

2006

Daily drawing and writing activities in a preschool classroom

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Daily drawing and writing activities in a preschool classroom

Abstract

This literature review examined the effect of providing daily drawing and writing activities in a preschool classroom. Benefits, as well as concerns, were discussed. Guidelines were presented to help with establishing a classroom environment that would provide daily drawing and writing activities for children in a preschool classroom. Conclusions were also drawn from the literature and recommendations were made to assist administrators and teachers with establishing a program that supports daily drawing and writing activities.

Daily Drawing and Writing Activities in a Preschool Classroom

A Graduate Research Paper

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

with a Major in Early Childhood Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

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July 2006

This research paper by: Lynn Glaser

Titled: Daily Drawing and Writing Activities in a Preschool Classroom

Has been approved as meeting the research requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education with a Major in Early Childhood Education.

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ABSTRACT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family- my husband, Ed, my son, Jackson, and my parents, Barney and Barb Bishop- their support and encouragement has given me the strength to complete this project.

I would like to thank the people of the Dubuque cohort- Amy Herber, Michelle Leicht, Michelle Meier, Angela Riesberg, Leigh Siegert, Nicole Sullivan, Kara Trentz, and Aulanda Zenner- for their constant support. Their encouragement through the process of the project has kept me from floundering.

I would also like to thank my close friend Heather Wagner. Her support and assistance throughout the process helped me through the whole the process.

I would like to thank Diane Muir, Dubuque Community Schools Early Childhood Coordinator and my building principal, for guiding me through the process of early childhood development. Her knowledge of literacy development for young children is unbelievable. She is an inspiration when working with children and their families, and I truly appreciate her guidance and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

When a mother hears for the first time that she is expecting, she understands that even in the womb, a baby is able to hear voices and sounds; with this understanding, mothers are encouraged to talk to, read to, and play music for their infants. Even though the infant is unable to communicate through words, oral or written, mothers are encouraged to provide books, music, and interaction with their babies. This environment provides stimulation for babies, and it allows babies to grow and learn.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the International Reading Association (IRA) have developed a joint position statement that recognize the following:

learning to read and write is critical to a child's success in school and later in life. One of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level to which the child progresses in reading and writing. (NAEYC, 2005, p 1)

Reading and writing topics in publications of the late 1800s to the 1920s focused on the elementary years; however, the 1920's brought recognition of the *period of preparation* for reading and writing, which are the early childhood and kindergarten years (<http://www.library.adoption.com>). In 1925, the concept of *reading readiness* was first referred to in a publication by the National Committee on Reading. Through this publication two factors were recognized as vital for preparing children to read and write: maturation (*nature*) and experiences (*nurture*) that were appropriate to accelerate readiness (<http://library.adoption.com>).

The perspective of readiness from the maturation view, was the dominate theory from the

1920s to the 1950s. This perspective held that "the mental process necessary for reading would unfold automatically at a certain period of time in development" (<http://library.adoption.com>, 2005, p. 1). It went on to say that until children were a certain age, parents and educators were encouraged to postpone the teaching of reading.

The readiness perspective of the nurture view, became more apparent in the late 1950's and 1960s. It took the position that through appropriate experiences, children could accelerate their readiness for reading. Teale and Sulzby (2005) identified factors that contributed to this shift in the following statement:

... a growing reliance on reading readiness workbooks and tests during the first years of schools... research on young children which was demonstrating that preschoolers knew more than was generally believed... adequacy of American education was being questioned since the Soviet Union was the first country to travel in space, and supporters of social equality argued that ' large numbers of minority children had culturally disadvantaged backgrounds and had to wait until they got to school to overcome the disadvantage (<http://library.adoption.com>, 2005, p. 1).

In the late 1960s, Marie Clay began to do research concerning the reading and writing development of young children. The term *emergent literacy* was introduced by Clay to "... describe the behaviors used by young children with books and when reading and writing, even though the children could not actually read and write in the conventional sense" (<http://library.adoption.com>, 2005, p. 1). During this time, Clay recognized the relationship "... between reading and writing in early literacy development. Until then, it was believed that children must learn to read before they could learn to write" (<http://library.adoption.com>, 2005, p. 1). Through Clay's research, understanding of literacy changed to the following perspective,

“... reading and writing develop at the same time and interrelatedly in young children, rather than rather sequentially” (<http://library.adoption.com>, 2005, p.2).

In an early childhood classroom, writing is at its earliest stage of development. The concept of writing is very broad and in an early childhood class, it is important to examine the expressive side of it; which is drawing. It is important for educators to recognize that a child's drawing is their form of writing. From its earliest form of drawing, children are beginning to communicate to themselves or to others. Educators need to allow this stage of writing to develop, with support and encouragement.

Stages of Writing

As it was stated earlier, until the 1970s, it was believed that reading must come first before a child would begin to write. Clay (cited in Escobedo & Allen, 2002) recognized and emphasized the importance between the two areas of development. Escobedo and Allen stated that “... children's listening skills, oral language development, and experiences with reading and writing form the basis for their emerging literacy” (Escobedo & Allen, 2002, p. 5).

