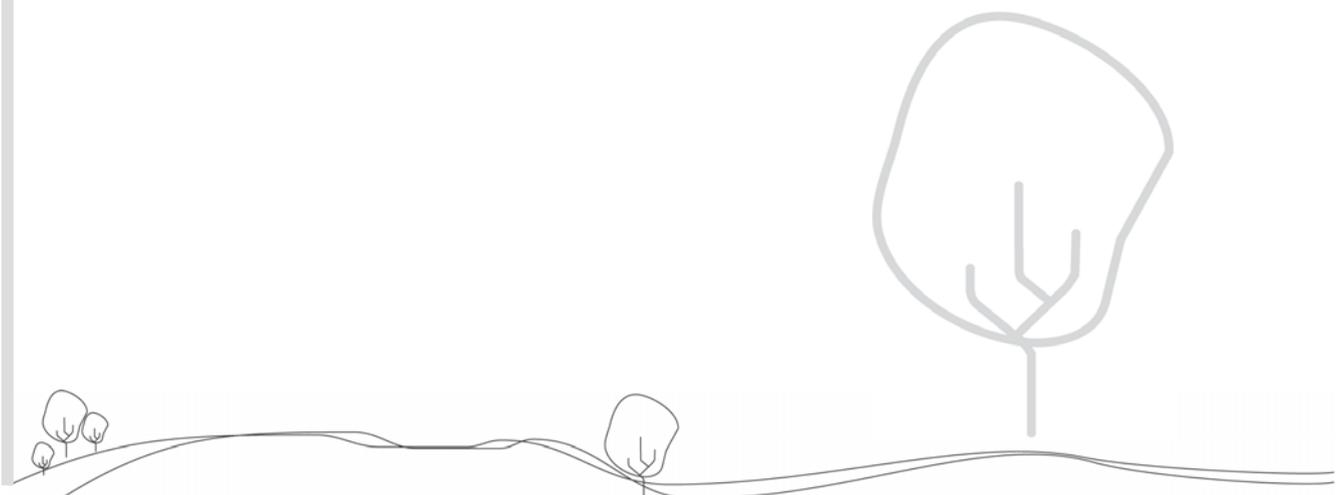




A collaborative self-study into the development and integration of critical literacy practices

Susan Sandretto and the Critical Literacy Research Team

2008



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Teaching and Learning Research Initiative

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Acknowledgements

The Critical Literacy Research Team¹ would like to thank the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) for the opportunity to continue our exploration of the development and implementation of critical literacy strategies that began in 2005. We also wish to thank the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) which administers the TLRI. In particular we wish to acknowledge the support of Sue McDowall, our NZCER research contact, as well as Christina Smits and Robyn Baker.

We are also grateful to the University of Otago for supplemental funding.

Many thanks to Dr Karen Nairn who acted as our research mentor. The research team would also like to thank Document Doctor for the fantastic transcription services of Rachael Brinsdon and her team.

And lastly, but most importantly, the research team would also like to thank the principals, families, and students who participated in and supported this project.

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1. Introduction

This report discusses findings from a two-year Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI)-funded project entitled *A collaborative self-study into the development and integration of critical literacy practices*. During this time, 2006–7, four Dunedin primary schools and one secondary school, involving a total of 16 teachers, took part in the project. The participating teachers became familiar with the literature on the theory and practice of critical literacy and developed, implemented, and evaluated critical literacy strategies in their regular classroom programmes.

Critical literacy has a long history and a number of different theoretical influences (Larson & Marsh, 2005). We use the term “critical literacy” to describe ways in which teachers and students can deconstruct texts (Lankshear, 1994).

The findings of our 2005 research (Sandretto et al., 2006) led us to believe that critical literacy for classroom practice involves supporting students to become aware that:

- texts² are social constructions
- texts are not neutral
- authors draw upon particular discourses³ (often majority discourses) and assume that readers will be able to draw upon them as well
- authors make certain conscious and unconscious choices when constructing texts
- all texts have gaps, or silences, and particular representations within them
- texts have consequences for how we make sense of ourselves, others and the world.

Another important aspect of critical literacy for us is supporting students in making connections between texts and their lived experiences.

² The research team has a broad definition of what counts as a text. Texts are found in written, verbal, digital or multimedia and visual forms. In other words, “A text is a vehicle through which individuals communicate with one another using the codes and conventions of society” (Robinson & Robinson, 2003, p. 3).

³ We use the term “discourse” to refer to “socially constructed and recognised ways of doing and being in the world, which integrate and regulate ways of acting, thinking, feeling, using language, believing and valuing” (Lankshear, 1994, p. 6). For us, the term “discourse” emphasises the power of language and encourages us to focus on the ways in which language works in different contexts.

Teachers and students have particular roles when engaging in the classroom practice of critical literacy. Teachers are responsible for setting up and maintaining a caring and supportive environment where students respect each other's responses and experiences, and can develop greater empathy for others. Teachers are also responsible for modelling a questioning stance towards texts. Students are responsible for contributing to discussions with the understanding that ideas are under consideration, but that critical literacy is not about critiquing people. Teachers are responsible for assisting students to consider multiple interpretations and readings of texts, rather than to search for the one 'right' reading. And finally, teachers are responsible for co-constructing understandings with students by supporting students to develop a meta-language of critical literacy, or a language to talk about critical literacy. (Sandretto & Critical Literacy Research Team, 2006a, pp. 23–24)

The Critical Literacy Research Team argues that critical literacy forms an important part of a multiple literacies, or multiliteracies, view of literacy and literacy teaching. Multiliteracies position reading as “a social practice” (Luke, 1995, p. 97), rather than “simply the ability to read and write” (Walter, 1999, p. 31). A number of educationalists have highlighted the “new times” we are preparing students for (Gee, 2000). We believe that in order to be successful global citizens in our rapidly changing world, students will need to develop a “repertoire of practices” (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 3) to engage with texts. The Four Resources Model by Luke and Freebody (1999) provides a framework for the “repertoire of practices” that students need to develop. This model suggests that the repertoire of practices that students need to acquire includes: code breaker, text participant or meaning maker, text user and text analyst (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Education Queensland, 2000; Luke & Freebody, 1999). Code breaker refers to the practices readers use to break the codes and systems of written, spoken, visual and multimodal texts. Text participant relates to the ability of readers to make meaning from texts. Text user represents the practices of using texts effectively in everyday situations. And, lastly, text analyst emphasises that texts are not neutral and signifies the practices of analysing texts.

Making meaning, or reading comprehension, in its most general sense can be described as the construction of meaning through purposeful interactions between readers and texts (Caygill & Chamberlain, 2004; National Reading Panel, 2000). Reading comprehension involves multiple processes including the retrieval of information, making inferences, the interpretation and integration of ideas and information, and the examination and evaluation of various elements of texts (Caygill & Chamberlain, 2004).

In developing critical literacy strategies, this research project focused on the fourth process of reading comprehension: “The process of examining and evaluating content, language and textual elements requires the students to move from constructing meaning to critically considering the text itself” (Caygill & Chamberlain, 2004, p. 5, emphasis added). Thinking critically “involves reading and writing beyond a literal, factual level. It involves analysing meanings, responding critically to texts when reading . . . It also involves responding to texts at a personal level” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 24). This process of reading comprehension also requires that students “use their own background knowledge and experience to critically evaluate the text” (Caygill & Chamberlain, 2004, p. 5), an important aspect of the research team's definition of

critical literacy (see below for full description). Ministry of Education documents also call for students to “reflect on the different social assumptions, judgements, and beliefs which are embedded in texts” ((1994, p. 12), an important aspect of examining and evaluating texts.

Although these descriptions encourage teachers to move students beyond literal and factual levels, teachers have been given little guidance on how to engage students critically with texts and how to move them beyond conventional practices that have failed many students (Comber & Kamler, 2004). This research project sought to address this gap between theory and practice.

2. Aims and objectives of the research

During the course of the research project, the participating teachers developed and implemented critical literacy strategies for guided reading (Phase 1 [P1], 2006, primary), integrated curriculum (Phase 2 [P2], 2006 and 2007, primary) and the secondary English classroom (P1, 2007).

Both the participating primary and secondary teachers sought to weave critical literacy strategies into their regular classroom practice, rather than to develop special critical literacy units of work. In this way the teachers and students became more adept at working with the strategies, as well as seeing the application of the strategies across curricular areas and texts (see Findings).

The research sought to:

1. enhance the understandings and practices of critical literacy for the participating teachers
2. support students in selected classes across four primary schools (and one secondary) to develop multiple strategies of accessing and interpreting texts
3. document the implementation of critical literacy strategies into regular guided reading lessons (P1) and across the curriculum through curriculum integration (P2) (Beane, 1997)
4. involve focus groups of students in stimulated recall interviews (SRIs) commenting on a lesson using critical literacy strategies
5. collect data to chart growth of reading comprehension and reading achievement in relevant curricular areas
6. produce collaboratively theorised reports of the research process and findings to share with audiences of both researchers and teachers
7. inform the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) programme at the University of Otago
8. elaborate on future research directions.

Research questions

This project investigated the following research questions with regard to the development and implementation of critical literacy strategies, changes in students' reading achievement (more broadly) and reading comprehension (more specifically), and the research process.

1. What critical literacy strategies can be most effectively integrated within guided reading lessons and across curriculum areas in the New Zealand context?
2. What changes were evident in students' comprehension of texts?
3. In what ways was the reading achievement of students enhanced?
4. What forms of assessment enabled the team to chart student growth of critical literacy skills?

5. What changes were found in students' ability to relate texts to their lives?
6. How did the research process support teachers to become more effective in implementing critical literacy strategies?
7. In what ways are the research capabilities of the participating teachers enhanced?

3. Research design

Overview

The research design for this project was based on the design of the 2005 pilot project (Sandretto et al., 2006). Both the pilot project and the research reported here consisted of a supported, collaborative self-study utilising a range of qualitative data collection protocols (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004). As detailed in Tables 1–3, the research design involves collaborative working sessions and a range of data gathering methods.

Collaborative working sessions

Teacher release time allowed for the development and implementation of selected critical literacy strategies and collaborative data analysis, theorising and writing. As demonstrated in the 2005 project, we found that the working days were an integral component of the research design. The largest budget item funded teacher release days that allowed the teachers to engage in collaborative:

- discussions of critical literacy strategies and the research literature
- data analysis, using a theoretical framework developed by the research team, of the videotaped lessons and audiotaped stimulated recall interviews (SRIs) (Wear & Harris, 1994)
- examinations of pre- and post-intervention data collected on student comprehension
- theorising of results
- drafting of reports and conference presentations.

At the end of the project the teachers evaluated the research process and design, made recommendations for future research, and chronicled the benefits and challenges of participation in teacher research (see Findings).

A range of data gathering methods

The range of data gathering methods documented the research process and provided evidence of the outcomes of the research (Table 3). These included videotaped teaching episodes, stimulated recall interviews with student focus groups, audiotaped interviews with teachers, and resources to gather information on student comprehension and academic achievement. The multiple data sources across time enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

Phase 1: Pre-intervention data was collected from all students through methods the teachers commonly used to gauge reading comprehension—for junior primary students this consisted of running records data; for senior primary students this consisted of STAR data, and for secondary students this consisted of asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) data. For the Phase 1 primary teachers, the same small group from each teacher was observed and videotaped due to the size of the project, although the teacher implemented critical literacy strategies with all students. For the Phase 1 secondary teachers, whole-class lessons were videotaped. Four lessons per teacher were videotaped during the course of the research (Table 1). In 2006, one lesson was followed by an audiotaped SRI which gives students an opportunity to comment on ways in which particular critical literacy strategies helped them engage with the texts in more personal and questioning ways, as well as indicate which strategies helped them better understand the texts, and make suggestions on ways that the teachers could further enhance their learning. The use of SRIs with student focus groups represented an innovative method in literacy research (Knobel & Lankshear, 1999). After reviewing this practice at the end of 2006, the research team decided to conduct an SRI after each lesson in 2007. Transcripts of the lessons and SRIs were produced (see Appendices 1–3 for lists of the transcripts).

Post-intervention data was collected to document the reading comprehension of all students following the methods used at the onset of the project.

Phase 2: Three integrated lessons per teacher were videotaped during the course of the research (Table 2). Each videotaped lesson was followed with an audiotaped focus-group SRI. Transcripts of these lessons and SRIs were produced (see Appendices 1–3 for lists of the transcripts).

Table 1 **Timeline Phase 1**

Term One	Term Two	Term Three	Term Four
Two-day working session for: individual interviews with teachers engagement with literature development of teaching strategies	Teachers begin to implement critical literacy (CL) strategies within guided reading lessons (primary) with <i>all</i> students	Teachers released for two days to: collaboratively analyse Term Two videos examine pre-implementation data on student comprehension finalise data collection for remainder of research	Teachers released for four days to: complete analysis of Term Three videos examine pre- and post-implementation data on student comprehension theorise results draft reports of results
Pre-implementation data collected on <i>all</i> students' reading comprehension	Researcher visits support implementation of CL practices	Researcher visits support implementation of CL practices	Teachers released for one day to: discuss research process and product
1 videotaped guided reading lesson per teacher with focus group	1 videotaped guided reading lesson with CL strand per teacher with focus group	2 videotaped guided reading lessons with CL strand per teacher with focus groups	
Student focus groups complete stimulated recall interviews (2007 after each lesson)	Student focus groups complete stimulated recall interviews	Student focus groups complete stimulated recall interviews	
Two-day working session for: analysis of lessons selection of teaching strategies integration into long-term planning	Two-day session consisting of: analysis of lessons selection of teaching strategies integration into long-term planning	Post-implementation data collected on <i>all</i> students' reading comprehension	

Table 2 **Timeline Phase 2**

Term One	Term Two	Term Three	Term Four
<p>Two-day working session for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual interviews with teachers • selection of texts • planning to integrate CL strategies within social studies 	<p>Teachers implement CL strategies through one integrated unit</p> <p>Researchers visit participating teachers regularly to assist with implementation of CL practices</p>	<p>Teachers implement CL strategies through one integrated unit</p> <p>Researchers visit participating teachers regularly to assist with implementation of CL practices</p>	<p>Four release days to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse videotaped lessons and stimulated recall interviews • theorise results • discuss research process and product • draft reports of results
<p>1 videotaped social studies lesson—whole class</p>	<p>1 videotaped lesson—whole class</p>	<p>1 videotaped lesson—whole class</p>	
<p>1 audiotaped student focus group stimulated recall interview</p>	<p>1 audiotaped student focus group stimulated recall interview</p>	<p>1 audiotaped student focus group stimulated recall interview</p>	
<p>Two-day session to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse videotaped lessons and stimulated recall interviews • plan integration within long-term planning 	<p>Two-day session to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse videotaped lessons and stimulated recall interviews • plan integration within long-term planning 		

Table 3 **Research questions and associated data sources**

Research question	Data source
1. What critical literacy strategies can be most effectively integrated within guided reading lessons and across curriculum areas in the New Zealand context?	Scrapbooks/learning logs Videotaped lessons (transcripts) Researcher journals Audiotaped discussions of research team working days
2. What changes were evident in students' comprehension of texts	Pre- and post-intervention measures of reading comprehension (Running records, STAR, asTTle) Scrapbooks/learning logs Videotaped lessons Stimulated recall interviews (?)
3. In what ways was the reading achievement of students enhanced?	Pre- and post-intervention measures of reading comprehension Scrapbooks/learning logs Videotaped lessons Stimulated recall interviews
4. What forms of assessment enabled the team to chart student growth of critical literacy skills?	Audiotaped discussions of research team working days Outcome: Draft critical literacy rubric
5. What changes were found in students' ability to relate texts to their lives?	Pre- and post-intervention measures of reading comprehension (Running records, STAR, asTTle) Scrapbooks/learning logs Videotaped lessons Stimulated recall interviews
6. How did the research process support teachers to become more effective in implementing critical literacy strategies?	Initial and final peer interviews (participating teachers) Audiotaped discussions of research team working days
7. In what ways are the research capabilities of the participating teachers enhanced?	Initial and final peer interviews (participating teachers) Audiotaped discussions of research team working days

Relationship development

This project used the same methods to build and maintain relationships as the 2005 pilot project (see Sandretto, 2006; Sandretto et al., 2006). In addition, the two schools and three of the four participating teachers from the pilot project were involved in this project, so we were able to build upon the solid relationships that were established in 2005.

