

# **Developmental Writing**

**What Does It Look Like, and  
How Can It Be Supported In  
The Preschool Years?**

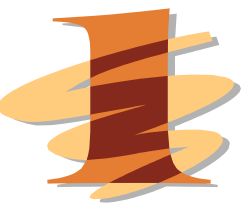
**“Becoming literate in the modern world is indeed an increasingly complex task. Reading and writing abilities don’t just happen. They are acquired, nurtured and refined through the acts of those who provide appropriate instructional contexts and support.”**

**Strickland, D.S.**

**Rutgers - The State University of New Jersey**

# Developmental Stages of Writing





## Awareness, Exploration or Role Play Writing

- Drawing
- Scribbling



## Emergent or Experimental Writing

- Early Emergent
- Emergent/Experimental



## Transitional or Early Writing

- Early Transitional
- Transitional/Early Writing



## Conventional Writing



## Proficient Writing



# **Awareness, Exploration, or Role Play Writing**

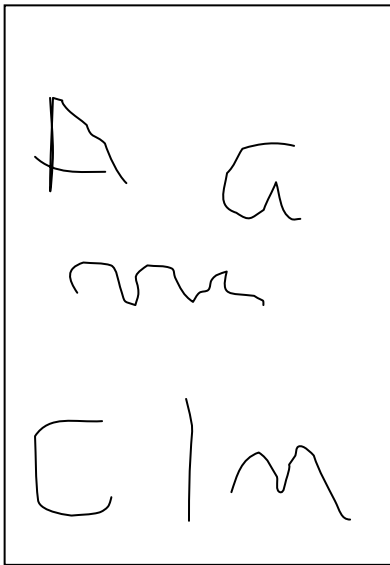
**Children are beginning to come to terms with a new aspect of language, that of written symbols. They experiment with marks on paper with the intention of communicating a message or emulating adult writing.**

# Stage 1 - DRAWING

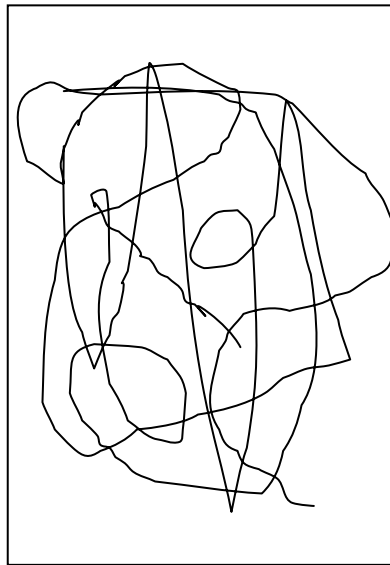


- Children use drawing to stand for writing.
- Children may believe that drawings have “a message”.
- Children “read” their drawings as if there were writing on them.

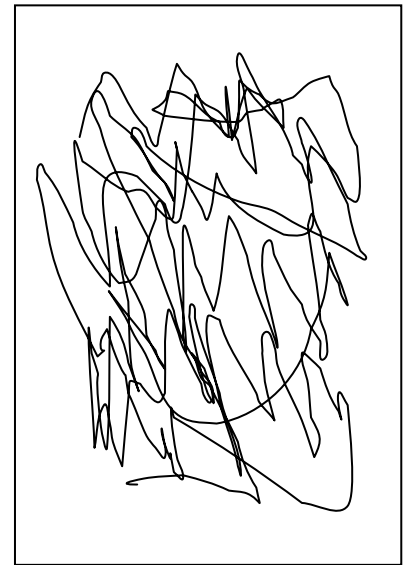
# Is it a picture, or is it writing?



