



Picture-Tellers: How to "Write" a Story, the Kindergarten Way

Curriculum Unit 13.01.01, published September 2013

by Katie I. Adams

Introduction

Entering Kindergarten is a huge milestone for many children. Their parents prepare them all summer long for the significant step they are about to take. They are told that going to Kindergarten makes them a "big girl" or "big boy," and that they will be doing a lot of learning when they get to school; and this is true! Today's Kindergarten students work on a wide range of academic and life skills throughout the course of the school year. They come into the classroom with confidence that they are now of school age and have reached a new stage of maturity. However, they quickly realize that they are the smallest of the big-ones, and they slowly lose that confidence.

Writing lessons that occur early in the year are full of the following statements from my students, "Ms. Adams, I don't know how to write that letter" and "I can't make a story, I don't know how to write yet." When children hear me announce writing in our daily schedule, they think of the printing and penmanship of letters (those strange symbols that big people can read and understand). To them, writing is only letters and words and has nothing to do with creativity, stories, or art. They do not realize that they possess ideas and thoughts that already make them writers. They have stories to tell...everyday...every single one of them. They need only the appropriate avenue to express those thoughts and ideas, as well as the organizational skills to make them clear to the reader. I want my students to know that they can write cohesive, organized stories by drawing pictures to show their words, rather than printing words to tell about their stories.

However, learning to write is so much more complicated than guiding students through a process of copying letters and learning simple sight words. When I receive my list of students in August, I get a group of 25-30 students who range in their age, maturity level, language acquisition, and learning abilities. As writing is so essential to their academic foundational skills, it is important that I provide my students with activities and lessons that help them achieve the goal of writing complete sentences by June. This goal, as stated in the "Kidified Standards ELA-K" includes 1.1 "I can use letter sounds to write about things I know," 1.2 "I can write simple words (CVC)," and 1.3 "I can write by moving from left to right and top to bottom." But these standards are lacking in guiding students to become *writers* of their rich thoughts and ideas rather than become *printers* of letters and words. ¹

Most of my students enter the class with the idea that they cannot read or write because they do not understand the mechanics of printing or they do not possess the ability to apply phonemic awareness to

letters. I want them to understand that they are capable of being great writers by communicating their thoughts and ideas in drawing images and pictures, as people have been doing for thousands of years. My unit is designed not only to help students see themselves as writers, but also to feel comfortable and confident in their ability to communicate their thoughts in the developmentally appropriate practice of drawing pictures and images.

Background

Like many public school teachers, I work in an area with a high level of socio-economically disadvantaged students. We service a large amount of second language learners as well. I teach at Robert Sanders Elementary School, which is one of five schools in the Mount Pleasant Elementary School District. Robert Sanders is nestled against the east foothills of San Jose, California and includes Kindergarten through eighth grade. We have between 450-475 students at any given time; 68.7% of those students are considered socio-economically disadvantaged, and 83% are eligible for reduced or free meals, 67.1% of the students are English Language Learners, and 13.2% have been diagnosed with a disability. The majority of our students are Hispanic or Latino, 80.7%, with approximately 5% Asian and 2% Caucasian students. We are approaching our third year in Program Improvement, a title put on schools that receive title 1 funding and have failed to meet their annual AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress according to state testing scores) goal for two years in a row. We are also continuing with our Structured English Instruction program in grades K and first. This program was developed to help students with very minimal knowledge of or use of the English language. These students are placed in a classroom with other English Language Learners (ELL's) where they can support each other in their acquisition of English. Each class is led by a teacher who uses only English and is supported daily by an English Language Development teacher, who guides the students through daily lessons and activities to help them better utilize their exposure to English at school.

My district has adopted the ELA curriculum called "Treasures," which is published by McMillian/McGraw Hill. The kindergarten curriculum consists of ten units, each unit being three weeks long. Within the curriculum the students work on phonics, phonemic awareness, decoding, segmenting, reading, comprehension, oral language, science, and social studies. It offers lessons and practices for almost every aspect of a typical ELA curriculum; however, I have not been overly excited about the writing portion and how it fits the needs of the students in my kindergarten classes.

While there are parts of the "Treasures" curriculum that I find to be highly valuable to the students and myself, I feel that it is lacking in its writing element. The curriculum starts off with a brief introduction to the ABC's, and it allows for a few drawing and reading activities. Then, the first unit sets the pattern for the year: students will focus on two to three letters per three week unit as well as a few sight words. In the suggested "centers" activities, the students are to practice these skills by using the letters to *write*. This is what I see as the key problem in the curriculum: it quickly links the skill of writing to the skill of printing, making the assumption that the two must go hand in hand. The program instructs students to identify and print letters assuming they are ready to make the huge leap between writing letters and understanding that those letters make words that convey thoughts and ideas. As stated in an article titled "Writing in Preliterate Children" by Jean Emile Gombert and Michel Fayol, "it is not until age 5 or 6 that the directionality of writing is mastered and the functions of the various writing media are thoroughly understood." ² Printing is a mechanical ability that should be taught separate from writing. It requires a different set of skills to perform successfully. Printing

letters involves fine and gross motor skills, as well as the ability to understand and physically copy the shapes and lines needed to make the letters. Writing, however, requires a great deal of conceptualization and organizational skill. This process must take place in the mind of the writer, before he or she even takes pen, or oversized pencil, to hand.

