

How can I increase both the quantity and quality of purposeful voluntary writing produced by my Kindergarten students?

Kelly Pulham

Biography



As a teacher for the Brant County Board of Education, and presently the Grand Erie District School Board, since 1987, Kelly has had the opportunity to work as a classroom teacher in almost all Grades K-8. She spent one year as an Early Literacy Teacher, during which she was privileged to work with primary teachers in twelve schools across two counties, and an excellent team of Early Literacy Teachers with whom she learned a great deal. This is Kelly's fourth year teaching Junior Kindergarten/Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK) at Boston Public School. She feels fortunate to be involved with the Early Years Reading Program and to have the opportunity to be involved with an action research team while engaged in this project.

Kelly is passionate about immersing young children in language experiences that will inspire them to be lifelong readers and writers by choice. She loves teaching kindergarten because the children are so energized by each new discovery they make - and everything is new!

Abstract

Anyone in education today is aware that there is tremendous pressure on the classroom teacher to have students learning more, sooner and faster. While this is not in itself a bad thing, I am very concerned about students being pushed to succeed on a standard of academic success in isolation from consideration for their physical, social and emotional development. As I thought about looking at my writing program and began to consider ways to improve students writing, it was important to me that this not detract from the play happening in my classroom which I consider essential for my students learning and development. Play is how young children learn, and in the kindergarten classroom children may well learn more from each other during these times than they learn from teacher directed lessons. So I thought about what I really wanted to see my students doing. I wanted to see them choosing to write at play time, or at home as well as when they are required to write at school. I wanted them to perceive their writing as purposeful and valued. And I wanted them to begin to develop some writing skills to give them a strong start in Grade 1. I also believe that children learn to write by writing, so I wanted to increase the quantity of writing happening in my classroom. So I began this study to look at ways of encouraging kindergarten children to become writers.

Process

In preparation for this research project I began thinking about my kindergarten timetable and how I could make time for more writing in the classroom. (See appendix 1 for a copy of my timetable.) With the co-operation of my administrator, who does my preparation time coverage, I was able to set aside one quarter of the day for language activities of one form or another. The content of this block is not static, but may include any number of reading, writing or oral language activities. At “Reading For The Love Of It” in February 2001, Sharon Taberski stated in her workshop on Reading Conferences, Guided Reading and Independent Reading: Three Essentials for Developing Strong Readers (and in her book On Solid Ground) that if we had a clear goal in mind for our students learning, we should select activities that would further that goal and not be concerned so much on any given day whether we included modeled, guided, shared and independent reading, writing and making word activities. I value the Four Blocks approach to setting up a language program (refer to the introduction sections of Predictable Charts, Interactive Charts and Writing Mini-Lessons for Kindergarten), but found it impossible to include all the possible activities on any one given day. As I learn more about teaching language it becomes clear that I, as the classroom teacher, have to make choices for my students, based on what I know about their development and the goal I have set for their learning. So with this in mind I set about looking for activities to develop my students interest in writing and to improve their ability to communicate effectively in print.

Our first writing as a class centered on the morning message. This is a strategy used to introduce students to many writing skills by modeling them in front of the whole class (See Getting the Most Out of Morning Message and Other Shared Writing Lessons). I would write a message for the students, stopping to think out loud about what I would write. I talked to them about how to stretch out the sounds in a word by saying it slowly and then writing each sound I/we heard. I used the morning message as a means to introduce the students to the concept of a word by looking for the spaces between words. We counted words and letters in the message and talked about the opening (Dear Class), the message (Today we will go to the gym.), and the closing (Love Mrs. Pulham). Very quickly the students showed interest in taking over the pen, and I invited students to contribute letters or words to the message as they were able.

As luck would have it I was fortunate to have Julie Lumax, our Early Literacy Teacher, come in during September to do a writing lesson with my kindergarten class. She introduced the idea of stories having a beginning, middle and end to my students and each child attempted to tell a story in three pictures (beginning, middle and end). Julie and I recorded the stories in writing for the students. One fourth of the students grasped the idea of a story having a beginning, middle and end. Another fourth of the students had some sense that their picture could tell a story, but not in the detail of the first group. One half of the students did not grasp the idea, or were unable to communicate their idea using this means. I decided that it was critical for my students to gain a better understanding of story, and so we have investigated the concept of story through our reading and writing program for several months.