**A**



**B**



**C**

**At the beginning of the first stage of writing we see no difference between the marks a child uses to draw pictures and those that are intended to “say something”.**

**We know the child’s intention only by listening or by watching the context in which the child makes the marks.**

- A – Phone message**
- B – Label on a block building**
- C – Signature**

**At stage #1 children begin to make a very important distinction:**

**✓ Marks used for writing look different from those used for drawing pictures.**

**✓ Writing marks are “lined up”, picture marks are not.**



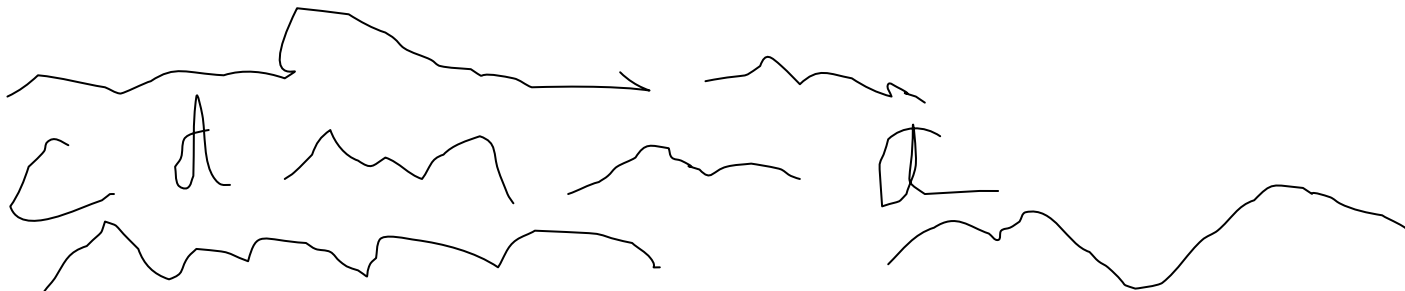
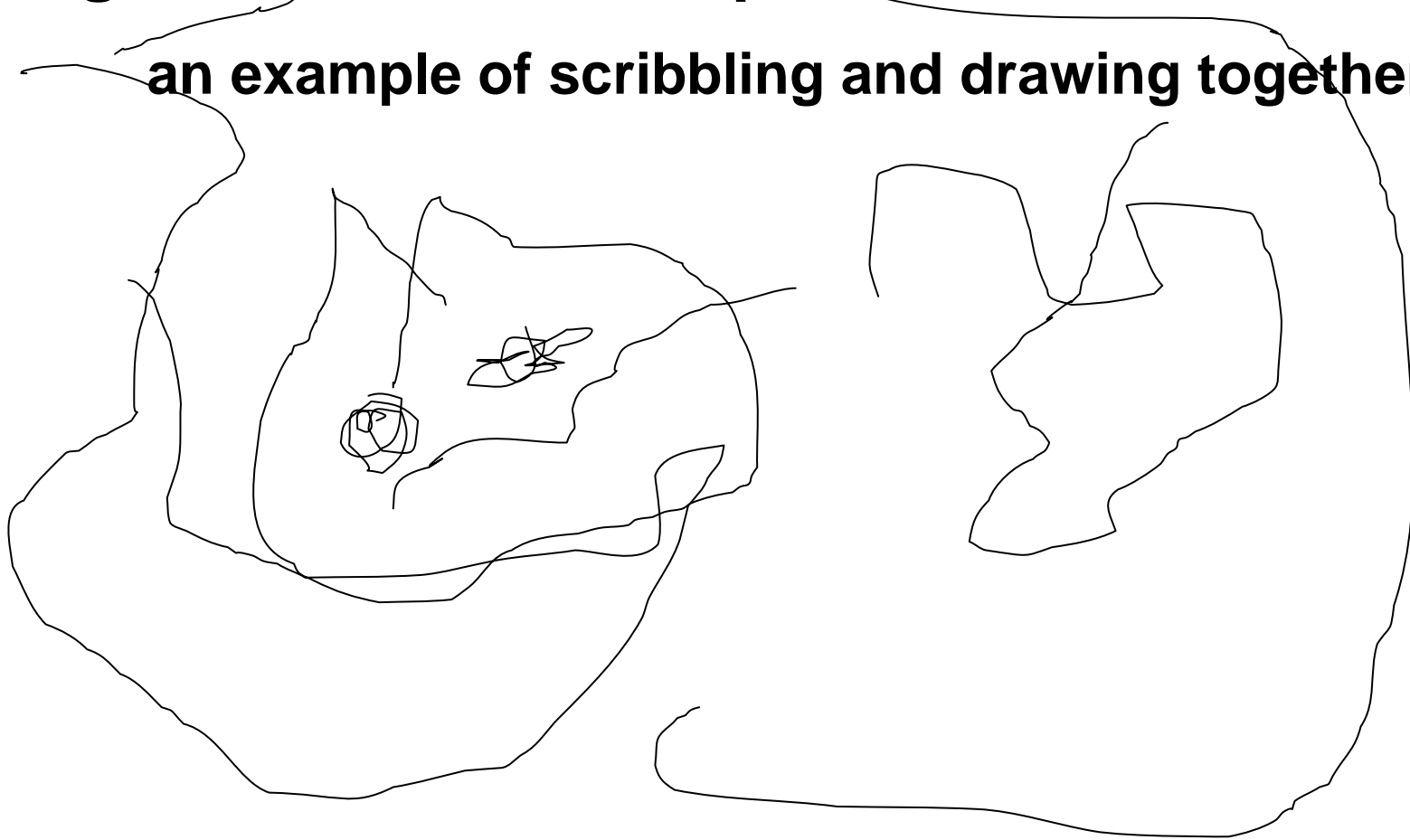
# Stage 1 - SCRIBBLING



