

WRITING

Pre-Literate:

Scribbles and a random assortment of marks on a child's paper are honored as expressive mark making and taught as "writing" and "storytelling". Writers are using these marks, even if they do not resemble print, to show ideas. In the middle of this stage, letter and number-like forms begin to emerge. Children will soon begin to tell about their own writing and drawings. Later in the phase, children begin to write legible letters that tell us they know more about writing. They may write strings of letters together (usually uppercase and with no spacing). While children are developing awareness of the sound-to-symbol relationship, they are not matching most sounds in print yet. These learners benefit from dictating a story to parents and teachers to gain an understanding that our marks carry meaning. Play with mark making with a various writing and drawing tools is highly encouraged to develop fine motor skills. Reading with adults allows these learners to develop concept of print (such as left to right directionality) that they will eventually incorporate into their own writing.

Emergent:

At this stage, beginning sounds emerge and children begin to see the differences between a letter and a word. Although they may not use spacing consistently yet. As letter sound knowledge develops, consonants will begin to represent words. Children often mix upper and lowercase letters in their writing. Their message makes sense and matches the picture, especially when they choose the topic. Usually they write sentences that tell ideas. Later in this phase, children will begin using spaces between words more consistently and will hear sounds in the beginning, middle, and end of words, including vowels. They may correctly spell some sight words, friends' or family names, and environmental print, but other words are spelled the way that they sound. Their writing is mostly readable. While children at this stage are often eager to share their writing, it is imperative that more proficient writers and adults do not focus too much on editing for conventional spelling. Kids at this stage will be supplied with resources for spelling some sight words correctly, but should mostly be encouraged to use their "brave spelling" as a way to build confidence and independence. They will begin to receive instruction on basic sentence structure (noun and verb) and start to use simple sentences. This is the phase where brainstormed ideas then become physical writing. Writers will practice sequential storytelling and employ parts of the writing process with support.

They will be introduced to the use of graphic organizers as a prewriting/organizational tool. List making and letter writing can also be introduced at this stage to provide children with more authentic reasons to practice writing. These writers may stretch their stories across several pages and often enjoy making books. They write mostly personal narratives, informational text about areas of interest or fiction with favorite characters.

Transitional:

This writing is readable and approaches conventional spelling. The writing is interspersed with words that are in standard form and have standard letter patterns. While "brave spelling" is still encouraged, writers can expect to edit for correct spelling during the editing phase of the process. Writers at this stage are beginning to practice the writing process more independently (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing). They are also

beginning to build writing stamina to write more for longer periods of time. These writers use authors and peers as mentors for their own writing and start identifying author's purpose. They are beginning to understand and explore different genres of writing and may enjoy making books similar to those that they read. Instruction in word study and strategies for brainstorming, collecting, and developing ideas becomes a focus in teaching. This helps writers see that opportunities for writing are everywhere, and that we all have something to say. "Publishing" and sharing writing with younger students, peers, and adults is a great way to motivate writers at this stage. Gentle reminders that "it's a process" and "Sometimes it feels hard" go a long way for them!

Fluency 1:

Children in this phase can spell most words correctly and are developing an understanding of root words, compound words, and contractions. This understanding helps them spell similar words. These writers have a handle of basic punctuation marks and start being able to distinguish between paragraphs. They start to incorporate transitions and understand the concept that a paragraph makes up a topic sentence with supporting related details. Instruction in the specific stages of the writing process, along with the use of graphic organizers help students gain independence, so the skills are internalized. They sustain independent writing for longer periods of time and begin to take writing on as a positive challenge, voicing their struggles, and being more open to revision when conferencing with teachers and peers. Additionally, they begin developing an at-home writing process (letter writing, journaling, expanding on in-class compositions). They use writing as a creative form of expression, to explore their inner and outer worlds and to teach others. Structure, audience, purpose, voice, and the elaboration of ideas are accessible writing traits to focus on when teaching these learners.