So often, printing and writing are linked together early on, in hopes that a kindergartener (typically age 4 or an early 5 in the beginning of kindergarten) is ready to combine the two skills and produce evidence of their thoughts or opinions. Most students at this age are beginning writers or "nonwriting" as defined in an article written by Marjorie L. Hipple titled "Journal Writing in Kindergarten," and they are at the developmental stage of drawing and scribbling forms that represent what their thoughts are. ³ The "Treasures" program asks the students, with the help of the teacher, to make lists and word webs in the first few weeks of school. After teaching Kindergarten for the past ten years, I know expecting that the students can copy a list or word web puts a great deal of stress on the students and the teachers. By beginning my unit early on in the school year, I will be able to disconnect the link between printing and writing, until the students are ready to make that connection on their own, naturally. I want my students' first experience with writing in school to be one that is not only developmentally appropriate, but exciting.

In the first few years as a teacher, because I had the typical excitement and enthusiasm that most new teachers have, I was ready to conquer the world. I started each year ready to greet a new group and take them to the heights of academia! While my schooling and training in a credential program provided me with multiple methods of reaching my students, I also had two boxes of curricular materials (at least ten TE's, a hundred or so pre-decodable books, phonics and phonemic awareness workbooks, and usually some fuzzy, loveable little puppet used to communicate the daily goals with the students), not to mention the hoards of advice from more seasoned teachers. My enthusiasm quickly diminished as I tried to plan lessons that included every part of the ELA curriculum into my four hour time-block with my students, not to mention math, science, social studies, recess, library, art projects, social activities, etc., etc., etc.!

As I began to accumulate a little more experience, I came to see that despite the curriculum's bulk, it was lacking in providing my students with the type of experiences they need to build the foundational skills that great readers and writers possess. Once I recognized this, I sought out advice from those more seasoned teachers. This time, they shared with me journaling strategies and their procedures for centers; and time and time again they mentioned something called "Writer's Workshop."

Objectives

In my unit, I will help my students produce written work in the form that is most suitable to their age and beginning skill level: picture drawing. I want to take away the stress of knowing what letters are, uppercase vs. lowercase, how to print them and what sound they represent. I want the students to understand that they are storytellers and that they are able to communicate those stories and *be writers* by drawing images that represent what they are thinking. This three-week unit will be the foundation of a year-long writer's workshop program. I will be establishing the practices and procedures of the program that will let the students grow and progress at their own rate. My unit will be the first step of the writer's workshop, which will help the students understand and see that they have a lot of ideas and stories to share with the world through their drawings, in a safe, esteem-building setting. As Angela Beyhmer explains, "Many kids find drawings to be a safe way to

create symbolic representations of what they want to say, what stories they want to tell." ⁴

My students are so enthusiastic about school and learning, but need the proper encouragement and guidance to bottle that enthusiasm and maintain it throughout the school year. In setting up an environment and writer's workshop that is developmentally appropriate, I am ensuring that they will continue to be excited about learning. Furthermore, an appropriate writer's workshop will allow the students to be successful and to be challenged at the same time. When they are able to meet and conquer these challenges, they become stronger writers and their enthusiasm is limitless. I want my students to feel capable and have a sense of pride in their writing, regardless of their stage in the writing process. This is a huge task in Kindergarten as some students come into the classroom with no experience in a school setting. Others, who have been in preschool, are ready to apply the skills they have acquired to more advanced activities. I find the adaptability and functionality to be the beauty of a thoughtfully developed writer's workshop, and the overarching goal of this unit.

Writer's Workshop and "Kid Writing"

Writer's Workshop is a writing program designed by Lucy M. Calkins. This program is a progression of developmentally appropriate lessons that begin in Kindergarten and continue through fifth grade. Each year, there is a developed theme to the units with a set of skills that build upon the previous year's while at the same time preparing students to continue on into the next year. Calkins has written several series of books on setting up writing and reading programs that aim to meet students where their needs are and move them on at a pace individually suited for them. Calkins exhibits a fine knowledge of teaching practices and provides explanations that any primary grade teacher can relate to in her series of books titled, *The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Writing*"; in her words, "As K-2 teachers, we know that we will have a variety of writers in our classroom. We know there will be a range of ability levels from children who can write 'squiggles and lollipops' to (perhaps) those who can write pages full of conventional sentences." ⁵ These books are great tools for teachers, offering step-by-step instructions for how to set up a workshop, procedures to follow to ensure success in a workshop, as well as strategies to use within the workshops.