- Children's scribbles are intended as writing.
- The scribbling resembles writing.
- Children begin to hold and use writing tools like an adult.

# Stage 1- Awareness, Exploration, or Role Playing

an example of scribbling and drawing together



# Key Indicators of Stage 1

## **The Writer:**

- Assigns a message to his/her own symbols.**
- Understands that writing and drawing are different, e.g. points to words while “reading”.**
- Is aware that print carries a message.**
- Shows beginning awareness of directionality; i.e. points to where print begins.**

# Teaching Strategies for Stage 1

❖ **Demonstrate the connection between oral and written language.**

*Examples:*

*Write a morning message everyday, repeating each word as it is written.*

*Write children's sentences as they dictate.*

❖ **Demonstrate that written messages remain consistent.**

*Example:*

*Write about shared experiences and display the writing for children to read later.*

❖ **Focus on the way print works (print concepts and conventions).**

*Examples:*

*Point to words, spaces, & letters.*

*Show children lines of print and the directionality of the text.*

*Share real writing with children, e.g. letters you receive.*

❖ **Use correct terminology for letters, sounds and words.**

*Example:*

*Discuss the features of books and print.*

❖ **Demonstrate that writing is purposeful and has an intended audience.**

***Examples:***

***Draw attention to and use meaningful labels and signs in the classroom and outside that reflect the children's interests. Be sure they reflect children's home languages.***

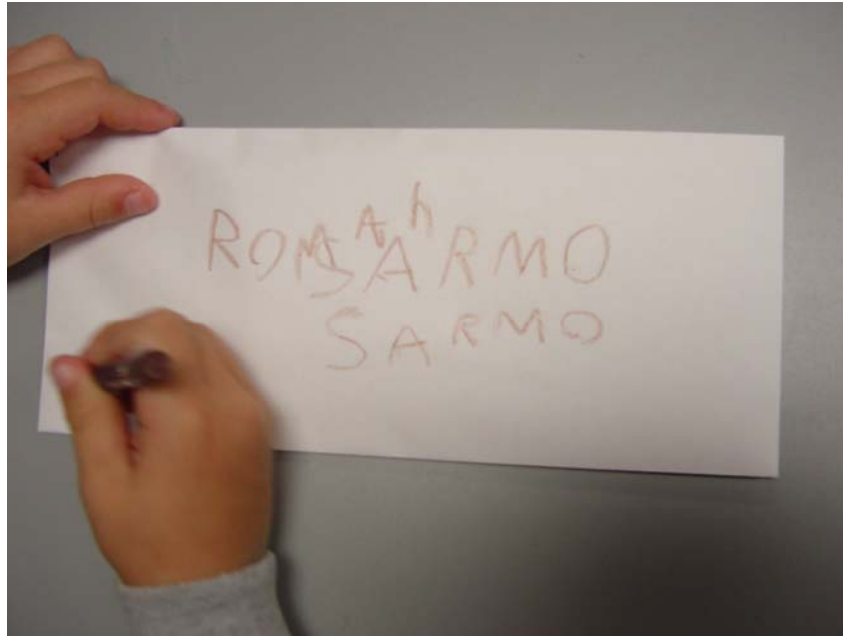
***Use name cards and have sign-in sheets for attendance and participation at centers.***



## ❖ Encourage children to experiment with writing

### *Example:*

*Compile a class news book each week in which children write their own news. Invite news tellers to draw a picture of their news and to write their name on the page.*





# **Emergent or Experimental Writing**

**Children are aware that speech can be written down and that written messages remain constant. They understand the left to right organization of print and experiment with writing letters and words.**

## Stage 2 - Early Emergent

- Letter-like forms (mock letters).
- Children become aware of the different shapes of symbols that make up the words in a line of print (lines, zigzags, loops).
- Shapes in writing actually resemble letters but are not actually letters.
- Although poorly formed, many letter-like marks are unique creations.



The image shows two rows of handwritten, letter-like forms. The first row contains six marks: a vertical line with a hook, a loop, a zigzag, a horizontal line with a hook, a vertical line with a hook, and a loop. The second row contains six marks: a horizontal line with a hook, a loop, a zigzag, a horizontal line with a hook, a vertical line with a hook, and a loop.

**Just as there are endless possibilities for different constructions given the same set of blocks or the same pieces of a Tinker Toys set, the child does not yet know that there are only 26 alphabet letters and that all the possibilities for creating form with this set of lines are not exploited in creating our alphabet.**

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**-Judith A. Schickedanz and Renee M. Casbergue (2004). *Writing in Preschool. Learning to Orchestrate Meaning and Marks***

## Stage 2 - Emergent/Experimental

- From mock letters to real letters.
- Random letters or letter string.
- Long strings of letters in random order.

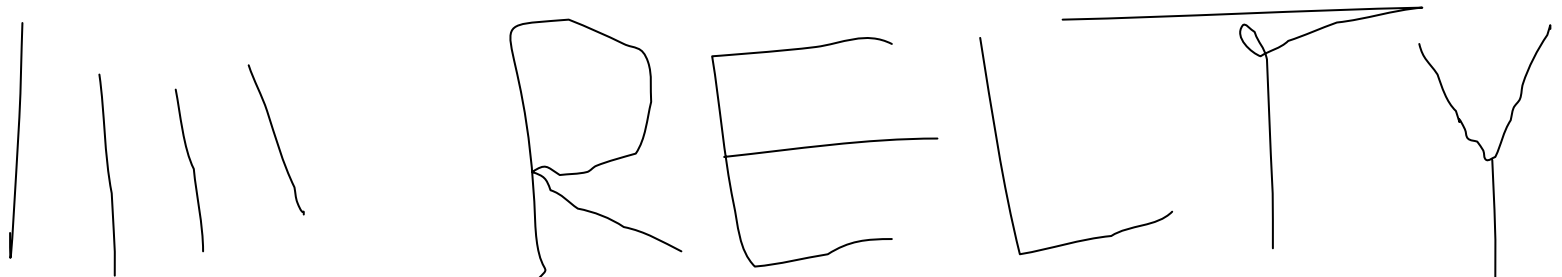
CHPFD PE3 d P4  
AC rms 02 + d /

- **Uses letter sequences – Some may be learned as at this stage children begin to write their names.**

- **May write the same letters in many ways.**

- **Continues to include scribbles and mock letters in their writing.**

- **Budding knowledge of directionality collides with the challenge of specific situations.**



# Key Indicators of Stage 2

## **The Writer:**

**Reads back own writing.**

**Attempts familiar forms of writing, e.g. lists, letters, stories, messages.**

**Writes using simplified oral language structures.**

## **Key Indicators of Stage 2**

- ☐ Realizes that print contains a constant message.**
- ☐ Begins to use left to right and top to bottom orientation of print.**
- ☐ Begins to demonstrate one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken word.**

# Teaching Strategies for Stage 2

❖ Model brief, imaginative and factual texts and explain the purpose and the intended audience.

