Writing Strategy

Kiora Hall School

north east
autism society

Writing

Our intention is to support children to become writers who:

- Understand what the writing is for, its purpose, which could be to make someone feel happy, to give information, to explain something, to be able to make something
- Have some sense of who the writing is for, the audience, which could be the staff, a friend, Mum, Dad, brother, sister, a character in a book
- Gather ideas, thinking about what they want to write
- Draw upon a store of words and ideas
- Have sufficiently well-developed motor control of their arm, wrist, hand and fingers to hold a pencil effectively, controlling its movement and forming letters, or be able to use a keyboard
- Know about the purpose and organisation of print, the alphabetic code, and words as units of meaning *know about and use letter-sound relationships for writing
- Write a few, then an increasing number of those tricky words which are essential for fluent writing
- Can place an idea, action, or statement within a sentence
- Use the conventional features of different genres: list, label, letter, caption.

It is recognised that, due to physical limitations or neurodiversity, some learners will not write in the conventional way. A pupil's inability to hold a pencil or engage in conventional writing tasks will not limit their ability to communicate in print. Learners are provided with a range of alternative means of 'writing' such as PECS, symbol-supported writing or computer technology.

Physical Development

There are many building blocks that need to be in place before a child can successfully use a pencil to write. Our curriculum is designed to ensure that the pre-requisite skills needed are developed across the school day:

- **Hand and finger strength:** An ability to exert force against resistance using the hands and fingers that allows the necessary muscle power for controlled movement of the pencil.
- **Crossing the mid-line:** The ability to cross the imaginary line running from a person's nose to pelvis that divides the body into left and right sides.
- **Pencil grasp:** The efficiency of how the pencil is held, allowing age-appropriate pencil movement generation.
- **Hand eye coordination:** The ability to process information received from the eyes to control, guide and direct the hands in the performance of a task such as handwriting.
- **Bilateral integration:** Using two hands together with one hand leading (e.g. holding and moving the pencil with the dominant hand while the other hand helps by holding the writing paper).
- **Upper body strength:** The strength and stability provided by the shoulder to allow controlled hand movement for good pencil control.
- **Object manipulation:** The ability to skilfully manipulate tools (including holding and moving pencils and scissors) and controlled use of everyday tools (such as a toothbrush, hairbrush, cutlery).
- **Visual perception:** The brain's ability to interpret and make sense of visual images seen by the eyes, such as letters and numbers.

- **Hand dominance:** The consistent use of one (usually the same) hand for task performance, which allows refined skills to develop.
- **Hand division:** Using just the thumb, index and middle finger for manipulation, leaving the fourth and little finger tucked into the palm stabilizing the other fingers but not participating

Activities to support the development of pre-requisite physical skills in preparation for writing:

- Movement to music
- Hydrotherapy/ Swimming
- Swing therapy
- Funky Fingers
- Wake-Up, Shake-Up
- Action songs
- Sensory exploration / sensory play.

Stages of Writing Development

EYFS/ Ladders A-B

This is the first stage of writing development which can be split into 4 developmental markers, and though the differences are subtle, they do indicate progress.

It begins with the Scribble Stage - this is a form of mark making that purely imitates the idea of writing. The marks will be placed at any point of the page, and will usually involve circular strokes, and random marks.

Giving meaning - children will be able to say, when prompted, what each of these random marks mean.

The Symbolic Stage - This again will start at any point of the page, but now the marks have an intended message. Perhaps there will be pictures (like smiley faces), and some random strokes intended to mimic writing. If you were to ask, then these marks would convey a basic message or idea "I am happy", "I saw a rainbow" etc.

Directional Scribble comes next, and this shows a lot more intent. The attempt to write will be written from left to right, usually in a linear place and pattern. Though there won't be actually words or letters involved (again, this is just a scribble), there will be some intentional message behind the marks.

Mock Letters - this stage of writing development is the child creating their own attempt at letters.

Emergent Ladders B-C

Emergent writing starts with strings of letters and then groups of letters. They'll begin to notice that words are grouped letters, and not a single string. They begin to break up their writing, although these letters won't actually form words yet.

Labelling Pictures - this stage incorporates pictures into the words. For instance, a sentence about a dog might include a picture of a dog in place of the word. This stage involves a lot of relational imagery.

Environmental Print – the children will copy what they see around them. Children are incredibly observant and at this stage of writing they will replicate words that they see around them regularly. Letter reversals are common here, but children are picking up the way that letters interact to form a word.

Transitional Ladders C-D

At this stage, the children move out of the representational into the written. It begins with word representation. The children begin to use single letters to represent sounds, or whole words - "I W H" - "I went home".

The next development point moves into letter representation, where a word might be represented by the first and last letter - "dg" - "dog".

Medial letter sounds end the transitional stage of writing. The children will use their phonic knowledge to make crude, but plausible attempts to spell simple words.

Fluent Ladders D onwards

Beginning Phrase Writing is the first step of the Fluency stage, and it is a way for children to begin conveying an understandable message with their illustrations. There will be a mix of all of the skills they have developed in the earlier stages, but this time the intent will be recognisable - in short this is where writing becomes readable.

Sentence Writing - This is the last stage of writing development. The key identifiers of this stage are structured sentences, attempts at punctuation, with many known words spelled correctly.

Writing progress

At Kiora Hall School, due to the complexity of need of our learners, moving from one stage of development to another can be a lengthy process. Teachers plan a range of activities to provide new and creative opportunities for the children to develop the skills at each stage of development. These opportunities include:

- Mark-making activities in continuous provision areas
- Activities to develop fine motor skills
- Over-writing shapes and letter
- Practising letter formation
- Practising the spelling of key words
- Copying words below a model
- Sentence construction activities/ Colourful Semantics