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Reading Matters!

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Teaching Writing: What's involved?

When children learn to write, they are learning many new forms of language that are for no other purpose than expressing meaning clearly in print.

The following skills must be taught to young writers in the classroom:

- **Letter Formation**: Handwriting should be accurate and automatic. Then attention can go to generating, organizing, monitoring, and correcting language output "on line."
- **Alphabet Knowledge**
- **Sound-Symbol Correspondence**
- **Spelling and Word Study**: Effective spelling instruction should teach sounds, symbols, syllables, morphemes, memory techniques, information about the history of our language, and self-monitoring strategies.

When teaching spelling:

- teach awareness of sounds and their sequences in words
- teach "sight words" a few at a time (3-5 per week)
- emphasize spelling patterns and correspondences
- use word sorting, dictation, sentence writing, speed drills, proofreading—to get across *how to spell*.
- **Handwriting Fluency**: Multiple studies have been published showing that fluency drills in writing have a beneficial effect similar to that of fluency drills for reading. They support the child's ability to focus on the higher purposes and more challenging aspects of composition, because the "lower level" skills are accurate and automatic.

Activities to Build Handwriting and Writing Fluency:

- copy sentences for fluency
- write the alphabet daily
- write the most common sight words in dictated sentences
- recall the major spellings for specific phonemes (/k/ = c, k, or ck)
- **Sentence Composition**: Direct teaching of sentence form is a necessity for your writers. A system of marking sentences, identifying grammatical role of words, and expanding sentences should be used and practiced. At the first and second grade level, emphasize what each of the sentence parts does before introducing formal grammatical terms.

How to get fluent with sentences:

- identify the "naming" and the action part
- say more about the "naming" part (what kind, how many...) and the "action" part (when, where, how long, for what reason).
- complete sentence starters
- identify the type of sentence: question, statement, command, exclamation
- Linking Sentences into Paragraphs

The Writing Process, with Structure

<u>Plan</u>	<u>Write</u>	<u>Revise</u>
<i>Get a topic</i>	<i>Put ideas into</i>	<i>Conference, Revise</i>
<i>Set a goal</i>	<i>words</i>	<i>Proofread</i>
<i>Organize thoughts</i>	<i>Get words on paper</i>	<i>Edit, Publish</i>

Planning:

Show the children a model of what is expected, or walk them through a “shared writing” in which a model is generated by the class together. Help the children conceptualize or visualize the end product they are striving to create. Give the children a springboard to jump from:

- Genre Choices—Give children instruction in and practice with: list making, description, personal narrative (sequence), exposition (explaining reasons), story telling (character, setting, plot), persuasive writing—notes and letters, poetry
- Planning—Give a jump start: use starter phrases, illustrations, readings, photographs, titles, TALK!
- Planning—Set a goal, show a model: Where are you going and how will you get there? Identify the audience and the purpose for writing
- Planning—Organize: Take the ideas that have been generated and ask children to organize them (use a graphic).

Writing a Draft:

As children write a draft, be sure they are referring to the brainstorming and organizational plan they just completed.

- Use yellow draft paper.
- Write every other line, for easy editing.
- Use a pencil with a good eraser.
- Draw one line through changes.
- Ask yourself, “Who will read this? What am I writing about?”

Revising:

State from the outset that drafts can always be improved and that good writers revisit their work many times to revise, edit, and polish.

- Revision—Getting feedback: (1) Conference with a teacher or partner, read aloud from the author’s chair; (2) Listeners ask for clarification and elaboration, ask writer to evaluate own work, suggest one or two improvements
- Revision—Words, sentences: improve word choice, substitute specific nouns, strong verbs; reword sentences (combine, shorten, reorder); add or delete information

Publishing:

Post corrected and neatly presented work to share with a larger audience.

* Write of type a final copy; Post with colorful background, illustrations; Publish in book; Place in “finished” section of writing folder; Display in school office or library.

“The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled.”
~ Plutarch

“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson