
Introduction

Learning to write assists children in their reading; in learning to read, children also gain insights that help them as writers. But writing is more than an aid to learning to read; it is an important curricular goal. Through writing children express themselves, clarify their thinking, communicate ideas, and integrate new information into their knowledge base.

—Centre for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) 1998b

The single most important thing you can do to help young children become writers is to provide them with time to write, materials with which to write, and to demonstrate the process and the importance of writing to them.

—Cunningham and Allington 1994, 88

Showing students how to write makes more sense to them when they understand and value why they are writing. Certainly, effective writing defies a cookie-cutter model, but our students do need to see and experience the thinking that goes into producing effective writing. Be explicit-show students how.

—Routman 2005, 15

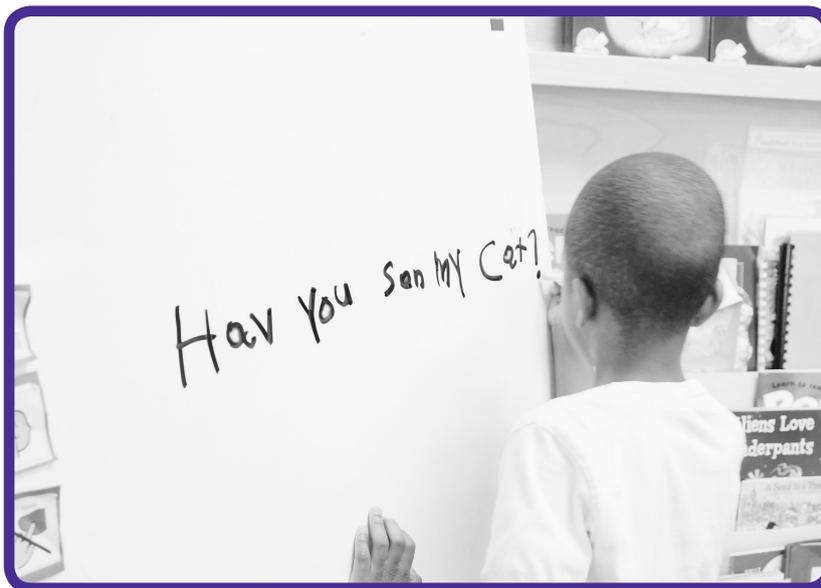


Figure Intro 1

A real reason to write!

A Note From Miriam

Teachers of young children know that no two days are the same and that young children never cease to amaze. Recently I visited a high-needs kindergarten class just outside Chicago, Illinois. The teacher has the children write a great deal from the first day. By spring she has many very skilled and engaged writers in her classroom. The day I arrived she introduced me as an author. She held up my *Kindergarten Teacher's Resource Book* and showed the children my picture on the back. She asked the children if they had any questions for me, the author.

Meredith: Where did you get all the paper? (The book is 500+ pages!)

José: How long did it take you to write? (5 years)

And the question that stopped me in my tracks . . .

Christian: Where do you get your ideas?

Clearly, these children are developing writing skills and understandings and see themselves as writers. That this is happening is no accident. The children write from day one. They are frequently encouraged to self-select their own writing topics. They are taught that their art is also very important. They are taught to look carefully so that they can include lots of details when they draw. Additionally, they are writing across the curriculum—in science, social studies, and math. And through the use of mentor texts and mini-lessons, the children are learning the craft of writing (see Figure 6.32 and Figure 6.33 on page 179). This is but one example of the many exciting and effective classrooms in which I have had the pleasure of participating. The children in Jo Simpson's class are learning literacy and loving it!

I would also like to acknowledge all of the other amazing preschool and kindergarten teachers across Canada and throughout North America with whom I have had the pleasure of working. You have supported me in many ways in writing this book. Your love of young children and your dedication to joyful literacy learning make me your biggest fan! One can never get old teaching young children . . . exhausted, but not old.

A special thank you to Heather Jelley and Colleen Drautz at Jersey Public School (York Region District School Board, Keswick, Ontario), Diana Bruni at Transfiguration of Our Lord Catholic School (Toronto Catholic District School Board, Toronto, Canada), and Jo Simpson from Boulder Hill Elementary (Oswego 308, Oswego, Illinois) for opening your Kindergarten (Prek–JK and K) classrooms to me. By allowing me to spend time and capture your exemplary literacy practice in this book, you have benefited fellow teachers, administrators, and coaches across North America. Even though you may not realize it, your kindergarten classrooms, with all of their ups and downs, are like poetry in motion!

Thanks as well to Karen Frick, Laura Ferguson, and their principal Joan Green, Radisson Park School (Calgary Board of Education, Calgary, Alberta), for allowing a professional photographer to invade your space to capture joyful and playful but intentional literacy learning. The authentic photos bring the book to life.