A second program that has been created from a combination of Lucy Calkins's Writer's Workshop and core Vygotskian theories is one titled "Kid Writing," which was developed by two primary grade teachers, Eileen G. Feldgus, Ed. D., and Isabell Cardonick, M.Ed. This program was written and geared toward the lower primary grades of Kindergarten and first grade. I find this program to be valuable for my typical set of students because it has the elements of Calkins's workshop while allowing teachers more opportunities to use their district adopted curriculum; thus, the teachers and students are happy with a developmentally appropriate and challenging program, and the administration has little room for objections as the curriculum has not been tossed out the window. Two of the main points of Feldgus and Cardonick's philosophy come directly from Vygotsky's theories of developmentally appropriate practices and the zone of proximal development: "Children learn best in risk-free environments with high levels of challenge and support," and "Children learn best through social interaction with a more knowledgeable peer or adult." ⁶ With the guidance of Feldgus and Cardonick, teachers can create an environment in which students are free to learn at their own pace, while still being challenged at a comfortable level. When the students reach a point of confusion or tension in their learning, they are encouraged to seek adult and peer help. Conversely, the guiding adult or more

"knowledgeable" peer is fine tuning his or her own skills when providing that assistance in the role of an expert.

A second benefit I see in Feldgus and Cardonick's writing program is the continued emphasis on writing throughout the entire day and on linking those lessons to phonemic and phonetic awareness—but only when the child is ready to do so. This point also recalls Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." ⁷ Again, the child is working at a level of comfortable challenge. As we all know, our students come to us with varying levels of literacy development, social-emotional develop, and maturity. In allowing every student to work at a rate that is suited for him or her, we take away the stress and anxiety that some may feel when they look at a phonics workbook only to see a strange combination of lines and curves, while the teacher goes on to name these figures and urge the students to copy them. While some students may come to us ready to name the letters, give their sounds, and practice writing them on lined paper, others have not developed that skill and may need to learn to hold a pencil before they even begin to think about forming the letters.

Many recent studies support the idea that children who are of Kindergarten age are not physically or cognitively ready to master or even practice handwriting until later on in the school year. In one study conducted by Stephen Rushton and Elizabeth Larkin titled "Shaping the Learning Environment: Connecting Developmentally Appropriate Practices to Brain Research," the authors provide a list of the numerous parts of the brain that are active when simply picking up a book to read: "For instance, reading a book requires that the child picks up a book, (activating the motor cortex: movement); she looks at the words, (activating the occipital lobe: vision); she attempts to decipher words (activating the temporal lobe: language); and finally, she begins to think about what the words mean (activating the frontal lobe: reasoning)." ⁸ A task that seems so simple, picking up a picture book to view or read, involves several parts of the brain and uses several skills. If this activity is so taxing, imagine how much it takes to see a letter, interpret it, pick up a pencil, and copy the form. Are we asking too much of our students too soon? I say the answer to that question is, yes. In a case study titled "Relationship Between Visual-Motor Integration and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten: A Modified Replication Study," Christopher J. Daly, Gail T. Kelley, and Andrea Krauss found that "Developmentally, a kindergarten age child is sharpening fine motor skills and visual perceptual skills that together enable them to perform activities requiring visual-motor integration, specifically handwriting." ⁹ Most kindergarten students are not equipped with the visual motor skills needed to learn to form the figures of the alphabet, let alone ready to decipher the images and symbols that make up written language. To many children the letters of the alphabet are recognizable only because they see them everywhere they go, but not because they have had a chance to decode the symbols and images. What Lucy Calkins, Eileen Feldgus and Isabell Cardonick attempt to do is set up a structure or frame for a writing program that allows teachers to modify it in order to meet the needs of their students.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices and Picture Writing

By beginning this unit early on in the school year, I will be able to disconnect the link between printing and writing that is made in our district's ELA curriculum. It is clear to all of us that our students need to develop phonics skills and have a strong foundation of phonemic awareness, but as today's kindergarten pushes its students to read, write, and compute, we tend to forget about what they need when they walk in the classroom. There is so much we want to achieve with them that the curriculums tend to push students to master letter identification and production early on in the year. While these are two skills that we will cover, and hopefully master by the end of the year, this unit allows the students to tackle these skills at their own pace. It does not assume that they are all in the same developmental spot and will work at the same rate. In the article "Relationship Between Visuomotor and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten," Marsha J. Weil and Susan J. Cunningham Amundson discuss handwriting from an occupational therapist's point-of-view; they explain the penalties of beginning handwriting too early in the year, "Some children are taught handwriting before they acquire adequate prerequisites for handwriting skills. Children who are not ready to write may become discouraged and develop poor writing habits that could be difficult to correct later." ¹⁰ Not only is it inappropriate to begin handwriting so early in the year when the majority of students are not ready to tackle it, but it can cause handwriting problems that will need to be worked on down the road.

A Brief History of Humankind & Written Language

Since the beginning of human society, there has been a need for some sort of communication to help people share the earth in peace and harmony. It is an inherently natural desire for man to want to communicate with those around him, conveying his needs, thoughts and emotions. For many years this was done with physical actions and reactions accompanied by sounds or grunts. After some time, as man became more sophisticated, so did the way in which he wanted to communicate. In a book on the origins of writing titled *The Study of Writing: The Foundations of Grammatology*, Ignace Jay Gelb explains how communication progressed from movement and sound, to a more concrete form: "The need for finding a way to convey thoughts and feelings in a form not limited by time or space led to the development of methods of communication by means of (1) objects and (2) markings on objects or any solid material." ¹¹ The time when written language began is similar to the stage of writing in which my students come to me in August. They have had a few years of learning to communicate their needs, thoughts and emotions through physical movement, sounds, and grunts, as well as oral language. It is my job to get them from this stage to that of communicating in a more tangible way.

