

## Module 3E: Session Handouts

### *Managing Writing Development Among Teachers That Impacts Children’s Writing Development*

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# Pre- and Post-Assessment

Module 3E: *Managing Writing Development Among Teachers*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title:   Teacher                      Assistant Teacher                      Director                      Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
(circle one)

Ages you work with:   infants                      toddler: ones                      toddler: twos                      preschool                      pre-k  
(circle all that apply)   6 weeks to 12 months                      13 to 23 months                      24 to 35 months                      3 to 4 years                      4 to 5 years

**Instructions:** Think about the following statements in relation to what you understand BEFORE and AFTER the training. Please check the box that best describes how you would rate your level of knowledge and skills based on the training topic: 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

STATEMENTS	BEFORE THE TRAINING						AFTER THE TRAINING					
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The stages of writing development												
Assessing how to help students advance to each subsequent stage of writing development												
A general understanding of the writing process as a developmental process												
Appropriate strategies teachers can use to improve capacity in the teaching of writing												
An understanding of the types of classroom activities you should encourage to support improvements in both teaching writing and learning to write												

# Conventions of Writing Development Scale

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

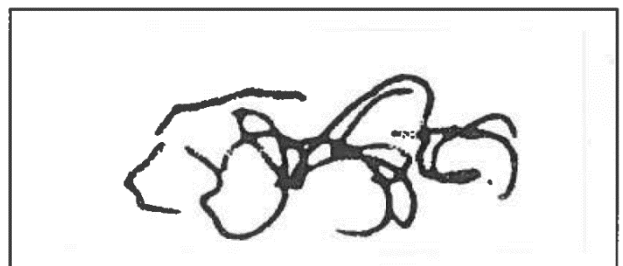
Level: \_\_\_\_\_

RECORD THE HIGHEST LEVEL AT WHICH MORE THAN HALF OF THE DESCRIPTORS APPLY TO A WRITING SAMPLE OR COLLECTION OF A CHILD'S WRITING. REFER TO THE ANCHOR PAPERS FOR EXAMPLES OF WRITING AT EACH LEVEL.

## Anchor Papers

### Level 1 – Emerging

\_\_\_\_\_ Makes uncontrolled or unidentifiable scribbling

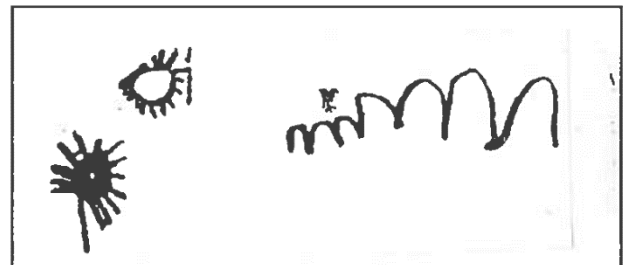


### Level 2 – Pictorial

\_\_\_\_\_ Imitates writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Draws somewhat recognizable picture

\_\_\_\_\_ Tells about picture



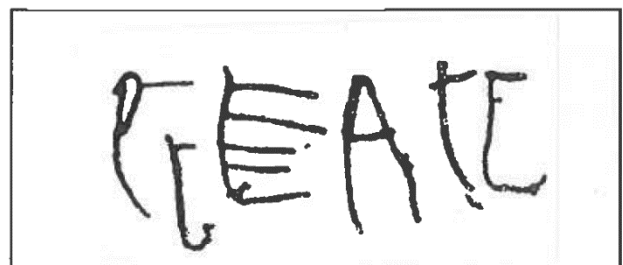
The flower is growing.

### Level 3 – Precommunicative

\_\_\_\_\_ Writes to convey a message; attempts to read it back

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses letter-like forms and/or random letter strings

\_\_\_\_\_ Prints own name or occasional known word



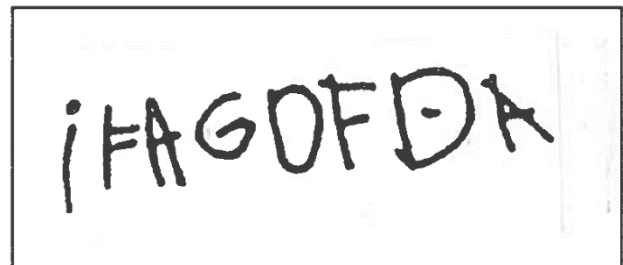
There are webs in Spidertown.

