

1997

## An Effective Writing Program that Meets the Needs of Lower Elementary Students

Marita R. Schroeder  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©1997 Marita R. Schroeder

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Schroeder, Marita R., "An Effective Writing Program that Meets the Needs of Lower Elementary Students" (1997). *Graduate Research Papers*. 1488.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1488>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

---

## **An Effective Writing Program that Meets the Needs of Lower Elementary Students**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this project was to examine current research on the writing process, to identify major elements of an effective writing program, and then implement a writing program for young children which encompasses the major elements. The elements of the writing program implemented within the classroom were: modeling (by the teacher, children and authors), daily writing, conferencing (mini-lessons), publishing, and special projects. It was found that a carefully structured writing program enhances the writing of students in the classroom. The process approach to writing values the students as well as the writing process. This approach is an ideal way to meet the individual writing needs of all the students in the class.

An Effective Writing Program that Meets the Needs of Lower  
Elementary Students

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Talented and Gifted Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Marita R. Schroeder

June 1997

This Project by: Marita R. Schroeder

Titled: An Effective Writing Program that Meets the Needs of  
Lower Elementary Students

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

6/27/97  
Date Approved

Linda F. Quinn

Graduate Faculty Reader

6/21/97  
Date Approved

Mary J. Selke

Graduate Faculty Reader

6/30/97  
Date Approved

Greg P. Stefanich

Head, Department of  
Curriculum and Instruction

## Abstract

The purpose of this project was to examine current research on the writing process, to identify major elements of an effective writing program, and then implement a writing program for young children which encompasses the major elements. The elements of the writing program implemented within the classroom were: modeling (by the teacher, children and authors), daily writing, conferencing (mini-lessons), publishing, and special projects. It was found that a carefully structured writing program enhances the writing of students in the classroom. The process approach to writing values the students as well as the writing process. This approach is an ideal way to meet the individual writing needs of all the students in the class.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Problem Statement .....	4
Research Question .....	5
Purpose .....	5
Rationale .....	5
Project Description .....	6
Definition of Terms .....	6
Methodology .....	11
Literature Review .....	12
Product Approach to Writing .....	12
Process Approach to Writing .....	14
Graves .....	16
Calkins .....	19
Bumgardner .....	22
Wood-Walters .....	25
The Project .....	29
Description of Project .....	29
Discussion .....	31
Conclusions .....	31
Appendixes .....	34
A. Project .....	35
B. Writing Chart .....	50
C. Word List .....	52
D. Writing Samples .....	55
E. Letter to Parents .....	57
F. Assessment Tools .....	58
I Can . . . Checklist .....	59
Writing Rubric .....	60
Checklist .....	62
References .....	65

## CHAPTER I

Introduction

Goodman (1977) states, “Written language is a natural extension of the human ability to create language to deal with each communication function as it develops” (p. 310). Children need to write to express their ideas and have them accepted (Calkins, 1994; Britton, 1982).

Writing is a process by which students can create meaning and learn about themselves. Children want to write; they want to write the first day they attend school (Calkins, 1994). The desire to write must be nourished and cultivated from the time children enter school (Squire, 1983).

Writing is a developmental process children learn by doing. Children can learn to write more naturally if the process, rather than the product is valued. Children need to ‘own’ their writing experience. Such ownership energizes students to engage in the writing process thereby strengthening their thinking and language abilities (Graves, 1983).

Clay (1991) explained that children are active constructors of their own language and literacy. Supporting individual differences

is an important principle of formal literacy instruction. Dehn (1979; as cited in Wilson, Mosley, & Shirley, 1993) found that “Students learned to read and write in different ways, even if . . . taught by the same teaching method. They follow the teaching method only in part’ [sic] in part they insist on their own strategies” (p. 271).

“Accounting for these different strategies is important in the development of literacy because each child learns in a different way and at a different speed” (Wilson, Mosley, & Shirley, 1993, p. 115).

Their competence grows as they gain inner control over constructing meaning from print. With supportive instruction, children can grow in developing language and literacy competence. Teachers can nurture students’ writing abilities by providing a classroom environment that offers genuine reasons for writing (Atwell, 1987).

### Problem Statement

There are many techniques which teachers can implement when teaching the writing process to young children. Teachers need to allow children to show that they are capable of writing by placing the control of the writing process in the hands of the children. Children need to go through the writing process at their own pace.



Most writing program authors do not provide a plan that allows for this to happen.

### Research Question

In what ways will the implementation of the writing process in my classroom allow the children to learn to write at their own pace?

### Purpose

The purpose of this project was to implement a process approach to writing within a first grade classroom in order to see if this method of teaching writing has an impact on children's ability to learn to write.

### Rationale

Children enter school wanting to write. Teachers need to nourish and cultivate this desire to write from the very start of school. Teachers must provide the right approach to writing because writing is a complex process. Most teachers do not have access to writing programs that allow for individual progression through the writing steps. A writing program needs to be developed and implemented in early childhood classrooms that meets the writing needs of all students.

### Project Description

A process approach to writing program that is designed for first graders was implemented within my classroom for six months. This step-by-step program enabled the teacher to engage young children in the writing process while letting the children learn the process at their own rate. Every day students were given opportunities to use this process approach to writing. The elements in this program consist of modeling, daily writing, conferencing, publishing, and special projects.

### Definition of Terms

#### Conferencing:

Conferencing is a time to see where a child is at with his/her writing, to meet with students for consultation or discussion, for asking questions, for sharing advice or information with students so that each will have the best final piece of writing possible" (Bumgardner, 1996).

#### Early writer:

A student who shows an increase in knowledge of print conventions and associates sounds with letter clusters as well as individual letters.

Editing/proofreading:

These terms are used interchangeably. This is the process of correcting mechanical errors, focusing on standard conventions of writing such as: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.

