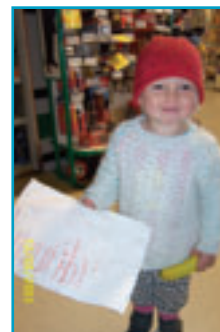


A repertoire of literacy practices

Being a participant in literacy events has been described as participating in a set of roles or practices. Combining a framework set out by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke²⁰ with ideas from Barbara Rogoff²¹ and *Te Whāriki*, we might say that being a participant in the culture's symbol systems and technologies includes the following repertoire of practices (not in any particular order). This repertoire parallels the principles of *Te Whāriki* (community, relationships, holistic development, and empowerment) and the four dimensions of strength outlined in Book 10 and referred to on page 6 above.

Observing and listening in²²

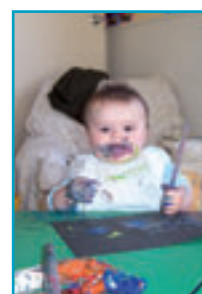
This is what children do before they begin to actively participate in the activities of the *community*. Ruby is actively involved in going shopping and, at the same time, she is observing an adult making a list.



Ruby goes shopping while an adult makes a list.

Playing with symbol systems and technologies

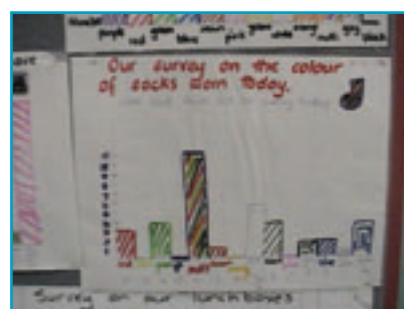
Children and adults often play with the tools, artefacts, and discourses to do with symbol systems and technologies in order to find out what they can do. (The tools, artefacts, and discourses are the “things” in “responsive and reciprocal *relationships* with people, places, and things”²³.)



Playing with paint.

Using the symbol systems and technologies for a purpose

Skills are useful in a *holistic*, meaning-making context. This is about noticing, recognising, and using the culture's symbol systems for making meaning. Making meaning includes understanding or breaking the codes – recognising and using the fundamental units, symbols, patterns, and conventions of literacy, mathematics, the arts, and ICT.



Counting and recording the colour of the children's socks.

Critically questioning or transforming

Critically questioning or transforming the units, the conventions, or the stories of meaning making systems (including inventing units, conventions, or stories, and choosing a tool from among several that might serve the purpose) involves using symbol systems and technologies with competence and agency. Both are actions of *empowerment*, which position children as having a valued viewpoint and being able to make changes.²⁴



Listening in to, playing with, using for a purpose, and transforming: The environment as a kitchen or a workshop

These processes can be summarised in another metaphor, from James Greeno:²⁵ to think of the domains of literacy, mathematics, the arts, and ICT as resources in purposeful environments. Greeno comments that “in this metaphor, knowing the domain is knowing your way around in the environment and knowing how to use its resources”.²⁶

And he adds that “kitchens and workshops are small human-made environments with materials and tools for specialized activities”.

Learning to use resources to make things also involves social as well as individual activities. In a kitchen or workshop, a person can learn how to put materials together and perform operations on them (e.g. various mixing operations, different methods of cooking, ways to attach parts, and how to make adjustments and repairs) by helping a more experienced worker, by being shown how to do things and then trying them with coaching by a mentor, or by following written instructions and observing the results.²⁷

A kitchen is a small, deliberately constructed environment, developed for solving specific kinds of problems. Although Greeno is writing about an aspect of mathematics – number sense – this metaphor is a useful one for all symbol systems and technologies. The purpose of entering the kitchen, for instance, is not to use the tools, but it might be to make a batch of scones. The tools chosen will be those apparently most useful to complete the task. But the cook needs to be familiar with the tools available to make the choice and may need to be inventive or adaptive when the “right” tool is not available. Sometimes the cook will play with the materials or the tools or the recipes in order to see what they can do. Occasionally someone in the kitchen will watch the cook and decide (perhaps later) to have a go at cooking something similar or to try out the tools. In the exemplar “Preparing a budget and playing with numbers”, for instance, a group of children and the teacher are selecting from a catalogue and budgeting for an equipment grant. This purpose calls on some mathematical tools for its achievement, including symbols (numbers) and a calculator. Lute watches this purposeful activity and later plays with the calculator, writing the numbers that appear on its screen.

