

Building successful identities with evidence-based practice: a commentary across the Pacific

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P McCardle & V Berninger [Eds.] *Narrowing the Achievement Gap for Native American Students: Paying the educational debt*. New York: Routledge, 132-150

Introduction

The papers in this section cover a lot of ground in Indigenous education in North America, from Indigenous language programs, to literacy learning in the early years of school, to family support programs, and college recruitment and student support programs. The editors asked me to write a concluding commentary for this section, relating these North American experiences to my own, as an educator in Indigenous Australia. Luckily, much of my experience has been relevant to the themes of these papers. Over thirty years ago I started working for Indigenous communities in central Australia, was adopted into the kinship system, though my ancestors were not Indigenous, and learnt to speak the Pitjantjatjara language. Since then I have been involved in teaching language and literacy in schools in both Indigenous languages and English, in Indigenous family support programs, and in tertiary education for Indigenous students. But my primary focus for the past two decades has been on changing the practices of schools and teachers, to better meet the needs of Indigenous students to succeed in the school. This goal was given to me by the Indigenous elders who taught me and directed my work, particularly my adoptive parents Nganyinytja and Charlie Ilyatjari, who devoted their lives to teaching their community's children about the world, and teaching the world about their culture.¹ But it has been sharpened by my experience working with Indigenous learners in schools and universities over the years.

If we want to achieve the twin goals of enabling Indigenous children to succeed in school, at the same time as strengthening their Indigenous identities and community languages, we cannot simply focus our attention on the children themselves, or their home and cultural backgrounds. Rather we have to focus on what it is that schools do, that currently fail to meet the learning needs of so many Indigenous children, and fail to give them coherent, secure identities as both Indigenous community members and successful learners in school. Armed with this knowledge it becomes possible to re-design what schools and teachers do. This has been the mission of myself and my colleagues over these years. One outcome is the teacher education program known as Reading to Learn, that has now trained many thousands of teachers around Australia and the world, in the strategies they need to make every one of their students successful, and most particularly their Indigenous students. The following commentary is offered from this experience.

A significant common theme in each of the papers in this section is an historical and political perspective on the problems for Indigenous children in school. Lockard & deGroat's description of Navajo language programs explicitly recounts the historical struggle to have instruction in Navajo language instituted in Navajo community schools. They survey the

¹ Information and videos about Nganyinytja and Charlie can be accessed on the web

'borders of state and federal language policies which have defined the opportunities of their students to learn' for a century, from 'the introduction of formal education with the signing of the treaty of 1868' to the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act (2006). Syverson & Coolidge's major focus is on the value of story telling and reading for Indigenous children's language and literacy development, but this is against the historical background that '300-500 Native languages were spoken by peoples indigenous to what is now the United States and Canada, but currently only 34 are still being learned as a first language by children'. Porter, Dill, Masutani, & Perry frame their description of family support programs in Hawaii against 'the same challenges that other indigenous communities face', including poverty, extremely low education levels, poor health and homelessness. Braine & Segundo's brief introduction to their oral conversation personalises this historical struggle, which 'for Native students is cultural trauma due to treatment by those who invaded and took away their land, removed their children from their homes and sent them to boarding schools, and govern them as a foreign government on the land that once belonged to them'.

History for these authors and their communities is not just an abstract set of facts and dates in a school curriculum, but a lived reality that continues to have dramatic effects on Indigenous children' education. The national histories of Canada and the US may have been glorious for some, but for Indigenous peoples they are ongoing traumas, echoing down the generations. Yet these authors and their communities are deeply concerned to conserve the past, in the form of their languages and cultural traditions, and all see a potential role of schools to support this. This is not an easy role to negotiate, as schools have been deliberately used in the past to suppress traditional languages and cultures, and as Lockard & deGroat point out, 'schools are institutions that reflect the knowledge and assumptions held by educational authorities about the prior knowledge of students from the majority language group'.

Following this last point, another common theme is the apparent mismatch between the teaching practices of the school and practices of Indigenous families and communities. Lockard & deGroat claim that 'most education is systematically based on research on the development and experiences of these majority language speakers' and call for 'reconsideration of educators' total reliance on a scientific world view'. Syverson & Coolidge characterise expectations of children in Native American cultures as a "quiet reflective" holistic way of learning' in contrast to 'the more overt and explicit learning and communication style typical of many mainstream classrooms'. Porter, Dill, Masutani, & Perry foreground Native Hawaiian values and perspectives, including 'showing respect...bringing everyone together... betterment of the whole... showing by example', in sum 'working hard for the benefit of the whole rather than the individual', implicitly contrasting with the competitive individualism of modern western culture and the school. Braine & Segundo again personalise this mismatch for the Indigenous child in school, where 'I never raised my hand or actively participated and was referred to special education', an experience that many Indigenous children have shared.

What I'd like to do in this commentary is draw together these themes, of historical contexts and mismatched teaching practices, to consider the history of the teaching practices of the school, and its impacts on many Indigenous children. Such an analysis will form a sound basis

for re-designing the school's teaching practices to better serve the needs of Indigenous students, for building secure cultural identities, while gaining the skills they need for further education.

To begin with, we need to consider that while schools were deliberately used in the past to suppress traditional languages and cultures, they were also once deliberately designed to reproduce class inequalities in the wider society, and this may have a more insidious effect on the education of Indigenous children. As the papers in this volume make clear, the injustices of the past did not simply disappear in the last generation, but continue to cast a shadow on the culture of schooling today. Mass schooling was designed early in the last century to provide no more than an elementary education for working class children, who were then expected to go into manual trades, while a much smaller number of middle class children were expected to complete secondary and further education in professions. This system continued in modified forms until quite recently. Even today, secondary school curricula are deliberately stratified for students with higher 'ability', who are tracked towards further education, and those with lower 'ability' who are not. This grading of classes has recently gone out of fashion in the primary school, but children are now often put into groups within each class, according to 'ability levels'.

Despite changes in teacher education, curricula, organisation and resourcing of schools, inequalities in outcomes remain little changed in recent generations. In developed nations such as the US, Canada and Australia, a minority of students attain university qualifications, a larger proportion gain vocational training, while a significant number receive no further education. Indigenous students are massively over-represented in the latter group, as Porter, Dill, Masutani, & Perry report for Native Hawaiians, only '7% had completed an associate's degree and 9% a bachelor's degree in 2000'. Education outcomes for Indigenous Australian students are even lower, where children may be three to seven years behind national averages for their peers (Rose, Gray and Cowey 1999).