In a book on writing, it is the authentic writing samples that really bring the instructional strategies, mini-lessons, and activities to life. Thank you to the many teachers across North America who provided me with such great examples of early writing . . . from scribbles to conventional text.

Thanks also to all of the kindergarten teachers, Public, Catholic, Private, and Charter, who I continue to have the privilege of working with across Canada and the United States. A special thank you to Laura Devitt and Joan Green and many other wonderful teachers and administrators in the Calgary Board of Education. You taught me so much.

A word of thanks to the many early childhood and literacy consultants who work tirelessly to support the work of preschool and kindergarten teachers. And to the principals who realize that preschool and kindergarten are the most important grades and who go above and beyond the call of duty to support their teachers and students. You are ALL my heroes!

And finally thank you to wonderful educators, authors and researchers such as Donald Graves, Barbara Bowman, Lucy Calkins, Marie Clay, David Dickinson, Shelley Harwayne, Judy Harris Helm, Georgia Heard, Don Holdaway, Lillian Katz, Lesley Mandel Morrow, Susan Neuman, David Pearson, Katie Wood Ray, Kathleen Roskos, Regie Routman, Timothy Shanahan, Catherine Snow, Vicki Spandel, Dorothy Strickland, Elizabeth Sulzby, Sharon Taberski, and William Teale, and Canadians Andy Biemiller, David Booth, Jim Cummins, Christine Gordon, and Keith Stanovitch, among others, who have taught us so much about early literacy and specifically how to most effectively support young literacy learners.

Dr. Tim Shanahan is professor of urban education at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and director of the UIC Center for Literacy. His research emphasizes reading-writing relationships, reading assessment, and improving reading achievement. Tim is former president of the International Reading Association and former chair of the National Early Literacy Panel. He was inducted into the Reading Hall of Fame in 2007. But most importantly to me, Tim always makes time to help out fellow educators all around the world. He is just an email away. Thank you Tim for the ongoing support you provide and for writing the foreword to this book. I am very honored!

And finally, thank you to the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children for leading the way. You have my greatest respect and appreciation!

Squiggles on a Page

By Colleen Drautz, Kindergarten Teacher

Jersey Public School, York Region District School Board,
Keswick, Ontario

What is my teacher looking at?

Whatever can it be?

I wonder what is over there?

Some paper's all I see.

I think I'll take a closer look . . .

Huh!

Some funny squiggles, that is all

A loop around,

A little snake,

A dot,

A line,

A ball.

My teacher comes and talks to me.

I tell her about my cat.

She smiles, picks up her marker

and makes more squiggles— just like that!

Now she's pointing to the marks she made

I hear my words out loud again.

You can read those marks? I can, too?

Will they always sound the same?

I think I'd like to do that, too.

I could practice every day.

I need squiggles to tell my story

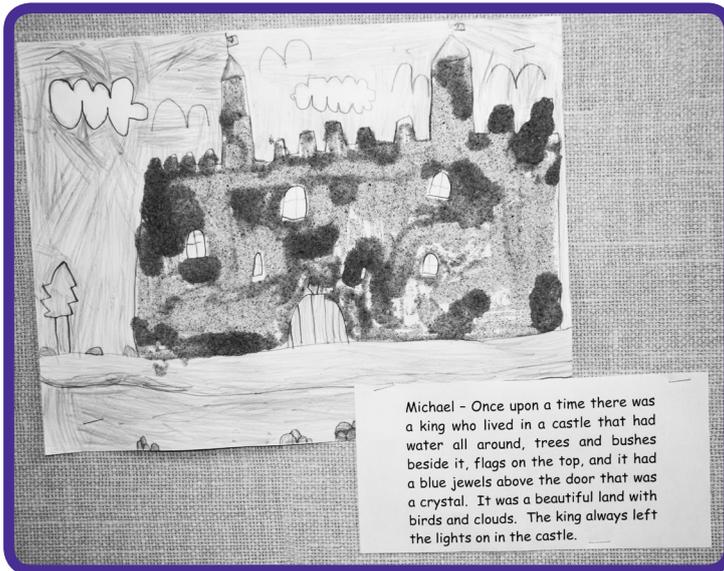
I have so much to say.



Figure Intro 2

Welcome to *Learning to Write and Loving It!*

Early childhood is unique. Early Childhood teachers need and deserve their own professional books geared specifically to literacy learning. This is the goal of *Learning to Write and Loving It!*: to help preschool and kindergarten teachers, teachers of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, get children off to a strong start. Although this book targets our youngest writers and readers, first grade teachers will also find many of the instructional strategies, assessment tools, mini-lessons and engaging activities both appropriate and valuable. “I believe that teaching a child to learn, to love learning, and to feel successful and joyful are among the most worthwhile of all endeavors” (Regie Routman, 2008 and 2009). That is what *Learning to Write and Loving It!* is all about.



