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Incorporating interactive writing throughout the day in a kindergarten classroom

Abstract

This study examined the use of interactive writing in a kindergarten classroom. Interactive writing and related terms were explained, and connections were made between interactive writing and learning standards. Possible problems and solutions were discussed, and a case study was conducted in a kindergarten classroom. Guidelines were presented for successful integration of interactive writing into a balanced literacy program. Also, conclusions were drawn from the case study and reviewed literature, and recommendations were made for the use of interactive writing in the classroom and for future research in this area.

Incorporating Interactive Writing Throughout the Day

in a Kindergarten 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

Amy Sobaski

July, 2006

This research paper by: Amy Sobaski

Titled: Incorporating Interactive Writing Throughout the Day in a Kindergarten

Classroom

Has been approved as meeting the research requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Education: Early Childhood Education.

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July 15, 2006
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July 21, 2006
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This study examined the use of interactive writing in a kindergarten classroom. Interactive writing and related terms were explained, and connections were made between interactive writing and learning standards. Possible problems and solutions were discussed, and a case study was conducted in a kindergarten classroom. Guidelines were presented for successful integration of interactive writing into a balanced literacy program. Also, conclusions were drawn from the case study and reviewed literature, and recommendations were made for the use of interactive writing in the classroom and for future research in this area.

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CHAPTER 1

INRODUCTION

Background

Since I began my teaching career in 2001, I have continually learned about the

importance of helping children learn to read. With the passage of the *No Child Left*

Behind Act of 2001, schools must demonstrate that students are learning to read at or

above grade level. As a preschool teacher in a federally-funded Head Start classroom, I

attended numerous workshops on ways to teach literacy in the classroom. The multiple

strategies and activity ideas presented were expected to increase student skills in

phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Classrooms in

my school district with older students—kindergarten through third grade—began a three

and a half hour uninterrupted literacy block. This meant no recess time or specials could

occur during reading time. While writing was included in the literacy block, reading was

the main emphasis.

Recently, in literacy professional development workshops that I've attended, writing

was given equal importance to reading. Researchers, such as Elbow (2004) and Wallace

(1985) described the reciprocal nature of the development of reading and writing.

Application of these research findings suggest that students can learn to read through

writing activities, and can alternately learn to write through reading activities. In fact,

Chomsky (1972) supported the view that writing [invented spelling] should precede

reading. An approach that has become popular in education today is called *balanced*

literacy, which incorporates multiple reading and writing opportunities in a variety of

contexts. One component of the balanced literacy approach is interactive writing: an experience in which students are active participants in composing and writing text.

As I progressed through my first year as a kindergarten teacher, I wanted to increase my knowledge of balanced literacy and more specifically, interactive writing. I began using interactive writing during my last year as a preschool teacher. However, I did not feel completely confident that I knew how to incorporate it into my classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine recent literature involving interactive writing in the classroom and to complete a case study of how interactive writing can be implemented throughout the day in a kindergarten classroom. To fulfill this purpose, this paper will address the following questions:

1. What is interactive writing?

2. How does interactive writing help students achieve school district benchmarks in reading and writing?

3. What are the problems involved in using the interactive writing approach?

4. What guidelines should be followed when implementing interactive writing as part of a balanced literacy program?

Need for the Study

With pressures from *No Child Left Behind* ever present, administrators, educators, and researchers alike, are continually looking for the most effective ways to assist children in reading at or above grade level. According to Morrow (2005), balanced literacy has been proven to be an effective way to increase student achievement in both reading and writing. An important piece of the balanced literacy puzzle is interactive writing. While

there have been some studies completed on the use of interactive writing in the classroom, limited research has been done on the use of interactive writing in early childhood classrooms, specifically kindergarten. More research in this area is necessary to help teachers become comfortable integrating interactive writing into their daily practice.

Limitations

The majority of the research examined for this study was case study situations. These case studies showed how interactive writing was implemented in specific classrooms, but only with a limited number of students. The results revealed in research articles may help identify specific interactive writing strategies for individual teachers. However, the number of subjects in each case study was limited, with the greatest number being 25 and the smallest number being 7. Only one study, completed by Craig (2003), included 87 subjects. Results from the studies conducted, regardless of the number of subjects, each showed student progress in writing after being involved in interactive writing activities.