*Example:*

*Make class big books that are both fiction and nonfiction.*

❖ Demonstrate the one-to-one correspondence of written and spoken words.

*Example:*

*Create story maps from familiar books where a series of pictures or graphics “retell” the story – label each picture or graphic.*

❖ **Discuss how writing can be used to communicate over time and distance.**

*Examples:*

*Set up post office boxes for children to write to each other.*

*Create “wall stories” that are continuing accounts of class projects.*

❖ **Relate written symbols to the sounds they represent.**

*Example:*

*Create rebus word cards, underline the initial consonants.*

❖ **Talk about letters, words and sentences and the purposes of writing.**

*Examples:*

*Write messages to children that they can read and perform. Underline key words or letters (e.g. a grocery list of items that children then find, a stop sign on a tricycle track, a morning message that gives instructions)*





# **Transitional or Early Writing**

**Children “write” about topics that are personally significant. They are beginning to consider audience needs. They begin to have a more formal sense of print conventions, letters, words and sentences but may only be able to deal with one or two elements of writing at one time.**

**The end of this stage usually happens in kindergarten and first grade.**

## Stage 3 - Early Transitional

- One letter may represent an entire syllable or word.
- Words and syllables often represented by single initial consonant sound (beginning phonemic spelling).
- Writing continues to include random letters and letter strings (few mock letters).
- Beginning awareness of punctuation.

WRONGTS.

(We are going to the store.)

## Stage 3 - Transitional or Early Writing

- Continued imprecision in the marks children use to compose letters (lack of uniformity).
- Awareness of spacing but often improper.
- Begin to understand that capital letters are used in different ways.
- Adds final consonant and vowel sounds in their writing.
- As writing matures, more words are spelled conventionally; but some letters are still invented or omitted.

Ahs is n Fr A house is on fire

**“Children acquire a working knowledge of the alphabetic system not only through reading but also through writing. Their efforts to spell encourage them to think actively about letter-sound relations.”**

**-Susan B. Neuman, Carol Copple, and Sue Bredekamp (1998).  
*Learning to Read and Write. Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children***

# Key Indicators of Stage 3

## **The Writer:**

- ❑ Relies heavily on the most obvious sounds of a word.**
- ❑ Uses a small range of familiar text forms.**
- ❑ Uses basic sentence structures and varies sentence beginnings.**
- ❑ Can explain in context, some of the purposes of using writing, e.g. shopping list or telephone messages as a memory aid.**

❑ Experiments with words drawn from personal experiences, literature, media, and oral language of peers and others.

❑ Attempts to use some conventional punctuation.

❑ Talks with others to plan and revise own writing.

I w/ b hope wen skul iz t  
I k t pla wt mi fredz in te  
sumr tatz ltz ov fn

# Teaching Strategies for Stage 3

❖ Continue to develop the awareness that writing is purposeful.

*Example:*

*Model and discuss how to choose a topic and the selection of details depending on the purpose of writing.*

❖ Talk about the differences between oral and written language.

*Example:*

*Encourage children to write for purposes that are relevant to them, such as letters, cards, and messages.*

- ❖ **Read, write, and discuss a range of different forms of writing for different purposes and audiences.**

***Example:***

***Jointly construct, display, and use various forms of functional print, e.g. schedules, calendars, rules, charts, etc.***

- ❖ **Help children build lists of high-frequency words from their reading and writing.**

***Example:***

***Create sets of card banks and sentence strips that are relevant to specific centers.***

***Have word cards available for children who repeatedly ask how to spell certain words.***

❖ **Demonstrate and talk about the writing of whole text from letter to word to sentence to paragraph.**



***Example:***

***Give students opportunities for personal choice writing such as diaries and journals.***

***Talk about the features of their writing, including; topics (ideas, feeling, experiences), purpose, audience, etc.***



# **Conventional Writing**

**Children are becoming familiar with most aspects of the writing process and are able to select forms to suit different purposes. Their control of structure, punctuation, and spelling may vary according to the complexity of the writing task.**

Once upon a time a dog named Rags got lost in the woods. All of the people looked for him. After a while he found his way home again. His family was very happy.