We have used a story curve to represent the three parts of a story. We read stories at story time and illustrated on chart paper the beginning, middle and end of the story. We made a story plan using this organizer, and then used interactive writing (as described in Interactive Writing by McCarrier, Pinnell and Fountas) to write our own story, “The Gigantic Corn”. This activity replaced the morning message as it was a massive project that involved both kindergarten classes and sixteen instructional days for 15-25 minutes per day. The children patterned their story after stories read in class, The Enormous Potato retold by Aubrey Davis, The Big, Big Carrot an adaptation of The Big, Big Turnip, by Jean Warren published in Story Time Theme-a-saurus and Big Pumpkin story on tape. See appendix 2 for the story the children wrote.



Later in the year we returned to morning message and other shared writing activities. I used shared writing to try to reinforce the skills taught in mini-lessons before our whole class writing time. Another thing I did during shared writing was introduce a few words I wanted the children to learn to read and spell. Words such as a, I, and, the, to, my, it, is and in. We also did some word wall activities with these words during language center time (fishing to match words on the word wall, BINGO, making word wall words with magnetic letters). Not all children remember these words, but the children are definitely beginning to have some words they

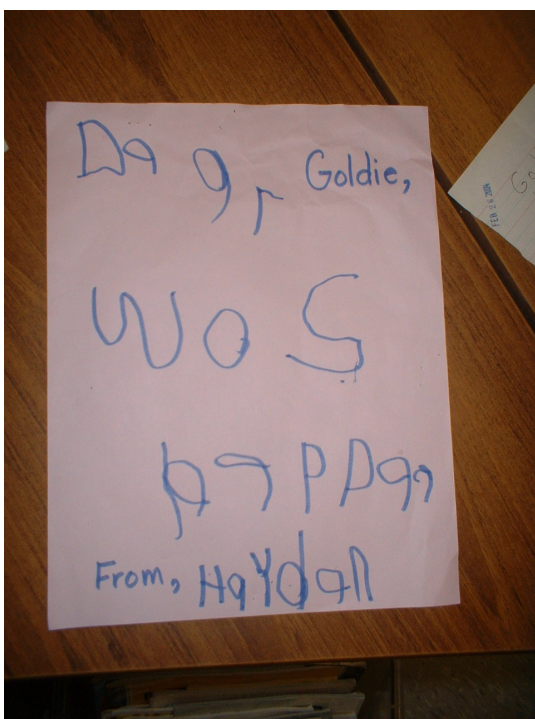
know how to spell.

During this time we were also developing a kindergarten version of the Writing Workshop. Each child had a writing folder which included a notebook and an alphabet chart (from Guided Reading by Fountas and Pinnell). We used this chart for rote practice as well (A “a” apple, B “b” bear). The writing folder also included a sound dictionary with all of the Jolly Phonics sounds. (Sound dictionaries were teacher made using regular notebooks with letters and picture actions pasted in. Each page had practice room for printing letters.)

Every day the children were asked to write in their writing notebooks. I marked the current page for their writing with coloured sticky tabs or post it notes to help get pages done in a somewhat accurate sequence. Each day’s work was date stamped when complete. Although I tried to provide “teasers” as a motivation for students to write, they were not required to write on the topic of the day and some children liked to choose their own topics. I also introduced the children to writing letters and lists in an attempt to expose them to different writing forms. As a class we developed a list of topics for writing and the expectations for writing time were made clear (see appendix 3).

Writing Workshop began to take on a shape. For about five to ten minutes I would introduce the children to a topic for writing or a form of writing (our mini-lesson). Then children would move to their tables to write. This would last five minutes for some and 20 minutes for others. As they finished the children would bring their writing to me where I would offer encouragement, note the skills they were developing and scribe on a post it note what they had written (our conference). I would then move the sticky tab to the next page to mark the place for the next day’s writing. The children’s writing took various forms from scribble to random letters, their name and/or copied print. After sharing their writing with me the children would move on to the next language activity which was usually looking at books. If a parent volunteer was in the room I asked them to sit on the carpet with the children and read with them. This helped those who finished early to stay focused on their reading.