In the 1970s, Clay (1975) introduced three stages of writing. Within the stages, the areas of scribbling, drawing, and representations of writing were recognized. It is known that children go through each stage of drawing and writing at their own pace of development. The more they are emerged in an environment that supports daily drawing and writing activities, development of their own drawing and writing begin to emerge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this literature review was to review the literature about emergent writing with preschool aged children. To accomplish this purpose, this paper will address the following questions:

1. What is the development of drawing and writing activities for young children?
2. What are the benefits of providing daily drawing and writing activities?
3. What are the problems associated with daily drawing and writing activities?
4. What are the guidelines for providing drawing and writing activities in a preschool classroom?

Need for the Study

It is important for educators to understand that before children enter kindergarten or first grade, they are already developing literacy skills and knowledge. Through their environments; such as home, daycare, and/or preschool, children have been surround by various types of print materials and adults modeling the use of print materials. The purpose of this literature review is to learn more about the literature that has been written about emergent writing and share this information with other early childhood educators in the school district. This literature review will also investigate how drawing and writing can benefit children within an early childhood program. The guidelines on drawing and writing and the benefits of journaling will be introduced and shared with school district early childhood specialists in the local school district.

Limitations

Emergent writing is a term that is associated with emergent literacy. Much of the research that is available examines emergent writing, focusing on children who are at the kindergarten level or above, the forms of writing that are apparent in a kindergarten room is at a

higher level, such as invented spelling. Some important literature on this topic was not available for review; this was particularly true with the topic of drawing.

Definitions

In order to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings, the following terms are defined below in the way they are used in this literature review.

Alphabetic Principle: "knowing that there is a systematic relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of oral language" (Vukelich, et al., 2002, p. 67).

Concepts of Print: Children work on the following: book handling, directional learning (left to right, top to bottom, and front to back), sequencing of events, capital and lower case letters, and punctuation. (Clay, M., 1991; Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002)

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Teaching children in a variety of ways by providing many opportunities to practice and learn new skills, that challenge them beyond their present level. (Dodge, D. T., Colker, L. J., and Heroman, C., 2002)

Emergent Literacy: "The new view of literacy as beginning at birth and emerging continuously until the stage of conventional reading and writing is achieved." (Clay, 1966. Cited in Escobedo & Allen, 1996, p. 5)

Invented Spelling: "... children's first attempts to sound out and spell words, result in part because children cannot at first detect all of the phonemes in words and in part because children often code in nonconventional ways the phonemes they hear" (Schickedanz, J., 1999, p. 62).

Journaling: unstructured drawings done by children, with descriptions, dictate by the children, of the drawings written by adults

Phonemic Awareness: "understanding that words consist of a sequence of phonemes" (Vukelich, et al., 2002, p. 67).

Scribbling: “early kinesthetic motions as non-communicative, muscular movements and actions, with the motoric activity itself providing satisfactio” (Escobedo, T.H. & Allen, M., 2002, pp. 7-8).

Typically Developing: children who are developing in all areas (emotion, physical, cognitive, and language) at the typical rate for their age.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Stages of Drawing and Writing With Young Children

The IRA and NAEYC (1998), and researchers, such as Clay (1975), have indicated the importance of providing young children with drawing and writing opportunities in a quality early childhood classroom. The IRA and NAEYC (1998) have stated in their joint position statement, that the early years of learning, birth through age eight, are important times for literacy development. Church (2005) and Thompson (1995) addressed how drawing is the beginning stage of writing and communicating. Important indicators of the development of drawing were identified, analyzed, and discussed to guide educators toward a quality writing environment in a preschool classroom.

In teacher's manuals and workshops, the stages of writing have been addressed in different ways, but in the end, the stages are basically the same with a few variations. The constant factor through the stages of drawing and writing is the child's need to communicate with others. Although children may be scribbling or drawing, they are communicating something to themselves or others.

Stages of Drawing

The first stage of drawing occurs between 18 months to age four years of age (Hale & Roy, 1996). This stage of writing development is referred to as the *Scribble Stage*. By using a writing object, such as a crayon or marker, a child may use the full fist grasp to hold the object in order for scribbling to begin. The scribbles that are visible on the paper will appear as lines that are made without control: these scribbles are referred to as *disordered* (1996). The next two scribble stages refer to the control the child has on the writing object. The *controlled scribble*

appears when the child spends more time drawing; this usually occurs six months later (Hale & Roy). The last stage at this level is the same as the controlled scribble stage, "... except the child begins naming his picture" (Hale & Roy, 1996, p.5).

The next stage in drawing is the *Preschematic Stage*, which occurs between the ages of four and seven years (1996). A child's drawing at this stage begins to take form of actual pictures. The act of drawing, not communicating with others, is what is important to the child. The most important object is the main focus of the picture, for the drawn objects appear to be floating on the paper (1996).

The last stage of drawing occurs between seven and nine years of age and is referred to as the *Schematic Stage*. This stage of drawing has more order, and objects do not appear to be floating on the paper (1996).

Stages of Writing

As with drawing, writing occurs through many stages of a child's development. Based on research done with preschool aged children, Elizabeth Sulzby, developed seven stages of writing (as cited in Vukelich, Christie, & Enz, 2002).

According to Sulzby, the first stage of writing is drawing. The pictures that a child draws represents writing (Vukelich, et al., 2002) The next two stages of writing development are similar to the first stages of drawing, the *Random Scribble* and *Controlled Scribbling*, which occur between the ages of two and three (MacDonal, 1997). These two stages of development focus on a child's controlled marks with a writing object. These controlled marks, which may be continuous lines, represent the child's first *writing* (2002). The second stage, the controlled scribble, has repeated patterns visible in the scribbles (MacDonal, 1997).

