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LITERACY THROUGH WRITING

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
in Education:
Reading/Language Arts Option

by
Glenda Jean Lindberg

June 1998

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Approved by:



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Associate Professor, Education

5/20/98
Date


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ABSTRACT

Many teachers each year have children who have difficulties learning in school. We face the challenge to create an environment where are students are capable of having successes in our schools today.

This project assists teacher in developing an understanding of the writing process and the factors that control the development of children.

The developmental stages of spelling is one factor that needs to be taken into consideration when designing a program for "at-risk" children. The stages provide useful information for the teacher and will assist in designing a quality writing program.

The interrelationship between reading and writing is another factor that can influence the success or failure of a program. Reading and writing are inter-dependant on each other in a child's literacy development. The success rate of students in the writing program will depend upon the connections that are made between the two processes.

The third factor is understanding the importance of the cognitive and affective styles of learning. A student's ability to understand the process of writing will help them in developing skills necessary to become effective writers.

The final factor in developing quality instruction is

the affective conditions needed for a successful reading and writing program. The conditions are based on the student's role as a learner in the school environment. Quality education takes place only if the student has control over their own learning.

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INTRODUCTION

AND

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the public schools today, more and more children are entering school with little or no experience with reading or writing. Teachers are recognizing that the task of teaching a child to read and write is becoming increasingly harder. Currently, national and state guidelines are requiring children to be reading at grade level by the end of third grade. I believe that all children can learn to read, however, I don't believe teachers and researchers believe in same rate learning. Reading is a developmental process just like learning to walk. We cannot precisely say when a child will begin to walk or read. All children are not the same. I believe that expectations requiring children to learn to read at the same rate is developmentally impossible. However, I do believe that through the process of writing all children have the ability to become successful readers.

In my years of teaching "at-risk" students, I have found that writing can improve a child's reading ability. I believe that writing assists students in understanding the functions of language. Through writing experiences, students can begin to acquire the necessary knowledge to

become successful readers. When talking about writing experiences, I am referring to a process approach to writing. The students are asked to write down their personal experiences and feelings about the subject matter. The importance of using a student's own language is crucial. Frank Smith (1985) states that "anything we try to learn that cannot be related to the structure of knowledge we already have in long-term memory is meaningless to us. It is nonsense" (p.43). When a teacher asks students to write about something they have never experienced, the activity is meaningless to them. My experience indicates that adults can't read what they don't understand.

I understand the literacy problem that faces our nation increases each year. Children have become the victims of our own culture. Families do not spend the time reading with their children. The technology age has developed a society of children who are more concerned about the newly released fast-action video game than reading and writing. Our roles as educators continues to become more and more important. "One of eight seventeen-year-olds is functionally illiterate, which means his or her reading and writing skills are below sixth-grade" (Hatkoff & Klopp-Kelly, 1992, p.79). My role as a teacher

is to understand the developmental stages of reading and writing and to develop a curriculum that will meet the needs of all children. Research has shown a clear benefit from connecting reading and writing (Shanahan, 1988) and has also shown that a writing program which includes instruction in specific informational text structures improves both writing and reading comprehension (Raphael, Kirscher, & Englert, 1988).

Children at a very young age understand that written language conveys meaning. The scribble writing on young children's papers is the beginning of literacy. They understand the purpose of writing is to convey one's thoughts to another person. If you ask children what they wrote, they can tell you. The scribbles are not merely random marks on a piece of paper but the children's first attempt to communicate to someone in a symbolic form of expression. Young children understand that adults use these same techniques to create and share meaning with others. They have learned to use writing as a form of communication by examining the world around them and using that knowledge to express their thoughts and feelings.

I believe that in schools today, many teachers still do not allow students the time to develop and grow as writers. The daily writing is part of the ritual of the

day. The students are asked to write to a prompt that the teacher has written on the board. Many times the "at-risk" students are asked to write about something they have never experienced. Cunningham and Allington (1994) remind us that, "the literacy-rich classroom communicates the importance of real reading and writing activities by engaging children in a variety of print activities not relegating reading and writing to a brief period" (p. 21). Good teachers recognize the importance of teaching children that their thoughts are important. Children who value their own writing will take pride in themselves and enjoy communicating through the written word. By allowing "at-risk" students to take responsibility for their own writing, they will intuitively learn and understand why we write.

I believe that the love of writing comes from being able to share something of yourself. In the classroom writing that is meaningful helps children understand the importance of writing in their own lives. The goal of teaching writing is to allow students to explore their own ideas and write for "real" purposes. "The single most important thing you can do to help students become better writers is to provide them the time, materials with which to write, and to demonstrate the process and the importance

of writing to them" (Cunningham & Allington, 1994, p.89). Through enjoyable writing activities children are allowed to expand their writing abilities which increases their motivation to write.

According to Cunningham & Allington (1994), "Children who write become better readers. One of the most powerful connections you can make is to connect reading and writing" (p. 94). Good writers and readers develop because of the freedom given by the teacher to become risk takers. Students that are allowed to explore and experiment with the printed word develop an understanding that words have meaning. The best writing has taken place because a teacher has allowed the students to explore their own ideas and become authors of their own text.

Writing daily is especially crucial for students who come from homes where the adults do not write. In an environment where the teacher serves as a model, students begin to understand the importance of writing. The teacher can systematically teach the writing process by providing the important components needed to produce quality writing. Through the modeling of the writing process, students can begin to develop the skills necessary to become effective writers. Graves (1994) reminds us that, " If we help children take knowledgeable responsibility in reading their

own work, we not only help them become effective lifelong learners, but we shift the responsibility for writing to them, where it belongs"(p. xvi).

When talking about curriculum reform, examining the possibilities within the school structure and framework are key factors in bringing about change. I believe personal vision-building is critical in creating an environment that allows us to examine our roles as educators and strive to make our educational system better. According to Michael Fullan (1993), "working on a vision means examining and reexamining, and making explicit to ourselves why we came into teaching" (p. 13). Personal vision allows us to articulate to others why we think that change is important. Block (1987) emphasizes that "creating a vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future" (p.102). If my goal as an educator is to ensure that all students will become successful readers and writers, then examining my practices in the classroom is crucial in bringing about change.

I believe that school restructuring has occurred in many schools across the state but hasn't really made an impact on the learning environment. According to Short, Harste and Burke(1996), curriculum reform can only be achieved by shifting the teacher-student roles and creating an environment for inquiry. Teachers who are thinking

about "true" reform really need to examine their beliefs
about how children learn.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature on the development of writing indicates that there are some key factors in providing support for "at-risk" students. These factors appear to be the: teacher's understanding of the writing process, development of spelling, interrelationship between reading and writing, understanding the cognitive and affective styles of learning and affective conditions for a successful reading and writing program.

Teacher's understanding of the writing process

The first aspect of trying to teach "at-risk" children is to examine the role of the teacher. Teachers who become observers of children's learning begin to modify their teaching according to the needs of the students. Forester & Reinhard (1989) reminds us that, the learning process can become a co-creative process between the teacher and learner. We learn from the children about how to acquire knowledge and they learn from us as we model writing and spelling. When the teacher's role is viewed as one of being a facilitator, students begin to take risks in their writing. They begin to understand that making mistakes is part of the learning process. By fostering a co-creative environment, students and teacher can work together to ensure success in writing.

Effective teachers recognize the need to support a program that will assist "at-risk" students in becoming successful at school. When teachers allow their students to become active participants in the writing process, they begin to acknowledge the child's method of learning. Many times teachers use an "IQ" test to determine a child's strengths. However according to Howard Gardner (1983), a child's intelligence should not be determined by asking them to do isolated tasks. Instead, Gardner suggests that intelligence has more to do with our capacity to solve problems and create products in a context-rich, naturalistic setting. By determining a child's strengths, a teacher can design curriculum that will enhance the capacity of learning through a context-rich environment.

During the writing process, teachers can become the model to assist students in becoming successful writers. According to Donald Graves (1994), "children need to hear the teacher speak out loud about the thinking that accompanies the process: topic choice, how to start, etc." (p.43). The teacher can compose stories in front of the students and demonstrate the elements of writing. The teacher models the writing and the students use the information to compose their own personal stories. "The teacher writes so the children can see the words and gives

a running monologue of thinking that goes with writing" (p.45).

The importance of giving the children running monologue is to assist students in internalizing the components of writing. Marlene and Robert McCracken (1995) state that the giving of thoughts and the getting of thoughts are two important components in teaching children about the aspect of their language. Through a monologue, children can come to understand the purpose of language and begin to communicate by recording their thoughts in stories.