Much like my students, humans began the aforementioned practice by drawing images. There are countless studies, essays, and documented images that support this idea. One such book dedicated to this belief is by Harry M. Raphaelian titled, *Signs of Life: A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols*. In his book he writes, "The first man-made symbols — images with meaning — come to us in the form of pictures, drawings and paintings preserved on cave walls or scratched and incised with sharp stone tools on bone, shell and ivory." ¹² Before any symbol or letter system was created, man relied on images and pictures to communicate with others. There were not yet abstract letter-images with phonetic connections to use as humans were not ready for this. Similarly, many of my students are not ready to take the jump from communicating through oral language to writing letters and words. Drawing pictures is the most natural next step for the majority of them, such as it

was thousands of years ago for man-kind itself. Anne Haas Dyson of UC Berkley adds that drawing pictures before learning to write letters and words serves as a sturdy and stable bridge between the two skills: "children's understanding of the symbol system of drawing (of using lines and curves to represent objects) may serve as a transition to their initial understanding of the symbol system or writing (of using the lines and curves of letters to represent the names of objects)." ¹³ As a teacher I must guide my students through this transition, allowing each student the time he or she needs to bridge that gap. By implementing a developmentally appropriate writer's workshop, I can steer my students down the path from drawing pictures in their story writing to using letters in their story writing (a goal to be approached much later in the year).

Kinder-Writer's Workshop

As I find the practices and strategies of both Calkins's and Feldgus and Cardonick's programs to be appropriate for my grade level, I would like to start off the year by designing and implementing a "Kinder-Writer's Workshop" of my own. However, in studying with my seminar coordinator and seminar group, I realized that there are a few tweaks I would like to make in my own class. My unit is going to be the foundation to our writing workshop. In setting up this program, I want to share with my students a brief but relatable history of written languages. I want each and every student to know, "You are an author" (Calkins). ¹⁴ I want them to take value in this not only by hearing me repeat it to them everyday, but also by learning how written language came to be, and started much in the way which they will—by drawing pictures. As writing and reading go hand in hand, I want my students to be able to *read* a sequence of images or pictures from a text. In doing this, they will experiment with making meaning with images and will see how their pictures, when put in sequential order, can be read as a text.

In my three-week unit, I will establish the practices and procedures as well as the reasoning behind implementing our very own Writer's Workshop. I will develop a sequence of lessons that will help my students learn to recognize the basic organization of a story (beginning, middle, and end), as well as help them to understand that a great deal of information can be communicated in the drawings they make to tell their stories. I will do this by showing my students examples of Hieroglyphics and explaining how its symbols served as the basis for the first written language. These examples will help them make the connection between images and communicating meaning in pictures and/or images.

We will then take a look at several familiar picture books, viewing only the images to create the story, being sure to identify its beginning, middle, and end. Finally, I will guide the students through an activity of writing their own book about a memorable event that has occurred in the first few weeks of school, again identifying the beginning, middle, and end.

The activities in this unit will strengthen the students' understanding of what it means to be a writer, as well as give them the confidence and enthusiasm they need to participate in our year-long workshop.

Strategies

The strategies that I will use in this unit are an attempt to meet the three main needs that I see my students as having. The first strategy will be to set up the Kinder-Writers Workshop within the first two weeks of school. Within our workshop, I will utilize such strategies as conducting a morning message lesson at the beginning of each day, daily journaling activities, and big book read-aloud (or "view-aloud"). During our read-alouds, I will check for understanding through comprehension questions and by guiding the students through their discussions.

Two major parts of Calkins's writer's workshop involve conducting daily mini-lessons that are aimed at teaching specific writing skills and encouraging students to share their writing. In this unit, I will use the mini-lesson time to empower my students as writers so that they are ready to conquer the tasks of writer's workshop. I will also build background of written languages by presenting examples of early writing systems (Hieroglyphics, rock art, Greek vase art) and prompting students in their responses to each. I will guide them to explore the connection between these ancient forms of writing and our workshop. In our daily discussions, I will encourage students to discuss it with their elbow partner (person sitting next to them on the carpet).

After reading the many articles and books on the developmentally appropriateness of certain strategies, I have decided to set up several stations during our centers time that aim to help students develop fine motor skills. Some of these activities will include manipulating play-dough, sand-table play, lacing beads and noodles, using markers and crayons to trace lines, curves and shapes. These activities will help students build muscle in their hand and fingers as well as help to develop hand-eye coordination or visual-motor skills.

Activities

Activity One: An Introduction to Ancient Writing

Objective: Students will make a connection between their developmentally appropriate stage in the writing process—drawing pictures—and how humans originally communicated through writing—drawing pictures.

Focus: Students will observe early examples of writing (Egyptian hieroglyphics), discuss what they may have symbolized, and create their own cartouches using hieroglyphic stamps.