The next stage of writing according to MacDonal (1997), Schichedanz, and Casbergue

(2004), is *Letter-Like Forms* or *Mock Letters*, which occurs at about three to four years of age (1997). During this stage, there is a purpose to a child's writing. A child will form mock letters that are, "... designs made with lines found in standard alphabet letters but composed to create a unique symbol that is not a standard letter" (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004, p. v). The *letter-like forms* randomly written may cover a whole page. The child is pretending to be writing, separating the writing from the drawing, and believing that the writing has a purpose (MacDonal1997).

Around four years of age, the next writing stage occurs, the *Nonphonetic Letter Strings* (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2004). Sulzby identified that the letter strings, which may include "... random groups of letters or repeated clusters of letters" (as cited in Vukelich, et al., 2002, p. 74) written at this stage, may show the child's lack of understanding of letter sound relationships.

The fifth stage is referred to as *Copying from Environmental Print* (2002) or *Letter and Symbol Relationship* (1997). During this stage the child uses letters to "... present words and syllables" (MacDonal, 1997, p. 1). Children are able to write their names and know which letters represent their names. A child may copy words from their environment (2002), and reversals occur often (1997).

The final two stages may occur in a preschool setting, but are more commonly observed in a kindergarten classroom. *Invented Spelling*, begins around four to five years of age, and is described as the stage when children begin to put letters together to form a word. The child is beginning to comprehend that letters represent particular sounds. Words from a child's environment are easily copied onto paper (MacDonal, 1997; Ollila & Mayfield, 1992). *Standard Spelling* (1997) or *Conventional* (2002), the last stage in writing, occurs when a child is between five to seven years of age. At this stage of writing, the child is correctly spelling the words, while

including some punctuation. Concepts of print begin to appear in this final stage of writing development. There is organization to the words, i.e., top to bottom of the page and left to right.

Through drawing and writing the child starts to recognize they can share messages with others (Campbell, 1992). The message may be conveyed in their drawing or through their letter-like forms. The important idea that children need to remember is that through drawing or writing, the message that is on their paper may be shared with others at a different time (Benson, 2005).

Benefits of Drawing and Writing To Young Children

Educators know how important it is to provide a quality literacy program for young children during their formative years, birth through age eight. NAEYC and the IRA (1998) recognize that literacy development is crucial for future success in a child's education and life. Drawing and writing activities not only help develop communication skills for a child, but they also promote the development of many literacy skills. When drawing children begin to develop their fine motor skills such as; grasping of a writing tool, eye hand coordination, and strengthening of the pincher grasp (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002).

When children dictate information about their drawings and writings to an adult, children begin to see themselves as readers. *Shared writing* (Vukleich, 2002) also known as the language-experience approach, refers to the strategy a teacher uses to have "... children read texts composed of their own oral language" (Vukelich et al., 2002, p. 137). The teacher can begin to show the child the relationship between drawing and writing to reading. Children begin to recognize that "... what they said can be written down in print and print can be read back as oral language" (Vukelich, et al, 2002, p. 138). While the teacher is writing down the child's words, the child has opportunities to develop the concepts of print. By observing the teacher write, the child is seeing the letters form at the top left side of the paper and move across to the right side of the

paper. Children may also begin to notice the difference between capital and lowercase letters. Through this shared writing approach, children begin to see themselves as readers. In my own classroom, I have witnessed children reading their drawing journal entries to their parents during meetings. Parents have expressed surprise and amazement when their child is able to read what is written on their journal page. I have also observed my student's level of confidence grow through this sharing experience. When the child realizes that they are sharing their drawings and writings with their parents, they become more confident in expressing what is on each page. This confidence begins to show through their expanded drawings and longer explanation of what they drew.

The development of the alphabetic principle is another benefit associated with drawing and writing activities. By rereading, with an adult, what was written during shared writing, children may begin to pick up sounds, shapes, and the names of certain letters. Through this process, children begin to their knowledge of *phonemic awareness*. According to NAEYC and the IRA (1998), phonemic awareness is closely tied to a child's later reading achievement.

Local early childhood teachers and principals believe that daily drawing and writing activities benefit children in their own classrooms or schools. In my school district, we currently have 14 early childhood special education (ECSE) teachers at two different schools. There is a principal at both schools and one assistant principal at one of the schools. Through interviews (see Appendix A), the ECSE teachers stated that the benefits they observed for their students were improvements in the following areas: creativity, the development of fine motor skills, imagination through drawing, letter recognition, right-to-left orientation, linking meaning to writing, increase of expressive language skills, name writing, and tying sounds to letters to form a descriptive word. The principals who were interviewed acknowledged that they were aware of

writing activities taking place in the early childhood classrooms. Writing activities that were apparent to the principals included the following: student's drawing journals, teachers' lesson plans, bulletin boards that display students' artwork and teacher dictation from each child tying the artwork to lesson being taught, and through lessons from *Handwriting Without Tears*. Through the various activities that were present in the buildings, both ECSE teachers and principals witnessed benefits that were associated between drawing and writing and developing literacy skills.