Furthermore, each study chosen has valuable insights into student learning. However, the studies examined interactive writing in different forms and in very different classrooms. The kindergarten and first grade classrooms were more likely to use it as a large group activity; whereas, the second through sixth grade classrooms used it more as an interaction between a teacher and individual student.

A final limitation is the access and availability of articles and materials for this paper. In my extensive research, only a small number of published studies were found on interactive writing in the classroom, and an even smaller number were available in full text.

Overview of the Case Study

After reading much valuable information regarding interactive writing in the classroom, I integrated it into my daily practice as a kindergarten teacher during the Fall 2005 semester. It was used in both whole group and small group situations throughout the day, including *Morning Message*, *Writer's Workshop*, and *Daily News* times. In addition, interactive writing activities served as minilessons on how to be a good reader and writer. These activities were used to teach about the conventions of written language, including letter names and formation, capitalization and punctuation, sentence structure, and the thought processes of a writer, as suggested by Ray & Cleaveland (2004). Progress will be noted through teacher observations, anecdotal records, and the reading and writing assessments used for kindergarten report cards in the Ankeny Community Schools. In addition, writing samples were collected to determine growth in students' independent writing (Pinnell and Fountas, 1998). After reviewing research in this area and completing the case study of my kindergarten classroom, I compiled guidelines that would help other teachers feel confident they can successfully integrate interactive writing into their balanced literacy programs.

Definitions

Interactive writing is part of a balanced literacy approach to reading and writing. For the purposes of clarity and understanding, the following terms will be defined in the following way:

Balanced literacy: Instruction that includes all of the following experiences: shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, oral and silent reading and writing, independent reading and writing, collaborative (interactive) reading and writing, content

connection in reading and writing, and performance of reading and writing (Morrow, 2005). According to Morrow, balanced literacy is incorporated into multiple learning contexts, including whole group instruction, small group instruction, one-on-one instruction, teacher-directed instruction, as well as center times and other social experiences.

Interactive writing: One component of a balanced literacy program. Interactive writing occurs between two or more people "…who exchange meaningful and purposeful texts across an extended period of time" (Hall, 1994, p. 1). Interactive writing requires that the teacher and students *share the pen* to develop a piece of writing. According to Pinnell and Fountas (1998), this type of activity helps children attend to features of print as they compose meaningful text. It can take many forms, from letter writing to stories to journal writing. Because interactive writing can be used in multiple situations and allows children to explore various ways of using written language, it is beneficial to children (Hall, 2000).

Shared Writing: One component of a balanced literacy program. The teacher writes text that is composed by students. This text works well for later reading opportunities. Shared writing can help students learn the conventions of print (Pinnell and Fountas, 1998).

Daily News: Occurs during large group time and lasts about 10 to 15 minutes. One child is chosen to share some special news with the class. It must be something that just happened or will be happening within the next day. The class helps to write the news on a piece of chart paper. After completing the message, *Daily News* can be sent home with a child, compiled to make a book, or posted around the room for students to read.

Morning Message: A message from the teacher to students that they read when they get to school and later discuss during group time. As the year progresses, students can do more of the *Morning Message* writing. From this activity, they will learn that print carries a message that is interesting and useful (Morrow, 2005).

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear and identify awareness that words are made up of individual phonemes (Morrow, 2005). This is not the same as phonics.

Phonics: Instructional practices based upon knowledge of letter-sound relationships. "Phonics and spelling are interrelated processes" (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998, p. 24). They both have readers and writers use, analyze, and read and write words.

Sight Words: Words commonly found in text and known immediately by the reader. "Once a word becomes a sight word, the reader does not need to use word-attack skills to read it" (Morrow 2005, p. 396).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Interactive Writing in the Classroom

Interactive writing may not look the same in each classroom. It may vary according

to student needs and interests, specific district benchmark requirements, and the teaching

style of the teacher. However, the literature reveals that some fundamental similarities

exist in any interactive writing activities. For instance, interactive writing occurs when

the teacher and student(s) create a piece of writing together. Either the student or the

teacher can decide the topic. It can take any form—"a list of things to do, a retelling of a

familiar story, a letter, a story" (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998, p. 29). Depending on the level

of the students, the teacher begins by completing more of the writing, having students

help with beginning sounds, then individual words, and eventually, entire sentences. The

teacher is the guide as students need help with spelling, ideas, or different ways to say

something (Morrow, 2005, p. 222).

