

WRITING CHARACTERISTICS

Understanding the developmental literacy phase of each student is critical to planning appropriate writing instruction. Students move through a phase-like progression of literacy, each with distinct reading, writing, and spelling characteristics.

When analyzing samples of children's writing, knowing what to look for and how to interpret it will assist the teacher in monitoring the student's progress effectively. These factors will also aid in making appropriate instructional decisions.

Children come to us with different literacy needs and word levels and develop at different rates. They may skip a phase altogether. The effectiveness of teacher observation, intervention, and encouragement will impact the rate of student progress. Monitoring how the student is progressing and documenting that growth throughout the year is an important task.

GRADES PK-1

Pre K, Kindergarten, and first grade students begin to build a connection between oral and written language therefore they develop reading and writing together. Awareness that spoken language can be written and written language can be read is a fundamental concept in communicating ideas. Students will be given daily opportunities to write and read their writing. As their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence and their sight-word vocabulary increases, they will be able to use these skills to put their ideas and thoughts on paper. Students need to be encouraged to write for real purposes by writing such things as letters, notes, signs, stories, and labels.

Strategies to foster writing in PK-First Grade:

- Modeled Writing: Demonstration of the act of writing by thinking aloud as composing text in front of students.
- Shared Writing: The teacher and students compose a piece of writing with the teacher recording the thoughts in front of the students. By recording in front of the students the teacher reinforces concepts of print, directionality, and print conventions.
- Interactive Writing: The teacher and students "share the pen" to compose a writing piece. The content can be a daily message, response to literature, and a group story.

The Writing Process at Different Stages of Development			
	Brainstorm or Plan	Drafting/Revising	Editing/Publishing
Emergent Writer	Draw first, then "write"	Usually do only single-draft writing May use pictures, scribbles, letters, and letter-like symbols	Do not know that writing says the same thing every time you read it Will "read" or tell about their writing in "author's chair"
Beginning Writer	Plan by pretelling	Write first, then draw Draft using phonetic spelling Revise by "adding on" at the end	Fix "word-wall words" Can read their writing and will share it in "author's chair"
Transitional Writer	Use brainstorming and organizers to generate ideas	Draft double-spaced and single-sided Revise by inserting or changing words and ideas	Can circle words that "don't look right" Need teacher support for editing Will recopy to publish
Intermediate/Advanced Writer	Use a variety of prewriting tools to organize as well as generate ideas	Revise by adding information in the middle or by cutting up and reorganizing text May start "cutting clutter" in text	Take responsibility for self-editing Will publish to share with a variety of audiences

adapted from *Marvelous Minilessons for Teaching Beginning Writing, K-3* by Lori Jamison Rog

MINI-LESSONS

Mini-lessons can be categorized in four broad areas: organization, strategies, skills, and author's craft. This chart contains suggested mini-lessons. Refer to your curriculum guide to obtain the applicable standards.

Organization (What to do)	Strategies (Composing)	Author's Craft (Written Expression)	Skills (Mechanics and Usage)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rules and guidelines• How to locate your materials• How to help yourself when no one is available• How to request a teacher conference• How to respond to peers when they share• How to use writing checklists• How to set up your writer's notebook/journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to match your words with your pictures• How to use details to describe• How to stick to a topic• How to organize writing with a beginning, middle and end• How to use illustrations to convey information• How to use time order words• How to create "mind pictures"• How to use sensory writing• How to extend a sentence with elaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to use talk bubbles• How to describe the setting• How to describe the character• How to create a good lead• How to create a catchy ending• How to use strong action verbs• How to revise for word choice• How to eliminate unnecessary or redundant information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to demonstrate directionality• How to write in complete sentences• How to use space between your words• How to use capitalization• How to use closing punctuation• Subject and verb agreement• How to use pronouns correctly• How to edit for spelling• How to use your resources to self-correct• How to use editing marks• Indentations

INDEPENDENT WRITING

During this time, students work as writers (which may include time to write and time to investigate what they will write) while the teacher confers with individuals or small groups. It is important to establish the routines, expectations, and procedures to which students must adhere during this time of independent practice.

Suggestions for specific classroom activities include the following:

- Use diaries or journals to promote fluency in writing and to help students see writing as one means of self-expression
- Utilize personal narratives, interactive writing, and writing workshop techniques to help learners become comfortable with the craft of drafting, sharing, revising, and editing their pieces (Calkins, 1994, Fletcher 2001).
- Make the reading-writing connection by exposing learners to a wide variety of literary forms in reading and then provide opportunities for learners to construct their own forms to share with others
- Incorporate various writing assignments in cross-curricula study.