# **Proficient Writing**

**Writers have developed a personal style of writing and are able to manipulate forms of writing to suit their purposes. They have control over spelling and punctuation. They choose from a large vocabulary and their writing is cohesive, coherent and satisfying.**

# Supporting English Learners



**When teaching children for whom English is a second language it is important to recognize:**

- That children need to have the freedom to use their own languages and to code-switch when necessary.**
- That text learning needs to be supported through oral language and social interaction.**
- That the context and purpose of each activity needs to make sense to the learner.**
- That it may be difficult to assess children's real achievements and that the active involvement of parents will make a great deal of difference.**

**Teachers need to be sensitive to the unique characteristics of a child's home language as they begin to learn to explore writing. Is the child's home language alphabetic or logographic?**

**Children typically progress through several phases when developing the ability to hear phonemes in words. In English, both consonants and long vowel phonemes are more easily heard as distinct sounds in words than are short vowels.**

**Children who speak other languages may display a different developmental progression.**

- **Children who are using invented spelling in English tend to use more consonants than vowels; because in English, consonant sounds are more prominent and easier to hear.**

- **In Spanish there is more of a mixing of consonants and vowels.**

## **Additional Considerations for Second Language Learners**

- **Make sure the classroom contains a variety of books, pictures and print that affirm children's family experiences and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.**
- **Use multimedia such as videos, pictures, and concrete objects to create connections with vocabulary words and print.**
- **Try to anticipate words that might be unfamiliar and give explicit meaning to them.**
- **Make use of the excellent language learning that occurs among children by supporting play and small-group activities.**

# Supporting Children with Disabilities



# **Considerations for Children with Disabilities**

**Although accommodations for individual children are specified in the IEP, there are some general strategies that might be helpful for children with special needs, as well as for typically developing children.**

# Strategies for Children with Disabilities

Some accommodations might include providing the following:

**Additional LARGE motor opportunities:**

- standing at an easel
- providing large size paper
- whiteboards and smart boards

**Fine motor opportunities and options including:**

- different sizes & types of writing tools
- adapters on writing instruments
- adaptive scissors
- modeling clay



# Strategies for Children with Disabilities

**For some children developing muscle strength or eye hand coordination could be a precursor to writing.**

**Examples of strength building activities are;**

- squeezing sponges while washing baby dolls, table tops or at the water table.**
- hanging up clothes or paintings with clothes pins.**
- squeezing play dough or clay.**

# Strategies for Children with Disabilities

Some accommodations might include providing the following:

**A wide variety of writing surfaces:**

- sand paper
- sand writing
- textured paper
- white boards
- shaving cream

**Different lighting features:**

- book lights near the writing surface
- direct sunlight
- low lighting

# Strategies for Children with Disabilities

Some accommodations might include providing the following:

**Assistive technology:**

- oversize computer keyboards**
- voice-to-print adapters**
- cassette recorders.**



# Things for Teachers to Consider

- **Observe children for hand dominance to provide appropriate supports to develop dominance.**
- **Positioning a child before an activity so they can participate to the fullest extent of their ability.**
- **Motivators to make writing fun.**
  - Pens**
  - Smelly markers**
  - Magna Doodle**
  - Jiggle Squidoodler (squishy sensory pen)**
  - Fingertip crayons**

# Child Expectations



# Current Desired Results Developmental Profile

- **DR 2:** Children are effective learners
- **Indicator 4:** Children demonstrate emerging literacy skills
- **Developmental Theme:** *Writing (knowledge and use of symbolic representation of information, ideas, and emotions through recorded language)*
- **Measures:**
  - #36-** Uses pretend writing during play activities (*e.g. scribbles lines and shapes*)
  - #37-** Uses strings of repeated letter-like symbols as pretend writing
  - #38-** Writes three or more letters or numbers

# Kindergarten Standards

## Writing

### 1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write words and brief sentences that are legible.

### *Organization and Focus*

**1.1** Use letters and phonetically spelled words to write about experiences, stories, people, objects, or events.

**1.2** Write consonant-vowel-consonant words (i.e., demonstrate the alphabetic principle).

**1.3** Write by moving from left to right and from top to bottom.

### *Penmanship*

**1.4** Write uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet independently, attending to the form and proper spacing of the letters.

