Reasons To Write:
Helping Young Children Discover the Power of Writing
Getting Started

- Purpose
- Objectives
- Who is here?
- Name Tents
- Housekeeping
Is this child writing?
Is this child cooking?
It was a great day. The air was cool and still. It was August 7, 1998. I stirred in my silent room as my Mother shook me awake. We were going to the beach to have breakfast. I loved the beach in the early morning.

As we stepped outside into the damp morning air, seagulls squawked and screeched. The sun was lightening the sky in the east.

We walked side-by-side down to the beach. It was the best beach—Rehoboth Beach in Delaware.

A biker in a black sweat suit whizzed by.

The waves crashed onto the shores, smoothing out eventually. We got our feet so wet! We would go into the waves: the hair on our legs would flatten, then popup as we stepped onto the beach and out of the water.
Big Ideas About Young Writers

Apprenticing
- Young writers can’t do everything older writers do. But they can do a lot when an adult props them up. So help them!

Language is fundamental
- Language skills are foundational to writing - so support children’s language growth at every age!

Writers as thinkers
- Even the youngest writers are thinking about the marks they make - so give them opportunities and be curious about what they do!

Reasons to write
Children are motivated to be writers when there is a reason to write - so involve them in writing for real purposes!
Discussion
Writing Development

Think about writing development between birth and 5 years old.

What skills do young children learn that are important in learning to be a writer?
Writers are Thinkers!  
Children Figure Out How Writing Works

- There is much more to how writing works than knowing how to make letters

- Child think about it from very early ages!

- You can see their thinking in their writing!

- Let’s take a look....
Writers are Thinkers!
Exploring making marks

- Writing? Drawing?
- Exploration!
- Look what happens when I do this! And this!
- “Whatever happens, happens”
I can represent something on paper!

One thing can stand for another.
Supporting early mark-making

High chair

Markers, finger paint...food?

Easel

Paint...one or two colors, one brush is fine.

Table

Finger paint, markers, pencils, crayons. Only a few, at table

Encourage pretend play, model drawing and writing
Considerations

- **Safety**
  - Pencils etc. at tables, not shelves
  - Only a few
  - No marker caps

- **Order/organization**
  - One or two colors is fine
  - Shorter handles
  - Finger paint in water tub
Writers are Thinkers!
Drawing or Writing?

When children are very young, their writing and drawing may not LOOK different. They differ in the child’s **INTENT**

- Children who are “writing” believe they are recording a message.
- Children who are drawing believe they are portraying something.
Picture-Like Scribbles
What do you notice?
What might the child understand about writing?
What do you notice?
What might the child understand about writing?
Mock Letters
Conventional Letters

My Shopping List

SCRM
BAG
FLOPs

I love my mom

Plus fine motor!
Challenges
Forming Letters is Hard!

- Directionality
- Placement on page
- Reversals
- Diagonal lines
- Lower case
Making Marks - Write Your Name!

Please copy your name!

Just so it can feel a little more like the way it feels to a 3-4 year old...

...please use the hand you normally do NOT write with.

...And hold your wrist and fingers still - move your ARM to make your lines
Writing Your Name

How did that feel?

Want to do some more writing?
Handwriting

- Cognitive challenge - what writing consists of, how to do it

- Fine Motor challenge
  - Grip
  - Movement in arm, hand, fingers
  - Helping hand and arm

*Don’t let handwriting get in the way of writing!*
“Dot-to-dot” and stencils will not help children know how to make letter strokes.

“Hand over hand” will not teach children fine motor control.

Instead

▶ explain, demonstrate, offer starting point, break down into a do-able task
▶ Offer information about how to hold their writing tool
Writers are Thinkers!

Word Creation Strategies

So...how do I make a word?
Letter Strings

My Shopping List

My party list
1. Bananas
2. Apples
3. Tomatoes
4. Bread
5. Yogurt
6. Milk
7. Yogurt

Name: Anthony R.
My party list
1. Orange juice
2. Apple
3. Ice cream
4. Piñata
5. Cake
6. Frosting
7. Apple juice
Name: Maya

I love pumpkins.
Letters and Sounds

K M P L Q
B Z Y B L
Robert
How Did This Child Figure Out How To Write These Words?
How Did the Child Figure Out How To Write *These* Words?

![Image of a child's drawing with the word 'ROKIT' and the word 'BUT' written below it.](image-url)
Word Creation Skill

Children who “get” that letters and sounds are related can now write anything!!!
Apprentice Young Writers
Using Sounds to Figure Out Letters

Hints for Writing Pineapple
Infant and Toddler folks
Feeling left out?

- Infants and toddlers are working on the earliest stages of marks and word creation.

