D. Your family

We'd like you to give a few details about your household [demographic questions followed] About your family and home

1. Is your 5 year-old child the eldest child?
2. If he/she is not, how many years older is the next oldest child?
3. Is he or she the youngest child?
4. If he/she is not, how many years younger is the next youngest child?
5. How many books are in your home (not magazines, newspapers)?
6. How many children's books are in your home (not children's magazines, school books)
7. How many children's and family videos/DVDs in your home?
8. Thank you for your time and for telling us about your home activities.

## Appendix 2: Teacher questionnaire

We want to find out what kinds of reading and writing 5-year-olds are involved with in your classroom. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in the things you do.

### A. Literacy practices in your classroom

1. Do you have a routine of sending reading books home?

4 days a week or more	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	1 or 2 times a month	Never
-----------------------	---------------------	-------------	----------------------	-------

- |  |
|--|
| 2. If you send reading books home, how do you expect parents and children to use them?   |
| 3. In what ways do you convey the appropriate or optimal use of the books to parents?  |
| 4. How many times a week do you read to children for non-instructional purposes (pleasure reading)?  |
| 5. What kinds of writing are included in your classroom programme?   |
| 6. Have you this year used print in other mediums (e.g. instructions on packaging, email) as reading material in the classroom? If so, what mediums did you use? |

7. Do you re-read books at the children's request?
8. What do you see as benefits for children of re-reading, if any
9. How often do you allow children to talk while you're reading a picture-book for enjoyment?
10. How often do you tell oral stories to the class, either traditional or personal experiences?
11. How often do you use nursery rhymes or language games in your programme?
12. How often does your class visit a library?

Once every day or more	2 or 3 times a week	Once a week	1 or 2 times a month	Never
------------------------	---------------------	-------------	----------------------	-------

13. How often do you talk with children about the texts they enjoy at home? (music, computer games, TV programmes, films, etc.)
14. In what contexts do you talk about films, television programmes, computer games?
15. In what ways do you consider such texts that children enjoy at home contribute to their literacy development?
16. How often do children use ICTs in your class programme?
17. Do online games contribute to children's literacy development, in your opinion?
18. List some titles of online games which you think might be appropriate for 5-year-olds
19. Tick the titles of any of the following television programmes which you have recently watched or about which you know some details

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Number Jacks</i>           | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Go Show</i>                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Dora the Explorer</i>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Blues Clues</i>                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Wiggle &amp; Learn</i>     | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Between the Lions</i>            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Mickey Mouse Clubhouse</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Special Agent Oso</i>            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Chuggington</i>            | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>My Friends Tigger &amp; Pooh</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>New McDonalds Farm</i>     | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Wordworld</i>                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bob the Builder</i>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Poppet's Town</i>                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kidzone</i>                | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Roll Play</i>                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Jane &amp; the Dragon</i>  | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Future is Wild</i>           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Go Diego Go</i>            | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Bo on the Go</i>                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Little Einsteins</i>       | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Handy Manny</i>                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Imagination Movers</i>     | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>You and Me</i>                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Finlay the Fire Engine</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Korero Ki Nga Kararehe</i>       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Miharo</i>                 |  |

### B. Thinking about the average 5-year-old in your class

The following items ask you to estimate how much time you think that the average 5-year-old in your class spends on the following activities at home:

1. How much time do you think they usually spend each day watching TV?

More than 1 hour	30–60 mins	15–30 mins	15 mins	None
------------------	------------	------------	---------	------

2. How much time do you think they usually spend each day watching a video or DVD?
3. How much time do you think they usually spend each day listening to music, including whilst riding in a car?
4. How much time do you think they usually spend each day playing outside?
5. How much time do you think they usually spend each day reading/pretending to read?
6. How much time do you think they usually spend each day being read to by someone else?
7. How much time do you think they usually spend each day using a computer?
8. How much time do you think they usually spend each day playing video games e.g. *PlayStation*<sup>™</sup>, *Xbox*<sup>™</sup> or *Gameboy*<sup>™</sup>?
9. How much time do you think they usually spend each day playing inside with toys?
10. How much time do you think they usually spend each day writing/drawing?
11. How much time do you think they usually spend each day using a phone?

## C. About you

1. Gender Female ☐ Male ☐

2. How many years have you been teaching?

Heaps! (20+)	10–20 years	5–10 years	3–5 years	1–2 years
--------------	-------------	------------	-----------	-----------

3. How many years have you been teaching this level?

4. Do you have time for personal reading at home?

At least daily	2–3 times a week	Once a week	Once a month	Very seldom
----------------	------------------	-------------	--------------	-------------

5. Do you use a computer for personal activities at home?

6. Does anyone in your household have a social network page? If so how often do they visit the site?

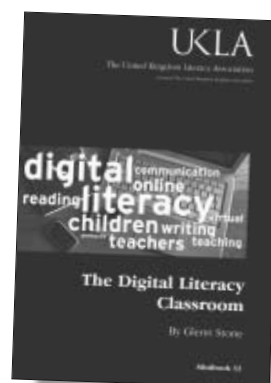
Thank you for your time and for telling us about your classroom activities.

UKLA

NEW MINIBOOK - NOVEMBER 2011

# The Digital Literacy Classroom

by Glenn Stone



**Are you interested in exploring ways of using new technologies within Literacy lessons? Do you need ideas for enhancing your school's Virtual Learning Environment? Have you considered the void that might exist between children's use of digital technology at home and their practice in school?**

This Minibook is an introduction for busy professionals interested in the potential of digital literacy in the primary school. The ideas offered provide a bridge between traditional literacy practice and new digital literacy pedagogy. It invites teachers to consider the value of digital literacies while exploring practical suggestions that build on existing practice. A rationale for moving towards digital literacy is also provided, set within the context of young people's digital worlds.

**About the Author**

Glenn Stone is Senior Lecturer in Primary Education at the University of Chichester where he teaches on the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Prior to this role, he taught across Key Stage 2 as a teacher and literacy leader in schools. Glenn's work to date has focused on the teaching of primary English and ICT. He is interested in the synergy between these two subjects, leading him to try out innovative ways that English can be taught and assessed using ICT.

**Price £8.00** (members)**£9.00** (non-members)

ISBN 978-1-897638-61-3

ISSN 2041 935X

Publisher UKLA 2011

*This Minibook is available from*  
**UKLA Publications,**  
**UKLA, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH**  
**www.ukla.org**