# Kindergarten Standards cont.

## Written and Oral English Language Conventions

### 1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions.

#### *Sentence Structure*

**1.1** Recognize and use complete, coherent sentences when speaking.

#### *Spelling*

**1.2** Spell independently by using pre-phonetic knowledge, sounds of the alphabet, and knowledge of letter names.

# **Environments that Support Writing**

# Environments that Support Reading and Writing

- ✓ Every center should support a connection to literacy and provide opportunities for children to read and write.
  
- ✓ “Temporary centers” can incorporate literacy learning.
  - Post office, office, construction company, supermarket, restaurant, bookstore, hospital
  
- ✓ “Portable writing center” can be developed if you don’t have enough physical space in your room. Use a suitcase or other container and pack it with the things you would have in a permanent writing center.

# Environments that Support Reading and Writing

✓ Every center should support a connection to literacy and provide opportunities for children to read and write.

- Calendars, appointment books, check books, recipes, etc. in the Housekeeping Center.
- Architecture books and magazines, drafting paper, grid paper, blue prints, etc. in the Block Center.
- Log books, journals, science magazines, colored pencils, etc. in the Discovery Center.

**“Young children’s learning environment should be rich in print. But more doesn’t always mean better. In a room cluttered with labels, signs, and such— print for print’s sake— letters and words become just so much wallpaper. Likewise, having lots of books is wonderful, but not if they are out of children’s reach. Put labels, captions and print in the places that count: where they catch children’s attention and where they serve a purpose.”**

**-Susan B. Neuman, Carol Copple, and Sue Bredekamp (1998).  
*Learning to Read and Write. Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children***

# **Assessing the Environment**

- 1. Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)**
- 2. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)**

# ELLCO

## Literacy Environment Checklist

### Writing Materials

13. Is an alphabet visible?
14. Are there word cards with names or familiar words?
15. Are there templates or tools to help children form letters?
16. How many varieties of paper are available for writing?
17. How many varieties of writing tools are available?
18. Is a distinct area set up and functioning for writing?

## **Writing Around the Room**

- 19. How many varieties of teacher dictation are on display in the classroom?**
- 20. How many charts, big books, or other evidence of full-group literacy are there in the classroom?**
- 21. How many varieties of children's writing are on display in the classroom?**
- 22a. Are there writing tools in the dramatic play or block area?**

**Writing Around the Room con't.**

**22b. Are there props that prompt children to write in the dramatic play or block area?**

**23. Are there alphabet puzzles available for children's use?**

**24. Are there puzzles with words available for children's use?**

# ELLCO Classroom Observation

## Language, Literacy, and Curriculum

### **10P. Approaches to Children's Writing**

- **Observations of writing materials and opportunities for children and teachers to be engaged in writing**

### **10S. Writing Opportunities and Instruction**

- **Observations of writing materials and opportunities for children and teachers to be engaged in writing**

# Literacy Activities Rating Scale

## Writing

6. Did you see children include writing in their play?
7. Did you see children attempting to write letters or words?
8. How many times did you see an adult help a child write?
9. Did an adult model writing?

# ECERS

## **16. Encouraging children to communicate**

- 5.1 Communication activities take place during both free play and group times (Ex; Child dictates story about painting; small group discusses trip to store)**
- 5.2 Materials that encourage children to communicate are accessible in a variety of interest areas**
- 7.2 Staff link children's spoken communication with written language (Ex; Write down what children dictate and read it back to them; help them write note to parents)**

**“Young children have great difficulty making controlled movements and precise lines. The most important thing we can do to support children’s beginning efforts at writing is to provide materials for writing.”**

**-Judith A. Schickedanz (1999). *Much More than the ABC’s. The Early Stages of Reading and Writing***

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2. Susan B. Neuman, Carol Copple, and Sue Bredekamp (1998). *Learning to Read and Write. Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
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4. Judith A. Schickedanz and Renee M. Casbergue (2004). *Writing in Preschool. Learning to Orchestrate Meaning and Marks*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association
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