

## What Is the Writing Process?

By Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.

Learning to write is like learning to read. Both follow a sequential process. Writing requires and combines more basic skills than any other subject area. Taking into account the developmental stages of children, educators teach writing through a series of steps that build on a child's learning experiences. Children are natural-born writers. Young children are usually eager and willing to scribble their ideas on paper. Even at early developmental stages, they are becoming writers. Parents and other caregivers encourage the excitement of writing in their child by being interested and involved with the writing process their child uses in school. The writing process begins in the early grades by exposing students to a variety of quality books read aloud. Children see and hear the ways that authors use language to create and tell a story. Children use the books they hear and read as models for their own writing.



Educators often teach writing to the whole class at one time. As children watch and listen, the teacher models the writing lesson and encourages the children to add their ideas as well. Sometimes writing instruction may occur in small groups with a teacher or teaching assistant. Small group instruction helps children who may need extra attention develop strategies needed to become independent writers. Most teachers in grades as early as kindergarten use a writing process. This process involves several steps to guide children from the beginning of writing to creating a finished piece. Teachers use these steps to provide structure and continuity in all forms of writing.

### The Steps of the Writing Process

- 1. Prewriting** - Children *brainstorm* to generate ideas for writing. They use charts, story webs, and graphic organizers to help develop a word list for writing, decide the type of writing, and audience, and determine the purpose for writing.
- 2. Rough Draft** - Children put their ideas on paper. At this time, they write without major attention to punctuation, grammar, or neatness. Some teachers may refer to this as a *sloppy copy* or *rough draft*. The purpose of the rough draft is for the student to focus on his/her ideas and get them on paper without the distraction or fear of making mistakes in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, or paragraph structure.
- 3. Peer Editing** - Classmates share their rough drafts and make suggestions to each other for improvement. They help each other understand the story by asking *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions. They look for better words to express ideas and discuss among themselves how to make the writing clearer.

**4. Revising** - The children use the suggestions from classmates to make additions or clarify details. Children try to improve their writing on their own. The teacher steps in at this stage and gives feedback.

**5. Editing** - Children work with the teacher and/or peers to correct all mistakes in grammar and spelling.

**6. Final Draft** - Children produce a copy of their writing with all corrections made from the editing stage and then discuss this final draft with the teacher. The teacher offers the last suggestions for improvement at this point.

**7. Publishing** - The writing process is finally at its end. Children publish their writing by making a copy in their neatest handwriting or using a word processor. This is a time for students to celebrate. They may share their pieces with the class during story time, make a class book or a personal portfolio, or send their work to local newspapers or children's magazines for publication!



### **Parent Involvement in the Writing Process**

The writing process provides children with a model that is sequential and consistent. Children of all ages and levels benefit from the structure of the writing process. Parents need to be familiar with the writing process that their child uses in school. Ask your child's teacher to review the process he/she uses in the classroom. Parents are in a wonderful position to provide experiences that translate into meaningful writing by doing the following:

- Provide a print-rich environment at home.
- Read to your child from various genres.
- Involve your child in daily writing by having him/her make lists for the store, label photos, or write letters and thank-you notes.

These activities can make long-lasting impressions on your child. By modeling writing in the home, parents signal to their children that good writing skills are important.

#### Resources

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory– <http://www.ncrel.org>

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory– <http://www.nwrel.org>

Raising Writers: A Guide for Parents– <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/Products/perspectives/sep-oct99/bailes.html>