In November I used the First Steps Writing continuum to assess my students’ writing skills. I admit I found the process of doing this tedious, but very worthwhile, enabling me to plan mini-lessons at the beginning of writing time that taught very specific skills I wanted my students to apply. Mini-lessons included ways to write (scribble, random letters, pictures with labels, print found in the room, sounding out words, known words), concepts about print (leaving spaces between words, using a period, left to right direction of print) and planning for writing (have an idea, rehearse it orally, count the words in your sentence then write one word at a time, read back what you have written). I referred to Writing Mini-Lessons for Kindergarten as a source and then matched the lesson ideas to my own students based on what I had learned about their needs from the First Steps assessment. At times I taught a mini-lesson to a small group specifically targeted to their needs, but most mini-lessons involved the whole class. As I modeled the strategy of the day I could make suggestions to the students based on what I knew about their writing. This modeling of the writing process emphasizing a very specific strategy seemed to be the most effective



Letters to Goldie

again when they read it back to me.

Another idea I tried to encourage my children to write more often was to have the children write letters to a class mascot (idea from a workshop at the “Reading for the Love of It” conference). I chose a stuffed dog, the children named Goldie, as a special friend for our class and promised the class that if they wrote a letter to Goldie, Goldie would write back. One student was quick to point out that Goldie could not really write letters, so I explained that my daughter and I would assist Goldie with his correspondence. Some of the children became very enamoured with Goldie and wrote letters often. Other children did not respond to this invitation. The letters to Goldie took various forms - some written with random letters and others using correct spelling done with parental assistance. Some were no more than a picture with the child’s name. All letters received a response from Goldie and I kept copies of Goldie’s letters so I could recall what “news” had been shared with each child. (See appendix 4 for sample letters to and from Goldie.) For a period of time I set up a bulletin board with letters to Goldie and added letters to it as they came in to school. This strategy seemed to encourage some children to write at home who may not have done so initially. Unfortunately I seemed to have mistakenly sent home letters to Goldie after removing

way of improving my student’s skill in writing. Often mini-lessons were repeated more than once with a different theme until students began to apply the skill independently. Sometimes I had to redirect my teaching if I pushed too soon for a specific strategies i.e. writing the sounds in words.

The First Steps assessment also helped me become much more knowledgeable about what skills each student was demonstrating in their writing. The conferencing time in the classroom was always busy and allowed very little time for each child. Knowing more accurately what each student was able to do allowed me to coach them briefly and quickly on one specific aspect of their writing as they read back their writing to me. Using sticky notes (post its) to record what they said was important to aiding me in assessment also.

One of the things I love about kindergarten is the stories the children have to tell. These are not always on topic, but I find their enthusiasm for the new experiences of life delightful. As a result I try to make time to really listen to the stories my students have to share. (Anyone who has taught kindergarten will know that this is especially important after a weekend.) As an educator I know that children’s development of reading and writing skills is linked to their oral development, so I place an importance on having a chance to tell their life stories as well as writing them down. This gives value to what each child has to say.

I also found oral rehearsal before writing to be helpful for those children just beginning to write the sounds in words and so I modeled this strategy frequently in class to encourage the children to say their sentence/story out loud before trying to write it down. This also encourages the understanding that a written message does not change, as they repeat their words several times while writing, and

them from the bulletin board, so I cannot accurately check how many children wrote to Goldie or the number of letters Goldie received. Letters to Goldie dropped off after a period of time, but they continue to trickle in and Goldie remains an important member of our classroom, often sitting on a lap during whole class lessons on the carpet. I even began to wonder if introducing Goldie to students in September might ease some of the adjusting to school blues experienced in the kindergarten classroom.

Around Christmas time I was reflecting on my students' writing and became aware that they were not writing the sounds in words although quite a few students demonstrated at assessment time that they were aware of letter sound connections. As a result I began to focus my time on those students who seemed to be ready to go the next step in developing their writing skill. For students who had the sound/letter knowledge, I could sit down with them one-to-one and assist them in stretching out words and recording the sounds they could hear. However, I could not get to each student often enough to make the difference I wanted to see. Also, the JK students completed their writing task so quickly and often distracted others as they moved on to the next activity. I wanted to find a way to encourage them to add to their pictures, or take the time to write more using scribble, random letters or whatever means they were using.

Also, in January, I wrote in my journal, "I am discouraged because some children have stated that they don't like writing time. This is, of course, the opposite effect I have been trying to achieve." I began to question what I was doing. "Should I be backing off on the structured lesson format and return to encouraging them to write as part of play? Am I pushing too hard for them to write in standard form when they are at an exploratory stage? Can I afford to back off and still see progress in their writing? How can I provide more scaffolding so that the frustration level is lower?" I do try to pay attention to my students comments, so I took their feelings seriously. I wanted them to like writing. So I spoke to Mrs. Sostar, Grade 2/3 teacher, my critical friend and parent of a student in my class, about this problem. We discussed the possibility of changing our reading buddy time to a writing time. I hoped that I could train the Grade 2/3 students to provide some of the scaffolding needed for my students to bridge the gap between knowing about sounds/letters and being able to use them to spell words phonetically in their writing.