According to Button (1992), *interactive writing* is different from *shared writing* in

two ways: 1) children have an active role in the process by holding the pen and doing the

writing, and 2) the teacher changes roles as students develop emerging knowledge about

print. In other words, in shared writing, the teacher writes what the children say; and in

interactive writing, students are doing some or most of the writing.

According to Button, Johnson, & Furgerson (1996), a writing activity done

interactively does not need to be lengthy. In the beginning of kindergarten, a teacher

might have it last about 15 minutes. As the year progresses, interactive writing lessons

might last for 20 to 30 minutes. The teacher should decide the length of the lesson based

upon the students' ability to remain engaged in an activity for a specific length of time. Button et al., further stated: "The power of the lesson lies not in the length of the text constructed but in the quality of the interaction" (p. 449). Additionally, it is important to note that students are not only learning how to write, but are also learning multiple early literacy skills. These skills include, but are not limited to the following: letter identification, phonemic awareness, building vocabulary, and reading sight words and other familiar words.

Connecting Interactive Writing to Standards and Benchmarks

By implementing interactive writing in the classroom, teachers are exposing their students to multiple reading and language arts skills. These skills are addressed in the state standards and district benchmarks. See Appendix A for the complete list of benchmarks from the Ankeny Community School District and standards adapted by the Mississippi Bend Education Agency that can be practiced and learned through interactive writing activities. The numerous standards and benchmarks that can be addressed through incorporating interactive writing demonstrate that it can be a valuable learning experience for all students.

Craig (2003) studied the effects of an adapted interactive writing intervention, labeled *interactive writing-plus*, with half-day kindergarten students, in comparison to a control group which used research-based metalinguistic games to teach similar concepts. The adapted interactive writing lessons incorporated additional instruction in segmentation and alphabetic skills. Craig found that children in the interactive writing-plus group exceeded the achievement of the comparison group on word identification ($p = .011$); passage comprehension ($p = .001$); and word reading development ($p < .05$).

Bickel, Holsopple, Garcia, Lantz, and Yoder (1999) examined a small group of kindergarten and first grade children as they learned early literacy skills through interactive writing. Both grades showed improvements in interactive writing abilities. The teacher assisted with almost every sound in the beginning of the year, but by March, children were generating ideas for writing, doing more of the writing, and proof reading their work. Throughout the study, each student made gains in his or her writing and had become a more independent writer.

Problems and Solutions Involved in Incorporating Interactive Writing

In the research studies examined for this literature review, few studies identified problems when adding interactive writing to a literacy program. Not one of the studies claimed that interactive writing was a waste of time or should not be used in the classroom. However, as an educator and a researcher, I have thought through a few problems or *roadblocks* involved in using interactive writing in the classroom.

The first roadblock is that some teachers may not believe they have enough background knowledge for *sharing the pen* with students in a developmentally appropriate and beneficial way. As with students, teachers have different learning styles and need to be given multiple opportunities to learn techniques. They could learn by watching other teachers use interactive writing, by participating in staff development, by learning from professional development videos on interactive writing, by having handouts available with basic guidelines and activity ideas included, or by including any combination of these learning techniques. Teaching other educators to incorporate interactive writing into their early literacy activities would not be a complex process and could be achieved.

Staff development opportunities have been effective in helping teachers learn new teaching practices. Button (1992) studied three kindergarten teachers over a two year period, looking in-depth at the teaching practices of the teachers as they attempted to perform a research-based instructional program in early literacy. The teachers had special training in teaching literacy (including interactive writing) to young children. Over the two-year period, teachers became more proficient in implementing interactive writing with their students. They noticed how their changed teaching practices affected student success over the length of the case study, and how they had then changed their instructional beliefs.

A second possible roadblock may be that change can be difficult for those teachers already using other methods. As teachers gain more experience in the classroom, they develop methods that work, or seem to work, for them. Change can also mean making or buying many new materials. When incorporating interactive writing into classroom activities, teachers do not necessarily need to *give up* other teaching practices, and not many new materials are needed. Interactive writing can easily be integrated into shared writing activities in the beginning of its use, and later, students would simply be doing more of the writing than the teacher. Four case studies conducted in different bilingual special education classrooms by Graves, Valles, and Rueda (2000) found that students in a classroom using multiple methods of reading and writing had more success in writing development than those using only one method. In addition, a whiteboard or chalkboard and a writing utensil are the only necessary materials needed to begin using interactive writing.