Emergent writer:

This writer is aware of some print conventions and uses some letter-sound links.

Estimated spelling:

The way children spell a word before they know the full conventional spelling of the word.

Fluent writer:

This writer has an increased knowledge of letter clusters, affixes, roots, and compound words, and has an increased understanding of standard conventions of writing.

Mini-lessons:

Teachers provide brief lessons on writing procedures, literary concepts, and writing strategies and skills. These can be conducted with the whole class, small groups of students, and individual students as the need arises.

Modeling:

The teacher demonstrates the writing process by writing a composition with the children. The teacher “thinks aloud” so children can see the steps, from choice of topic to the completion of a composition.

Prewriting/rehearsal:

These terms are used interchangeably. Activities or time devoted to the preparation for writing. Examples include: discussions, brainstorming sessions, field trips, reading of literature, media presentations, class experiences, and works of art.

Print conventions:

The way written words appear on paper; putting spaces between words, capital letters at the beginning of sentences, writing from left to right.

Process writing:

Students experience the process that writers use and learn to write by writing about self-selected topics.

Product writing:

In this approach to teaching writing, writing is viewed as a finished product.

Publishing:

This is the act of drawing pictures to go with a story the child has written. It is an opportunity to share a final piece of writing with peers and families.

Recursive nature:

The students shift from one element of writing to another and then back again, if there is a need.

Rewriting/revision:

These terms are used interchangeably. This is the act of reading carefully what has been written, making changes by adding information, and taking out unnecessary information in order to improve the writing.

Writing/drafting/composing:

These terms are used interchangeably. They denote a writing activity that is a tentative piece of work undergoing change.

Young children:

For the purposes of this project, the term ‘young children’ refers to kindergarten and first grade students.

## CHAPTER II

### Methodology

Early in the school year, the author found there was a need for a writing program that taught the writing process to all children but yet allowed them to go through the steps at their own pace.

Initially, the author was using bits and pieces of curricular ideas from many professional sources. There was no underlying philosophy among the various resources selected. The author did not have an extensive enough background in teaching writing to young children to develop a writing program on her own. A thorough search was conducted of professional resources, through the University of Northern Iowa Library, the local Area Education Agency, and educational sites on the internet.

The author found that there were two different approaches that could be used to teach writing; the product approach and the process approach. Both approaches to writing were researched to find which approach best fit the writing needs of the author's students. Once it was decided that the process approach to writing met the criteria set by the author an additional research of literature was completed. Many journal articles and books were

located that dealt with the process approach to teaching writing to young children. Each journal article and book about the process approach to writing offered a different perspective. Since there were so many possibilities, four programs were chosen and then compared to determine which aspects were common among all four programs. After the four writing programs were reviewed one was chosen, adapted, and then implemented within the author's classroom.

### Literature Review

Existing writing programs must be considered to determine how the elements of a process approach to writing are included. These elements must be explored to determine how they influence children's writing abilities.

There are two approaches that can be used when teaching writing to young children. The first approach to writing is the product approach.

### Product Approach to Writing

With this approach, writing is viewed as a product. Teachers usually tell the students when to write and what to write about. The single most important goal children have to keep in mind is if



the teacher is going to approve of the piece of work. If the teacher likes the writing then the students get a good grade. In this approach it does not matter how a child gets to the product, only that he/she does. Working together is not viewed as positive.

Writing is a group activity only in that everyone starts and stops at the same time (Bumgartner, 1996).

In a product approach classroom, writing is attacked without any real understanding of the writing process or its recursive nature. The only time students see a teacher write is when he/she is writing on the chalkboard. Teachers evidence little understanding that prewriting, writing, rewriting, and editing are ongoing and sometimes simultaneous acts. Carroll and Wilson (1993) stated that "All too often texts extend the activity of prewriting on Monday to drafting on Tuesday, rewriting on Wednesday, editing on Thursday, and handing in the final copy on Friday" (p. 30). This approach does not allow students to go back to prewriting after working on a draft. It does not encourage students to begin an entirely new part after revising, if needed. Students of the product approach to writing most often write only on the teacher's assigned topic.

### Process Approach to Writing

The second approach to teaching writing is called the process approach. In this approach “Process means giving students time to prewrite, write, postwrite, proofread, and edit their papers” (Carroll & Wilson, 1993, p. 12). The process approach means teaching various forms of writing so students think through their meaning, their purpose, and the needs of their audience. Students are encouraged to collaborate with peers and to discuss their writing with teachers. Grammar and mechanics are taught within the writing process. The process of writing is just that, a way that writing happens when authors write. Recognizing this frees the teacher to be a facilitator of writing rather than a commander. Children are shown how to achieve high-quality final products that please themselves and others (Bumgartner, 1996).

From the literature reviewed, numerous writing programs were found that could be used when teaching the writing process to young children. Four process approach programs were studied to compare the elements that they had in common. The four program authors that were chosen for consideration are Graves (1994), Calkins (1994), Bumgardner (1996), and Wood-Walters (1996).

Graves has been involved in writing research for two decades, and has been a teacher, school principal, and language supervisor for a city school system. He is currently Professor Emeritus from the University of New Hampshire.

Calkins is known nationally as a researcher and writer in the field of teaching writing. She is an Associate Professor of English Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she directs the Writing Project. Through this project a team of ten teacher-trainers are providing classroom-based staff development to teachers throughout the New York City Schools. Calkins has worked with teachers in more than 100 school districts throughout this country and Canada. She has been involved for eight years in research in the teaching and learning of writing.

*Bumgardner is founder of Language Arts Consultants and has* been an independent writing specialist for several years as well as a presenter in classrooms on several topics involved with the writing process. She has been a presenter at Young Authors' conferences, Chapter 1 conferences, and parent/teacher workshops throughout the Midwest. She is the author of several publications on writing.