I went to the Grade 2/3 class on my preparation time and talked to them about how they could help the kindergarten children with their writing. I explained to them how I felt divided into many pieces as I tried to help each child. We talked about what writing looked like in kindergarten and I encouraged them to try to remember what their writing looked like when they were younger (I taught many of these children and could help them remember.) We composed a chart of things for them to do to help their buddy. The chart included things like reminding the child to start at the left side of the page, to put spaces in their writing, and to add more detail to their pictures to help tell the story. I taught them to say a word slowly to help the child hear the sounds in the word and told them it was okay if the child did not hear all of the sounds or even wrote down an incorrect sound as long as they recorded what they heard. When we started writing buddies I was very pleased with how focused all the students were. It seemed that the JK students did stay on task longer with the help of an older student.

To help develop letter/sound/word knowledge I use the Jolly Phonics program (see [The Phonics Handbook](#)) as a means of introducing the sounds to the children. This program encourages children to listen to the sounds in words and helps to develop phonemic awareness. The songs (Jolly Jingles - see bibliography) used to help teach the sounds are important to making the lessons memorable and make review fun. The actions that are taught with the sounds are also useful for some children to make the letter-sound connection.

Other children seemed better able to remember the alphabet chart from the Guided Reading book listed earlier more easily, so I use both strategies. This did not seem to cause confusion, but instead seemed to consolidate learning.

For students to be able to use what they know about letters/sounds in their writing, they have to be able to say a word slowly and record the sounds they hear (segment the sounds in the word). I used a number of little songs from [Snapshots: Literacy Lessons Up Close](#) to help develop the ability to blend and segment sounds. Refer to appendix 9 for the songs (thank you Deb Opersko, Primary Consultant at the Simcoe School Support Centre (SSSC) for sharing this idea at a kindergarten workshop). When segmenting words into sounds I sometimes use wooden cubes backed with adhesive magnets as a way of identifying each sound as it is heard. For example, teacher says the word cat. Children say “c” and one cube is slid down on the magnetic board. Children say “a” and a second cube is slid down on the magnetic board. Children say “t” and a third cube is slid down the magnetic board. Teacher reviews, pointing to the cubes “c”, “a”, “t”, cat. How many sounds are in cat. Child says “three”. (Thank you to Margot Kneale, a fellow Kindergarten Teacher with the Grand Erie District School Board, who shared this adaptation of Elkonin Boxes at a kindergarten meeting. See the Grand Erie District School Board Strategies for Early Literacy Binder, Working With Words Strategies Part 4 Emergent page Em3 for a description of Elkonin Text Boxes).

Findings

I gathered information from a number of sources to evaluate the effectiveness of the change in my writing program. Parents were an important source of information for me as a part of this research project. During September Early Identification interviews I asked parents about whether their children wrote at home and what that writing looked like. In October I sent home a letter asking for permission to use photos, work samples, etc. as a part of my research. See appendix 5 for this letter. In February I sent home a questionnaire to parents asking them to respond to four questions to help me with my research. See appendix 6 for the questionnaire. All parents responded to the questionnaire. Three cheers for the parents at Boston Public School! In response to the questionnaire, all parents indicated that their child’s writing had changed since September and all of them indicated that the change was an improvement. See some of the comments below.

“She is more aware of writing and what it stands for.”

“She is able to write the letters so you know what they are. She is working on words. She is trying to write stories using letters and numbers. She can also write some of the kids names in her class.”

“He did no actual letter writing before September. If he wanted to write before it was done with a picture. He will now try to sound a word out but just the first letter. He’s very interested in writing though and often asks for help with spelling.”

“September - no skills. Unsure of letters names and sounds. (Now) can sound out 3/4 letter words, remember how words are spelled and then continues to use the words in written manner.”

“He is able to make letters that he was having trouble with. He sits there and says the word and sounds it out so he can spell it. He is able to make sentences and write down what he is thinking.” Author’s note: Wow! Isn’t that what writing is all about - communicating a message!

