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President's Pen

Nau mai haere mai, Tēnā koutou, Ko Margaret Carter tōku ingoa. He Kaiako ahau no te kura o Tirimoana Primary and President of the Auckland Literacy Association.

From the Auckland Literacy Association [ALA] Seasons Greetings and end of year tidings. This year the ALA has had what could be called a return to 'normal' year; with events, conferences, and engagements, and what a fantastic year it has been!

During 2023 ALA has hosted and enjoyed such memorable events from the Catholic Kāhui Ako speaking at our AGM on Critical Literacies, to the Young Authors and Illustrators Event for our ākonga, alongside the Gala Dinner with Dr Rae Si'ilata in Term 3, and most recently Dr John Milne's presentation of research around Reading for Pleasure and Te Mātaiaho | the refreshed NZ curriculum. These events have been powerful, engaging and most of all delivering quality learning to the teams of educators who have attended.

Many members of the ALA were able to attend the NZLA conference in Southland earlier this year and supported the launch of the "Lindie Lou Adventure Series", getting to work alongside author Jeanne Bender and illustrator Marcus Winter. The NZLA conference, with the theme of "Lighting Our Literacy Pathway" was a fantastic example of bringing together researchers and keynote speakers who were able to share the latest information in literacy.

The ALA has had the great honour this year, of conferring two Life Membership Awards on Prof. Warick Elley and Dr Libby Limbrick, for their endless contributions to literacy and as members of the Auckland and New Zealand Literacy Associations. These are two very incredible people who have dedicated a lifetime to research, literature and literacy.

Finally, the ALA launched a new social media platform five months ago to keep members updated and engaged in key events and information from ALA and NZLA. The uptake on this has been amazing! The platform shares book reviews every month, literacy promotions, literary articles as well as ALA Event Posts and happenings.

Looking ahead to 2024 the ALA will continue to engage with NZLA to deliver professional development opportunities for teachers and educators across Auckland. For Term 1 ALA is excited to have Dr Murray Gadd as our guest speaker at the AGM with the launch of his new book "Building Young Writers". Keep a look out for more information!

For now, though, warmest regards and best wishes for the summer break.

Ngā mihi nui
Margaret Carter
ALA 2023 Presidents

Auckland Literacy Association

Save the date:
Wednesday 28th
February

Come along and join
us at our free event

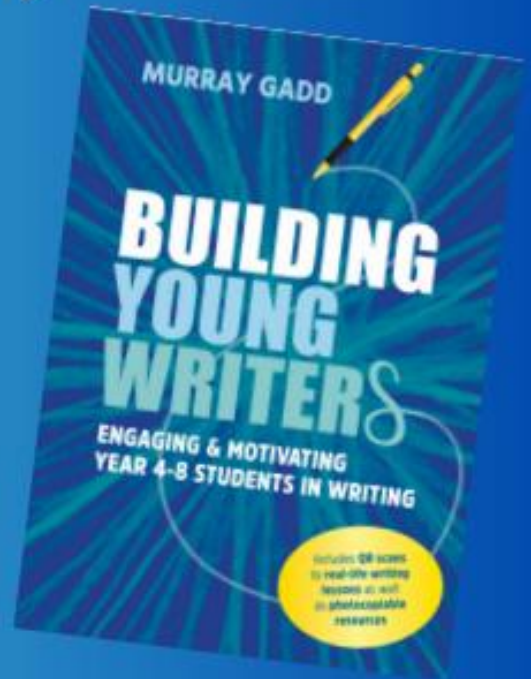
Murray Gadd:
Building Young Writers
presentation

Murray Gadd: Book Launch

ALA: AGM

4:30 PM
Tirimoana School

Look out for the registration and
more information coming soon!



AUCKLAND LITERACY ASSOCIATION

2024!

TERM 1

Writing acceleration
Murray Gadd - Building Young Writers
Book Launch and AGM
Wednesday 28th February
4:30PM
Tirimoana School



TERM 2

Two amazing events
1- Literacy Development through Literature

2-The Common Practice Model

Time and Venue TBC



TERM 3

Special Children's Event
Hands on workshops exploring literacy through the ARTS for Y5-8 students from member schools

Time and Venue TBC



TERM 4

Current Research

3 Stunning researchers will be sharing their research and how this impacts us as the classroom teacher

Time and Venue TBC.