Within schools, inequalities in outcomes are almost universally understood as differences in students' 'ability', despite widely reported correlations between outcomes and levels of socio-economic advantage. The educational sociologist Basil Bernstein sees this as a maneuver to distract attention from ineffectiveness of teaching.

The school necessarily produces a hierarchy based on success and failure of students. The hierarchy both within the school, and its consequences for occupational class hierarchies outside the school, is potentially and actually highly divisive and so a major threat to horizontal solidarities. The school must disconnect its own internal hierarchy of success and failure from ineffectiveness of teaching within the school and the external hierarchy of power relations between social groups outside the school. How do schools individualize failure and legitimize inequalities? The answer is clear: failure is attributed to inborn facilities (cognitive, affective) or to the cultural deficits relayed by the family which come to have the force of inborn facilities (2000:5).

Schools may get away with this excuse, by masking class inequalities as individual 'ability', but it becomes unacceptable when applied to Indigenous children as its implications become

potentially racist. Still, the focus of legitimation remains steadily on the child rather than the teaching, so that inequalities in outcomes are attributed to differences in children's cultures and languages. The solution often prescribed is to incorporate elements of the child's culture into the classroom, or at least to value the child's culture rather than ignoring it. This is a critical factor in fostering a secure identity for Indigenous children in school, as all the papers in this volume attest, but unfortunately it does little to improve the effectiveness of teaching for these children, as education outcomes show.

So let's now turn to examine what it is about classroom teaching that is so ineffective for many Indigenous children. Lockard & deGroat's claim, that 'education is systematically based on research on the development and experiences of these majority language speakers', idealises what actually happens in school. In fact, much of teachers' classroom practice is based on their own experience, and strategies they pick up after they have started teaching (Nuthall 2005). Teachers regularly report that their preservice training (including the research they may have studied) has relatively little impact on their practices. In short, most of what happens in the classroom is not scientifically designed from research, but is inherited from past practices.

How children become literate in middle class families: parent-child reading

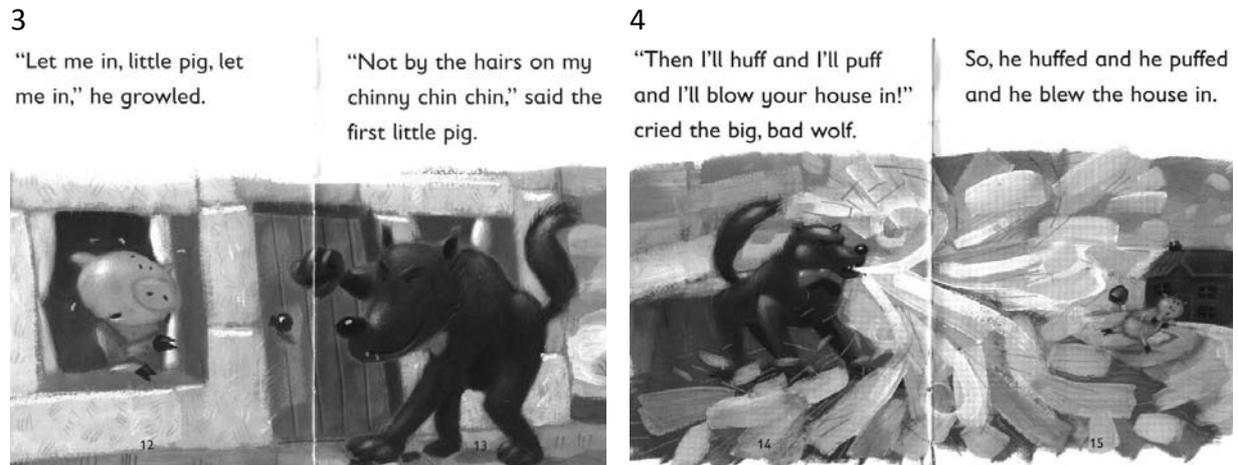
One such inherited practice is 'shared book reading', which is strongly advocated by Syverson & Coolidge, and which I agree is a crucial component of early years teaching, particularly for Indigenous children. Shared book reading has been researched in the academy, and is advocated in teacher training, but it does not originate from research, but from the middle class cultural practice of parent-child reading in the home (Adams 1990, Williams 1995). The evolution of this cultural practice is intimately entwined in the development of mass schooling and the growth of the western middle class in the past century. Its origins are related to the traditions of governesses, from middle class families, educating upper class children in the 18th and 19th centuries (Bernstein 1975). It has also led to the market in children's picture books, which today form the content for shared book reading in the primary school.

The middle class practice of parent-child reading is not simply to read a book, but to thoroughly discuss the meanings in the pictures and the text. Children's picture books are designed to encourage such parent-child interaction, as the stories are generally far outside children's experience, and the pictures have complex relations with the written text. At its best, shared book reading in school reproduces this type of discussion, so that children experience the same learning and pleasure as they would reading with their caregivers. Syverson & Coolidge characterise shared book reading with 'language facilitation and scaffolding strategies such as open-ended questioning, modeling, repeating, and expanding to scaffold and promote children's language'. These are very broad categories that could be interpreted in all kinds of ways. Let's see what they might mean in detail, with a parent-child reading exchange, in which a mother is reading *The Three Little Pigs* with her 18 month old daughter.

The exchange unfolds as a series of interaction cycles. Each cycle consists of four types of moves. The mother first **prepares** the child to recognise a feature of the text, the child then

interpreted in terms she knows the child will recognise from her own experience. The child can thus see herself reflected in the characters, in their activities and their relationship with their mother. This identification with the protagonists is the seed of empathy. Accordingly the child laughs in recognition, repeating the waving gesture. Her identification also engages her interest in the characters' intentions, and so in the events to come, so that she turns the page to see what happens next.

Figure 2



Source: Kellogg 1997

Third and fourth cycle

	Child	[turns to page 3]	
3	Mother	[points to the wolf] Oh oh, I see that wolf. [eyes get larger as if in fright]	Prepare
	Child	[turns to page 4 and points to wolf] Oh oh.	Identify
	Mother	Oh oh.	Affirm
4	Mother	He huffed and puffed [blowing on child] and he blewww that pig away. Very bad, isn't he? [in different tone directed toward child as an aside].	Elaborate

In the third cycle the learning focus progresses explicitly to feelings of empathy and antipathy. This time the mother directs attention to both the image by pointing, and her own facial expression with 'I see that wolf'. She evaluates the image with the apprehensive 'Oh oh', interpreting the pig's facial expression with her own, modelling the reader's empathy with the protagonist, and the antipathy to the antagonist. The child thus recognises both the emotion and expectancy inherent in the apprehension, and responds by turning the page, and pointing to the next picture of the wolf and repeating 'Oh oh', which the mother affirms by repeating 'Oh oh' herself.