A teacher's understanding of the types of activities to promote communication is important. The McCrackens (1995) suggest three major types of activities which promote a thinking environment: 1) Activities that provoke thought while developing the need to communicate and the desire to record one's own thoughts; 2) Activities that teach ways that thoughts can be written down and ways to practice thinking and learning; 3) Activities that teach children the functions of print and allow children to begin the natural process of learning how to read and write. Children in a thinking and learning environment are allowed to explore language and learn through their own mistakes. This way of teaching also allows the teacher to become

aware of the developmental stages that children go through while learning to write.

Development of spelling

Teaching spelling through a developmental approach allows children the time needed to become successful. According to Marlene and Robert McCracken (1995), spelling is perhaps the only skill that we expect children to perform perfectly the first time. We accept the babbling talk of a baby when they are first beginning to speak. We encourage a child learning to walk as they stumble across the floor even though we know they have not mastered the whole concept. So why is it not appropriate to have children make mistakes in their writing? If children are to learn to spell, allowing them to make mistakes is essential in their developmental growth.

When the teacher takes on the role of an observer, they can begin to examine a child's spelling progression. The literature indicates that all children go through developmental spelling stages in their writing. According to Donald Bear (1996), students' progress in spelling can be separated into three stages: alphabetic, pattern and meaning. The alphabetic stage refers the relationship between letters and sounds. The pattern stage is present when children begin to understand that some letters have an

affect on how other letters sound. The meaning stage is represented by the understanding that groups of letters can have direct meaning. It is important for a teacher to view spelling as a continuous natural progression. Students who are allowed the freedom to write without being required to spell everything correctly will become risk takers.

According to Jo-Ann Parry and David Hornsby (1985):

It is important for the teacher to continue confidence building by showing children that everyone makes mistakes and that there is an opportunity to correct them. If too much emphasis is placed on correct spelling initially, then writing will be crippled. (p.59)

The developmental spelling theory also suggests that inventive spelling can be used to determine a child's knowledge of written words and can be used to guide instruction (Invernizzi, Abouzeid, & Gill, 1994). If a teacher can determine a child's stage of spelling development, lessons can be designed to help teachers direct children's efforts as they learn to read and spell. Teaching strategies that examine the English language and allow students to make discoveries about spelling patterns is important. These self discovery lessons are much more meaningful and allow spelling patterns to become intrinsic. Children who are given opportunities to write daily, will begin to develop patterns in their spelling. While

examining these patterns, a teacher can determine what has been learned and what skills are needed to improve.

Research also supports the idea that certain key words can be taught to support the reading as well as the writing program. Marie Clay (1993) points out that anchor words are important in a child's reading development. These words are not the easiest to learn so they must be taught in context: I, is, am, come, see, the, we, at, on, look, this, a, in, to, like, me, my, and, here, up, go, it, you, of, and that. These anchor words will be vital in the development of the reading and writing process. They will be the base foundation and starting point in the teacher's curriculum development.

Interrelationship between reading and writing

The literature supports the fact that reading and writing are inter-dependent on each other. "Although it is possible to read without writing, it is an impossibility to write without reading" (Parry & Hornsby, 1985, p.67).

Reading and writing can both be considered constructive processes. When reading, meaning is constructed according to one's own life experiences. In writing, the writer composes the story through experiences that are constructed by memories or thoughts that they have previously experienced. The meaning that is constructed in both the

reading process and the writing process are dependent on the life experiences of that person.

In reviewing the literature it was found that reading and writing are related even in their earliest stages (Juel, Griffith & Gough, 1986). Instruction that does not address the interrelationship between reading and writing will result in little or no transfer of knowledge. Transfer is not automatic unless it is used in a context that is meaningful for the student. For example, one week students may pass a spelling test but will not be able to spell the word correctly the following week in their writing. According to Frank Smith (1985), when we learn new information it is stored in short-term memory. The difference between long and short-term memory is organization. "Short-term memory holds unrelated items, but long-term memory is a network, a structure of knowledge, it is coherent" (p.42). The transfer of knowledge can only be achieved if the learner understands the purpose for which it was originally obtained. According to Timothy Shanahan (1988), "if students do not understand that reading or writing knowledge can be transferred, then there is less possibility that it will transfer. Building the bridges is a vital teacher role" (p.641). Learners who actively use prior knowledge to create information in

reading and writing will be able to easily transfer from one process to another.

In another study Timothy Shanahan (1984) compared measurements of the reading and writing components at two grade levels. The reading tests administered included phonetic analysis, reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and lastly a limited cloze test. In the area of writing, two student samples were taken and analyzed for average number of words, vocabulary diversity, and organizational structure. The results concluded that reading and writing were related at both the second and fifth grade. However, it did not suggest that writing instruction was sufficient in teaching students to read. The connection between reading and writing was that students can be taught the conventions of our language through writing.

Understanding the cognitive and affective styles of learning

If reading and writing involve the same cognitive structures, it is possible that instruction in one could result in the increased ability in the other. The literature reaffirms the idea that reading and writing are related.

Shanahan (1994) states:

It appears that phonics knowledge is the most important aspect of reading that relates to writing performance for beginning readers. Also, for beginning readers, spelling appears to contribute more highly to the reading-writing connection than do the other variables. (p. 475)

This information allows us to develop curriculum that would support a strong reading and writing program interdependent on each other. The integrated instructional approach might allow for maximum efficiency in both reading and writing.

According to Marie Clay (1994), a child cannot write or read without having some skill at hearing sounds within words. There is also no chance of learning letter-sound relationships without the ability to hear and differentiate between sounds. This ability to manipulate sounds is called phonemic awareness. Patricia Cunningham and Richard Allington (1994) state that, "a child's level of phonological awareness is a very good predictor of beginning reading success" (p.129). The likelihood that a child will fail to learn to read can be linked to the lack of phonemic awareness. Developing phonemic awareness through oral language is the first step in laying the foundation for formal reading instruction. Interactive writing is an activity which can assist students in developing the ability to hear sounds. The teacher orally talks about what is being written on the board. The

emphasis is on listening for sounds and how to form the words. The students are actively engaged in the activity by "sharing the pen" with the teacher and writing the text as a classroom project.

The literature supports the theory that writing plays an important part in the early reading process. Robinson (1973) using a battery of tests found that her measure of writing vocabulary was a good predictor of reading progress. Marie Clay (1975/1997) states that remedial programs for severely retarded readers have usually stressed writing as an aid to reading. The students who engage in the writing process begin to manipulate the units of the written language. Writing requires students to attend to print and discriminate the differences between letters and words. According to Clay:

Creative writing demands that the child pay attention to the details of print. To put his messages down in print he is forced to construct words, letter by letter, and so he becomes aware of letter features and letter sequences, particularly for the vocabulary which he uses in writing again and again. (p. 2)

In order to learn to read, attending to the printed word is crucial. Reading requires the ability to distinguish the difference between a word and a letter. A child's ability to pay attention to the printed word is required to become a successful reader. Through the use of writing instruction, a teacher can teach the skills necessary to

become successful readers and writers.

**Affective conditions for a successful
reading and writing program**

The student who is viewed as an active participants in the learning environment becomes an independent learner. Regie Routman (1994) defines independence as the learners' ability to examine and monitor their own behaviors throughout the learning process. In the writing process, students begin to gain control over their own learning by being encouraged to write about their own experiences. When children are in control of their own learning, they feel safe in taking risks. Forester and Reinhard(1989) remind us that, "The elements of safety and trust assure that emotional blocks to learning are minimized and that the lower layers of the brain will not give the shut-down signal but will give full play to curiosity and impulse to explore" (p.30).

Students who take a personal stake in the writing process develop ownership of learning. Ownership of their own writing becomes the vehicle for fluency. The students are able to observe that writing is really nothing more than thoughts and conversations written down. The key factor in the writing process is that the thoughts are the

actual experiences of the child. According to Frank Smith (1985), the conventions of the English language can be very unpredictable and therefore difficult to comprehend.

However, by using the language written by the child it makes the conventions less confusing and easier for a child to read. The comprehension comes from the children so it is never confusing to them.

According to Reggie Routman (1994), the climate of the classroom contributes to students' willingness to write. The physical and emotional environment that is conducive to the needs of children allow them to take risks. Children who feel safe in their environment begin to feel confident about their writing. Allen (1974) writes that "learning is risk taking"(p. 1). Creating an environment that fosters respect and allows students to take risks makes learning easy and productive. Students begin to understand that risk-taking is part of the process of learning. By encouraging students to become active participants in the learning process, teachers can begin to turn reluctant students into enthusiastic learners.