Parent information meetings were held at each school early in Term One. While these meetings were primarily part of the ethical consent process for the project, they also served an important

function in establishing relationships with parents and whanau/family at each school. A babysitter was provided free of charge to look after children so that more parents might be supported to attend. While few parents elected to use this service, the research team has continued the practice each year. In addition, we provided light snacks. The parent information evenings provided a venue for parents to come and meet the researchers, find out about their child's potential involvement in the project, and ask questions. An average of nine parents attended each meeting.

An important aspect of the research design, which also enhanced the development and maintenance of relationships, were the research team working days. Typically these days were held in a seminar room close to the university. The project provided morning tea and lunch. The seminar room was comfortable and held all the equipment that the research team needed to do the work together. The food was delicious and the coffee plentiful. These creature comforts contributed to create an atmosphere conducive to focusing on the work.

Ethical issues

Following the ethical procedures used in the 2005 research, the researcher sought ethical approval through a comprehensive approval process from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. We received ethical approval in November of 2005 (reference number 05/182). One advantage of having notice of the award of the TLRI before the end of 2005 was that we could complete the University's ethical approval process before the onset of the project in January 2006 and be ready to begin the research at the beginning of the school year.

A paramount concern in conducting practitioner research is the protection of the rights of the participating teachers, their students, and the students' families. These rights include issues of respect, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the research at any time. This research seeks to attend to these issues by implementing a "graduated process" (Clayton [Missouri] Research Review Team et al., 2001, p. 53) of informed consent for all involved to provide multiple opportunities for all participants to ask questions and clarify the roles, purposes and outcomes of the research. We initiated the research project by gaining informed consent from the participating teachers. To complement the informed consent process, the participating teachers have signed a Partnership Agreement (Appendix D) which further outlined their roles as both teachers who are submitting their professional practice to examination, and as co-researchers who are analysing that practice and disseminating the results. It is important in any practitioner research project to have regular and explicit discussions about everyone's roles and responsibilities.

A parent information night was held at each school where the researchers and participating teachers described the project and invited discussion and questions. These information nights provided an opportunity for the researcher to initiate the development of relationships with the

students and their parent(s) or guardians who would be involved in the research (see previous section). Free babysitting services were offered to support greater attendance.

After the parent information night, the participating teachers spoke with their students, provided them with the student information and consent forms, described the project, and provided them with opportunities to ask questions and discuss the project (David, Edwards, & Alldred, 2001). Students and their parent(s) or guardians (Valentine, 1999) would be asked to give informed consent for:

- general participation in the project where the students will participate in lessons using a critical literacy focus and provide pre and post-intervention data on reading comprehension (P1)
- general participation in the project where students will be videotaped in whole class lessons involving a critical literacy focus and provide data on academic achievement (P2 primary and P1 secondary)
- specific participation in the project where small groups of students will be videotaped during guided reading lessons, and will complete an audiotaped stimulated recall interview commenting on one guided reading lesson with a critical literacy focus (P1); or, participate in focus-group, audiotaped, stimulated recall interviews following whole-class videotaped lessons (P2); only the research team will have access to the videotaped lessons.

During the preparation of findings for subsequent conference presentation and publication the research team will take into consideration issues of confidentiality. We are aware that due to the co-authoring of results, it will be difficult to ensure the confidentiality of participating students. Therefore the team will be particularly attentive to issues of representation (see Bishop, 1996). Copies of all research outputs have been made available to participating schools, students, and families.

4. Findings

Introduction: Student understandings of critical literacy

Building on the findings from the 2005 project, we began by revising our understanding of critical literacy. While we have not changed the adult “definition”⁴ of critical literacy (see Introduction), we have altered the student poster used for teaching (see Figure 1). This adjustment was constructed via negotiated dialogue between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 groups during working days and as a result of their experiences of working with the 2005 definition, as well as the discussions surrounding working day readings and video analysis.

We sought to enhance student understandings of critical literacy by more explicit teaching of the metalanguage of critical literacy, an important finding of the 2005 project. We found the SRIs useful in illuminating students’ understandings of critical literacy. In the stimulated recall interviews students increasingly were able to articulate their understandings of the aims and objectives of critical literacy.

A number of students demonstrated the understanding that critical literacy was about stating and supporting their opinion:

Student: Everyone comes in with their own opinion, so everyone looks at it in a different way . . .

Student: All you have to do is justify, and state your opinion and it’s not right or wrong until you’ve justified it. (StimRecall_P_22_05_07, pp. 4–5)

Students also stated that by expressing their own opinion and listening to the opinion of their classmates they were able to broaden their thinking:

Student: It helps to see different views of the same thing. Like different people see one thing in a different light.

Student: . . .you know the other ways that the other people see it so you . . . understand the other ways of seeing something. (StimRecall_W_11_09_07, p. 2)

⁴ We are hesitant to use the term “definition” when discussing our understanding of critical literacy as we do not wish to imply that it is static. We believe it is important to continually revisit any understanding of critical literacy and be prepared to revise it to suit local needs and contexts.

Figure 1 Student Poster



- People make choices about who and/or what is included, so
- Some things and/or people may be excluded
- Choices are made about how things and/or people are represented

- All readers have different knowledge and experiences that they bring to texts
- Readers will make sense of texts differently



So what?

We can develop an awareness of how texts influence our thoughts and actions



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Student: We were thinking about different points of view from Mrs Rennie's idea and the other people's ideas and we made up our other ideas. (StimRecall_E_1_05_07, p. 4)

Student: 'cause some people might have like thousands of answers to thinking what this text means. Some people have like different opinions, different answers, different viewpoints. (StimRecall_H_23_07_07, p. 6)

Student: But if you're looking at it closer, you can kind of get opinions and new ideas of the book and things that you'd never really notice, because of critical literacy. (StimRecall_T_20_09_07, p. 3)

Students noted that the critical literacy lessons enabled them to focus on representation in texts:

Student: You see how people are represented. (StimRecall_T_26_07_07, p. 1)

Student: Yeah, or like people are represented, like if a brown person read about that Maori were badly represented, you might see the stereotype. (StimRecall_R_30_03_06, p. 3)

In other stimulated recall interviews the student focus groups highlighted a number of features of the poster, that is, the role of the author in constructing texts, what the reader brings to texts, and how s/he makes meaning from it:

Researcher: So what does critical literacy mean to you?

Student: I think it's like not just reading the text but understanding the text.

Student: Same. Yeah, just understanding the text a bit more and going a bit deeper than just what we read. Thinking about it and stuff . . .

Student: Something that portrays an idea or an opinion or . . . inform someone maybe . . .

Student: . . . so we can think more about the text and see what we bring to the text . . . what we know about . . . what the text is about and stuff . . .

Student: Learning to go further than just reading a book or something. Like other parts of it, going deeper . . .

Student: It gives you a better understanding of the text . . .

Student: . . . You could use it to understand the characters a bit more . . . (StimRecall_T_26_07_07, pp. 2-4)

Student: I was just going to say [that critical literacy] sort of want[s] us to think about why the author's done what they've done and why they could have maybe done it another way, but they didn't. (StimRecall_P_22_05_07, p. 1)

Student: Something that you can relate to yourself . . .

Student: And if it's influenced you and your thoughts. (StimRecall_P_24_08_06, p. 3)

Student: When you like, think about the text and how it's constructed and who's included and excluded . . .

Student: To expand our thinking . . . our thoughts about the text. (StimRecall_R_25_08_06, p. 2)

Other students emphasised the value of the critical literacy lessons in encouraging them to (re)consider texts and not take them at face value:

Student: . . . to like . . . question things. Like not just take things for face value. Just to question deeper. (StimRecall_P_20_03_07, p. 2)

Student 1: To be able to analyse . . .

Student 2: Um, just going deeper than just reading . . . (StimRecall_T_7_06_07, p. 1)

Researcher: What do you think critical literacy is at the moment?

Student: I think it's going to be digging a bit deeper into the text you're reading and trying to interpret it more that you usually would. (StimRecall_T_15_03_07, p.2)

Researcher: Why do you think we're doing critical literacy?

Student: To see what sort of ideas we come up with when we like have to really think about what we're reading and not just kind of take it at face value. (StimRecall_T_15_03_07, p. 2)

In the final SRIs we asked students about the value of critical literacy:

Researcher: Do you think the project should be continued?

Students: Yeah.

Researcher: Why?

Student 1: Well it helps you understand more about texts, like every text or yeah, texts in general and stuff.

Student 2: You usually just read the book, and go "Oh, that's a pretty good book, yeah I enjoyed that." But if you're looking at it closer, you can kind of get opinions and new ideas of the book and things that you'd never really notice, because of critical literacy. (StimRecall_T_20_09_07, p. 3)

The research questions

1. *What critical literacy strategies can be most effectively integrated within guided reading lessons and across curriculum areas in the New Zealand context?*

Over the two years of the project the research team members used critical literacy strategies in guided reading lessons and across curricular areas. Guided reading is an important component of reading programmes (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003, 2005). It consists of teachers working with small groups of students to provide focused instruction in “decoding, making meaning, and thinking critically” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 96). Teachers in the project found that guided reading provided an excellent opportunity to support small groups of students to focus on texts: “Only in small-group discussions do students have the opportunity both to engage in extended conversation about complex ideas and to have their understandings deepened by the ideas of their peers” (Au, Mason & Scheu, 1995, cited in Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 7).

The Critical Literacy Research Team, informed by the literature and professional development initiatives in their schools, used a description of curriculum integration called “inquiry-based curriculum integration” (Bartlett, 2005a, 2005b). Although the exact flow of events varied from school to school, typically each inquiry unit began with whole-school or syndicate planning. In these meetings the teachers would select the “Big Idea” (Wilson & Jan, 2003). The Big Idea needs to hook students in and capture their interest. The Big Idea would be something like, “The decisions of human beings influence the survival of other living things”, rather than a theme such as, “Who or what needs water?” This would allow for the opening up of possibilities.

This would be followed by an introduction of the topic to the class where the teacher would gauge what students already know. At this stage students would assist teachers with planning the unit. Students would brainstorm on the wonderings wall or use a Know-Want-Learn (KWL) to articulate what they were interested in exploring (Murdoch & Wilson, 2004). Students would participate in activities and the teacher and individual students would reflect on the learning throughout the unit, not just at the end. Assessment of student learning would also take place throughout the unit and the teacher and students could grow a class list of ways they have to “show” their learning. At the end of the unit the process would be evaluated.

The underpinning philosophies of inquiry-based curriculum integration are (ideally) to:

- share curriculum and other decision making with young people
- involve teachers in decision making, rather than being driven from curriculum documents or administration
- focus more on the skills of inquiry rather than on pre-determined scope-and-sequence content guides
- take on questions that you (the teacher) do not know the answer to and that you learn alongside the students
- demonstrate relevance between school learning and wider world

- discover and strengthen links between students' lived experiences and education

The Phase 2 Critical Literacy Research Team members from 2006 and 2007 found that critical literacy was an excellent critical thinking tool that could be applied to support students to examine any text in any subject area.

The remainder of this section discusses the critical literacy strategies used by the research team including a focus on metalanguage, use of the poster, a balance between explicit and exploratory teaching, the importance of text selection, and a focus on questioning.

Metalanguage

The Phase 1 2007 teachers from the secondary setting found that providing students with a copy of the poster for their folders, then providing explicit instruction in the metalanguage of critical literacy, enabled the students to develop greater understanding of critical literacy. This foundation of terms was built upon in subsequent lessons (see Appendix F for a metalanguage word bank).

Further, students benefited from guidance in increasing their understanding and use of metalanguage. Frequently, this might involve the teacher unpacking the poster and, at that point and throughout the lesson—depending on the teaching point—the metalanguage associated with critical literacy would be discussed.

In the stimulated recall interview, students were able to demonstrate their growing understanding of the metalanguage associated with critical literacy:

Researcher: So what do you think were the key points in [teacher's] lesson today?

Student: Look at the composer.

Researcher: Who is the composer?

Student: The person who created it. (StimRecall_J_21_05_07, p. 1)

In the SRIs the researchers asked the students to explain what a text is. Over the two years of the project the understanding of metalanguage increased as teachers placed greater emphasis on it. For example, at the time before we placed greater emphasis on direct teaching of metalanguage, student responses to the question, "What is a text?" were typically along the lines of:

Student: It's a . . . like a paragraph or piece of writing . . .

Student: It's something people have said. (StimRecall_C_30_03_07, p. 4)

By the end of the two years students were responding more broadly to this question:

Researcher: What is a text?

Student 1: A way of communicating.