Problems Associated With Drawing and Writing Experiences for Young Children

In their joint position statement, NAEYC and the IRA (1998) states that some teachers who work in a preschool setting are not required to hold a four year license or to take part in any formal teacher preparation requirements. Also, the salaries in some preschool settings are considered low, making this difficult to retain quality staff. When these two factors are considered in the educating of our young children, teaching drawing and writing to young children may become difficult.

One potential problem is that the emphasis of drawing and writing development may not be on the process of how the child learns the skill, but rather how the child performs the skill. Some children are being instructed by teachers who have not been provided adequate training in child development. This lack of training can lead to inappropriate writing instruction taking place in early childhood classrooms across the country. An early childhood educator needs to understand that each child entering the classroom is unique in his or her development. An educator needs to be conscious of this uniqueness, and accept where the child is functioning at academically and emotionally building upon the skills that the child brings into the classroom. Due to lack of professional development or formal preparation, the teacher may push skills, such

as handwriting, which are not appropriate for the child at this time of their development. In a personal observation at a community preschool, I witnessed children who were three to four years of age being instructed on how to correctly write the letter *K* on lined paper. According to the stages of drawing and writing, random and controlled scribbles are appropriate for children, not letter formation, or handwriting. If children are pushed or forced to draw or write before they are ready, they may become discouraged. This may then "... develop poor writing habits which are later difficult to overcome" (Saracho, 1990, p. 10).

Another potential problem with providing drawing and writing activities to preschool children is educating educators and parents about the importance of these two activities. Many early childhood educators and parents of young children do not understand how important it is to model literacy activities, including writing and provide opportunities for the children to explore the drawing and writing activities. Children need to observe and explore drawing and writing in their environments to assist with the development of literacy, specifically the alphabetic principle and phonemic awareness, and the relationship between reading and writing (Vukelich, et al, 2002; NAEYC & IRA, 1998).

Through personal experience working with parents of preschool children, I have found that parents question the importance of basic drawing skills. Parents frequently dismiss the importance and value of their young children's various stages of drawings and writing and fail to recognize and celebrate the fact that these drawings and early writing are an important step in developing appropriate written communication skills. Through my formal educational training, I have learned that it is most effective to help parents understand the stages of early childhood development. It is essential to help parents and other educators accept the children where they are at and guide them on their personal journey through the stages of development.

Through the interviews with local ECSE teachers and principals, I learned that quality professional development with drawing and writing activities is lacking. Professional development that is offered to the ECSE teachers is presented at the local level by their own colleagues who are considered master teachers of a specific skill. One teacher felt that there was not enough time to fit daily drawing or writing activities into a school day because of all the other curricular demands that are in place.

Drawing and writing provide many benefits to children, but the way the instruction is provided may create potential problems. Teachers and professionals need to be aware of problems that can appear when providing a drawing and writing program. For the drawing and writing program to be a quality experience, the identified problems discussed in this section concerning teachers' education and experience, and professional development opportunities must be overcome.

CHAPTER 3

GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING DRAWING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES IN A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

Developing Guidelines

Since the early 1970's when Clay began studying children's communication through drawing and writing, it became apparent how important the idea of emergent literacy is. Children begin to understand through their environment that with pictures, drawings, and words, they are able to communicate and understand a message. When the IRA and NAEYC developed their joint position statement, in 1998, they brought together the reasoning why drawing and writing activities should be developmentally appropriate for children. Educators now understand the importance of providing a quality writing program for children. The following guidelines are needed to provide quality developmentally appropriate drawing and writing programs for children.

1. Professional development is needed for educators to know the latest and most effective ways in using developmentally appropriate drawing and writing activities with children.

Through interviews that were done with the local ECSE teachers, a concern that was mentioned involved not receiving quality professional development that focused on the stages and importance of drawing and writing development. In our country, not all early childhood educators have a degree to work with young children. Due to this lack of early childhood governmental regulation, some educators are not aware of the development of early drawing and writing stages (IRA & NAEYC, 1998). "Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to stay current in an ever-expanding research base and to continually improve their teaching skills and the learning outcomes for children" (IRA & NAEYC, 1998, p. 19).

2. Educators need to provide instruction that is appropriate for the learning of all children.

Educators need to be aware that when children begin their early childhood experience in a classroom, they are all entering at a variety of levels of development. That is also true with early drawing and writing development. A child's drawing and writing development really begins before they even enter an educational environment. Some children may observe their parents or daycare providers drawing and writing while at home, and some children may be provided with opportunities while at home or in a day care setting to engage in drawing and writing activities. These opportunities may be structured or more casual (IRA & NAEYC, 1998).

Educators need to understand "... that no one teaching method or approach is likely to be the most effective for all children" (IRA & NAEYC, 1998, p. 7). An educator needs to be aware of what level each child is functioning in their development of drawing and writing. This may be done through observation, working with, and talking with children, and using informal evaluation (Ollila & Mayfield, 1992). A variety of teaching methods and tools needs to be used in educating children on the development of drawing and writing. Instruction should be provided in various ways: large and small groups and individual time. The most beneficial way of instructing children with diverse needs is through small groups that provide plenty of individual attention (IRA & NAEYC, 1998).

3. The environment needs to be supportive of drawing and writing development.

In essence, the physical environment becomes a drawing and writing area for the children. Through guidance and opportunities, educators can offer a variety of tools, and modeling of drawing and writing activities throughout the day.

