Differentiating Writing Instruction: Meeting the Diverse Needs of Authors in a Classroom

Mary Shea
Canisius College

This article outlines a rational for responsive, differentiated writing instruction that targets students' identified needs with respect to various dimensions of the writing process. Discussed is a cycle that requires ongoing assessment, instructional decision-making, responsive, differentiated instruction, guided practice, and assessment. Responsive teaching holds great promise. Teachers' mindful implementation of interventions will determine the success of this principle.

Characteristics of a Differentiated Writing Classroom

The Dynamics of Differentiated Teaching

Based on data from formative assessment *for* learning (Stiggens, 2002), effective teachers plan meaningful, engaging lessons that maintain a fine balance between teaching content and teaching the processes for learning and thinking. As a lesson unfolds, good teachers act diagnostically, assessing students' responses at each step. Based on measured responsiveness, instructors *mediate* learning (remove misunderstandings) by differentiating (i.e., adjusting) instruction, materials, and/or group size, ensuring that all learners succeed (O'Connor & Simic, 2002). The seamless coordination of ongoing assessment and differentiation creates *dynamic*, synergistic teaching (Rubin, 2002; Walker, 2004) — teaching diagnostically with continuous measurement of learners' level of understanding, areas of confusion, and other factors that affect success followed by appropriate instructional adjustments. Dynamic teaching involves the analysis of changes in students' performance during instruction as well as probes of learners' responses as a foundation for successive instructional steps. This assessment-responsive teaching-guided practice-assessment cycle is characteristic of instructional differentiation or teaching tailored to the diverse needs of learners — of writers.

This article presents the concept of differentiated instruction, particularly it's role in writing classrooms where the uniqueness of authors is expected and respected — where a range of interests, motivation, and levels of writing competence are found. Principles of differentiation

undergird all aspects of any effective writing classroom — a community where members have ample time to write, share, and receive targeted feedback. Differentiated instruction is effective when it's based on ongoing and broad assessment of learners, when tasks are authentic, learners are engaged, there's time to practice, and the classroom tone is supportive. This applies in the writing classroom as well. Specific traits of effective composition are outlined in the article, appreciating that effective differentiating integrates teachers' content knowledge with pedagogical expertise. A protocol for writers' workshop is suggested — one that's compatible with differentiated writing instruction. Tools appropriate for writing assessment are included. Finally, selected strategies for struggling writers' are described.

Defining Differentiating Instruction

The *universal design* curriculum model includes instructional differentiation (i.e., responsive teaching) at all levels (Tobin, 2008). Such instruction is tied to dynamic, ongoing assessment. In classrooms where students have diverse needs, such teaching is essential for effectiveness. "Most students are able to benefit from initial instruction that's learner-centered. But, some don't. In such cases, in-the-moment assessment is essential" (Shea, 2012, 4). It reveals differences in interests, background knowledge, or needs, facilitating the recognition of learning glitches. It informs instruction that can ameliorate the situation (Shea, Murray, & Harlin, 2005).

"Differentiation embodies the philosophy that all students can learn — in their own way and in their own time" (Dodge, 2005, 6). Differentiated instruction maintains attention on curricular objectives while providing children with the kind of support, resources, instruction, and tasks they need to meet and exceed established standards (Tomlinson, 2000). But, it starts with the child and the teacher — not the content (Dodge, 2005). It involves finding a path that's just right for the learner. Differentiating also requires that teachers find time to work with small groups and individuals. That's not a new phenomenon; teachers have always done that while other students are engaged in independent practice, independent writing, projects, learning centers, or other such activities — alone or quietly working with others. Of course, protocols and expectations for behavior when the teacher is conducting small groups must be clearly established and reviewed regularly. Boushey & Moser (2006) describe a classroom in which children successfully navigate independent reading and writing tasks while the teacher provides differentiated instruction. It calls for effective classroom management — another topic in itself.

Teachers who differentiate assess each writer's readiness (i.e. background knowledge on the topic and specific skills), talents, interests, motivation, and other factors; they assess the writer's performance on meaningful tasks directly related to the instruction provided. They differentiate *content* (what students learn), *process* (how they learn it), *product* (how students demonstrate content mastery), and *environment* (conditions that set the tone and expectations) (Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005) depending on the needs they've identified through assessment. Few writing approaches have been empirically tested (Pritchard & Honeycut, 2006), but we do have case studies and classroom scenarios (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983) that reflect forms of differentiation as well as real world (i.e., authentic) purposes for writing — ones that engage and motivate writers to persist at a difficult task in order to perfect their expression of knowing and communications.

Effective differentiation calls for authentic relevant tasks and materials — ones that engage students and stimulate persistence. These are targeted to students' immediate needs identified through multiple, detailed assessments. In such environments, learners realize their strengths and confusions; they also experience recognition and support from the teacher and others. A community where all are teachers and learners soon evolves — where writers feel comfortable taking risks and helping others.

Authentic Purposes for Writing

Children should write in school for the same reasons people use writing in the world. "Children's writing often reflects events which are important to them, real and imagined happenings, [and] the plots of favorite or influential stories they have read or heard told to them" (Nutbrown, 1999, 73). Writers directly or indirectly communicate personal stories. Some are small; others are grand. Children also write to report what they've learned from research, activities, or experience (Shea, 2011).

Writing is an expressive language process that allows one to record thoughts, feelings, and inspirations for self or others (Walshe, 1982). It "…involves thinking, feeling, talking, reading — and writing [composing]" (Turbill, 1984, 9). Transforming ideas into text requires extended effort to make the expression clear for a reader. A passion for sharing ideas is the driving force that encourages writers when the work becomes tedious.

If the content of our writing is something we know about and care about, the work is personally relevant (Oglan, 2003). It might be our knowing (e.g., about an issue) that sustains the desire to write; we want to record the information for ourselves or tell others about it. Or, it might be the interest we have in a topic that leads us to investigate and report findings. We persist when we have a passion or drive to continue the activity — and we trust that support is available when needed. Calkins (1994) calls it stamina.

Unless writing is appreciated as composing first and related secretarial elements (i.e., grammar, handwriting, spelling, sentence structure) second, students get bogged down in elements and lose heart for their message. For them, the craft of writing staggers in its development across the grades. When the purposes for writing are authentic — when teachers put *function* (purpose) ahead of *form* (i.e. mechanics, conventions) — writers are motivated to engage. After all, a perfectly conventional message that lacks substance will never be memorable (Shea, 2011).

Engaging Writers

Effective writing classrooms put a profound Roman insight into practice. The message is ancient, but simple; *Scribendo disces scribere* — you learn to write by writing. It's the same for so many things in life; it's how the term *on-the-job training* came into our lexicon. Doing the task makes components easier to understand (Shea, 2011). Writers need opportunities to comfortably engage in practice that mirrors the target behavior.

In such environments, children write letters to friends and family; they write letters of complaint, inquiry, or support to officials and organizations. They respond to what they've read, writing in literature logs to reflect and prepare for group discussions. They record observational notes in science, as a step in the scientific process. They interview peers, teachers, school staff, and parents before writing an article in the school newspaper. They write a report on research they've compiled related to a unit of study (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996).