Student 2: Communicating ideas to other people. (StimRecall_T_15_03_07, p. 3)

The poster

The critical literacy poster that was developed in 2005 continued to evolve and serve as a fundamental tool in the delivery of critical literacy lessons (Figure 1). The poster had several roles. It provided a framework for individual lessons, acting as a point of focus and a visual reminder of the significant teaching point. The Phase 2 teachers reported that in delivering integrated curriculum the poster provided a text, or visual link, to link critical literacy and the curriculum area under study. It also gave the students a sense of continuity between a topic-based series of lessons and a specific critical literacy lens. Critical literacy was no longer an isolated lesson, but rather a thinking tool to unpack any given text. For example:

Teacher: We are going to be looking at our critical literacy, putting our critical literacy lenses on our exploration of food packages... Today we are going to look at muesli bar packages... When you first go back to your tables with your group I want you to spend a little bit of time looking at those packages and sharing with each other... the choices that people, okay the authors, the people who have designed and made these packages, what choices have they made when they constructed these packages? (Lesson_P_31_05_06, p. 1)

In this case the text is what we have called elsewhere a community text (Sandretto & Critical Literacy Research Team, 2006a) and the students are analysing it in the context of a unit on healthy eating. The teachers continued the evolution of the poster and negotiated a revision during reflection near the end of the project for 2006.

The secondary teachers did not adapt the poster developed in 2005 and revised in 2006. They found that it provided scaffolding and a visual reminder for the students. They revised the poster at the beginning of the lesson as a means to remind the students about the various critical literacy elements (the role of the author, the reader, and the “so what?”).

We noticed that the secondary students were becoming very familiar with the poster as the year progressed and able to refer to it in the stimulated recall interviews. For example:

Researcher: What things on that poster do you think match what today’s lesson was about?

Student: Choices are made about how things and/or people are represented maybe . . .
StimRecall_T_26_07_07, p. 1)

Explicit/exploratory teaching—balance

The issue of balance was a key feature when discussing other strategies also. Importantly connected to the previous issue, the teachers—particularly in the Phase 2 group who were utilising wider, often theme- or topic-based curriculum approaches to delivering critical literacy—noticed there was a balance required between explicit “top-down” teaching and a more exploratory approach. The issue of explicit teaching of the metalanguage that harbours increased critical engagement with a text had been identified previously, and this continued to be an important strategy. However, with the use of what for the children were often new learning areas and topics within the Phase 2 team, this issue was extended into considering the importance of the students’ background knowledge. There were benefits to the use of an exploratory model. These

included allowing children to explore their own critical meanings of a text and further potentially opening up possible interpretations that the teacher him/herself had not considered. The problem with a dominant exploratory approach was that children—who were often learning a topic for the first time—did not always have the necessary background knowledge to engage critically with a text. As one teacher often reminded the group “the children do not know what they don’t know”. Thus, Phase 2 teachers noticed that, just as Phase 1 teachers were doing with guided reading texts, a second reading of the text was often useful—the first to provide knowledge which could be investigated on a predominantly informative level, and the second when the text itself could be explored critically.

Students’ stimulated recall interviews also supported this:

Student: We do need a bit of background information and discussion to help us understand things that we’re trying to learn. (StimRecall_J_11_09_07, p. 3).

Student: Well, he normally asks like what knowledge we bring to the text, and today he asked what knowledge we bring to the author . . . it helps us to understand the text a bit more if you know about the author. (StimRecall_T_20_09_07, p. 1)

Whilst the need for explicit direction was generally not as noticeable for the Phase 1 teachers, there were similar issues. For example, the teachers and researchers identified the need for careful scaffolding in some questioning areas. Of particular interest were questions regarding who or what was included or excluded in a given text. Children would often respond in a random or irrelevant manner. Sometimes, then, it was important that direct attention was given with respect to the particular critical literacy focus for a given lesson:

Student: Um, she sort of came over and explained it more, So like I actually really knew what I was doing. There’s some teachers that just stand up front . . . most of the time I don’t normally get it [but] . . . she comes around and tells you. (StimRecall_G_15_03_07b, p. 2)

Teacher: In whose interest is the text?

Student: What does that mean?

Teacher: Who’s the text for? Who’s the text about? Who’s it benefiting? (Lesson_G_22_05_07, p. 2)

Teacher: What does the word “gospel” mean?

Student 1: Church.

Student 2: Doesn’t that like mean the opposite of like church music kind of stuff?

Teacher: So if I’m standing here and I’m preaching, I’ll preach to you about maybe . . .the Bible, in which case I’m giving you the gospel. OK the word according to the Bible. (Lesson_G_28_03_07, p.3)

Text selection

The teachers identified text selection as an important strategy. Initially, for some Phase 1 teachers this was an arduous task. However, generally, while there was obviously variation in the ease with which critical literacy strategies could be employed with any given text, the teachers found the range of texts they could apply critical literacy to increase as their understanding of critical literacy strategies developed. This was concurrent with an expressed development in the way teachers approached texts themselves and a development in their ability to question or interrogate a particular text.

As teachers' skills became more sophisticated, the range of texts that they were willing to interrogate increased. Ideas included the use of lower-level texts for students so they could engage on a critical level without the possible burden of a difficult text. For example, Year 8 children explored gender and family stereotypes in a junior reader. Phase 2 teachers highlighted the usefulness of juxtaposing texts so that differences could be noticed and explored. For example, why might different texts on the same topic provide differences in information? Teachers were prepared to utilise wider literacies such as visual texts and illustrations as well as community texts such as flyers and advertisements.

For example, in a lesson exploring the history of segregation in the South to support lessons on *To kill a mockingbird*, the teacher juxtaposed photographs from the period representing black and white schools (Lesson_J_3_04_07). By the end of the second year, teachers found that they were using a wide range of texts at varying levels. Texts included movies (*Happy feet*), novels (*Number the stars*), video clips from YouTube, advertising, and so on. A number of the teachers used digital texts and increased their use of multimedia texts including blogs, wikis and so on. In the inquiry units, teachers found they made use of a wide range of texts. Students also identified that with variation in texts came opportunities for the teachers to select texts that were relevant to the students:

Student: Quite a lot of the things that [teacher's] made us look at concern us, which kind of makes us more interested in it. (StimRecall_T_20_09_07, p. 2)

Questioning—A matter of balance

The use of appropriate questions was identified as the core strategy in developing comprehension and critical literacy skills. In this way the teachers recognized questioning as an important shared strategy between critical literacy and guided reading lessons. Across the year, and largely as a result of video analysis and collegial discussion, the teachers came to the conclusion that questioning needed to be refined and limited to focus on two to three key questions. The teachers felt the influence of adopting critical literacy strategies had greatly enhanced their range and depth of questioning and consequently the students' responses reflected this. However, it was important not to attempt too wide a range in any one lesson and they felt exploring a narrow point in depth was both more beneficial to the students and supported the aims of the lesson.

Particular strategies within questioning were highlighted across the year. Wait time was identified as crucial and teachers became aware of the inadvertent habits they had developed to fill in any silence or “pregnant pauses” that often followed a question being posed. For example, teachers noticed they rephrased or repeated the question. Thus deliberate and conscious efforts were made to ensure waiting time was given for students to consider their responses. Another questioning strategy was the increased use of neutral responses. Several teachers noticed during analysis that their verbal responses to students’ discussion were often value laden and as such potentially inhibited a wider-ranging scope of answers. This point gained increased importance given that, firstly, students are highly attuned to offering what they think the teacher wants and, secondly, an often-stated point within critical literacy is that, generally speaking, there is no one correct answer to any given question. Much discussion was given to this issue reflecting a need to balance the idea of positive feedback with the idea of highlighting the notion that in many respects there were no right or wrong answers. The teachers’ general conclusion was to highlight the importance of neutral responses within a wider realization of the balancing act that their professional role entailed in this matter.

Students commented on the value of learning to support their answers and concurred that there were no right or wrong answers:

Researcher: Tell me what you mean by a “good answer”?

Student: Well . . . an answer that makes sense and is relevant and . . .

Student: Yeah, you can back it up.

Student: . . . prove it and stuff. (StimRecall_J_22_05_07, p. 5)

Students also commented on the types of questions used in a critical literacy lesson:

Student: He [the teacher] kind of, you know, explained the question more, rather than just reading it and expecting us to know what it means. 'Cause you know they're pretty advanced questions . . . the way he put it kind of made it a bit easier for us to understand. (StimRecall_T_15_03_07, p. 4)

Again, the idea that dominated teachers’ responses to these issues was one of balance and the key point became one of identifying at which moment the greater weight of either explicit or exploratory teaching style was adopted. Further, this balancing act was not something merely considered for individual lessons but one that had to be juggled fluidly within lessons and conversations.

Talking atmosphere (no wrong or right answer)

A further strategy that emerged was the aim of encouraging a “talking atmosphere”. We say “aim” because it is important to note that there are a number of dynamic variables that can impact on the willingness and ability of students engaging in a discussion. However, set as a goal and accompanied with explicit teaching of management strategies for engaging in discussion, creating a climate of conversation was identified as an important and useful strategy for critical literacy.

One explicitly directed strategy was to encourage students to respond not only to the teacher but also to each other. In this way the teacher became a part of the conversation team when possible and not always its leader. Also, the rights and responsibilities accorded to the students as creators of the discussion were enhanced. Encouraging this often also required explicit guidance in constructive ways to engage in the art of discussion where there are multiple and often disputed points of view:

Teacher: If that's what you believe and that's what you see, then that's what you write down. What is real in this particular image? (Lesson_G_22_5_07, p. 2)

The teachers also sought to encourage more than one answer:

Teacher: Why should there only be two answers? . . . Why should there only be one answer? (Lesson_G_22_5_07, p. 5)

Teacher: Remember what I said to you the other day. Nothing's the wrong answer, you've just got to be able to back it up. Why are they good? (Lesson_G_28_03_07, p.2)

Another means to create a talking atmosphere was that of highlighting the "correctness" of students' own opinions:

Teacher: You think that's what they do? Nice. So that's your opinion. Nice. Write it down. Write down your opinion. (Lesson_G_28_03_07, p.8)

In other words, in order to foster multiple readings of a text, teachers encouraged students to contribute by validating their responses.

Teachers also positioned themselves as a participant in the discussion, rather than a fountain of knowledge. In this lesson on a music video, the teacher acknowledged that the students knew more about the musician than they did:

Teacher: Yeah well there we go. You see I'm going to have to learn more about Tupac. (Lesson_G_28_03_07, p. 9)

As discussed in the previous section, wait time was very important. Phase 2 teachers found that with explicit attention to wait time students began to discuss amongst themselves in whole-class lessons.

The teachers' contributions could encourage a talking atmosphere in other ways too. In some cases, the teacher made a statement, often contentious, to prompt student thinking and discussion. For example, after reading a short story about the junk left behind in space, the teacher asked the students to consider her friend's reading of the story. This friend commented that "no more spacecraft should explore space because of the risk of space junk being left behind" (Lesson_P_16_08_06, p. 1). The students were then led through a discussion that encouraged them to explore their own views on that statement along with additional information to take into consideration.

In another example, the teacher drew attention to the ideas a younger class held about the moon, eliciting discussion from the older class about their own knowledge and the different ways the two

classes had made sense of a text. Additionally, to enhance the multiple readings of any given text, the teacher offered his/her reading at the end of the lesson. This further served as a means to expose students to readings they might not otherwise come up with.

Teachers employed strategies such as the distribution of tokens to indicate the number of responses a student was responsible for contributing. This served both as a limit to dominant children and an encouragement for those less willing.

The secondary teachers found that with careful planning and scaffolding, group work served to help develop a talking atmosphere. Secondary students seem to feel more confident discussing the ideas with their peers first, and then reporting back to the whole class. The stimulated recall interviews supported the implementation of group work:

Researcher: Think about what [the teacher] did today to help you learn about critical literacy. What are some of the things that she did?

Student: Um . . . got us to revise a sheet that we got.

Student 2: And gave us the task to do it with, in like the groups, so we've got two opinions, not just your own. Not just sitting there thinking, "Oh, this is a good question, or this is a good answer".

Researcher: Now last time you fed back that you liked group work for that reason. Do you still think it's a valuable thing for teachers to do?

Student 3: Yeah, 'cause it gets you involved. You might be just like a person who just sits there doing work and stuff.

Student: But then you might divide it into like one person writing, one person speaking, one person drawing . . . (StimRecall_J_10_09_07, p. 6)

Researcher: What did [the teacher] do today that helped you learn about critical literacy?

Student: Put us into groups.

Researcher: Did you find that useful?

Student: Yeah. He [the teacher] let us discuss it with other people. What we thought.

Researcher: Why is it useful to discuss with other people in groups? Why?

Student: Umm . . . so you don't just get your own idea.

Student: Other people's ideas are important as well. So piece them together and . . .

Student: . . . make a bigger idea. (StimRecall_T_26_07_07, p.4)

Student: By splitting up into groups we could all focus and then by getting everyone to explain their . . . it kind of gave us a good overview.

Student: He really put the onus on us to do the work instead of sort of just talking at us. (StimRecall_P_22_05_07, p. 5)

Another strategy that supported the development of a talking atmosphere at the secondary level was the use of a scribe. One student would take notes on the board, highlighting key points during the course of the discussion. These notes could then be distributed later to the entire class. The ideal would be an ICT tool such as a smart board.

Student: Um . . . you can't refer back to a discussion, unless you're recording it . . . You can't really learn a discussion 'cause it's gone.

Researcher: Can you think of any ways around that? That you could make the discussion more concrete for later work?

Student: Um. Teachers writing out notes and then giving you the page of notes and then go through the page and discuss about that, and then you still have the page and you can refer back to that page. (StimRecall_J_24_07_07a, p. 6)

The secondary students found that when the teacher made statements such as, "It's just my opinion" or, "I think", they felt more confident to contribute. This invitation for multiple answers encouraged a talking atmosphere:

Researcher: I noticed a few times he [the teacher] said that there was not [a] right or wrong answer. "This is just my opinion . . . does anyone agree or disagree?"; "Do you find that useful?"

Student: Yeah. It just means like you can . . . sort of feel free to say [what] we want, [and that he] wouldn't sort of, like, judge you. (StimRecall_T_7_06_07, p. 4)

Resources

The development of resources was an important strategy in that it provided tools to complement the conceptual work involved. Along with the poster the teachers noted a number of other useful resources created and collected throughout the year. All of these can be downloaded from the website (<http://criticalliteracy.org.nz>) and some are included here as Appendices 7–10. This site was seen to provide a community for educators in critical literacy both on the project and beyond. These resources included:

- questioning with "plastic" questions—a series of generic questions laminated on card that could be used as prompts for lesson planning or for students to choose an area to explore (Appendix G)
- a list of suggested texts; through the sharing of text discoveries and plans teachers saw the importance of developing a database of texts to aid in sharing
- A lesson plan template (Appendix H)
- A rubric for assessment (Appendix I).