In the fourth cycle the mother reads the words on the page for the first time. She prepares the child to recognise their relation to the image by blowing on her, imitating the wolf in the image. Recognising the wolf's behaviour in both words and image then provides a context for elaborating with a moral judgement 'Very bad, isn't he?'.

In a minute or two this child has thus had a series of micro-lessons in identifying features in a story book, in engaging with characters and predicting what's to come, in sharing the characters' emotional reactions, and in judging their behaviour. According to Adams (1990), children in literate middle class families will experience around 1000 hours of this type of talk-around-text before they start school. But this is a highly specialised type of interaction unique to middle class culture. In a large scale study, Williams (1995) shows that it is typical of tertiary educated parents, but not so of less highly educated parents, who may read stories with their children, but are less likely to have this kind of discussion about the meanings in a text. It also contrasts strongly with story-telling practices often reported for Indigenous families. For example, Syverson & Coolidge quote Vi Hilbert in *Haboo*:

My elders never said to me, 'This story carries such and such a meaning'... I was expected to listen carefully and learn why the story was being told. Though guided, I was allowed the dignity of finding my own interpretation.

Recontextualising middle class culture in the school: classroom interaction

Now let's see what can happen to this kind of discussion with shared book reading in the early years of school. Here is a Year 1 class that is reading a wordless picture book about a snowman.² Now the primary purpose is not parent and child sharing the pleasure of reading together, but children acquiring skills in reading for meaning, one of which is often called 'inferencing'. The teacher starts by pointing to the picture of the snowman's nose and asks Ben a Focus question, asking him to 'infer' what the object is.

Teacher	What's that he's got, Ben?	Focus
Anna & Jody	Carrot!	Identify
Teacher	[makes circular motion on round object in illustration]	Prepare
Bobby	Meatball! Meatball!	Identify
Kris	Oranges!	Identify
Teacher	Yes, Kris, I think you...That's right!	Affirm
Other child	Meatball! Meatball!	Identify
Anna	They're oranges!	Identify
Jody	Oranges!	Identify
Other child	Tangerine!	Identify
Teacher	Well, it's kind of oval like a tangerine. [makes oval shape with hands]	Reject

Unlike the mother, the teacher does not prepare Ben to answer her question, and he remains silent. Anna and Jody then enthusiastically answer 'Carrot!' (which they may know from reading other books about snowmen). But the teacher doesn't accept their response. Instead she now prepares by giving a wordless clue (a circular motion), to which Bobby enthusiastically answers 'Meatball'. The teacher ignores this, but then affirms Kris' response 'Oranges'. Another child repeats Bobby's unsuccessful response and is also ignored, as are Anna and Jody, who repeat the successful response. Instead of affirming the last response 'Tangerine', the teacher qualifies it. So every response except one is either ignored or

² from McGee 1998:164

qualified by the teacher. She doesn't explicitly say 'no', but they are not accepted, and the children know their responses have been rejected.

This is a normal pattern of classroom interaction at every level of school. Teachers ask questions and usually one or more students can give the responses we are after, which we use as stepping stones in the lesson. If we don't get the right responses, we then take a step back and prepare for the response we want. As with shared book reading, this pattern of classroom interaction does not come from research, and is not explicitly taught in preservice teacher training, but is inherited by teachers from their own experience, and applied intuitively in our practice. The teacher's conscious focus is on the knowledge being learnt, but the children are learning something far more personal and powerful, that there is a hierarchy in every classroom, in which some students are more likely to be successful and affirmed than others. Over time, this experience relentlessly shapes children's identities as more or less successful learners. Indigenous children are widely reported to find it alienating, as Braine & Segundo report, 'I never raised my hand or actively participated' (see Malin 1994, Malcolm 1979, 1991 for Indigenous Australian children's experiences).

Indeed, Braine & Segundo emphasise this point repeatedly in their videoed oral discussion (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_2jU9AwtQg¹). Indigenous children, along with many other children, are routinely alienated by the competitive practice of responding to teachers' classroom questions. Rather than risk continual rejection, they remain silent. Appallingly, as Braine & Segundo discuss, Indigenous children's silence in classroom discussions is often interpreted by teachers as evidence of a learning disability, so that they may be referred to special education classes. But what is the point of the competitive practice of 'hands-up' to respond to teachers' questions? In the Reading to Learn training program, we make a point of asking teachers how many of their students consistently respond with the answers they are after. Most teachers say just 2-3 students, sometimes 4-5, out of classes of 20-30 students. Again, teachers are not trained to use this practice, but simply inherit it from experience. Its consequences for the less successful students in their classes are ultimately disastrous, yet it continues because it fits the notion of learning 'abilities'.

It must be emphasised however, that teachers rarely set out to deliberately alienate children in their classes. On the contrary, the teacher above probably asked Ben her first question because she was concerned to engage him in the discussion, perhaps because he was one of the less vocal children. Most teachers are concerned to engage all their students as much as possible, but they are often hamstrung by the cultural practice of the school, of asking interpretive questions that weaker students cannot confidently or successfully answer.

Indeed, teachers exercise extraordinary skill every day, planning moment-by-moment the questions to ask of their students, in order to get the responses they need, which they can affirm and then elaborate with new knowledge they want the whole class to learn. The problem is that only a few students consistently respond with the answers we need. These few students have understood the question, have been able to infer the response we want, are affirmed, and are thus maximally ready for the elaboration. We all hope that other students are benefitting less actively from the discussion, but we also know that many students are getting little benefit. Unfortunately this too often includes Indigenous students.