Finally, some researchers disagree about whether or not the teacher should correct students' writing. For instance, Button et al. (1996) stated that the teacher should support students' risk taking in writing, but should also use correction tape to *mask* preconventional attempts and to help "...the child write the word, letter, or punctuation mark conventionally" (p. 449). Hall (2000) disagreed, contending that the teacher needs to respond to the meanings of the children's writing and never correct errors. This discrepancy might cause some educators to be unsure of exactly what they should do while writing interactively with their students. It is important for educators to pick one of these methodologies.

In the case study I conducted, I chose to correct students' writing when errors were made. My reasoning was that if the whole class was participating, I wanted interactive writing to be an accurate model of how writing should look. I corrected children in a positive manner, so I wouldn't lower their confidence in their writing. The most common errors were the following: making an uppercase letter when a lower case letter should be written and reversing letters. When children made these errors, I would say, *That [letter] looks really nice, but could you flip it to the other side?* Children never seemed discouraged by this. In fact, they liked to put the correction tape on. This method was successful in my classroom.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY

Participants

Participants in this case study included 25 all-day kindergarten students in my

classroom at Northeast Elementary School in Ankeny, Iowa. The classroom contained 14

girls and 11 boys, ages 5 and 6. Students displayed a wide range of early literacy skills

when assessed in September, 2005. For instance, some students identified less than 15 of

the upper and lower case letters, while others knew 23 consonant sounds and multiple

sight words.

Methodology

My goal this past year was to incorporate interactive writing into my kindergarten

classroom in a variety of situations. I wanted to learn how it would fit best into my

teaching throughout the day. To learn this, I incorporated interactive writing into a

Superstar Activity, Morning Message, Daily News, small group sessions, and *special*

activities from August, 2005 to January, 2006. My intention was to have some form of

interactive writing embedded into each day, not necessarily to do each of the interactive

writing sessions all in a single day. Each activity will be explained in the following

paragraphs.

Superstar Activity

This was an activity done in August and September, 2005, to help children get to

know one another. One child was chosen each day to be the *Superstar*. Children could

ask them any one of the eight questions I had posted on the white board with picture

clues. Prior to beginning each day, we reviewed the eight questions as a class. Children

could raise their hands if they wanted to ask a question that day. Questions included: 1) What is your favorite color? 2) What is your favorite thing at school? 3) What is your favorite food? 4) What is your favorite sport? 5) What is your favorite toy? 6) What is your favorite book? 7) What is your favorite movie (or television show)? and 8) What is your favorite animal?

During this activity, discussions came up about the difference between a comment and a question. Children quickly learned that their role as the audience was to ask the Superstar a question, instead of commenting on something they themselves liked. Chart paper was used to record the Superstar's responses. I asked the *Superstar* how to spell his or her name, and he/she spelled it for me as I wrote the letters at the top, placing a star both before and after the child's name. After each question was asked and answered, I would say the words as I wrote them. Four questions were asked of the *Superstar*, so four sentences were written on each paper. After the first few times, I had the children begin to help with the writing. Initially, they would help with the beginning letters of two or three words, and I would choose specific volunteers when the letter was the same as the beginning of their names. As we progressed, the children helped with one or two words throughout the writing, by first sounding the word out and then having a volunteer write the sound. After each child had a turn to be the Superstar, I compiled their responses into a big book to be read at our Big Book Workstation.

Morning Message

In about mid-September, I introduced *Morning Message* at the beginning of the day. I wrote a simple message each day, using a similar format so children would soon be able to read the text, as discussed by Morrow (2005). The message was usually about

something special that would happen that day. It always began with *Good Morning!*
Then it would say something like: *We have a special visitor today.* For the first week, I
simply wrote the message. After that, I began leaving small pieces out. For instance, one
day I said, *_ood _orning! _oday we have PE.* I always read it as it sounded without the
beginning sounds, and the children would laugh because it didn't sound right. This was a
good time to discuss the importance of beginning sounds in making words. I had
volunteers come up and fill in the sounds I had left out as we discussed upper case and
lower case letters, and when each should be used.

<center>*Daily News*</center>

After we had concluded our Superstar activities, I began an activity which I called
Daily News. With this, I took preconceived ideas I had about the term *Daily News* and
adjusted them to fit the specific needs of my classroom. Prior to this year, I would have
used this term for an activity to wrap up the day with the class, as a way to help them
remember what we did during the day. However, because of time constraints, I was
unable to fit this into an end of the day activity. Since children enjoyed spotlighting one
child each day, we used the term, *Daily News,* to encompass something special a child
has been, or will be doing either inside or outside of school.