“Now she knows the letters and they mean something to her. They are not just drawing. She is more confident when she writes because she doesn’t have to copy them like before. Now if I tell her to write down a letter it is in her head how she has to do it.”

I asked the writing buddies what changes they had observed in their writing buddies’ work. They made the following comments:

“When I say the word (slowly) she can write it down without any help.”

“He has been writing longer sentences.”

“He is getting to know all his words and letters.”

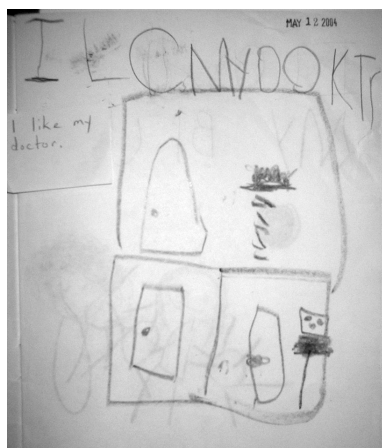
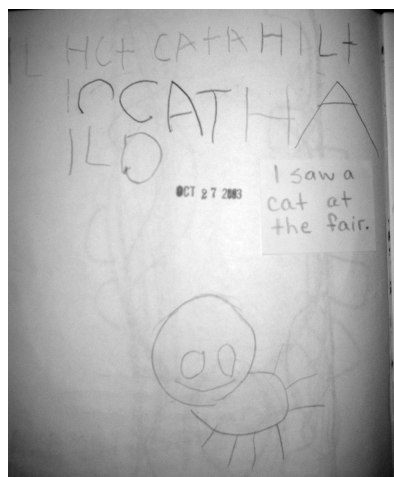
“He can write his sentence without me now.”

The writing buddies also said they found it fun to help the children get used to writing words down and that it was exciting to hear their sentences.

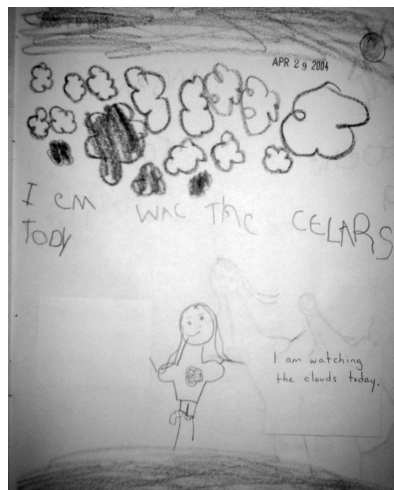
In April I reassessed how my students skills were developing using the First Steps Writing Continuum. In November I determined that I had three children in the experimental phase in writing, four children in the role play phase of writing and 25 who have not yet achieved all of the indicators in the role play phase. Of those who were not yet in the role play phase of writing, 17 of them had four of the five indicators for role play writing. In April when

	Experimental Phase	Role Play Phase + 5 or more indicators from next level	Role Play Phase + 1-4 indicators from next level	Role Play Phase	pre - Role Play Phase 4 indicators	pre- Role Play Phase < 4 indicators
November total 32 students	3 students	1 student	1 student	2 students	17 students	8 students
April total 30 students	4 students	9 students	5 students	6 students	4 students	2 students

I reassessed the two classes I had four children in the experimental phase in writing, 20 children in the role play phase of writing and six children pre- role play phase (two children had moved away). Of those in the role play phase of writing, nine of them exhibited five or more of the eight indicators for the experimental phase of writing, five of them exhibited one to four of the eight indicators for the experimental phase, and the remaining six indicated only the five role play indicators.