Redesigning teacher-class interactions to engage all students

One response to this problem has been to denounce explicit teaching activities as ‘teacher-centred’ practice, and advocate instead individualized activities that are supposed to be ‘learner-centred’. This is a false dichotomy, that has little real benefit for understanding and designing classroom practices. The term ‘teacher-centred’ is designed to resonate with ‘self-centred’ and imply an uncaring attitude towards learners. In fact teaching and learning in all cultures is a relationship that unfolds over time, in the kinds of cycles illustrated above. This is most apparent in manual activities in which teachers prepare learners for a learning task, by demonstrating how to do it, handing control to the learner to do the task, and guiding them to do it successfully. This kind of practice is just as familiar in Indigenous cultures. The central phase of the cycle is the learning task, which only the learner can do for themselves. But the teacher can prepare the learner to do the task successfully, if the teacher understands the nature of the task. Once a task is done successfully, it can be elaborated with a higher level of understanding, or the next step in a task sequence.

This pattern of explicit teaching seems to contrast with Syverson & Coolidge’s description of learning ‘In some Native American cultures, children may be expected to learn by listening, observing, and participating in authentic community activities.’ Similar statements have been made about so-called ‘learning styles’ in Indigenous Australian cultures (Harris 1985 ref), which seem to explain the pattern of Indigenous children’s silence in the classroom. But there are many situations in all cultures in which children are expected to participate silently, particularly in formal activities such as religious ceremonies. The learning task may indeed involve ‘listening, observing, and participating’, but these tasks have typically been prepared by children’s cultural experience over time, and will eventually be elaborated by explanation of the meanings involved. As Braine & Segundo point out, ‘oral tradition of Native culture is a medium for transmitting the wisdom of past generations with the challenges of the present and the dreams and visions for the future’. Such wisdom cannot just be acquired passively, it must at some point be transmitted explicitly by teachers, elaborating on learners’ experience.

As far as classroom interactions in school are concerned, the point is that the universal teaching/learning cycle of Prepare-Task-Elaborate is distorted by the hierarchical social structure of the classroom. Teachers ask interpretive questions that require students to interpret from their own knowledge, so that only a few students can answer successfully. They are actually encouraged to do so in teacher training, because it is supposed to encourage ‘inferencing’ or ‘critical thinking’ in students, as Syverson & Coolidge advocate ‘open-ended questioning’ in shared book reading ‘to scaffold and promote children’s language’. This widespread notion is surely not based on evidence of any value for the weaker students in a class, but it does resonate with teacher educators’ own practice of asking interpretive questions of their students. If you are a teacher educator reading this, how many of your own students confidently respond to these types of questions in your lectures? Is it always the same students?

The solution to this problem is actually relatively simple. Instead of asking interpretive questions of the whole class, which only a few students can answer, teachers can carefully prepare their questions so that any student can answer. The interpretive level of

understanding can then be left to the elaboration. If all students can answer successfully and be affirmed, then all can benefit equally from the elaboration, instead of just the top few. A simple way to ensure that all students can answer, is if the answer comes from a text that the whole class is reading, rather than from students' individual knowledge. If the preparation guides students to successfully identify words or images in the text, as the mother does in parent-child reading above, then any student can be asked and affirmed. The ideal practice is thus to prepare the whole class, and then ask individual students to identify the feature so that all can be affirmed in turn. The meaning can then be elaborated, either by the teacher explaining, or by asking the children's own experience. At this point, it doesn't matter if only a few students respond, because all students have successfully identified the text feature and can benefit from the elaboration of its meaning.

Shared book reading: a whole class teacher guided activity

This is in fact the ideal practice of shared book reading, in which the teacher prepares children to understand a story book, by talking the class through the illustrations in a big book. As she does so, she guides children to identify elements in the pictures, as the mother does above. Shared book reading can thus be classified as a whole class teacher guided activity. The children's task is to identify elements in the text, but the teacher carefully prepares them to do so, and elaborates their meanings. It is not simply 'teacher-centred' because the children are all doing the learning tasks of identifying text elements, and following the story, but the teacher is carefully guiding them to do these tasks successfully. A shared reading book will typically be read aloud again and again, until all children thoroughly understand the story, and can say many of its sentences along with the teacher. Again this derives from the practice of parent-child reading, in which story books are repeatedly read until children know them intimately. It also resonates with Indigenous story-telling practices, in which children may hear the same story many times until they can repeat it from memory.

I have seen many early years teachers do this successfully with classes of Indigenous Australian children, who have no books in the home, and little or no English. After a few days of repeated preparation, reading and elaborating, every child understands the story (which is usually far outside their experience and often quite bizarre), and can say the English words perfectly along with the teacher. This is why I consider shared book reading to be the most important single literacy activity for Indigenous children in the early years of school. This meaningful and pleasurable engagement with story reading should form a basis for the children to become successful readers, but at this point disaster often strikes. In the remote Indigenous community schools I have studied, not one child was reading independently before the end of Year 3, and no child could read more than basal picture books by the end of primary school (Rose, Gray & Cowey 1999).

Dis-integrating literacy learning

The cause of this disaster is not that shared book reading is insufficient, but that the other 'literacy activities' in the early years fail to build on the meaningful engagement with written texts that parent-child reading and shared book reading provide. These literacy activities universally include drills in memorising the alphabet and letter formation, drills in memorising letter-sound correspondences in phonics, and drills in memorising 'sight-words',

which are the most common English words, primarily simple grammatical words like 'the' and 'was'. Activities may also include drills in 'phonemic awareness', particularly for children who speak other languages at home, and drills in English grammar structures. Also very common are individual or group reading of basal picture books, levelled to children's assessed 'ability levels'. Used together, all these activities are often referred to as a 'balanced approach' to literacy. But I prefer to call it 'dis-integrated', because it fragments the tasks of reading and writing in disconnected activities, using disconnected texts, words, letters and sounds (Rose 2011).

For children from literate middle class backgrounds, with 1000 hours of parent-child reading before school, these activities make sense. In almost every sense these children already know how to read; their vocabulary of written English is large, they understand how written stories unfold, and how to relate them to their own experience; all they need to learn is how to decode the written words in texts they already understand. This is what the alphabet, phonics and sight-word activities give them, and individual or group reading gives them practice with reading for meaning. But for children from oral cultural backgrounds, without this experience of parent-child reading, these 'literacy activities' are literally meaningless. Out of context of real stories, the letters of the alphabet, isolated 'phonemic' sounds of English, letter-sound correspondences of phonics, and grammatical sight-words like 'the' have no meaning. Yet they are expected to memorise these decontextualised, meaningless items and somehow apply them to reading for meaning. Not surprisingly they struggle to do so.

