

# Contents

Preface . . . . .	xi
<b>Chapter 1 The Literacy-Rich Classroom . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
Literacy and the Young Child . . . . .	2
Literacy and the Early Childhood Teacher . . . . .	7
Literacy and the Early Childhood Classroom . . . . .	9
Goals for Reading and Writing . . . . .	11
<b>Chapter 2 Big Books . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>
Teachers' Questions . . . . .	13
Big-Book Activities . . . . .	19
2.1 Hello, Good-Bye . . . . .	20
2.2 Kitten on the Wall . . . . .	22
2.3 Building Blocks . . . . .	24
2.4 Class Baby Book . . . . .	26
2.5 The Arlitt Mail Book . . . . .	28
2.6 Hush Little Baby . . . . .	30
2.7 What Is It? . . . . .	32
2.8 A-Hunting We Will Go . . . . .	34
2.9 Silly Friends . . . . .	36
2.10 Old MacDonald . . . . .	38
2.11 Rain, Rain, Go Away . . . . .	40
<b>Chapter 3 Interactive Charts . . . . .</b>	<b>43</b>
Teachers' Questions . . . . .	44
Interactive-Chart Activities . . . . .	55
3.1 Look Who's Here . . . . .	56
3.2 The Train . . . . .	58
3.3 Snowflakes Are Swirling . . . . .	60
3.4 The Mitten . . . . .	62
3.5 I Went Camping . . . . .	64
3.6 Chicka Chicka Boom Boom . . . . .	66
3.7 Bingo Revisited . . . . .	68
3.8 Scarf Dancing . . . . .	70

3.9	Pizza Is Yummy . . . . .	72
3.10	Dirty Clothes. . . . .	74
3.11	Hurry Mama. . . . .	76

## Chapter 4 Writing Explorations . . . . . 79

Teachers' Questions . . . . .	79
Writing Activities . . . . .	87
4.1 Pocket Stories . . . . .	88
4.2 Story Starters . . . . .	90
4.3 Pumpkin Books . . . . .	92
4.4 Helping Baby ( <i>Song Variation</i> ) . . . . .	94
4.5 Bought Me a Cat ( <i>Song Variation</i> ) . . . . .	96
4.6 Surprise Box. . . . .	98
4.7 Science Observations . . . . .	100
4.8 Word Processing . . . . .	102
4.9 Quilt Stories . . . . .	104
4.10 Class Post Office . . . . .	106
4.11 Pumpkin Patch ( <i>Field Trip Documentation</i> ). . . . .	108
4.12 All About Us ( <i>Class Book</i> ) . . . . .	110
4.13 "Family Day" Cards . . . . .	112
4.14 Cloud Stories ( <i>Art Elaborations</i> ). . . . .	114
4.15 Journals. . . . .	116
4.16 Take-Home Bear . . . . .	118
4.17 Address Books . . . . .	120
4.18 Writing Caddies . . . . .	122
4.19 Scrapbooks. . . . .	124
4.20 Class Movie ( <i>Project Documentation</i> ) . . . . .	126

## Chapter 5 Writing Centers . . . . . 129

Teachers' Questions . . . . .	130
Writing Center Activities. . . . .	139
5.1 Basic Writing Center ( <i>Starting the Year</i> ) . . . . .	140
5.2 Apple Writing Center ( <i>Early Autumn</i> ). . . . .	142
5.3 Autumn Changes ( <i>Late Autumn</i> ) . . . . .	144
5.4 Colorful Mice Writing Center . . . . .	146
5.5 Alphabet Writing Center . . . . .	148
5.6 Winter Writing Center . . . . .	150
5.7 Bakery Writing Center . . . . .	152
5.8 Pizza Writing Center . . . . .	154
5.9 Construction Zone Writing Center . . . . .	156
5.10 Spring Writing Center . . . . .	158
5.11 Grocery Store Writing Center . . . . .	160
5.12 Baby Writing Center . . . . .	162
5.13 Summer Writing Center . . . . .	164
5.14 Rhyming Writing Center. . . . .	166

<b>Chapter 6 Literacy-Based Games and Manipulative Materials . . . . .</b>	<b>169</b>
Teachers' Questions . . . . .	169
Literacy-Based Games and Manipulative-Material Activities . . . . .	175
6.1 Word Banks ( <i>Word Game</i> ) . . . . .	176
6.2 Lucky Stars ( <i>Word Bank Game</i> ) . . . . .	178
6.3 Letter Memory ( <i>Letter or Word Game</i> ) . . . . .	180
6.4 My Words ( <i>Word Bank Path Game</i> ) . . . . .	182
6.5 Grab Bag ( <i>Word Game</i> ) . . . . .	184
6.6 Magnetic Words ( <i>Word Game</i> ) . . . . .	186
6.7 Add an E ( <i>Phonics Game</i> ) . . . . .	188
6.8 Alphabet Bingo ( <i>Letter Game</i> ) . . . . .	190
6.9 Letter Tray ( <i>Literacy Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	192
6.10 Letter-Bead Twist ( <i>Literacy Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	194
6.11 Letter Blocks ( <i>Literacy Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	196
6.12 Foam Letters ( <i>Sensory Table Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	198
6.13 Sponge Letters ( <i>Art Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	200
6.14 Letter Molds ( <i>Art Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	202
6.15 Letter Stencils ( <i>Writing Area Manipulative</i> ) . . . . .	204
6.16 Clouds ( <i>Story Extension</i> ) . . . . .	206
6.17 Fish Hunt ( <i>Story Extension</i> ) . . . . .	208
6.18 Baby Owls ( <i>Story Extension</i> ) . . . . .	210
6.19 The Mitten ( <i>Story Extension</i> ) . . . . .	212
<b>Chapter 7 Environmental Print . . . . .</b>	<b>215</b>
Teachers' Questions . . . . .	216
Environmental-Print Activities . . . . .	221
7.1 Classroom Routines ( <i>Name Cards</i> ) . . . . .	222
7.2 Clouds ( <i>Attendance Chart</i> ) . . . . .	224
7.3 Leaf Attendance Chart and Gross-Motor-Room Chart . . . . .	226
7.4 Job Chart . . . . .	228
7.5 Open or Closed? ( <i>Doctor's Office Sign</i> ) . . . . .	230
7.6 Woodworking Guidelines ( <i>Relevant Print</i> ) . . . . .	232
7.7 Organizing an Art Area ( <i>Signs and Labels</i> ) . . . . .	234
7.8 Block Area Extension ( <i>Relevant Print</i> ) . . . . .	236
7.9 Pizza Menu ( <i>Dramatic Play Area</i> ) . . . . .	238
7.10 Making Applesauce ( <i>Recipe Chart</i> ) . . . . .	240
7.11 Fruit Salad ( <i>Individual Recipe Book</i> ) . . . . .	242
7.12 Class Phone Book ( <i>Dramatic Play Area</i> ) . . . . .	244
7.13 Food Containers ( <i>Dramatic Play Area</i> ) . . . . .	246
7.14 Copy the Label ( <i>Special Activity</i> ) . . . . .	248
7.15 Waiting List ( <i>Beginning the Year</i> ) . . . . .	250
7.16 Daily Message Board . . . . .	252
7.17 Class Message Board . . . . .	254

<b>Chapter 8 Literacy Suitcases</b> . . . . .	257
Teachers' Questions . . . . .	257
Literacy-Suitcase Activities . . . . .	263
8.1 The Basic Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	264
8.2 Apple Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	266
8.3 Autumn Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	268
8.4 <i>The Mitten</i> Literacy Suitcase ( <i>Winter</i> ) . . . . .	270
8.5 Post-Office Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	272
8.6 Sleepy-Animals Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	274
8.7 "I Love You" Literacy Suitcase ( <i>Friendship</i> ) . . . . .	276
8.8 Cloud Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	278
8.9 Farm Literacy Suitcase . . . . .	280
<b>Appendixes</b> . . . . .	283
Appendix A Selected Predictable Books . . . . .	283
Appendix B Alphabet Model . . . . .	285
Appendix C Reading Assessment Terms and Forms. . . . .	287
Appendix D Writing Assessment Terms and Forms . . . . .	291
Appendix E Literacy Suitcase—Sample Letter to Parent . . . . .	295