This activity begins with children thinking of something that has happened very
recently or will be happening very soon. I remind them that their news must have
happened yesterday, today, or will happen today, or tomorrow. I keep a list of children
who have already shared, so everyone has a fair chance at sharing their news, but
ultimately the children must raise their hands if they have something they would like to
share for writing.

To start the sentence, a green marker is always used. This signifies the concept that green means *go*. Black is usually used for the rest of the writing. To end the sentence, a red marker, signifying *stop*, is used for a period or exclamation point. At this point, students are helping with any sight words we have had, such as *I, the, my, are,* and *red,* to name a few commonly found Dolch Sight Words. Additionally, they are helping with some beginning sounds and a child places three fingers up each time a new word is formed to make sure we allow enough space between words. Figure 1. shows one of the Daily News writings completed as a group. During this activity, children are making letter-sound connections, practicing sight words, identifying when to use upper- and lower-case letters, visualizing correct spacing between words, and learning what makes a sentence a sentence. As we conclude the activity, the chart paper is given to the child to take home. I always mention that the children should show it to their families and discuss what is written.

Figure 1.

Daily News

My grandma is coming today.

14   4:10PM

To keep children actively involved in Daily News each day, I adjusted it throughout the school year. In January, I introduced Daily News Journals. Students each got a journal with a pencil velcroed to the front cover. While I had students help write the message on the easel, the rest of the class stayed engaged by writing the same message in their journals. In addition to keeping students engaged, this allowed students to gain practice in handwriting, spelling, spacing, and transferring thoughts to their papers. In April, I began using sentence strips to write instead of chart paper (See Figure II.). As we completed writing each day, the child who shared the news for the day took the sentence strips home. At home, they cut the sentence up into individual words, mixed it up, and then put the sentence back together to read to their families.

Figure II.

Daily News

I had an Easter

hunt with my cousins!
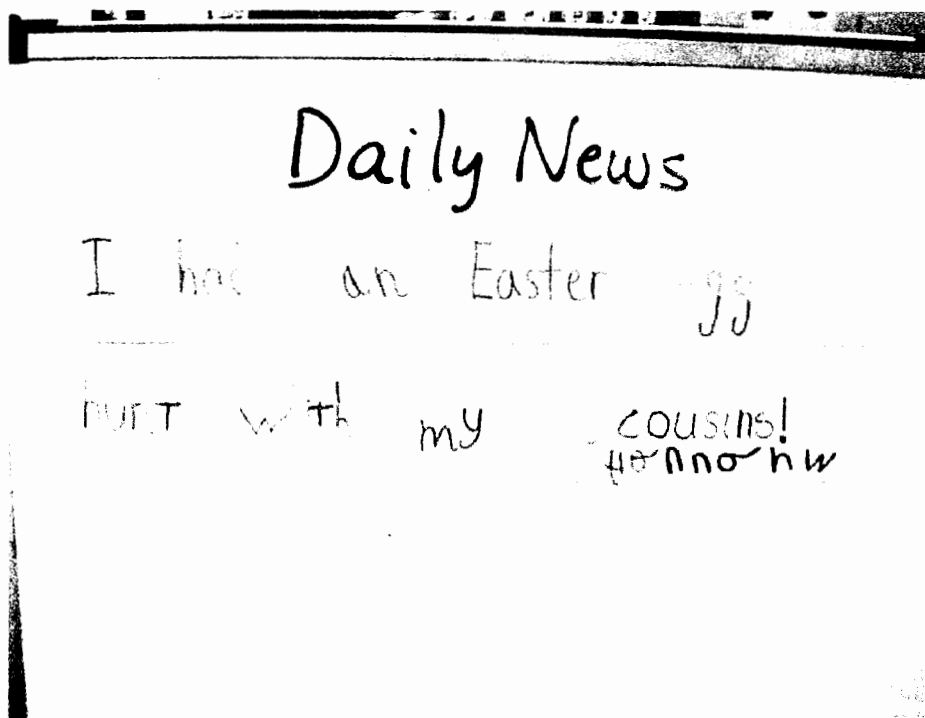
Special Activities

