THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF A
GENERATIVE CURRICULUM
HANDBOOK

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by
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Signature of Advisor
This research project is dedicated to mom, the late Janet Amyx Hamilton, who convinced me the education field was the way to go. Mom will forever be my model, and I hope that some day my students love me as much as her students loved her.

A very special thanks to my husband, Bruce, who encouraged and believed in me from the very beginning that I could obtain my masters. Thanks for being proud of me. You had so much patience and understanding during this time. To Kelsey and Mackenzie, thank you for putting up with mommy. Now we can have the summers for what they are intended for! Thanks to Dad and Judy for the prayers for me and my family throughout this time. And lastly to Terri Evick, my friend and teaching partner. You've taught me to always reflect on what is best for kids. I love you all!
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
Background Information

The motivation for the investigation of a generative curriculum stems from the author's reflection of her practices in the whole language philosophy.

Many of the traditional ways of organizing classrooms and schools for instruction are being examined (Goswami and Stillman, 1986). Not only should traditional styles be evaluated, but also whole language teachers should carefully reflect on their practice. Many teachers who consider themselves whole language teachers do not understand the philosophy behind whole language (Routman, 1988). The author agrees with Routman and believes that there are at least three important issues facing many whole language classrooms. The elements are: the opinions that teachers hold of themselves, the lack of student choice, and the inadequacy of authentic learning. As a reflective practitioner, the author recognizes that these elements should be established within her own classroom to improve student achievement and mastery teaching.

The author believes that to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness, changes need to be made in how teachers view themselves. Traditionally, teachers viewed themselves as transmitters of knowledge; teachers approached students as empty vessels waiting to be filled. Whole language encourages teachers to become involved in a learning pilgrimage with the students. They should take the role of a facilitator and guide (Cordeiro and Fisher, 1994). The author believes that it is very difficult for teachers to
relinquish control. Yet, when the teacher and students plan, research, teach, learn, and evaluate collaboratively, respect develops.

Respect allows and promotes choice, trust, and independence. Respect accepts children where they are and encourages and congratulates them for their attempts. Respect values children as unique individuals. If they (students) are respected, they will feel secure and be able to take risks (Routman, 1988, p. 32).

This attitude is very important in establishing a responsive and nurturing classroom climate that enables all members of the learning community to flourish.

When the teacher views himself/herself as a learner, the next natural occurrence in the whole language classroom should be student empowerment. Research has proven that choice is a powerful motivator (Oldfather, 1993). The author of this proposal informally asked her students, the experts, what was the most interesting, exciting part of the school day. They responded most positively about Reading and Writing Workshop. The reason was evident; each child enjoyed having choices for reading and writing. As one young student said, "I love to learn about the Vietnam War but we really do not study it in third grade. So, in Reading and Writing Workshop, I can choose to read and write about the war, and that makes me happy". When students can choose tasks and texts they are interested in, they expend more effort learning and understanding of the material (Schiefele, 1991).

Another element that is vital to the effectiveness of a whole language teacher is the issue of authentic learning. The current traditional paradigm in education emphasizes the need for acquiring knowledge in abstraction rather
than in a meaningful context (Cordeiro, 1990). In many classes, learning seems to be prescribed determined only by the course of study. Whole language integrates by using thematic units. These units fulfill the objectives in the curriculum, but they seem forced and artificial (Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994). As a whole language teacher and user of the thematic approach, the author has concerned herself with accomplishing the unit of study, the student objectives, and the colorful projects rather than focusing on the students' needs and interests.

We (students and teachers) do not need new information: we need to think about the information have. We need to interpret what goes on when students respond to an assignment and others do not. We need to interpret things like that—and then to interpret our interpretations (Goswami and Stillman, 1986, p. 28).

When learning is based on the student's prior knowledge, interests, and needs, children in the classroom initiate a process of locating resources, searching for answers and insights, organizing and synthesizing information, and sharing their discoveries with an audience of peers. Learning is made relevant when students engage in experiences that help make connections to the real world. This inquiry or problematic approach to instruction encourages students to take an active role in learning, and makes learning meaningful.

Perplexed by these neglected elements in the author's whole language approach, the author searched articles, consulted colleagues, and reexamined her whole language philosophy. Gary Manning offers a recommendation to whole language teachers that is clearly distinguished by the elements that the
author has discussed. It is named generative curriculum or theme immersions. The generative curriculum is not a prescribed curriculum but a creative, intuitive curriculum that evolves by way of the children's inquiries, questions, and interests (Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994). A generative curriculum is an approach which is consistent with the theory and practice of whole language.

Because generative curriculum is relatively new ideology encompassing all areas of the curriculum, the attempt to better understand and implement appears overwhelming to educators. It is the author's intent to further investigate aspects of the generative curriculum so that educators can become better informed. It is the writer's purpose to implement a generative curriculum to provide students with authentic learning. Finally, it is the author's intent to experience the concept of generative curriculum so to embrace the whole language philosophy in the true sense of the word.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to design and develop a handbook to support elementary whole language teachers for the implementation of a generative curriculum.

The handbook explores the theory of generative curriculum and how it can enhance student and teacher learning. The handbook will challenge the whole language teacher to reflect upon what needs to take place within the classroom. The handbook presented in Chapter IV takes on a question-answer format. More specifically, the handbook includes ideas to generate interest within the classroom, provides ways to connect student interest with
curriculum mandates, and supplies ways to create a natural integration between subject areas, language, and life.

Definition of Terms

**Whole language** is a curricula that keeps language whole and in the context of its thoughtful use in real situation (Routman, 1988).

**Generative curriculum** is a creative, intuitive curriculum that evolves by way of the children's inquiries, questions, and interests.

**Literature circles** are small, temporary discussion groups of students who have chosen to read the same piece of literature.

**Theme cycles**, otherwise known as theme immersions are comprehensive in-depth studies that have been collaboratively developed by the teacher and the students based on the investigations of generative curriculum. From these broad themes, students create sub-themes to pursue for further investigation.

**Theme units** are predetermined topics selected by the teacher or dictated by the districts curriculum used to teach a specific subject or skill.

Limitations

This handbook was designed for use by K-6 grades; it would not be
conducive to secondary students. The handbook was not intended to be a step by step book for teachers. It is for whole language teachers who would like to understand generative curriculum, and approach their district's curriculum in a more meaningful way.

Significance of the Project

The significance of this project, specifically the handbook, will allow whole language teachers to reflect upon their current teaching strategies. It is the writer's hope that this will encourage whole language teachers to engage in the generative curriculum thus making the educational experiences as authentic as possible.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As educators, it would seem that our goal in education would be to approach learning so that each student would make authentic connections between their activities in the classroom and the real world. Whole language focuses on the fact that children's learning needs to be reality-based rather than abstract. It also believes that language is used for real purposes; to solve real problems, to explain, to communicate, and to understand. Whole language philosophy reminds educators to start where the child is developmentally. However, after reflecting upon the author's own whole language teaching strategies and observing other whole language teachers, the author began to question the approaches being used in the whole language classrooms. When there are preplanned, imposed themes in which the child has no voice or choice, we are not taking into account the needs, wants, or interests of each child. Prepackaged units that center around a narrow theme do not allow students to engage in meaningful pursuits that resemble the real world. As educators we must constantly reflect on our practices and approaches and ask ourselves, "Is this what's best for this group of students?" "Do the students have a choice in what they are learning?" "Are the learners fully engaged in a meaningful learning process?" After reviewing the literature with these questions in mind, the author organized this chapter into three sections which focus on generative curriculum. They are: the characteristics of generative curriculum, the benefits of generative curriculum, and the implementation of a generative curriculum.
Characteristics of a Generative Curriculum

To fully engage in the whole language philosophy, many researchers suggest generative curriculum or theme immersions. The generative curriculum is not a prescribed curriculum but a creative, intuitive curriculum that evolves by way of the children's inquiries, questions, and interests (Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994). The generative curriculum takes on an approach which is consistent with the theory and practice of whole language. However, a generative curriculum distinguishes itself from a traditional thematic unit or an integrated curriculum in a number of ways.

In a generative curriculum the learning is characterized as purposeful and meaningful. Generative curriculum is not a specific unit predetermined by a teacher or curriculum guide. Instead broad issues or themes evolve from the interests and curiosities of the students. Many times the theme cycle stems from social issues and causes that the students feel personal about which go beyond the "textbook" knowledge. Instead of focusing on skills or facts in specific subject areas determined by the curriculum guide then using a topic unit to teach the skills, students and teacher investigate a theme which can lead to many different disciplines. Worksheets, textbooks, and activities are not at the heart of a generative curriculum, but concerns itself with the genuine learning process. Specific skills develop naturally as a result of the exploration and immersion of a particular theme cycle (Manning and Manning, 1991).