The products (artifacts) of all these efforts provide rich and valid information on the progress of children's development as writers. We need to efficiently mine data points — and record them for analysis that leads to an effective next step on the path to competency. Data reveal precisely what each writer needs; it's the basis for crafting differentiated lessons. Capturing multifaceted, relevant data is key.

Identifying Needs

There's valuable information to be gathered while watching and interacting with writers. Teachers don't want to miss or forget any of it. Anecdotal notes relieve memory of that burden; they capture learning milestones that may otherwise be forgotten (Shea, 2011).

Stop to visit with a writer, letting him talk first about his work. Teachers share what they've observed or what they're thinking as a reader; then they wait for a response. They can discuss the writer's intent, the content, or his style of writing. There's a little dance going on — a cha-cha-cha with the writer in the lead. The writer gradually assumes control; the teacher offers coaching, feedback, and nurturing forward. It's important to allow a level of comfort and trust to blossom in this relationship. Combined, observations and interactions drive decisions related to future instruction. Without such a balance, interventions become futile interference (Nutbrown, 1999).

Take brief notes on a myriad of writing activities that had a variety of purposes. Some may have been teacher-directed prompts or petitions (Cole, 2002); others were self-selected. There's no one right way to take notes. But, the key is to have a *system* for doing it — one that's easy to access and is consistent.

Some teachers make positive, public notes. They tell children what they're writing. "Jamal, I'm writing down that you have a clear organization in your report. You've used good headings and subheadings. The writing in each section sticks to the topic. Your readers will easily follow how you've connected ideas." Soon others are picking up on this "Hooray!" and checking their work for the quality praised.

I preferred to use a page of mailing labels for my notes; I'd write the date and child's name with a comment. At the end of the day, I removed each and stuck it on a sheet in the child's writing folder. Every writer had a sequentially dated collection of comments. We'd often look these over when conferencing and use them to set goals. Figure 1.1 shows how these notes were accumulated for reflection and planning (Shea, 2011).

Figure 1.1: Anecdotal Notes

At the end of the day, dated address labels with anecdotal notes are added to a list in the child's portfolio. Reflections are recorded and plans are made.

Student: Jamal	Year: 2009-2010	
Dated observation	What does this show?	How do I respond?
3/10 *Jamal organized his report with headings/ subheadings that give good flow*	He's thought the premise through and built a logical explanation from his perspective.	Scaffold him as he extends to add supporting details. He needs to add important ones, but not too many.
3/24 *Jamal's having trouble spelling multi-syllable words*	He's confusing the drop,double,or stays the same principle when adding suffixes.	Review words in each category. Discuss sounds heard and spellings

Periodically, teachers review notes they've collected and evaluate the writer's growth. It's a *tentative value* that marks progress at that moment in time (Shea, Murray, & Harlin, 2005). But, it indicates the quality of performance on tasks that apply the skill in ways it's used naturally — in life and learning. Collectively, data from many sources reveal patterns of strengths and needs.

Multiple Assessments: A Complete Picture

Most states in the U.S. include a writing component in their ELA (English Language Arts) test and in content area assessments. Both have some potential for contributing useful information for instruction. But, the skills measured with these assessments only scratch the surface.

Children need to develop a broad range of writing skills (Cole, 2002; 2006) — more than can be measured on such tests. In addition, knowledgeable teachers use day-by-day formative assessments that consider a broader range of writing products. Conclusions drawn from such analyses have greater utility; they lead to targeted instruction.

Writers need differentiated instruction that's responsive to where they are. "Let them write, and only then teach at the point of revealed need" (Walshe, 1982, 11). That's differentiation. Teaching *in the moment* and *for the moment* yields efficient forward growth.

Walker (2008) suggests that teachers need to teach diagnostically and "assess changes in students' reading and writing *as* they teach" (18). Teachers understand that writers need to learn

about all of the *traits* (characteristics) that define quality writing — ones that make the message understandable on its own (Calkins, 1994; Culham, 2003; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1980). However, decisions on what they teach when are guided by what writers are doing and a guiding principle that relevant purposes will inspire attention to form. Very often, the relevance of these traits becomes evident as writers share writing with others. Sensitively delivered, specific feedback from an audience builds confidence, encourages refinement of the message, and provides the support needed when a task is difficult (Johnston, 2004). It sets a positive tone where writing craft is taught; the classroom becomes a community of authors and learners (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987, Short, Harste, Burke, 1996).

Building a Writing Community

Writers hone the traits of quality writing when given time, choice, and ownership (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987; Short, Harste, Burke, 1996; Turnbill, 1984). An ongoing appreciation for the ideas communicated in children's writing is central for effective assessment and instruction. Armstrong (1990) observed, "meaning must be held central to children's writing…one of the most important tasks in interpreting children's work is to describe its patterns of intentions" (15).

As a writing coach, teachers do in-the-moment assessment of writing pieces and provide just enough instruction to meet identified needs. When students appear unready or unwilling to address such needs, they search for an alternate presentation rather than abandoning the objective (Shea, 2011). They "look for another way to adjust instruction [differentiate] for literacy development" (Walker, 2008, 18). Often, that's all it takes.

The goal is to help the writer take that step forward — to write better. Sometimes, the writer is seeking assurance that he can do it; hold on until he gains confidence. All the components of good writing will be learned in such communities — in ways that inspire children to *write with power* (Elbow, 1998) as they master the elements or traits of the craft.

Components of Writing

Traits of the Craft

Common characteristics — *traits* — of quality writing have been well documented (Calkins, 1994; Culham, 2003; Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987; Murray, 1980; Phenix, 1990; Short, Harste, Burke, 1996). A framework for considering them in a balanced approach ensures appropriate attention to each.

Composition traits relate to the ideas expressed. *Communication* traits deal with the writer's ability to deliver a message. *Secretarial* traits involve the mechanics, form, or conventions used to make the message presentable to readers (Nutbrown 1999). When the latter category is overemphasized, development is stifled; writers disengage when correctness is valued more than communicating their ideas.

On the other hand, it's easy to lose focus on the message when presentation is a tangle of weeds. A reader's attention wanes when getting to the message is hampered in this way. Teachers keep the need for balance in mind as they observe authors, conference with them, and decide how to coach.

Use a checklist to document a writers' growth in the traits (Shea, 2011). It guides observations and note taking. Each trait has notable markers (Culham, 2003; Nutbrown, 1999). There's no hierarchy of development, but each aspect adds to the whole. Composition and communication are the first components to consider. Score and attach a checklist to individual writing samples; these are included in a student's writing portfolio. Record scores for benchmark writing pieces on the group checklist. It reveals patterns of strengths and needs within a group of writers; plan targeted interventions based on information gleaned from careful analysis of traits revealed in brief and longer writing samples (Shea, 2011). Compiling data related to each of the traits — data from multiple samples across different writing tasks, purposes, formats, and topics — provides a comprehensive picture of a writer's development. See Figures 1.2 and 1.3.

