

## Writing, Grade K

### Assessment

#### The Developmental Stages of Writing

It is the process, not necessarily the correctness, that you should focus on when evaluating your students' writing. Look for changes that indicate growth in understanding and progression of writing concepts.

#### Drawing, scribbling, and dictating to the teacher

In kindergarten, writing instruction builds on students' tendencies to draw, scribble, and tell stories. Students need encouragement and support in their writing to help move toward conventional writing and spelling.

During the early stages of writing, teachers often transcribe as students draw and dictate stories. Pay particular attention to helping students make connections between their drawings and your transcriptions.

#### Drawing, writing captions, and writing simple sentences

The next writing stage develops as students acquire more phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge. In this stage, students begin to form random letters (usually those most familiar to them, as in the letters that make up their names) and numerals (1-10). Eventually they write groups of letters to make "words," and then group these words with spaces between them to approximate sentences.

In addition to drawing pictures, students may start to use beginning and ending consonants to label their drawings.

Each student's progress will be different at this stage: some will begin writing letters and words right away; others may continue to use incomplete spelling into second grade. Teachers should understand the range of abilities, yet be on the lookout for students who may have special needs.

#### Connected sentences and paragraphs

In later stages of development, students begin to write connected sentences and paragraphs and use conventional spellings for familiar words. In these stages, their writing often takes the form of captions for their pictures.

Kindergarten students will gradually increase the quantity of writing they produce in a sitting. As they write, students may not work at the same pace. Some students will not be able to concentrate on their writing for more than fifteen minutes. **Invented Spelling**

You can determine a student's understanding of sound/letter correspondences by observing what letters the student uses to represent words (invented spelling).

#### Common deletions and representations

Eventually, drawing and scribbling expands to include the use of temporary, or invented, spellings, which are based largely on the sound/letter correspondences they are learning.

Encouraging students to use invented spellings contributes to their understanding of the alphabetic principle by leading them to reflect on the sounds in spoken words and to relate the sounds to printed letters. Frequently, students will use consonants to represent words, leaving out vowels entirely (e.g., *dg* for *dog*, *Mg* for *Meg*). In early writing efforts, students are more likely to write letters to represent long-vowel rather than short-vowel sounds (e.g., *bot* for *boat*, *lat* for *late*). They may represent short-vowel sounds with letters that have similar sounds (e.g., *tuk* for *took*, *wun* for *one*).

Student's invented spellings are often phonemically accurate; that is, they have sounded out the word and used letters to represent each sound. When students delete letters in their writing, it may be that they did not isolate a confusing sound (such as a vowel sound).

## **Addition of vowel sounds and representation of sounds**

As students progress in learning sounds and letters, they begin to more consistently add letters for vowels. Because vowel sounds in English have multiple and/or irregular spellings, using correct vowel spellings in written words is usually more difficult than adding consonant spellings.

Phonics-related activities are important because they give students practice isolating and identifying sounds. Students need guidance and opportunity to figure out word spellings. **Invented Spelling as an Assessment Tool**

Invented spelling is a valuable assessment tool—one which teachers and parents should use. Teachers can see evidence that students are picking up sound/letter correspondences. Early attempts to tie oral language to writing can provide teachers insight into students' ability to use letters that have been taught and those that may be more difficult for the class.

There is enormous variation in students' progress as they learn to write, just as in reading. You will have a better idea of how the class is keeping up by tracking student progress, and you may determine that some students need extra help. Examine student writing and analyze invented spellings. Point out deletions, additions, and replacements that occur in the invented spellings, and note which sounds and letters have been taught in class.

## **Teacher Conferencing**

Teacher writing conferences can provide informal or formal opportunities for assessment.

Teacher-student conferences support students' writing by helping students evaluate their writing and make needed changes. During conferences, focus attention on specific areas by asking simple questions, such as:

- What do you want to write about?
- What word would you like to write?
- What's the first sound you hear in that word?
- What letter do you need to use?

In addition, comment positively on some aspect of the writing:

- I like your picture. Tell me about it.
- Excellent! *House* does begin with the letter *h*.

Teachers may initiate conferences, but students should be encouraged to call conferences on an as-needed basis. Writing conferences are an excellent opportunity for teachers to observe students as they make decisions about their work and take responsibility for the development and completion of their work.

## **Writing Seminar**

**Writing Seminar** can be used to determine how well students are participating; evaluate the questions that students ask and how the Seminar leaders respond to the questions.

## **Writing Folders**

*Writing Folders* provide a detailed record of students' progress as they learn to write. Compare pieces, identify strengths and weaknesses, and allow the students to reflect on their own work and how it changes over time.