NZLA SPONSORED TEACHER CONFERENCE REPORT

Lighting the Literacy Pathway
25 September to 2 October 2023

After luckily winning the position of sponsored teacher in 2021 it was with great pleasure I was able to board the plane to Invercargill!



The 2023 NZLA conference “Lighting the Literacy Pathway” took place during our September School holidays in Invercargill and provided an excellent platform for professionals, researchers, and experts in literacy to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and foster collaboration. The conference attracted many participants from around New Zealand with a few international participants.

There were 7 brilliant Keynote speakers and the conference commenced with an engaging speaker Kathryn Berkett who set the tone for the event. Notable figures such as Murray Gadd, Anne Milne, Kath Murdoch, Christine Braid, Lyn Stone and Andrea Greer delivered insightful speeches that emphasized the importance of a range of wellbeing, child centred learning around literacy and

techniques.

The breakout sessions addressed critical topics in literacy. Prominent researchers and practitioners, including Sue McDowell presented their research findings and insights, which stimulated discussions and provided attendees with valuable takeaways.

The conference included an excellent ‘authors evening’ featuring 2 local authors Callan Goodall and Ella West and international author Jeanne Bender supported by our own Sandman Marcus Winter. Jeanne has recently written a book based in NZ that was launched earlier in the afternoon. This evening allowed participants to hear about each author’s different experience from the ideas through to the publication and sales of their books. We were also treated to beautiful surroundings and amazing food.



The NZLA conference was a resounding success, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and stimulating discussions in the field of Literacy. The event served as an excellent platform for those in the field of literacy education to stay updated on the latest developments and create meaningful connections. The insights I gained will have an ongoing and immediate impact on my own understanding and practice.

It was an absolute privilege to attend this as a sponsored teacher, and I strongly encourage all teachers to join your local associations and take up the chance to grow and improve your own knowledge and enhance your classroom practice with the opportunities provided by attending these events and the support you receive to enable you to do so.

Anna Watkin
Auckland Literacy Association Sponsored Teacher
2023



NZLA SPONSORED TEACHER CONFERENCE REPORT

Lighting the Literacy Pathway
25 September to 2 October 2023

I was privileged to attend the New Zealand Literacy Association conference in Invercargill as a sponsored teacher and I express my thanks to Auckland Literacy Association for this opportunity.

The conference was a vibrant and energising meeting of teachers and educators who are passionate about developing literacy in their students. In a world where wars and disasters often dominate the news channels, it was a magical and uplifting experience.

The keynote speakers were inspiring. Kath Murdoch spoke about the power of inquiry and the importance of teaching students the language of inquiry from a young age. Kathryn Beckett talked about the importance of resilience and aiding young people to develop healthy brains. She advocates healing dysregulated environments. Andrea Greer divulged the importance of the gut-brain connection and of developing practical ways to support the nervous system. Murray Gadd showed that ways of developing writing which work in our schools can also be used with intellectually challenged students. Christine Braid outlined the role of a structured approach and a flexible approach to developing literacy, "Bringing together structure and flexibility provides the best opportunity for all learners to succeed." Anne Milne discussed the way we shape our expectations for Māori learners, encouraging the development of a space for their stories and their ways of learning and knowing.



There was a rich selection of stimulating workshops. Key among these for me were: Christine Braid's workshop on the importance of recognising the links between pictures and text in picture books and how both media weave together to tell a story. A highlight was Marcus Winter's sand art for storytelling. It was a magical way to learn about New Zealand history and offers a powerful means of linking image and text to tell stories. I was privileged to present my doctoral research on children's metalinguistic awareness and its importance when learning to write. I was humbled by a full house of attentive attendees who responded with positive feedback.

At the author's evening social event, Jeanne Bender, an avid traveller, presented her Lindie Lou adventure books, a charming and delightful introduction to world travel for young readers. Callum Winter read to us his book *Midmost Marvin*. I was struck by the street cred of the language and that children would love his words. Ella West read from her latest book, "The Sound of My Heart". The authors inspired lighting the literacy pathway for young people with their creativity.