Figure 1.2: Writing Checklist

Name _____Date_____Title of writing piece_____

Record the date when significant evidence has been gathered to support the determination of skill level as Beginning, Developing, or Early Fluent

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Fluent
Composition			
Ideas			
• writing is focused on a theme			
• strong, relevant ideas are used to address the theme			
• ideas are supported with relevant, interesting, important, or informative details			
• message is clear to author and reader			
Organization			
• effective opening			
• ideas flow logically, building on each other			
• transitions between ideas and sentences are smooth; sentences blend together			
• effective closing			
Sentences			
• uses simple sentences			
• expands sentence with details and descriptors			
• constructs appropriate compound sentences with conjunctions (e.g. and, but, or)			
• creates appropriate sentences of varied length, type, and style			
Vocabulary			
• colorful language is used appropriately			
• precise language is appropriately used			
• interesting words are used appropriately			
• effectively incorporates new words from literature and conversations			
Communication			
Purpose			
• intention directs the writing			
• writer can explain his intention			
• uses writing for multiple purposes			
• appropriately matches purpose to genre for writing			
• effectively writes in different genres			
• has a sense of audience; considers needs and interests of readers			
Voice			
• a personal tone comes through — a sense that the writer is speaking to a reader			
Secretary			
Mechanics			
• tracks print while reading message back; notices missing words			
• Spelling (Beginning = semi to early phonetic Developing = phonetic; Early Fluent = transitional to conventional			
• appropriate punctuation			
• appropriate capitalization			
• standard grammar			
Appearance			
• print progresses from L to R, line-under-line (unless purposefully placed for aesthetic reasons)			
• correct letter formation			
• appropriate spacing between letters, words, sentences			
• clear handwriting			
• generally neat			

Comments:

Date/Comment

(Shea, 2010)

Figure 1.3: Writing Checklist for Group Analysis

Name _____Date _____Title of writing piece_____

B=beginning D=Developing F=Fluent

List writers and pieces of writing →																												
Skill	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**	**B**	**D**	**F**
Composition																											
Ideas																											
• writing is focused on a theme																											
• strong, relevant ideas are used to address the theme																											
• ideas are supported with relevant, interesting, important, or informative details																											
• message is clear to author and reader																											
Organization																											
• effective opening																											
• ideas flow logically, building on each other																											
• transitions between ideas and sentences are smooth; sentences blend together																											
• effective closing																											
Sentences																											
• uses simple sentences																											
• expands sentence with details and descriptors																											
• constructs appropriate compound sentences with conjunctions (e.g. and, but, or)																											
• creates																											

appropriate sentences of varied length, type, and style																										
Vocabulary																										
• colorful language is used appropriately																										
• precise language is appropriately used																										
• interesting words are used appropriately																										
• effectively incorporates new words from literature and conversations																										
Communication																										
Purpose																										
• intention directs the writing																										
• writer can explain his intention																										
• uses writing for multiple purposes																										
• appropriately matches purpose to genre for writing																										
• effectively writes in different genres																										
• has a sense of audience; considers needs and interests of readers																										
Voice																										
• a personal tone comes through — a sense that the writer is speaking to a reader																										
Secretary																										
Mechanics																										
• tracks print while reading message back; notices missing words																										
• Spelling (Beginning = semi to early																										

phonetic Developing = phonetic; Early Fluent = transitional to conventional																										
• appropriate punctuation																										
• appropriate capitalization																										
• standard grammar																										
Appearance																										
• print progresses from L to R, line-under-line (unless purposefully placed for aesthetic reasons)																										
• correct letter formation																										
• appropriate spacing between letters, words, sentences																										
• clear handwriting																										
• generally neat																										

Comments:

Date/Comment

(Shea, 2010)

Assessing for Content

The desire to *communicate* seems inherent — something we're driven to do. It's what writing is meant to accomplish. As children work on printed messages, they understand *composition* as an exploration and expression of ideas in print (Shea, 2011).

In early stages, children's writing seems like a string of loosely related ideas, bouncing from topic to topic. Teachers model how to focus when they write with the class (e.g., The News, Language Experience Charts, class books). After lots of modeling, mini-lessons, and time for practice, they look for consistent themes in children's writing. Is there a topic? Do ideas relate to the topic? Are interesting, important, or informative details provided to support the topic? Teachers want writers to understand that the strength of their ideas and details supporting them persuade an audience when both are connected. They also want writers to realize that readers decide whether to continue — to learn, be convinced, inspired, or entertained — when the content is clear and author's voice holds their attention (Murray, 1982, 1983; Shea, 2011).

Writing voice develops with good models, coaching that directs attention to it, and lots of writing practice. Voice is hard to describe, but you know it when you "hear" it! It's in a writer's tone, word selection, or injection of humor (Calkins, 1991, 1994; Murray, 1982, 1983; Shea, 2011). Voice grabs readers' attention, but a coherent, logical flow in the writing sustains their engagement. Teachers also look for well-structured, interesting sentences that connect to the topic and transition smoothly to the next paragraph in the writing piece.

Assessing for Sentence Structure

Children who have been invited to participate in extended discussion and immersed in quality literature with follow-up conversation have absorbed content and language formats as models for constructing sentences (Ray, 1999). Over time, these writers expand kernel sentences to ones that are sophisticated, detailed, and varied in length, style, and type. Their constructions emulate models they've seen; input highly affects output.

When this trait is weak, provide a plethora of effective language models from literature. Examine how sentences are intricately woven to build a logical argument, description, or persuasion stylistically in each example (Ray, 1999; Shea, 2011).

Precisely how one organizes ideas in print is a difficult concept. In oral conversation we can backtrack to clarify when a listener doesn't follow our thoughts. But, writing doesn't allow

that; readers must construct personal understanding based on the author's presentation. Authors need to keep this in mind as they guide readers through their composition. However, there is a degree of oral/print connection.

Abundant experience with oral exchanges creates awareness of qualities that make a message clear and interesting. In a similar manner, effective writing piques the reader's interest from the opening sentence. Readers remain engaged when the writing flows with well-sequenced ideas and bridges that take readers from one to another. Organized writing flows toward a closing that creates a sense of completion (Calkins, 1991, 1994; Murray, 1982, 1983; Shea, 2011). Word choice in these sentences is also important; the right words add flavor, nuance, and definition to the ideas expressed.

Assessing for Vocabulary

Teachers want writers to know that words are important; they have power. Precise words clarify meaning, lessening misunderstanding between the author and reader. The right words in the right places make the writing memorable. Children acquire such words through models heard in conversation and in books read aloud. They acquire words when they read independently (Calkins, 1994; Murray, 1982, 1983; Shea, 2011). Draw children's attention to author's word choices; help them read like writers. In the process authors become additional teachers of writing in the classroom (Ray 1999).