Materials: I want to provide the students with a wide range of hieroglyphic images to view and discuss. I will have an assortment of books on Egypt to share with class, including *Fun With Hieroglyphics* by Catherine Roehrig and *Hieroglyphs* by Joyce Milton and Charles Micucci. I will also use the Apple iPad that is available for use with permission from the principal. I will be able to do a simple search on any web browser and share the images with my students using the iPad and the projector. To make the cartouches, I will use small pieces of cardboard cut into ovals and covered with a thin layer of play dough or clay, hieroglyphic stamps, permanent ink-pads in assorted colors, and small lunch trays to hold the supplies at each table.

Procedure:

-Gather on the carpet in front of the projector screen. Share with children the fact that they are in Kindergarten to learn to do many things and that they will grow a lot during the course of the year. But they may not know that they are already writers, even as they sit on the rug in front of me, even if they do not know how to spell their names, even if they have never written a single letter in their life!

-Show images of ancient hieroglyphics (be sure to use several images of cartouches) and ask students to share their ideas about what they think the images are, where they are, and what might they be for (allow students to share out ideas, prompting with questions if needed: What does that look like to you [pointing to a specific symbol]? Have you ever seen a picture that looks similar? Where do you think these pictures are? In a building, outside on a tree, where might they be?)

-Reveal to the students that these symbols and images are from the first ever ABC's—hieroglyphics! Explain how the images are read, left to right and right to left. Share with students how the symbols translate to the English alphabet (translation tables can be found online at www.chamois.k12.mo.us or in the Catherine Roehrig book).

-Model for students the procedure of creating a cartouche. Talk them through the process, step-by-step.

-Send students to their tables, passing out a cartouche to each. At each table, in the center, is a tray with five to six of the hieroglyphic stamps, and three to four stamp pads.

-Once students are done, bring their cartouches outside and place in the sun to dry.

Closing:

-Call students back to the carpet to share with their elbow partner which symbols they used to make their cartouche.

-Use the translation chart to translate a word from our daily schedule to hieroglyphics (recess, lunch, writing, etc.).

Activity Two: Introducing Kinder-Writing Workshop

Objective: Students will be introduced to the procedures and routines of our writer's workshop. Students will also have the chance to be a writer, after watching the teacher model developmentally appropriate writing practices.

Focus: Students will participate in their first mini-lesson that is designed to demonstrate that they are full of writing ideas. They will watch as I model how to brainstorm writing ideas, choose a focus idea, and then draw a picture to show my idea. They will share aloud their ideas and then return to their tables to create their first kinder-writer's workshop paper.

Materials: Large pad of chart paper or two large sheets of white butcher paper—one sheet is designed as a replica of the student's writing paper—whichever style works best for your students, countless printable resources can be found online (I like the writing paper found on *Teachers Pay Teacher* under "Mrs. I's Class"), markers, students sheets of writing paper, supply baskets at each table (each basket containing several pencils, crayon boxes, marker sets, and erasers).

Procedure:

- Gather with students on the carpet, in front of easel board with blank chart paper and markers.
- Remind the students from previous lessons that they are writers right now; they are all ready to write as soon as they choose an idea.
- Guide them through the process of thinking about a topic by thinking about what they know. Make a list of things that I like, eventually focusing on places where I like to go.
- Make a list of places that the students like to go.
- Model how to draw a picture of me at the beach (a place that I like to go).
- Model how to add simple details and colors to writing.
- Review the list of places the students helped to create on the chart paper.
- Students tell their elbow partner a place they like to go that they will write about at their seats.
- Send students to their tables; on their way they take a sheet of writing paper to their seats.
- Remind students of workshop rules and timing.
- Walk around and conference with students as needed (as this is our first time writing at our tables, conferencing time will be minimal).

Closing:

- Call students to the carpet with their writing and allow any students who wants to share to stand on the "writer's stage" (a stool placed in front of the carpet) and share their writing.

Assessment:

- Collect students' writing to do a quick check and evaluation (I like to save their first writing of the year and send it home on the last day of school, so the students and their parents can see how far their writing has come in the school year).

Extensions:

- If you have noticed that your group of students contains enough children who are ready to write letter-strings or letters, the next day you can begin with a mini-lesson on the topic or call those specific students to the carpet for a conferencing session on writing letters or symbols for each sound they hear.

Activity Three: How to Write a Three-Part Story (A two-part lesson)

Objective: Students will participate in a writer's workshop mini-lesson that pushes them to stretch their one-page writings into a three-page story. They will read a story (taken from the Treasures curriculum) as displayed in three sequence cards and observe how a story can be told in three parts, beginning, middle, and end.

Focus: They will see this process in reverse as I share a story with them, taken from the Treasure's curriculum

sequencing cards. After "reading" the story in the three images representing beginning, middle, and end, students will brainstorm activities we've done at school, breaking each of them down into three steps. We will then work as a whole group to choose a significant event that has occurred in school thus far, to break it into three parts, and to draw each part (teacher modeling the writing).