We read the book *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins during our farm theme and decided to go on a classroom walk. As we walked through the book again as a class, we used the same positional words as the book to describe where we were going to walk. For instance, Rosie walked *around the pond* and we decided to walk around the tree. We used each of the *positional* words found in the story, but related them to our places in and around our school. We conducted the writing similarly to how we typically had done interactive writing to that point. Children helped with some beginning sounds and prominent sounds found in simple words. The word *the* had already been a sight word, so the children wrote that word independently each time it occurred. After we wrote our directions for the walk, we went on a class walk to each place. A parent volunteer took pictures of the children following each direction. Later in the week, the pictures were compiled and small groups of students helped to copy each line of directions onto individual pages to form a class book of the occasion. Children needed only a few reminders about how to form specific letters. They really enjoyed the walk and later made a class book of their experience for all to see.

Results

After experimenting with interactive writing in the fall, I found that *Daily News* offered the best opportunities to gain and keep my students' interest. The children enjoyed sharing their news with the class, and they liked writing the sentences in their *Daily News Journals* as well. We continued this activity daily through the remainder of the school year, but began using the journals only on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. This helped to add enough variety to keep children interested in each session.

As the year progressed, I began to see changes in the children's writing. For instance, in the fall and spring students were assessed on their writing based on a four point scale. A student scored a *one* if he/she attempted to write letters of any kind. He/she scored a *four* if he/she wrote using beginning and ending sounds as well as familiar sight words. In the fall, 61% of the students scored a *one* or a *two*, while 17% scored a *three*, and 22% scored a *four*. By the spring, 26% of the students scored a *three*, and 74% scored a *four*. All students showed growth in their writing. I noticed the changes during interactive writing activities and in the children's weekly journal entries. They began to write sentences, sound out many words, use spaces between words, write upper case letters only when they are needed, and write words that had become familiar during the interactive writing process.

CHAPTER 4

Guidelines for Using Interactive Writing

During my undergraduate and graduate experiences, I did not hear much about interactive writing. Many courses discussed balanced literacy and guided reading, while only mentioning interactive writing briefly. Until completing research for this study, I did not have adequate background knowledge in this area—a common roadblock to implementing this approach. The following guidelines are needed so that teachers can understand the components behind interactive writing, maximize student learning in reading and writing, and eliminate roadblocks in the writing process.

1. Have a goal for each lesson, whether it will be done in a small group or a large group (Pinnell and Fountas, 1998).

Goals are important because they will ensure that each interactive writing activity is purposeful and that children will continue to learn new concepts and gain more literacy skills. Of course, sometimes learning opportunities come up even when they have not been planned into the activity, and these moments can be built upon as well. For instance, on one occasion in my classroom, we were doing Daily News, in which the goals had been to have children sound out all beginning sounds and complete the sentence with some form of punctuation. After writing the word *Yesterday*, one student raised his hand and said, "I see the word *day* in there!" We then had a brief discussion about being good readers, and how good readers look for smaller words within larger words to help them figure out what it says.

2. The teacher and students decide together what to write, and the writing is meaningful to both writers and readers.

Students must have a say in what is being written (Hoffman, 2003). This will help them stay actively engaged in the process, as well as make the writing meaningful when read by students in the future. An interactive writing piece should be something about which students have had some prior knowledge and interest. This will help them to more actively contribute throughout the writing process. In addition, the writing should make sense to outside readers.

3. The teacher and students are both actively involved in the writing.

This is also known as *sharing the pen*. Henry & Wiley (1999) suggested that teachers decide who will share the pen for various reasons, including: to reinforce the learning level of a specific child; to solidify new learning that is almost mastered; or to get feedback on their teaching. They contended that the teacher should observe students as they read and write and assess periodically to determine what has been learned and what learning should come next.

In my experiences with interactive writing, I have found that all students can participate in the writing at some time, regardless of their skill level. For instance, in a kindergarten classroom, most students can write the letter that begins their names. The teacher could have any of the students write that letter when it came up in the writing activity. In addition, the teacher can call on nearly any student, even in the beginning of the year, to end the sentence with a period. However, with the time for these activities going from about 15-30 minutes, not every student will get a turn every day.

4. Students complete more of the writing as the year progresses.

According to Button, Johnson, & Furgerson (1996), the teacher might write more of the text in the beginning of the year. She might also write challenging words of parts of

words and assist with letter formation. Later in the year, as students begin to hear sounds in words, write letters, use familiar chunks, and make generalizations about print, they should complete more of the writing.