The teacher and the student share responsibility in a generative curriculum. In many thematic units, the teacher is responsible for planning and organizing materials. Yet because the generative curriculum is to be purposeful and meaningful, most theme cycles are negotiated rather than
teacher oriented. Teachers must take a hands-off approach and resist efforts to plan the theme immersions in advance. In theme immersions the students and teacher take on a team-like approach in sharing the responsibilities of planning and carrying out the learning. The teacher should become the facilitator and encourager.

The generative curriculum has three basic strands of learning (Cordeiro and Fisher, 1994). Within the month long theme cycle in which the whole class is immersed in, mini-topics also arise. These are small 1-2 day units which have branched off from the broad theme. Incidental learning takes place at anytime throughout the course of the day. Most incidental learning is not planned but is based on mutual interest or happenstance. Cordeiro (1994) writes referring to her classroom research of generative curriculum: "During the longer theme study, other unrelated mini-studies and incidental learning were generated, but a surprising number of them arose from our sustained interest in the theme". The beginnings of each theme immersion is characterized by questions, current issues, and problems which lead to learning experiences. Then new information leads to new issues, more problems and questions. The cycle continues in a collaborative effort between learners.

Benefits of a Generative Curriculum

Engaging in generative curriculum is beneficial because it can improve student achievement. "Students develop in depth understandings of topics rather than surface learning that often results from reading a single text. They learn how to learn. They learn how to research questions. They engage in purposeful reading and writing" (Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994).
Their learning is not imposed upon them by an external source instead their knowledge develops from within thus improving learning. Students have opportunities to explore, pretend, demonstrate, teach, respond, and use new knowledge. Whole language upholds that this is the best way to learn.

Problem solving and decision making are part of the curriculum and are seen as essential elements in every learning experience (Cordeiro, 1990). A generative curriculum allows for the critical thinking process to take place especially when the students are convincing or defending their own point of view. Discussing, listening, and sharing is promoted which leads to active learning within the theme immersions. This type of democratic classroom naturally leads to the higher level thinking.

Another advantage of generative curriculum is that it increases students' motivation through authentic learning. Paris and Turner gathered data within several classroom that were task oriented. The open-task were tasks that the children were in control of both the products and the process of learning. The closed tasks were directed and decided upon by the teacher. The major finding of the study was that the most reliable indicator of motivation was the actual daily tasks that provided opportunities for students to use real reading and writing for authentic purposes. Paris and Turner (1995) summarized that there are six influences that have an effect on student motivation. They are student choice, student control, collaboration, challenging material, constructive comprehension (making meaning through reading and writing), and that the consequences of open activities promote feelings of competence and efficacy. All of these features are found in the generative curriculum classroom. Generative curriculum goes beneath the surface of classroom topics and units. The learning is connected
to life which makes for meaningful and genuine experiences. When students have a choice and a voice in what they want to learn and how they would like to proceed in the learning, it motivates and provides ownership in the educational process. Students who participated in a generative theme cycle were interviewed by Penny Oldfather, assistant professor at The University of Georgia, who noted that students said that having a choice in the course of study and how to pursue it was one of the main reasons they felt so motivated to learn (Oldfather, 1993). When the learning is real and meaningful the motivation comes from within.

Not only do the students benefit from generative curriculum but the teachers also benefit by taking the role of a learner. In devising such learning and teaching strategies as problem-based thematic instruction, teachers are striving to give their students and themselves meaningful experiences. Teachers of a generative classroom view themselves as learners and researchers. A generative curriculum-type teacher does not view the students as empty vessels waiting to be filled. "In a generative curriculum, teachers realize that they don't just assign tasks and dispense information; they support students as they explore answers to their own questions" (Manning and Manning, 1991). Teachers who are involved in theme immersions usually want and need opportunities to share with other teachers. As noted in many of the texts the author read as well as the first-hand experiences of a generative curriculum with co-teacher, Terri Evick, the author believes that the professional support and sharing is beneficial to the teacher's own growth process. The more sharing that took place, the more ideas evolved. Further sharing led to stepping back and taking a hard look at teaching styles, philosophies, and processes.
Generative curriculum leads to authentic uses of literacy - reading, writing, speaking, and listening. A read aloud book can open up a whole discussion on a social issue or current topic. From this common theme other pieces of literature may be investigated. Using meaningful literature enhances the link that leads to significant discussions, writings and storytellings as well. The students eventually develop a frame of reference for literature, making connections to real life issues (Daniels, 1994). Gaining and expressing knowledge through reading, writing, speaking, and listening leads to a deeper understanding of the world and allows for interpersonal interactions to take place.

Generative curriculum allows for students needs and wants to be met and knowledge expressed in a variety of ways. Students may become interested in a specific theme for entirely different reasons. The children can gain information and knowledge through many various avenues. The same students may construct and express knowledge through more than one form of expression. As teachers observe students expressing their knowledge in different ways, they are better able to evaluate students' thinking and to use this information to support further learning (Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994).

Effective Implementation of Generative Curriculum

To effectively implement generative curriculum, an attitude of community of learners must be present. "Abandon the assumption that children know nothing, or that their knowledge is wrong, or irrelevant, or something that can be fixed by teachers" (Cutting, 1992). The children as well
as the teacher need to be active participants in the joint development of the theme cycle. Teachers must trust students, and students must have confidence in themselves in the learning, planning, and implementation of a cycle. A teacher who stands up in front of the class providing new knowledge does not allow for the democratic atmosphere.

Implementing a successful generative curriculum must begin with broad concepts. Thematic units develop around topics such as "whales" rather than extensive themes such as "changes in our world." With topics or units, teachers feel the need to integrate all subject areas, but with theme cycles it is essential that ideas that are pursued support or challenge a particular point of view. Forcing subjects together to make connections across the curriculum may not be beneficial. If a unit does not allow inquiry into the real substantial issues of a discipline, it would be better not to integrate (Shanahan, 1995).

Teachers must be completely aware of students' curiosities, inquiries, and interests when implementing a generative curriculum. Surveys, brainstorming, and interest inventories will aid the teacher in getting to know the students needs and wants. Spending time in classroom discussions about social issues will help the teacher become aware of the students' prior knowledge and interests.

The physical environment of the classroom must foster inquiry to generate student interests. The participants within the classroom must feel free to move about freely and with a purpose (Laminack and Lawing, 1994). Regardless of the classroom's physical structure, it is important that teachers work toward having a variety of spaces in the classroom that lends itself to creating, writing, reading, discovering, and discussing.
In order to effectively implement generative curriculum, the teacher must organize the school day into large blocks of time (Manning and Manning, 1991). Providing for a workshop type setting three to four times a week an hour and half each time allows for the children to create, plan, and research, and allows time for the teacher to meet with individuals or small groups. Time spent modeling how to research, interview, explore, and create are essential before and during these large blocks of time. The children need to know the parameters and expectations too. Setting up structures and routines that are predictable during this time allow for the students to move with minimal intervention (Laminack and Lawing, 1994).

Tapping into the communities resources and agencies who are willing to team up with schools will enhance the implementation of generative curriculum. Fourth grade teacher Bob Thompson (1994) realized that he needed provide his students with resources beyond the library sources available to his students. In doing so he noted that the community specialists found ways to make the children's interests come alive and to engage them with concepts that helped the students get a better understanding of the world around them.

To effectively implement student generated theme immersions with the district mandated curriculum, integrate subject areas that connect naturally (Shanahan, 1995). Most curricula can work itself into and through different theme cycles that are generated by the students. One must view the curriculum as not something to cover-instead something that is created (Cordeiro, 1994).

Implementation of a generative curriculum, authentic assessment is the most effective means of evaluation. For successful assessment, Manning,
Manning, and Long suggests that progress checks and 5-7 minute conferences with every individual and/or group should take place once a week (1994). Keeping student files or portfolios which may contain anecdotal notes from the teacher to a student self-evaluation can give information on the learning process. Rubrics, a format of criteria, suggested by Routman, allow for more process-performance-based evaluations rather than product-based. Rubrics can then be translated into traditional letter grades that are mandatory by 90% of the public school systems (1991). These assessment and evaluation tools can be used in joint efforts by the teacher and student which give tremendous insight on the growth, development, and knowledge gained throughout the generative curriculum theme cycle.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Purpose of Project

The author considers herself a whole language teacher. However after years of whole language support groups, classes, and seminars, the author found that many of the themes and units were more appealing to the teacher than the students. The students were not interested in prepackaged themes. The author found herself trying to fit curriculum-mandated skills into any theme. Literature that fit into the unit was used regardless if the students wanted to read it or not. The learning that was taking place was too contrived. The author observed that when learning was spontaneous and child-initiated, a natural integration of all subject areas took place which led to an increase in authentic learning. The author wanted to become more informed about student generated curriculum so that learning and excitement would increase within the classroom.