The physical environment should invite children to explore drawing and writing. Children should see photos, pictures, and print placed around the room. Child created work, including art

or written products, should be displayed at child eye level, with descriptions by children or educators of the process involved in completing the finished work. Child names and common words should be displayed to encourage and promote classroom writing. The writing and art centers are not the only centers that can promote drawing and writing development for children. Educators need to be aware that by providing drawing and writing materials in many of their learning centers, children will explore these materials on their own or through modeling and guidance from the adults in the room (Ollila & Mayfield, 1992). Learning centers should be equipped with drawing and writing materials. Some examples include the following: the kitchen center should have pads of paper and crayons or pencils to encourage the children to write messages to one another while using the phone or taking food orders while playing restaurant; the block center should include paper, markers, drawings and/or pictures of buildings, to encourage children to draw the structures they are building or are going to build. Within the art or writing centers, the following materials could be offered to children to encourage drawing and writing activities: various types of unlined paper, markers, crayons, pencils, pads of paper, magazines, newspapers, various cards, paint, chalk, chalkboards (Miller, 2000; Thompson, 1995).

4. Children need opportunities to utilize a writing center everyday with the support of an adult.

Educators need to work alongside the children to encourage and support their growth and development in their drawing and writing (Schickedanz, 1999). When children are exploring with materials in the writing center, a teacher must interact with them. Children do need the space to explore on their own, but the teacher should be near by to answer questions or to offer information (Schickendanz, 1999). When sitting alongside the children, the teacher may observe

and encourage the children, but it is also important for the teacher to demonstrate drawing and writing. By demonstrating for the children, the teacher may help some of the children in their development (Campbell, 1998). Also, when sitting with the children, the teacher can talk with them about their drawing or writing, this in turn can "... encourage the children to think further about writing and to think of themselves as writers" (Campbell, 1998, p. 78).

Chapter 4

Case Study

The case study that will be discussed in this chapter describes the growth children made throughout the school year in drawing and writing. The skills that were examined are drawing of a person, writing a child's first name with or without a written model, and drawing recognizable pictures in their personal journal. The first sample taken from a child was performed with no supports or accommodations. Some of the skills taught were supported by a certified teacher, a classroom paraprofessional, the curriculum entitled *Handwriting Without Tears*, weekly instruction of certain skills, with the aid of our Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant.

Children are unique in their development. Some children enter preschool capable of drawing a circle, knowing to start letters at the top of the page, or tracing lines made by an adult. It is the job of the teacher to know and understand each child's development, and what is appropriate to teach the child. The teacher knows that she needs to build upon already mastered skills, but knowing what skills are mastered is an important job of the teacher.

The study was conducted through the school year, beginning in September and ending in May. The class, where the study was conducted, consisted of 18 students. Nine students were entitled for special education services, and the nine other students, who are typically developing, were from the community's preschool. Of the 18 students, three will be staying in preschool for another year, and the other 15 students will become kindergarteners. The classroom has the support of two certified special education teachers and four paraprofessionals. The preschool class meets four days a week in the afternoon, for two and a half-hours.

The data for the study was taken from the following sources; student journals, monthly scrapbook drawings, and monthly scrapbook name samples.

In the beginning of the school year, in a small group or as individuals, the children were asked to draw a picture of themselves. There were no adult supports or accommodations provided for this personal drawing. The samples by the students varied in details (see Appendix B, Logan's & Trevor's September person sample). The majority of students drew a person with the following features; a circle for the head, two eyes, a line for the mouth, two lines for arms, and two lines for legs. Many of the samples also had no body for the person. The arms and legs of their drawing were coming out of the head.

Each month the students were asked to perform the same task of drawing a picture of him or herself. After the first month the following two supports were added: large group instruction using verbal and visual cues on how to draw a person, and weekly instruction through the *Handwriting Without Tears*, with their concept of a person, *Mat Man* (Olsen, 2005).

The large group instruction was taught in the following way: At circle time, the teacher would have a large piece of chart paper in which she would introduce the lesson by stating the objective for the students: drawing a picture of him or herself. She would then start verbally prompting the students with leading questions: *What do we need to draw first for our picture? Do we put that at the top of our page or the bottom? (while visually moving her hand to each area of the paper), what else do we need for our picture?.* The majority of the students would become involved with the activity, volunteering opinions and answers, while a minority of the children would observe the visual lesson on the paper. If the students would state that the person needed arms, but no body was drawn yet, the teacher would lead the students using her own body as a visual teaching tool. She would question them: *Do my arms come out of my head? What do I*

need first before I draw my arms? The instruction would continue until the person we were drawing was complete. Once the drawing was complete, the teacher would guide the students to the next activity. Once the transition was complete, each student was pulled aside in the room, and asked to draw a picture of him or herself. During the first three months, the visual model that was drawn in the large group served as a reference. During this individual activity, the adult supervising the activity provided no cues, except the prompt *remember to do your best*. Each drawing was saved so it could be placed in a scrapbook (see Appendix B, Logan's & Trevor's November and March person drawings). Two students out of the 18 were provided with extra help. This support was based on their developmental needs. One student was given verbal cues on what he should draw each step of the way. The other student was provided with visual and verbal cues. If the teacher recognized that either student was making progress on his own, some of the support with his drawing would be decreased.