5. Correct spelling and punctuation should be used.

While it is important to remain positive and encouraging throughout the writing process, it is also important that interactive writing activities done as a group are good models of how writing should look. This also applies to letter formation. Interactive writing times can be great teaching opportunities to show how letters should be written. Students enjoy using Magic Fix-it Tape when they need to adjust the spelling of a word or the formation of a letter.

The teacher should "...support what is almost known as well as promote new learning" (Hoffman 2003, p. 22). Students should be comfortable trying out new words, while the teacher should be careful to call on children for parts of the writing with which he/she knows that the child will have some success. In addition, use of this guideline should eliminate the roadblock of uncertainty about whether or not to correct student writing, and it will also help teachers incorporate interactive writing into their current teaching.

6. Demonstrate the connection between reading and writing.

"Learn that what is said can be written and what is written can be read" (Hoffman 2003, p. 23). A common interactive writing activity should have text similar to what is being read in the classroom. Students should make sure the writing says what they want it to say and to anticipate the next word to be written. The teacher should help children to

focus attention on the following: sounds, spelling, conventions of print, correct letter formation, developing phonics skills, and increasing reading fluency (Powers, 2005).

7. The writing is based on oral language between the teacher and students.

The teacher must keep the activity interactive. She can do this by repeating a sentence before writing it, by letting children say the sentence to a neighbor, the floor, or the sky, by using different voices to read the sentence, and by counting the words while saying them (Powers, 2005). According to Powers, the teacher might also use any of the following prompts (p. 40):

- *Say the word slowly. What is the first sound you hear?*

- *How many sounds do you hear?*

- *Does it look right?*

- *What word do we need to write next?*

Teachers can complete a variety of activities using these guidelines. They can retell a familiar story, write a letter, make a class book, complete survey questions, or complete one of the activities mentioned in the case study in Chapter 3. These guidelines allow for teachers to engage in instruction at the exact level of student need (Button et al., 1996). Therefore, interactive writing can be used in any primary classroom and adjusted to fit any group of students. Finally, when following the guidelines in this chapter, teachers will find that interactive writing can be integrated easily into activities already being completed in the classroom, and they will not have to spend much time learning this approach.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the use of interactive writing in

the classroom and to complete a case study of how interactive writing can be

implemented throughout the day in a kindergarten classroom. To accomplish this

purpose, this paper addressed the following questions:

1. What exactly is interactive writing?

Interactive writing is one component of a balanced literacy program. The teacher and

students *share the pen* to create a writing product collaboratively. As the year progresses

and literacy skills increase, the teacher should phase out his/her writing as much as

possible and allow students to complete more and more of the writing.

2. How does interactive writing help students learn the school district's benchmarks
   in reading and writing?

Through interactive writing activities, students are exposed to the school district's

benchmarks in both reading and language arts. Among the reading benchmarks that can

be learned are the following: conventions of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

and comprehension. Some language arts benchmarks that can be learned include:

listening, grammar usage in writing, handwriting skills, mechanics, foundations or

concepts of writing, types of writing and their use, and how to communicate.

3. What are the problems involved in using this approach?

One potential problem is that of implementing this approach with a lack of adequate

background knowledge regarding interactive writing by teachers. A second potential

problem may be that teachers get comfortable with their current ways of teaching and are

not willing to invest time in learning a different approach. They may think they are already experiencing success with their current methods. A final potential problem can be the disagreement among educators about whether or not the teacher should correct student writing. Some educators, such as Button et al. (1996), believe that it is important to demonstrate correct writing when writing in front of the class while others, including Hall (2000), do not want to discourage learning by correcting what has been written. Each of these roadblocks can be overcome if teachers keep an open mind and are willing to do what is best for their specific groups of students.

4. What guidelines should be followed when implementing interactive writing as part of a balanced literacy program?

Interactive writing can be easily incorporated into any kindergarten classroom. Some guidelines that should be followed when using interactive writing in the classroom include the following:

- Have a goal for each lesson.

- The teacher and students decide together what to write, and the writing is meaningful to both writers and readers.

- Both the teacher and the students are actively involved in the writing.

- Students complete more of the writing as the year progresses.

- Use correct spelling and punctuation.

- Show a connection between reading and writing.

- The writing is created from a conversation between the teacher and the students.