A natural writing environment allows students to begin attaching meaning to their knowledge base. According to Marie Clay (1991), writing provides extra opportunities for children to gain control of literacy concepts. By

focusing on the aspects of writing, students can begin to make literacy connections within their brain. Lucy McCormick-Calkins (1986) states that if we look at how children learn oral language then learning written language needs to be done in the same way. Children will learn written language by using it for real purposes just as a child learns to talk.

The importance of writing in the classroom can determine the success as a reader for many "at-risk" students. For many students writing provides the foundation needed to become successful readers. "The interrelationship between reading and writing has seemed particularly significant for those students who have been called learning disabled" (Routman, 1988, p.103). Scheduling for the writing is crucial in meeting the needs of those students with difficulties. The natural language of a child is predictable and when written down can be read with ease by students with reading difficulties. So it is important to allow "at-risk" children time to develop their skills as writers. Lucy McCormick-Calkins (1886) states that writing time needs to consist of long periods of writing time in the course of a day. This allows students to take control of their own writing processes and they can begin to develop strategies and plan for their writing.

According to Cunningham and Allington (1994), if we only schedule short periods of writing time, we should expect the pieces of writing to be brief. Teachers will get quality writing pieces if scheduled blocks of time are set aside during the day for students to write.

Assessments are a crucial part of the writing process. Assessments based on a child-centered curriculum allow students to understand the writing process and grow as writers. Bonnie Campbell-Hill (1994) reminds us that, "if your primary goal is to nourish active, independent learners who view learning as a lifelong process, then traditional report cards and standardized test results are simply inadequate" (p.5). Good assessments allow a student to establish personal goals in writing which will ensure growth and success.

The purpose of assessment is to collect data that will allow children to reach their goals in writing. Likewise, assessments can also serve as a tool to improve teacher instruction. One of the most powerful ways of documenting a student's growth in writing is the collection of writing samples. As stated by Lynn Rhodes and Nancy Shanklin (1993), "the messiest literacy collections, but the richest resources of information, are the student's ongoing reading and writing folders" (p. 415). These assessments can be

used by the teacher and student to determine growth in writing. By using these writing samples, a teacher can determine a students' strengths and weaknesses in order to adjust instruction and record academic gains.

CONCLUSIONS

In the review of the literature, several key elements were important in developing a writing program designed to reach "at-risk" children. These key elements form the basis for this project.

The first key element discussed was the teacher's understanding of the writing process. A teacher who becomes an observer of children's learning will naturally use that information to improve instruction. The teacher will also refine the practices of teaching to meet the needs of all the students so even "at-risk" students will be successful.

The second element in designing a quality program was the understanding of spelling stages and how this type of assessment can be beneficial in creating lesson to support low achievers. By understanding that inventive spelling plays an important role in the developmental process of learning, a teacher can ensure that "at-risk" students will not become discouraged.

The third key element discussed was an understanding that reading and writing are related. Because reading and writing are dependent, it is crucial that a program involving both needs to be established. Their inter-dependance on each other allows a teacher to combine these

two processes to achieve long term transfer of knowledge.

The fourth element was the understanding that reading and writing have similar cognitive processes. Phonological awareness is an important skill which children who have reading difficulty lack. A teacher's insight into this information can help them implement a strong program that includes activities in phonics and phonemic awareness.

The final component of the key factors that support a strong writing and reading program is the affective conditions of a classroom. Students who are at risk have failed to become good readers. They lack the confidence in themselves to believe that they can be successful. An environment that allows students to make mistakes helps them become successful readers and writers.

GOALS, OUTCOMES AND LIMITATIONS

The goal of the project is to assist other primary teachers in creating a classroom of exceptional writers through the process of writing and publishing class books. These activities included can also be easily adapted to an upper elementary classroom. The specific objectives of the project are to:

1. help other teachers understand the importance of being a model of writing for their students.
2. create a classroom environment that enhances one's writing program.
3. schedule time to allow students to become successful writers.
4. assist students in becoming better writers by participating in the publication of classroom books.
5. provide activities which allows students to share their published work with others as a celebration of their accomplishments.
6. use assessments that will allow students to monitor their own progress and assist the teacher in planning.