## Writing Explorations

*Nilani pretended to bake a cake in the dramatic play area. She shook an empty cake box over a bowl, stirred the bowl with a wooden spoon, and placed the bowl in the oven. Then she decided she wanted to keep the recipe. With paper and pencil from a nearby writing box, Nilani carefully began to copy the ingredients from the back of the cake box. A short while later, she showed her writing to the teacher. "Look," Nilani said. "This is how you make a cake."*



*Sijia was busy typing on the classroom computer, which was part of the writing center. She took class name cards, one at a time, from a basket and typed the words on the computer. Sijia carefully watched as the letters appeared in large type on the screen. Each time she completed a name, Sijia pressed the enter key. Soon she had a list of all the names in the class. Sijia's teacher then helped her print the list on the printer.*



Children are excited about writing, especially when it serves a purpose, such as advancing their play or preserving important information. Teachers can capitalize on this natural interest in writing by designing specific materials to incorporate into play activities or planning activities to highlight the writing process.

## Teachers' Questions

How does writing emerge in young children?

*Writing emerges in young children in predictable stages. During the initial **scribbling** stage, children make global approximations of writing. Next, in the **linear/repetitive** drawing stage, they refine their scribbles to appear more like personal cursive. Writing at this level often looks like scallops or waves. This stage is followed by closer approximations of letters in the **letterlike forms** stage.*

Next, during the stage of **letters and early word–symbol relationships**, children actually print letters but may use a single letter to represent an entire word. Phonetic awareness becomes apparent in the following stage, **invented spelling**, as children begin to write the sounds they hear. Finally, children progress to the stage of **standard spelling**.<sup>1</sup> See chapter 1 for a more complete description of the stages, and examples.

### At what age do children become interested in writing?

*Children often become interested in writing early in their pre-school years, once they develop sufficient coordination to control a writing implement. This does not mean that they immediately begin to produce recognizable print. Writing emerges gradually as children experiment with writing materials and become more aware of written language.*

### How do young children usually hold the pencil?

*Children often progress through a series of pencil grasps as they progress in their ability to write. Initially, many young children wrap all four fingers around the pencil in a **fist grip**. Some children wrap all four fingers around the pencil but also rotate the hand so that the back of the hand faces the body in an **overhand grip**. Later many children develop a **three-finger grip**, with two fingers on top of the pencil and the thumb opposite. A **tripod grip**, the most mature grasp, is the standard writing position characterized by one finger on top of the pencil, one finger below the pencil, and the thumb opposite. Many older preschool children hold the pencil with a tripod grasp; however, some children continue to hold the pencil near the eraser end for a while, which often contributes to faint, wobbly handwriting. Three-finger grips, or even fist grips, are still used by some kindergarten children, particularly if they have not had much experience with writing.*

### Should the teacher correct a child's pencil grasp?

*The teacher should not correct a child's pencil grasp, because it is not a mistake to hold the pencil in a less mature grasp. Rather, it shows the child's current level of development. Children usually hold the pencil in the manner that is most comfortable for them. Gradually, as they develop more hand and finger strength and better coordination, they change grips. When teachers insist that children hold the pencil in a particular way, they may inhibit and discourage children from trying to write. If a teacher senses that a child is becoming frustrated with writing due to a particular way of holding the pencil, then the teacher may choose to model an*

alternative grip. This should be offered as a suggestion rather than an ultimatum.

## What concepts do children construct through early writing experiences?

*Early writing experiences help children construct concepts related to the meaning of print and the mechanics of written communication.* Before children can use print as a symbol system to communicate their thoughts, they must understand that print has a specific meaning. Writing activities such as story dictations (activity 4.3), creating class books (activity 4.12), and pocket stories (activity 4.1) help children construct this fundamental concept. Children also learn specific mechanics of writing, such as left-to-right and top-to-bottom text progression and the need for a particular sequence of letters in order to form specific words. In addition, children gradually learn the function of capital letters and certain punctuation marks.

## How can teachers encourage the emergence of writing in young children?

*Teachers can facilitate children's transition into writing by accepting all writing attempts as legitimate, helping children see the component parts of letters or words, and incorporating writing into daily routines.* As children begin to try to express themselves through writing, it is crucial that adults acknowledge their attempts as communicative, just as they respond to babies' babbling as a real form of communication. This encourages children to continue experimenting with the writing process. The teacher might acknowledge an early writing attempt by saying, "I see a lot of writing underneath your picture." If the teacher cannot decipher the child's writing, he might say, "Tell me what you were thinking about when you wrote this." Understanding the normal stages of writing helps teachers and parents appreciate the written forms that children demonstrate.

Teachers can help children who are developmentally ready progress to more advanced stages of writing by isolating parts of letters or words. However, it is crucial to accurately judge the child's developmental readiness. Children need many opportunities to experiment with writing materials before they acquire the coordination to produce particular strokes. Trying to rush them through the process may cause unnecessary frustration and discourage children from writing. Many children advance through the writing stages without any outside assistance; however, some children seem to benefit from the teacher scaffolding their

learning by breaking down the letters or words as they move from one stage to the next. For example, if a child has become proficient at producing linear, repetitive drawing, isolating the circular and straight parts of a letter may be a catalyst for helping them produce more letterlike forms. For children who are in the letterlike form stage, describing or modeling how a particular letter is formed may help them create closer approximations. Teacher intervention should be to encourage rather than evaluate, with the goal always to support the writing process rather than dampen enthusiasm. Therefore, teachers may choose to offer assistance primarily when they notice that a child is becoming frustrated.

Many daily occurrences provide reasons for children to write if teachers incorporate them as classroom expectations. For example, many teachers use waiting lists to help children wait for turns at popular activities. Rather than writing the children's names for them, teachers can give that responsibility to the children. This creates a real motivation to write. Of course, teachers must accept writing at any stage as legitimate and not critique children's attempts, or they may quickly become discouraged. Other natural situations that may motivate children to write are putting names on artwork, writing messages about seat placement at lunch, and creating save signs for block structures. Children can be given responsibility for all of these tasks. Baskets of name cards strategically placed around the classroom may help children who need a model for writing their names. Incorporating writing throughout the classroom is also discussed in chapter 7.

### **What materials do young children need for writing activities?**

*Children need a variety of types of writing tools and both lined and unlined paper.* On the one hand, younger children often feel more comfortable writing with a marker than a pencil since they may not yet have enough finger strength to create a dark mark with a pencil. On the other hand, children see adults writing with pencils, so they are eager to try them. The more experience children have with pencils and other writing devices, the stronger their fingers become. Adults often assume that "fat" pencils are easier for children to hold. Actually, when given a choice, children often prefer regular-width pencils to the wider ones.

Children who are just transitioning into writing may be inhibited by lined paper. Since children's first attempts at creating letterlike forms are usually large and shaky and placed randomly on the page, it is unrealistic for children to try to fit them between the lines. Later, when children begin to refine their

writing and gain better control, lined paper provides a useful guide for their writing.

### **What types of writing activities are developmentally appropriate?**

*Dictation, extensions of predictable text, story starters, and documentation of specific activities or projects encourage children to experiment with writing.* Children must first construct concepts about written language before they can begin to write. Story dictation helps them perceive the relationship between written and spoken language and can serve as a bridge to actual writing (activity 4.3).

Just as predictable text supports the emergence of reading, it can also stimulate children's writing. Creating greeting cards based on a repeating text (activity 4.13) or altering the words to popular songs (activity 4.4) are examples of writing activities based on a predictable format.

