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ABSTRACT
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school subjects) and personal literacy (or ways of knowing and
believing about the self, and personal communication norms arising
from historical or experiential and gender-specific backgrounds).
Drawing upon the literature which supports teachers as change agents,
the MSU group used principles embedded in feminist praxis to
facilitate an interaction between these literacies. Teachers
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collaboration and successes in creating multiple literacies are
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personal success are also indicated. (Author)

Research Series No. 210

# REDEFINING SCHOOL LITERACY:
## TEACHERS' EVOLVING PERCEPTIONS

Sandra Hollingsworth and
Margaret A. Gallego

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## Abstract

For the past year, 12 social studies, English/reading, bilingual, and library teachers at an urban middle school have collaborated with 2 professors and 2 graduate assistants from Michigan State University (MSU) to create the concept of "multiple literacies" in themselves and among their students. The purpose of the work is to extend the concept of multiple literacy beyond its traditional reading/writing and content knowledge boundaries and to help students see the connections between the knowledge and processes that are required to be school literate and those they will need for real life success. Developing multiple literacies thus involves the integration of *community literacy* (or the appreciation, understanding, and/or use of interpretive and communicative traditions of culture and community), *school literacy* (or the interpretive and communicative processes needed to adapt socially to school settings, maintain a good sense of self, and gain a conceptual understanding of school subjects), and *personal literacy* (or ways of knowing and believing about the self, and personal communication norms arising from historical or experiential and gender-specific backgrounds).

Drawing upon the literature which supports teachers as change agents, the MSU group used principles embedded in feminist praxis to facilitate an interaction between these literacies. Teachers collaborated by selecting and designing instructional projects intended to support the work. Both problems in establishing the collaboration and successes in creating multiple literacies are described in the paper. Preliminary changes in students' school and personal success are also indicated.

# REDEFINING SCHOOL LITERACY:
## TEACHERS' EVOLVING PERCEPTIONS

Sandra Hollingsworth and Margaret A. Gallego[1]

Literacy is a slippery notion. Traditionally limited to communication processes taught in school, literacy has moved beyond the confines of text and into the functional and workplace worlds of information processing, economics, and politics. Once thought to be the responsibility of elementary school teachers, the care and nurturing of literate students now belongs to all teachers. Today, opportunities to become "literate" in its many senses can mean the difference between a fully functioning life and a life at the margin. Yet many young adults--particularly in inner-city school settings--lack such opportunities.

For the past year, we have been working with teachers and students at C. W. Otto Middle School in Lansing, Michigan, to create opportunities for redefining school literacy. Otto is one of seven school-university collaborative sites known as Professional Development Schools currently operating through Michigan State University.[2] An urban middle school located in the state's capital with a high proportion of working class African-American and Caucasian students, Otto has the highest Hispanic and Native American student representation in the district. Many teachers at Otto are experienced veterans who have survived waves of educational reform without realizing significant change in teaching and learning. Recognizing the increasing need to provide opportunities for literacy for their students, 12 Otto teachers were ready to risk yet another "new approach."

## The Concept of Multiple Literacies

Our project's intent is to develop the concept of school literacy beyond its traditional definition of reading and writing. We want middle school students to experience "multiple literacies" or the

interaction between:

> *Community literacy*--the appreciation, understanding and/or use of interpretive and communicative traditions of culture and community

> *School literacy*--the interpretive and communicative processes needed to adapt socially to school settings, maintain a good sense of self, and gain a conceptual understanding of school subjects

> *Personal literacy*--ways of knowing and beliefs about self and personal communication norms arising from historical or experiential and gender-specific backgrounds

## The Need for Multiple Literacies

Incongruence between school literacy and personal and community literacies is a particular problem area for urban students (see Au and Mason, 1981; Fine, 1990). Students fail to see the connections between the knowledge and processes that are required to be literate in school and those that they will need for real life success. The result of promoting a single or standard school literacy alienated from personal and community literacies is school failure. We further contend that the incompatibility between school literacy and personal and community literacies has been fostered in three ways: (1) by separating the content of schooling from the processes of becoming literate, (2) by failing to relate content to personal prior knowledge, and (3) by ignoring the connections between content and culture/community.

Broader than personal literacy, *community literacy* integrates individual ways of knowing, believing, and communicating with those of a larger cultural community. Our view of community literacy is not exclusive to particular ethnically bounded norms or racial or religious distinctions, but, approximating that of communicative competence (Mehan, 1979), is reflective of the social and content knowledge necessary to interact appropriately within a particular group.