Fluency 2:

These writers embrace the entire writing process (prewriting, drafting, revision), participate in workshopping, give and receive constructive feedback, contribute productively in group discussions, develop an independent consistent writing practice, experiment with different organizational strategies for a variety of compositional forms, dive deeper into punctuation and parts of speech, and use complex sentences. This phase is where the stage is set to begin exploring points of view and tone. Students are ready to constructively and effectively evaluate and critique others' written work and really envelop the revision process. They also reach for writing resources independently (Thesaurus', Dictionaries, learning aids).

Fluency 3:

These students have developed a confidence in their writing ability and a solid grasp of foundational skills. They are ready to smooth the rough edges in their writing, make powerful word choices, use compound, complex, and compound complex sentences. and further their mastery of written communication skills. Additionally, they have a comprehensive understanding of the elements of a story, including characterization and point of view, as well as the construction of a narrative arc. They will further develop skills using descriptive language (literary devices). They have writing stamina.

READING

Pre-Literate:

These readers need enriching and enjoyable experiences with books, especially picture books. Students can become comfortable with them, even before they start reading independently, by telling stories from the pictures, recognizing letters and words, and even language patterns. They are able to work with concepts of print and are at the beginning stages of developing the ability to focus attention in letter-sound relationships. Through guided reading practices, children begin to make predictions about what they are reading. Children at this stage fall in love with the world of books. Alphabet books, rhyming books, songs, poems, and books with predictable text patterns are favorites for developing phonemic awareness.

Emergent:

These readers are able to use several strategies to predict a word, often using pictures to confirm predictions. They have a stronger knowledge of letter sounds and are beginning to recognize sight words and environmental print. They understand letter-sound relationships, and that sounds are put together to make a word. They also understand that a sentence ends in a period, question mark, or exclamation point. Children must pay close attention to visual cues and language patterns to read for meaning. They are aware that a story has a beginning, middle, and end and can discuss the background of a story to better understand the actions within it and the message it carries. It is a time when reading habits of risk-taking, and of predicting and confirming words (while keeping the meaning in mind) are established. Readers show more preference in choosing books (both fiction and nonfiction) and the idea of “just right books” is introduced to develop independent reading skills.

Transitional:

Readers at this stage understand the central idea of a text. They often like to read books in a series as a comprehension strategy; the shared characters, settings, and events support their reading development. These readers like to explore different genres of text and think more about the author’s purpose. They read at a good pace; reading rate and fluency is one sign of a child’s overall comprehension. At this stage, children generally have strategies to figure out most words, but need help with understanding increasingly more difficult text. Readers understand that they are not just reading to get the words right, but for understanding and enjoyment. Higher level picture books and short stories are still a great way to develop comprehension skills and thinking strategies.

Fluency 1:

These readers are confident in their understanding of text and how it works. They are reading independently with broadening preferences. They often enjoy sharing their thinking in book groups or literature circles. They are able to independently track their comprehension (plot recall) as they read. Informational text structures along with text in other genres are studied. Children begin to use books as mentors for their own writing. They are ready to absorb comprehension strategies that assist in discovering themes and author’s message. This effective reader has come to know that text is something that influences people’s ideas. These

readers are reading to learn as opposed to learning to read. Research can be done more independently and the reading/writing connection is integrated into daily life.

Fluency 2:

Readers at this stage are able to scan text for the information they need. They interact with the text through highlighting, underlining, and/or making notes in the margin. They naturally interpret literature from various points of view and confidently prioritize plot details. They enjoy making inferences about the author's purpose and can summarize their opinion as to why it may change throughout the course of the book. In addition, they are able to distinguish how tone affects the overall feeling of the story. They naturally draw correlations between the text and their own lives and/or other books. These readers accurately identify basic literary devices (metaphor, simile, personification) and compare and contrast multiple themes within a single piece

Fluency 3:

These Readers are not intimidated by long pieces of text. They are ready to speak to the nuances of written language. They know the ins and outs of the narrative arc and continue to correctly identify, and get excited about literary devices. At this stage, readers become increasingly interested in character's motivations and author's purpose. They often like to make parallels between the text and historical events. They are interested in discussing/writing about symbolism and can recognize universal themes and compare similar themes from a variety of works. Students in this stage relish in critiquing writing style, plot lines, word choice, and characterization. They eagerly share suggestions for how the text can be improved.