Throughout the year, students made progress on their drawings. It was noticed that after the winter break, a little more instruction was needed in the month of January. In the month of January, students thought that our group drawing of the person was missing something, a belly button. In the months to follow some of the students drew more details in their drawings, adding eyebrows, clothes, earrings, and eyelashes. Some of the bodies drawn changed from a circle to a square or triangle (see Appendix B, Logan's & Trevor's May person drawing).

The next two skills that were supported throughout the school year was drawing recognizable pictures and writing the student's first name. At the beginning of the school year, children picked out their own personal drawing journal. The journal consisted of a cover page with the child's name on the cover along with the title *child's Name Journal* and many blank white piece of paper inside it. This provided the student with the ownership of something that

was his or her and no one else would be using it. The journal lesson was introduced a few times in large group sessions. The teacher gave the following instructions: *that each student would wait for an adult to call his or her name, write their first name, draw a picture, and then wait to tell the adult what was drawn so that the adult could dictate on the page what the student said about the picture.* After the instruction was given all the students were dismissed to work on other activities. Once the child was with an adult at the table, the journal would be set up in front of the child.

The first journal sample, name writing and drawing of a recognizable picture was done with no adult support or accommodations. The adult sat next to the student and when completed with the activity, the adult would ask what was drawn, then write down on the page what the child had said and write the date on the page. Another notation that was made by the adult was what hand the child used to complete the activity. For the rest of the year, the journal activity was completed in the following format, with the journal open, the child's first name, which was written on a large index card, would be placed at the top of the journal (see Appendix C, Trevor's and Will's journal entries). The child would then choose a marker, any color except yellow. The adult would ask the child to write each letter in his or her name: re-teaching a letter, if needed. The adult would always use a yellow marker for this stage of the lesson. This provided visual cues to the teacher concerning the growth each child was making throughout the year. It also allowed the teacher to share with parents what letters their child was working on during this skill.

Once the student learned how to write his or her first name, the visual cue was taken away. At that point, it was noted in the journal. Another stage in the skill involved asking some of the children to write their last name (see Appendix C, Will's last journal entry). This skill was taught the same way the first name was taught: using visual cues with adult prompts, or using

visual cues without verbal prompts. The skill of writing the last name usually occurred in the months of April and May. Some extra supports that were provided to two of the students was the use of a slant board, isolating the pincher grasp, and teaching the skill removed from the classroom because of attention difficulties.

The growth that was seen by the end of the year included: six of the 18 students were writing their last names with the aid of a visual cue, while seven of the 18 students were writing their first names without any supports, while one student did not show any progress during the school year.

The final skill that was documented throughout the school year was drawing recognizable pictures. This skill was also completed in each student's individual journal. This skill was more open ended than the previous two skills. The only instruction given at the beginning of the school year was that each student was to draw a picture, then tell an adult what was drawn. The adult would then write down what the student said about his or her drawing. The adult would also date the drawing. After the adult wrote what the student stated to her, the statement was then read back to the child for his or her confirmation.

In the beginning of the school year, the majority of the students described their drawings using one word. Also, the majority of the drawings were unrecognizable to others (see Appendix C, Trevor's and Will's first journal entry). The teacher noticed many of the students rushing through the activity to get to another activity. Also, some of the students had trouble attending to the task in front of them. It was observed that six out of the 18 students would *scribble* on the sheet and would not be able to dictate what was drawn or the student would repeat what another child had said about his or her picture. In the first few months, the teacher also noticed that three out of the 18 students kept drawing the same *pictures*. Examples of pictures that were drawn

would consist of a large colored circle, or a long continuous curvy line. The description of what was drawn was also always the same. The teacher, after looking at the data, introduced a new step in the skill, before drawing a picture, each student was asked to think about what he or she was going to draw, then tell it to the adult working with him or her. This step corrected the problem of the students who were drawing the same thing over and over again (see Appendix C, Trevor's & Will's second and third journal entries).

Another skill that was introduced to six of the 18 students was that of assisting the adult with writing the words to describe what was drawn. The adult would sound out each individual word that the student used to describe the drawing. The student was then asked to tell what letter sound they heard as the adult slowly pronounced the word. The teacher would write down the letter that was given to her by the student (see Appendix C, Will's last journal entry). Due to the various developmental levels of each child, this skill proved to be challenging and was not introduced to all children. The children who were introduced to this skill were beginning to understand the *alphabetic principle*. They were aware that a letter(s) represents a certain sound. It took longer for them to learn this skill and at times they were confused by what they heard. After the words were *spelled* to the adult, the adult and child would then read together what was written.

Out of the three skills that were taught throughout the year in this early childhood classroom, the progress that was most noticeable was the drawing of a person. This skill was reinforced at least six times each month. Strategies were taught for this skill in small and large groups. The next improved skill was that of writing their first name. This skill was also reinforced throughout the month and many visual supports were provided throughout the classroom to assist each student to write his or her name. The skill of drawing a recognizable

picture is more of an open-ended skill, and thus, it was more difficult to support this skill. Each individual's developmental level and exposure to early drawing activities influenced the development of this skill.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the literature concerning the development of drawing and writing activities for young children, and it also presents guidelines for establishing a educational environment that promotes daily drawing and writing activities. To accomplish this purpose, this paper addressed the following questions:

1. What is the background on drawing and writing activities for young children?

It was not until the 1920's that the development of reading and writing became important at the early childhood and kindergarten levels. A publication in the 1920's, that The National Committee on Reading referred to the concept of reading readiness, recognizing the preparation of reading and writing for children. Also from this publication, the views of readiness was seen from a maturation or a nurture view (Benson, 2005). In the 1970's Marie Clay, began to study young children and their reading and writing development. She coined the term *emergent literacy*, which described behaviors young children exhibited when reading or writing, though they were not actually doing so. It was during the 1970's that Clay recognized that reading and writing develop simultaneously, rather than sequentially (2005).