Materials: Large pad of chart paper, or four large sheets of plain, white butcher paper, markers, students sheets of writing paper (three pages stapled together like a book for each child), supply baskets at each table (pencils, crayons, markers and erasers), *Apple Farmer Annie* by Monica Wellington sequencing cards from Treasures curriculum (choosing the best three to tell the story and stapled together, out of the six cards provided), a teacher-written book in the same writer's workshop format that the students will use in Day 2 of the lesson.

Procedure (Day 1):

-Gather students on the carpet in the kinder-writing workshop area in front of the easel board and tell them that you want to begin the workshop by telling them a story.

-Share the "story" *Apple Farmer Annie* with the students by looking at each page, discussing what is happening, and describing the scenario in each picture.

-After discussing each page of the book, begin to formulate a story that links the pages together as a story (keeping it as simple as possible, based on the class' skill level).

-Show students the teacher written three-part book (this should be a book that you have already created in the writer's workshop format: a simple beginning, middle, and end story with a simple plot and illustrations).

-Ask questions to guide the students' thinking and get them ready for the next day's lesson: Where can you get ideas for your story? Can you think about something exciting that happened to you since you've been in Kindergarten? Maybe you went on a special trip last summer and want to make that into your story.

-Record students' ideas on the chart paper, with their names next to their idea and save for tomorrow.

Closing:

-Have students turn to a partner and share other ideas for a story.

Procedure(Day 2):

-Gather on the carpet for writer's workshop, in front of the easel board with chart paper and yesterday's list of student ideas for story writing.

-Review story of *Apple Farmer Annie* as well as the teacher-written book you shared with the students on the previous day. Be sure to use keywords: beginning, middle, end, sequencing.

-Share with students a day that you can remember as special since the school year began, recalling three major events that day.

-With students, repeat the three events and count them out numerous times.

-Model making your story into a book by writing it in front of the students, with their guidance and assistance

(What was the middle part? What could I draw to show that? Are there any details I can add to make this page more interesting?)

-Review the students' list of story ideas from yesterday and ask if there are any more ideas they would like to add today, recording their responses on the chart paper.

-Have students stand and mingle-mingle on the carpet (walk around the carpet area, finding a new spot once the music has stopped), then share their story idea with their elbow partner. (If time permits, I might put them in quick groups of four and have each small group share—four ideas is better than two!)

-Send students to their seats, stopping at the writer's station to get their "books" (three regular workshop writing papers stapled to look like a book).

-Allow students time to think at their seats and write.

-Circulate, prompting with story ideas or sequencing tips when needed. I like to encourage the students to first ask their tablemates for help.

Closing:

-Call students back to the carpet after ten to fifteen minutes, leaving their books on their tables to be collected.

-Choose two to three students to share their books with the class (I choose students who have a firm grasp of the concept or who are headed in the right direction. I might also choose students who have effective details or have tried to add letters; just to give the class a variety of examples to look at).

Bibliography

Beyhmer, Angela. "Kindergarten Writing Workshop." *The Reading Teacher* 57, no. 1 (2003): 25. A useful article that explains the reasoning behind beginning writer's workshop in Kindergarten with drawing pictures.

Calkins, Lucy. *The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: FirstHand, 2003. A useful tool in implementing a writer's workshop.

_____. *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum*. Portsmouth, NH: FirstHand, 2003. Another useful guide in setting up a writer's workshop and keeping the momentum going for all grades.

Daly, C. J., G. T. Kelley, and A. Krauss. "Relationship Between Visual-Motor Integration and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten: A Modified Replication Study." *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 57, no. 4 (2003): 459-462. A study conducted to examine the relationship between hand-writing skills and brain development in Kindergarteners.

Dyson, Anne Haas. "Transitions and Tensions: Interrelationships Between the Drawing, Talking, and Dictating of Young Children." *Research in the Teaching of English* 20, no. 4 (1986): 379-409. An article that uses Vygotsky's theories and practices to exhibit the developmental stages of writing: speaking, drawing, letter and word writing.

Feldgus, Eileen G., and Isabell Cardonick. *Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshop*. Bothell, Wash.: Wright Group, 1999. A wonderful workbook for any teacher looking to incorporate a writer's workshop that includes phonetic skills and developmentally appropriate practices.

Gelb, Ignace Jay. *The Study of Writing: The Foundations of Grammatology*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1952. An interesting book listing the various forms of early writing systems and how they came to be.

Gombert, Jean Emile, and Michel Fayol. "Writing in Pre-literate Children." *Learning and Instruction* 2, no. 1 (1992): 23-41. An article that explores the progression of young children from spoken word to written word.

Hipple, Marjorie L. "Journal Writing In Kindergarten." *Language Arts* 62, no. 3 (1985): 258. An article written by a kindergarten teacher on the effectiveness of journal writing in a kindergarten classroom.

Olshansky, Beth. "Making Writing a Work of Art: Image-Making Within the Writing Process." *Language Arts* 71, no. 1 (1994): 522-523. An article describing the benefits of linking art and drawing with writing.

Raphaelian, Harry M. *Signs of Life; A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols*. [1st ed. New York: A. Sivas, 1957. An informative account of how we written language came to be.