Wood-Walters has over twenty years of teaching experience and has demonstrated that she knows what will and will not work. She has gained insight and knowledge, through extensive work in New Zealand and the United States, of how to incorporate additional literacy activities into a first grade program.

Graves (1994) stated that children are ready to begin the writing process when they can write their name, show some sign of using letters, and produce drawings that are beginning to show more extensive content than a simple drawing of one object. Children are initially introduced to formal writing through the teacher's oral discussion and demonstration. The teacher begins conversing with those children who exhibit the prescribed characteristics to find a common topic for all the children. Once a topic is found, the teacher starts to write, with the children helping to compose by volunteering the names of letters that go with the sounds they need to represent. Toward the beginning of the process the teacher will draw a quick sketch that will help to tell the story. By demonstrating the writing process the teacher is showing where writing comes from, that drawings can be a helpful way to rehearse for the writing of the text, how to sound out words, how to put

spaces between written words, and how to compose from left to right. Many demonstration sessions are needed to help children become more independent writers because many skills are involved in writing.

The independent writing process has a beginning process called rehearsal, the preparation for composing. Young children rehearse for writing by drawing. As a child draws he/she is visualizing what he/she will be writing about. The drawing will be used as an idea bank when the child is writing. Rehearsal cannot happen if writing occurs infrequently. Infrequent writing sessions limit the ability to make choices because they limit both the practice of writing and the exercise of selecting topics. Ideally, writing takes place every day. Children need to have a set time and day so they can rehearse what they will be writing.

The next step in the writing process is composing, which commonly includes everything a writer does from the time the first words are put on paper until all drafts are completed. When writing, young children follow a simple pattern of select, compose, and read. Select refers to information children gather from the pictures they have drawn or selecting one bit of information to start writing.

Compose refers to the choosing of words to go into the selection.

Read means going back and reading what has already been written.

After the rehearsal, composing, and initial reading steps comes the revision part of the writing process. Revision with young children in first grade means the adjustment of handwriting, spelling and some grammatical inconsistencies. Most children at this age are not ready to rework their information. This skill will evolve as they become more mature writers.

Graves (1994) believes that teachers should seldom encourage young children (K-1) to revise. He wants them to write extensively and to experience the flow of writing. Children may occasionally add information and work to improve certain skills but they should concentrate on only one skill at a time when writing. Children handle revisions by learning in one piece of writing what to apply in the next rather than going back and changing the first.

An important aspect of Graves' (1994) writing process was the teacher's interview with the children about pieces of their writing. Interviews were a useful diagnostic tool for finding out how specific the children could be about self assessment and what they needed to do to be better writers.

Through the interview the teacher can decide if the child needed to be “nudged” to try new things and experiment with new skills. Mini-lessons can be developed from the interviews to help improve student writing. Students need to see how their writing is improving to know how to go on as a writer. This can be accomplished during the interview.

Calkins (1994) believed that it is essential that children are deeply involved in writing, that they share their texts with others, and that they perceive themselves as authors. When teachers understand the writing process, they can help each student invent, use, and adapt effective writing strategies. The terms: rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing are used to describe the writing process.

Rehearsal refers to the ability of writers to see potential stories everywhere. For young children, the drawing provides a supportive framework within the piece of writing. Most of the meaning is carried in the picture.

Draft means the tentative writing efforts of the children. Children at this level will often voice what they are about to write. Talk surrounds the production of written words because writing is

embedded in oral language. As the children become confident with their writing, they can write without the vocal accompaniment.

The draft soon turns to revision, which means to see again. Revision helps children to see the emerging subjects and develop meanings within their writing. Children at this age are less likely to go back and read what they have written. They go on from where they left off, which results in writing that is a collage of pieces of writing that may have little in common. The teacher needs to encourage children to read what they have written to other children and to read the stories to themselves.

The heart of the writing process is the teacher-student, and student-student conferences. It is through them that students learn to interact with their own writing. During the teacher-student conference the teacher asks "What are you trying to say?" "How does this sound?" "Where is this leading you?" When teachers ask these questions during the conference, children internalize them and ask them of each other in peer conferences. Eventually, they will ask them of themselves during writing.

Editing, the reworking of the draft until it is ready for final copy emerges last. Young children should be encouraged to edit their



drafts. This editing takes the form of the children asking themselves, "Is this my very best?" "Am I done or do I have more to say?" This simple form of editing should be introduced to children from the very beginning of the year during a mini-lesson session. The important aspect of editing at this time is to get the children to form the habit of rereading their writing.

It is important that children have a predictable time for writing because it allows children to take control of their own writing processes. As children go through the writing process they follow the cycle of rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing. Shifts between rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing can occur often throughout the writing session. Writers can shift easily from one aspect to another as they write. This writing process does not fit easily into a teacher-led, whole class method of instruction. Within one classroom the children can all be working at different stages in their writing.

The role of the teacher as conceptualized by Calkins is to provide the time, materials, and structure for the writing process. As the children are writing the teacher is moving about the classroom, talking with individual students about their writing, and

meeting with small groups of children in a mini-lesson. At the beginning of the year the teacher needs to explain the expectations required of each student during writing time. For example children need to know if they are to continue to write while the teacher is meeting with other students.

Bumgardner (1996) stated that . . . “An important part of a teacher’s work is modeling the writing process for his/her students” (p.1). As children write at their desks, they need to see teachers writing at the board or at their desks. Children should observe teachers gathering ideas, choosing one to use (getting ready to write), putting together a beginning sentence, and then developing it into a paragraph (first draft, rough draft). Teachers should show children how they cross out words, and change what is written to make the writing the best it can be (revising, editing). Once pieces of writing are finished, teachers need to read the writing aloud so the students can hear if it is the best that could be written (ready for publishing).