### Level 4 – Semiphonetic

\_\_\_\_\_ Correctly uses some letters to match sounds

\_\_\_\_\_ May use one beginning letter to write a word

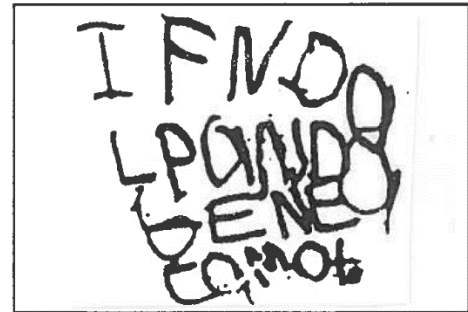
\_\_\_\_\_ Usually writes left to right (may reverse some letter)



I have a goldfish called Arielle.

## Level 5 – Phonetic

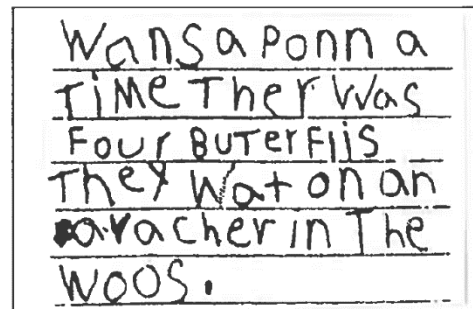
- \_\_\_\_\_ Represents beginning and ending consonant sounds
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spells some high-frequency words correct in sentences
- \_\_\_\_\_ Includes some vowels (often not correct ones)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Writes one or more sentences



I found a lamp and a genie came out.

## Level 6 – Transitional

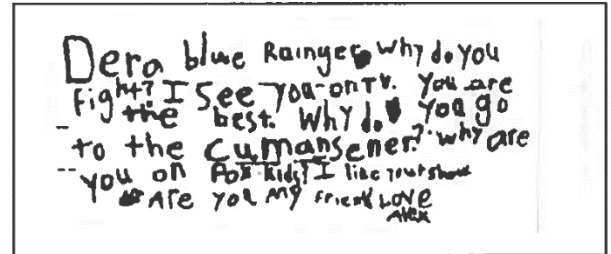
- \_\_\_\_\_ Correctly spells many high-frequency words in sentences
- \_\_\_\_\_ Uses vowels in most syllables (may not be correct ones)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Begins to use simple punctuation (period: question marks – may not be correct)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Writes more than one sentence



Once upon a time, there was (were) four butterflies. They went on an adventure in the woods.

## Level 7 – Conventional

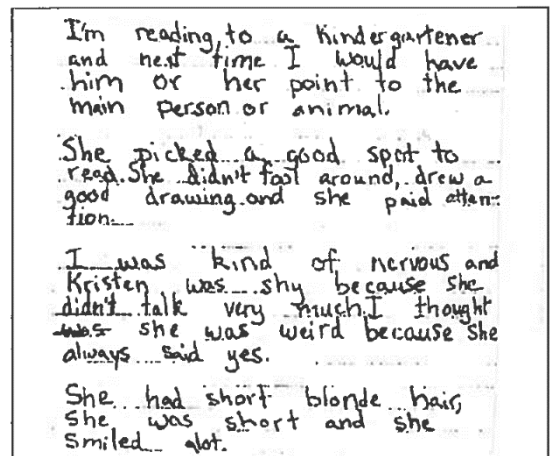
- \_\_\_\_\_ Correctly spells most high-frequency words (more than one sentence)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Uses larger correctly spelled vocabulary; may use phonic spelling for advanced words
- \_\_\_\_\_ Uses more complex and varied sentence structure; capitalizes beginning word in sentence; uses lowercase appropriately
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spaces words correctly



Dear Blue Ranger, Why do you fight? I see you on TV. You are the best. Why do you go to the command center? Why are you on Fox Kids? I like your show. Are you my friend? Love, Alex

## Level 8 – Advanced

- \_\_\_\_\_ Has accumulated a rich body of written vocabulary
- \_\_\_\_\_ Uses advanced print conventions accurately (quotation marks, commas, apostrophies)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organizes writing into appropriate paragraphs





## Examples of Effective Writing Communication Prompts

- What are you writing about?
- What is your topic?
- How will you start?
- Why do you want to write this piece?
- Who is your audience?
- Who or what is this story about?
- What happened?
- Who is in the story?
- Who are the characters?
- When did this happen?
- Where is the story happening or taking place?
- Why did this happen?
- How will this story end?
- What did they think about the book?
- What did you like about the book?
- What do you need help with today?