The limitations of this project involve teacher interest and their theoretical beliefs about teaching writing. If a teacher doesn't feel comfortable with a student-centered classroom, then this might not be

something they would be interested in trying. It is important that a teacher feels comfortable in allowing the students freedom to explore with language and become self-motivated. The project requires a teacher to take on the role as a facilitator. If you are not comfortable with a student-centered environment, you may want to start out slow and try some of the activities included in the project.

APPENDIX A

Writing: The Key to Success

A practical guide to teaching writing
in the primary grades

Introduction

Each year we face the challenge of students entering kindergarten and first grade unprepared for the tasks that are required. As a teacher, experiencing the frustration of trying to teach at-risk students is very heart-breaking. These ideas and lessons are a result of trying to reach those students needing extra time and assistance to become successful.

There is a variety of ideas to assist you in developing your own writing program. Management techniques and assessment tools are also included to allow you to implement writers workshop and track student progress. Every lesson in this section was developed through the need to assist at-risk students in becoming successful in reading and writing.

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Your role as a teacher in the writing process

Teacher's role. Your responsibility as a teacher is to provide many opportunities to encourage your students to write in class. Your students in this setting become part of a community which encourages each other in their successes as well as their failures. The atmosphere is one of collaboration and discovery. In this collaborative environment the students learn from one another as well as you. This atmosphere of trust and encouragement will allow your students to take risks and share their written work with others.

Establish a writing community. The key to a successful program is to develop a community of writers in your classroom. In this type of environment your students will understand that they are part of a network of people to assist others in becoming better writers. Your writing community is there to help and give support whenever needed. Children who feel secure within the writing community will be able to express their feelings to others in a positive way. Your major role is to create and maintain a supportive and secure

environment for your students.

Modeling Writing. Your role as a teacher is to facilitate and introduce the writing process through modeled writing. Using a large piece of writing paper, you write in front of the children to create text. Modeling the writing process to your children will allow them to see how language is constructed. During modeled writing, it is important for you to let the students hear the process one goes through to write something. Your students' concepts about writing will be formed through this modeled writing. It is important that you understand that the impact you can make in modeled writing will be crucial for your student's success when they begin to write.

Interactive Writing. In this type of writing your students take an active role in writing. The students create the text by "sharing the pen" with you. During the lesson, you verbally talk your students through the writing process while the text is being constructed. Through questioning and direct teaching you focus your students' attention on the concepts about print (Clay, 1993) such as top-to-bottom and left-to-right

directionality, capital letters, and punctuation. You can also use this activity to teach letter/sound correspondence and spelling patterns.

Setting up your classroom to foster learning

Display their writing. Your classroom environment is a key element in the creation of a positive learning environment. Bulletin boards can become an intricate part of the writing process in the classroom. Boards designated for published stories encourages students to write. If you allow students to submit one writing per month to be posted on the publishers wall, they will become highly motivated to continue writing. If students have the opportunity to fill your walls with their work, their motivation to write will increase. So create the excitement for writing through the classroom environment. Displaying your student's work assures them that their writing is valued in your classroom.

Develop a writing center. Another way to encourage your students to write is by providing a writing center filled with colored paper, envelopes, colorful pencils,

clip art pictures, stickers, rubber stamps, wallpaper books and templates to make their own envelopes. Your center should be stocked daily. Colored paper can be purchased or donated by a local print shop. Many hardware stores have discontinued wallpaper books you can get for free or pay a minimal amount of money for them. The wallpaper books can be used for book covers.

Create a word wall. Do your students often get discouraged because they are unable to spell the words they want to write? The word wall is a perfect solution to your problem. A bulletin board or chalkboard can be used to create a word wall. A word wall is essentially a dictionary. The words can be written down on sentence strips and tacked on the wall or chalkboard. This allows you to change words once your students know how to spell them. The words on the wall can be high frequency or words that are frequently misspelled. If you write the words in alphabetical order and in different colors, your students will be able to easily locate the words they need. Your word wall is a valuable resource for students in the writing process assisting them in moving into conventional spelling.

Creating time for writing:

writers workshop

Scheduling time for the process of writing. Your writing schedule is an important part of the success your students as independent writers. A long block of time each day for uninterrupted writing is essential in the growth of your students. Your writing program should be seen as a daily routine. A predictable writing time will allow your students to become aware of their own writing. Your students will become better writers by realizing that writing is part of their everyday life. Time is also needed to allow your students to go through the steps of the writing process (pre-writing, writing, revising, and publishing). The process of writing can be taught effectively if there is a regularly scheduled writing. Writers workshop is a great way to encourage your students to write because it is part of a daily routine. The following schedule can be changed according to the age group of your students and the amount of time needed to finish the writing piece. Some writing projects may take longer so the schedule can be modified to meet the needs of your

students. The chart below is a sample of a weekly plan for writers workshop:

Monday: Teacher models writing and students develop writing topics.