Bumgardner (1996) explained that the process writing approach has steps that writers follow to produce high-quality pieces of writing. These steps are: prewriting, drafting, revising,

proofreading, editing, and publishing. During the prewriting step the children take the time to talk, listen and discuss ideas with a group. These ideas can be written down by the teacher or the students. A common experience, reading a book, hearing a poem, or taking a field trip can be used to set the stage for writing. Children need to be helped to get into the mood for writing.

When the children are ready to write, they may find it more helpful to write on every other line. This allows them to make revisions easily without messing up the paper too much. The act of revising involves carefully reading what has been written and making changes to improve a piece of writing (Bumgartner, 1996). The steps of drafting and revising are closely related. As children go back to read what they have written and make changes, they are drafting and revising at the same time. Young children may only make a few changes in their writing and only with prompting from the teacher. Terms associated with writing should be used with the children so they can become familiar with the terms. Before children show their writing to someone they need to be the first audience, to read the piece of writing to themselves. This is the

first step children need to complete before conferencing with a peer or teacher.

Conferencing, according to Bumgartner (1996), is not a step in the writing process but it is an important part of writing for children. Conferencing helps teachers to see where students are with their writing, note areas of difficulty, and help lead mini-lessons to address specific problems experienced by a small group of children. The teacher's responsibility is to show the children how they can make their writing better. The teacher is there to guide the students through the writing process. The writing process is done cooperatively (student-student, teacher-student) to help students develop confidence in their writing skills.

Proofreading/editing follows revision. This involves the student going back in his/her piece of writing to fix any mechanical errors (spelling, punctuation, capitalization). The teachers will have modeled this step often with students by using pieces of their own writing.

The final step in the process writing approach according to Bumgartner is publishing. Publishing can take on many forms (i.e.; in a book, in a letter, on the computer, in a play, in a wall display, read

on an audio or videotape), anything that can be read and shared with family and friends. When publishing, the children write the final published form in their best handwriting.

The steps in the writing process as defined in Wood-Walters' (1996) text are: "Modeling, daily writing, conferencing, publishing, and special writing" (p. 3). Modeling provides the opportunity to fill each lesson with learning as the teacher thinks aloud. Daily writing involves children learning to write by writing every day. It also involves a short one to one period of conferencing time where teachers can ask children questions about their writing, sit back, and listen to what children have to say about their writing. Publishing provides an opportunity for children to be creative and take pride in what they were able to produce as they share it with their families. Special Writing is a guided writing activity pertaining to work that is written, edited, and taken home in one day.

As teachers model they are providing a class lesson. "It is a time when the focus may be on a common learning need, creating and awareness of writing possibilities, editing a writing piece, or sharing effective writing" (Wood-Walters 1996, p.4). The written

work of children can provide motivational and instructional models for other children's writing. For example children's writing can be used to show: (a) a clever beginning or ending, (b) self-editing procedures, (c) interesting uses of words, or (d) beginning, middle, and endings of a story. Each day it is important to expose the children to good quality books, stories, and poems. As the teacher is reading, attention should be drawn to: (a) titles - how they reflect what the story is about, (b) questions that arise in the reader's mind, (c) pattern text of the story, (d) predictable text, and (e) how the illustrations relate/add to the story. Wood-Walters (1996) stated:

Through the teacher as model, children as models, and authors as models, the language program can be richly expanded.

Children's interests will grow and change and they will begin to write on all sorts of varied topics. Modeling provides the opportunity to load each lesson with learning! It enables each child to take from it what he/she is ready for . . . each day (p. 6).

In order for children to learn to write they need to write every day. This writing needs to start on the first day of school and

continue every day thereafter. This provides the children with a structure from which they can organize themselves and plan ahead regarding what they might write about.

As children begin to write each day they will soon see themselves as writers. By writing every day, the program becomes student-driven. If the frequency and consistency of writing are decreased the program becomes teacher-driven, which will result in reluctant, struggling writers. Teachers need to help children develop the skills of writing and to discover the joy of writing which comes from writing every day.

As children begin to write each day they need to have control over the topics about which they write. Children will write about what they know best. It is the teacher's responsibility to guide the selection process and discuss potential topics with children. A classroom that provides many shared experiences, discussions, and exposure to a wide range of literature will easily generate many ideas for children's writing

The elements that were found to be common to the four programs were: (a) modeling by teacher, child, and author; (b) writing; (c) conferencing - teacher to student, student to student;

and (d) mini-lessons. Each program implemented or presented these elements differently. Only Wood-Walters' process approach to writing offered a methodical process that could be easily incorporated into this particular classroom.



### CHAPTER III

#### Description of Project

This project drew heavily upon Wood-Walters' (1996) process approach to writing. Wood-Walters had a full time aide in her classroom so she was able to do the special writing assignment each day. This author did not have access to an aide, or a classroom helper. Due to this lack of assistance, the author had to make some changes in the original writing program. The following are the components of the writing program that were implemented.

#### Modeling:

This was accomplished during a daily writing time in which the teacher provided the opportunity to fill each lesson with learning. The children took an active part in the writing that the teacher was demonstrating.

#### Daily Writing:

There was an established daily period of time in which students wrote and published compositions on topics of their own choosing. Children learned to write by writing every day.

Conferencing:

The teacher asked: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and then listened, one-to-one, to student responses during, short individualized mini-lessons.

Publishing:

This provided an experience that was exciting. It allowed for creativity and provided results in which children took well-deserved pride as they shared with family and friends.

Special Project:

Special projects allowed children time to develop their fine motor skills and practice listening skills by making art projects that related to classroom themes. They were projects that could be started and taken home in one day. For a more detailed, expanded description of the writing program see Appendix A.

## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

#### Conclusions

The writing program that was implemented allowed each child to go through the writing process at their own pace. All of the children became better writers because they were not forced to use elements of the writing process for which they were not yet ready. The children were exposed to many types of writing and used these when they were ready to do so. To have students at many different writing stages was very manageable because the writing program was designed with that in mind. The children looked forward to writing each day. If there was a day that they could not write the children voiced their disappointment.

One unanticipated positive outcome of the process was that as the lower ability children became more confident with their writing, their confidence with reading also grew. These children were transferring the skills they were learning when writing to their reading. They made the connection between writing and reading.

The wholistic instructional implication of the project is that quality literature experiences presented in the classroom along with

modeling and time to write positively affected the writing responses of the students and helped them to develop their writing ability.

## Appendixes

## Project

### Introduction

The author has drawn heavily upon Wood-Walters' (1996) process approach to writing format for this project. Wood-Walters' approach to writing had the steps all laid out so they were easy to implement in the classroom. The author made changes to parts of the program so that it would fit the needs of students within the author's classroom. What follows is a description of the planning and organizational steps the author completed to prepare the students to write. The steps in each day's writing session in the first grade classroom are also included.

### Preparation for writing

1. The classroom needed to be arranged so small groups of children could sit together in order to freely discuss their writing. In this classroom, the author arranged the desks so that they were in groups of four. Above two groups of desks, signs were hung that read: Writing Group A and Writing Group B. Elsewhere in the room there was a table set up for publishing, a table for conferencing and a special projects table. Above each of these tables a sign designated the writing area.

2. Paper, pencils, glue, and scissors were needed at the special projects table. The publishing table was supplied with markers, stamp markers (markers that have different shaped stamps on the tips), colored chalk, colored pencils, crayons, glitter crayons, construction paper, scissors, pencils and glue. To make publishing a special time, the items at the publishing table could only be used when publishing. The items were put into clear plastic containers so children could easily see them.

3. Writing groups of four to six students, depending on the number of students in the classroom, were created. The writing groups had students of varied abilities. Each group had a group symbol, which was indicated on the writing chart.

4. Writing folders were made for each child from file folders with colored duct tape at each end (a different color for each group). The writing folders were organized to hold the child's writing book, alphabet and/or word card(s). The child's first and last name was written on the front of the folder along with the group symbol. As the children started to publish, the titles of their published pieces were written on the front of the folders.

5. A writing chart indicating the writing groups and activity assignments for the day was posted in an area where everyone could see it (see Appendix B for an example of this chart). Putting a piece of Velcro on the back of each group symbol allowed for the easy rotation of the symbols each day.

6. Writing books for the children needed to be prepared. For use at the beginning of the year, books with ten blank 11 x 14 pieces of paper were folded in half and stapled together. Later on, when the children's writing became more easily readable for the teacher, students began to write on lines. To make these writing books, ten pieces of lined writing paper were alternated with ten pieces of blank paper and then stapled together. Each child's name was written on the front of a writing book.

7. Publishing books were made from card stock paper that had been folded in half. Two pieces of white paper were glued on the inside . For those children who wrote longer stories, publishing books with more than two pages were made. The author found the easiest way to do this was to fold three 8 1/2 x 11 pieces of paper in half and insert them into a piece of card stock cover then sew down the middle using a sewing machine.



8. Lists of words commonly used by students when writing needed to be copied so they could be given to students once they reached the early or fluent writing level (see Appendix C). Words were highlighted when the children spelled them correctly in their writing. This list of words helped to develop each child's list of functional spelling words. The lists also aided the children in the editing phase of their writing. When the time came the lists were glued on the back of the children's writing folders.

#### Daily Writing Session

To help the reader better understand this writing program the author will provide a description of what happened during a typical 45 - 60 minute writing session. The same activities were done each day.

1. The author read to the students two quality books that went with the theme in the classroom. The teacher always commented on some aspects of the books (the pictures, the text pattern, the use of print, how the book began and/or ended). Examples of some high quality books that were read are:

- Hogrogian, N. One Fine Day. c. 1971, Macmillan
- Hutchins, P. The Doorbell Rang. c. 1986, Scholastic

- Keats, E. Snowy Day. c. 1962, Scholastic
- Martin Jr, B. Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?. c. 1967, Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, Inc.
- Neitzel, S. The Dress I'll Wear To The Party. c. 1992, Scholastic
- Pfister, M. Rainbow Fish. c. 1992, Scholastic.
- Steig, W. Sylvester and the Magic Pebble. c. 1969, Simon & Schuster.
- Wood, A. The Napping House. c. 1984, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Zolotow, C. The Quarreling Book. c. 1963, Harper Collins Publishers.

2. After the teacher read and discussed the books, a poem was read that went with a current classroom theme. It was read through once and then the children were invited to read the poem along with the teacher. As the poem was being read, the teacher pointed to the words so children could realize that print carries a message. This poem was read every day for a week. On the last day the children received a copy of the poem to put into their poem folder. Previous poems were read at least once a week. Poem folders were kept in a

place that was easily accessible to the children. Poems helped the children to experience fun in speech, rhyme, and rhythm in print.

3. A story was written on the chart paper. Students sat facing the chart pad sitting cross legged with their hands in their laps. Topics for stories included events such as an experience that the teacher had, a child's important news, something that was happening at school, a pattern from a well-known story or poem, or a specific genre. Student input was encouraged through the following questions: Where on the paper do I start writing? Where do I start to write on the page? Can you help me sound out this word? Can I fit this word on the end of this line? Where should I write this word? What comes at the end of the sentence? After writing one word, what do I have to remember to do?