- Support what they do rather than expect or demonstrate letters.

- And...what follows is what matters most!

- Marks and Word Creation are used as tools to write well-crafted Messages for important Purposes
Messages - Having Something to Say!

Journey from short, simple messages to longer messages that are reasonably detailed and coherent.

Teachers in elementary grades report that the *most* difficult part of writing is not making letters or spelling. It is *having something to say*. 
“What children do in oral language, they also do in writing.”

“Writing in Preschool” p. 60
Language is Fundamental
Infants Develop Language

Infants label, express wants and needs, connect

Build language by...

Giving language
  labeling, describing, using new words

Encouraging infants to use the language they have.
  Conversational turn taking, interest
Language and Writing Grow Together!
Length, Complexity, Detail, Coherence

Labeling
Single Events

These are bad words! We don't say bad words!

Peter took his dog for a walk.

No saying Bad Words!
Coherence

"This is a Whale. The Whale tries to eat a person. He got out of the water and got lost in the Sand."

Animal Story 5-4
Detail
The Whales Got Nice to the People

by Derek

January 11, 2000

A long time ago there was people in a castle and then big whales came in the castle and they were swimming in there and baby ones too. And the people said "awh" and the whales said "don't be scared," we're nice." And the people said "how are we ever going to get out of this deep water." The whales said you can just ride on my back! Then you'll be out of this deep deep water. Then you can climb up a tree and then you'll be safe." And then the baby one said "hay daddy!" And then the daddy one said "whoaah!" "The baby one said "I'm gonna go play with my friends!"
How Did This Story Happen?

Once there were two children. They loved pens. There was a man who had some pens. One night the man was sleeping. They quietly crept up beside him. They reached out to the table where his pens were and they each took one! Then the man woke up! He said, "If you want my pens you must write a letter.

J. Or else I will turn you into a
Language

- Give children language!
  - New words!
  - Mirror talk
  - Challenging books - stories and information
  - Tell stories

- Encourage children to use the language they have.
  - Conversations
  - Stories
  - Explanation
Two Important Reasons Children Don’t Write

- The child isn’t confident in their skills or ability to put a message on paper

- The child is unaware of the potential purposes or ways that writing can be used
Why Do Children Write?

- When do your children write? What kinds of activities?

- Do they choose to write? If so, what reasons do they have for writing?
Resource

Purposes: Some Reasons Young Children Write

Included in the handouts
Reasons to Write

- Children will write when there is a reason to write

- There are *many* purposes ways that children can use writing *if* an adult
  - introduces the purpose
  - apprentices the child in the process
Modeling and Apprenticing Example

Writing Farewell Cards

Taking Phone Messages

Notice...

What information do children receive about writing?
I love you Mr. Tunica. I wrote a song for you and I want you to come back.

Farewell Notes
Phone Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOR</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>A.M.</th>
<th>P.M.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHONE</th>
<th>AREA CODE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>EXTENSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TELEPHONED</th>
<th>PLEASE CALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAME TO SEE YOU</td>
<td>WILL CALL AGAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANTS TO SEE YOU</td>
<td>RUSH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETURNED YOUR CALL</td>
<td>SPECIAL ATTENTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Message:**

| MESSAGE | |
|---------| |

**Signed:**

- Office Depot
“I Love You” Notes

- Goal - tell someone that you love them or care for them

- Solution - Write an “I Love You” note!

I like you always Mommy and Daddy. And my whole family.
I love my mom and dad and my sister.

I love everybody is my friend.

I love my mother and my brother and my sister and my baby brother and my other big brother.
Zaida’s Love Note to Ms Molly
Private Property/No Trespassing

- Problem - child does not want other children to take something
  - Ex, her place, materials

- Solution - Write a sign that says “don’t touch my stuff!” and put it on the materials
Danika's Spot
Saved for Danika

No one take this jewelry
Danika
Turns

- Problem - everyone wants to use the computer!

- Solution - Make a turns list. People can sign up for turns
Reminder Notes

- Bring a little notebook for Nadira
- Bring a notebook for Kevin
- Bring a notebook for Janika

Rambi will help with my camera.
How-To

- **Problem:** How do we remember how to make something? Or share how to make it with someone else?

- **Solution:** Write down how to make it? Recipes, directions...
How to make a banana sandwich

by Ivette
1. Cut a banana
2. Put jelly on the bread.
3. Spread it around
4. Put the bananas on
5. Fold it over
Go. Eat it!
Yum!
How To Make a Butter Sandwich

1. You open up the biscuit.

2. You put the butter on. You use a spoon to spread it on.

3. Then you put the top on.

4. You eat it!

By Tyresse, Ivette and Donika
How To Make a Ring

How to make Rings

You break some paper and cut it. You wrap the paper around your finger. Then you put some glue on.
Promoting Writing for Purposes

What do you notice these educators doing to promote all this writing?
Writing Goes Viral!