I have observed many Indigenous children trying to read basal picture books, often while their teacher looks on. By middle primary they may have memorised the alphabet and some letter blends, and a few 'sight-words'. They may be able to recognise and say these sight words, but struggle to decode other content words letter-by-letter, often unsuccessfully trying to use the illustrations for clues (as they have been told to do). Their strategy when they cannot read a word is to look up at the teacher, who usually tells them the word, which they then memorise in the sequence of the sentence. After some days in this manner, a child may have memorised many of the sentences in a picture book. What is most heartbreaking is that they believe they are reading, and their teacher often believes they are reading too. They will be ticked off for that picture book, and allowed to choose another at the same level, to repeat the charade. These children are brilliant, innovative learners; they have invented their own version of reading, and perform so well that they can convince their teacher. But they have no hope of succeeding in the school.

These standard early years 'literacy activities' are not only ineffective for children from oral cultural backgrounds, they are only partially effective for many others who are not from highly literate middle class families. If they are so ineffective, where did they come from? Again the answer is not from research and design, but from past practices. Alphabet and sight-word drills originated over 2000 years ago in ancient Greece and Rome. They are described by Dionysius of Helicarnassus, a Greek who lived in Rome during the first century B.C.

When we first learned to read was is it not necessary at first to know the names of the letters, their shapes, their value in syllables, their differences, then the words and

their case, their quantity long or short, their accent, and the rest? Arrived at this point we began to read and write, slowly at first and syllable by syllable. Some time afterwards, the forms being sufficiently engraved on our memory, we read more cursorily, in the elementary book, then all sorts of books, finally with incredible quickness and without making any mistake.

The phonics method was later devised in the monasteries of medieval Europe, to cope with the difference between the Roman alphabet and the sound systems of Germanic languages like English.

Crucially, these ancient methods were devised for teaching older children, adolescents and adults to read and write, not five and six year old infants. They are based on ancient notions of reading as simply decoding the letters that represent words. They rely on learners already understanding a) the meanings of the words they are decoding, b) the connections between these meanings from sentence to sentence in a text, and c) their connections to readers' experience and values. In other words, they depend on learners already having three levels of comprehension of written texts: literal comprehension of words in each sentence, inferential comprehension of connections across the text, and interpretive comprehension from their knowledge and values. This is a key reason why tertiary educated middle class parents spend so much time, carefully discussing the meanings in story books as they read with their children. It gives them a necessary foundation for benefitting from the literacy activities of the early years classroom. At the same time, the continuation of these practices ensures that children without this experience struggle to become independent readers in the early years, and may not be able to effectively learn from reading as they progress through school. This is the experience of many Indigenous children, and many others.

Re-integrating literacy learning: Reading to Learn

As with teacher-class interactions, the solution to this problem can be relatively simple. It does not mean abandoning explicit teaching of foundation skills in literacy, but rather re-integrating them into a carefully planned sequence, starting with meaning. Instead of treating literacy as something separate from the pleasure of reading, the shared reading book, with which children are thoroughly familiar, can be used for all literacy activities. Once all children thoroughly understand the book, after repeated readings, and can say many of its sentences along with the teacher, one sentence at a time can be used to teach foundation skills in reading and writing, including word recognition, sentence structure, letter-sound correspondences, spelling, letter formation, and sentence writing. As part of the Reading to Learn program, many Indigenous teachers, teaching assistants and student teachers have been trained in these strategies in Australia, and have taught children to read and write within an hour, when they have been failing to read for three or more years with standard methods.

Briefly, the method begins with the teacher writing out a familiar sentence from the shared reading book on a strip of cardboard or paper. The children already know the sequence of words in the sentence. The teacher now guides them to recognise each written word in the sentence, first by pointing herself at each word as the children say each word, then by holding the children's hands as they point and say the words, before the children point and

say each word independently. Each of these steps may be repeated several times, until each child can point and say the words accurately (Figure 3).

Figure 3: beginning one-for-one word recognition



In the next step, the teacher guides children to cut up the sentence into chunks of meaning (groups of words), mix them up, re-arrange them, then read them again. Then they cut them up into individual words and play with their order. This activity is called Sentence Making (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Sentence Making



By these means, children become thoroughly familiar with each word in the written sentence, and can recognise them in and out of the sentence. At this point the teacher guides them to spell selected words, and form their letters, by cutting them up into their letter patterns, and practising writing them on little white or blackboards. This allows them to practise without stress, as they can check for themselves and try again until they get it right. Content words are used for these spelling and letter formation activities because they are still meaningful out of context of the sentence. It is the meaning that supports children to practise and remember the letters (not the other way around) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Spelling and letter formation



Once they can write most of the words in the sentence, the teacher guides children to write the whole sentence that they have been reading. In this step they practise fluent writing, as well as spelling the little grammatical words that are usually used for 'sight-word' drills. After practising on their boards, they may write the sentence in their books. By these means, all children in a class rapidly learn to read and write the stories they are familiar with in shared book reading, no matter what their language or cultural backgrounds. Once they have built up enough foundation skills, the teacher guides them to start innovating on the stories. This guided practice builds up their written language resources, until they are ready to start writing their own texts.

This carefully sequenced, explicit teaching of literacy skills contrasts with the common early years practice, of getting children to try writing stories from their own experience, whether or not they have the skills to do so. This is another well worn inherited practice in the primary school, that was appropriated by academics in the 1960s and re-badged as 'process writing' or 'whole language' (Graves 1983). In Australia it has been disastrous for Indigenous students, as it fails to take into account the variations in literacy skills that children bring to school (Gray 1990, Rose 2011, Rose & Martin 2012). Figure 6 shows a typical example from an Indigenous child after a year of standard early years literacy practices (with teacher's corrections). He has memorised a few words including his name, and '*he is happy*', but can only guess at how to write other words.