2. *What changes were evident in students' comprehension of texts?*

Reading comprehension can be defined as “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader” (National Reading Panel, 2000 #520, p. 14). The findings of the National Reading Panel in the United States “suggest that text comprehension is enhanced when readers actively relate the ideas represented in print to their own knowledge and experiences” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 14), an explicit focus of this project.

However, as noted by Alvermann and Eakle (2003), “comprehension is only the first step toward developing a critical awareness of all kinds of texts” (p. 14), the overarching aim of this project. In addition, when engaging with new technologies, the ability to analyse the construction of texts and to consider representation in texts becomes more vital (Alvermann & Eakle, 2003; Coiro, 2003; Henry, 2006). There can be little doubt we are in an age of information far exceeding any historical precedent. The communication tools of the period we live in within the developed world make vast amounts of information accessible to vast numbers of people. To take the Internet as perhaps the most obvious of these communication tools, we can see along with this rise in information a parallel rise in misinformation. Never before has the ability to discern the accuracy or utility of information been more necessary. Such is the depth of the Internet’s reach; this skill is required of people across generations. Thus it is important that the idea of literacy envelops its wider connotations in terms of the critical comprehension of the texts we are exposed to. This is not to suggest that we are to analyse and “tear apart” every text for debate or discussion. Whilst this is certainly a necessary element of critical comprehension, deciding when this skill is required is also an important attribute of critically comprehending the information that a person is taking in.

Assessment of reading comprehension has always been fraught with difficulty (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998). Researchers have had to appease themselves with measures of “the residue of the comprehension process . . . rather than the process itself” (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998, p. 98). While researchers involved with new literacies or multiliteracies approaches to literacy instruction recommend assessment techniques such as project, performance, group, and portfolio assessment (Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvery, 2003), other researchers note that these types of assessments have been critiqued for being “too personal . . . or too time-consuming” (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998, p. 97).

The Critical Literacy Research Team found that the use of current reading comprehension assessment tools such as running records, STAR tests and asTTle did not assess the aspects of comprehension that were clearly related to text analysis. A finding that warrants further investigation is that the Year 9 focus-group class involved in the project in 2007 improved four steps in the “understanding” portion of the assessment on the AsTTle. This is a very pleasing result and was highlighted by the school’s administration for further discussion within the department. Nonetheless, there is an urgent need to develop a repertoire of assessment tools that can both inform teaching at the classroom level and, more broadly across schools, report directly on the role of text analyst.

While a standardised tool that would enable greater comparisons between cohorts of students would be valuable to have in the repertoire of assessment tools, we are concerned about the ability of multiple-choice type assessment tools to cater for the multiple readings and multiple viewpoints that we are promoting. Finally, we wish to signal a caution here that we would not like to see the development of an assessment tool for critical literacy that drives instruction (Sarroub & Pearson, 1998), and our development of a rubric started with the poster and what we were teaching, rather than with student outcomes that we sought to measure and then had to teach (see Findings, research question 4, for further discussion).

3. *In what ways was the reading achievement of students enhanced?*

In 2005 the Phase 1 group used running record data as their pre- and post-assessment, the outcome being mixed results overall. They concluded that the kinds of questions being asked in typical comprehension tests were inappropriate to measure critical literacy.

As a result of the 2005 findings the 2006 Phase 1 group decided to use a more standardised test, the STAR test, to try to measure critical literacy. The majority of the participants in the programme showed an increase in STAR results, with some showing marked improvements. For example, in 2007 two classes (Years 5–8) produced STAR results showing 82 percent of the students improved their stanine result or stayed the same, and for a Year 5–6 class all students either remained constant or improved. Despite these positive results, the group felt the STAR test proved an inappropriate way to measure gains. The Critical Literacy Research Team believes the assessment does not reflect the “textual analysis” aspect of comprehension which critical literacy seeks to improve. In addition, the Phase 2 teachers were using critical literacy as a critical thinking tool in inquiry/integrated curriculum lessons. Under our multiple literacies framework we consider texts quite broadly, including “reading” digital texts. Our current literacy assessment tools do not allow us to assess comprehension of digital literacies.

With this in mind the group saw the need to develop an assessment tool that reflected the intent of critical literacy. The critical literacy assessment rubric was developed with consultation and negotiation from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 groups along with advice from colleagues working in assessment. In 2007 this rubric was implemented with both Phase 1 and Phase 2 groups. A control group not involved with the project also took part in the assessment, allowing us to evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness of the rubric.

We were able to chart ways in which students’ reading achievement was enhanced through the lesson transcripts, analysing them against the key teaching points in the poster. Utilising their understanding of these concepts and through exploration of the lesson transcripts the teachers could clearly identify aspects of students’ reading that had developed across the length of the project during the year. For one, there was evidence that the children had an increased awareness and depth to relating texts to their own experiences (see Findings, research question 5).

In another example, in response to the senior journal story, “Tusk the cat” (Anderson, 2002) children demonstrated empathetic responses identifying the storyline with the experiences of others:

Student: . . . I think that most people would be able to relate to it, because if they don’t have cats or a pet then they will know someone who does. Like I think everyone would know someone who has a pet, it’s not like there is a whole group of people who don’t have pets. (Lesson_L_30_8_06, p. 4)

A further example highlights the depth of experience students demonstrated. Following the reading of a senior journal text, “Moving on” (Hill, 1998), which explores grief, children were willing to share some of their own experiences:

Student 1: [If] someone died you can’t, you can’t um, like, um, you can’t just keep him, you can’t hold onto that feeling that, that he is still there ’cause he isn’t anymore.

Student 2: When my grandad died I had to move on.

Teacher: Can you explain that in a bit more detail? How do you mean you moved on?

Student 2: Like have to move on, forget about him. (Lesson_T_26_07_06, p. 1)

Students also demonstrated an increased awareness of being able to recognise and articulate multiple viewpoints as well as consider the construction of texts and multiple messages. While interpreting a journal text about hunting the children expressed several points of view regarding people’s feelings about hunting as a sport. They could see people might see hunting as adventurous, cruel, fun, and a legitimate activity for people to engage in:

Teacher: How has he [main character] been constructed?

Student H: Um, he’s quite responsible.

Student G: I agree with [student]. And like he’s just sort of constructed, so he’s sort of takes after his dad . . . wants to take his dad’s footsteps by hunting.

Student D: Like he wants a bit of adventure . . .

Teacher: Who’s missing from that text?

Student F: The mum’s missing.

Student ?: isters and most women.

Student J: Vegetarians . . . I don’t think vegetarians would go hunting and killing wild animals and stuff . . . Um, well, if I was a vegetarian I know I wouldn’t go hunting. I wouldn’t go hunting anyway. Like . . . because it’s kind of . . . it would make them sad to think that people eat [animals] . . .

Teacher: All texts are constructed by people. What do you think the people who constructed this text . . . what messages did that person want us to get?

Student C: Hunting isn’t a bad thing?

Student I: Hunting could be actually just plain . . . like a hobby?

Student G: I think they [authors] might be trying to tell us that you make up your mind whether you want to do hunting or not . . .

Student E: People who go hunting aren't actually people who like . . . want to kill animals just for fun. Like they hang their heads up on their fireplace. Like not all bad people that are murderers, they just want to go out and do hunting. (Lesson_W_24_08_06, pp. 2-6)

In a junior text, "Cousin Kira" (Cowley, 1988), the children were able to see why the main character might be feeling angry at looking after her young cousins but also discussed how the younger children in the story would be feeling (Lesson_E_8_06_06). The same group explored a text, "My name is Laloifi" (McMullin, 2005), and demonstrated an awareness of the ways in which texts can influence their thinking about cultural difference in both negative and positive ways. Through critical literacy questioning the children were also able to reflect in new ways on cultural differences within their own environment.

This example also suggests the students were demonstrating the way in which a text can influence their thoughts and actions. This development was highlighted in other instances too.

In response to a senior journal text, "Jelly-belly" (Frater, 2002), a child noted: "You can't judge a book by its cover, like everybody is equal so you shouldn't make fun of somebody just 'cause they, they look different or think differently from you" (Lesson_R_7_06_06, p.3). On a similar theme, other children explored issues of racism and grasped the text's message: "Um, you can't just judge people 'cause they are black . . ." (Lesson_R_2_07_06, p. 5). Again, but in relation to violence, children realised the text was "showing us that we should be pacifists, like, somebody who doesn't like arguments, or fighting or anything violent even if it's just verbal sometimes" (Lesson_R_2_07_06, p.3). When reading a senior journal story, "The Birthday Visit" (Storer, 2005), about the experience of having relatives in prison, the group discussed several elements that encouraged them to consider other points of view:

Teacher: What do you think the author wants us to think about prisons maybe and the people in them?

Student: It's just a place people go when they make a big mistake.

Teacher: So after you read this text . . . has there been any change in how you thought about prison?

Student: Before I read it I thought, well . . . prison would be a bad place to end up and now I think it is not so bad. (Lesson_W_23_03_06, p. 5)

Part of this increased skill in considering representation was to notice when things were misrepresented. The children continued to improve in this. For example, after looking at a journal story, "Do as the Romans do" (Cowely, 1983), on Samoa, the children were able to compare the story with other sources of information on Samoa that they had been consulting as part of a wider unit of study:

Teacher: When the author wrote this story, how did he portray Samoa?

Student B: In Samoa really it's . . . you start school early and finish early. But in the story it must say that, that they start at the same time as we do and finish at the same time . . .

Teacher: When the author wrote this story, had he been to Samoa?

All: No.

Student C: 'cause it doesn't sound like he has experienced anything or read something about Samoa. He doesn't know anything about Samoa, from the book. (Lesson_T_30_08_06, p. 1)

In another example at a student voice interview a child was able to relate to where the resort his family had stayed at had misrepresented its facilities in its advertised brochures. Several teachers explored the use of advertisements as a text for examination, and again the issue of representation was prevalent. Children developed an increasing awareness of the particular approach advertisers take, noting for example the lack of imperfections in models in a Warehouse flyer advertising clothing (Lesson_R_25_08_06).

The secondary teachers involved in the project in 2007 found similar results. The following represents a brief case study of one class. This case study is representative of the other participating classes. The students in this study came from a top-stream, Year 10 class of 31 students. A focus group of six students was selected from this class to participate in the stimulated recall interviews. The focus group was a cross-representation of cultural background.

The pre-test comprised an asTTle test that was administered to the whole Year 10 class. This demonstrated that the group's comprehension was at Level 5/6 of the *New Zealand Curriculum*. As part of this test, "Thinking Critically" was also assessed. This also came out at Level 5/6. This data demonstrated that this group were at a higher level than would be expected of a cohort group of the same age.

The post-test showed that there was little difference in the comprehension scores. This could be explained easily. The post-test differed from the pre-test, to meet the requirements for a project outside our school. This is unfortunate as it is difficult to make an objective comparison against the pre-test. It would be fair to say that as there was little difference, this remained insignificant in terms of the results. The "Thinking Critically" component did show an improvement in two of the students, while two remained the same and two decreased only within one grade, which is insignificant in terms of the study.

However, the students' reading was enhanced. This was noted in the stimulated recall interviews, an integral part of the research process. After the lessons the following comments were noted that demonstrate ways that the critical literacy strategies enhanced their reading. This was demonstrated by how they felt as they were empowered as a reader. This is important as we do not just rely on the quantitative data. There is a place for observation and professional judgement and it is through this that we can observe the learners' empowerment:

Researcher: What do you think were the key points in [teacher]'s lesson today?

Student C: Just sort of like interpreting like sort of the messages that the poms [authors] are trying to like put across to the reader . . .

Researcher: What [do] you think critical literacy is at the moment?

Student D: I think it's going to be digging a bit deeper into the text you're reading and trying to interpret it more than you usually would.

Student F: What the author was kind of thinking when they wrote it.

Student E: Their point of view and stuff. (StimRecall_15_03_07, pp. 1-2)

Researcher: What does critical literacy mean to you?

Student A: Like think about the messages behind [the text] and like [what] the writer was thinking when they wrote it and like morals or themes, something they were trying to get across.

Student C: To be able to analyse it. Thinking about why they wrote it.

Student B: Just going deeper than just reading. Like background information and stuff . . . What you can bring to the text. (StimRecall_7_06_07, p. 1)

Researcher: What things on that poster do you think match today's lesson?

Student: Choices are made about how things and/or people are represented maybe . . .

Student: Readers will make sense of text differently . . .

Researcher: [student] tell me what way you saw your connection . . .

Student: Well, 'cause in the thing it's like . . . you see how people are represented. It'd be like 'cause you know how they said that it'd be picking on teenagers kind of thing [in the article on boy racers], with the cars and stuff. And like how they make choices and stuff about it . . .

Researcher: And what about you [student name]? In what way was part of the point of the lesson connected to the experiences you guys have?

Student: Well, because we all know like different things . . . We all think about texts differently, and so . . . 'cause we all had different ideas about the article today . . .

Researcher: OK. So what does critical literacy mean to you?

Student: I think it's not like just reading the text but understanding the text.

Student: Yeah, just understanding the text a bit more and going a bit deeper than just what we read . . .

Student: Learning to go further than just reading a book.

Researcher: Do you think it's important?

Student: It gives you a better understanding of the text.

Researcher: Do you think you would use it outside an English lesson?

Student: Probably would, yeah.

Researcher: Can you think of some ways that you might?

Student: When you're just reading a book in your leisure time or whatever, you could use it there to understand the characters a bit more . . . and where the writer got their ideas and stuff . . .

Student: It could help you see the other side of the story . . . you've got to think, you know, there's always another side to the story and maybe look a bit deeper into that. (StimRecall_26_07_07, pp. 1-4)

4. *What forms of assessment enabled the team to chart student growth of critical literacy skills?*

The Critical Literacy Research Team developed a rubric (Appendix I) at the end of the first year during the research team working days. We believe that the rubric represents a form of authentic assessment in that it was developed from the poster and thus measures the areas to which teachers are teaching critical literacy strategies. This rubric was trialled during the second year of the project with students who were part of the project, and at the primary school level with students who were at the same level and attending the same school but not in the project. We found the rubric to be a flexible tool to chart student understanding of critical literacy when used during a critical literacy lesson to assess student responses during discussion.

For example, we found in a Year 2/3 class that was not involved in the project that at the beginning of the year, over two guided reading lessons, all the students in the focus group were located in the "identifies" and "justifies" categories, but with little use of the critical literacy metalanguage. This same focus group at the end of the year was still located in these same categories, with two students needing support on one aspect ("how people/animals/topic are represented in the text"). Again, the students demonstrated little independent usage of the critical literacy metalanguage. This represented little or no growth in critical literacy skills (Table 4).