Among many exciting exhibitors, it was encouraging to see Reading Recovery, Tui Tuia Learning Circle and Scholastic holding stalls in the foyer. Reading Recovery tutors were able to tell their story in their words and offer another dimension to our understanding of literacy acquisition. Scholastic raised a significant sum of money for Books for Oceania and will be sending books to Tongan schools.



Social events were also important and an exciting experience for me personally was seeing the Southern Lights in the hotel car park (where the streetlights were not lit) with Jeanne Bender.

All in all, it was an intense and wonderful conference and the highlight of our literacy year.



Moira Newton
Auckland Literacy Association Sponsored Teacher
2023

READING FOR PLEASURE WITH DR JOHN MILNE

1 November 2023

The Auckland Literacy Association Term 4 Literacy Event was held at Massey Primary School where Dr John Milne, an AUT senior lecturer, presented aspects of his doctoral research into Reading for Pleasure.

The afternoon began at about 3.30pm with an informal time of conversation and afternoon tea in the school library. Christine Calis and Fiona Dutton from Te Manawa library, and Emma Smolden from the National Library set up tables of resources available for loan to support Reading for Pleasure. Ailish McAllister had 'teacher' stamps that could be ordered from Stampede.nz <https://nzstampede.co.nz/>

For the more formal time of the afternoon, we all moved into the FLE (senior learning area), where Bruce Barnes (Massey Principal) welcomed the 50+ attendees and Heather Bell awarded Life Memberships to ALA to Prof Warwick Elley for his literary work in the Pacific and Dr Libby Limbrick for their outstanding contributions to literacy. Linda Vagana, from Duffy Books was also a mentioned VIP guest, for her efforts in providing books for homes and Scholastics amazing support of the ALA through the years.

Dr John Milne then gave his presentation. His research has focused on reading, children's experiences of reading and the development of different styles of reading. Reading for Pleasure and John's own research have become linked to provide us with the notion of 'reader identity'.

John has been involved in major research projects:

1. Communities of Readers (six projects so far)
2. Growing up in NZ. Data collected over eight years from babies born 2009/10. Questions asked about reading for pleasure and other variables.
3. Covid. Research is being done on how Covid / lockdowns have affected reading for pleasure.



In this session John shared some of the important outcomes of that research and what it means for us as educators. The inclusion of Reading for Pleasure in Te Mātaiho: The Refreshed NZ curriculum coming into play in 2024, and the ongoing debates about the teaching of reading within schools.

Some important discussion centred around the learners' seeing teachers as readers, teachers recognising that children who read are busy people who also like to read and the correlation between those who regularly read for pleasure and high academic attainment.

There are plans for another research project beginning 2024 involving schools and ECE centres with the National Library assisting with advice and support however, funding is still unconfirmed yet.

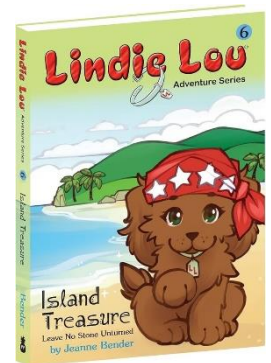
The afternoon ended with some lucky door prize winners: Helensville School and Royal Road, provided by Scholastic.

Nova Gibson
ALA Executive



ISLAND TREASURE: LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED**By Jeanne Bender**

This is the sixth early chapter book in a series titled the Lindie Lou Adventure Series, featuring a puppy named Lindie Lou who loves to explore, and to make new friends. Lindie Lou's first four adventures are set in the USA, and her fifth is above the arctic circle in Norway. Such diverse settings allow young readers to experience diversity in many different forms. This latest chapter book in the series brings Lindie Lou and her friends to Aotearoa New Zealand.



The story is not simply straightforward but skilfully weaves some of the history involving the shipwreck of the HMS Buffalo in Mercury Bay, Whitianga, and sensitively explores the nature of what is precious through the search for a pounamu greenstone hei tiki heirloom. A local historian is introduced, along with a sand artist. Marcus Winter, the sand artist, is not only a key character, but has been an excellent central advisor in things taha Māori. The story, the glossary, the explanations, and the supplementary information all combine to powerfully strengthen the opportunities for young readers to extend their cross-cultural understanding without being patronising in any way.