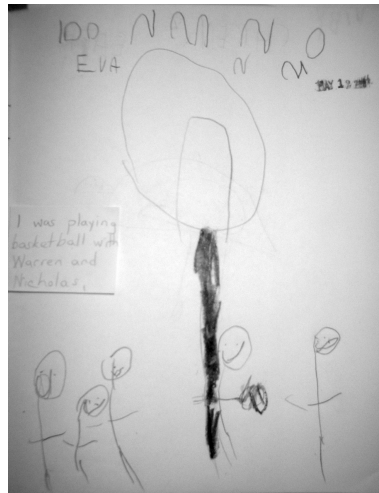
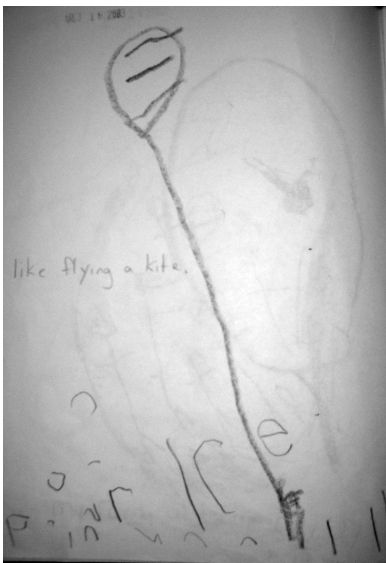
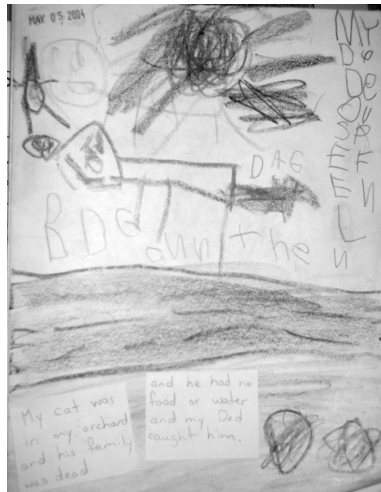
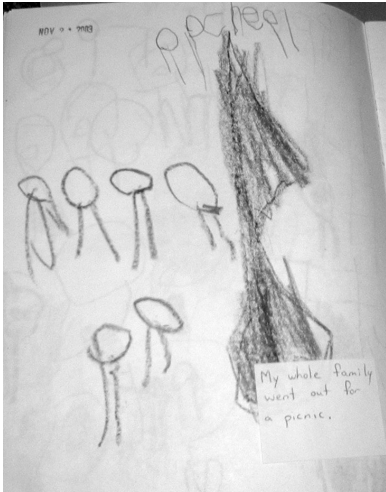
Of those in the role play phase of writing, nine of them exhibited five or more of the eight indicators for the experimental phase of writing, five of them exhibited one to four of the eight indicators for the experimental phase, and the remaining six indicated only the five role play indicators. Of those in the pre-role play phase, one student exhibited two role play indicators, one student exhibited three role play indicators and the other four exhibited four of the five role play indicators. This dramatic improvement across the class was in spite of the fact that I was “tougher” in my assessment in April



due to becoming more skilled in using the First Steps Writing Continuum. See table below for a summary.

Without a doubt my students’ writing has improved. Assessment with the First Steps Writing Continuum indicates that they have learned more about the way print works (direction of print, writing as a means of communicating). See photos comparing fall writing samples to spring writing samples for several students.

They have also grown in their knowledge of letter/sound/word connections. See Appendices 7&8 for tables comparing assessments done in October 2003 and May 2004 for SK students and comparing assessments done in Dec/January 2004 and May 2004 for JK students. On average, SK students do know most of the letters and sounds and can name a word that begins with an alpha-



bet letter. On average, JK students can identify most letters by name, but are still connecting sounds and words to the letters they know.

I was very excited by my students' learning, but my research also questioned whether I could get the children to write on their own time. I increased their writing by making writing a daily activity, but I wanted to see them choosing to write at play time and at home. When my new kindergarten students arrived in September I surveyed parents to find out if their children wrote at home and what that writing looked like. I asked them in March if their children were writing more at home, and again what their writing looked like.

28 parents reported that their children were writing more since September. Two parents said that their children were not writing more since September. In general, children seemed to be doing more writing and feeling more confident about it.

Below is a chart comparing some of the parents comments when their child came to school in September with their comments on the questionnaire.

Around the time we began the writing buddy program I observed more students writing at play time. Some of the children began writing in student made cards at the creative center and writing "mail" at the house center. I even had to ask one SK boy to stop writing as it was time to clean up. On March 30th I noted in my journal that Mr. Mayhew, the Vice-Principal, had taken the

	September	March
Female JK	**** makes letters C & O and other letter-like symbols; makes cards & letters for people, scribbles for name on her work	**** writes all kinds of little notes such as the grocery list. The notes usually only have a few recognizable letters, but she will ask how to make a letter she is thinking of to put on her list.