# Comprehensive List of Activities that can be Utilized During Stages of Writing Process

**Prewriting:** This is the first step that involves all types of preparation. Teachers explain the assignment and provide activities that allow students to access prior knowledge, build new knowledge, collect ideas, and the words, letters, symbols, and pictures that bring them to life, and help students to begin writing.

- Brainstorming
- Talking, discussion
- Reading a book aloud to a child, group, or class
- Reading a book to self
- Viewing video
- Sharing an experience
- Asking questions to build background knowledge
- Drawing
- Looking at pictures or illustrations

**Drafting:** Drafting is the second step of the writing process for young children. When drafting writing, students are composing their thoughts. Teachers guide this step by providing clear instructions. There should be a clear understanding that students can make choices about how they express themselves. Scribbling, drawing, using letters, or words or a combination of any if appropriate when students are drafting. The following activities assist with drafting.

- Using new letters or vocabulary
- Creating a beginning-middle-end
- Using a main idea
- Expanding on a prewriting, selecting the best idea(s)
- Listing ideas in a sequence
- Modeling, looking at previous examples, using book models
- Prompting
- Copying
- Using graphic organizers
- Adding description
- Free writing

**Sharing:** Sharing is the final step of the writing process for young children. The sharing step happens after every writing session. This does not mean every child shares every day, but it does mean that sharing is regular part of the writing process and the final, celebratory step in the process. Sharing writing is the teacher and student's chance to celebrate writing. These activities are what the students and teachers might do with the final product.

- Display/post
- Publish in class-made books
- Illustrate
- Sharing circle
- Reading to each other
- Reading to an adult

# Before-During-After Read Aloud Teacher Prompts

## **Before Reading Aloud – Activate Prior Knowledge**

- Look at cover with children
- Predict what they think the book is about
- Ask if they have ever seen whatever the topic of the book is
- Ask if this book reminds them of other books

## **During Reading Aloud – Focus Attention on Reading**

- Confirm or disconfirm initial predictions
- Make connections the beginning parts or events in the book
- Pause and ask what they think will happen next
- Ask about new vocabulary
- Monitor comprehension by asking:
  - What just happened?
  - How do you know that happened?
- Ask about the illustrations or pictures

## **After Reading Aloud – Reflect on What was Read**

- What happened first? What happened next? What happened last?
- What did you think about the story?
- What surprised you?
- What did you like about the story?
- Has something similar happened to you?
- Does this book remind you of other books?



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# Read Aloud Texts that Encourage Writing in Response to Reading

With participant input, generate a list and record on chart paper, on the screen, etc.

# Children's Book as Models to Teach Writing Skills

## Children's books as models to teach writing skills

Susan Anderson McElveen  
Connie Campbell Dierking

A walk through elementary classrooms today often reveals students immersed in literature. Books in baskets, books on shelves, books in centers, and books in the hands of teachers and children reflect a model literacy environment. We believe that in these classrooms lies a great tool for teaching writing in the elementary grades: children's literature.

Writers' workshop has proven to be a powerful method for the delivery of writing instruction. Authors such as Lucy Calkins have written extensively about their research using direct instruction, writing and conferences, and sharing for teaching young writers. Our school district provided us with excellent training opportunities and resource materials for teaching writing as a process through the daily workshop format.

As kindergarten and fourth-grade teachers, we were excited about the possibilities of daily writing. However, we found ourselves looking for models other than our own writing to use in the direct instruction portion of writers' workshop. The daily minilesson often requires demonstration of a target writing skill. Precise examples, in the form of good writing models, are necessary for students to learn the target skills. To support the materials we already had, we began to search for a tool that would provide a model for all writing levels.