Jeanne's editor wrote to the Auckland Literacy Association to ask for someone to assist Jeanne and to validate her story. Rob Southam and I were 'selected', and after our first zoom meeting with Jeanne we were delighted to be involved. She is a warm, enthusiastic, caring and thoroughly engaging person who works hard to promote stories that operate on many different levels. Her willingness to come to New Zealand to attend and actively participate in the NZLA conference in Invercargill and to bring Marcus with her, spoke volumes about her commitment.

I'm looking forward to talking with a group of young readers to explore perceptions of what constitutes cultural treasures, how we value these, and how Lindie Lou helps to further our learning. AND, already I'm looking forward to Lindie Lou's next adventure!

Heather Bell
ALA Executive





Choosing and Using Picture Books That Inspire and Celebrate Play

by Emma Smoldon

'There's so much more to a book than just the reading.'

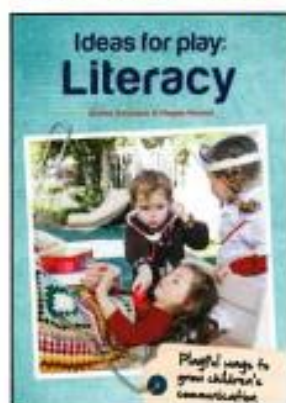
Maurice Sendak



Early years educators, neuroscientists and speech-language therapists, in New Zealand and internationally, advocate for the importance of play for children's development and wellbeing. And by play they mean, an activity that is enjoyable and sustained, imaginative, creative, and freely chosen. Play is how children learn best; it is the thing they innately do, and need to do, to explore, try out new ideas, practice familiar situations, and find out about the world and themselves. It grows creative thinking, and language, and allows them to activate their imaginations. Mmmm... isn't that also a description of great picture books too?

Finding two 2022 picture books recently (*Mud* by Annie Bailey, illustrated by Jen Corace and *The World Belongs to Us* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Leo Espinosa) that celebrate and inspire play in all its magic and joy got me thinking again about the power and benefits of play*, and how picture books can play a part. Not least because play, like any picture book, offers a huge boost to literacy and language development, and wellbeing. Connecting reading to play is an essential part of raising a reader.

Children engage in different types of play: physical play, play with objects and symbolic play, imaginary—pretend play and games, outdoor play and language play. Here are some ideas for taking a play-based approach to picture books that celebrate or enrich play.



You don't need all of these books to add to play. Add one or two at a time to your repertoire, the ones you feel the kids in your setting or life would really love and respond to. Quality picture books like these contribute to providing an essential print-rich play environment for learners. Some of the books are inclined towards very young children and some are more for older children (albeit picture books are for all ages).

Movement

Children love to move in physical play. Picture books can engage the audience in playfully characterising physical movements such as dancing or other actions within the story that can be imitated. Others contain a rhyme or refrain that is fun and natural to respond and move to.

Eric Carle's *From Head to Toe* is a beautifully executed series of questions and answers about the movement of various animals. Each page shows a child following an animal's lead in moving a body part and includes this question inviting children to move, 'Can you do it?' I like how it can evolve into a movement game, which it does when reading to larger groups. It allows children to think creatively and form their own body shapes and movements.



How Do You Dance? by author-illustrator Thyra Heda explores movement and dance as a personal expression in so many ways. It features watercolour dancing figures of all ages, stages and diversity, also included in the endpapers, and then takes a spin with many characters about how all movement is playful and valid. What's the best way to dance? Exactly as you want to—or not! My favourite page is the Try some new moves page featuring pictures of crazy moves as a visual list. This is a nice break in the flow of the book to let you and the audience choose, try out and interpret, or recognise in others.

How about a celebration of the specialness of dancing with grandparents? *Dancing with Grandma* by Rosemary Mastnak employs simple large text and sumptuous watercolour plates to show a grandma, girl and cat twirling around a kitchen in a snapshot of a moment of fun and connection.

Let's take playground swings next in *Grandpa Versus Swing* by Tania Sickling, illustrated by Lael Chisholm. Grandpa takes his grandchildren to a new playground but gets stuck and has to wriggle free. Lael Chisholm's watercolours bring life to this problem, tackled playfully as a team and ending with images of Grandpa swinging gleefully with his grandkids. You are never too old to play.