Once it was seen that children were using the above strategies in their writing, the focus moved to: marking words for editing, proofreading for meaning, editing spelling and/or punctuation, adding, or deleting words. The children selected the aspects of the modeling that were relevant to them.

When the story was written, the teacher drew a picture to go with the story. It was important for the children to see how details

could be added to a drawing, how appropriate colors were used, how to draw animals and people, and background to match the story. When the picture was completed the author pointed to the words while reading the story along with the children.

Later in the year, the teacher often chose a child's piece of writing, with the child's permission, to share with the children. The piece of writing was chosen in order to model how to eliminate boring words (and, said, then went, etc.) or how to ask questions about a piece of writing in order to make it more interesting for the reader. For example: "Garrett in your story you said, He went to the tree. How did he get to the tree? Where is the tree? Who is he? When did he go to the tree? Why did he go to the tree?" With the help of the children, this sentence was changed to: When the sun came up the owl flew to the pine tree to sleep.

4. After the 15-20 minute modeling session was completed the children were ready to write. Their attention was turned to the writing chart (see Appendix B). Folders were held up for the first group one at a time. As the children recognized their names they stated what they were going to write about for that day. Nobody was allowed to leave the area until he/she had an idea.

Before the children began to write, clear directions were given about where in the writing books to write and draw the pictures. One page was for writing, the other page was for the drawing. The children's attention was also drawn to the fact that crayons were used for drawing and pencils were for writing. As children began to write the teacher circulated among them, writing the names of the emergent writers on their writing pages. Each child said the letter names as they were written; if this was not known, the teacher would say the letter name as each letter was written and the child repeated it. If the child could say the letter name a dot was put under the letter. When all letters in the name were known a dot on the writing book cover indicated that the teacher no longer needed to write that child's name each day. The children continued to write their names each day but the focus shifted from letter identification to letter formation.

Children at the early or fluent ability level did not write their names at the top of the writing page. Instead they wrote the date at the beginning of the writing for each day. The teacher circled the date after reading their writing. Children at this level had the

option of starting a new piece of writing or continuing one from a previous day.

5. Time was spent with each child at the conferencing table. The children read their writing pieces. When the piece of writing was read, it was pointed out what the children had done well and suggestions were offered. Once children were aware of their capabilities, it was their responsibility to maintain the level of writing skill they had achieved. Difficult words were discussed. If the writers were at the emergent level the teacher wrote what the children had written at the bottom of the page to provide a correct model for the children to touch and read (see Appendix D). The children then read their stories with help from the teacher by pointing to the words as they read.

At this point in the writing process, the students controlled their own writing and the teacher responded to their questions and ideas. Children at the early or fluent stage of writing used estimated spelling, circling words about which they were unsure as they wrote. Prior to raising their hand to conference, children had to read through their composition asking “who, what, why, where, when, how” questions. The children also made sure their writing

when, how” questions. The children also made sure their writing made sense by reading it aloud to themselves. The children checked circled words for correct spelling in a personal writing dictionary or from a word list and edited their words by writing the word correctly above the circled word. At this level, students were learning to self-edit for content as well as for spelling and mechanics. Once the children had checked their writing they were ready to read the piece of writing.

At this time, the children were no longer given the models at the bottom of the page. Any misspelled words in the writing were corrected above the misspelled word. The letters in the words that were correct were marked (see Appendix D). This allowed the children to advance in taking ownership of their writing.

During the conference the teacher not only looked for misspelled words but helped children with skill areas, choosing only one skill to teach at a time and doing it in a gentle way that left the ownership of the writing with the child. Changing everything in the child’s piece of writing each time makes it no longer the child’s.

After the conference, the child marked the writing selection which enabled the teacher to know what piece of writing was to be

published the following day. At the end of the school day the teacher wrote the composition into a publishing book so it would be ready the next day.

6. During conferencing children could type their pieces of writing on the computer. The children chosen to work on the computer were using spaces in their writing. An excellent computer program that was used is Kid Works Deluxe 1.0 [computer software] (1996). This program allowed the child to write a story, give it a title, draw the picture to go with the story, and then print it in book format. Before the story was printed on the computer, the teacher modeled the child's writing below or on the next page. On their publishing days, children colored the picture and then put it into a special computer story binder which the child took home along with a letter from the teacher (see Appendix E).

7. During the writing time, the teacher met at least twice with those children not conferencing, once to write the child's name on the writing page and then once again to help them with writing. Assistance was provided in areas such as helping a child sound out a word or asking questions of the child about the writing.



8. The children who were at the special projects table worked on the activity that was demonstrated to them on a previous day. This component of the program provided students with time to practice illustrating techniques, develop their fine motor skills, practice following directions, and using their creativity. The special project was an art activity that went with a theme being taught in the classroom at the time. Once the project was completed the students were responsible for cleaning up the area. If the students finished before the writing time was completed, they could go to reading centers.

9. Children who were at the publishing table had the opportunity to publish at least once a week. That varied depending upon the stories they were writing at the time of conferencing (the stories may not have been finished in time to publish) and if the children had been absent for more than two to three writing periods that week. The children were ready to publish when they could draw a picture that went with the story. In publishing, the students drew pictures and wrote the first draft using estimated spelling. The final copy was printed using the changes discussed with children at their conferences.

Lastly, the students redrew the pictures from the previous day. The teacher set a high standard for overall correctness and presentation that was expected for all published pieces. Taken into account were each individual writer's abilities and determining if it was an appropriate time for them to publish. The teacher taught individual writers with individual needs that varied during the year.

There were certain writing topics that were not published. The topics could be written about but not published. These topics were ones that were hurtful to others, gut and gore, and writing that used offensive language.