Michael - Once upon a time there was a king who lived in a castle that had water all around, trees and bushes beside it, flags on the top, and it had a blue jewels above the door that was a crystal. It was a beautiful land with birds and clouds. The king always left the lights on in the castle.

Figure Intro 3

Look at the details in the drawing and in the scribed text. Notice the lights on!

Writing From 2000 to Today: Some Things Have Changed!

My first professional book appeared in June 2000: *Kindergarten Teacher's Resource Book* (Nelson Thomson Learning). I wrote from the perspective of a kindergarten teacher. My goal was to provide a practical research-based book on literacy teaching and learning for kindergarten teachers. Judging by the responses from kindergarten teachers around the world, it appears that I succeeded. I am pleased to say that more than 10 years later the content of that book is still valid. However, the research data on literacy, kindergarten teaching, and learning have provided some additional insights.

Educators now know, for example, that writing in preschool and kindergarten is extremely important. In fact, the quality of writing support for 4-year-olds is highly related to their language and literacy growth at the end of kindergarten and Grade 1 (Dickinson and Sprague 2001). Many preschoolers and kindergarteners are writing before they are reading! In fact, the long-awaited US Report of the National Early Literacy Panel, released in January 2009, indicates that writing that develops from birth to age 5 is one of six variables that predict later literacy development.

Preschool and Kindergarten teachers have been so focused on reading that not enough attention has been given to writing. The irony is that supporting writing also supports reading! There is no doubt that early childhood teachers deserve a book to help them use developmentally appropriate and engaging assessments, activities, and approaches to support writing in preschool and kindergarten.

Research Base, Beliefs, and Understandings for *Learning to Write and Loving It!*

There are no more important *grades* than preschool and kindergarten. Literacy learning at this time can change lives. Research indicates that what happens in school and at home with 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds has a long-lasting and powerful impact. All children deserve a strong start.

In a joint position statement issued by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), "One of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level to which the child progresses in reading and writing" (1998, 30).

Research Base, Beliefs, and Understandings		Learning to Write and Loving It!
“Excellent teachers know it’s both what you teach and how you teach” (Copple and Bredekamp 2009b, 48).		shares both the <i>what</i> and the <i>how</i> of effective literacy teaching and learning
Research consistently points to the importance of ensuring that children enter first grade with the attitudes and knowledge about literacy that will enable them to succeed (Snow, 1998).		provides the skills, strategies, engaging mini-lessons, activities, and assessment tools to make this happen
Play and literacy learning naturally support each other (Copple and Bredekamp 2009b; Bodrova and Leong 2004; Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario 2011).		provides many excellent examples of teachers scaffolding effective play-based literacy activities, both spontaneous and planned
“A balanced developmentally appropriate language and literacy curriculum is not only beneficial but perhaps crucial in these early years” (Neuman 1998, x–xi).		supports such a curriculum
The latest research on early childhood literacy learning not only stresses the importance of writing for its own sake but also supports early reading (both decoding and meaning), phonological awareness and concepts of print, and the reading–writing connection (Harrison et al. 2008; Shanahan, 1984, 2006; Snow, 1998; Dickinson and Sprague, 2001).		provides motivating and engaging writing activities as well as mini-lessons to scaffold learning
Young children construct knowledge, but they also need direct teaching involving much scaffolding through modeling, demonstrating, explaining and guided practice (McGee and Richgels 2003; Schickedanz, 2004; Routman, 2005).		supports the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model as one example of focused teaching
Children must be provided with opportunities to apply the strategies they are taught by doing interesting activities that make sense to them. They learn best when they see a specific purpose for what they are learning (Routman, 2005; Copple and Bredekamp 2009; Helm and Katz 2010).		provides engaging, interesting, and purposeful activities

Research Assessment Instruction

Differentiation or “embracing” the individual child (Tomlinson 2010) is key to both academic success and happiness in early childhood.	➔	provides a variety of assessment tools to help drive instruction; supports many instructional approaches and materials; engaging activities and projects provide managed choice (Allington 2002) for the students.
Literacy learning occurs across the preschool-kindergarten day, across the curriculum. Integration is natural for teachers. Through cross-curricular integration and inquiry in areas such as social studies and science, young children are able to develop literacy skills while acquiring important “big ideas” involving hands-on activities (Copple and Bredekamp 2009b).	➔	provides many examples of integrated cross-curricular projects and activities that celebrate the inquiry approach and project-based learning
The home plays a key role in emergent/early literacy development (National Early Literacy Panel Report 2009; Bennett-Armistead, Duke, and Moses 2005; Gullo, 2006).	➔	includes many examples of practical and easy-to-implement home literacy activities

How to Effectively Use This Resource

As with all of my professional books, *Learning to Write and Loving It!* enables you to quickly access specific content or topics using the detailed table of contents in conjunction with the index. However, you may prefer to read through the entire resource in order to gain a more complete picture of writing development in preschool and kindergarten. Reputable research, developmentally appropriate and easily implemented assessment tools, instructional strategies, samples of children’s work, and descriptions of what some of the samples reveal are key components of this resource. The diagnostic assessments featured in this resource are both formative (assessment for learning) and summative (assessment of learning).