Our view of *school literacy* involves communicative processes, content and analytic knowledge, both in academic and social settings of schooling. As commonly conceived, "school literate" students are those who have mastered a standard academic curriculum. Like others before us (e.g., Heath, 1983), we've noticed that students who perform well on verbal and mathematical tests are the same students whose personal and community literacies match the standard school literacy. Those whose personal and community literacies do not match, fare poorly. They seldom

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question the school's definition of who is "knowledgeable" or "school literate," but are more likely to question their *own* knowledge and knowledge resources and deem them inadequate.

*Personal literacy* involves communication norms arising from historical or experiential and gender-specific backgrounds. It reflects the ways students believe they "should" interact socially in the world. The historical reality of urban students' failure to become "school literate" (Cordtz, 1989), for example, becomes a personally self-fulfilling prophecy. A related but less-understood example is the recently discovered failure of adolescent girls to maintain a personal sense of confidence and self-knowledge because they become *too competent* in conforming to a standard school literacy (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990); that is, by practicing school-approved communication skills to a level of mastery, young girls often submerge and forget their own personal (and often intuitive) ways of speaking and relating to others. They lose their own "voices." Intervention during these vulnerable years is pivotal in assuring students' success in multiple literacies.

Related to issues of students' personal literacies are concerns that teachers' personal histories and ontologies (or ways of being in the world) impede their abilities to change their experienced-based expectations for these students. Even individual teachers whose personal literacies help them view *all* students as capable of success, often lack the institutional support to make changes in such politically and managerially popular systems as student tracking on the basis of verbal and mathematical literacy alone (see Apple, 1987; Freire, 1985).

### Beginning the Redefinition with Teachers

While our ultimate goal is to increase opportunities for all students at Otto School to develop these multiple literacies, a preliminary goal occupied our attention in this first year: to involve teachers collectively in clarifying and broadening perceptions and practices supporting the development of multiple literacies. To begin this difficult and ambiguous process, we looked for guidance from previous research on teachers as change agents.

One useful resource was the literature on *changes in beliefs*. Teachers who have tried new practices and observed resultant changes in students can change their beliefs about appropriate

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practice (Guskey, 1986; Hollingsworth, 1989). Also helpful in conceptualizing this project was the literature on *teacher-directed research* (see Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). Teacher-researchers not only evaluate curricular and pedagogical knowledge given to them by "experts," they create their own, demonstrate and modify contextually situated models for success, claim personal power, and challenge conservative institutional structures (Hollingsworth & Minarik, 1991).

Finally, there is also promise of change in *collaborative models* which challenge the persistence of privacy found in noncollegial schools by encouraging open discussions, experimentation, demonstrations of pedagogical success, and student achievement (Little, 1987). Researchers and policymakers have learned that the problems of school may have less to do with unknowing teachers than with the institutional constraints placed on their possibilities of coming to know (Jackson, 1987). One promising collaborative model intended to facilitate personal, curricular, and institutional change involves the use of feminist pedagogy. This approach supports the development of voice and institutional critique by valuing reflective experience as specialized knowledge. Through an open-ended conversational process, feminist pedagogy thus emancipates ways of knowing and knowledge of underpowered groups such as women, teachers, and people of color. It avoids the silence, conformity, and lack of change which often comes with traditional hierarchical models.

## The Principles Underlying Our Approach

Integrating principles from literature noted above on changes in teachers' beliefs, collaborative models for change and teacher-initiated research to both direct and monitor instructional change, we saw our work to develop multiple literacies as an example of collaborative feminist praxis (Stanley, 1990). Praxis is a commitment to reflect upon the experiences of the underpowered in order to affect social change. We assumed that engaging in praxis as a form of collaborative research would give teachers a rationale for examining their practices, focusing on changes in students' multiple literacies, and noticing the differential effects of their instruction. The result would be a change in teachers' perceptions about the concept of school literacy and pedagogical ways of achieving it (content change) as well as learning a continuing way of studying the further

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relationship between content, instruction, and students' learning (process change). The

assumptions or principles embedded in feminist praxis include:

- An acknowledgement that teaching is a "woman's profession"--at least metaphorically--(both male and female teachers endorse traditionally "feminine" values of care, connection, relationship, and responsiveness) and is thus underpowered