In the enduring classic **We're Going on a Bear Hunt** by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, each stage of the journey magically includes movement and sound, finishing with the all-important thrill of the imagined retreat and chase. The power of Rosen's format is not only in its perfect rhythm but in its adaptability to be playfully re-enacted and altered up (or not) by children with or without adults. **Stomp** by Ruth Paul also employs a great marching, rolling, stomping journey of assorted dinosaurs, showing these bigger body movements.

Tips: look for picture books with repetition and good rhythm alongside a movement journey to imitate/create or those featuring body parts and song. Tell the story on multiple days; first read to the children; second do some movements while reading; third act out the story together.

Outdoor Play

Going outdoors to play is pretty physical too. The strongest memories of play, for me, maybe even for most people, are of being sent outside to play and rampage around in the street or park. I love Jacqueline Woodson's **The World Belonged to Us** (illustrated by Leo Espinosa) as a perfect expression of exactly that. Set in Brooklyn, New York this book is about free play in summer holidays. Children are released from school and their energy spills over onto the street (and pages). Narrated by one girl, it brings in other voices, as all the children play in the streets, connected to each other and their community. This uninterrupted and creative play: water hydrants opened, pavement games created and huts constructed from huge boxes.

I would award one squillion points to **The Bomb** by Sacha Cotter and Josh Morgan for endpapers and layers of New Zealand landscape, and the diversity of characters in its colourful illustrations. This book is about resilience and play in perfecting a bomb—that perfect splash as you enter the water. I particularly like the intergenerational, all-age playfulness.

There has been an increase in calls for children's rewilding of play and experiences. Books that reflect on and talk about the power of the senses in nature.

In **The Perfect Leaf** by Andrew Plant, Elly and Mai, two young girls, become new friends through meeting and discovering play in an autumn wood full of golden leaves.

Richard Jackson and Suzy Lee's **This Beautiful Day** has a read-aloud, toe-tapping rhythm that matches the children playing first inside and then outside through an all-weather day—running, whooping, sliding and gliding—evoked in Lee's masterful simple pencil drawings.

And for older children—even teens, Beatrice Alemagna's **On a Magical Do-nothing Day** is about outdoor play as an antidote to screens. A bored child is cooped up in a holiday cabin, has her screen confiscated and ventures outside where, without a screen, her senses are heightened in experiencing and reimagining the outdoors.

Exploratory Play and Sensory Play

Mud is a rhythmic delight of a book that characterises outdoor and sensory play in showing play with gloopy, oozy mud. Two siblings joyfully squish, squelch and slip in it whilst creating a mud kitchen, café and lake and use it for throwing and splatting. It would delight those who like exploring and creating with mud and goo—messy play at its best—and encourage or support other children to try it. Recent research has also pointed to touching and feeling the physical make-up of mud being beneficial for our wellbeing.

Sand and water play can also be sensory and can move on to involve objects that can link to stories. Sally Sutton's picture books **Roadworks** and **Dig, Dump, Roll** always provide a good read to enrich children exploring these with small-world ideas and objects. Jennifer Beck's **My Mum is the Queen of the Road** (illustrated by Lisa Allen) is an empowering read to try as it starts with sandpit play and we follow the conversation between children about the types of things the road-worker Mum does in her role.

'Let's Pretend' Play

Enriched pretend play (imaginary, fantasy and socio-dramatic play) helps children learn new concepts, develop interpersonal skills, and gain independence. Inspire new pretend play ideas by reading picture books about children and characters using their imaginations to create worlds and adventures.

In **What to Do with a Box** by Jane Yolen, Chris Sheban's textured cardboard-esque artworks combined with Yolen's expert rhyme, details the play possibilities with a huge box for two children (and their dog soulfully looking on). Illustrating their wonder and interaction shows ways of using the cardboard box in play, and works well to add to children's imagination, particularly for those who love the enclosure of a box or table hut.

Not a Box and its companion **Not a Stick**, by author-illustrator Antoinette Portis are a perfect unfolding of the creative imagination of the characters—and how children can use everyday objects to represent unique and imaginary ones. The expressive, simple line-drawn rabbit, and, in the second book, pig, defend questions and statements, repeating that *It's not a box/stick*, whilst demonstrating and defending the magic of imaginary play.