Effects of Literature Review

Reviewing the literature and journals helped this author understand the intertwining of the philosophies of whole language and student generated curriculum. It gave the author a chance to reflect on her experiences as a whole language teacher and where she needed to develop professionally. The texts supported the philosophy with examples of actual classroom scenarios and vinegettes of teachers who are currently using a generative curriculum. The author interviewed the school district's elementary curriculum coordinator to determine restrictions or mandates. The information collected from the research aided the author in
implementing a six-week generative curriculum within her classroom. Based on the writer's classroom experience and prior research, suggestions of implementation was used to develop the resource manual.

Format and Topics of Manual

The format of the handbook was developed for teachers who view themselves as whole language teachers but want to develop professionally within the classroom. Each section was designed to begin with an introduction to the topic. Under each section, the handbook includes an informative question-answer type format that will help teacher reflect on their present teaching style and respond to their students' current needs.

Specifically, sections I and II was written to introduce the reader to generative curriculum. The author defines the philosophy and definition of generative curriculum. Section I also includes theoretically sound benefits that will enhance student learning. In reading the texts, the author realized that a whole language teacher must empower the learners. This means roles must be reversed in the classroom. The teacher must take the role as the facilitator and the student take responsibility for their learning. Students must see their teacher actively learning. Thus, the development of Section II in the handbook.

Section III focuses on generating ideas and getting to know your students so that themes may be narrowed down to manageable parts. Charts, interest surveys, parent letter, and open-ended assessments can be found in the appendices to aid teachers in meeting their students' needs and wants.

Sections IV and V will aid the teacher in the physical environment of the classroom as well as the structural time line of the day. The author felt
that these sections were extremely important to include. A traditional or structured setting will not be conducive in meeting the students' needs.

Many teachers experience curriculum pressure at the district level to cover every objective and record a grade for every objective in the course of study. Because of this, the last sections of the handbook discuss the teacher's accountability to the district and state mandates while meeting the needs and wants of the students. During the field test, the author evaluated and assessed by observation, discussions, and open-ended reports. Value was placed on individual achievement, looking at the process as well as product. Section VIII includes various options of assessing and evaluating the students' progress.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS
Life in the Classroom

A

Student Generated Curriculum

A Handbook for Teachers
Dear Teachers of Life,

I have found a new challenge for myself once again. As a whole language teacher I find that there is always some new idea or concept worth looking into to better myself or benefit my students. Reflecting back on my teaching career, I can't believe where I've been as a professional. I can't imagine where I'm headed! I have been a firm supporter of the concepts behind whole language for nearly 10 of my 12 years of teaching. I've grown so much and learned from so many professors, colleagues, kids, and professional speakers. I absolutely believe that whole language is the way to go.

In the past 12 years I feel that I have constantly reflected on my teaching approach and style. I am not afraid to change and try new things. About 3 years ago I began to evaluate some important issues that I needed to face within my classroom. I noticed that my students were not motivated by these prepackaged thematic units I was teaching. I also noticed that the students were not taking an active role as learners. The last thing that bothered me was that I the literature based units that I planned and taught seemed contrived and unimportant to the children. All of this hurt because I spent endless hours and money to integrate literature and writing into as many subject areas I could. After all isn't that whole language?

My question was answered quite quickly after a professor had recommended a couple of professional books on generative curriculum. After reading them I immediately felt the need to go full force into the classroom and try it. I didn't however. I first asked myself many questions. I looked at my current approaches and found that some of the things I implemented in the classroom were in fact generative curriculum. Other areas definitely needed change. I am far from perfecting the concept of generative curriculum. I feel that I've learned what the true meaning of the whole language philosophy really is intended to be.

This handbook is for those want to learn more about themselves as a teacher. Whole language teachers may want to reevaluate their current styles and move a step beyond into generative curriculum. The handbook addresses various issues starting with the philosophy to implementation of generative curriculum. The handbook is formatted in a question and answer style. These questions are ones that I asked myself as well as other colleagues. Each chapter is followed by a guided reflection box that has questions or tasks that the reader can reflect upon concerning his/her own teaching style, approach, and beliefs.

It is my hope that you will enjoy the handbook and be able to use it towards your professional journey.

Amy Burns
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At 2:00 p.m. the third graders in my class began working on a unit centered around Native Americans. I instructed, "You have 45 minutes to research your tribe that I have assigned to you. Be sure to include your tribes type of dress, kinds of food they ate, and types of homes they lived in. You may use the encyclopedia or any other pieces of literature. When we are finished you will share the information with the class. You may begin." I noticed a few groans, others got to work quickly, and of course, a few waited for someone else in their group to take the lead. Just as my students were getting on somewhat of a roll, I announced that it was time to clean up and share their information. During this share time, I noticed many of the children were not impressed by the other groups that shared. I'm not too sure if they were impressed with their own reports either. To be honest, in the twenty-five minutes that they shared their information on various tribes, I have to admit 1) I didn't learn much and 2) I too was bored. (That is not a good sign to someone who has 18 years to go in her teaching career).

The next day at 2:00 p.m. I instructed the children that they were to make a mural or a diorama of their particular tribes' village. They would have two 45 minute blocks of time in which to complete the project. After two days of creating time, I was sorely disappointed in the outcome of the projects. In fact, I was embarrassed to display them in the hallway.

That was the end of our ten day unit on Native Americans: On to the next topic. Each new unit began with an introduction of new literature, a plan of action, and a culminating project. Each new unit also ended with disappointment.
As a reflective practitioner, I had to evaluate my teaching style and approach. What could I be doing differently? Why are the students not responding in the way that I want them to respond? After all, I was using all types of literature. I was integrating other subject areas into my themes. My activities seemed to be fun and attractive. I also continued to buy thematic teacher resources to provide fresh ideas for the integrated topics. Surely my students weren't interested in what I had to teach!?

As I continued to reflect on my teaching, there were some conclusions I came to about my approach, style and plans.

I believe in the philosophies of whole language; I consider myself a whole language teacher as do many of my cohorts. However after years of whole language support groups, classes, and seminars, I found myself more involved in themes, activities, and "doing" integration across the curriculum that focused on penguins, Mexico, or a specific piece of literature. Fitting these topics into content areas posed as a constant challenge. Many of the themes and units were more appealing to me than the students. The students were not interested in prepackaged themes. I found myself trying to fit curriculum-mandated skills into any theme. Literature that fit into the unit was used regardless if the students wanted to read it or not. The learning that was taking place was too contrived. The students were not engaged in active learning. This is why my Native American study was a disappointment to me as well as my students.

Another observation I made, which happened more often that I thought, was that when something spontaneous and child-initiated occurred, interest levels peaked and a natural integration of all subject areas took place which led to an increase in authentic learning. When Robbie brought in an
authentic Native American fish hook that he had found in a nearby farmer's field, many inquiries from other students arose out of pure curiosity. However many times this unrehearsed, off-the-cuff learning had been cut short because "we needed to get back on task."

Comparing and contrasting the teacher planned themes that I imposed on my students with the authentic spontaneous inquiries the students had throughout the course of the day, I was driven to read professional literature and discuss my dilemma with colleagues and university professors. Professional literature that supports whole language offers a recommendation to whole language teachers who are wanting to go beyond thematic units. It is named generative curriculum or theme cycles.
Section I

Understanding Generative Curriculum

What is Generative Curriculum?

Generative curriculum is not a prescribed curriculum but a creative, intuitive curriculum that evolves by way of the children's inquiries, questions, and interests. I believe it is a step beyond what many teachers consider a holistic or whole language approach. Generative curriculum is a very natural way to learn. It's life in the classroom. Generative curriculum allows students to pursue their own interests by way of inquiries and allows the teacher to facilitate the interests as well as help meet the individual needs each child has. In a generative curriculum the learning is characterized as purposeful and meaningful. Many times the theme cycle stems from social issues and causes that the students feel personal about which go beyond the "textbook" knowledge. Instead of focusing on skills or facts in specific subject areas predetermined by the curriculum guide and using appealing topics to teach the skills, the generative curriculum invites students and teacher to investigate a theme or sub-themes which can lead to many different disciplines. Worksheets, textbooks, and activities are not at the heart of a generative curriculum, but concerns itself with the genuine learning process. Specific skills develop and are taught naturally as a result of the exploration and immersion of a particular theme cycle (Manning and Manning, 1991).