10. When the writing time was finished, the final activity consisted of reading the published stories from that day. After the stories had been shared the children took their books home to share with their families. Books were returned the following day and placed in the classroom library for a few weeks. That allowed children to read one another's writing. After a few weeks the published books were placed in each child's portfolio which was kept until the end of the year.

11. In an effort to develop into independent writers, the emergent writing children must be provided with strategies to help

them self-reflect and identify their next step. With the help of an “I Can” card (see Appendix F) the students and the teacher were able to focus on what children could already do and what they could work on to improve.

A rubric is a powerful tool in helping early and fluent writing children improve the quality of their work. What makes using a rubric most powerful is the process of developing the rubric with the students. Before the process of creating a rubric is started, the teacher had in mind the attributes valued for specific tasks.

Questions that encouraged the children to define these attributes in their own language were asked. See Appendix F for a sample of a writing rubric developed by the author’s first grade students.

12. The assessment part of this writing program was individualized, on-going, and an integral part of the teaching process. At the end of each day the children’s writing was evaluated by the teacher using a checklist (see Appendix F) and rubric to find out the things children could nearly do and help them move from being partially successful to being completely successful. When assessing writing the teacher looked at the unedited work to know

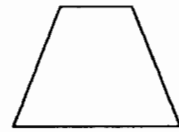
what skills had been learned and what strategies the children had used.

This writing project provided children with a way to progress through the prewriting, writing, rewriting, editing, and publishing stages on an individual basis and experience success. Children were given opportunities to learn from what the teacher did (modeling) and not solely from what the teacher said they should do.

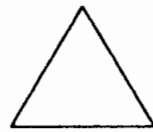
## Appendix B

Writing Chart

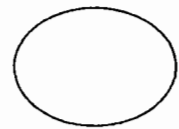
Writing A



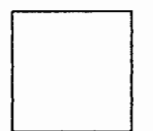
Conferencing



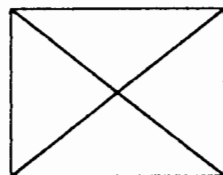
Publishing



Special Project



Writing B



## Appendix C

## Word List



From Enhancing Your Kindergarten/First Grade Program Through Innovative Reading and Writing Strategies (p. 96), D. Wood-Walters, 1996, Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research. Copyright 1996 by Darla Wood-Walters. Reprinted with permission.



## Word List

<u>Aa</u>	<u>Ee</u>	<u>Ii</u>	<u>Nn</u>	<u>Ss</u>	<u>Ww</u>
about	eat	I	name	said	walk
after	ever	in	never	saw	want
all		into	next	school	was
along	<u>Ff</u>	is	night	see	we
am	fast	it	no	she	went
an	father		not	shop	were
and	food	<u>Jj</u>	now	small	what
are	door	just		so	when
as	found		<u>Cc</u>	some	where
at	friend	<u>Kk</u>	of		who
	from	king	off	<u>Tt</u>	with
<u>Bb</u>		know	old	that	
be	<u>Gg</u>		on	the	<u>Xx</u>
because	get	<u>Ll</u>	once	their	
big	girl	lady	one	them	<u>Vv</u>
boy	go	like	our	then	yes
but	going	little	out	there	you
buy	good	live		this	your
by	got	look	<u>Pp</u>	time	
		live	park	to	<u>Zz</u>
<u>Cc</u>	<u>Hh</u>		play	two	zoo
came	had	<u>Mm</u>	put		
can	has	made		<u>Uu</u>	
car	have	make	<u>Qq</u>	up	
children	he	man	queen	us	
come	help	me		used	
	her	morning	<u>Rr</u>		
<u>Dd</u>	here	mother	ran	<u>Vv</u>	
dad	him	my	road	very	
day	his		run		
did	home				
do	house				
dog					
down					

From Enhancing Your Kindergarten/First Grade Program Through Innovative Reading and Writing Strategies (p. 96), D. Wood-Walters, 1996, Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research. Copyright 1996 by Darla Wood-Walters. Reprinted with permission.

## Appendix D

## Writing Samples

Emergent

I My is da H/S ball  
a Jack y green

I had a green tractor in my shed.

Early/Fluent

I am going to make a new  
<sup>ball</sup>  
ball. I am going to make it  
<sup>by</sup> By the <sup>swings</sup> swings.

## Appendix E

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

The stories in this binder have been written on the computer by the students in our class. I have edited each story with the writer, and then he/she has provided an illustration. It is now ready to share with you.

Please enjoy the writings of other first graders too. Your child may not be able to read other's stories, so please read with or to him/her. Enjoy!

Thank You,

P. S. Please return the binder tomorrow.

## Appendix F

## I Can . . . Checklist

Illustrate (and you know what it is!)							
Say letters & write name (just right!)							
Write letters (left to right)							
Leave spaces (between words)							
Write first & last letters (in words)							
Use estimates (first, middle, last sounds)							
Write some words (every letter!)							
Read story (touch and read)							
Write 2 sentences (good for you!)							
Write 3 sentences (well done!)							

Use periods (one thought)							
Use capitals (beginning sentences and names)							
Use speech marks (quotes)							
Edit spelling (using spelling cards or dictionary)							
Edit for meaning (makes sense!)							
Vary my topic (interesting)							
Use wide vocabulary (“super” words)							
Write a story (beginning, middle, end)							
Write with variety (retelling, pretend, poetry, letter....)							
Write quickly (with confidence!)							

From Enhancing Your Kindergarten/First Grade Program Through Innovative Reading and Writing Strategies (p. 96), D. Wood-Walters, 1996, Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research. Copyright 1996 by Darla Wood-Walters. Reprinted with permission.

## Writing Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Writing Sample Dates \_\_\_\_\_

Story	Great!	Getting There	Not Yet
Sentences	4 or more sentences.	2-3 sentences	No complete sentences
Sequence	Sequences 3 or more events.	Sequences two events.	Unable to sequence events.
Format	Beginning, middle and end present.	Beginning and an end.	Beginning but no end.