- A questioning which leads to social changes in the oppressed conditions of marginalized cultures (such as school children), rather than either validating or uncovering "scientific truths" about mainstream cultures

- A rejection of the single positivist view which values and measures cognitive/academic knowledge as it is transmitted from experts to novices

- A validaticn and inclusion of both cognition and rationality as epistemological frames, but also supportive of emotion, intuitive leaps, and other less verbal feelings that are traditionally associated with women's learning but omitted from programs of research

- A recognition of the epistemological value of using reflective experience or personal stories as knowledge

- A continual examination of the relationship between the researcher and the researched (the investigator's actions are always open to critical examination and must be reported) along with the researcher's actions

- A recognition of the intellectual biographies of each member of the collaboration in order to understand and value differing positions

- A valuing of uncertainty in the process of social change

- A provision for sufficient time and conversational opportunities to allow intuitive reflections to surface

- An articulation of the reflective frameworks we all currently use and where they come from (to examine critically socialized external or standard sources as well as personal sources)

- A deconstruction and readjustment of new reflective foci based upon currently available information

- An admission of the pain and discomfort that comes with changes in our perceptions and our actions

- An encouragement of continuous celebration of our discoveries, changes and rearrangements of power through new narratives

### The Social Literacy Team: Restructuring to Promote Multiple Literacies

We at Otto Middle School are employing principles of feminist praxis to clarify our specialized

knowledges and our understanding of "literacy" and to redefine what is needed to become literate

in school. Twelve volunteers--five social studies teachers (world history and geography), three

English teachers, two reading teachers, a librarian, and one bilingual teacher--two release-time teachers, two graduate research assistants, and two professors from MSU participate as the Social Literacy Team. We are building a collaborative, interdisciplinary community to reconcile school, personal, and community literacies (see Figure 1).

The social studies, reading, and bilingual teachers work daily with a significant number of students at risk of school failure. The English teachers work with "enriched" students (or those who may be at risk of succeeding too well in school) as well as "regular" students. The university professors and graduate assistants have expertise in literacy, social studies, working with students at risk of school and personal failure, and in feminist pedagogy. Release-time teachers (in the respective subject areas) were hired to regularly take over classes so that teachers can plan and work together.

## What We Did

Using the principles of feminist praxis, our work involved:

1. Efficiently designing and carrying out curricular projects which support the integration of social studies content, literacy (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) processes, and community or cultural understanding, and

2. Studying personal changes and teaching and learning, so that

3. Students at risk of school and personal failure will see the relevance of school in their lives, become multiply literate, learn to appreciate their own cultures and communities, and develop the healthy self-esteem needed to continue to seek new literacies over the course of a lifetime

To carry out this work, teachers planned specific projects with two or more members of the team to integrate the features described above, develop new instructional strategies, and investigate the results with children. Each project developed through systematic cycles. Cycles consisted of (a) planning meetings within and across subject areas to develop integrated project lessons, (b) the implementation phase which was observed and noted by collaborators, and (c) reflection meetings where the collaborators met to reflect upon and evaluate the cycle in terms of student learning. To design and coordinate our project cycles, we met after school as a team every other week. There