Rushton, Stephen, and Elizabeth Larkin. "Shaping the Learning Environment: Connecting Developmentally Appropriate Practices to Brain Research." *Early Childhood Education* 29, no. 1 (2001): 29. An article exploring recent trends in teaching practices and what the kindergarten child's brain is developmentally ready to accomplish.

Senner, Wayne M. *The Origins of Writing*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. A book of essays explaining the lengthy process of how written language came to be.

V

Bibliography

Beyhmer, Angela. "Kindergarten Writing Workshop." *The Reading Teacher* 57, no. 1 (2003): 25. A useful article that explains the reasoning behind beginning writer's workshop in Kindergarten with drawing pictures.

Calkins, Lucy. *The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: FirstHand, 2003. A useful tool in implementing a writer's workshop.

_____. *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum*. Portsmouth, NH: FirstHand, 2003. Another useful guide in setting up a writer's workshop and keeping the momentum going for all grades.

Daly, C. J., G. T. Kelley, and A. Krauss. "Relationship Between Visual-Motor Integration and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten: A Modified Replication Study." *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 57, no. 4 (2003): 459-462. A study conducted to examine the relationship between hand-writing skills and brain development in Kindergarteners.

Dyson, Anne Haas. "Transitions and Tensions: Interrelationships Between the Drawing, Talking, and Dictating of Young Children." *Research in the Teaching of English* 20, no. 4 (1986): 379-409. An article that uses Vygotsky's theories and practices to exhibit the developmental stages of writing: speaking, drawing, letter and word writing.

Feldgus, Eileen G., and Isabell Cardonick. *Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshop*. Bothell, Wash.: Wright Group, 1999. A wonderful workbook for any teacher looking to incorporate a writer's workshop that includes phonetic skills and developmentally appropriate practices.

Gelb, Ignace Jay. *The Study of Writing: The Foundations of Grammatology*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1952. An interesting book listing the various forms of early writing systems and how they came to be.

Gombert, Jean Emile, and Michel Fayol. "Writing in Preliterate Children." *Learning and Instruction* 2, no. 1 (1992): 23-41. An article that explores the progression of young children from spoken word to written word.

Hipple, Marjorie L. "Journal Writing In Kindergarten." *Language Arts* 62, no. 3 (1985): 258. An article written by a kindergarten teacher on the effectiveness of journal writing in a kindergarten classroom.

Olshansky, Beth. "Making Writing a Work of Art: Image-Making Within the Writing Process." *Language Arts* 71, no. 1 (1994): 522-523. An article describing the benefits of linking art and drawing with writing.

Raphaelian, Harry M. *Signs of Life; A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols*. [1st ed. New York: A. Sivas, 1957. An informative account of how we written language came to be.

Rushton, Stephen, and Elizabeth Larkin. "Shaping the Learning Environment: Connecting Developmentally Appropriate Practices to Brain Research." *Early Childhood Education* 29, no. 1 (2001): 29. An article exploring recent trends in teaching practices and what the kindergarten child's brain is developmentally ready to accomplish.

Senner, Wayne M. *The Origins of Writing*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. A book of essays explaining the lengthy process of how written language came to be.

Vygotsky, L. S., R. W. Rieber, and Aaron S. Carton. *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky*. New York: Plenum Press, 1987. A look at Vygotsky's theories of language acquisition and the development of various parts of the brain.

Weil, Marsha J., and Susan J. Cunningham Amundson. "Relationship Between Visuomotor and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten." *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 48, no. 11 (1994): 982. An eye-opening (or re-opening) study conducted on what we expect Kindergarteners to do and what they are developmentally ready to do.

Notes

1. www.pvusd.k12.ca.us Pajaro Valley Unified School District *I Can Do Standards!*
2. Jean Emile Gombert and Michel Fayol, "Writing in Preliterate Children," 31.
3. Marjorie L. Hipple, "Journal Writing in Kindergarten," 258.
4. Angela Beyhmer, "Kindergarten Writing Workshop," 25.
5. Lucy Calkins, *The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Writing*, 8-9.
6. Eileen G. Feldgus and Isabell Cardonick, *Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals and Writing Workshop*, 9.

7. Lev S. Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky*, 86.
8. Stephen Rushton and Elizabeth Larkin, "Shaping the Learning Environment: Connecting Developmentally Appropriate Practices to Brain Research," 28.
9. Christopher J. Daly, Gail T. Kelley and Andrea Krauss, "Relationship Between Visual-Motor Integration and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten: A Modified Replication Study," 459.
10. Marsha J. Weil and Susan J. Cunningham Amundson, "Relationship Between Visuomotor and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten," 982.
11. Ingnace Jay Gelb, *The Study of Writing: The Foundations of Grammatology*, 4.
12. Harry M. Raphaelian, *Signs of Life: A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols*, 2.
13. Anne Haas Dyson, "Transitions and Tensions: Interrelationships between the Drawing, Talking, and Dictating of Young Children," 380.
14. Lucy M. Calkins, *Units of study for primary writing: a yearlong curriculum*, 56.