Story starters are a useful tool in motivating children to write. An image of a favorite story character (activity 4.2) or an open-ended phrase (activity 4.13) are two types of story starters teachers can use as writing catalysts.

Documentation of activities or group projects provides a natural forum for writing. Since children often tell stories as they create with art materials, teachers can capitalize on the natural link between art and language by combining art and writing activities (activities 4.9 and 4.14). Long-range group projects require documentation in order to preserve the thinking process that propels the project. Children can help with the documentation (activities 4.7 and 4.20). They may also be interested in recording their experiences on field trips (activity 4.11).

### **What should teachers consider when taking dictation?**

*Teachers should write exactly what children say, regardless of possible grammatical errors, and create clear print models.* While it is tempting to correct any language mistakes children may make, this causes confusion when they attempt to read what has been written. As they look at the corrected words, they mentally repeat what they originally said but see something different on the paper. Children gradually correct their grammatical errors as their language develops. While teachers will certainly want to model correct grammar when they talk to children, the goal for dictation is not to set spoken language models but to help children construct an accurate relationship between spoken and written language.

Seeing their words written down encourages children to begin writing themselves.

Teachers should print clearly when they take dictation from children. Since young children are just beginning to learn how written language looks, they cannot distinguish letters written in various styles. Therefore, the teacher's printing should be in a standard form that closely resembles the print children see when they look at books. Teachers should write in lowercase letters, use correct capitalization and punctuation, and allow an adequate space between words so that children can distinguish where one word stops and another word starts.

### **What should teachers do if a child avoids writing?**

*Teachers should continue to provide encouragement and include opportunities for writing in areas of the classroom where the child feels comfortable.* Sometimes children avoid writing because they feel that their writing is not good enough. They may have been teased by an older sibling or criticized by an adult. As children observe teachers accepting and encouraging writing on all levels, they may feel confident enough to try writing themselves. When writing materials are available throughout the classroom, children may incorporate them into their play and feel less threatened about perceived writing inadequacies. Teachers often observe that some children produce far more writing in the dramatic play area than in the writing center.

### **How can teachers incorporate writing throughout the curriculum?**

*Teachers can include writing materials as functional parts of area designs throughout the classroom.* For example, if the dramatic play area is transformed into a dance studio, writing tickets could be a logical outgrowth of the play in that area. An observation notebook might be included in the science area, since careful observation is part of the scientific process. Children may wish to write words to fit on a song chart in the music area, while in the art area they may record stories or descriptions for their artwork. One group of children designed an amusement park in the block area of their classroom, complete with signs labeling the various rides. If teachers can envision possible writing activities as they design areas of the classroom, then children are more likely to incorporate writing into their play.

## How can teachers incorporate journal writing into early childhood classrooms?

*Teachers may include journal writing as a regular part of the class schedule or make journal writing available whenever children are interested.* Journal writing is scheduled as a regular part of the day in many kindergartens and first-grade classrooms. While children may be encouraged to write about whatever they wish, they may all write at a particular time of the day. This allows the teacher to assist a number of children during journal time and ensures that all children spend some time writing each day.

Preschool teachers may prefer to make journals available as a choice activity rather than as a structured part of the day. Each child in the class can have a journal folder that they add to whenever they are interested. Teachers can encourage journal writing by providing paper in unusual shapes, word cards that are of interest to the children to use as models, and a variety of writing implements. (See activity 4.15 for journal ideas.) With children's permission, teachers may choose to read children's journal entries to the class during group time.

## How can teachers encourage phonetic awareness through writing activities?

*Teachers can help children hear the sounds of words they are attempting to write and draw their attention to sound-letter relationships.* Children are interested in phonics when it is an outgrowth of the writing process. Teachers can help children distinguish various sounds by emphasizing them as they repeat a particular word that a child is writing. Since initial consonants are the first sounds that children learn to distinguish, emphasizing the beginning sounds of words is a good starting point. Later, teachers can focus on ending sounds, interior consonants, and vowel sounds. Teachers should scaffold for children who are using phonetic spelling. For example, if the child can already distinguish the initial sound, then the teacher can ask what other sounds the child hears, and emphasize them.