The value of following these guidelines is the structure that is given to the writing process. The outcome is that writing will be improved and students will want to write more.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. Students can learn numerous reading and language arts concepts through interactive writing activities.

2. Interactive writing can be embedded into any part of the day. Teachers may choose to do a *Morning Message*, *Daily News*, or they may choose to write stories interactively. Many large and small group writing activities can be made to be interactive. The possibilities are endless.

3. Interactive writing may look different in every classroom. Teachers should adjust the activity to fit the developmental levels of the students. What works for a teacher one year may have to be drastically adjusted by that same teacher another year, depending on student needs.

Recommendations

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

1. Interactive writing is part of a balanced literacy program. Clearly, students learn valuable reading and writing skills through this interactive process. Teachers in early childhood and primary grades should incorporate it into their daily routines as part of a balanced approach to teaching literacy.

2. Professional development opportunities should be provided to teachers who are not familiar with the interactive writing process. Training sessions need not be lengthy

to get all necessary information to teachers. However, teachers should be able to see the difference between shared and interactive writing by the end of the training.

3. Teachers should experiment with interactive writing activities to see which type of activity fits best into their particular classrooms with the specific group of students being served.

4. Further descriptive research is needed to show new ways in which interactive writing can be introduced and practiced within classrooms at each grade level.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Reading Benchmarks for Kindergarten (Ankeny Community Schools) that can be learned through interactive writing:

- Conventions of Print
    - Identifies difference between a letter and a word
    - Indicates directionality: left to right, top to bottom
    - Shows an understanding that print carries a message
    - Locates first and last word on the page
    - Verbalizes voice print match

- Phonemic Awareness
    - Phoneme Blending (e.g., (c-a-t = cat))
    - Phoneme Segmentation (e.g., (cat = c-a-t))
    - Phoneme Manipulation (recognizes rhyming words, determines if words have the same beginning sound, uses sound substitution on beginning sounds)

- Phonics
    - Identifies 26 upper case letters/26 lower case letters
    - Copies letters from a model
    - Produces letter when letter sound is heard orally
    - Recognizes consonant sounds
    - Recognizes and produces short and long vowel sounds
    - Produces and records sounds (e.g., Consonant-Vowel-Consonant words)

- Fluency
    - Expression: reads and recites short dramatic selections to improve fluency and expression in oral reading
    - Sight words: reads common sight words automatically, applies common sight words in context

- Comprehension
    - Retells beginning, middle, and end of a story
    - Identifies main character(s)
    - Recalls important details of a story
    - Summarizes problem and solution of a story
    - Connects literature to self, text, and world
    - Infers meaning from text
    - Explains the difference between fiction and nonfiction based on text characteristics and features

Language Arts Benchmarks for Kindergarten (Ankeny Community Schools) that can be learned through interactive writing:

- Listening
    - Follows the topic of conversation
    - Follows rules of conversation

- Grammar/Usage in Written Composition
    - Writes complete sentences

- Handwriting
    - Copies letters, from model
    - Writes first and last name
    - Uses spaces between words
    - Writes from left to right and top to bottom
    - Forms letters in print

- Mechanics
    - Capitalization: Capitalizes the beginning letter of a sentence and always the word "I"
    - Spelling: Matches beginning sounds
    - Punctuation: Uses correct end punctuation: period

- Writing
    - Develops sense of writing using pictures and letters
    - Writes about a picture or event using beginning and some ending sounds
    - Discusses ideas with peers

- Types of Writing
    - Creative: composes group thank-you letter with teacher assistance

- Types of Oral Communication
    - Oral interpretation: echo reads with expression
    - Small group: interacts appropriately with peers during small group work

Reading Standards and Benchmarks for Kindergarten (adapted by the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency) that can be learned through interactive writing:

Standard 1: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

- Interval Benchmarks:
    - Understands the basic concepts of print
    - Knows the basic conventions of reading (e.g., purpose, parts, elements, and procedures)

- o Retells stories or parts of stories
- o Uses self-monitoring and self-correcting strategies
- o Responds to stories in a variety of ways (oral, written, kinesthetic) to show comprehension
- o Knows the names of the letters of the alphabet and can identify them by name in any context
- o Knows the correspondences between speech sounds and the letters or letter combinations that represent these sounds (phonemic awareness)
- o Converts written word to spoken word
- o Knows at least 20 high-frequency words