Is this like inquiry-based or discovery learning?

In most cases it is. Discovery learning is a teaching process that
encourages students to discover a fact or principle. The teacher can guide the students to obtain new knowledge or the students can discover knowledge themselves. Inquiry-based learning is also part of generative curriculum because it encourages students to investigate or explore by problem posing and problem solving. When students inquire about a particular concept in a generative classroom, they reason, infer, and experiment to learn about the concept they are interested in. Discovery and inquiry-based learning is a method of teaching characteristic of generative curriculum. If you have 27 students in a generative class not all students will be wanting to learn about the same concepts. These types of methods need to be in place for the student generative curriculum to work well.

Isn't generative curriculum the same as thematic units?

Not at all. When a teacher uses a thematic unit or topic study, he/she chooses the topic, the process in which the learners will achieve the mastery, the literature that will be used, and the outcomes. The teacher preplans and directs most activities. The content in these traditional units, such as animals, are based on the teacher's goals or district curriculum, and the themes such as "whales," are used to teach specific subjects and skills. Teachers teach by tying activities to specific objectives in which the curriculum become a grab bag of activities. Memorizing whale spelling words, measuring a whale out on the playground for math, and reading all whale books become meaningless and contrived to most students. This is not to say that is not fun to teach and that all children do not respond positively about this method of teaching. Yet I'm not sure how much learning is truly internalized for a lifetime. And since it is the teacher who spends endless hours planning these creative lessons to get
a point across, we go home wiped out. Many of the thematic units are limited and absolute. Why do we feel so compelled to teach a two week unit on whales when the prescribed curriculum may ask us to investigate all endangered species?

Theme immersions or generative curriculum is student-oriented and topic negotiated. The students share in the responsibility of planning and organizing. Many of the theme immersions are broader social issues that we all deal with such as civil rights or changes. The generative curriculum allows for authentic uses of literacy, genuine learning experiences, and collaboration between teacher-student and student-student. The students engage in problem posing (instead of thematic teaching in which the teacher poses the problems and students try to solve them) using reading and writing as tools for researching their significant inquiries. Sometimes the learning naturally integrates other subject areas although integration is not required. As the sharing of this new knowledge takes place, more inquiries and problem posing about new themes begins to emerge. And the cycle continues.

Major differences between thematic teaching and generative curriculum is that in a prescribed or mandated curriculum the content is eventually broken down into memorized facts, isolated skills, and concepts. On the contrary, generative curriculum looks at concepts or ideals by inquiries. Everyone may have a different perspective about a set of questions. As questions get answered more inquiries emerge. This leads to a deeper understanding of the world. Another difference is that the thematic topics, even though they are integrated throughout the curriculum, are taught as autonomous pieces.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Selection</th>
<th>Traditional Units</th>
<th>Generative Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected by Teacher or dictated by the curriculum</td>
<td>Negotiated between teacher and student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Designated by topic: (animals, weather, soil erosion)</td>
<td>Focuses on broad issues (endangered species, homelessness, civil rights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content is pre-selected</td>
<td>Content evolves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>Selected cultures studied at designated period</td>
<td>Integrated into classroom environment and part of all activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>Behaviorism</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>Skills specific to content areas</td>
<td>Skills develop in the process of use as students explore a particular question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Teacher</td>
<td>Determines, plans, and directs most activities</td>
<td>Guides students' learning and serves as member of community: serves as a model learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Activities</td>
<td>Preplanned by the teacher</td>
<td>Self-selected and cooperatively planned by students and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activities not necessarily about content</td>
<td>Activities related to integral aspects of content - No artificial connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chart taken from Theme Immersions, Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994)

It sounds like generated curriculum is basically pulled from the content areas (social studies, science, and health). Is it?

We can't help but be curious and learn about our world. It seems as though many of the inquiries that students generate come from the curiosities around their world which fall into one of the "content"areas. But in everyday life we don't break down our day into segregated units and say "Okay, I'm going to learn about measurement (math) and then later I'll learn
about nutrition (health).” No, in real life we learn to cook correctly by following a recipe. Content areas can derive from prescribed district curriculum. As the teacher keeps in mind the prescribed curriculum that she needs to cover, he/she integrates it into the student-generated needs and wants.

**What are the benefits of a generative curriculum?**

There are several benefits by allowing for generative curriculum to take place within your classroom. Because the students are fully engaged in what they want to learn, they are motivated to read and write and make meaning of their learning. Generative curriculum allows for choices in what each student would want to learn and how they would like to proceed in the learning process. This motivates and provides ownership. When learning is real and meaningful to each child, motivation comes from within.

Generative curriculum lends itself to higher level thinking. It encourages problem posing, problem solving, and decision making. During the learning experiences the students are actively involved in discussing, listening, and sharing ideas. They are convincing, defending, and forming opinions. These elements are essential in and out of the classroom.

Generative curriculum leads to authentic uses of literacy - reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students use these elements to convince, research, investigate, and communicate their learning. If the students are
motivated by what they are learning, they will want to gain and express knowledge to others. All of this leads to a deeper understanding of their world and the interpersonal relationships in it.

Generative curriculum allows for students' needs and wants to be met and knowledge expressed in a variety of ways. Students may become interested in a specific theme for entirely different reasons. The children can gain information and knowledge through many various avenues. The same students may construct and express knowledge through more than one form of expression. As teachers observe students expressing their knowledge in different ways, they are better able to evaluate students' thinking and to use this information to support further learning (Manning, Manning, and Long, 1994).

Because generative curriculum allows for an increase in motivation, authentic uses of literacy, and various learning needs and wants are met, it also improves student achievement. Since their learning is not imposed upon them by an external source, their knowledge develops from within thus improving learning. Students seem to have a deeper understanding of the theme cycles (than just to memorize for a test) because they take ownership in their learning.
Guided Reflections:

Who does the planning in your classroom?

How could you allow for change?

Make a list of areas that you could let go and let the students take over.

What benefits do you see as a whole language teacher?

What are the benefits of teaching thematic units or topics?

What are some downfalls of predetermined topics?

What are three things that frustrate you most with your style of teaching now?
Section II
Empowering Learners

The role of the teacher changes. Not just the day to day jobs that one would traditionally encounter but also the attitude one must carry into the classroom. "Abandon the assumption that children know nothing, or that their knowledge is wrong, or irrelevant, or something that can be fixed by teachers" (Cutting, 1992). The children as well as the teacher need to be active participants in the joint development of the theme cycle. Teachers must trust students, and students must have confidence in themselves in the learning, planning, and implementation of a cycle. A teacher who stands up in front of the class providing new knowledge does not allow for the democratic atmosphere.

So what is my role? Do I do the planning? Who teaches?

The teacher should view himself/herself as a guide and a facilitator. Time allowed for students to share and hear their discoveries, inquiries, and life connections are imperative. At this point it is the role of the teacher to listen. Then, the teacher aids in developing the environments for learning. This is very different from a traditional approaches. Teachers must realize that students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with new information. Teachers must also realize that we are not the only ones who holds curriculum knowledge. Teachers must learn to trust students, trade control for collaboration and resist efforts to plan the theme in advance. Together the students and the teacher should view themselves as co-learners. The students and teacher are both in charge. Collaboratively they decide on broad
themes and materials needed. In the past I started planning my units of study in August. I opened the school year with map skills, geometry, and fairy tales. Somehow I weaved everything together—actually it was forced together. Now I see the benefits of not planning a topic but waiting to see the dynamics of the class. About three weeks into the school year is the time for you and your students to begin negotiating broad themes. Choosing very broad themes that encompasses a number of smaller themes that you know the children will explore or the curriculum mandates can help in scheduling. I believe that the more you trust the students, the more they will take the lead. This is something that will gradually happen over time.

Why should I allow for choices?

Children must be given choices if they are to learn. If topics are assigned, students do not take ownership in the learning process. They complete the task(s) for the teacher instead of themselves. If the teacher allows for the student to be the decision-maker, the child will justify their decisions. Choice is a motivating factor. I informally asked my students, the experts, what was the most interesting, exciting part of the school day. They responded most positively about Reading and Writing Workshop. The reason was evident; each child enjoyed having choices for reading and writing. As one young student said, "I love to learn about the Vietnam War but we really do not study it in third grade. So, in Reading and Writing Workshop, I can choose to read and write about the war, and that makes me happy". When students can choose tasks and texts they are interested in, they expend more effort learning and understanding of the material (Schiefele, 1991).
I am to be a learner as well?