When developing curiosity about and appreciation for wonderful language — language that rolls off your tongue and stays in your head like a tune you can't dismiss — children's vocabularies grow. They enjoy peppering their writing with them. Teachers love to come across such surprises!

Assessing for Spelling and Conventions

Response from others leads the child to associate a message with his emergent writing. But, only he can decipher it. For his message to be readable by others, he must compose using symbols readers will understand. The need fuels curiosity about the *secretary* trait — the *mechanics* for constructing conventional print messages. It makes editing relevant. Mechanics include expected forms for standard usage in written language. It includes following structural

protocols for different genres (i.e. narrative, informational, or poetry). It also includes correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Shea, 2011).

When refining word constructions, children use phonemic awareness to isolate sequential sounds heard in words they want to use and match those sounds to letters used in the language to represent them (phonics). The *sound spellings* (i.e., words spelled as they sound) created in this process reveal the child's logic, phonemic and phonetic knowledge, and stage of spelling development (Gentry & Gillet, 1993; Scanlon, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2010). When children's stage of spelling development has been determined, they can be grouped for instruction. See Figures 1.4 and 1.5.

Figure 1.4: Stages of Spelling

***Precommunicative* stage**
This would more appropriately be named the *early communicative* stage since even primitive scribble forms can begin with intention. Such purpose may simply reflect a desire to be recognized as a creator — "look at what I made" (Shea, 2010). Gentry and Gillet (1993) note that one of the first features that makes children's marking look like writing is its directionality. Marking at this stage is characterized by:

- random-looking scribble with free forms.
- letter-like symbols, random letters, and/or letters copied from the environment.
- repetition of known letters or ones the child is able to write.
- some lower case, but mostly upper case letters.

S*emiphonetic* stage
This stage reflects growing understanding of phonetic elements. Children's writing reflects letter-sound associations they're making. Writing at the semiphonetic stage:

- is more readable, especially when the author includes illustrations,
- includes some known words (e.g. spelled correctly),
- correctly spells the initial (or most prominent) sound in a word,
- reveals awareness of sound segmentation; more sounds (e.g. beginning and ending) in words are represented,
- uses standard directionality of left-to-right and return sweep,
- contains situations where letter names are used to spell (e.g. writing u when spelling you, using w for the first sound /d/in dog because the name of w begins with /d/. Although included in the semiphonetic stage by Gentry and Gillet (1993), other researchers have isolated this characteristic as *letter name stage* (Bear et al., 2000).
- is influenced by how sounds feel as they're produced in the mouth (e.g. writing jr for /dr/ is a common error) (Schulze, 2006).

***Phonetic* stage**
Writers represent most (in long words) or all (in short words) of the sounds they hear in words at this stage. At this stage, writers:

- include appropriate (but not always correct) letters to represent all (or most of) the sounds heard in the word (e.g. luv for love),
- spell sounds in a fairly sequential manner,
- spell sounds heard (e.g. the oa in boat with o, the ph in phone with f, or the er in player with r),
- attempt to spell medial sounds (e.g. vowels), letter combinations (e.g. consonant blends and digraphs), and multi-syllable words, and
- produce readable text.

Transitional Stage
As writers progress to this stage, they incorporate linguistic knowledge into their spellings. Children begin to notice how words look in print; they're acquiring visual strategies for spelling. They notice structures in the language that do not hold true to the sounds of letters separately (e.g. past tense of verbs sounded with /d/, /t/, or /id/, but spelled *ed*). They understand patterns and structures in English — where and when word spelling is not based on sound alone (Shea 2010).

Conventional Stage
This stage continues across a lifetime. It identifies writers who consistently use correct spelling. Spelling words conventionally at lower levels is not the same as spelling more sophisticated ones correctly.

Figure 1.5: Class List on Spelling Continuum

Semi phonetic……		**Phonetic……**		**..Transitional**
Bradley	Tom	Toby	Mickey	Erin
Jimmy	Danae	Melanie	Derrick	Adam
Emma	Alicia	Bella	Kenzie	Amanda
Rafael	Jon	Sam	Riley	Cole

Teach: Semi phonetic — Transitional

Word Awareness	**Short vowels**		**Dbl. letters**
Syllable Awareness	**Long vowels**		**Verb endings**
Awareness of onset and rime	**Initial blends**	**Irreg. verbs**	
Alphabet (recognition & matching)	**Consonant digraphs**		**Making plurals**
Phonemic awareness	**Final blends**	**Irreg. plurals**	
Initial consonants	**Vowel digraphs**	**Compound words**	
Final consonants	**"R" controlled vowels**	**Prefix/suffix**	
Medial consonants	**Diphthongs**		**Abbreviations**
			Homonyms
			Contractions
			Possessives
			Silent letters

Teaching Across Spelling Stages

The term *invented spelling* seems to cause must consternation among teachers, administrators, and/or parents; they fear students will have the incorrect spelling imprinted on their brain if allowed use it. Some teachers use an alternate term — *temporary spelling* — designating that these forms won't be used forever. Some have a hard time accepting the premise that writing with invented spelling is a "stepping stone" to early reading" (Schulze, 2006, 18).

Children try out the strategies for word construction they've observed, incorporating acquired PA (phonemic awareness) and phonics skills (matching letters to sounds) when spelling what they hear. A better term for these efforts is *sound spelling* (Scanlon, Anderson & Sweeney, 2010). This label honors what children are actually doing — spelling the sounds heard with letters or letter patterns. Children's sound spelling errors allow us to examine their thinking, confusions, and gaps in learning. Analysis of sound spellings allows us to hone in on what to teach, making instruction efficient; it's targeted on what's needed right now. It's differentiated for groups or individuals.

Spelling skills grow developmentally. It takes time to learn about the letter patterns and relationships of sounds to letters in a language — especially English orthography. Gentry and Gillet (1993) outline five stages of spelling development.

The first is called the *precommunicative* stage. Gentry and Gillet (1993) note that one of the first features that makes children's marking look like writing is its linearity or horizontal direction. Marking at this stage is characterized by:

- free-form, random-looking scribble.
- letter-like forms, random letters, and/or copied letters (as the child progresses).
- the repeated use of known letters or ones the child is able to write.
- indiscriminate mix of upper and lower case letters.
- attention to directional consistency (Schulze, 2006).

As children participate in modeled, interactive and guided writing activities, they learn how letters are mapped onto sounds to spell words. They begin to acquire sight words for reading that become words they can write automatically. They find that some words do not follow expected sound-letter connections. This learning takes time. Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, (2000) state, "The movement from this stage [precommunicative] to the next

[semiphonetic] hinges on learning the alphabetic principle; letters represent sounds and words can be segmented into sounds" (18).