We stumbled on the answer while conducting our joint kindergarten/fourth-grade peer writing workshop. Susan had just read aloud *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown (1949) to the students. Both classes were discussing the author's technique of focusing on an object through the use of specific details. Our two groups of students were at different ends of the writing continuum. However, the kindergarten students were enthralled with the riddle-like language of Brown's book. The fourth-grade students were eagerly counting the many citations of specific details.

The resulting cross-age quiet writing, conference, and sharing time proved that 50 heterogeneous students were willing to give details a try in their own writing. We discovered that literature was the bridge that linked the target skill with the reason for thinking, speaking, and writing like a writer. It was then that we envisioned creating a list of target skills necessary for developing effective writing and then matching children's literature books to those skills. (See Sidebar for books we use to teach specific skills.)

### Skills and seeds

The qualities of effective writing may be defined as target skills for instructional purposes. When presented in daily writers' workshop, these skills emerge, develop, and mature in our students' writing. Target skills include brainstorming, focus, elaboration, organization, and conventions. Target skill instruction may begin with brainstorming personal topics to write about and learning how to focus on a particular topic. As focus becomes evident in our students' writing, many elaboration skills emerge and develop. These include the crafting of supporting ideas; specific details; and rich language such as simile, alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia, and personification.

As students realize they have a lot to say about a topic, the need for organizing the writing becomes apparent. Organization skills include an attention-catching lead, an interesting and complete middle, and an ending that either brings the piece to a definitive close or leaves the reader wondering about multiple possibilities. Conventions allow the writer's piece to clearly express a message. Knowledge of sentence structure and variety, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar are necessary to write clearly. A master teacher tries to provide learning opportunities for all students at their individual levels. Although we may be competent in writing, published authors of children's books are often the real masters of these skills.

Our plan involved using children's literature, specifically fiction and non-fiction picture books, as a teaching tool to support our writing instruction. Prior to using picture books in our mini-

lessons, the examples we used to model writing skills were primarily our own. Realizing that we can't describe a setting as eloquently as Jane Yolen, we read *Owl Moon* (1988) and let her model for students what a difference a word or phrase makes. Early writers who are just beginning to include settings in their writing will listen to the words *white snow* and know that it must be winter. Older students will listen to "Then the owl pumped its great wings and lifted off the branch like a shadow without sound," and discover the difference a simile can make in a piece of writing. Therefore, the picture books would serve as models from which students would view published examples of the target skills. During the minilesson, we would examine the model and study how the author used a particular target skill. Then teacher and students attempt to use this skill in their own writing.

The use of picture books led us to another discovery. We cannot simply model a writing skill for students and expect them to easily create a similar example. We need a bridge to link the model to students' ability to write independently and confidently. Hence, we added demonstration to the minilesson. This involves the teacher and students together attempting to create their own example of the target skill. Once students study the author's model and participate in a group demonstration of the target skill, they are better able to try the skill in their own pieces.

We have found two other benefits to using children's literature in writers' workshop. One is that literature allows students endless opportunities to generate personal topics for writing. The other is that students are exposed to models that facilitate the development and enhancement of "writerly" thinking and language, which they then apply in their own writing.

Harwayne (1992) believed that literature helps students discover their own "seeds" or thoughts to write about. She suggested that "We've not only come to appreciate that responding to literature can help students find their own topics for writing, we've come to value literature as a major resource for generating topics" (p. 61).



We agree that students write best about what they know from their personal experiences. Topics of interest to them are found in many children's literature books. Through literature, students meet characters that remind them of themselves or of people in their daily lives. Grandparents or other special relatives are brought to mind in Karen Magnuson Beil's *Grandma According to Me* (1992). Books that model attention to setting, such as Jane Yolen's *Welcome to the Sea of Sand* (1996), may remind students of their visits to special places. As the events of a narrative unfold, children may find the character facing a similar problem or using actions they have personally experienced. Every child can relate to Judith Viorst's character Alexander as he endures his "terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad day" (1972). Such reminders become seeds for thoughts to write about. Suddenly, children realize that their own experiences are worthy of print.