Sure. If you are studying "structures" you might be interested in how your new house or the playground is being constructed. As you discuss your own inquiries and learning, it becomes a model for the students. I model how I learn as I learn. If the students see you researching, creating, and sharing it may become a springboard for a totally different sub-theme. In devising such learning and teaching strategies as problem-based thematic instruction, teachers are striving to give their students and themselves meaningful experiences. Teachers of a generative classroom view themselves as learners and researchers. A generative curriculum-type teacher does not view the students as empty vessels waiting to be filled. "In a generative curriculum, teachers realize that they don't just assign tasks and dispense information; they support students as they explore answers to their own questions" (Manning and Manning, 1991).

Guided Reflections:

Do I learn with my students?

How do my students view me?

What choices do I allow my students to make now?

What are some responsibilities I would like to relinquish?

Is my class a democratic one?
Section III
Generating Interest

Getting to know your children and letting your students become acquainted with one another is very important. This sharing time allows for trust and team building to develop. When each voice is valued a sense of community emerges. I never felt that I took the time to promote this important aspect within my classroom. Because of the sense of community of learners that is present, respect and risk-taking flourish.

How do I know each students interests?

I start the year with several surveys. This helps me understand where each individual was coming from. At times we use graphs which also make me aware of individual and group interests. Interviews that lead to newspaper writings is another way to build a sense of community. Weekly reflections (see appendices) help the child as well as myself focus on prior knowledge, needs, and interests of the students. As we read and listen to various types of literature it seems that we generate our own topics. Many times these topics naturally fall into a prescribed (district mandated) curriculum. As an active listener, you can become more aware of your students interest. When you respond to the surveys or discussions that come from shared readings or conversation, it even makes the child aware of his own interests.

I use Lucy Calkins' concept of living as an author by using Writer's
Notebooks to help me pull out interests too. If we live as authors do, observing, making notes, collecting, and learning from the world, we can begin to understand the world around us. Writer's notebooks are somewhat like journaling. Using meaningful pieces of literature such as Grandad Bill's Song or The Memory Box, we discuss these stories and how they relate to our own lives. After discussing the connections these stories have in our lives, the children go back to their writer's notebooks to write. The students also collect poems or articles which are placed in the notebooks. Many times I find out new information about a child. I point this our during individual conferences and only suggest that this could be a topic to explore. The notebooks provide the students with reflective way of uncovering new topics that they would like to pursue.

Another way to key in on students' interest is share time. Even at the third grade level, I value sharing time. Each child can share something of interest to him once a week. It does not have to do with curricular activities. Lots of dialoguing takes place during this time. Of course, the teacher needs to participate in sharing as it provides modeling for an effective share time.

### Guided Reflection:

How have I generated interest in the past?

**How can I motivate those students who are not "into" the topics that are mandated?**

In 5 minutes make a list of the things you know your students are interested in that are deemed as "outside" the curriculum. How well do you know your students?
Section IV

Changing the Classroom

Imagine wanting to express your knowledge that you've obtained about "structures." You've decided to show the class that the strongest structure is a triangle. You have in your mind what you want to do. However, all materials needed are out of reach and you must ask before you open any cabinets. You are told you must work at your seat. (And by the way, don't make a mess)! It makes one think twice before delving into any type of a project doesn't it? Imagine how comfortable it would be to just kick back and read a historical fiction in your hard plastic chair? How many of us would do this in our own home? How about being told to take the tub of messy earthworms outside because one day of observing is enough? These are the physical changes that need to be made (which require attitudinal changes as well) if you want to be successful with generative curriculum.

What kind of physical changes do I need to make within my classroom?

If you want to empower your students, build trust, transfer responsibility, and have a classroom that encourages creativity and the expression of knowledge, you need to think about changing the physical environment of the class. This will probably mean changing your ideologies about how your classroom should look (see appendices 58-59). I believe it is important that you allow for large work areas. I design spaces for small groups, large groups, quiet groups, and individual space. The whole group area is important because it brings the class together as a community. Items,
agendas, and frustrations are shared here. I feel this encourages social interaction and support. A board or chart is normally nearby so that notes, webbing, mini-lessons, and brainstorming can take place.

Instead of having learning centers that are teacher guided such as file folder games and flash card activities, try to make areas that would allow for discovery learning or practical usage. For example, I have a science area for observing nature and the art center stores many supplies. My writing area are drawers with all types of paper, stencils, staples, book covers, and writing utensils which encourages writing. It also has many student published books. The reading area is filled with all types of books, information and addresses on authors, and a couch and pillows. All of these areas are very comfortable and natural atmospheres so that the learning process can take place.

**What types of materials and supplies do I need?**

The materials that you need are probably in your classroom. The most vital materials you will need is your classroom library. Your classroom needs to be filled with variety quality literature of all levels. Sorting and classifying your classroom library will give children easy access to their wants and needs.

Allow your room to be filled with artifacts, bugs, and animals. This gives the opportunity for exploration and inquiry. Any art supplies will do. All types of paper, paints, boxes, material, etc. can help those who enjoy creating visual media do so. Be sure to have musical instruments and staff paper, tape recorded music, and blank audio and video tapes too. A theater, an art studio, and dress up box will also add to the children's way of expressing their knowledge and help make connections to life. Try plastic
storage tubs where a small group would share pencils, scissors, and other school supplies. This also creates an atmosphere of sharing.

I prefer having tables in my room instead of desks. As certain children with the same interests develop, they can work together at the same table. This also develops a sense of our space versus my space.

Make sure all supplies are accessible to students at anytime. Placing the responsibility back on the students to get out and clean up the supplies are extremely important since it frees the teacher up to do more important tasks.

Guided Reflection:

What is the physical set up of my classroom presently?

Do the students feel free to move about the classroom?

Make a sketch of your room. Could you make some physical changes?

What types of supplies do I have stored away that the children might be able to benefit from if they were more accessible?

Make a list of possible centers you could have in the room that would work regardless of what was being studied.
Section V
Organizing the Day

What about the structure/schedule of the day? There isn't enough time in the day already.

The structure of the day is uniquely different from a traditional classroom. Generative curriculum does not happen from 2:00 to 2:45 p.m. each day. I would suggest a workshop or research time. This time block would need to be approximately 90 minutes which would allow for inquiring, creating, researching, reading, and writing. There are many different ways to set up a schedule (see appendices 60).

You may want to begin by scheduling four basic work times: Reading, Writing, Research, and Math Workshop-allowing for choices and invitations within these blocks of time. If you are a person who is not sure about letting go, start small by allowing for choices within your morning schedule. During this time you may allow for choices in the books the students read and/or write (see section VII). You also may want to begin with the four blocks of teacher directed working time but on one day of the week allow for several options or choices that center around your broad theme. Eventually, you'll find that generally all subjects tend to mesh. However, keep in mind that your schedule should be a well-balanced program that includes time for quiet reflection, reading and writing, interaction, and hands-on exploration. A schedule needs to be predictable so that the students can be prepared to focus. Don't hesitate to adjust the schedule according to your students needs. After
awhile you will find it so natural to blend your reading and writing together into a block of time, and then this will create more time for research or workshop time (formerly known as content area). Math is more difficult to integrate.

There seems to be a lot going on. How do you keep track of each students and their activities?

Before the workshop times begins, meet with you students as a whole group. This time should be set aside almost daily to discuss individual plans. You can get a feel for what each child or group will be working on that day. I personally take a status of the class a couple times a week so that I can keep track of the activities that are taking place through out the week (see appendices 61-62).

When do I teach the curriculum?

Remember the children are teaching themselves in most instances. And, yes, there is time that is set aside for explicit instruction. Group meetings can also be used as a time to demonstrate possibilities of projects or model "how to" when researching a topic or have a direct instruction lesson. The children need to be taught how to research, where to find alternative resources (other than the encyclopedia), how to take notes, and how to do an interview.

The ideal situation in teaching the prescribed curriculum is to have short mini-lessons and one on one conferences while every one else is engaging in workshop time. For example, my class became interested in insects and arachnids. There were many questions that came from our class discussions. As our discussion went on, others asked questions about other
animals, habitats, endangered species, and even humans. At this, I felt it necessary to turn the day into a workshop/research day. As the children went on their way this is what I observed: Readers engaged researching information, students writing questions that they had, others writing information that they already knew, a few student making recordings of their observations at the science table of the arachnids and insects. Three children were debating whether or not a roly poly bug was an insect or an arachnid. A group of boys were measuring the lengths of different worms. What I was amazed with was that everyone was engaged in learning. The block of time was supposed to be reading and writing workshop - yet much more than just reading or writing objectives and procedures were taking place. It was the power of choice.