I'm a fan of John Hegley's comic poetry and wordplay. In his book **Stanley's Stick** this word magic is combined with Neal Layton's imaginative and lively illustrations giving us a great story of the many things a stick can be for a child; a Stickosaurus, a musical instrument and spacecraft.

Dressing up is often an essential element of imaginary play, allowing children to physically take on a role and explore it. Reading Elana K. Arnold and Linda Davick's **What Riley Wore** with children enables confidence and identity. Riley dresses up on her first day of school to overcome shyness, and employs a different dress-up on each other day to help others, solve a problem, and take on different play and roles. I like the gentle nod to gender diversity and celebration of open-ended, glorious costume and dress-up expression. Children often use dress-up to communicate a story or character—maybe even persona—they are exploring. I like the repetition, rhythm and dance alongside cultural dress in **The Girls in the Kapa Haka** by Angie Belcher and Debbie Tipuna, and see children take on the swish of piupiu in their play.



Piupiu Dress



The costumes do not have to be custom-made. Mary Ann Hoberman's sweet, bouncy, read-aloud **I Like Old Clothes**, illustrated by Patrice Barton, is the story of a sister and her little brother playing with their hand-me-down clothes, thinking about who and where they came from and how to use them to dress up and play... *once-for-good / now-for-play clothes*. And in **Superhero Levi** by Robin Kahukiwa, Levi feels empowered to be a dress-up superhero in many situations—slaying taniwha, protecting smaller kids.

Having a play companion is important to some too. **Adventures with Grandpa** by Rosemary Mastnak shows us a touching story where a boy's imagination is sparked in playing alongside Grandpa in Grandpa's shed.

If someone doesn't want to play, if they are feeling they can't, or are sad, **Big Hid** by Roisin Swales is your go-to. Big and Little, a tortoise and squirrel, love to play together until one day Big starts to hide. Little puzzles out how to help concluding in a hug to overcome the problem. I can see that you can use this book as a support and reading prescription for those who are finding play tricky.

Madly imaginative, strong narrative and memorable characters are also key to inspiring play (with bonus points for food). **The Giant Jam Sandwich** by John Vernon Lord and **The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch** by Ronda and David Armitage were favourites to revisit in reading and in play with children I know. The venture to mix and then bake a giant oozing jam sandwich sparked play with mixing recipes, crazy machines and wasps. **The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch** saw children exploring lighthouse and tower construction, ropes and pulleys to get the playdough lunch across in time to avoid seagulls.

Playing with Language

Some books are designed to be obviously interactive and playful—they break the fourth wall between the reader and the story, sometimes referring to themselves as books and addressing and involving the readers directly with commands, questions and silliness. They can become favourites and encourage important back-and-forth talk between reader and audience. **I Say Ooh You Say Aah** by John Kane is one that follows on from the success of **The Book With No Pictures** by B.J. Novak.

I always start with the fabulously open-ended **You Choose** by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt, where many possibilities are laid out to have a playful conversation together. Sharratt's now characteristic, bright, bold, comic-like illustrations along with the open questions work to encourage talk and support choosing. Follow with Sharratt's **What's In the Witch's Kitchen?** for great rhyme, and the clever code-switching

Mixed Up Fairy Tales and **Mixed Up Nursery Rhymes** by Hilary Robinson to flip creative combinations. Any of Mo Willems' **Elephant and Piggie** books also fit into this category of perfect silliness and interactive language play (and early familiar word recognition). Playing with language happens also with picture books with strong rhythm and well-chosen words that children enjoy, and as they become more familiar with them, they may complete the sentence, and find that they can say it from memory.

Picture Book Magic

There are many picture books that inspire and celebrate play. I only touch the surface here. The books I mention (and so many others) can enrich play-based learning while also always helping with the magic and joy of reading. Strong characters and stories, clever, interactive and silly books, visually stunning, and imagination-going-wild books are the best to spark play in the classroom or at home.

The picture books that you connect to personally will be by far the most successful. Discover, try out, match to play (display and sell!) great picture books that 'sing' to the children that you care for, teach and inspire, or play alongside.

*Check out my book about literacy and play: **Literacy: Ideas for Play**. Emma Smoldon and Megan Howell (2015) New Shoots, Auckland. I have used some of the ideas from this community-based approach to early / emergent literacy.