In a Year 5/6 classroom that was involved in the project the teacher found that at the beginning of the year the students were very mixed, with results from "with support" to "identifies" and "justifies". Four students were able to independently make links between the text and their own experiences/knowledge. At the end of the year the focus group had made considerable gains in most areas. All of the students were located in the "justifies" range (Table 5). Students did not rate as "independent" for making "links between text and personal experience/knowledge" as they did at the beginning of the year—a finding that warrants further exploration.

Table 4 Rubric results Year 2/3 class not in project (Term 1, Term 4)

Criteria	With support	Identifies List State Record	Justifies Explain Debate "Because . . ."	Independent e.g., able to apply to multiple texts without prompting
links between text and personal experience/knowledge	M	M		
	A	A		
	Z	Z		
	S	S		
	R	R		
multiple viewpoints			M	
			A	M
		Z	Z	S
		A	S	R
			R	
incidences of in/exclusion in the text	M			
	A	R		
	Z	Z		A
	S	M		
	R	S		
how people/animals/topic are represented in the text	M			
	A			M
	Z	Z		A
	S	R		S
	R			
influence of text on his/her thinking			M	
			A	M
			Z	A
		Z	S	S
			R	R

NB: Letters represent student initials.

Table 5 Rubric results Year 5/6 class in project (Term 1, Term 4)

Criteria	With support		Identifies List State Record	Justifies Explain Debate "Because . . ."	Independent e.g., able to apply to multiple texts without prompting
links between text and personal experience/knowledge	C	C		D	P
				M	D
				H	H
				A	M
multiple viewpoints	C		P	C	
			D	H	
			H	M	
			M	A	
				D	
incidences of in/exclusion in the text	C	D	H	A	C
				M	A
			P		D
					M
how people/animals/topic are represented in the text			C	P	A
			M	H	M
			A		D
			D		C
					H
influence of text on his/her thinking	C		P		A
			H		H
			D	M	M
					D
					C

NB: Letters represent student initials.

In discussion at the end of the project when we reviewed the rubric results and reflected on its use as an assessment tool for critical literacy we identified that the rubric could be used to measure student application of critical literacy to a particular text or to measure their understanding of critical literacy terms and concepts. Another important finding is that in a pre-test/post-test design the rubric was difficult for teachers to administer for a pre-test if they were new to the project. Teachers new to critical literacy who wish to use the rubric in a pre-test/post-test design may wish

to have more experienced colleagues administer the pre-test. The secondary teachers in the project recommended that the rubric be revised for use at that level. Further piloting of the rubric is recommended (see Future Research).

We also found that the stimulated recall interviews were a very useful way to chart student understanding of critical literacy. These interviews gave a great deal of in-depth data that teachers could use as either formative or summative assessment. Teachers could use the stimulated recall interview schedule (Appendix K) as a means to gather data at the beginning of the year on student understandings of critical literacy that could inform their teaching, similar to the way in which the Numeracy Project uses student interviews. Although the stimulated recall interviews were not originally formulated as an assessment tool, we have ended up using it as an assessment tool to inform our practice.

5. *What changes were found in students' ability to relate texts to their lives?*

Drawing on personal experience in relation to text is a commonly used strategy particularly in guided reading lessons in New Zealand schools (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006). This tactic serves both to introduce a text, nurture interest, and aid in developing comprehension. In addition, by connecting personal knowledge and experience to texts, students may increase their achievement (Hunsberger, 2007). Hunsberger (2007) has called for “research in literacy [to] investigate this connectedness and its benefits for the academic performance of students” (p. 421). In the critical literacy project the use of connecting personal experience to a text means students can develop an awareness that there are a number of valid yet differing experiences people draw on in approaching a text. Consequently, students can acquire the idea that the sense different readers make of a text will vary. From an understanding of the validity of multiple positions readers are thus able to use their own experience to challenge, question, or defend texts.

In one lesson where students were to analyse the prospectus of a number of local high schools, one student commented just before the analysis began: “Generally, couldn’t like this critical literacy thing sway what high school we’re going to?” (Lesson_6_L_08_07, p. 2). Demonstrating an awareness that the critical literacy work they were about to embark on might impact on their personal lives.

In another lesson children used their different experiences of their grandparents to challenge stereotypes not only that were being explored in a senior text, but also that the children held themselves, to some degree:

Teacher: So what experiences have you had with old people?

Student B: Argh! Granddad and grandmas.

Teacher: Well you have got as a great example what you did with your grandfather; what have you done just recently?

Student B: Go on a boat, but he’s fun.

Teacher: But he's old though—he can't be fun.

Student B: He is, but he's not old-fashioned . . .

Student J: Well, my nana normally just sits there and watches telly, but she goes on walks sometimes, and then my granddad, sometimes he plays on computer games.

Teacher: Does he? Well that's exciting, or fun.

Student J: And he goes out; they are building a new section and they are doing the gardens, and sometimes we go out and help them with the garden . . .

Student B: It will probably be solitaire or something. (Lesson_27_P_07_06, pp. 3–4)

As the children continued to explore their own relationships with their grandparents they came to realise not only that the text had constructed “old people” in a particular way but that their own ideas about this could be challenged by their experiences.

Further to the ability to challenge texts, teachers noted an improvement in the students' depth of answers, and a greater willingness to contribute in response to questions regarding their personal experience. In the following example this student initiated a discussion about changing classes in response to a text about changing schools. This discussion was the first time that this Year 2 teacher had heard children express these views and lead to a subsequent rethinking of the wider school's approach to managing children's transition between classrooms:

Teacher: Has anything like that happened to you before?

Student: Um, when I changed class.

Teacher: What were you worried about when you changed class?

Student: Because you don't know anything about them.

Student: Well when I was going to change to Room 6 I didn't want to because I wanted to stay in Room 5 because it was a nice kind of place.

Student: And I thought there's going to be these horrible bad kids in Room 6. (Lesson_E_27_07_06, pp. 2–3)

A Phase 2 2006 teacher noted that during the lessons the students developed a greater understanding of the power of personal experience to influence their reading and understandings of texts. In one particular lesson the teacher used these points of the poster as the focus of the lesson. Students watched excerpts from the movie, *Finding Nemo*. The children examined aspects of the film that were clearly aimed at adult understandings (a scene in which sharks attended a meeting to give up eating fish which mirrored the structure of an Alcoholic Anonymous meeting), but that still provided interest for children. In the discussion that followed the children came to realise that their own personal experiences altered their understanding of the scene:

Teacher: . . . did any of you know about Alcoholics Anonymous and the pattern of that meeting?

All: No.

Student H: Um, people trying to stop drinking alcohol.

Teacher: Right, OK and you didn't know the way the meeting would work and I wouldn't expect you to . . .

Student B: Yeah, I just knew that there was Alcohol[ics] Anonymous but not the patterns following.

Teacher: Right.

Student E: I knew there was some sort of programme but I didn't know how it was.

Teacher: Do you think that because you didn't know about Alcoholics Anonymous that you in some way made the wrong sense of the part we watched? Now just think about that for a little minute. Do you think in other words that there is one sense that is correct or right and that you didn't have it? What do you think?

Student G: I think there is more than one sense of right but some senses, some senses are right but they sort of make you less understanding.

Student E: Um, well I reckon that it is not just the wrong sense because um, readers bring different sense to it.

Student B: Yeah, um, well it wouldn't matter if you didn't really know about that because there is still understanding out there.

Teacher: . . . Do you think it was sensible to have all that about AA in a movie for children?

Student H: It is all right because we still have what we think.

Student D: Um, well, if you do have some adult things, like not too adult but some adult things in a kids' movie it makes it more enjoyable for the whole family to watch it. (Lesson_S_30_03_06, pp. 5–6)

Students were able to make links to personal experience using a wide variety of texts. For example, in an art lesson on Gauguin the students compared his paintings from France and his paintings from Tahiti and discussed how he might have been feeling. One of the students commented: "When my dad draws and he's angry we can tell that his paintings are done when he's angry because he uses all these dark colours". (Lesson_23_07_07, p. 3).

The rubric provided another opportunity to document students' ability to make links between texts and their own experiences. A rubric assessment completed at the end of the year with three secondary students demonstrated their ability to relate texts to their lives instinctively and with confidence. For example, one student when given the statement, "All readers have different knowledge and experiences that they bring to texts", responded by talking about his feelings when he saw the movie, *Out of the Blue*. He is a surfer and has been going to Aramoana for years. He said that Aramoana "seems weird [because] 17 years ago some guy went ape". After seeing the

movie he walks around Aramoana feeling completely different. In response to the same statement, another student discussed his feelings when watching *The Matrix*. It made him think about the “big questions” that were raised by the movie surrounding existence, what is real, and so on.

Another student, when responding to the statement, “We can develop an awareness of how texts influence our thoughts and actions”, responded to the movie *Once Were Warriors*. He expressed admiration for the character Jake the Muss—a violent man who beats his wife. When asked why, the student replied, “Jake is never scared or threatened . . . it would be good to be like him”.

The students may have had these thoughts anyway without being involved in this project. However, their ability to express themselves openly and with confidence (as mentioned above) is, we believe, a direct result of the project, as their responses to the same questions at the beginning of the year elicited no response whatsoever, even after direct questioning and “hinting” from the teacher.

6. *How did the research process support teachers to become more effective in implementing critical literacy strategies?*

At the end of each year of the project, in the exit interviews, the teachers were asked to consider: “In what ways has your teaching changed as a result of participating in this research project?” During the research team working days the teachers commented that it was the structure of the project that enabled the teachers to reflect on and refine their teaching as they implemented and evaluated the critical literacy strategies (see also Research design).

The regular working days were an integral component of the project and allowed regular review, reflection, and support to try new ideas. The teachers were able to attend the working days because of the release time paid to the school from the project. One outcome of the working days in the first year was the revision of the poster and the development of the rubric for trial in 2007. During these working days “side conversations” (Luna et al., 2004) often took place that at the time seemed off task, but on reflection we found that they provided a great deal of learning. We found that these side conversations encouraged the research team members to share ideas across schools and curriculum areas, and also—as a result of watching each other’s lessons—gave them confidence to try out new ideas.

Video analysis was one of the main activities during the research team working days. This was supported by the transcripts and allowed the research team to reflect and modify existing teaching practices and implement new and improved practices. Teachers were supported to move outside their comfort zone and take risks. Teachers identified that an increased focus on questioning skills, and the role of students in negotiating the curriculum, arose out of the video analysis and research team working day conversations.

A conference paper that arose out of discussions during the research team working days enabled the research team to place greater emphasis on the quality and depth of questioning, one of the

primary critical literacy strategies (Sandretto & Klenner, 2007). One of the tools that came out of this paper was some criteria for video analysis (Appendix L). From the exit interviews teachers explained:

Teacher A: My questioning skills have certainly been developed.

Teacher B: By letting the children have time to answer the questions I give them and taking a lesser role at discussion times—letting the children lead the direction of the discussions. (ExitInterview_EP_6_11_06, p. 3)

Teacher A: I think there are more opportunities for discussion in my classroom now . . . and the children have developed an awareness of how to accept different opinions, how to share their own opinion, how to come back after someone else's for debating . . . for accepting different opinions have been enhanced through the critical literacy project.

Teacher B: For me it is also about the discussions that go on . . . just to let the children take the questions and talk amongst themselves and for me to be more of a pointer or a driver in the discussion rather than be the overseer of it.

Teacher A: Yeah, I think through watching the videos on the working days we all picked up on a few really useful things like wait time, and that has flowed over into the classroom in many areas [like] limiting the number of questions that we asked and letting those questions be answered thoroughly and within their own time . . . we also talked about our feedback methods . . . and that is something that is often in the back of my mind as those discussions are happening. (ExitInterview_CL_6_11_06, pp. 3–4)

The teachers also identified that an increased emphasis on the role of students in negotiating the curriculum also arose out of the research team working day discussion:

Teacher A: I think we are more genuinely trying to be child centred . . . I used to think it was just a matter of making sure you had some nice games for children to play and it wasn't all sort of pencil and paper tasks you gave them and now I see it's just so much more than that and it is involving children in almost negotiating the curriculum in its kind of highest level.

Teacher B: Exactly the same thing. I did think that if I had hands-on activities and written activities and visual activities and movement activities then I was catering for all the children's needs and it was giving them some sort of power to a certain extent . . . But I think there's even more, much more than that and I would like to take it much further. (ExitInterview_JR_10_11_06, pp. 7–8)

Video analysis enabled the research team to identify what we termed “missed opportunities”. While an opportunity to make a change to that particular lesson was gone, by sharpening their reflection skills, the teachers became better able to spot some of those opportunities during the heat of the pedagogical moment. In this secondary lesson where the teacher and students analysed a Coca-Cola advertisement, upon reflection the teacher found that she had missed an opportunity to build upon links to student experience:

Teacher: They've got another name for what?

Student C: Like Japanese or Asian.

Teacher: Oh, they've probably got a different word for Coke? Yeah.

Student B: Some people.

Teacher: Yeah, exactly. So they know what it is. Good point. What about Asians or Polynesians that live in New Zealand? Is that what you were talking about [student]?

Student K: You know, like

Teacher: Oh, OK, in other countries.

Student K: But over here, the Asians and Polynesians, they were.

Teacher: Because they're living . . .

Student K: That's how, New Zealand ways, they do it. (Lesson_J_21_05_07, p. 7)

When rereading the transcript, the teacher realised that the student, who is Polynesian, was trying to articulate that he did not see himself represented in the ad and thus did not find the ad fair in its representations of young people.

The engagement with the critical literacy literature during the research team working days reinforced the practices. Debate around some of the readings supported the research team to refine their practices, with time to read, discuss, and reflect on them. This was an important opportunity to engage with the theory of critical literacy and curriculum integration (Phase 2). As one of the participating teachers mentioned in an exit interview:

I've really enjoyed having this chance to . . . read lots of readings, get lots of ideas and sort of talk about it and discuss it . . . because otherwise you're busy teaching and you don't really have the chance to think about sort of this more "theoretical" stuff that you need to have an understanding of before you can move on. (ExitInterview_GP_10_11_06, p. 4)

And:

Teacher A: We need the two sides, don't we?

Teacher B: Yes.