What about lesson plans? What do they look like?

I've tried different forms. Some are weekly plans, some are daily. It is difficult to write specific plans for the whole class especially when the objectives and interests are diverse. When I give direct instruction I write objectives and procedures. But when the class is involved in workshop time write lesson plans in broader terms. I have also seen a teacher use a student lesson plan form (much like an assignment book) in which each student creates plans based on what he/she needs to do.

Sounds like a busy place. But with all the activities with different goals, how do you communicate to parents about their child?

I prefer to put that responsibility on the students. Every Monday through Friday each child fills out an Assignment Sheet or Student/Teacher
Lesson Plan (see appendices 63). On the front of this sheet are the daily assignments or student-lesson plans that each child accomplished that week. If there are tasks that I assigned and are missing, they are circled. Other plans that the student chose to learn about are on the sheet too. On the back of the assignment sheet is the Weekly Reflection (see appendices 64). The students fill these out on Friday. They are open-ended sentences that help the student reflect on their week and communicate to their parents about the week. They are sent home on Friday to be signed by the parents. They are returned to me the following Monday. It's nice to keep them so that they can be referred back to for progress checks throughout the year. I've had many compliments from parents who like this form of communication. Another form of communication is a teacher composed newsletter every fourth week or so. Newsletters created by the children are excellent ways to communicate too.

Guided Reflections:

How could you reorganize your day?

Since generative curriculum invites students to learn about what they are most interested in, what type of form do you see yourself using to keep track of the many activities or areas of study?

What are some crucial skills that you feel are necessary and require direct instruction before learning can begin?

What are some skills that may not
Guided Reflection continued:

need direct instruction but could be taught "as needed?"

What are some unique ways of communicating to your parents?

Since generative curriculum is to be much like a workshop, compare the workshops you have attended (where you have learned and was beneficial to you) to your classroom now. What are the benefits of a workshop atmosphere?

How could you change your schedule so that it would lend itself to a workshop type approach?
Section VI
Exploring the Curriculum

As a teacher of 12 years it seems that my main concern was covering the prescribed curriculum. No matter what approach one uses, all teachers seem to race against the school calendar to "fit it all in." It always amused me that teachers would spend 2 or 3 weeks on a topic such as "dinosaurs" but only a week on "man's effect on the environment." No wonder we have trouble fitting it all in! There are a couple of ideas that I can suggest which may help with the curriculum mandates versus student generated themes. First find out what the district and state dictates are. Then find commonalities between the generative curriculum that stem from student interest and the mandated district curriculum. Decide on the important prescribed curricula that you think are vital to generative curriculum. For example, most prescribed curriculums include study and research skill as well as requiring students to engage in some form of reading and writing. These are skills, strategies and objectives that concord with generative curriculum.

Am I required to teach every objective out of the district mandated curriculum?

You do need to know what you are expected to teach. A suggestion made by Gary Manning is to study the prescribed curriculum guides in all areas. As you do, jot down the expected topics and note those you want to propose for study as well as those you think students are likely to generate. Many of these topics suggested by the district and the students may have some commonalities around them. If you do this you will begin to see how some
topics and objectives develop into broad themes. These broad themes then could lead into other themes that would cover more mandated curriculum. As the year goes on continue to study the curriculum, keeping in the forefront of your mind the needs and interests of the children. You will find that your students will have studied these mandated objectives in much more depth than if you would have taught them within a narrow unit.

**What if something just doesn't blend into the generative curriculum?**

Manning suggests that you spend very little time on the "unimportant must dos" before moving on to what you and your students deem as important issues. For example, displaying a bulletin board or reading a book about a required topic allows you to cover the curriculum objectives in a short amount of time. This allows you and your students to have larger chunks of time for student selected curriculum.

**How do I know the mandated curriculum is being covered?**

Get to know your mandated curriculum from the inside out. Decide on your broad topics. Check sheets for mandated curriculum and generative curriculum for each child may help you organize your planning. You may want to take 15 minutes at the end of the day to make anecdotal notes on major themes or sub-themes that were touch on that day.
Guided Reflections:

What are the mandates in my curriculum?

What are the major themes across the curriculum?

What are some creative ways to "teach" some of the unimportant "must dos" objectives?

What are some units that you are spending 2 or more weeks on that centers around only one objective in the prescribed curriculum? (Example: a unit on dinosaurs instead of endangered/extinct species)

How do the needs and wants of your students compare and contrast to the mandated curriculum?
Section VII

Integrating Naturally

How do I approach the beginnings of a generative curriculum?

I would suggest that you begin your school year with interests surveys, share times, team-building games, meaningful pieces of literature, writer's notebooks, and other activities that build a sense of community and give you an idea of the interests and needs of the children. This would last about 2-3 weeks. During this time I would begin making charts, brainstorming lists, surveys, webs, and KWL charts too (see appendices 65-70). During these first three weeks you may want to model and explicitly instruct the children on specific skills such as research techniques.

After these weeks of community building have developed, as stated in section, you may feel most comfortable to start in small increments. My first adventure into generative curriculum, without realizing it, was writing workshop.

I do writing workshop in my classroom. How is this like generative curriculum?

If you allow for the students to choose the topics of their stories, you are on your way to a generative curriculum. Look how motivated the children are when you give them the choice to write letters, stories, or poetry. I know my writing workshop could have gone on for hours if I would have let it. When you conference during writing workshop time, I'm sure you point out specific skills and strategies that need to be addressed. This is one-
on-one instruction which fits the need of an individual child. At times mini-
lessons take place so that you can address an issue that you see that the whole
class needs to be instructed on. This is generative curriculum. Think of all
the curricular objectives you fill within writing workshop time!

The writing workshop is a perfect way to begin. After you feel
comfortable with this you may want to consider your reading program. Many
whole language teachers use trade books in their classroom. I did too. As
time went on I realized that I was making the literature choices for the
children. Nevertheless when the students returned from their library, the
books they chose where very different in from what I was choosing for them.
I was amazed at the variety of reading levels and topics. When I evaluated
my trade books that I required my children to read I observed that they fit into
*my* topic study and were basically all on the 3rd grade reading level.

**What about reading and the generative curriculum?**

One year, my colleagues and I decided that our writing workshop was
going so well but reading was not. We compared the writing process to the
reading process and wondered why it could not be patterned in the same
fashion. That summer we ordered small books sets of a variety of topics and
levels. We allowed the students to choose the book they wanted to read and
this formed their particular literature circles for the week or month. My
cohorts decided to hold conferences with the children instead of assigning
ditto sheets for a reading grade. This is another way to gradually move into
generative curriculum.

Now I am at a point of individualizing my reading even more. The
students choose books based on their level and interests. My classroom
library is leveled and I have individual conferences with each child one a week. I am enlightened by the students interests based on the books they chose. When I confer with them I realize how insightful they are. A couple days a week I have literature circle based on Harvy Daniels book A Voice and A Choice: Literature Circles. The concept is based on students choosing their books and discussing it much like one would discuss the weather or a popular movie. So many connections to "life's curriculum" are made. These discussions then develop into inquiries which lead to many of our student-generative studies.

**Where does social studies, science, and health fit in?**

I have set aside a time in my room in which I call research time. This time is just that. As a class we take our broad themes or social issues and explore our inquiries. For example, one of our broad themes was patterns. Some of the sub-themes that came from the student's inquiries and brainstorming list were geometric shapes, number patterns, building structures, patterned poetry, repetitive books, music. Not all students studied these patterns but all made a connection between the different areas of study.

**When does math come into play?**

Math is probably the most difficult to weave into generative curriculum. Math builds on a foundation. I believe it is necessary to have more direct instruction in this area. However, many math concepts can be retaught or extended within the research time. One thing to remember is not to force any given concept into a theme cycle.
Guided Reflections:

How do you see integration throughout the curriculum naturally taking place in your classroom?

As you begin to try generative curriculum, take 30 minutes to walk around the room and make anecdotal notes. After this is completed go through your curriculum. What was the broad theme being covered that fits with the prescribed curriculum?

Be sure to take small steps as you begin. What are the curricula areas in which you could begin the concept of generative curriculum?