Figure 6: Indigenous child's writing after one year of standard early years teaching

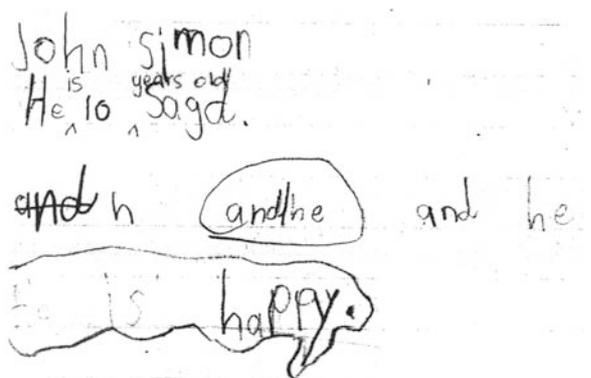
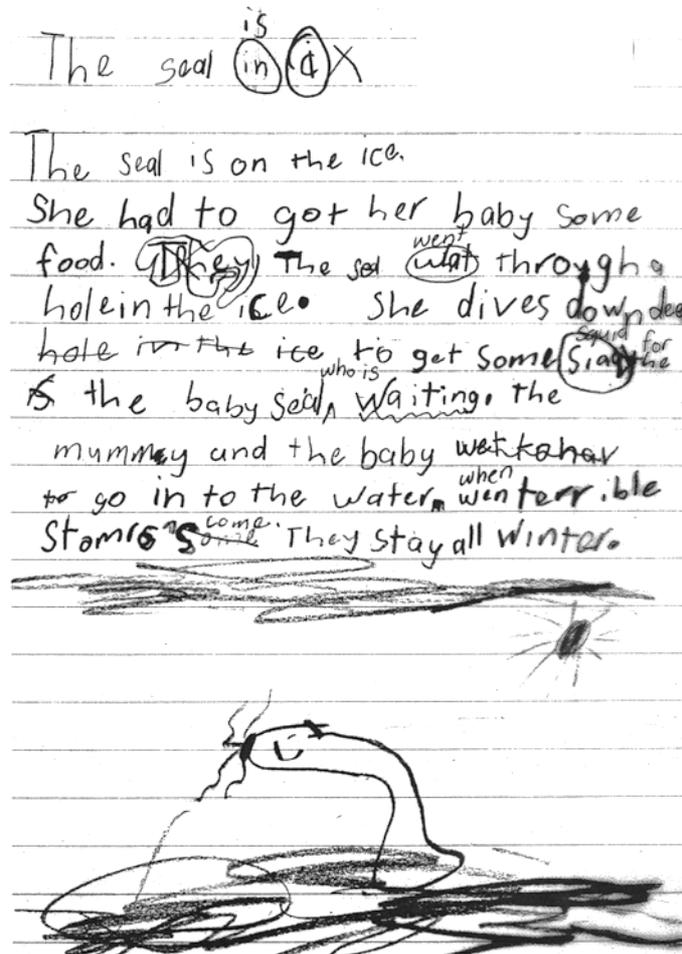


Figure 7 was written by the same child after two months of the strategies described above.

He has independently written a detailed, coherent and legible description on a topic the class has studied.

Figure 7: same child's writing two months later



These activities are explained in detail, and demonstrated on video, in the Reading to Learn teacher resource materials (Rose 2014, www.readingtolearn.com.au).

Implications for teacher education and family support programs

The complexity of teacher-class interactions and shared book reading, and the simplicity of the Reading to Learn strategies described above, have implications for both teacher education and family support programs for Indigenous children in school. For one thing, Indigenous families cannot be expected to compensate for ineffective literacy teaching in the early years of school. It is crucial to give the kinds of support and connection between Indigenous families and school provided by the programs described by Porter, Dill, Masutani, & Perry in Hawaii. But it is equally important to provide teachers with the skills they need to make all their children successful, no matter what their cultural and language backgrounds.

The strategies above are very easy to learn and apply. In the Reading to Learn program, support teachers and parents are guided to use them in just one day (Rose 2014, Rose and Underwood in press). This means they can be very easily taught as part of teacher preservice

and inservice training, and as part of support programs for Indigenous families. They require very few resources, other than the shared reading book, cardboard, small white or blackboards, marker pens or chalk, and scissors, so they are appropriate for Indigenous families with limited resources. Furthermore they only require a family member to be able to read the children's book, and to write selected sentences on the cardboard strips. If the caregiver reads the sentence carefully, they will then be able to guide the child to cut it up into its meaning chunks, and to practise spelling its words, and rewriting the sentences. I see no reason why programs such as those described by Porter, Dill, Masutani, & Perry could not provide this training and these resources to the Indigenous families they support, along with the reading texts they currently provide. This would certainly give their children's foundation literacy skills a valuable boost, as it has for many Indigenous families in Australia.

On the other hand, the parent-child reading practices described above involve a more complex orientation to written ways of meaning. To reiterate, these practices have evolved within literate middle class culture, in tandem with the evolution of the school. Parents' orientation to unpacking written meanings through talk-around-text is typically acquired in the course of a long formal education, including university, often built on their own experience of growing up in literate families. Careful, large scale research has consistently shown that caregivers from less highly educated backgrounds tend not to engage in the same kinds of talk-around-text, even when they spend as much time reading with their children (Williams 1995). In my experience, it is difficult for caregivers from oral cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous caregivers, to acquire these kinds of skills through short-term training programs. This does not mean that Indigenous caregivers cannot do this for their children, as Ross Braine describes in his videoed account, his parents thoroughly prepared him for school. But as Braine and Segundo make clear in their discussion, this is exceptional for Indigenous families.

However, these cultural practices give children from middle class families an enormous advantage in the early years of school, not only in their experience in written ways of meaning in story books, but in the talk-around-text that is the medium of classroom learning. They are likely to be most active in classroom discussions, to rapidly become independent readers and writers, and be judged by their teachers as the most 'able' learners. It is unrealistic, and I believe unreasonable, to expect Indigenous families to provide the same preparation for school learning that middle class families do. Rather it the responsibility of teachers, and their academic trainers, to learn how to provide Indigenous children with the higher level orientations to written meanings, and the engagement in talk-around-text, that will make them successful in school.

On one hand, this implies that teachers must be trained to do shared book reading effectively, so that it supports all students to gain the inferential and interpretive comprehension of texts that the most literate students currently enjoy. On the other, it requires teachers to understand the structures of their own discourse in the classroom, so that they can engage all children successfully in the conversation. In order to do shared book reading effectively, teachers need to know how to analyse the patterns of meaning in the reading books they are using. These include 1) patterns at the levels of the whole text, such as the episodes through which a story unfolds, as well as its topics, messages, double meanings, and humour; 2) patterns within each episode, such as sentences that expand

events or descriptions, characters' reactions, and dialogue; 3) patterns within each sentence, such as who it's about, what they were doing, where, and when; 4) relations between written meanings in the text and in the illustrations. Teachers then need to know how to draw each child's attention to these patterns, in terms that all can easily understand, and that engage them all in the meaningful, pleasurable activity of reading.