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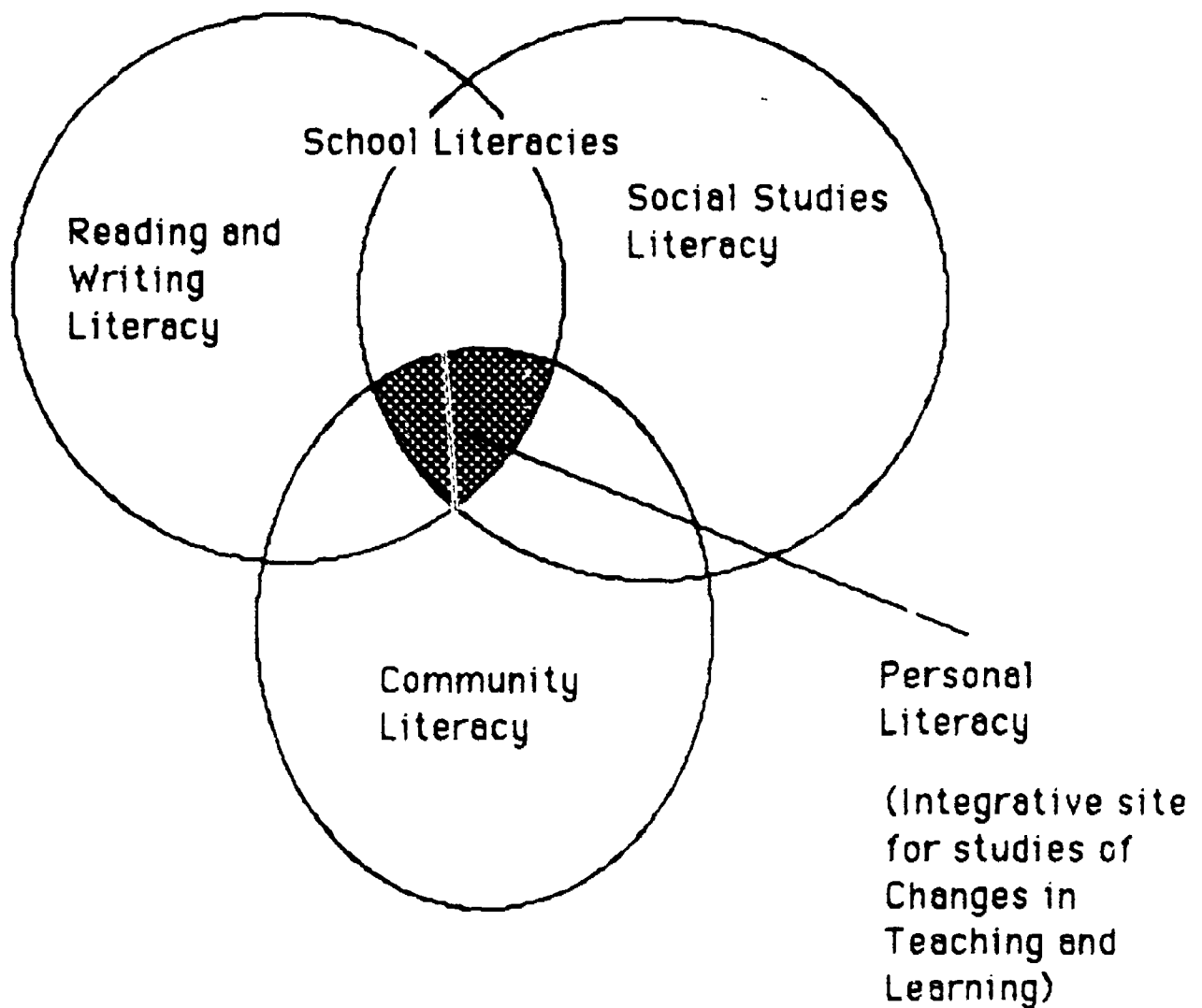
Figure 1. **Multiple Literacies**

*Community literacy*--the appreciation, understanding and/or use of interpretive and communicative traditions of culture and community.

*School literacy*--the interpretive and communicative processes needed to adapt socially to school settings, maintain a good sense of self, and gain a conceptual understanding of school subjects.

*Personal literacy*--ways of knowing and beliefs about self and personal communication norms arising from historical or experiential and gender-specific backgrounds.

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we planned integrative strategies, talked about the concept of multiple literacies, the value of feminist pedagogy and conversation, and told stories about changes in ourselves and our students.

## How We Facilitated/Monitored Our Evolving Perceptions

To both facilitate and monitor our own progress, we tape recorded, transcribed, and summarized our biweekly meetings into collective stories of change. Reviewing these notes helped us also reflect upon our work and our changing perceptions. In addition, we interviewed each teacher individually twice during the year. Teachers monitored progress in their students by collecting students' school products during the project cycles, by videotaping classes, and by keeping anecdotal records. Teachers and university staff also observed lessons and prepared non-judgmental running narratives, videotapes, and summary notes.

These data were summarized twice during the year and returned to teachers for verification and/or correction. The team employed principles of constant comparison (looking for themes and patterns of changes in perceptions, Glaser & Strauss, 1967), feminist methodology (looking for social and personal changes in both participants and researchers, Harding, 1987), and narrative inquiry (looking for narrative structure in qualitative themes, Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Finally, videotaped segments of classroom instruction were arranged on videodisk to monitor and reflect upon our progress and to be used as an instructional tool.