## How can teachers assess children's development of writing skills?

*Teachers can record anecdotal notes that describe each child's writing progress and save examples throughout the year.* Some teachers maintain a folder for each child that includes anecdotal records and also samples of the child's work. Other teachers keep a notebook with pocket dividers to section off a space for each

child. Teachers should be careful to record details about the child's writing, including which hand was used, how the child held the writing implement, what stage of writing appeared, how long the child engaged in writing, and where in the classroom the activity took place. Such detailed notes help teachers monitor children's writing progress and also plan additional activities that build on the interest of the children. Writing strategies and outcomes can be quickly recorded on the writing assessment form in appendix D.

### **How can teachers explain emergent writing to parents?**

*Teachers can include information about writing stages in newsletters and discuss the writing process during open houses or parent meetings.* Parents can support children's emergent writing when they understand the normal progression of children's development in writing. Seeing specific examples of the various stages is especially helpful. Parents come to view their children's writing attempts as important steps in a long-term process and become excited when they see new stages emerge.

### **How can teachers use writing activities to bridge home and school?**

*Teachers can design writing activities and materials to send home and display project documentation for parents to see.* A classroom prop such as a small teddy bear can rotate among homes and serve as a writing catalyst. Parents can help their children document what they did with the bear, and children can share the written account when they return to school with the bear (activity 4.16). A literacy suitcase, which contains a variety of writing materials, can also circulate among homes. Literacy suitcases are discussed in chapter 8.

Parents are naturally interested in class projects and events. Documentation boards, which may also include samples of children's writing, keep parents informed about important learning experiences at school.

1. Marjorie V. Fields, "Talking and Writing: Explaining the Whole Language Approach to Parents." *The Reading Teacher*, vol. 41, no. 9 (May 1988): 898-903.

# 4.1 Pocket Stories



## Description

Pocket stories allow children to see their words in print and also to match the words. For this activity, the bottom of a piece of paper is folded up about two inches and stapled to form a pocket. Each child draws a picture and then dictates a phrase or sentence about the drawing, which the teacher prints on the pocket. The teacher then prints duplicate words on strips of paper, which the child can match to the words in the sentence and store inside the pocket. Children can also copy the words or add their own writing to the pocket.

## Child's Level

This activity is appropriate for preschool, kindergarten, and some first-grade children.

## Materials

- ◆ manila paper, 9 by 12 inches, with the bottom edge folded up and stapled to form a pocket
- ◆ strips of paper, to print duplicate words that can be cut apart and matched to the words on the pocket
- ◆ markers

## What to Look For

Children will eagerly match the individual words to the words in the sentence on their pocket.

Some children will copy the individual words or the entire sentence.

Some children will create their own pocket stories with art or writing materials.

## *Helpful Hint*

Fold up at least two inches for the pocket, or the word cards will fall out easily.

Children will look at each other's pocket stories.  
Some children will notice punctuation and word placement.

### **Modification**

Teachers of older or more experienced children may wish to write the original sentence on the pocket themselves in order to create a clear model, but have the children print the duplicate words to go into the pocket.

### **Comments & Questions to Extend Thinking**

Tell me about your picture. I'll write your words on this pocket.  
Can you find the word on your pocket that matches this word?  
Look at the word "I." It's a letter and a word.

### **Comments & Questions to Encourage Phonetic Awareness**

Listen to the sound this word starts with. What letter do you think I need to write?  
What sounds do you hear in this word?  
Can you find another word in your sentence that starts with the same sound as this word? (Clearly pronounce the initial consonant.)

### **Integrated Curriculum Activities**

Put paper folded into pockets in the art or writing areas. Children may wish to continue creating pocket stories.  
Share the pocket stories at group time. Children are often interested in hearing what their friends have written.  
Create a group pocket story. Children can collaborate on a group mural and dictate a short story about it. The teacher can fold up a pocket at the bottom and create word cards for matching.