Make a list of social issues or concerns. How can these broad themes integrate throughout the curriculum? What kind of inquiries could these issues lead to? How do you see them fitting into the prescribed curriculum?
Assessing

As a whole language teacher I always wrestled with the district mandated grading system and strand report card. I wanted my philosophy and the evaluations to coincide with each other but this was not happening. The district pushed whole language but did not support it through the reporting system. I constantly asked myself how could I give a low-ability student a "D" just because the books he chooses are easy-reader type books? It bothered me because the student was enthusiastic about literature, progressing, comprehending, and puts forth effort. I felt as if I was setting the student up for failure. The report card we are required to use breaks every area into parts and a letter grade is given. This type of evaluation does not give the individuality that the generative curriculum lends itself to. However, professional literature continues to encourage authentic assessment in a whole language and generative curriculum.

What is authentic assessment?

Routman(1988) states that assessment and evaluation are used interchangeably, but they are not the same. Assessment refers to data collection and gathering of evidence. Assessment is only the first step of the evaluation process. Evaluation implies bringing meaning to that data through interpretation, analysis, and reflection. Regardless of what one chooses to use, it needs to be authentic. It needs to be meaningful, natural, and on-going.
What are some benefits of using authentic assessment?

Authentic assessment gives a true picture of the whole child. Authentic assessment is multidimensional, including cognitive, affective, and social processes. Assessment and evaluation give much more insight to the growth and goals achieved. It focuses on the complete process of learning from beginning to end rather than focusing on a culminating project.

It gives the parents and teacher a deeper understanding of the child and his perspective of the learning situation. Authentic assessment captures and capitalizes on the best each student has to offer, rather than focusing or criticizing errors.

Give some examples of assessment tools.

Portfolios, a collection of work, is a way to determine growth. Goal setting and reflections by the student, as well as the teacher, are important parts of portfolios (see appendices 71-72). It is an excellent way to communicate with parent. Conferencing with students over their "in-process" work or completed projects can give insights beyond paper pencil tasks. Observations (see appendices 73) are the most natural and thorough way to learn about a student. All of these can be used as communication tools to the parents.

 Aren't these considered informal assessments? What about official documentation? How can you be accountable for what the students have learned using these tools?

I've always worried about converting my methods of assessing into letter grades to make them more formal. I believe the proper term (instead of
informal assessment) would **informed assessment**. This label conveys respect for the kinds of everyday assessments knowledgeable teachers carry out on a day to day basis. Informed assessments are indeed valid ways of evaluation. The strand report cards that are mandated by school districts do not have to come from one type of system (ie. percentile based tests). The various tools that many whole language experts suggest are legitimate forms of documentation. If a teacher feels the need to use the percentile system try using rubrics (see appendices 74-76). A balance of informed assessments help a generative curriculum teacher with more than enough legitimate documentation.

The key to assessment and evaluation in a generative curriculum is respect in a teacher/student relationship. A teacher needs to earn respect from the students and vice versa. One must let go and move to the role of the facilitator. Trust the students to do their best, to make good choices, and the students will respond to this. The teacher in a generative classroom must trust that the observation and conferences that one has with the children are authentic assessments which will aid in the evaluation process.

Guided Reflections:

*What types of authentic assessments do you use in your classroom?*

*What kinds benefits do you see when assessing authentically?*
Guided Reflection continued:

Try "kid-watching" for 30 minute time period. What did you learn from the children you observed?

Compare and contrast the percentile grading system (strand report) with authentic assessment.
Appendices
Primary Classroom
## Scheduling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Opening Duties/Committee Work Circle and Share Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:20</td>
<td>Read a picture book/discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:25-10:00</td>
<td>Writer's Notebook/Mini-lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Continue with Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:40</td>
<td>Independent Reading/Literature Circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45-12:25</td>
<td>Lunch and Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:15</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15-1:45</td>
<td>Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-3:10</td>
<td>Research Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Opening Duties/Committee Work Circle and Share Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:20</td>
<td>Mini-lessons and status of the class to prepare for research time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20-11:00</td>
<td>Research Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-11:55</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-12:45</td>
<td>Lunch and Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:50-1:10</td>
<td>Read aloud to prepare for writing and reading time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15-2:55</td>
<td>Reading and Writing Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:55-3:10</td>
<td>Share successes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sample Record-keeping for Writing Conferences
### — Status of Class —

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>week of</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>“Apple Bear In The Snow” s.c. vowels aio</td>
<td>“Skiing”</td>
<td>“Gina Coming Over”</td>
<td>To be published</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>“Ice Cream” (Flavors)</td>
<td>“Colors” (Picture book)</td>
<td>“Hearts”</td>
<td>“Rainbows”</td>
<td>“Ice Cream” c.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>“The Cabin”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skiing</td>
<td>g.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>“Julie Going To My House” c.c.* good content</td>
<td>“Everything In The World”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concepts written in **black** are concepts taught during conference. Concepts written in **blue** show that a child is using a concept previously taught, but inconsistently. Concepts written in **red** are mastered and used consistently.

### Suggested Symbols:

- cc: content conference
- sc: skills conference
- ec: editing conference
- gc: group conference
- EV: evaluation conference
- 1D: first draft
- 2D: second draft
- P: publish

---

Jean Mann  
(Adapted with permission from Paula Fleming)  
Society for Developmental Education®  
Northgate, Route 202, P.O. Box 577, Peterborough, NH 03458 (603) 924-9621
Sample use of folder for record-keeping

Books __________________________ (name) __________________________
has written

1. My cabin  9-16
3. Louisiana  10-21
4. Thanksgiving dinner  11-16

Front Cover

Spelling/Vocabulary

too Christmas
to Louisiana
two ocean

Back Cover

Topics __________________________ (name) __________________________
knows much about

1. skiing
2. whales
3. drawing
4. playing piano

Inside Left

Topic list

1. my cabin
2. skiing
3. Louisiana
4. new house
5. poodle

Attach to inside of folder

Inside Right

Things __________________________ (name) __________________________
knows

capitals
periods
quotation marks
ai

Jean Mann
Society for Developmental Education®
Northgate, Route 202, P.O. Box 577, Peterborough, NH 03458 (603) 924-9621
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Pretest and Quickword Handbook</td>
<td>Spelling words in ABC order</td>
<td>Spelling Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading Contract</td>
<td>1. Reading contract</td>
<td>1. Reading contract</td>
<td>1. Reading contract</td>
<td>1. Reading contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Problem Solver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Homework_
Weekly Reflection

Name __________________________________________________

The book I liked the most this week was ____________________________

I liked it because ____________________________________________

In math I learned about ________________________________________

I especially enjoyed __________________________________________

My behavior this week was ______________________________________

I need to work on _____________________________________________

Teacher's Comments:
All assignments were turned in. Yes _____ No _____. (see other side
for missing assignments)
Reading Contract was turned in. Yes _____ No _____
Weekly Reflection was turned in. Yes _____ No _____
Listened and followed directions. Yes _____ No _____
Followed classroom directions. Yes _____ No _____

The following supplies are needed for next week:

__________________________________________________________

Parent Comments:

Parent Signature______________________________________________
# KWL Chart

**Name ____________________**

This is what I already **KNOW** about ____________________.

---

This is what I **WANT** to know about ____________________.

---

This is what I **LEARNED** about ____________________.
The Big Day

The first day of school is now over. You met a lot of new friends and renewed old friendships. How was your first day? Take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Try to answer them the best that you can. If you need more room use the back.

1. How did you feel as you entered your new classroom?

2. What was your biggest worry?

3. What was your biggest surprise?

4. Who did you meet?

5. Describe your classroom.

6. Describe your teacher.

7. What do you think will be most exciting about this new grade?

8. What do you think will be the biggest difference between this school year and last school year?

9. List three goals that you would like to accomplish this year:
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

10. List three questions that you would like to ask your teacher:
    a. 
    b. 
    c. 

1. My full name is ________________________________________________.

2. I was born on ________________________________________________.

3. My favorite subject is _________________________________________.

4. If I could go anywhere in the world, it would be __________________
   ______________________________________________________________.

5. When I grow up I want to ________________________________________.

6. My favorite animal is __________________________________________.

7. A hobby I enjoy is _____________________________________________.

8. My favorite meal is ____________________________________________.

9. The best thing about me is ________________________________________.

10. The next best thing about me is _________________________________
     ______________________________________________________________.

11. I'm really good at ____________________________________________.

12. I think I'd like to improve at _________________________________.

----------------------------------

Stars
Interest Inventory

Name____________________  Grade _________  Date __________

1. If you cannot watch T.V. at home, what would you most like to do? __________

2. If your parents told you could do anything that you wanted to do this weekend, what would you choose? ____________________________

3. What is your favorite subject in school? ____________________________

4. What subject is most difficult? ____________________________

5. If you could learn about anything you wanted to learn about, what would you choose? ____________________________
6. What is your favorite T.V. show?