Tuesday: Pre-writing- Students begin writing based on the topic chosen.

Wednesday: Writing Conferences- Teacher conferences one to one with students about improving their writing. Student may present to group for suggestions.

Thursday: Revising- Students rewrite their paper using suggestions from teacher and other students.

Friday: Presentations- Students work on illustrations and present story to class.

Student topic choices are important. In starting writer's workshop, begin by having your students write about events that have happened in their lives. This writing activity is designed to help your students understand that writers use real life experiences to construct meaning. If writing is going to be something they enjoy, then your students need to have choices in what they write about. Every story will be unique and will provide some personal insights into their lives. These stories tend to be the favorites among the students. They thoroughly enjoy reading about each others life experiences.

Presentations-sharing their work. Allow your students to share their work with each other. This will encourage them to continue to write. Author's chair is a time when you gives students the opportunity to share their work with their peers. Your students can then give the author suggestions on how to make the story more interesting. These suggestions can teach your students to understand the importance of revising and making something presentable to an audience.

Ideas for publishing student work

Personal experience stories.

Generate with your students a list of personal events they've had in their lives. After the list is created, have them write true stories about these experiences. Type the stories on the computer and have the students illustrated them. Assemble the stories into a book by using a binding machine. Put these stories in the library for others to read.

Group literature extensions. Group literature writing activities involve all students publishing one book cooperatively. After reading a literature selection, assigned each student a different part of the book to

be rewritten. For example, your students can rewrite the three little pigs using different animals as the characters. Literature stories that have predictable text are good for this type of activity.

Patterns in books. After reading a book with a writing pattern, your students can recreate their own story using the pattern in the book. It Looked Like Split Milk by Charles G. Shaw is a prime example of a patterned book. The students complete the sentence: Sometimes it looked like a _____ but it wasn't a _____. The published version of the book is done with white paint and blue paper. Have your students paint pictures of objects they might see in the clouds. The picture can be laminated and bound together using a book binding machine.

Theme Books. Other books you can publish with your students can be based on a themes. Themes are an easy way of getting your students excited about writing. Treetop Publishing company(P.O. Box 085567 Racine, Wisconsin 53408-5567) makes professionally bound blank story books. The student stories can be written or typed on white paper then glued into the book. The

company sells books with theme covers, as well as blank cover so your students can design their own.

Flip Books. Flip books are a great way for your students to write about what they have learned. These books are assembled by using five sheets of paper. On each sheet, a fact is written based on the theme or unit being studied. After the books are assembled your students make illustrations to match the text.

Pocket stories. To make pocket stories, have your students create pockets using construction paper. Next, have them write a letter to someone or to a character from a book. Display the pockets on a bulletin board with the letters in them. This is a good activity to display in the school office or around the community.

Scrolls. Creating a history scroll is an excellent way to teach your students about time-lines. Have your students write their life story on a scroll. The scrolls are constructed by using empty toilet paper rolls and long paper. Have your students bring family pictures to put onto their history scroll. You can photocopy the pictures so the originals are not ruined. Have them paste the pictures onto their scroll as a

time-line of events that happened in their lives. The scrolls can also be used for events that have happened in history.

Shape books. Shape books are another way to get your students excited about writing. Your students can make shape books to correlate with the theme you are studying. The top cover of the book is in the shape of an object matching your theme. Lined paper is cut into the same shape as the cover. The students write their story on the lined paper and attach the cover to complete the published story.

Sticker Stories. This type of book is a great way to get books in the home. Give stickers to your students that correspond with the theme being studied. Have your students put a different sticker on each page of the book. Instruct them to write one sentence or two sentences describing the sticker. Staple the little books together and let the students take them home.

Clip art stories. Give your students a sheet of clip art that relates to an idea or theme. Have each student select several pictures for their story. Glue the pictures in the top left hand corner of each page of

the paper. Have them write their stories using ideas generated by the clip art.