Books that we have used to facilitate the discovery of seeds include *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant (1982), *Tell Me A Story, Mama* by Angela Johnson (1989), and *When I Was Little* by Jamie Lee Curtis (1993). As students listened to the words of Cynthia Rylant, they recalled personal experiences and began to generate a list of topics or seeds to write about. When Rylant described her grandmother beating a snake in the yard, a kindergarten student remembered a time when a bird entered her house through the chimney. The description of Rylant's visit to the general store helped a fourth grader recall her visit to one. After taking a bath in cold spring water, Rylant and her brother enjoyed hot cocoa. One of our students remembered the winter day she couldn't wait to drink hot cocoa and ended up burning her tongue.

Endless story topics are jotted down on paper, like seeds sprinkled in the earth. The number of ideas generated quickly becomes impressive. During future writing workshops developing stories are shared with others. The sharing of personal experiences in turn may spread even more seeds for stories.

Finally, when students are immersed in a literature-rich environment and par-

### Examples of children's literature for teaching writing skills

- Baylor, Byrd. (1986). *I'm in charge of celebrations*. New York: Scribner's.  
Using strong verbs for description.
- Beil, Karen Magnuson. (1992). *Grandma according to me*. New York: Dell.  
Describing a person.
- Blume, Judy. (1974). *The pain and the great one*. New York: Dell.  
Comparing and contrasting two people.
- Brett, Jan. (1996). *Comet's nine lives*. New York: Putnam.  
Using cause and effect and strong transitions to sequence a story.
- Brown, Margaret Wise. (1949). *The important book*. New York: HarperCollins.  
Focusing on a topic using specific details.
- Cooney, Barbara. (1982). *Miss Rumphius*. New York: Dial.  
Developing a strong character.
- Crews, Donald. (1991). *Bigmama's*. New York: Mulberry.  
Organizing with an obvious beginning, middle, and end.
- Curtis, Jamie Lee. (1993). *When I was little*. New York: HarperCollins.  
Brainstorming personal topics to write about.
- Fox, Mem. (1985). *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*. New York: Dial.  
Using effective lead sentences.
- Heller, Ruth. (1989). *Many luscious lollipops*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.  
Using a variety of verbs.
- Himmelman, John. (1997). *A slug's life*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press.  
Describing an animal.
- Johnson, Angela. (1989). *Tell me a story, mama*. New York: Orchard.  
Brainstorming personal topics.
- Krauss, Ruth. (1945). *The carrot seed*. New York: Harper & Row.  
Story in the voice of first person.
- Lindbergh, Reeve. (1996). *What is the sun?* Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.  
Using questions as leads.
- Numeroff, Laura. (1994). *If you give a mouse a cookie*. New York: Scholastic.  
Examples of cause and effect.
- Numeroff, Laura. (1996). *If you give a moose a muffin*. New York: Scholastic.  
Focusing on a topic.
- Numeroff, Laura. (1998). *If you give a pig a pancake*. New York: Scholastic.  
Using a full circle: the story beginning and ending in the same place.
- Paulsen, Gary. (1995). *The tortilla factory*. New York: Harcourt Brace.  
Explaining how to make something.
- Pratt, Kristin Joy. (1992). *A walk in the rainforest*. Nevada City, CA: Dawn.  
Using alliteration in the format of an ABC book.
- Redhead, Janet Slater. (1985). *The big block of chocolate*. New York: Scholastic.  
Focus on a topic.
- Rylant, Cynthia. (1982). *When I was young in the mountains*. New York: Dial.  
Brainstorming topics to write about.
- Showers, Paul. (1961). *The listening walk*. New York: HarperCollins.  
Integrating onomatopoeia throughout a text.
- Van Allsburg, Chris. (1979). *The garden of Abdul Gazasi*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.  
Narrative with open endings.
- Van Allsburg, Chris. (1981). *Jumanji*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.  
Narrative with open endings.
- Van Allsburg, Chris. (1985). *Polar express*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.  
Narrative with open endings.
- Viorst, Judith. (1972). *Alexander and the terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad day*. New York: Scholastic.  
Brainstorming topics to write about.
- Yolen, Jane. (1988). *Owl moon*. New York: Scholastic.  
Describing a setting using similes.
- Yolen, Jane. (1996). *Welcome to the sea of sand*. New York: Scholastic.  
Elaborating through the use of strong verbs.

ticipate in daily writing, they can develop “writerly” thinking and language. Teachers who consistently share and discuss effective writing techniques found in children’s literature facilitate opportunities for their students to think, speak, and write like writers. Through the study of published authors’ books students can view examples of each target skill. Appropriate vocabulary terms, such as *focus* or *elaboration*, are introduced in the minilesson and referred to throughout conferences and sharing time.