2. What are the benefits of providing daily drawing and writing activities?

The IRA and NAEYC both recognize the importance of providing drawing and writing activities in a preschool classroom. The development of these two activities are crucial to the success of a child's life and education (NAEYC & IRA, 1998). The child's drawing and writing skills not only benefit with the development of reading, but these skills also promote the development of the following: fine motor skills, increase of attention and memory skills with

retrieval of prior knowledge, expression of self, and written organization (Saracho, 1990).

Another benefit that is true when providing drawing and writing activities is how children begin to relate their activities to daily occurrences in their own life (Waring-Chaffee, 1994). Local educators and principals had many of the same beliefs of the IRA and NAEYC, of the benefits of providing the two activities in a preschool classroom.

3. What are the problems associated with drawing and writing activities which are provided for young children.

Saracho's research brought up the problem of when children are pushed or forced to draw or write before they are ready. When a child is pushed or forced with his or her literacy skills, the child may develop poor writing habits that are difficult to overcome in the future (Saracho, 1990). The IRA and NAEYC expressed the concern that some teachers in a preschool setting are not required to hold a four year license, nor participated in any formal preparation. Retaining quality staff in some preschool centers is also difficult because of the low salaries offered to them (NAEYC & IRA, 1998). Providing quality instruction is not always provided because of the previous two concerns expressed by the IRA and NAEYC. Local educators and principals stated that quality professional development that focused on drawing and writing activities is lacking and it affects their abilities to teach.

4. What are the guidelines for providing drawing and writing activities in a preschool classroom.

Local districts and communities need to understand the importance of providing quality professional development to all educators of young children. The professional development needs to be ongoing to assist teachers with their teaching skills and student outcomes (1998). Instruction for children needs to be appropriate for all children in the educational environment.

Children begin their education at all levels of development, teachers need to be aware of the uniqueness in each child and teach to where each child is at developmentally (1998). The educational environment needs to support the development of drawing and writing activities. Teachers need to guide and support with daily activities, by using a variety of tools throughout the day. A writing center needs to be established with daily opportunities to explore and interact with the materials, on their own or with the support of interaction with the teacher (Schickedanz, 1999).

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this review of literature:

1. Reading and writing develop simultaneously, which is why young children must have exposure to daily drawing and writing activities.
2. Providing daily activities and exposure to drawing and writing activities in educational environment will be beneficial to the future of a child's life and education.
3. All children are unique in their development, teachers need to be aware of where they are functioning with their development, and support them at the appropriate level.
4. Educators need to be provided with quality professional development, to guide them in their own learning of the stages of drawing and writing development in a young child.

Recommendations

Based on a review of the literature, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Educators need to be aware of the stages of drawing and writing development in order to provide support the children in their classrooms.
2. Educators need to support the children in their development of drawing and writing.

3. Educators need to understand the importance how providing daily drawing and writing activities to children will benefit their overall life and education. The activities, structured or unstructured, need to educate the children.

4. School districts need to provide quality professional development for educators of the young child. Educators need to understand the importance of drawing and writing development. They need to learn new teaching methods and understand teaching methods that already are appropriate to use for the education of all young children.

5. Educators need to understand the importance of exposure to a variety of tools and activities for drawing and writing activities in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A consists of 14 questions that were asked to Dubuque Community School ECSE and Structured Learning teachers and building principals.

1. How many years have you been with DCSD?
2. How many years have you been in your current position?
3. If currently in a classroom, how many students do you currently have?
4. If currently in a classroom, how many paraprofessionals do you currently work with?
5. Do you currently have structured daily drawing and/or writing activities in your room?
6. If no, why?
7. If yes, what type of activities do you provide to your students?
8. Do you provide journal drawing/writing with your students?
9. If yes, what are some of the benefits do you observe with this activity?

The following questions related more to the principals of the two buildings.

10. Do you see evidence in your school/building of child's writing activities?
11. If yes, what evidence do you see?
12. Do you feel the early childhood teachers have received enough professional development to support their instruction of early drawing and writing activities in an early childhood classroom?
13. What would you like to see in your school/building that show evidence of the importance of early writing for preschool age children?
14. What early writing skills do you feel are important/beneficial in the development of a preschool aged child?