Children also learn about writing from each other

1. Make your writing spaces social

2. Show children each other’s writing
Writing is Social
Share Children’s Writing

- Class book
- At group time
Engaged Writing

What can you tell about the amount of effort this child put into this writing?

(over 300 “letters”)

Why do you think she wrote so much?

Do you think she is going to become a good writer?
Authentic tasks encourage self-regulation because they give students a genuine purpose for participating in an activity

(Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000)
Literacy with Passion

Let’s help children learn to read and write with the same passion that they talk and play.
Children as Storytellers
Story Dictation

Young children can dictate stories. When they do, they...

- Develop oral language skills - use language!
- Learn about how stories work (narrative form)
- Observe conventions of print - they watch while you write!
- Learn letters and sounds - watching you write
- Are motivated for literacy
How Did This Story Happen?

Once there were two children. They loved pens. There was a man who had some pens. One night the man was sleeping. They quietly crept up beside him. They reached out to the table where his pens were and they each took one! Then the man woke up! He said, "If you want my pens you must write a letter."

J. Or else I will turn you into a
Apprentice Young Writers
Getting Started

How can we help children get started with telling stories?

- Encourage children to tell a story about what they are pretending in dramatic play
- If there is some topic that a child talks about frequently, ask if they want to make a story about it
- When a child shares something at arrival, ask to write it down as a story
Apprentice Young Writers
During the Story

- Listen! Write down what the child says.
- Say out loud what you are writing as you write it.
- Ask for clarifications when the child’s story is confusing.
- Restate non-standard English in Standard English (or 1st Language) and ask if you can write it in Standard.
- For some children, point out some letter-sound relationships.
Some Beginners’ Stories

Kayla - “A princess story”

Lucas - “Spiderman and batman. Spiderman runned up and Batman went pow.”

Derek - “Once there was a little mouse. And a Batman. And a whale. And there was a scary sound. Whooo! The end.”
Some Stories from Vivian Paley

“Pretend I’m the baby and you only love me and you don’t talk on the telephone”

“The daddy turned off the television.”
Scaffolding Story Telling
Story Dramatization

- Assemble a “cast”

- At group time, read the story out loud

- Assist the cast in acting out the story
Dramatization Benefits

- Storytelling “goes viral”
- Younger children learn more sophisticated storytelling strategies from older ones
How can I do this? It takes time!

1. Just do it! Language and stories and seeing writing are important.

2. Consider asking your most challenging child to tell stories to you. It will change your relationship with him. And it may help him to share his stories.
Jackson
Jackson’s First Story

The Venom Suit Story and the Toxin Suit Story

There’s a Carnage suit. And a risky venom and auto venom. Spiderman turned into a carnage venom suit. Risky venom. There are lots different kinds of venom. There is light venom and rope venom and lackmovenom and holt venom.

Venom
Another Early Jackson Story

Venom girl took her suit off and then she was a carnage girl. Then she took her carnage girl suit off. I was watching on my Dad's computer. He was at work. Jasmine was watching me. Jasmine is my sister.

Venom girl was in a video. My mommy is mad at me 'cause I need the Venom suit on. Cause my mommy is annoying me when I am watching my movie.

So then, I put the suit on and threw a venom vob at my mom. I turned into a Ninja and my mom turned into a Ninja. It made
A Few Weeks Later

The Costume Story

I am going to have a Spiderman costume. You put it on and go to Halloween. You go trick or treating. You get some candy. You go home and eat it. But just some of it. Me and Desiree and Mom and Trey. Trey had a scary costume with blood. And he has a sword and kills people for pretend. Mom didn’t have a costume. Desiree had a costume.

Jackson
Black Light Jackson

I got a toy web shooter with a light.

It's a flashlight. It doesn't really shoot webs.

It just glows in the dark. And then you shut it off. And I'm not scared even though it's dark.

I stay on my bed with my Mommy. I sleep with my Mom.
In storytelling a child says “This is how I interpret and translate right now something that is on my mind.”

Vivian Paley
The fantasies of any group form the basis of its culture. That which we have forgotten to do, the children do best of all. They make up stories.

Vivian Paley
What Makes Someone A Writer?
Post Card Reminder

On the back (blank) side of your postcard, write...

- Something you want to remember about how children learn to write

- One action you want to remember to do to support children’s

Put your name and address on the front!
“Nothing you do for a child is ever wasted”

Jonathan Fribley

jonathan@cloudnet.com