7. What book or story have you read recently that was really exciting to you?

8. What is the most fun thing to do inside besides watching T.V.?

9. Do you like to do your work best in groups or alone?

10. Would you rather read a book or watch a movie if you have to learn something?

11. Who are your two best friends in this class?
My Reading

Circle your answers.

1. I like to read. yes no maybe

2. I like my parents and teacher to read to me. yes no maybe

3. I have a favorite author. yes no maybe

4. I go to the library. yes no maybe

5. I think reading is important. yes no maybe

6. I have many books of my own. yes no maybe

7. I like to tell others about the books I read. yes no maybe

Draw a picture of your favorite book on the back of this page.
This portfolio is an ongoing collection of ______________'s work. It will be sent home several times a quarter so that parents can review it and share with their child and teacher, their comments and observations about their child and his/her work. Parents may also ask their child to bring this portfolio home any other time that they wish. Please sign and date this form every time you review the portfolio. Do not take any papers out of the portfolio. Papers should be returned to school on Monday.

Parents signature  Date  Comments
Showcase Portfolio Student Reflection Sheet

Name __________________________
Date __________________________

What grade would you give this paper?

Circle One: Very Neat  Neat  ok  Sloppy  Very Sloppy

This is really good because __________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

To make this better I could __________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

I chose this piece to put in my Showcase portfolio because

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________
Kid Watcher Activity

The learning activity I observed was ________________________________.

Name of student(s) ________________________________________________.

Describe what the student(s) were doing ________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What was most interesting to you about this observation?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

kid-watcher ______________________________ date ______________
FOCUS FOR INSTRUCTION
Circle the Descriptors That Best Describe the Reader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**WIDE READING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Often makes inappropriate selections; has difficulty making any selection.</th>
<th>Tends to select short easy books of limited genre or books beyond ability.</th>
<th>Usually makes appropriate book selections; developing personal criteria for selecting books.</th>
<th>Makes appropriate book selections; developing personal criteria for selecting books.</th>
<th>Uses a variety of criteria to select books.</th>
<th>Uses a variety of criteria to select books.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**CONSTRUCTING MEANING / RESPONSE**

| Inability to retell with prompting. | Incomplete retelling; limited discussion of components with prompting. | Adequate retelling; reflects an understanding of the text. | Retelling includes all components. May interpret book critically. Supports views with encouragement. | Effectively structures and organizes retelling; includes all components. Interprets, analyzes, or summarizes story. May critique author or literary purpose. | Effectively structures and organizes retelling; includes all components. Interprets, analyzes, or summarizes story. May critique author or literary purpose. |

**ORAL READING / USE OF STRATEGIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited strategies. Depends heavily on a single cue.</td>
<td>Uses some strategies; not always in an orchestrated flexible manner.</td>
<td>Uses a variety of strategies; at times strategies are observable.</td>
<td>Most of the time strategies are used automatically.</td>
<td>Uses strategies automatically.</td>
<td>Uses strategies automatically.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BEHAVIORS / ATTITUDE / SELF ASSESSMENT**

|---|---|---|---|---|---|
EVALUATION SCALE FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Grade Three

4

A writing sample in this category focuses on the purpose and reflects an awareness of audience. Ideas are clear and fully developed. This paper includes all or most of these characteristics:

• an effective beginning
• sentences that relate to one another
• originality of word choice
• details that enable the reader to visualize or share experiences
• logical development
• correct application of mechanics, grammar, and usage skills appropriate to grade level

3

A writing sample in this category focuses on the purpose and reflects an awareness of audience. Ideas are clear, yet some details are omitted. This paper includes all or most of these characteristics:

• an adequate beginning
• complete sentences: most relate to one another
• clear but not vivid language
• details that add information, yet gaps are evident
• logical development
• generally correct application of mechanics, grammar, and usage skills appropriate to grade level

2

A writing sample in this category responds to the assignment, but lacks clarity and completeness. This paper includes all or most of these characteristics:

• an abrupt or vague beginning
• some incomplete sentences and unrelated thoughts
• dull and repetitive language
• few details
• confused development
• inconsistent application of mechanics, grammar, and usage skills appropriate to grade level

1

A writing sample in this category does not deal with this assignment. Ideas are not clear. This paper includes all or most of these characteristics:

• an abrupt or vague beginning
• incomplete, unrelated thoughts
• dull and repetitive language
• few details
• no logical development
• excessive errors in application of mechanics, grammar, and usage skills appropriate to grade level

9

Student did not address the prompt.

Special Note: A 9/1, 9/2, 9/3, 9/4 may also be given when the student writes, but not about the prompt topic.
KINDERGARTEN - GRADE SIX

Analytic Scoring Scale

Understanding the Problem

0: Complete misunderstanding of the problem
1: Part of the problem misunderstood or misinterpreted
2: Complete understanding of the problem

Planning a Solution

0: No attempt, or totally inappropriate plan
1: Partially correct plan based on part of the problem being interpreted correctly
2: Plan could have led to a correct solution if implemented properly

Getting an Answer

0: No answer, or wrong answer based on an inappropriate plan
1: Copying error; computational error; partial answer for a problem with multiple answers
2: Correct answer and correct label for the answer

Eff. 9/94


CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The motivation for the investigation of a generative curriculum stems from the author’s reflection of her practices in the whole language philosophy.

Many of the traditional ways of organizing classrooms and schools for instruction are being examined (Goswami and Stillman, 1986). Not only should traditional styles be evaluated, but also whole language teachers should carefully reflect on their practice. Three issues that whole language teachers may need to reflect on are: the opinions that teachers hold of themselves, the lack of student choice, and the inadequacy of authentic learning. As a reflective practitioner, the author recognizes that these elements should be established within her own classroom to improve student achievement and mastery teaching.

The purpose of this study was to design and develop a handbook to support elementary whole language teachers for the implementation of a generative curriculum.

In Chapter I of the study, the writer provided the introduction to the project which included the following: background information, purpose of the study, and the limitations of the study. In Chapter II, a review of the literature related to the project was provided. This literature included journal articles and books. Chapter III dealt with the procedures used to create the handbook. In this chapter were sections that included: the reasons that this particular project was chosen, the effects of the literature review, the handbook topics and the format and design of the handbook. Chapter IV
contained the actual manual which was created. The topics covered in the handbook were the philosophies and benefits for a generative curriculum, the materials needed, and instructions and guidance on how to implement the generative curriculum. The format was one of questions and answers with a guided reflection at the end of each section. Also included were surveys, charts, and forms of record keeping and assessments located in the appendices.

**Implications for Practice**

The handbook was developed out of personal/professional search. The author wanted to become more informed about student generated curriculum so that learning and excitement would increase within the classroom. It was also designed to be used as a guide to help whole language teachers reflect on their present practices and encourage them to continue their journey professionally.

In developing the handbook, the researcher kept in mind the many teachers she works with closely. They are at various spectrums of their professional development. Most consider themselves whole language teachers. This handbook would be helpful for various people in the education field. If the guided reflections are answered truthfully and with an open mind, the handbook would be beneficial to them. The manual could also be used by administrators who want to stay informed with current educational practices. The guidebook may also aid parents in answering the questions about student generative curriculum.

The handbook may used in different ways. It could be used to educate
the teacher who is ready for professional growth. The question-answer format is broken down into sections that could be used for a quick reference for the teacher to refer to when an issue arises. It would allow the teacher to become informed and develop a knowledge base. The guided reflections are to be used as a guide for teachers to consider professional development. Hopefully, notes will be made and questions will be answered as the guided reflections ask. The appendices holds some valuable surveys, charts, and forms so that the teacher can use as he/she begins generative curriculum.

Section I will give those who are completely unfamiliar to generative curriculum a background and an understanding to the concept. Sections II will aid in attitudinal changes that are needed to those who want to put the responsibility of learning back on the children. Sections III, IV, and V allows the teacher who is ready to implement generative curriculum. It will help he/she with the physical set up of the room, the scheduling of the day, and the planning of the curriculum. The last three sections address the curriculum, the integration of the curriculum, and the evaluation process of generative curriculum. This would be beneficial to administrators, parents, or teachers.

In conclusion, the handbook explores the theory of generative curriculum and how it can enhance student and teacher learning. The handbook will challenge the whole language teacher to reflect upon what needs to take place within the classroom. More specifically, the handbook includes ideas to generate interest within the classroom, provides ways to connect student interest with curriculum mandates, and supplies ways to create a natural integration between subject areas, language, and life.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


_______. (1994). Interview with third grade student. Lakota School District. West Chester, OH.