APPENDIX B



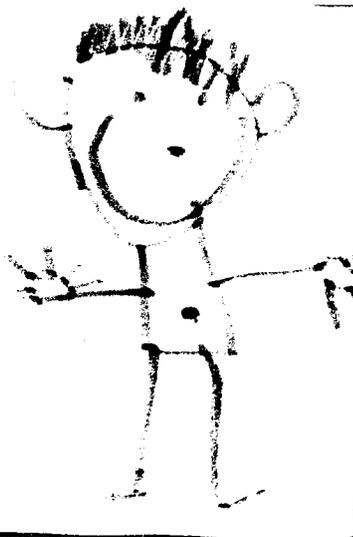
Logan's September Person Drawing



Logan's November Person Drawing



Logan's March Person Drawing

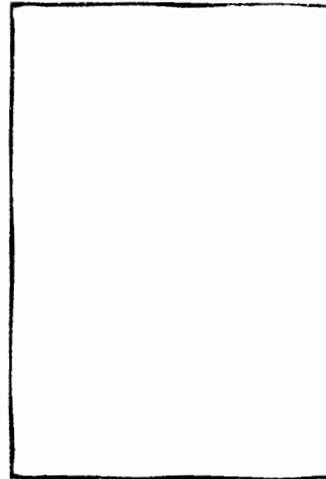


Logan's May Person Drawing

APPENDIX B



Trevor's September Person Drawing



Trevor's November Person Drawing

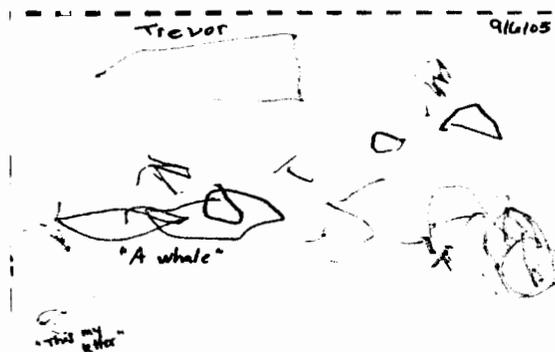


Trevor's March Person Drawing



Trevor's May Person Drawing

APPENDIX C

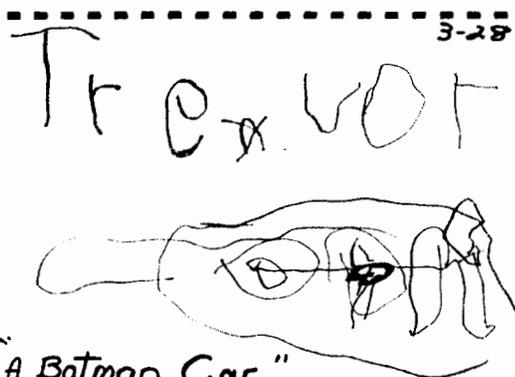


Trevor's First Journal Entry



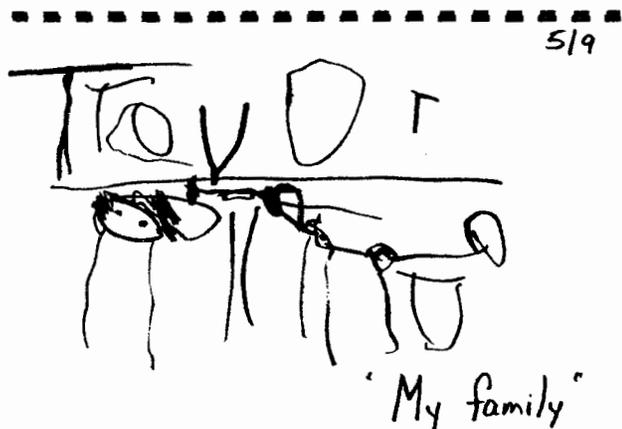
This is batman

Trevor's Second Journal Entry

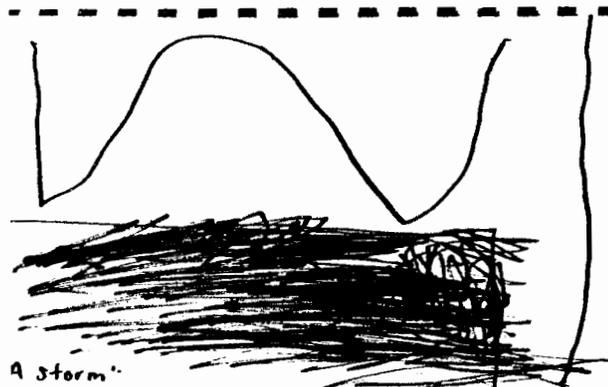


"A Batman Car"

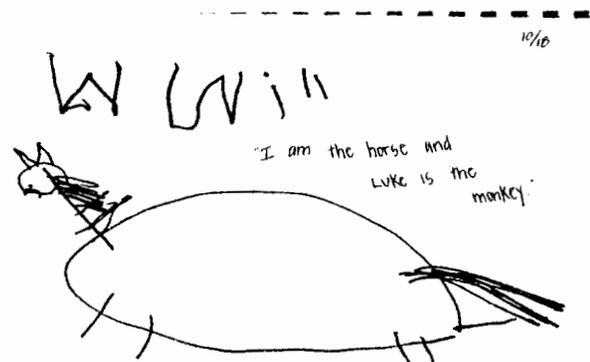
Trevor's Third Journal Entry



Trevor's Last Journal Entry



Will's First Journal Entry



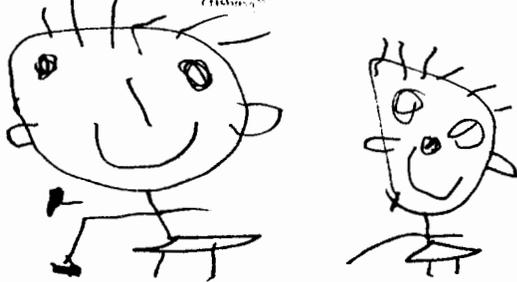
Will's Second Journal Entry



Will's Third Journal Entry

Will Schroeder

"The end of the world"



Will's Last Journal Entry