Also included are proven teaching and organizational strategies, mini-lessons, and activities that effectively support writing. Frequently a series of mini-lessons that may extend over several days is listed as one lesson. It is important to follow the particular children and their needs. Limit mini-lesson

time, at any one time, to what is appropriate for the individual or group. The Window on the Classroom feature brings the early childhood experience to life. Some of the vignettes exemplify strong classroom practice while others describe specific situations that you may connect with personally. All of the accounts come from actual classrooms and are included to make you think.

Rounding out the contents is a list of recommended professional books, reports, CDs, and DVDs, and a comprehensive bibliography. The reproducibles, which are conveniently packaged in an accompanying modifiable CD, include literacy assessments, observation checklists, assessment summaries, literacy home-school links, and more.

Learning to Write and Loving It! consists of nine chapters and can be thought of as being written in two parts that work together to provide the big picture:

PART 1: The Introduction and Chapters 1 through 3 provide the background, research base, and user-friendly assessment tools to support effective early childhood writing.

PART 2: Chapters 4 through 9 and the Closing Thoughts *link assessment to instruction* by providing the practical *how-to* of daily effective literacy practice in preschool and kindergarten.

- **Chapter 1: Literacy Learning in Preschool and Kindergarten** provides the necessary background to teach literacy including writing, reading, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing. The chapter includes predictors of early literacy success, important literacy skills and understandings, a continuum of children's development in early reading and writing, an explanation of the term *developmentally appropriate*, a list of developmentally appropriate literacy expectations, and a clarification of the role of play in supporting literacy learning.
- **Chapter 2: Research on Writing in Preschool and Kindergarten** provides a description of writing stages, categories, goals, skills, and understandings. It also details spelling development in early childhood (the five stages of spelling development, the pros and cons of invented spelling, and the pros and cons of underwriting). Finally, it describes some effective writing tools (including technology) and outlines the high-yield strategies for successfully supporting young writers.
- **Chapter 3: Assessing Writing in Preschool and Kindergarten** describes ways to assess and document student writing and to effectively implement writing portfolios. Suggestions for determining each child's

The following symbols are used throughout the book:



Easy-to-implement and effective strategies for involving parents/caregivers in their child's learning



Recommended read-alouds and other great resources to support literacy development



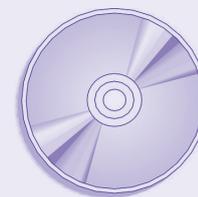
User-friendly tips for incorporating technology to enhance literacy development in your classroom



Suggestions for when to use think-alouds to support literacy learning



Opportunities to scaffold learning through play-based literacy activities



Reproducibles found on the accompanying CD

writing category and spelling stage are also provided, as is support for children learning to assess themselves as writers. Trait-based scoring scales, spelling stages, and writing exemplars are also included, in addition to a reproducible Writing Checklist (Reproducible 2.1 on the accompanying CD).

- **Chapter 4: Effective Instructional Approaches** includes a description of instructional approaches to teach writing and proven implementation strategies for each approach.
- **Chapter 5: Writing Workshop** describes the four stages of writing workshop. Stage 1 provides practical examples of important procedural and skill and strategy mini-lessons. Stage 2 outlines strategies for implementing sustained writing. Stage 3 describes different kinds of writing conferences and provides step-by-step implementation guidelines. Stage 4 outlines the importance and how to of author share.
- **Chapter 6: Writing Fiction and Nonfiction Genres** provides an understanding of preschool and kindergarten children’s typical aptitude for and interest in writing fiction (narrative) and nonfiction (including informational text). The chapter shares practical mini-lessons and activities to support writing both genres.
- **Chapter 7: Writing Songs and Poetry** provides easy-to-implement mini-lessons for writing and enjoying songs and poetry.
- **Chapter 8: Play Plans Before and After Centers** describes the purpose of play plans and mini-lessons to scaffold play-plan writing before centers and writing after centers.
- **Chapter 9: Writing Messages and Using Interactive Journals** provides descriptions of many different kinds of authentic messages that students can write along with the mini-lessons to scaffold implementation. Based on research done in kindergarten classrooms, interactive journals provide an alternative to the regular journal writing typically seen in kindergarten.