



Interactive Writing: Developing Readers Through Writing

Everything emergent and early readers need to know about reading can be demonstrated through writing.



LITERACY CHAMPION: C.C. BATES

C.C. Bates is a professor of literacy education at Clemson University and is the director of Clemson Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Training Center. Her research agenda focuses on the use of digital tools to enhance and deliver professional development for reading interventionists and K-2 classroom teachers, which stems from her

ongoing inquiry into the teaching of children who are learning to read and write. Bates is the author of *Interactive Writing: Developing Readers through Writing* (Benchmark) and the co-author of *The Next Step Forward in Running Records: Getting to the Heart of Effective Instruction through Deeper Qualitative Analysis* (Scholastic). She also co-developed the Record of Reading app for oral reading assessment, which has been downloaded over 400,000 times.

One to Know: Interactive Writing

Interactive writing demonstrates the reciprocal nature of literacy learning. During interactive writing, students and teacher engage in collaborative and constructive conversation. Students' voices are honored and as they negotiate ideas and information with the teacher and together craft a readable text. As the text is written, students gain an understanding of a range of foundational skills necessary for both writing and reading including concepts of print, phonological and phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, orthographic knowledge, phrasing and fluency, the importance of monitoring a message for meaning, and so much more! Interactive writing provides a literacy experience that is all inclusive yet simultaneously allows the teacher to differentiate instruction by strategically having children contribute to the chart. The planned and in-the-moment decisions that occur before, during, and after an interactive writing experience stem from a teacher's intimate knowledge of students' developing writing and reading behaviors and the knowledge of how these literacy behaviors change over time.

What to Do

Begin with a collaborative conversation. The conversation between and among students and teacher not only underpins the text but builds language and vocabulary. Once the text is negotiated, write it word by word so students see the directional movement of print unfold. Use the text as a teaching tool, for example, have students say words slowly and connect sound to letter(s), invite them to the chart to write a letter, letter cluster, or word, and/or discuss the purpose of punctuation as it occurs. Once the text is complete, reread it multiple times. Since interactive writing begins with a meaningful text that students composed, they are able to experience firsthand what phrased and fluent reading feels and sounds like when they reread what they wrote. Fluency is much more than the pace at which a student reads. Fluent reading is prosodic and interactive writing provides the perfect context to help children understanding how reading sounds like talking as they connect oral language to writing and writing to reading.

More to Know and Do

Sometimes it is difficult to fit one more thing into the schedule. One of the greatest things about interactive writing is it can easily be integrated throughout the day to maximize time and incorporate a variety of genres and forms. Teacher and students may write about the results of a science experiment, a list of items needs for an upcoming class trip, a letter to an author as part of a book study, or a recap of the day's events. Have the students decide on a catchy name for the recap, perhaps "Backpack Chat," "Going Home Gathering," "Afternoon Appointment," or the "Carpet Conference." Whatever the selected title, use the created text to highlight the day's events. Incorporating an interactive writing recap at day's end fuels children with responses to the age-old question, "What did you do at school today."

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