In order to engage all their students successfully in talk-around-text, teachers need to know how to analyse and plan their own discourse. This includes preparing children to successfully recognise elements in a text, so that all can be affirmed, and then using their successful responses to elaborate with inferential and interpretive levels of comprehension. It includes knowing when to ask children questions, to ensure that they will always be able to answer successfully, and when to simply give them the information they need. It involves knowing their students, and continually watching to see who needs to be engaged and affirmed, and who needs to be supported, and knowing how to support them effectively. In my experience, this is more than most teachers currently receive in preservice training. Teachers and their trainers need to learn how to do close semantic analyses of reading texts, and how to closely analyse actual classroom discourse, and use these analyses in their lesson planning and delivery. This requires far more detailed knowledge about classroom discourse than general notions such as the 'open-ended questioning, modeling, repeating, and expanding' that Syverson & Coolidge note. The business of teachers is language, and to do the job well for the benefit of all their students, teachers must have a strong, practical grasp of how language works.

Indigenous cultures and languages in the school

With these kinds of analysis and planning by teachers, there need be no conflict between the home cultures of Indigenous children and the culture of the classroom; and no need for Indigenous children to be left out, left behind, or alienated from classroom learning. It becomes possible for all children to build secure, confident identities as successful learners, in harmony with their identities as Indigenous community members. Crucially, it is possible for schools to provide Indigenous children with the skills they need to succeed in mainstream schooling and further education, at the same time as fostering their Indigenous cultural identities and languages. However it is critical to recognise that the school is a different cultural context from the contexts of Indigenous children's homes and communities. When a practice or knowledge is taken from the community context into the school, it is no longer the same but is transformed into another kind of practice or knowledge; it is 'recontextualised' in Bernstein's terms (2000).

For example, Syverson & Coolidge discuss 'both Native (Muckleshoot) and non-Native stories' being used in shared book reading. There is now a wealth of Indigenous stories published as picture books that can be used in this way. However this is a very different context from their original context of oral story-telling. In Indigenous cultures, the relationships between story-teller and listeners is often just as important as the story itself, alongside all the cultural experience they share. In shared book reading, the teacher becomes the story-teller, and ultimately the book itself. The story is abstracted from the personal relations of family and community. Furthermore, shared book reading involves elaborate discussion of the meanings in the text, as described above. Its purposes are for

children to develop generalised skills in inferential and interpretive comprehension of written texts, as well as engaging in the pleasure of book reading. This contrasts with the purposes and modes of Indigenous story-telling, as Syverson & Coolidge quote Vi Hilbert, "My elders never said to me, 'This story carries such and such a meaning'".

Moreover, children's books created for parent-child reading and shared book reading are specifically designed to be read and discussed together, often with layers of meaning carried by the text and illustrations, intended to be unpacked in the shared reading. Indigenous oral stories are not originally designed for these functions. Although they often have layers of meaning, they may be revealed gradually through repeated tellings, as children mature and become aware of their deeper implications (Martin & Rose in press). Because they are often oral stories that have been transcribed, they may not have the elaborate patterns of written language characteristic of children's books created for parent-child reading. On the other hand, Indigenous stories in children's books may be rewritten, often by non-Indigenous authors, and their meanings significantly changed. It is common to see such stories that have been adapted to the pattern of Rudyard Kipling's 'just-so stories', whose main message seems to explain why animals have certain features (Martin & Rose in press). Finally, a common activity with shared reading books in the school, is to use their stories as models for children to write stories of their own. In Reading to Learn, this activity is called Joint Rewriting, in which children are guided to use the language patterns of reading texts, while changing the plot, characters and settings, to write successful stories of their own. Many Indigenous oral stories actually have deep religious significance, and have been handed down through countless generations from the community's ancestors. How appropriate is it to encourage children, Indigenous or not, to make up their own creation stories using these sacred stories as models? For all these reasons, careful thought needs to be given to the place of Indigenous stories in activities like shared book reading and rewriting.

Another alternative is to bring Indigenous story-tellers into the school, which is a growing practice in Australia. In this way, children hear the stories from the elders who are their custodians, and can explain their cultural significance. With the elders' permission these can also be used for literacy activities in both Indigenous languages and English. Teachers can record and transcribe these stories, and print them so that children can illustrate and practise reading them. Older children can also learn to record and transcribe them themselves. This activity can also be used for studying Indigenous languages. If the story is told in language, teachers can guide students to transcribe and translate them. This is a powerful method for students to learn about the grammars and semantics of both languages, by actively comparing how each language expresses similar meanings in different wordings (Rose 2005a).

This raises the wider issue of teaching Indigenous languages in the school, which is the topic of Lockard & deGroat's chapter. Here again a key issue to grapple with is recontextualisation of Indigenous knowledge as school curriculum. The question is what functions the language serves in the culture of the school, which cannot be identical with its traditional functions in the home culture. As with all languages, Indigenous children have traditionally learnt their mother tongues largely unconsciously, through interacting with their caregivers and peers. In this regard, the work on language learning in the home, by Halliday (1975, 1993) and Painter (1991, 1996) are invaluable for understanding how caregivers guide children in

learning their mother tongue. This research is an essential corrective to notions that children passively absorb language from their environments, via an imagined 'language acquisition device'. The term 'immersion' in some language learning theories is also related to this notion of passive absorption.

However, the Navajo language 'immersion' programs described by Lockard & deGroat appear to have been carefully based on context specific language learning, in which children were explicitly guided to study selected aspects of traditional Navajo culture, through the medium of Navajo language. These might be compared with some programs for Indigenous Australian children, such as the Yipirinya School in Alice Springs, central Australia. In this community controlled school, children spend some weeks each year in excursions to their families' homelands, accompanied by community elders. What they learn in these excursions, including stories and knowledge about the country and kinship systems, forms the basis for language and literacy work back at the school. Children are guided to write these stories and topics, extending their command of the oral language at the same time.

In these kinds of activities children are learning to become 'ethnographers of their own communities' (Martin 1990). These are different functions for culture and language learning than traditional (pre-colonial) contexts, in which children were participants in but not recorders of their cultures. The ethnographic activities of recording community language and culture do not exclude participation, but they add another layer of analysis and reflection, which are central components of school learning. Learning to speak one's mother tongue is a largely unconscious process, even though it is guided by one's caregivers. But learning to read and write in school are conscious processes, involving reflection on meanings and how they are expressed as wordings (Halliday 1993).