The *semiphonetic* stage is characterized by developing understanding of the match of letters to sounds or phonics. Children's writing at this stage reflects what they know about phonetic principles. Writing at the semiphonetic stage:

- is more readable, especially with the support of illustrations,
- often includes a few known words,
- uses an appropriate letter to spell the most prominent sound in words (usually the beginning sound),
- reflects early understanding of sound segmentation,
- shows awareness of standard directionality,
- reflects confusion of letter names with sounds in words; children might write *u* when spelling *you* or *w* for the first sound in *dog* because /d/ heard at the beginning of *dog* matches the /d/ heard when saying *w*. Although included in the semiphonetic stage by Gentry and Gillet (1993), other researchers have isolated this characteristic as *letter name stage* (Bear et al., 2000).
- is influenced by how sounds feel as they're produced in the mouth (Schulze, 2006). Children confuse letters that have similar tongue placement or mouth formation (i.e. writing jr for /dr/).

Lots of time for practice with sound segmenting in the process of encoding personal messages propels children to the next stage.

Children in the *phonetic* stage represent most (in long words) or all (in short words) of the sounds they hear in words. Writers at this stage:

- include letters to represent all (or most of) the sounds heard in the word,
- spell sounds in a fairly sequential manner,
- spell sounds heard (e.g. the *oa* in boat with *o*, the *kn* in *knee* with *n*, the *ph* in *phone* with *f*, or the *er* in player with *r*),
- attempt to spell medial sounds (e.g. vowels), letter combinations (e.g. consonant blends and digraphs), and multi-syllable words, and,
- produce readable text.

As writers at this stage progress, they begin to incorporate knowledge gained from experiences with print. Children begin to notice words; they develop a visual image of the way words look in print, especially where sounds heard don't align with expected letters. Visual memory of unusual words is important for successful spelling in English (Scott, 1993). For example, they notice that the past tense ending on most verbs is spelled *ed* whether sounded as /d/, /t/, or /id/. As children incorporate this linguistic knowledge, they move into the next stage.

In the *transitional* stage, spellers consider what they hear, word meanings, word patterns, and their memory of how a word looks in print. They are getting closer and closer to correct spelling; they're developing *spelling consciousness*, but their spelling isn't always correct.

Spelling consciousness includes curiosity about the structure of words, knowledge of the language system, awareness of social expectations for spelling, and a habit of consistently applying spelling knowledge (Scott, 1993; Shea & Murray, 2000). All this takes time to develop. Spelling in English is a complex process. Writers at the transitional stage:

- attempt to revise their spelling,
- use a vowel in every syllable,
- incorporate visual strategies with sound spelling,
- demonstrate an understanding of morphemic (meaning) units (e.g. prefix, suffix) and inflectional endings ('s, s, ing, er, est) in the language; they add these to root words to modify word meaning and grammatical function, and
- use an increasing number of automatic writing words — words they know how to spell correctly without having to sound them out.

Instruction at this stage is focused on words or word patterns that are tricky. What are students trying to use, but continually confuse? A *core word list* that includes high frequency (HF) words, common *demons* (most confused words) and individual demons becomes the source for spelling instruction (Routman, 2000). Movement from transitional to the final stage is a lifelong journey.

The last stage is *conventional*. It's important to remember that conventional spelling is relative to a writer's developmental level. As students expand ideas with sophisticated words and sentence structures, knowledge demands increase for spelling words. Students need to be supported as risk takers as they attempt to spell difficult words.

Position *conventional* as the place we want our writing to be after it's edited. That honors attention to multiple elements of style — message quality, spelling consciousness, and the perseverance to make one's work ready for an audience of readers. At this stage:

- help writers notice the *distinguishing features* (Kibby, 1989) of unusual, interesting, and sophisticated words when reading. This builds visual memory of words and word patterns. It also increases vocabulary knowledge.
- teach skills and strategies for efficient proofreading and editing,
- encourage writers to use best words rather than safe ones, and
- focus on increasing children's repertoire of automatic writing words.

Developing young writer's curiosity about words with a *spirit of inquiry* (Schulze, 2006) makes spelling a problem solving process — one that's engaging! All along the way, teachers note students' progress and plan instruction to help them move forward as proficient spellers. Students are grouped for the right instruction at the right time. Along with accuracy, presentation in a writing piece matters. Making a good impression on the reading — at first glance — is important.

Assessing for Appearance

We've heard the caveat, *don't judge a book by its cover*; a great story can be found within tattered or messy covers. But it typically doesn't work with writing. Writing that goes public (i.e., offered to a public audience) will be judged by how it looks. It only gets one chance to make a first impression. When writing's messy, readers often turn away without giving the message a chance (Shea, 2011).

As children develop motor control and learn the basics of handwriting, the appearance of their writing improves. But, legibility is the goal rather than perfect matching to a handwriting style. Use exemplars; writing pieces that are legible and neat help children internalize a target for their final product. Young writers — as anyone learning a craft — need to have a vision of where they are going, support to get there, and time to practice.

Working on Writing

The Gift of Time

The patient gardener knows that, along with soil, sun, and water, plants need time to grow. Learning to write well takes time too; writers need the gift of time to engage deeply, mindfully, and personally in their craft.

Skills across the labyrinth of writing traits grow when adults offer patience, effective instruction, time for practice, sensitive feedback, appreciation of effort, and audience for the writer's message (Calkins, 1991, 1994; Hansen, 1987; Murray, 1982, 1983; Shea, 2011). The same ingredients led to Beckham's agility with a soccer ball.

The writing traits represent long-term goals; mastery is a lifelong pursuit. But, it is important to keep an eye on that destination while working in the moment. In conferences, discuss the work with a writer, suggest revisions, support the process of polishing the piece, and help the writer set new goals (Calkins, 1994; Murray, 1982, 1983; Shea, 2011). Giving readers the tools and teaching them how and when to use each is necessary for becoming a strategic writer. Targeted instruction based on identified needs when they occur in individual writers will move each forward efficiently and effectively. Differentiating instruction on the traits of writing is just as important as providing that that kind of instruction in any other curricular area. Writers in any classroom reflect a wide range of writing experience, competence, interests, genre preference, content and word knowledge, and immersion in exemplary models of literature. Such a range demands coming to know writers individually and setting lesson objectives based on that knowledge. Let writers appreciate that instruction is planned to meet their immediate needs — to support them as they learn to write like authors.

Writing as Authors

The goal of any writing curriculum should be more than nurturing mechanical writing in response to prompts. Writing is an expressive language process; it's for personal expression of knowing, thinking, feeling, asking, and all the other purposes for which expressive language processes (i.e., speaking and visually representing) are used. Writing as an author is about communicating ideas. That kind of writing is composition; it involves a personal construction. The author gathers ideas, decides what he wants to tell, and encodes that thinking into written

text. Copying text is not the same. It's mechanical; it doesn't involve thinking or personal input. And, the copier can easily disengage from the task.

When we intend that another person or a wider audience will receive our writing, there's natural motivation to present ideas clearly and persuasively. Our work reflects us; we want to make a positive impression. Teachers want all writers to accept that seemingly simple premise; it will inspire them when the work is hard — when polishing it seems tedious.