## Changes in Perceptions of Community, School, and Personal Literacies

During our first year of work, we hoped to celebrate changes in teachers' evolving understandings of their personal roles and school practices to facilitate connections between students' multiple literacies. However, when teachers were asked directly about their teaching as a result of their involvement in our collaborative group, many replied they have changed very little, if at all. Following the school evaluation models, teachers looked externally to their students for evidence of change rather than inward for personal changes--and global changes in students were slow in coming. Attempting to encourage self-reflection as a prerequisite to reflection on student change, we learned that such a process was foreign to many teachers--a way of knowing not usually part of teachers' roles.

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Although there were many challenges in our learning to work together, those of us from MSU observed changes in each context. Teachers' evolving literacies were illustrated by what was said publicly at our biweekly meetings, described in individual interviews, and by what teachers did instructionally in the privacy of their classrooms. Their praxis can be summarized according to developing definitions of community, school, and personal literacies.

## Community Literacy Change

The notion of community literacy was illustrated by two interdependent concepts: (a) the collective participation in a community of learners (i.e., collaborative conversation, team planning and teaching) and (b) the teachers' integration of students' community and personal literacies into the process of attaining school literacy. Though each concept will be discussed in separate sections of this paper, it is important to note that these concepts are interdependent: We found that teachers' understanding of students' community literacies began with an understanding of their own.

**Building a community literacy.** Before the 12 teachers in the Social Literacy Team began to meet as Professional Development School (PDS) members, they had few regular opportunities to cross subject area boundaries or to work collaboratively. Otto does not have a school-wide team concept and teachers do not share the same students. The Social Literacy Team composition reflected an attempt to restructure the existing school community (divided by disciplinary and ability-tracked lines) and develop a new sense of community literacy within a community of learners. The key features of this phase of our work were (a) getting to know each other personally and professionally, (b) clarifying our philosophies of teaching and learning, (c) identifying and naming our individual project goals, (d) listening openly, (e) identifying the points of community in our individual perspectives, (f) viewing one another as experts in varying instructional areas, and (g) tape recording our meetings to establish a norm of openness and reflection.

In addition to regular cross-subject group meetings, those of us from MSU visited each teacher individually during the community-building period to support and learn about the teaching he or she was already doing, to help identify dilemmas, to give feedback where requested, and to help think about

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change. We wanted to make clear that the previous forms of collaboration teachers had known ("you work from our plans") was not our style. We also set up subject-specific team meetings as required.

**Integrating multiple communities.** As all of us noted dilemmas in the existing community at Otto which limited students' opportunities to develop multiple literacies, we raised them as possibilities for change. We hoped to find ways to put aside some of the problematic traditions and communication patterns inherent in the existing "life of the school" (phrase coined by Social Studies teacher Judy Filice), to conduct our multiple projects and improve teaching and learning at Otto. For example, those of us from MSU found conditions such as classrooms formed on the basis of students' math and verbal abilities, a lack of middle school teams and the resultant discontinuity of effort across grade levels, and limited rewards for inquiry and self-reflection to be problematic for our goal of developing multiple literacies--even though they were part of the existing community at Otto. Teachers' concerns involved a lack of planning time, out-of-date texts and materials, a limited sense of "voice" in school and university affairs, and a sense of being overworked in their jobs.

Developing an internal sense of community required coexisting, if not blending, with other existing community norms. C.W. Otto is a large school (1,100 students and 72 teachers) with many different programs. The teachers have to teach classes for five hours a day, advise students, supervise detention rooms, counsel parents, plan their daily work, and attend various school meetings. When the PDS arrived at Otto, many of the teachers already belonged to and/or supported another group intended to improve schooling, and perceived PDS to be a suspicious competitor. Accommodating two professors from MSU whose "university community" valued taking time to meet regularly, commit to change, formulate plans, assess needs, try new ideas, and regularly reflect upon them was not easy. Nor was it easy for those of us from MSU, with the luxury of an observation perspective on the dilemmas, and free from the daily need to plan, teach, and think about changing long-term traditions, to develop the patience needed for this work.