Celebration of Authors

Balloon Launch. One activity to encourage writing is a balloon launch. Each child who writes a story is given a balloon. On the balloon attach a note that says: I am an author at (school's name). My name is _____ and I am in the _____ grade. If you find this postcard please write a brief message about where it was found and return it to :(school address). This activity is a great way to reach out into the community and maybe get a few penpals.

Young Author's Fair. The Young Author's Fair is a way to promote literacy. During the fair, students rotate through literacy centers. Some examples of literacy centers are: 1) Making a book mark 2) Publishing a book 3) Listening to an author speak 4) Viewing and reading books from other classes. The Children's Author Network is an organization that promotes local children's authors. The organization has several brochures to assist in planning for an author to come to your school. They can be reached by calling (310) 545-9582.

Display writing around town. Displaying student work within the school community, local library, school district office are great ways to showcase your student's writing.

**Assessments in writing to
ensure success.**

Writing samples. Writing samples are a simple way to track your student's progress. At the beginning of the year, have your students submit a writing sample to you. This first sample becomes the baseline assessment for the year. Then collect monthly writing samples for each student in your class. These can be stored in a three-ring binder. These samples are an excellent way of keeping track of your students progress.

Periodically, you can review the writing samples and begin to design lessons to improve your students writing skills.

Developmental stages of writing checklist. The developmental stages of writing checklist assessment can assist you in planning for writing groups (see page 42). Each child's individual writing sample is analyzed to determine the spelling development. This checklist

will allow you to divide your students into writing groups. By grouping your students, you can design lessons that meet the needs of the group.

Sound and Letter Recognition. Sound and letter recognition (see page 44) is an assessment that can be used for K-2 students. Many students having difficulty in reading lack sound/symbol correlation. This assessment will allow you to use this information while engaging in interactive writing.

Rubrics. Rubrics are another way for you to assess your students. The rubric (see page 45) is an easy way for your students to monitor their own progress in writing. Your students will improve their writing only if they know their weaknesses. A well-designed rubric allows children to understand the expectations of the teacher and encourages them to become self-motivated.

Developmental Writing Checklist

Student Name _____

Stage of writing	Date and sample
Scribble writing	
Letter-like symbols	
Strings of letters	
Some beginning sounds	
Beginning and ending sounds	
Beginning, middle and ending sounds	
Beginning, middle and ending sounds with some standard spelling	
Standard spelling	

*Adapted from Let's Write: A practical guide to teaching writing in the early grades by Nancy Areglado and Mary Dill.

Sound and Letter Recognition Sheet

Student Name _____

Grade _____ Age _____ Teacher _____

Sounds:

Q W E R T Y U I O P A S
D F G H J K L Z X C V B
N M

Upper Case Letter Recognition:

Q W E R T Y U I O P A S
D F G H J K L Z X C V B
N M

Lower Case Letter Recognition:

q w e r t y u i o p a s
d f g h j k l z x c v b
n m

Student Writing Rubric

Student Name _____

<p>Score P</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>A drawing</p> <p>Letters</p> <p>My letters go in the right direction.</p> <p>Example: bmhafr</p>	<p>Score 1</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>Neat writing</p> <p>Spaces</p> <p>My letters are beginning sounds.</p> <p>Example: i hv a c</p>	<p>Score 2</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>Neat writing</p> <p>Spaces</p> <p>Periods</p> <p>Inventive spelling</p> <p>Example: i hav a cat.</p>	<p>Score 3</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>Neat writing</p> <p>Spaces</p> <p>Periods</p> <p>Capitals</p> <p>Inventive Spelling</p> <p>Example: I hv a cat.</p>
<p>Score 4</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>Neat writing</p> <p>Spaces</p> <p>Periods</p> <p>Capitals</p> <p>Some errors in spelling</p> <p>Self-correcting</p> <p>Example: I hav a cat. It like milk.</p>	<p>Score 5</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>Neat writing</p> <p>Spaces</p> <p>Periods</p> <p>Capitals</p> <p>Few spelling errors</p> <p>Self-correcting</p> <p>Example: I hav a cat ad it likes milk.</p>	<p>Score 6</p> <p>I have...</p> <p>Neat writing</p> <p>Spaces</p> <p>Periods</p> <p>Capitals</p> <p>Standard spelling</p> <p>Self-correcting</p> <p>Four sentences</p> <p>Example: I have a cat. It likes milk. We like to play. He is soft.</p>	

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