		Yes (she writes more often) I am amazed with ****'s progress with understanding the alphabet, sight, sounds, print application and with her general interest with printing. She enjoys making pretend lists and printing her name and others' names.
Male JK	**** makes his name except * (one letter); pictures with name	Definitely more since September. **** does like to pretend he's writing stories. Usually a combination of letters and scribbles. No actual words. From September to now **** has added more recognizable letters. The size of the "writing" has significantly gotten smaller. He follows the lines and is going in proper direction.
Female SK	**** does write using letters spelled by Mom; birthday cards, name, grocery list	Yes, she is (writing more at home). She does distinguish the capital or upper case from lower case but doesn't know when to use them. Always writes from left to right now. **** is starting to be able to sound out a word and write it instead of asking what letter comes next.
Male SK	writes his name; doesn't choose to write or draw	**** writes his name a lot easier, helps with grocery list; He is willing to write things a lot easier. He knows his letters. At the beginning of the year it took a couple days to write a letter to Goldie. Today it took 10 minutes.

children to the computer lab. One of the SK boys made a card for his Mom, copying Happy Birthday Mom from the text as part of the program. I was excited to see him using print from the environment in a meaningful way. The same child the previous year loved to write, but everything was scribble, impossible to tell picture from print. Today I observed students using recipe books at the house center as menus, and one student had a notepad where she recorded what other students were ordering from the “menu”.

Conclusions

I think it would be fair to say that most of my students do write more frequently by choice than they did before, although some of them would still prefer other activities. I talk to them about their feelings, acknowledging that writing is hard work. By providing as much support (scaffolding) as I can and by providing many opportunities for them to share/celebrate their work, I hope the positive feelings of success will make the challenge of writing worthwhile.

The quality of their writing has definitely improved as demonstrated in their work samples, comments from parents and writing buddies, and the assessment tools used. I attribute this success to a number of factors:

1. Explicit teaching of skills

The writing mini-lessons and shared writing lessons focused on the specific skills the students needed to learn. These lessons were much more explicit than previous years, dividing the skills into very small manageable chunks. Lessons were carefully matched to learners and repeated as variations on a theme as often as needed.

2. Daily writing

Although it was difficult to make time for daily writing and I worried about pushing too hard, I think the daily writing was critical to my students' learning. By encouraging children to write in whatever manner they could from scribble to words correctly spelled and valuing each writing attempt, I think I kept the task to an age appropriate level. What I did note was that the daily writing impacted the students learning of letter names/sounds and reading as well as their writing.

3. Scaffolding

My younger students especially needed the support of one to one assistance to give them confidence to try writing sounds in words. Writing buddies were a big boost in making the challenge manageable. Parents were also supportive and encouraged their children to write at home. Shared writing lessons that enabled students to participate in writing in a non-threatening way also helped provide the needed scaffolding to develop independent writers.

I know that next year I will continue to set aside a large block of time for language activities. I will continue daily writing with my students. I think I could further improve my writing program by providing my students with more opportunities to share their writing. I will also try to get my students more involved in recognizing their best work so that they can strive to do their best each day. I have learned so much from my students and their parents this year. Thank you for being my partners in research. Thanks also to Mrs. Sostar and her Grade 2/3 class who gave us such a boost in our learning.

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Appendices

Kindergarten Timetable 2003/04

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
8:45-8:55	Entry - Students put away belongings, put on shoes, look at books; Opening Exercises on PA					
8:55-9:20	Calendar/ Phonemic Awareness Activities including Jolly Phonics/ Some math activities integrated here.					
9:20-10:00	Playtime *I do guided reading during this time, listen to children read, assess, observe, play games to build skills, etc. At end of play time one group of children shares the work they did at play this morning					Prep during play
10:00-10:15	Recess					
10:15-10:25	Snack					
10:25-10:55	Language	Language	Reading/ Writing Buddies	Language	Language	Reading/ Writing Buddies
10:55-11:20			Language			Language
11:20-11:35						
11:35 -12:35	Students Lunch Break					
12:35-1:15	Library - prep	Math	Math	Library - prep	Math	Math
1:15-1:55	Math	Gym - prep	Computer	Math	Gym - prep	Computer
1:55-2:10	Recess					
2:10-2:20	Snack					
2:20-3:10	Playtime I often use this time to withdraw children in small groups to do an art activity or some other integrated curriculum item.					
3:10-3:20	Home Routines					
3:20-3:27	Bus students line up in hall with buddies					

Thursday October 9, 2003.
Dear Kindergarten Families,

During this school year I will be involved in an Action Research project to investigate ways to encourage young children to write. The Grand Erie School Board supports Action Research as a means for change to improve student learning. I am excited to be a part of this project and look forward to the challenge of thinking critically about my program and trying out new ideas.