Internet Sources and Children's Resources

Ancientscripts.com- A Compendium of World-wide Writing Systems From Prehistory to Today
(www.ancientscripts.com)

California Department of Education (www.cde.ca.gov)

Osage County School District (www.chamois.k12.mo.us)

History Discussion Forum (www.historum.com)

Pajaro Valley Unified School District (www.pvusd.k12.ca.us)

Rich East High School Ancient Civilization Studies (www.richeast.org)

Robert Sanders Elementary School website (www.rs.mpsed.org)

Teachers Pay Teachers (www.teacherspayteachers.com)

Milton, Joyce and Charles Micucci, *Hieroglyphs*. Grosset and Dunlap, 2000.

Roehrig, Catherine, *Fun With Hieroglyphics*. New York, New York. 1990.

Wellington, Monica, *Apple Farmer Annie*. Dutton Children's Books, New York. 2001.

(The Treasures curriculum provides this book as a Big Book as well as sequencing cards. If you do not have Treasures, you can photocopy three major scenes from the story to use as your book for Lesson three).

Appendix

California Common Core Standards Addressed: In completing this unit, the students will have met the following standards for writing at the Kindergarten level:

K.W.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Students draw pictures in our "Kinder Writer's Workshop" to write about an event that is significant to them, which has occurred since the first day of school.

K.W.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Students will participate in "Kinder Writer's Workshop" to draw pictures that tell about a place that they like to visit.

K.W.5 With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

Students will consult with their peers and teacher in pre-writing activities conducted before they are sent to their seats to write. The teacher will use guiding questions to prompt the discussions between students and student-teacher.

Vygotsky, L. S., R. W. Rieber, and Aaron S. Carton. *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky*. New York: Plenum Press, 1987. A look at Vygotsky's theories of language acquisition and the development of various parts of the brain.

Weil, Marsha J., and Susan J. Cunningham Amundson. "Relationship Between Visuomotor and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten." *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 48, no. 11 (1994): 982. An eye-opening (or re-opening) study conducted on what we expect Kindergarteners to do and what they are developmentally ready to do.

Notes

1. www.pvusd.k12.ca.us Pajaro Valley Unified School District *I Can Do Standards!*
2. Jean Emile Gombert and Michel Fayol, "Writing in Preliterate Children," 31.
3. Marjorie L. Hipple, "Journal Writing in Kindergarten," 258.
4. Angela Beyhmer, "Kindergarten Writing Workshop," 25.
5. Lucy Calkins, *The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Writing*, 8-9.

6. Eileen G. Feldgus and Isabell Cardonick, *Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals and Writing Workshop*, 9.
7. Lev S. Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky*, 86.
8. Stephen Rushton and Elizabeth Larkin, "Shaping the Learning Environment: Connecting Developmentally Appropriate Practices to Brain Research," 28.
9. Christopher J. Daly, Gail T. Kelley and Andrea Krauss, "Relationship Between Visual-Motor Integration and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten: A Modified Replication Study," 459.
10. Marsha J. Weil and Susan J. Cunningham Amundson, "Relationship Between Visuomotor and Handwriting Skills of Children in Kindergarten," 982.
11. Ingnace Jay Gelb, *The Study of Writing: The Foundations of Grammatology*, 4.
12. Harry M. Raphaelian, *Signs of Life: A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols*, 2.
13. Anne Haas Dyson, "Transitions and Tensions: Interrelationships between the Drawing, Talking, and Dictating of Young Children," 380.
14. Lucy M. Calkins, *Units of study for primary writing: a yearlong curriculum*, 56.

Internet Sources and Children's Resources

Ancientscripts.com- A Compendium of World-wide Writing Systems From Prehistory to Today
(www.ancientscripts.com)

California Department of Education (www.cde.ca.gov)

Osage County School District (www.chamois.k12.mo.us)

History Discussion Forum (www.historum.com)

Pajaro Valley Unified School District (www.pvUSD.k12.ca.us)

Rich East High School Ancient Civilization Studies (www.richeast.org)

Robert Sanders Elementary School website (www.rs.mpsd.org)

Teachers Pay Teachers (www.teacherspayteachers.com)

Milton, Joyce and Charles Micucci, *Hieroglyphs*. Grosset and Dunlap, 2000.

Roehrig, Catherine, *Fun With Hieroglyphics*. New York, New York. 1990.

Wellington, Monica, *Apple Farmer Annie*. Dutton Children's Books, New York. 2001.

(The Treasures curriculum provides this book as a Big Book as well as sequencing cards. If you do not have Treasures, you can photocopy three major scenes from the story to use as your book for Lesson three).

Appendix

California Common Core Standards Addressed: In completing this unit, the students will have met the following standards for writing at the Kindergarten level:

K.W.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Students draw pictures in our "Kinder Writer's Workshop" to write about an event that is significant to them, which has occurred since the first day of school.

K.W.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Students will participate in "Kinder Writer's Workshop" to draw pictures that tell about a place that they like to visit.

K.W.5 With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

Students will consult with their peers and teacher in pre-writing activities conducted before they are sent to their seats to write. The teacher will use guiding questions to prompt the discussions between students and student-teacher.

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use