External motivators or consequences are never as effective or lasting. Creating a community of writers in the classroom ensures a continuous and broad audience. The community provides sensitively delivered full and honest feedback, supports each writer's efforts, and celebrates everyone's milestones. Authors in such classrooms write for all the reasons people write in the world. They also write in response to an open-ended prompt related to curricular studies. However, writing can be very personal — produced solely for the writer's use. Teachers want writers to understand such distinctions and treat the writing in each situation appropriately. Writing, like speech, has socially accepted expectations for different registers. *Register* refers to the form of speech or writing accepted in different situations (i.e., casual, formal, business, personal).

Processed and Unprocessed Writing

Some writing that's done in the classroom remains *unprocessed;* it's not revised or edited. This writing remains in draft state. Teachers want children to understand when and why writing would be unprocessed.

When we make notes for ourselves — jottings that help us recall, think, reflect, or organize ideas — they remain unprocessed as first draft writing. There's no need to polish them because they will not be presented publicly — to an audience of other readers. The writing is a tool for personal inquiry rather than communication. But, the teacher does read much of this work (e.g., to assess children's understanding of curricular content or quality of research notes on a topic). It must be noted at this point that current technologies are creating new registers of writing where certain informal communications (e.g., text messages) are also acceptably unprocessed.

As a learning *artifact* (work sample that reveals a child's thinking or understanding), each writing sample provides rich data for assessment. Ask writers to be reasonable — but not overly

fussy — with regards to appearance and conventions when it's unprocessed writing that will be reviewed for content. (See Figure 1.6.) But, any writing piece created for the purpose of communicating to a wider audience should be refined.

Figure 1.6: Unprocessed Writing…
….writing to think, reflect, organize ideas in a study of birds

5/6
black-caped cikades way less than 4 pennys. They can be in very cold weather like in Alaska. They grow extra fethers in winter to be warm. They hang upside down to get seeds at the botim of a fedr or larva underneath leaves on trees. They hide seeds in the fall. That's like what squirrels do.

5/7
Owls, haks, and racoons are enames. They eat chikades. Chikades call chik-a- de-de-de-de to warn the other birds. Caralina chikades, mountin chikades and chesnut chikades live in the south and west. Chikades will come to your yard if you have a small fedr. They like sunflowers.

Writing is *processed* (e.g. refined or polished) when it will be presented to an audience beyond the author. First drafts are reviewed, analyzed, and revised until the message is connected, cohesive, and clear. Then, final touches are made in the editing process to make the delivery correct and attractive. Processed writing involves steps that are presented in a linear format, but are never strictly followed that way by authors. It is a *recursive* movement — two steps forward and one step back; in the process, authors refine messages. In classrooms that include writers' workshop, children learn how to work as authors.

Figure 1.7: Writers' Workshop

Mini Lesson:10 minutes -- The workshop begins with a mini lesson. Lesson objectives are based on needs identified by the teacher as she confers with writers. They fall into the following categories.

• procedural (How we do …..)
• strategies (How we revise, use transitions, vary sentences…)
• organization (How to present information with clarity, flow, connected ideas….)
• skills (How to edit grammar, spelling… How to choose good words.)
• qualities of good writing (How to interest readers with a good opening, word choice, voice, or closing.)

Status of the Class: 5 minutes

At the end of each workshop, children determine which step in the writing process they'll be working on. The teacher calls all who will be Brainstorming; they put their writing folders in the Brainstorming box and write B in the next day's space on the line with their name. Next, those who will be drafting put their folders in the Drafting box. This continues until all folders have been put away. When workshop starts, children pick up their folders as each step is called. They get right to work where they left off. Whenever the teacher confers with a writer, she writes an asterisk in that box. The chart is a visual reminder of who she's met with to support, direct information gathering, or co-edit.

Name	4/4	4/5	4/6	4/7	4/8	4/9	4/12
Jamal	B*	B	D*	D	R*		
Tonya	D	R*	Rev	S/C*	P		
Janelle	P	P*	P	B*	D*		
Tommy	C*	B	D*	D	D		

Working Through the Steps: 30-40 minutes

Children pick up where they left off in the previous workshop session and continue from that point in the steps of the writing process. But, the sequence is always recursive; they can go back to a previous step at any point. The following steps are posted on a wall chart to remind children what's involved at each point. Children who are gathering ideas for writing or waiting for an editing conference can read silently. They can also assist peers as an audience in rehearsal or share steps and help with revisions when asked by an author.

Brainstorm:

• Think of story ideas. What do you want to write about? What do you want to tell your audience of readers?
• Make a web or sketches to map the way you will tell your message. Some writers like to brainstorm by talking to others; this helps them consider what they want to include.
• Sometimes writers need to gather more information before they can write. They read books on the topic.

Draft:

• Start writing! Get ideas down on the paper. Use your web or sketches to remember what you want to talk about.
• If you're not sure about spelling, spell words the way they sound. You'll correct them later.

Rehearse:

• Try out your writing with a partner or small group. Read it out loud.
• How does it sound? Does it need changes? What does the audience think?

Revise:

• Make changes in your writing. Someone in the rehearsal audience can help.
• Add new information, take out parts, or rearrange the order.

Share:

• Read your revised writing to a small group.
• Does it sound right now? Is it clear? Does it flow? What does the audience think?

Edit:

• Check your writing. Did you use capital letters where they belong? Did you use punctuation correctly?
• Underline or circle words you want help spelling.

Editing Conference:

• Meet with the teacher to talk about your writing and make final corrections.

Publish:

• Copy the final draft with all corrections. Use your best handwriting. Illustrate your work.
• Present your work to an audience. Sit in the Author's Chair and read it to the class. Display it in the room for others to read.

Workshop Closing: 10 minutes

Materials are put away as described in *Status of the Class*. Writers come together to debrief. The teacher comments on significant observations. Selected writers share segments of their work, explaining their purpose and goals.

Organizing for Writers' Workshop

Figure 1.7 outlines a possible schedule for writers' workshop — one I've used in first grade. The block for individual writing time can be adjusted when the daily schedule requires a shortened period or expanded when possible. Before the workshop starts, protocols for behavior are thoroughly established and practiced. The workshop model allows the teacher to work with small groups or individuals while other writers are engaged.

I usually work though a piece of writing, modeling each step before children work on the same step in their writing. We stay together through this first production for the purpose of reinforcing understanding of the process and expectations. But, after that, authors work at a pace that fits their work.

Children who finish a step ahead of others in that first guided run through the process can read ancillary resources related to a unit of study, work on a project, or read books of choice. As noted in Figure 1.7, reading can also be done during the writing block time when authors need more information on a topic or are waiting for an editing conference with the teacher.

The status of the class chart reminds children what they planned to do; it allows the teacher to instantly note those with whom she's recently conferred. It's also clear where she should direct her attention next. These visits are opportunities to gather anecdotal notes on writers' performance at any step in the process. See Figure 1.8.

Figure 1.8: Anecdotal Notes

When observing, watch for the writer's
• overall confidence level with the task as a whole.
• strategies used to organize and communicate his message.
• purposes for writing, including genres used.
• consideration of audience (i.e. interests and needs).
• methods for topic selection.
• strategies used for spelling.
• acceptance of responsibility for his writing.
• physical agility with the task (i.e. pencil grip, motor skills with writing).