These differences in contexts and processes of learning have implications for how teachers plan and guide their students in Indigenous language learning programs. Lockard & deGroat quote Eilene Joe lamenting 'a shift to the use of more English for literacy; this is where the Navajo Nation Head Start made the mistake in teaching more English'. My own view is that such conflicts between learning Indigenous languages and English is unnecessary and potentially counterproductive. As with the activity of transcribing and translating traditional stories outlined above, each language can be used to reflect on, and enhance the learning of each other. Using both languages to reflect on each other is a powerful way to build strong, coherent identities, that comprehend and control the very different cultures in which Indigenous children must learn to live. But this demands explicit, effective teaching of both languages, using the kinds of strategies outlined for literacy teaching above.

My own second language is the Indigenous Australian language Pitjantjatjara, which I was taught by my elders and peers in the communities. For me, there were usually clear boundaries between contexts where Pitjantjatjara or English were the appropriate languages to use. However one of my key roles was to interpret in meetings where Pitjantjatjara and English speakers could not understand each other. The English speakers were usually government agents, or other visitors. The Pitjantjatjara speakers had all been to school, but had never learnt enough oral English to understand and negotiate independently with the agencies that controlled their resources, and had never learnt enough written English to qualify for further education or for the jobs in their communities that required

further education. The major reason was that the school curriculum from 1940 until 1990 was in Pitjantjatjara language, initiated by progressive missionaries. One rationale for this was the popular theory that children learn literacy most easily in their first language, which can then easily transfer to literacy in English. The Pitjantjatjara experience over fifty years, and three generations, showed that this theory is too simplistic. Like the Navajo, the Pitjantjatjara struggled to gain policy control over their community schools for decades. When they did win control, their first act was to replace Pitjantjatjara with English literacy as the primary curriculum goal. They reasoned that Pitjantjatjara teaching was the responsibility of the families, and English literacy teaching was the responsibility of the school (Rose 1999).

The point of this story is that Indigenous languages are necessarily recontextualised when they are brought into the school, often with results that were unexpected by their advocates. Unlike the Pitjantjatjara, few Indigenous communities today can simply leave the teaching of community languages to families, because they are no longer spoken every day in the families, if at all. The functions they once fulfilled in people's everyday lives have been taken over by English. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that this process can be significantly reversed, as most Indigenous communities and families are integrated in so many ways into the English speaking world. For Indigenous languages to survive and revive they must fulfil social functions that are significant and meaningful enough for children and young people to want to speak them, and these functions must be distinct enough that English cannot be more easily used. Some common functions for language revival are in formal contexts such as ceremonies, songs, and 'welcome to country' speeches, but these contexts and the language used are very restricted. Another promising context for expanding language learning and use is in ethnographic activities that involve recording, transcribing, translating and discussing, as outlined above. Through these active processes, students expand their language knowledge, and this expanded knowledge can be applied in other contexts in the school and beyond, in story-telling, in speeches, in dialogue, and in writing.

It is essential that schools and communities are crystal clear about their goals in language teaching, and the functions that Indigenous languages and English serve in the school and in students' future lives. These functions may include qualifying for further education, for which a high level of English literacy is essential, or conserving a community language which young people may have stopped using, for which targeted, explicit language teaching programs are essential. Or the goal may be to give students strong, coherent identities as both Indigenous community members and citizens of the modern world. For this goal, language programs that integrate explicit teaching of Indigenous languages and English, building oral and written skills in both languages, and critical skills for reflecting on the meanings in both cultures, are what is needed.

Supporting Indigenous students through primary, secondary and tertiary education

Braine and Segundo's oral discussion about recruiting and supporting Indigenous students through college echoes many of the same issues faced by Indigenous students in Australia. It begins with the struggles of Indigenous children in the competitive environment of the classroom, and the shame associated with being referred to special education. It continues with Indigenous secondary students' lack of preparation and motivation for college

education, and with their struggles once they get to college, in coping not just with the social environment, but the academic work required of them. The program run by Braine and Segundo is inspirational and essential, and is mirrored by comparable programs in many Australian universities and technical colleges, to attract Indigenous students and keep them to graduation.

Nevertheless the numbers of Indigenous students making it to further education and staying there is still well below what it should be, as Porter, Dill, Masutani, & Perry cite for Hawaii. As you may expect, I consider that the fault for this lies squarely in the hands of schools, and their ineffective teaching practices. I have devoted considerable space above to outlining what schools can do in the early years, to give all their students the foundation skills they need to succeed. But the same principles can be applied in the upper primary, secondary and tertiary classroom. It is neither acceptable nor necessary for universities to blame schools for students' lack of preparation, or for secondary teachers to blame primary schools, anymore than primary schools should attribute failure to children's 'abilities' or home cultures.

In order to take responsibility for teaching all their students effectively, schools must first acknowledge that reading is the fundamental mode of learning in the school, and that all teachers should know how to teach all their students how to learn from reading. One implication of this recognition is that reading must be placed at the centre of classroom practice, and that teachers must be able to guide all their students to engage with and learn from the reading texts of the curriculum. The strategies developed in the Reading to Learn program are designed for teachers to do exactly this, at all levels of school. Crucially they are designed for teachers to engage every one of their students, no matter what their language and cultural background, in reading the same texts at the same level. They are designed to embed skills in reading and writing in teaching the curriculum content, in such a way that the weakest students are supported to do the same learning tasks as the top students. With these teaching tools, no student needs to be relegated to special education classes, in which as Braine and Segundo make clear, they are unlikely to catch up with their more successful peers. In contrast, the Reading to Learn strategies have consistently been shown to accelerate the learning of the weakest students at an average four times above standard growth rates, while top students accelerate at 1.5 times standard rates (Culican 2006, McCrae et al 2000, Rose 2011, Rose & Martin 2012, 2013). This rate of growth for the bottom students is essential if the achievement gap in each classroom is to be narrowed, and more Indigenous students are to succeed.

The Reading to Learn strategies are designed for teaching reading and writing across key learning areas in the primary school, for teaching subject specific reading and writing in the secondary school, and for teaching academic literacy in tertiary education. Unfortunately there is no space left to describe these strategies in detail, but they are available in the publications listed in the references, particularly in Rose (2005, 2014). At the tertiary level, their application with Indigenous academic students is discussed in Rose (2008), Rose, Lui-Chivizhe, McKnight & Smith (2003) and Rose, Rose, Farrington & Page (2008). The support they provide Indigenous students to succeed with academic work is a powerful complement to the essential social support provided by the programs that Braine and Segundo describe.

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