Other problems in creating a sense of community were external to the Social Literacy group and the school. The newness of the PDS concept at the university level created changes in policy,

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inconsistencies, and ambiguity. Many teachers at Otto did not know what the concept of restructuring was about, were suspicious of yet another change, and were doubtful of a team approach. They had well-grounded fears about losing control of their teaching and about the difficulty of adapting to something in which they had neither familiarity nor genuine ownership. They also questioned the feasibility of learning new approaches, only to be asked to change again in the future. One of the teachers spoke of these concerns:

> I guess I distrust programs of this type, because I've had past experience with programs that are here for awhile and then they evaporate. . . . The money dries up, or the funding is cut off, or the direction is changed and then all of the effort seems to be gone. And I also think--and I've thought about it--that there seems to be a distrust on the part of public school teachers toward academia, as though academia has let them down. . . .[Academics are] so far removed from the reality of what a public school is like that they--many of them could not have functioned very well in a public school situation. . . . So I suppose that a lot of teachers really sort of looked at people in the academic community as coming up with a lot of ideas that really weren't going to help tnem very much, because they really didn't give a lot of credit to what was coming [from the teachers' expertise].

**Evolving perspectives.** After MSU participants demonstrated that a *basic purpose* of the community-building process was a feminist commitment to voice our individual goals and understand one another (and thus create change by redefining beliefs about the nature of power), the teachers began to have more faith in the effort. It was then that we began to break down the strong cultural norm for privacy, isolation, public silence (and private complaining), and the feeling of selflessness and powerlessness in the face of rigid structures. To establish authentic relationships, we found it was important to risk making specific complaints which, left unspoken, inhibited all of us buying into the project and finding solutions together. To do so we had to face the realities of school literacy norms and the difficulties of merging communities.

The teachers spoke loudly in this phase, and often with public emotion, while clarifying and articulating their needs and goals. It was here that they confronted the structures of the PL⁻ organization, their own school structure, and even our plan. Their concerns included the unfamiliarity of meeting and working collaboratively, the elusive nature of material resources which might aid their work, the difficulty of collaboration across subjects and students when the possibility of structural reorganization seemed so complex, our insistence on self-directed inquiry

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into their practices, and a history of public silence regarding interpersonal feelings. One teacher tried to help us understand the frustrating process of creating a new community. *"You are dealing with a staff that for years has not communicated with each other, especially about our angry feelings. . . . This has been going on for so many years. You yourself said change is uncomfortable and it takes time and that--that is part of the process."*

By bringing (uncomfortable) emotions and feelings about this difficult work out from behind backs to the full face of the group, we found that we were challenging more than instructional strategies and structures. We were building a new community literacy, preparatory to developing instructional projects which incorporated students' community literacies.

## School Literacy Change

Traditional school literacy definitions often urge teachers to perceive students as either literate (bright) or not, according to how well they manage the standard curriculum. Our project's goal, reflective of feminist praxis, was to broaden the concept of school literacy in two ways: (a) coming to view all students as capable of becoming school literate, regardless of their class assignments, external behavior, or verbal and mathematical ability labels and (b) integrating subject-specific content with traditional reading/writing processes and students' personal and community literacies.

**Providing literacy opportunities for all students.** Two English teachers on the Social-Literacy Team teach "enriched" classes, or those set up to "challenge" students scoring higher on standardized tests. There are no "enriched" classes in social studies, bilingual, or reading classes. Thus teachers perceived their roles and their students differently. At first there seemed to be little hope that these ability differences could be changed. We heard comments such as these, *"We don't really know what to do with [regular] middle school students. . . .They are not analytical; they can't get one situation and relate it to another." "I believe that some students just can't get any more literate. . . .They reach a ceiling and that's it."* We believed that working together reflectively and reflexively would help overcome some of these perceptions and show that changes in teaching structures and styles might profit all students.

**Evolving perceptions.** Although teachers were not free to reassign students, some teachers did begin to use "enriched" activities for their "regular" classes. Two social studies teachers who formerly used a teacher-directed style tried the cooperative grouping more commonly used in "enriched" classes. Bill Townsend, for example, found that grouping helped to bond his seventh-grade geography students and made them easier to manage.

The remedial reading teachers also experimented with more cooperative structures for their classes. Kay Baldwin had her seventh- and eighth-grade students work in groups to read short stories, novels and plays, perform skits, and construct their own mystery stories. The class was videotaped so that Baldwin could more closely observe students' progress. She found the activity to be a success. The cooperative groups provided students an opportunity to interact and encouraged even though those who were most reluctant to participate. Sharon Plavnick, an eighth-grade English teacher, noticed carryover of Baldwin's project into her class: The former "I hate to read kids" were now willing to read and write.