In the editing conference, I complete a form for each writing piece I discuss with an author. See Figure 1.9. The conference is an optimal time to differentiate responses to a writer — to reteach skills not quite mastered or nudge him to try something new. I review anecdotal notes and the checklist when planning for mini lessons in writers' workshop.

Figure 1.9: Editing Conference Checklist

Author _____Title of Piece_____

Content:
Description of this writing piece:

Is there a clear message presented in this piece? _____
Can the author read it? _____ Can others read it? _____
Did the author stick to a topic? _____ Is the topic well developed? _____
Is there evidence of revision? _____
Comments:

Mechanics:
• Punctuation — Comments:

• Capital letters — Comments:

• Spelling — Stage level reflected by misspelled words_____
Examples of sound spelling:

Strengths of this piece:

Teaching points in conference:

Goals set for next writing piece:

Mini lessons are just that — brief in length and content; they can be done with the class, a small group, or as a tutorial. Topics for such lessons fall under a variety of categories as noted in Figure 1.9. Sometimes they are procedural, emphasizing how we work together or get steps done. That's especially true in the beginning of the year when establishing classroom tone or at times when writers need to be reminded of expectations. More often, mini lessons address skills and strategies for good writing. My frequent read-alouds introduce an array of authors and a range of genres. I want writers to stretch their wings in new formats; these models inspire.

As mentioned, literature offers exemplars writers can use as a launching pad for personal style (Ray, 1999). Along with models I explicitly teach how to write in various structures. For example, I demonstrate how the Answer Sandwich can be used as a cue when responding to a question or prompt (Cole, 2009); this is a *constructed response*. This practice will help them in writing assignments across the curriculum. Knowing how to skillfully craft such responses is also an important life skill.

Answer Sandwich

Figure 1.10 describes each step of the answer sandwich. I teach each step, model it with my own writing, and ask students to examine my completed response with me. Did I answer the question or prompt? Was my response clear and complete? Did I pull the reader in with my lead — top bun? Do I have a good closing that neatly ties the response together?

Figure 1.9: Better Answers for Constructed Responses

Prompt for a constructed response matched to curricular study: Are our oceans being polluted at a dangerous rate? Why? Why not?

The Answer Sandwich

Step 1: The top bun for the answer sandwich

Strategy 1 and 2 combines *restatement of question* and *gist-only response* evoking a "tell me more" request from the reader. Don't give away your 'thunder' in the opening.

Open restatement:
The pollution of our oceans is happening at a dangerous rate because…..

The pollution of our oceans is happening at a dangerous rate because major contributing factors have not been controlled.

Closed restatement:
Our oceans are being polluted at a dangerous rate due to many reversible factors.

Step 2:
The middle of the answer sandwich **— lots of meaningful details** logically presented with an introduction, development, and transitional sentences.

Step 3:
The bottom bun closes up the sandwich by referring back to the premise; it's not too big, but strong enough to hold everything together and end with a one-two punch!

Example: Although there are numerous other contributing factors that have increased the rate of pollution in our oceans, these reversible ones are major and need to be addressed immediately to restore our planet's health.

Cole, A. (2009)

Based on my notes, I plan to reteach and provide more practice. When students are responding to prompts in curricular areas, I evaluate responses based on the expectations taught with this method. I notice students referring to it whenever they respond to a question or prompt. The workshop process and supports in the classroom scaffold most writers toward proficiency. Some progress faster and farther than others.

Evaluating Growth in Writing

Periodically, teachers review data (e.g., from anecdotal notes and writing samples) accumulated over time (i.e., across a reporting period) and form conclusions about a student's growth as a writer and speller. They form a *tentative conclusion*; they make an evaluation *of* learning (Stiggins, 2002) — of the writer's progress on a continuum (e.g., for spelling or writing development) or against a benchmark of expected performance at a specific point. What writing traits has the student acquired? What stage of spelling is reflected with words constructed?

Basic writing and spelling skills need to be continuously monitored and practiced (Scott, 1993). Evidence of growth in the writing traits and spelling is measured in tasks accomplished across the curriculum — across the grades. Each production of writing provides a wealth of assessment data. The collection reveals growth when viewed in totality. Conclusions drawn from assessment data constitute evaluation. Evaluation becomes increasingly more accurate with multiple data points from varied contextual demonstrations of the target performance — data

produced without stress, with personal investment, and in connection with the whole curriculum. When particular writers have difficulty, teachers differentiate, using alternate approaches and materials to ameliorate glitches in learning. There are many compendiums of instructional strategies (Culham, 2003; Hollas, 2006; Invernizzi, Templeton, Johnston, & Bear, 2007: Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014) that target specific needs. The following may be helpful when a writer struggles.

Scaffolding Struggling Writers

Bodrova and Leong (1998) describe a process for scaffolding reluctant or struggling writers. It's based on Vygotskian theory of ZPD (1978) — zone of proximal development (i.e., what a learner can do with help that he cannot do alone at this time). The procedure includes *materialization* and *inner speech*. Materialization involves combining a concrete object with physical action to assist learning a target concept.

The viewer slide or *word window* that children use to isolate single words or letters is an example. The slide is adjusted to show a specific word in the window. That word is examined for *distinguishing features* (Kibby, 1989) that make it memorable when met again in reading and writing. Children can also *frame* a word with their fingers; this works well with large print on charts. See Figure 1.11 and 1.12.

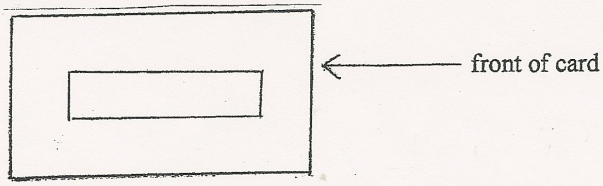
Figure 1.11: Word Slide

Figure 1.11 Word Slide

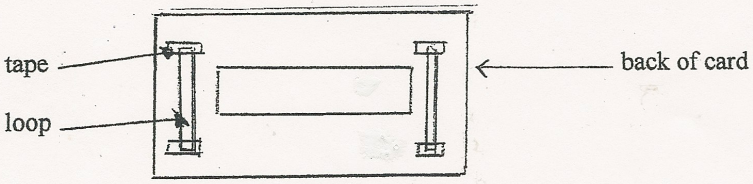
Making a Slider

You need: two 5 X 8 unlined colored index cards, a ruler, scissors, and tape

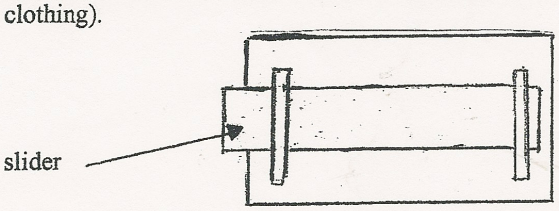
Cut a rectangle in the center of one 5X 8 card.