Teacher A: We need the theory and we need the practice. (ExitInterview_RTW_6_11_06, p. 6)

Finally, the stimulated recall interviews allowed insight into the children's thinking. This information greatly influenced the changing practices. Student voice templates (Figure 3) encouraged the teachers to focus on at least one aspect highlighted in the stimulated recall interviews to trial and report back on. These were a useful tool to keep us "on track" in terms of paying greater attention to the suggestions made by the students. The students also seemed to appreciate having their ideas and concerns heard. As teachers noted in the exit interviews:

Teacher A: I think [the stimulated recall interviews were] invaluable and hearing the students that don't agree with what happens in the classroom, and that they don't understand, and some of those that do agree and do understand see just the range of . . . multiple readings that went on was just so good.

Teacher B: It was student voice that kept them going on [with] the group work thing with their responses to group work and having more minds or more heads being better than one. When they talked about group work they didn't talk about it like, "Oh, that's great, I can skive off". I think when they talked about group work they actually . . . they were given a boost of confidence when they were in a group, so that's what really made me carry on with it.

Teacher A: They knew that what they were going to say was actually going to be taken into consideration, rather than just being filed aside and nothing will happen with it. (ExitInterview_JTJ_30_11_07, pp. 4-5)

And, as students noted:

Researcher: So what do you think were the key points in the lesson today?

Student C: Discussion.

Researcher: What made you think discussion [student]?

Student C: Oh, just 'cause how she was in the beginning [of the lesson]. She said we're going to have a class discussion, and I think that's what we all said last time [in the stimulated recall interview] that that's what we should do. We should do more discussion work and have a scribe . . . and I think she's [teacher] heard some of that already, so I think she was trying to do that.

Researcher: So you think she's picked up on what you all said in the interview last time?

Student A: Yeah.

Student B: Definitely.

Student C: Oh, she's trying to. (StimRecall_11_09_07, p. 1)

7. *In what ways were the research capabilities of the participating teachers enhanced?*

In their exit interviews the participating teachers discussed ways that the project supported them to develop the skills of a researcher that could in turn enhance their teaching:

I think . . . learning the skill of actually reading interesting articles and actually looking for information, looking at children's responses [when] reading transcripts and identifying gems one might say, and just the general thought process of turning your thinking around and viewing things differently and working perhaps in a way to information gather and develop teaching a bit further. (ExitInterview_RTW_26_11_07, p. 2)

I've got increased knowledge about how research is undertaken. And the confidence to present conferences *et cetera*. (ExitInterview_CL_26_11_07, p. 2)

I'm better at taking a piece of written research and taking an idea from it and actually trying to use it in my teaching. (ExitInterview_RJ_10_11_06, p. 2)

I never really was that interested in research as such. The practicalities is what I wanted. I went to workshops that were practical . . . and if they were backed up by research, all well and good. And I can see now this has . . . widened my view of research and researchers and how the process is important [and] that best practices do need to be backed up by research. (ExitInterview_RJ_10_11_06, p. 2)

Four teachers in 2007 and one teacher in 2006 were able to present at the annual conference of the New Zealand Reading Association, a conference largely aimed at practitioners. In addition, three teachers from the 2005 project presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, a conference largely aimed at researchers. Several of the teachers commented on this experience in terms of their own personal growth during the project:

I've learnt how to . . . prepare and deliver a presentation, which I really had never done before, so that's been valuable. (ExitInterview_RJ_10_11_06, p. 2)

I presented a workshop at [conference] and really enjoyed the opportunities and just that growth and confidence at being able to say what we are doing [and] why we are doing it. (ExitInterview_CL_6_11_06, p. 1)

One of the things I did was present at conference, something that I'd never done before. So that was huge for me. I really enjoyed it, and it highlighted what I had learnt throughout the year and the skills that I have developed. (ExitInterview_EP_26_11_07, p. 1)

I have learnt from watching, presenting and attending the reading conference [which] was a huge challenge and despite everything it was a wonderful experience and something that perhaps I would have thought I would never do, so that has been a very big growth thing, and even interacting in our group, being part of that, and going back to our own staff and presenting critical-literacy-type information, talking about our project. I think that has been personal growth for me. (ExitInterview_RTW_26_11_07, pp. 2-3)

Presenting a paper at the . . . conference was an important part and I really enjoyed it because of all the knowledge that we got from these working days that we have. I could take that and easily talk to people about critical literacy. (ExitInterview_CL_26_11_07, p. 2)

The opportunities to present at conferences have given me confidence to share our knowledge and to get our ideas out there, which has been a personal confidence thing and also professionally. I'm more confident about what we've been going. I believe in it, and I'm able to confidently talk about it and share that with other people, and that's been a good thing to have come from it. (ExitInterview_CL_26_11_07, pp. 1-2)

Some of the teachers also mentioned that as a result of this positive experience in a research project they would be more willing to engage in research in the future:

I guess the other thing I would like to do is definitely become more involved with other research projects as they come up through my teaching career. (ExitInterview_CL_26_11_07, p. 2)

I think probably after being involved in this research project I'd be more willing to be involved in further research projects. (ExitInterview_CL_26_11_07, p. 1)

Strategic value of the research

Reducing inequalities

This pilot project was aimed at reducing disparity and inequalities in literacy achievement within the primary and secondary sectors of New Zealand education through the exploration of critical literacy strategies. Critical reading has two senses: “In its narrower sense critical reading is about responding to particular texts. More widely, however, it involves awareness . . . of what reading itself is” (Wallace, 1992, p. 61). However, “The trouble with much—if not most—literacy teaching is that critical reading has not generally been encouraged” (Lankshear, 1994, p. 13). This project sought to raise achievement in literacy across all curriculum areas for all students regardless of their reading abilities, cultural, social, or linguistic backgrounds by providing opportunities for students to engage critically and deeply with texts (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Teachers participating in the project observed that students with print-processing difficulties felt empowered to participate in the rich discussions during the critical literacy lessons. By providing opportunities for students to participate orally, a barrier was removed and these students were able to experience success when their contributions to the discussion were validated. Participating teachers also found that students who typically performed poorly on the STAR test did not contribute during other types of literacy lessons, as they were not risk takers (i.e., did not like to risk getting the answer “wrong”). However, these students were much more likely to contribute during the critical literacy lessons because, as noted by the students, they knew that:

There's no right or wrong answers, so people aren't scared to share their opinions and, like, 'cause sometimes in . . . other things you hear them say, “No, that's not right” and things like that. But now they can't [say that] because there's no right and wrong answers. (StimRecall_R26_06_07, p. 3)

As discussed in the Findings, we found the current measures of reading achievement inadequate to measure the impact of critical literacy on reading comprehension and reading achievement gains (see also Limitations). We do, however, have a great deal of evidence that demonstrates the ways in which students increased their critical literacy and thus their critical thinking skills over the course of their participation in the project—an important element of lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Addressing diversity

This project situated critical literacy practices within five schools (of deciles 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9), working with 12 classroom teachers and with students from Years 1 to 13. It sought to establish

that such different textual practices enable all students to relate texts to their lives with an increased depth of comprehension.

Critical literacy practices encourage students to problematise and deconstruct texts, to understand a text's cultural or ideological origins, to seek more than one reading, and most importantly to "affirm . . . multiple realities and ways of being" (Hall, 1998, p.191). As such, critical literacy practices have the potential to build upon the resources that all students bring with them to school. Finally, the project enabled teachers and students to articulate and support "commonly held values, such as concern for social justice and the welfare of others, acceptance of cultural diversity, and respect for the environment" (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 14).

The participating teachers commented during a research team working day on the value of being better able to create a talking atmosphere:

Teacher C: I'm just thinking about, if you look at all the results, and I think, didn't a few kids comment on having the confidence to be able to talk about issues . . . or things in the classroom, and I think that confidence is probably one of the biggest problems with those tail end [of achievement] kids . . . So they don't feel as though . . . they're not bright enough or they're not able to speak for whatever reason. I think with . . . [those] kids, often it's not about their ability. With [those] kids it's about whether they feel confident, whether they feel like they're going to be laughed at. Whether they feel marginalised, whether they feel like they're in a supportive environment . . . So if our aim is to create a supportive environment, an environment that's fair, create an environment that listens, and create an environment where every single answer is valid and is given value, therefore those . . . kids are going to improve. (ResearchTeamWorkingDay_30_11_07b, p. 1)

The participating teachers found that the critical literacy strategies encouraged and supported them to increase the diversity of the types of texts they used. They found that by using a more diverse range of texts they were able to engage and motivate more students than they could with some more traditional literacy lessons. For example, a number of the teachers used digital texts and found these to be more engaging and more relevant as a number of students used these sorts of texts at home (see also Bearne, 2003; Carrington & Marsh, 2005).

Understanding the processes of teaching and learning

This project represented "theory busting, theory building, and [a] paradigm shift" in how teachers engage with students' multiple experiences and viewpoints in responding to texts (Luke, 2003, p. 61). "Critical literacy is an activity that reconstructs and develops ALL parties involved, pulling teachers forward as well as the students" (Shor, 1999, p. 9, original emphasis). It moves teachers and students well beyond traditional literacy instruction, which seeks to promote a view of reading more along the lines of literary criticism, rather than a critical view of textuality (Locke, 2000).

During a research team working day the participating teachers discussed ways in which the project had impacted on their professional practices:

Teacher D: That could be the value of the stimulated recall interviews and the student voice templates. [They] informed . . . teaching.

Teacher G: It's almost peer assessing . . . it's students assessing teachers really, isn't it?

Teacher E: I think without that, we wouldn't have done half the stuff. For example, the wait time.

Teacher B: But also the videoing and all of us viewing the videos. I mean it's not just teaching and learning with the children. It's the teaching and learning that we've been involved in as well.

Teacher G: And going back and talking to the kids about it too . . . [I] would just come back from [research team working days] and [tell them] we came up with some ideas that you gave us to try, 'cause they're pretty keen to see that. (ResearchTeamWorking Day_26_11_07, p.3)

As noted in the Findings, the participating teachers identified ways in which participation in the project enabled them to place a greater emphasis on questioning and creating a talking atmosphere. Teachers also spoke about the value of improving their skills as reflective practitioners:

Teacher B: I think you become more reflective too . . .

Teacher C: The reflection's been a big thing, hasn't it? Like being able to reflect through the readings and pulling things out of the readings and reflection from . . . the video sessions and the stimulated recall interviews.

Teacher B: Yeah, the videos were good.

Teacher C: . . . and just talking and being able to share and seeing other [ways].

Teacher B: But . . . it's that collaborative sort of talking, bouncing ideas off each other. Really, if you have a problem you can talk it out and getting those ideas which is, it's been really beneficial. (ExitInterview_GP_10_11_06, pp. 2-3)

Exploring future possibilities

This research has highlighted the need to investigate and develop alternative assessment strategies to effectively assess the developing critical literacy skills of students (see also Future research). Current literacy assessment methods including running records and standardised tests of reading comprehension do not adequately measure the core attributes of critical literacy that we have outlined. There is a notable lack of assessment strategies for teachers to use as they support students to develop critical literacy skills (Morgan & Wyatt-Smith, 2000). There is an urgent need to broaden our current conceptualisation of critical literacy strategies to include forms of assessment that are compatible with and supportive of the critical literacy strategies the research team is developing for the New Zealand context.

In addition, this research has only begun to explore the use of a greater variety of ICT texts such as multimedia and digital texts in literacy instruction. As the field of literacy moves to incorporate a multiliteracies approach that more closely reflects the sorts of literacies people will need in their daily lives (New London Group, 1996), a greater need will arise for teachers to be able to incorporate a wider variety of texts in their teaching. The use of digital texts deserves further research (see Future research).

Practice value

Likely impact on practice

New Zealand educational researchers and teachers have long known how research and theory can inform and enhance teaching practice: “Practice, not theory, is the larger notion . . . while theory and knowledge can help us criticise and develop practice, they must always be criticised finally in terms of practice” (Warnock, 1996, p. 31). Critical literacy strategies offer innovative methods of enriching students’ engagement with texts in cross-curricular settings while supporting links between theory and practice.

The teachers found that their participation in the project gave them the time and space to be the reflective professionals that everyone expects them to be:

But the reality is that this [project] is actually making you accountable as well as reflective as well as empowered . . . I think it keeps teachers fresh, ’ cause you can get stuck in a method or strategy and you never change and yet the kids change. (ResearchTeamWorkingDay_30_11_07b, pp. 6–7)

The project, by enhancing teachers’ skills as researchers, also enabled them to gather evidence on the impact of their teaching on the students. They had evidence through the videotaped lessons, stimulated recall interviews, and rubric data, that their practice had changed.

In addition, the secondary teachers found a number of links between the critical literacy work and the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The big questions, “Why bother doing this? How will it help me and my classes at senior school level?”, can be answered by applying the critical literacy questions to an NCEA exam paper. The connection is reflected between the types of specific questions that are asked of any kind of text and the types of exam questions the students are required to answer. The widening focus of the critical literacy questions gives the students a deeper awareness of questions and answers that can be found in the analysis of texts. They provide the student with the vocabulary to answer questions using the higher-order thinking skills that are required for success at the Merit and Excellence levels of NCEA. The benefits of applying these questions to your teaching and to your students allows for the broadening of questioning skills. There is no doubt that at senior school level the skills of critical

analysis have always been taught and developed. Critical literacy allows the teacher and the students a solid foundation to enhance these skills further.

Below is an example of how the NCEA questions can be matched to the questions of critical literacy. The link between the higher-order thinking skills identified by Anderson et al. (2001) and the critical literacy questions can also be noted:

1. Analyse how one or more minor character(s) helped you understand a main character.

Construction of characters: Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?

Power and interest: In whose interest is the text? Who benefits from the text?

2. Analyse how an important setting was made realistic or believable.

Whose view; whose reality? What view of the world is the text presenting? What kinds of social realities does the text portray? How does the text construct a version of reality?

3. Analyse how techniques were used to strongly affect your emotions in one or two key sections.

Power and interest: What knowledge does the reader need to bring to this text in order to understand it? Which positions, voices, and interests are at play in the text? How is the reader positioned in relation to the composer of the text?

4. Analyse how links between the beginning and end helped you understand a main theme or issue.

Textual structures and features: What are the structures and features of the text?

Power and interest: Why is the text written the way it is?

5. Analyse how your text managed to be both entertaining and thought provoking.

Multiple meanings: What different interpretations of the text are possible? How do contextual factors influence how the text is interpreted? How does the text mean? How else could the text have been written?

6. Analyse how one main character's attempts to solve a problem were important to the text as a whole.

Construction of characters: Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?

Power and interest: In whose interest is the text? Who benefits from the text?

In addition, we believe that there are a number of links between the critical literacy work and the new curriculum document that is likely to impact on practice. Under “values” students will be encouraged to value:

. . . innovation, inquiry, and curiosity, by thinking critically, creatively, and reflectively; diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages . . . ” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10).