As a part of the research process I will be collecting student work samples, gathering information from surveys, taking photos and video of students and myself working, and recording the observations of students, parents and colleagues. I will be sharing the results of my research with other professionals and writing a report which will include work samples, photos, etc. to be published. I would also like to include class photos in future kindergarten newsletters. I ask your permission to use any or all of the following for the purposes stated above:

- your child's work samples
- photos of your child
- audiotapes of your child
- videotape of your child

At no time will I share anything negative about any child in my room and I assure you that I always have your child's best interests at heart. Would you please fill out the permission form below and return it to me by Friday October 17, 2003. If you have questions about this project feel free to contact me at school, 443-5003.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kelly Pulham

I give my permission for Mrs. Pulham to use audio, visual, comments, and work samples of my child for her Action Research report or for any presentation she makes about her research.

Student's name: _____ Parent Signature: _____
Date: _____

I give my permission for Mrs. Pulham to use photos of my child in class newsletters.

Student's name: _____ Parent Signature: _____
Date: _____

February 23, 2004.

Dear Kindergarten Families,

As you are aware I have been researching how to encourage my kindergarten children to write more frequently and to improve their writing skills. As a part of this project we have been writing daily in class. Children have also been encouraged to write at home and many have written letters to Goldie, our class mascot.

In September, I talked to parents of students entering the kindergarten program about whether their child chose to write at home and what that writing looked like. To assist me in my research I would very much appreciate if all parents would take the time to answer a few questions about their child's writing at home at this point in the year. Please take some time, before March Break if at all possible, to answer the questions below. If you need more room feel free to write on the back of the page. Then return this questionnaire to me at school so I can use this information to assist in my research and further direct instruction in the kindergarten writing program. Thank you so much for your support and encouragement with this project. It has been a learning experience for me and my students.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Pulham

1. Does your child write at home? What kinds of things do they write?
2. What does their writing look like? If you are unable to describe their work a sample will do.
3. Have you noticed your child writing more often since September?
4. Has your child's writing changed since September? How?

SK Letter/Sound/Word Assessment

May 2004						October 2004					
Upper Case			Lower Case			Upper Case			Lower Case		
Letter	Sound	Word	Letter	Sound	Word	Letter	Sound	Word	Letter	Sound	Word
						6	0	5	6	1	1
12	1	6	10	1	6	6	1	1	2	1	1
26	13	20	25	8	21	5	0	2	2	0	0
25	21	22	23	21	18	20	10	13	16	9	12
26	24	23	25	24	23	25	18	16	21	15	12
26	25	21	23	22	19	23	13	7	15	11	3
26	23	21	25	21	22	12	2	5	11	1	2
26	26	23	24	23	22	26	6	8	22	7	7
26	23	22	26	25	23	26	7	6	25	11	6
26	26	25	23	23	21	23	10	12	23	10	3
24	14	18	19	14	4	14	1	10	10	0	5
26	23	24	26	23	24	24	15	14	22	15	9
25	15	13	24	20	15	24	5	16	24	5	2
23	17	16	19	13	13	9	4	1	6	1	1
24 average	19 average	19.5 average	22.5 average	18 average	17.8 average	17.4 average	6.8 average	8.3 average	14.6 average	6 average	4.6 average

JK Letter/Sound/Word Assessment

May 2004						December/January 2004					
Upper Case			Lower Case			Upper Case			Lower Case		
26	16	20	23	15	17	22	1	5	21	4	9
6	0	7	6	1	5	3	1	2	1	0	0
25	0	5	23	0	4	23	0	1	19	0	0
12	1	0	9	1	0	7	1	0	6	0	0
24	18	19	22	14	14	11	0	3	12	1	4
22	14	17	19	11	14	11	3	3	8	2	1
22	9	9	21	10	9	15	4	1	8	2	0
26	20	14	26	22	18	21	4	5	24	4	2
18	4	16	15	3	10	5	3	1	4	1	0
18	10	11	11	5	7	2	0	4	3	0	0
19	1	13	16	1	8	4	0	0	3	0	0
26	16	16	25	14	15	25	7	10	16	2	7
21	0	13	12	0	5	10	0	4	8	2	3
23	0	11	19	0	5	8	0	0	3	0	0
24	0	0	18	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0
25	1	17	23	0	14	20	0	7	19	0	2
21 average	6.9 average	11.8 average	18 average	6 average	9 average	11.9 average	1.5 average	2.7 average	9.8 average	1 average	1.8 average