**Integrating students' personal and communities literacies with school literacy.** Other teachers worked at developing personal and community literacies as they rethought school literacy. A sixth-grade reading teacher, June Rhea, developed a six-week unit on "Adversity" which integrated literature, poetry, and science through novel reading, group work, library research and peer presentations. Using the novel *Where the Lilies Bloom* as a centerpiece, students brainstormed lists of social problems, including specific problems they needed to overcome in their own lives. Rhea implemented the unit with a "regular" reading group *and* a remedial group of students. She was surprised and pleased with their positive performances and found that both groups wanted to continue their study beyond the six weeks scheduled.

Judy Filice had success with a unit on geographical autobiographies in her seventh-grade "regular" classrooms. She and release teacher Maria Evans prepared packets of questions and maps to go home with each student. Students were to trace their geographical ancestries-- punctuating the families' actual community changes with anecdotal records. The improvement in student motivation and family participation was apparent. This was the first assignment of which

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Filice ever had over a 50% return rate on the day that it was due. Doris Hawkins, a seventh-grade English teacher, developed a multicultural literature program for her English classes and plans to work with Filice to incorporate the program into geography lessons.

Rick Bryce, a sixth-grade English and social studies teacher, and Pat O'Meara, a seventh-grade world history teacher, worked together with Gallego to incorporate more writing into O'Meara's social studies lessons. O'Meara also co-taught with release teacher Dave Kubel and Hollingsworth to develop an easy-to-manage pairing procedure for cooperative grouping. Through these changes, O'Meara balanced his students' needs for content coverage, social interaction, and practice with literacy processes. Instead of covering all the chapters in a traditional history unit, for example, students now cooperatively selected areas they wanted to research, wrote newspaper articles in their paired groups, then published their investigations to share with the whole group.

Andrea Rodriguez, a bilingual teacher with a community interest, worked with the social studies teachers and their students to conduct a full-school cultural and community identity survey. Rodriguez, Kubel, and Evans then organized a series of speakers and demonstrations reflecting the various cultural groups represented by the Otto student body. They invited parents to celebrate Otto's diversity with an *International Fair*. Cultural information and artifacts were displayed and teachers were encouraged to visit the fair with their individual classes.

**Personal Literacy Change**

Because we were working to create a new sense of "community literacy" and to reconceptualize the notion of "school literacy," teachers' personal literacies (or historical way of being in the world) were also challenged, as were ours from MSU. While we wanted to support projects that teachers initiated, we also believed that studying the process of that work would become a means to progressive social change. We hoped that our commitment to principles of collaborative feminist praxis would encourage the teachers to reflect publicly on both their successes and areas in which they needed to improve. We wanted to share with them reflective

tools for expanding their personal literacies and increasingly view themselves as experts and inquirers, so that change at Otto would be self-sustaining.

**Inquiry as a means to reconceptualizing personal literacies.** Getting to the level of inquiry needed both to clarify personal literacies and direct instructional changes to improve school literacy proved to be some of our most difficult work. Perhaps because we'd started community building with strong support for teachers' *existing* practices (so that we might understand them), teachers saw those of us from MSU more as support for them (in terms of providing expertise, materials, and doing the additional legwork of planning and preparation), rather than in terms of mutually supporting each other in both teaching and inquiry. An excerpt from a meeting transcript serves as an example: *"The reality is that, as a support person, and I think all four of you [from MSU] come under the category of support people, when you work in a support position in a school, the burden of responsibility is on a support person to prove himself."*

Teachers had difficulty, therefore, agreeing that inquiry goals to study perceptual change could become part of a collaborative plan. Additionally, because of past experience with university and administrative visitors, and our current focus on change, many felt that our "inquiry" focus was a front for judging them. *"Sometimes you probe us and it's like you're crushing us and I'm not really sure if I'm meeting up to the expectation. Cause I'm sure, when you come into our rooms, you judge us. Well, I mean you have to, you know what I mean? You say no, but you have to."*

Teachers also were suspicious about the differences in our rewards for inquiry. We at MSU are expected to conduct research, attend conferences, and report on our work. Such reflection and reporting is not professionally rewarding to teachers; the focus of their reward is based on their daily work in their classrooms. Teachers thus felt we should limit the inquiry focus and be more of a physical presence at the school. Yet we at MSU believed that the reflective study of our evolving work and its resultant effects on students was not only instrumental to the development of multiple literacies but a way to expand all of our personal ways of knowing and believing about teaching and learning. Trying to bring closure on these differences in personal literacies pushed us into "we/they" party lines:

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*Well, I've got another thing about the we/they [concept]. I think if you go to team teaching and work with us, that will be more like a we. . . . I think sometimes, inquiry is important to you, but, we have, team teaching is kind of--I mean, teaching all day is kind of tough. . . . We all have to have an understanding, if you do come in and teach for one hour, that's not teaching, that's like, if you had a full five, six hours . . . I mean, we've got to put ourselves in your shoes.. . .We realize you have to fill all these other. . .things and I'm not really sure, there are different ways of doing it, and if you do it a certain way, I would be interested in it. But if it's all writing and reports . . .*

**Evolving perspectives.** To counter these fears, those of us from MSU staff were careful to employ the principles of feminist praxis and give data back to teachers so that they could see the notes we took in their rooms, to use nonjudgmental measures such as video- and audiotapes, and to encourage teachers to use the materials for their own reflection. Teachers were also encouraged to record themselves and each other. We modeled such reflection in the co-teaching we did in their classrooms as well as in our collaborative meetings, pointing out that healthy self-reflection and inquiry is the basis for change. Eventually, teachers who grew more comfortable with the inquiry procedures spoke to others of their value.

*When somebody comes in your room, that was my worst fear. I thought, I'm not gonna let anybody in here, and I don't want a [videocamera], and I don't want someone taking notes. But I found out that I'm surprised . . . it doesn't bother me. Because, I mean, like this tape recorder, you know, I'm so used to it now, and I know that I've been to other meetings in PDS and we've had arguments with other members and they don't even want it on and, so, you get kind of used to it.*

By teaming with teachers in their classrooms and realizing the complexity and difficulty of change within institutions, we at MSU are also gaining a better understanding of teachers' resistance to adopting self-reflective inquiry modes. We are learning to have patience with the change process and to search for better collaborative forms of documenting our learning.

## Changes in Students

In spite of the difficulty in modifying personal literacies, the changes in the teachers' concepts of community, school, and personal literacies *have* had a positive effect on students. No longer looking solely to teachers for direction and information, or limiting their learning to "school-like" literacy, stud'ents across classrooms now work together, question their learning, are beginning to write, and engage more fully in the course work. Students are also becoming more accountable for their work. Some teachers have prepared formal evaluation measurements to assess the overall

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effect of the integration of personal, community, and school literacies. Other analyses take the form of illustrative stories of changes in teaching and learning.

One such story comes from Bryce and Gallego's development of an instructional sequence leading to sixth-grade English students' writing personal autobiographies. After teaching interviewing techniques so that students could gather information about their cultural/community histories, students verbally presented the results of their research. Notably, a Laotian student who had previously shyed away from interaction with the teacher and students was literally transformed after her presentation. She offered the class expertise in her own ethnically specific cultural traditions. In a 35-minute presentation she reviewed the geographic migration to Lansing with the use of maps, spoke about family differences, and taught the group to say a few words in her native language. Her peers enthusiastically asked her questions, crowding in on her as class ended. The change in her posture and status in the class was apparent and she continued to communicate effectively with her peers and the teacher. Additional work on the nature of student change is planned for the second year of the project.

### Promise of the Work

By drawing connections between personal, school, and community literacies, we have tried to overcome the sense of isolation and the limited sense of self-efficacy that teachers sometimes feel. Freedom from isolation and a sense of mutual vulnerability and risk then set the stage for change and self-reflective inquiry. Other groundwork toward that end comes through the "team" concept as an alternative form of staff development. By cutting across disciplinary lines, we created a community to integrate grade, subject, and student categorizations, to show that "permanent school structures" can be changed, that all students can have equal opportunities to acquire multiple literacies, and that we all have specialized knowledge (which will also change) to share with each other.

This work provided teachers alternative means of increasing all students' self-knowledge and subject-matter knowledge in literacy and social studies by the identification and integration of teachers' and students' multiple literacies. It provided those of us in university-school

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collaborative work more information about integrating multiple communities. Moreover, this work also supports the growing collaborative and teacher-research traditions, promising that teachers can continue to direct their own changing perceptions of personal, school, and community literacies long after PDS faculty have moved on to other projects.

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