These are the kinds of values supported in critical literacy. Under the “key competencies” the critical literacy strategies will enhance students’ thinking; support them to use language, symbols, and texts; and support them to relate to others. “Thinking” is described as being:

. . . about using creative, critical, and metacognitive processes to make sense of information, experiences and ideas. These processes can be applied to purposes such as developing understanding, making decisions, shaping actions, or constructing knowledge. Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of this competency. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12)

In terms of the key competency of “using language, symbols, and texts”,

Students who are competent users of language, symbols, and texts can interpret and use words, numbers, images, movement, metaphor, and technologies in a range of contexts. They recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people’s understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12)

And finally, in terms of the key competency “relating to others”:

This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas... They are aware of how their words and actions affect others. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12)

These competencies have direct links to the poster and the definition of critical literacy as used by this project. Practitioners implementing critical literacy strategies into their regular programme will see the impact on, and relevance to, their practice.

Relevance to practitioners

The participating teachers have had multiple opportunities to explore their understandings of critical literacy, and enhance the strategies they use to incorporate critical literacy into their guided reading lessons and integrated units, that will allow them to extend and challenge all students. During the course of the research, the research team explored and negotiated the development of specific strategies to incorporate critical literacy practices into guided reading lessons (P1) and examine the anticipated benefits for students with the application of critical literacy strategies within integrated units (Wolk, 2003) (see Findings).

The research team has disseminated findings directly to practitioners as a means to enable them to make links between the project and their own professional practices (see also Appendix E). We:

- have presented findings in a coauthored paper at the New Zealand Reading Association and New Zealand Association for Research in Education annual conferences
- will publish coauthored work in peer reviewed journals, *The Reading Teacher and English in Aotearoa*
- have shared findings with Bachelor of Teaching students at the University of Otago.

Transfer to the learning environment

The incorporation of critical literacy strategies into guided reading and cross-curricular units enables “children . . . to be code breakers (How do I crack this?), text participants (What does this mean?), text users (What do I do with this here and now?), and text analysts (What does all this mean to me?)” (Hall, 1998, p. 190). This study made direct links between the theory of critical literacy and classroom practice. Teachers and students were able to:

- take a questioning stance with texts (Wallace, 1992)
- discuss ideological assumptions that underwrite texts (Luke, 1993)
- understand that texts position them in certain ways (Davies, 1997)
- understand that texts are social constructions (Wallace, 1992)
- make connections between texts and their lived experiences (Ministry of Education, 2003)
- critique particular viewpoints and reflect on their own position, re-evaluating it in light of their findings (Ministry of Education, 1997).

These findings have been presented at a number of conferences aimed at practitioners, including the Ulearn conference and regional and national reading association conferences, as well as to local primary schools for their professional development and to Bachelor of Teaching students at the University of Otago (Appendix E). These outputs as well as the lead researcher’s involvement with the Otago Literacy Network will ensure that there are multiple opportunities for the findings from the project to be transferred not only to the learning environment of teachers involved in the project but also more widely.

In addition, in 2008 King’s High School has elected, with the support of Dr Sandretto, to make critical literacy the focus of professional learning for the English department. In designing the year-long programme they have made use of the research design of the project and borrowed a number of elements including using the rubric to gather information on student understandings of critical literacy, using peers to observe lessons and provide collaborative feedback, videotaping a lesson, and gathering student voice through surveys to inform their teaching. They have also selected readings from the literature used in the project. We hope to expand this to other departments in 2009.

Potential benefits to students, parents, teachers, and communities

In addition to benefits already described for participating students and teachers, we believe that the community will realise benefits in terms of increased student achievement. There are benefits, however, beyond increased literacy achievement. As noted by Alverman and Eakle (2003):

Comprehension is only the first step toward developing a critical awareness of all kinds of texts. It is often said that comprehending is equivalent to constructing a text's meaning, whereas reading critically is focused on figuring out how a text comes to have a particular meaning. Taught to read critically, students will be able to analyze how writers, illustrators, and others involved represent people and their ideas—in short, how individuals who create texts make those texts work. (p. 14)

As educators involved in preparing students for an unknown future, we believe we have an obligation to reshape literacy practices better fitted to the kinds of literacy practices our students are engaging with outside of the classroom, rather than fitting students into literacy practices as they currently stand (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).

Recommendations for future research

Morgan and Wyatt-Smith (2000) advised, “Critical literacy must ask how it is possible to enact a form of assessment which is not incompatible with its espoused theory and practice” (p. 138). This continues to be a central concern for the Critical Literacy Research Team. While we found the rubric and stimulated recall interviews with students to be promising tools, we believe that these should form part of a broader repertoire of tools that teachers and administrators can use to chart student development of critical literacy.

One tool that has been developed at the end of the project and needs to be trialled in future research is that of a critical literacy self-assessment tool (ResearchTeamWorkingDay_30_11_07, p. 10; Appendix J). Students could use the tool to position their understandings of their ability to use different critical literacy strategies and chart their growth over the year. Such a tool might make different critical literacy skills more explicit and support student acquisition and application of them. The rubric may need to be adapted for use at different levels.

Future research into the development and implementation of critical literacy across the sector needs to build upon the successful research design of this project and explore ways to support schools and teachers to sustain their practices. What sorts of classroom and school-wide support mechanisms need to be in place in order for the promising practices developed in this project to continue?

Future research also needs to examine the role of multiliteracies and ICT including multimedia texts, digital texts, and the use of Web1 and Web2 to support a multiliteracy approach to literacy instruction. Australia, for example, is building on the work of leading literacy leaders and

incorporating a multiliteracies approach in both pedagogy and policy. New Zealand needs to investigate ways in which these approaches will support the new curriculum.

5. Limitations

As noted in the Findings, we are well aware that there are strengths and limitations in any assessment tool. Nonetheless, a continuing limitation for the use of critical literacy in the curriculum is the lack of a standardised assessment tool to chart student growth in comprehension and critical literacy skills. One area of future research would be for a team with members with expertise in the area of assessment to work together with team members with expertise in critical literacy to design and pilot a repertoire of assessment strategies to use for formative and summative assessment.

6. Capability and capacity building

Three years of funding from the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (including the 2005 research) enabled 10 teachers to be involved for two years. One important finding from this project is that teachers need time and space in order to engage with the research literature, connect with theory, and reflect on their own practice. They also need support to develop the skills and attributes of researchers. As discussed in the Findings, the teachers found that participating in the project enabled them to develop the skills of a researcher that could in turn enhance their teaching, and supported them to disseminate results to colleagues in their own schools and more widely at conferences. They also reported that, as a result of this positive experience in a research project, they would be more willing to engage in research in the future. Appendix E lists the research outputs to date from the project. Without the collaborative research team working days, the full team would not have been able to disseminate findings as widely as they have at this stage. Future research needs to take into consideration the issue of time and space for teacher practitioners/researchers.

7. Conclusions

Over the course of the project the participating teachers became more confident and skilled at implementing critical literacy strategies. They developed and piloted a critical literacy rubric as a means to better understand student development of critical literacy skills. They also made use of the stimulated recall interviews as a means to gain feedback on their teaching and examine student understandings of critical literacy. The participating teachers gained skills as researchers and presented their work at national and international conferences. The Critical Literacy Research Team firmly believes that critical literacy should be an integral part of any balanced literacy programme (Sandretto & Critical Literacy Research Team, 2006b). To support this, other types of assessment need to be developed that will give students multiple ways to demonstrate their ability to analyse texts. As noted by one of the students: “Critical literacy gets your brain thinking” (StimRecall_R_3_4_07, p. 4).

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of transcripts 2006

Date	Teacher	Transcript type
2/03/06	L & C	Initial Interview (P1)
2/03/06	W, R & T	Initial Interview (P1)
2/03/06	E & P	Initial Interview (P1)
9/03/06	P & G	Initial Interview (P2)
9/03/06	J & R	Initial Interview (P2)
21/03/06	C	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
21/03/06	L	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
23/03/06	T	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
23/03/06	R	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
23/03/06	W	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
29/03/06	J	Whole class social studies lesson
29/03/06	J- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
29/03/06	P	Whole class social studies lesson
29/03/06	P- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
30/03/06	E	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
30/03/06	P	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
30/03/06	G	Whole class social studies lesson
30/03/06	G- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
31/03/06	R	Whole class social studies lesson
31/03/06	R- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview

4/05/06	Phase 1	Research team working day
4&5/05/06	Phase 1	Research team working day
5/05/06	Phase 1	Research team working day (tape 3)
11/05/06	Phase 2	Research team working day
12/05/06	Phase 2	Research team working day
31/05/06	J	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
31/05/06	J- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
31/05/06	P	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
31/05/06	P- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
1/06/06	L	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
1/06/06	C	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
7/06/06	T	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
7/06/06	R	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
7/06/06	W	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
8/06/06	P	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
8/06/06	E	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
8/06/06	G	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
8/06/06	G- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
8/06/06	R	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
8/06/06	R- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
29/06/06	Phase 2	Research team working day
30/06/06	Phase 2	Research team working day
20/07/06	C	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
20/07/06	L	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus

26/07/06	T	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
26/07/06	R	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
27/07/06	P	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
27/07/06	E	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
11/08/06	Phase 1	Research team working day
16/08/06	J	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
16/08/06	J- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
16/08/06	P	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
16/08/06	P- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
24/08/06	P	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
24/08/06	P- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
25/08/06	R	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
25/08/06	R- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
25/08/06	W	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
25/08/06	W- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
29/08/06	E	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
29/08/06	E- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
29/08/06	G	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
29/08/06	G- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
29/08/06	R	Whole class lesson w/ critical literacy focus
29/08/06	R- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
30/08/06	T	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
30/08/06	T- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
30/08/06	L	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus

30/08/06	L- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
4/09/06	C	Guided reading lesson w/ critical literacy focus
4/09/06	C- Focus group	Stimulated recall interview
15/09/06	Phase 1	Research team working day
17/10/06	Phase 1	Research team working day
26/10/06a	Phase 1	Research team working day
26/10/06b		
27/10/06a	Phase 1	Research team working day
27/10/06b		
27/10/06c		
3/11/06a	Phase 2	Research team working day
3/11/06b		
3/11/06c		
6/11/06d	Phase 1	Research team working day
6/11/06	T, W & R	Exit Interview
6/11/06	C & L	Exit Interview
6/11/06	Peter Thorn & Elsie Boyens	Exit Interview
9/11/06a	Phase 2	Research team working day
9/11/06b		
10/11/06	R & J	Exit Interview
10/11/06	P & G	Exit Interview

Appendix B: List of transcripts 2007 – Phase 1

Date/File	Teacher	Transcript type
1/03/07a 1/03/07b 1/03/07c 1/03/07d		Research Team Working Day
8/03/07	G, P & T	Initial Interview
8/03/07	J & J	Initial Interview
15/03/07	G	Lesson
15/03/07a 15/03/07b	G	Stimulated Recall Interview
15/03/07	T	Lesson
15/03/07	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
20/03/07	P	Lesson
20/03/07	P	Stimulated Recall Interview
2/04/07	J	Lesson
2/04/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
3/04/07	J	Lesson
3/04/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview

27/04/07a 27/04/07b 27/04/07c 27/04/07d 27/04/07e 27/04/07g 27/04/07h 27/04/07i 27/04/07j 27/04/07k 27/04/07l 27/04/07m 27/04/07n 27/04/07o		Research Team Working Day
30/04/07b 30/04/07c 30/04/07d 30/04/07e 30/04/07f 30/04/07g 30/04/07h 30/04/07i 30/04/07j 30/04/07k 30/04/07l 30/04/07m 30/04/07n 30/04/07o		Research Team Working Day
21/05/07	J	Lesson
21/05/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
22/05/07	P	Lesson
22/05/07	P	Stimulated Recall Interview

22/05/07	G	Lesson
22/05/07	G	Stimulated Recall Interview
22/05/07	J	Lesson
22/05/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
07/06/07	T	Lesson
07/06/07	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
28/06/07a 28/06/07b 28/06/07c		Research Team Working Day
29/06/07a 29/06/07b 29/06/07c 29/06/07d 29/06/07e		Research Team Working Day
23/07/07	J	Lesson
23/07/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
24/07/07	J	Lesson
24/07/07a 24/07/07b	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
26/07/07	T	Lesson
26/07/07	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
17/08/07a 17/08/07b 17/08/07c 17/08/07d 17/08/07e		Research Team Working Day
18/08/07a 18/08/07b		Research Team Working Day

10/09/07	J	Lesson
10/09/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
11/09/07	J	Lesson
11/09/07	J	Stimulated Recall Interview
20/09/07	T	Lesson
20/09/07	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
29/11/07a 29/11/07b 29/11/07c		Research Team Working Day
30/11/07b		Research Team Working Day
06/07	G & P	Exit Interview
30/11/07b	J, J & T	Exit Interview

Appendix C: List of transcripts 2007 – Phase 2

Date/File	Teacher	Transcript type
1/03/07	L & C	Initial Interview (P2)
1/03/07	W, R & T	Initial Interview (P2)
1/03/07	E & P	Initial Interview (P2)
1/03/07a 1/03/07b		Research Team Working Day
2/03/07a 2/03/07b 2/03/07c 2/03/07d 2/03/07e		Research Team Working Day
30/03/07	C	Lesson
30/03/07	C	Stimulated Recall Interview
3/04/07	W	Lesson
3/04/07	W	Stimulated Recall Interview
3/04/07	R	Lesson
3/04/07	R	Stimulated Recall Interview
5/04/07	L	Lesson
5/04/07a 5/04/07c	L	Stimulated Recall Interview
1/05/07	P	Lesson
1/05/07	P	Stimulated Recall Interview

1/05/07 1/05/07 Part2	E	Lesson
1/05/07	E	Stimulated Recall Interview
4/05/07	T	Lesson
4/05/07	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
31/05/07a 31/05/07b 31/05/07c 31/05/07d 31/05/07e 31/05/07f 31/05/07g 31/05/07h 31/05/07i 31/05/07j 31/05/07k		Research Team Working Day
1/06/07a 1/06/07b 1/06/07c 1/06/07d 1/06/07e 1/06/07f 1/06/07g 1/06/07h 1/06/07i		Research Team Working Day
18/06/07	L (no transcript- see S lesson & Stim Recall)	Lesson Stimulated Recall Interview
18/06/07	C	Lesson
18/06/07	C	Stimulated Recall Interview
19/06/07	P	Lesson
19/06/07	P	Stimulated Recall Interview

19/06/07	E	Lesson
19/06/07	E	Stimulated Recall Interview- missing file
20/06/07	S	Lesson
20/06/07a 20/06/07b	S	Stimulated Recall Interview
26/06/07	W	Lesson
26/06/07	W	Stimulated Recall Interview
26/06/07	R	Lesson
26/06/07	R	Stimulated Recall Interview
23/07/07	T	Lesson
23/07/07a 23/07/07b	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
30/07/07a 30/07/07b 30/07/07c		Research Team Working Day
31/07/07		Research Team Working Day
6/08/07	L	Lesson
6/08/07	L	Stimulated Recall Interview
6/08/07	C	Lesson
6/08/07	C	Stimulated Recall Interview
7/08/07	R	Lesson
7/08/07	R	Stimulated Recall Interview
7/08/07	W	Lesson
7/08/07	W	Stimulated Recall Interview
13/08/07	P	Lesson
13/08/07	P	Stimulated Recall Interview
13/08/07	E	Lesson

13/08/07	E	Stimulated Recall Interview
17/08/07	T	Lesson
17/08/07	T	Stimulated Recall Interview
17/09/07a 17/09/07b 17/09/07c 17/09/07d 17/09/07e		Research Team Working Day
26/11/07	R, W & T	Exit Interview
26/11/07	L & C	Exit Interview
26/11/07	P & E	Exit Interview
26/11/07		Research Team Working Day

Appendix D: Partnership Agreement

A collaborative self-study into the development and integration of critical literacy practices

Preamble

The purpose of this partnership agreement is to describe the nature of the partnership between the members of the research project *A collaborative self-study into the development and integration of critical literacy practices* and to outline the rights, roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes agreed to by the partners.¹

All team members have had opportunities for input into this partnership agreement:

East Taieri School- Principal: Jennifer Horgan, and Teachers: Rae Parker, Garth Powell, Peter Thorn and Elsie Boyens.

