

The Importance of Daily Writing Opportunities for the Kindergarten Student

Kindergarten students require many opportunities to write each day in their classrooms if they are going to develop a love for writing. What is the secret that will motivate young students to write? What should writing instruction look like in a kindergarten classroom? First, let me state that it will not happen overnight and worksheets will not serve as motivators for this instruction. According to Coker (2014), "Writing may be one of the most difficult academic tasks for students" ("Chapter 2," para. 1). Coker also states (2014), "... including effective writing instruction when students begin preschool and kindergarten can strengthen students' writing achievement" ("Chapter 2," para. 1). For teachers as well as parents, the challenge to help our kindergarten children become writers can seem daunting. Some questions I have heard in the past include: My child doesn't know his letters yet, so how can he write a story? My student doesn't know how to write words independently, so what can I do to help him to develop as a writer? When I visit a classroom why are they playing at centers rather than receiving direct writing instruction? After 24 years of working with young students, I have found that there are at least three important factors involved in kindergarten writing instruction that must be addressed in order for our students to become meaningful early writers: providing daily opportunities to write, thoughtful and meaningful instruction, and experiences with a variety of literature.

Let me start out by addressing the importance of daily writing. One area of this practice can be through play. For a kindergarten student, it is vital to include play as these experiences allow students to experiment with familiar ways we use writing to

communicate. Imagine a kindergarten classroom where students are playing in the housekeeping center, the block center, dramatic play center, or the art center. How can a kindergarten teacher integrate play with writing practice? In the professional article, *How Do I Write...?*, Cabell, Tortorelli, and Gerde (2013) state, "Providing writing materials in all centers gives children the chance to experiment with writing at their own level in playful, authentic contexts." (p.655). For example, students could plan a menu in the kitchen center, or pretend to be an author writing a new book about animals, or read a bedtime story to the baby doll that the student created himself. These opportunities around play could certainly be tailored to meet Common Core standards as well as provide students with experiences that show how we communicate through writing in our world.

Another area that should be embraced when developing our kindergarten writers, would be thoughtful and meaningful instruction. Specifically, the topic of invented spelling comes to mind. It seems that sometimes this step may be overlooked as a necessary stage of writing development. Teachers should model ways to incorporate the use of invented spelling into their daily instruction. Teachers should also explain to parents that as students experiment with the relationship between letters and letter sounds, they are learning to invent ways that make sense to them when spelling words. According to Coker (2014), "Practice with invented spelling has been shown to promote spelling development because it allows children to test and refine their theories of how the writing system represents sounds" ("Chapter 2," para. 35). It is important to model writing to students and during this time teachers can model how to sound out words

when spelling them and incorporate invented spelling. A great time to model such writing strategies would be during Morning Message and Sharing the Pen.

Finally, if we are to help our kindergarten students develop a love for writing, they must be surrounded by good books. These opportunities allow children to hear the art of words as well as increase their vocabulary. Coker (2014) states, “The use of trade books in the preschool and kindergarten classroom can also provide students with models of sophisticated grammatical constructions” (“Chapter 2,” para. 41).

A great teaching tool to integrate reading with writing would be during our read aloud times. This time can offer students the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of genres and writing styles.

As parents, teachers, and administrators, we must realize the importance of purposeful writing instruction including play, meaningful instruction, and experiences with literature in our kindergarten curriculum. According to Cabell, Tortorelli, and Gerde (2013), “Early writing is one of the best predictors of children’s later reading success” (p. 651). If we are to help our students become good readers and writers, it must start at the earliest stage of their academic careers. We must foster an environment that encourages a love of writing rather than one of boredom and distaste. We must help our students realize the connections between writing and our everyday lives and how we share information and communicate with one another through an enriched writing classroom. Writing should occur daily in the kindergarten classroom and should be modeled for the students so that they understand how to utilize writing effectively according to their developmental level.

References

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