

Writing

Accomplished early childhood teachers know how young children develop as writers, and they use this knowledge to teach writing. They know that young children's writing tends to progress from scribbles, to mock letters and symbols, to developmental spelling with limited control of mechanics, and then to increasing use of conventional spellings of words. They know that for the youngest children, "writing" to express their ideas may involve drawing and dictating as well as actually forming letters and words. Teachers encourage children to communicate using print, and teachers gain insights into children's thought processes and growing literacy by studying what they write. They understand the challenges that children face when trying to convey their thoughts in writing.

Accomplished early childhood teachers understand the importance of teaching writing in ways that are meaningful and developmentally appropriate. Teachers encourage children to write, or pretend to write, during dramatic play; for example, children might act the parts of servers writing restaurant orders, or they might create road signs for block cities they have built. Accomplished teachers create readily accessible writing areas stocked with materials such as pencils, markers, staplers, and paper that children can use to write and illustrate books and cards.

Accomplished early childhood teachers support children's development as writers in many ways. They introduce children to the different genres, including narrative, informative, and persuasive texts, and they provide opportunities for children to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. They encourage children to share their opinions, provide information, recount experiences, or correctly explain the steps in a procedure. They understand how to scaffold children's writing development. For example, they might guide children through the stages of creating an argument, moving them from simply stating an opinion to ultimately creating a counter-argument.

Accomplished early childhood teachers provide developmentally appropriate instruction in the writing process. They teach young children prewriting strategies such as brainstorming; finding a topic that fits a purpose or an audience; researching or otherwise exploring ideas related to the topic; and organizing ideas with outlines, webs, charts, or other graphic organizers. They show children how to write a first draft, reminding them to include details that will catch the reader's interest and to provide support for main ideas. They teach children to revise their work by reviewing ideas and organization, and model how to edit work for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Finally, they help children publish their work. Accomplished teachers weave technology into every step of the writing process, from researching interesting topics, to checking spelling, to publishing.

Accomplished early childhood teachers demonstrate that good writers are also good researchers. They teach young children how to formulate questions, find answers in a variety of sources, evaluate sources, and restate information in their own words. They explain the meaning of plagiarism and show children how to cite sources appropriately.