Port Chalmers School- Principal: Robyne Selbie; Teachers: Peta Hill, Jennie Upton, Clive Swale and Lisa Hansen.

Balaclava School- Principal: Sally Direen; Teachers: Wendy Lamond and Rosemary Coleman.

Brockville School- Principal: Ben Sincock; Teacher: Tui Quaqua

University of Otago- Researcher: Dr Susan Sandretto and Dr Karen Nairn, research mentor.

Principles:

This partnership agreement is based on:

- *respect* for each person involved and the unique knowledge, skills and experience they will bring to the project
- *commitment* to the conduct of the project according to ethical principles outlined in the University of Otago policy on Human Ethics
- *an ethic of care and respect* for the teachers and students participating in the project and for their individual school cultures and communities
- *commitment* from all partners to their responsibilities under the Treaty of Waitangi
- *commitment* from all partners to attend meetings, meet deadlines and carry out key tasks acknowledging that there may well be times when extra support is required to fulfil these demands.

¹ Adapted from Kane (2002) *Making sense of learning at secondary school*.

The key roles of the team members are:

- The **participating teachers** are responsible for implementing the collaboratively developed critical literacy strategies within the guided reading lessons (Phase 1) or integrated curricular units (Phase 2), critically reflecting on their professional practice, gathering assessment data on students, and contributing to the collaborative research design, data analysis, theorising and writing of the research findings according to their levels of comfort and expertise.
- The **principals** are responsible for acting as advisors and supporting the participating teachers in their schools.
- The **research mentor** will be responsible for critical feedback into the development of the research design, reviewing and contributing to milestone reports, and meeting once each term with the researchers for discussion of research progress.
- The **researcher** Susan Sandretto will be responsible for the overall management of the research project. She will be responsible for ensuring that deadlines are met and that open communication and regular contact enable all team members to have input into each phase of the project. Susan will liaise with NZCER and provide milestone and final reports. She will be responsible for effective and transparent management of the budget and related administration matters and ensuring that the research project meets all obligations as outlined in the University of Otago's contract with NZCER. Susan will be responsible for gaining ethical consent through the University of Otago's Human Ethics Committee.

In addition, Susan will be responsible for data collection through videotaped lessons, audiotaped individual interviews and group meetings. She will facilitate and organise group meetings, and support the participating teachers through regular contact and site visits. Susan will be responsible for coordinating the dissemination of the research results.

All partners will:

- contribute to the ongoing implementation of the research project according to their levels of comfort and expertise.
- discuss the Milestone Reports and opportunities for collaborative input will be assured prior to submission.
- have input into the interpretation and ongoing analysis of the emerging data through group meetings and opportunities for critique and feedback at significant stages.

Project Team Meetings:

Meetings of the project team will be held during each school term according to the research plan and project timeline. During these meetings, the research team will collaboratively develop the critical literacy strategies to be implemented, refine the research design and data collection methods, analyse the data, theorise and co-author the research results. The principals (advisors) and the research mentor will attend these meetings as appropriate. The advisors and research mentor will receive drafts of all milestone reports and have opportunities to contribute to the development of these.

Communication:

- Agendas and notes of scheduled meetings will be kept and distributed by email.
- The research team will maintain regular email contact through an email list used for updating members on progress of report, distributing draft reports for comment, etc.

Conflicts:

- There is *commitment* from all partners to open communication and the sharing of information. Should any conflicts arise in the course of this project they will be discussed within the group and resolved by consensus within the parameters of the contract negotiated with NZCER whenever possible.
- Members of the research team are able to seek the support and guidance of appropriate people within their school and/or University of Otago personnel in seeking to negotiate any issues that may arise.

Appendix E: Critical Literacy Research Team outputs

- Harford, J., Sandretto, S., Klenner, S., Brown, G., Graham, T., Maw, P., et al. (2007). *Integrating critical literacy strategies into media studies: Lessons from ongoing research*. Paper presented at the National Association of Media Educators of New Zealand (NAME) conference, Auckland.
- Sandretto, S., & Critical Literacy Research Team. (2006). Extending guided reading with critical literacy. *set: Research Information for Teachers*, 3, 23–28.
- Sandretto, S., & Critical Literacy Research Team. (2007). *Critical literacy*. Paper presented at the mini-conference of the New Zealand Reading Association (NZRA), Otago Branch, Dunedin.
- Sandretto, S., & Klenner, S. (2006). *A collaborative self-study into the development and integration of critical literacy practices: A focus on student voice*. Paper presented at the national conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE), Rotorua.
- Sandretto, S., & Klenner, S. (2007a). *“I just feel like I don’t know where to go”: An examination of the use of dialogue in critical literacy pedagogy*. Paper presented at the Future Directions in Literacy: International Conversations conference, Sydney.
- Sandretto, S., & Klenner, S. (2007b). *Interrogating the use of dialogue in critical literacy pedagogy*. Paper presented at the national conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE), Christchurch.
- Sandretto, S., & Klenner, S. (2007c). *“The reality of dealing with all of these differences”: Deconstructing a narrative of “inclusion”*. Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Language, Education, and Diversity, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Sandretto, S., Klenner, S., Boyens, E., Thorn, P., Hansen, L., Swale, C., et al. (2006). *Integrating critical literacy strategies into guided reading lessons: Lessons from ongoing research*. Paper presented at the 30th national conference of the New Zealand Reading Association (NZRA), Bay of Islands.

- Sandretto, S., Klenner, S., Boyens, E., Thorn, P., Hansen, L., Swale, C., et al. (2007a). *Extending guided reading with critical literacy*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the New Zealand Reading Association (NZRA), New Plymouth.
- Sandretto, S., Klenner, S., Boyens, E., Thorn, P., Hansen, L., Swale, C., et al. (2007b). *Weaving critical literacy strategies into integrated curriculum..* Paper presented at the annual conference of the New Zealand Reading Association (NZRA), New Plymouth.
- Sandretto, S., Klenner, S., Parker, R., Powell, G., Hill, P., & Upton, J. (2006). *Weaving critical literacy strategies into integrated curriculum: Lessons from ongoing research*. Paper presented at the 30th national conference of the New Zealand Reading Association (NZRA), Bay of Islands.
- Sandretto, S., & Tilson, J. (2006). *Infusing critical literacy into teacher education: A teaching/research nexus case study*. Paper presented at the conference of the Teacher Education Forum of Aotearoa New Zealand (TEFANZ), Dunedin.
- Sandretto, S., Tilson, J., Hill, P., Howland, R., Parker, R., & Upton, J. (2006). *Collaborative self-study research on critical literacy practices: Research practices as texts*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Francisco.
- Swale, C., & Critical Literacy Research Team. (2007). *Introduction to critical literacy*. Paper presented at the ULearn annual conference, Auckland.

Appendix F: Word bank of metalanguage

constructed
inclusion
exclusion
representation
stereotype
racism
gender issues
bias
text
viewpoint
equity
fairness
benefits
relevant
irrelevant
knowledge
experience
importance
interpretation
reality
interest
values
voice
difference
power
privilege
images
empathy

Appendix G: Critical literacy question cards

<p>What is this text about?</p> <p>How do we know?</p>	<p>Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?</p>
<p>Why are we reading and/or viewing this text?</p>	<p>What does the composer of the text want us to know?</p>
<p>What is this text about?</p> <p>How do we know?</p>	<p>Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?</p>
<p>Why are we reading and/or viewing this text?</p>	<p>What does the composer of the text want us to know?</p>

<p>What are the structures and features of the text?</p>	<p>What sort of genre does the text belong to?</p>

What do the images suggest?	What do the words suggest?
What kind of language is used in the text?	What kind of language is used in the text?
What are the structures and features of the text?	What sort of genre does the text belong to?
What do the images suggest?	What do the words suggest?

How are children, teenagers or young adults constructed in this text?	How are adults constructed in this text?
Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?	Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?

How are children, teenagers or young adults constructed in this text?	How are adults constructed in this text?
Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?	Why has the composer of the text represented the characters in a particular way?

What is this text about? How do we know?	Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?
Why are we reading and/or viewing this text?	What does the composer of the text want us to know?
What is this text about? How do we know?	Who would be most likely to read and/or view this text and why?
Why are we reading and/or viewing this text?	What does the composer of the text want us to know?

Appendix H: Critical literacy lesson plan template

Title and level of text
Rationale for selection of text
Link to critical literacy poster/definition
Questions to elicit student discussion
Metalinguage
Reflections on the lesson

Appendix I: Rubric for assessment

Coversheet: Critical Literacy Rubric

Underpinning principles (philosophy)

- All texts are social constructions. (Thus, this point on poster is not directly assessed).
- Critical literacy is a cumulative set of critical thinking strategies/skills that will be developed and enhanced over a number of years; and practised over a lifetime.
- Critical literacy is about supporting students to become aware of multiple interpretations.

Assessment design

- pre-/post-test design
- ‘snapshot’ of students’ critical thinking
- supplements running record and/or STAR data
- to be used with small groups in a guided reading lesson
- in some circumstances the teacher may elect to conduct an individual assessment
- teacher may elect to use as a self- or peer-assessment tool

Purpose

- pre-test is to inform teaching and learning
- post-test is to gauge progress and next-step learning

Task development (responsibility of teacher)

1. Lessons used with rubric have been developed for the purpose of CL assessment.

2. Provide as many opportunities as possible for students to articulate their thinking and achieve each aspect of critical literacy.
3. Allow for wait-time during questioning and use neutral responses to student answers.
4. Use follow-up questions such as ‘Why do you think that?’ or ‘Can you explain further?’ or ‘What makes you think that?’ or ‘Explain your thinking’ to provide an opportunity for students to justify their responses or scaffold.
5. In order to assess all five areas, multiple lessons will be necessary. (In an ideal world assessment would be completed within a fortnight.)
6. Attach copy of CL lesson plan templates.

Level of performance

With support

Student is able to demonstrate aspect of critical literacy with teacher prompting and/or scaffolding.

Identifies

Student is able to state, list, or record with regard to critical literacy aspect, but does not provide justification even when prompted.

Justifies

Student is able to rationalise, explain, or debate with regard to critical literacy aspect with or without prompting.

Expectations

Age of the student and exposure to critical literacy will be among the many factors in determining the level of performance. We caution teachers to avoid viewing the assessment rubric as the sole indicator of the student’s overall achievement and growth in critical literacy. It is intended as part of a larger programme of formative and summative assessment.

Link to poster	Criteria The student is able to recognise:	With support	Identifies List State Record	Justifies Explain Debate “Because . . .”	Independent e.g., able to apply to multiple texts without prompting
All readers have different knowledge and experiences that they bring to texts	links between text and personal experience/knowledge				
Readers will make sense of texts differently	multiple viewpoints				
People make choices about who and/or what is included so some things and/or people may be excluded	incidences of in/exclusion in the text				
Choices are made about how things and/or people are represented	how people/animals/topic are represented in the text				
We can develop an awareness of how texts influence our thoughts and actions	influence of text on his/her thinking				

Appendix J: Critical literacy self-assessment tool

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
	Not so much			Very much so	

For each statement, rate yourself and provide an example from the text you just read.

1. I am able to make links between the text and my personal experiences.

Give an example:

2. I am able to identify multiple viewpoints.

Give an example:

3. I am able to identify incidences of inclusion (or exclusion).

Give an example:

4. I am able to discuss how people/animals/topic are represented in the text.

Give an example:

5. I am able to discuss the influence the text has had on my thinking.

Give an example:

Appendix K: Stimulated Recall Interview schedule

1. What do you think were the key points in today's lesson? (What did you learn about critical literacy today?)
2. Are there words you did not know in today's lesson? Are there 'glossary' words or critical literacy words that you are now more familiar with?
3. What does critical literacy mean to you?
4. What is a text?
5. Why do you think we're doing critical literacy?
6. What did the teacher do today that helped you learn about critical literacy?
7. How confident are you to express your own point of view when it is different to that of the teacher (or the majority of the class)?
8. If you were the teacher, what would you do to help students learn about critical literacy?
9. (Critical literacy questions): Select one question and tell us why it is a good fit for this text.

Appendix L: Criteria for video analysis

Criteria for Video Analysis: Promoting Open Dialogue

Teachers seeking to promote open dialogue in critical literacy lessons:

1. Treat students as having important understandings and contributions for discussion. Student questions are considered significant initiation points for discussion.
2. Encourage and develop multiple perspectives rather than consensus interpretations.
3. Encourage and explicitly guide students to add on to the ideas of other students in what are sometimes termed uptake or follow-ons.
4. Allow time for developing understanding and engaging in discussion.
5. Emphasise the use of authentic teacher questions which do not have a pre-specified answer.
6. Model the idea of taking a position and expressing opinions appropriately, including a willingness to reposition themselves as nonexperts and genuine participants.
7. Seek to balance explicit teaching and student-directed discussion.

Appendix M: Student voice template

Name _____ Date _____

Reflections on SRI	Potential change	What changed?