Mechanics	Great!	Getting There	Not Yet
Capitals	All sentences start with a capital.	Some sentences start with a capital.	No capitals are used at the beginning of the sentences.
Grammar	Subject and verb agree	Sometimes the subject and verb agree.	Subject and verb never agree.
Punctuation	Sentences end with a period or a question mark.	Some sentences end with a period or question mark.	No periods or question marks are used.



Writing Rubric Continued

Spelling	Great!	Getting There	Not Yet
Invented Spelling	Includes correct beginning, middle, and ending letters.	Includes correct beginning and ending letters.	Writes some beginning letters.
Conventional Spelling	Spells many commonly used words correctly.	Spells some commonly used words correctly.	No commonly use words spelled correctly.

Illustrations	Great!	Getting There	Not Yet
Details	Many good details	Some good details	Few details
Picture	Picture goes with the story	Picture somewhat goes with the story	Picture does not go with the story.
Appearance	Very neat	Somewhat neat	Sloppy and messy
Coloring	Stayed in the lines. Colored in one direction.	Colored out of lines sometimes. Colored in one direction most of the time.	Often colored out of the lines. Colored in many directions.

Handwriting	Great!	Getting There	Not Yet
Letter formation	Letters formed correctly	Most letters formed correctly.	Letters formed incorrectly.
Use of writing lines	Writing lines used all the time.	Writing lines used some of the times.	Writing lines not used.
Spacing	Spaces between all words.	Spaces used between words used some of the time.	No spaces between words. Writes strings of letters.
Appearance	Very neat	Hard to read at times	Unreadable

## Checklist

Grade/Date	Emergent Writing Behaviors	Comments
	Pre- letter writing	
	Recognizable illustration	
	Dictates a complete sentence	
	Writing random letters	
	Writing letters left to right	
	Leaves spaces	
	Random reading	
	One to one reading	
	Knows letters in name	
	Knows alphabet	
	Uses initial consonants	
	Uses estimates	
	Uses a few high frequency words	
	Reads back at conference	
	Spaces words correctly	
	Chooses a topic	
	Takes pride in writing &/or illustration	

Key: N = Not observed    B = Beginning    S = Secure

From Enhancing Your Kindergarten/First Grade Program Through Innovative Reading and Writing Strategies (p. 96), D. Wood-Walters, 1996, Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research. Copyright 1996 by Darla Wood-Walters. Reprinted with permission.

Checklist

Grade/Date				Early Writing Behaviors	Comments
				Uses end sounds in estimates	
				Uses many high frequency words	
				Estimates ---	
				Teacher corrects	
				Estimates ---	
				corrects after conference	
				Writing quickly, with confidence	
				Can title writing appropriately	
				Varies topic choice	
				Sequences ideas	
				Experiments with periods	
				Experiments with capitals	
				Uses surface sounds in estimates	
				Uses vowels	
				Uses initial blends	
				Correctly spells more than estimates	
				Can add to a story	
				Uses periods correctly	
				Uses capitals correctly	
				Can use a question mark	
				Writing includes a beginning, middle and	
				Can innovate a story	
				Takes pride in published work	

Key: N = Not observed    B = Beginning    S = Secure

From Enhancing Your Kindergarten/First Grade Program Through Innovative Reading and Writing Strategies (p. 96), D. Wood-Walters, 1996, Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research. Copyright 1996 by Darla Wood-Walters. Reprinted with permission.

## Checklist

Grade/Date				Fluent Writing Behaviors	Comments
				Critical choice of story to publish	
				Can delete	
				Experiments with quotes	
				Uses final blends	
				Uses suffixes correctly	
				Uses syllables	
				Edits before conference	
				Uses extended sentences	
				Varies sentence beginnings	
				Uses a wide vocabulary	
				Uses the possessive	
				Uses a comma	
				Uses an exclamation mark	
				Uses punctuation confidently	
				Writes w/variety -letter	
				* * -report	
				* * -imaginative	
				* * -retelling	
				* * -poetry	
				Publishes correct work	
				A confident writer	

Key: N = Not observed    B = Beginning    S = Secure

From Enhancing Your Kindergarten/First Grade Program Through Innovative Reading and Writing Strategies (p. 96), D. Wood-Walters, 1996, Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research. Copyright 1996 by Darla Wood-Walters. Reprinted with permission.

## References

- Atwell, N. (1987). In the middle: Writing reading, and learning with adolescents. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Britton, J. (1982). Prospect and retrospect. Montclair, NJ: Boynton Cook.
- Bumgardner, J. C. (1996). Helping students learn to write. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Calkins, L. M. (1978). Heads up: Write what you see. Language Arts, 55(3), 355-357.
- Calkins, L. M. (1986). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Carroll, J. A., Wilson, E. E. (1993). Acts of teaching: How to teach writing. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.
- Clay, M. M. (1991). Becoming literate: The construction of inner control. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Goodman, K. S. (1977). Acquiry literacy is natural: Who killed cock robin?. Theory Into Practice, 16(5), 309-314.
- Graves, D. H. (1983). Writing teachers and children at work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Graves, D. H. (1994). A fresh look at writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- KidsWorks Deluxe v. 1.0 [computer software]. (1996). Torrance, CA: Davison & Associates, Inc.
- Squire, J. R. (1983). Instructional focus and the teaching of writing. Columbus, OH: Ginn & Co.
- Wilson, T. L., Mosley, M. H., Shirley, S. (1993). Emergent literacy: Young children's experiments with written communication. Reading Improvement, 30(2), 113-116.
- Wood-Walters, D. (1996). Enhancing your kindergarten/first grade program through innovative reading and writing strategies. Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research.