It becomes commonplace to overhear kindergarten students discussing details or fourth graders discussing types of transition words. Writing vocabulary emerges in layers as we continue to use previously introduced terms while adding new ones. As we confer with students and they confer with one another, the application of writing skills takes on a deeper meaning.

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### Sharing and rehearsing

While students learn the language and how it reflects the thought processes necessary to written expression, they also begin to analyze their own thinking. They begin to share ideas for leads, opinions on word choice, and thoughts about organization as they come to value the time spent thinking before writing. When our students demonstrate this we tell them they are rehearsing for writing, just as an actor rehearses for a play. Calkins (1994) believed that when children view themselves as writers they write often and rehearse often what they plan to write about next.

We observe the growth of writers in our classrooms every day. As our students develop a love for language and confidence as writers, they notice specific words or spellings in literature and collect new words for their pieces. The collection grows as they listen to one another. They begin to understand an author’s style and bring in other books by the same author to share.

One such example is our collection of Chris Van Allsburg picture books. In our fourth-grade class we studied the open endings in *Polar Express* (1985), *The Garden of Abdul Gazasi* (1979), and *Jumanji* (1981). Students began looking for more titles, and soon our collection grew to 15 books. By the fourth book,

the students knew the elements of Chris Van Allsburg’s style. They became experts at comparing and contrasting one book or one character to another.

Laura Numeroff provides explicit examples of circular stories in her books *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (1994), *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (1996), and *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* (1998). In each book the reader is introduced to a character who receives something. The character moves through a series of events that concludes with the character receiving the same object again. Through such a study of literature, students will attempt to mimic an author in their pieces as they search for their own voice and style.

As we continue to explore children’s literature as a tool for writing instruction we keep notes of which books model particular target writing skills. An easy way to do this is by using index cards and storing them in a box. Favorite pieces of literature may be used over and over by simply changing the focus of the target skill. For example, *Bigmama’s* by Donald Crews (1991) is an explicit model for organization and also demonstrates the effective use of transitions and prepositions.

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### A natural connection

The use of literature has proven to be an effective way to support writing instruction in the primary and intermediate grades. The masters of children’s literature have given us their books not only to read and enjoy as readers, but to dissect and learn from as writers. They have provided us with authentic, language-rich examples to model the target skills we hope our students will master. Models of quality literature motivate students to explore personal topics of interest in their own writing. Students are able to observe good writing, which enhances their ability to recognize clear, focused, elaborated text in other literature as well as in their own writing.

We need to take advantage of the books filling our library shelves. The connection between these texts and what students can write is a natural one. We have successfully implemented this resource to develop this natural connection.

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### References

- Calkins, L.M. (1994). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Harwayne, S. (1992). *Lasting impressions*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

# Tips for Teachers of Young Children to Promote Writing as a Frequent Activity in Early Childhood Classrooms

**Tip 1:** Name writing proficiency provides a foundation for other literacy knowledge and skills – it is associated with alphabet knowledge, letter writing, print concepts, and spelling.

- Develop a sign-in or sign-out routine that allows children to write, or attempt to write, their names each day. In some classrooms, or for some children, the routine may begin with writing the first letter instead of the whole name or with scribbling letter-like symbols.
- Model writing your name and promote name-writing activities in several centers throughout the day, such as having children sign their name as they write a prescription or when they complete a painting.

**Tip 2:** Explicitly model writing by showing the writing process to children and thinking aloud while writing. Instead of writing the question of the day or the morning message before the children arrive, write it in front of them.

**Tip 3:** Label specific items in the room and draw children’s attention to the written words. Write out functional phrases on signs related to routines, such as “take three crackers” or “wash hands before eating,” then read and display the signs.