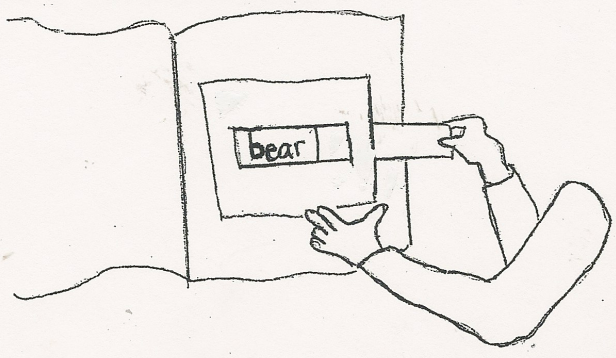
Use another 5 X 8 card to cut narrow 3/8" strips that are longer than the height of the rectangle cut in the first card. These are taped to make loops that hold the slider on the back of the card.



From the second 5 X 8 card, cut a rectangle slightly wider and slightly longer than the opening in the first card. Slide it into the loops on the back of the first card (as a belt on clothing).

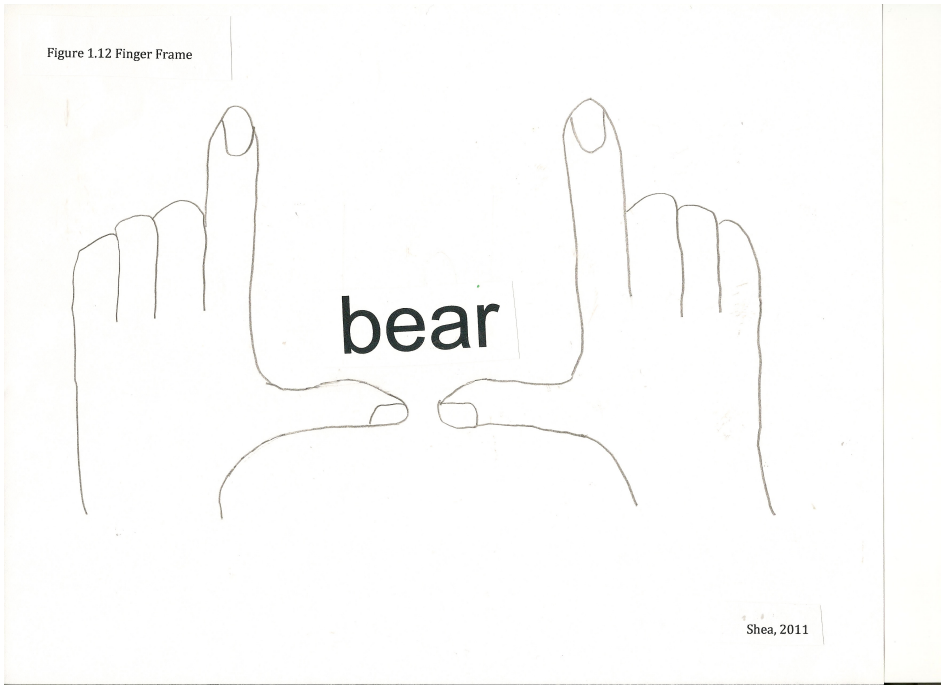


Move the slider to show the beginning letter(s) of a word, a single word, punctuation marks, or any other feature you want children to notice.



Shea, 2011

Figure 1.12: Finger Frame



Materialization is accompanied by the child's inner speech; it provides rehearsal, direction, and guidance through a task (Galperin, 1992). The speech is typically subvocalized (spoken softly). Inner speech and materialization fade once the skill is internalized. Materialization and inner speech also draw attention to the separate, sequenced sounds in words. Some children need additional help problem-solving how to encode words, sound-by-sound. I use Elkonin boxes to help them.

Elkonin's (1963) introduced the use of sound boxes for identifying separate phonemes in a word. For example, the strip of three boxes is set out for words with three phonemes. The child moves a penny into a box for each phoneme spoken when the word is articulated. (See Figure 1.13). Then, we decide what letter or letters we need spell the sounds.

Figure 1.13: Elkonin Boxes

Phonemic Awareness — Identifying Sounds in Words
Elkonin boxes for word with **three** phonemes

Target word: pet

The child moves a penny into the first box as he says /p/. He moves a penny into the next box as he says /e/. Finally, he moves a penny into the third box as he says /t/.

Then, we spell each sound.

p	e	t

I demonstrate how I can change the beginning sound and make new works with the rime (et). I write and we read — met, net, and wet.

Target word: look

The child moves a penny into the first box as he says /l/. He moves a penny into the next box as he says /oo/. Finally, he moves a penny into the third box as he says /k/.

Then, we think about how to spell each sound. I explain that the /oo/ sound is spelled with two letters — *oo*

l	oo	k

I demonstrate how I can change the beginning sound and make new works with the rime (ook). I write and we read — book, shook, and took.

Combining these methods, we work through the procedure for *Scaffolded Writing* (Bodrova and Leong (1998). It's a temporary support. Extensive teacher modeling precedes each step of the process.

I model how to use lines on the page that I've highlighted with color. I also model various strategies for word construction, including listening for sounds and representing these with appropriate letters. Exactly how to integrate known letter patterns, automatic writing words (e.g. the, of), and resources in the room (e.g. word wall, charts, books, signs) for word construction is a constant theme in this performance.

I demonstrate — by thinking out loud — how inner speech guides me through the task. With this preparation in place, I can initiate Scaffolded Writing step-by-step.

1. The writer thinks through his message and shares it. I repeat the message to confirm what was said; sometimes, I help the writer refine or simplify the statement.
2. The writer and I repeat the message together as I make a highlighted line on the paper for each word of the statement. This step may be done before or after the child illustrates. However, drawing first often helps the writer gather and organize ideas.
3. The child is given the paper with the highlighted lines. He writes a word on each line, using known strategies for spelling. As he writes, the child repeats the message. He articulates plans and strategies; he problem-solves his way throughout the process.
4. The procedure is repeated as the message increases in length.
   Some interventions are individualized while others can be planned as mini lessons for small groups.

Analysis of students' writing in this highly supported process directs plans for what to teach. What does each writer need to improve his ability to accurately construct a clear message and encode readable or accurately spelled words?

Conclusion

Effective teachers of writing understand that each new instructional step is based on information gathered from valid, reliable data collected during responsive teaching. Writers are at different steps on a continuum of writing competence. That's to be expected; it's the norm. Providing each with appropriate — in-the-moment information that he needs to master the step he's on or move forward — is essential. Continuance of the cycle of baseline formative assessment, selection of research-tested methodology matched to learner needs, mindful targeted instruction (responsive teaching), guided practice with engaging tasks, and continued assessment ensures that children grow as expected in confidence and competence as writers.

References

Armstrong, M. (1990). Another way of looking. *Forum*, 33, (1), 12-16.

Bear, D., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2000). *Words their way; Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Bodrova, E. & Leong, D. (1998). Scaffolding emergent writing in the zone of proximal development. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 3(2), 1-18.

Boushey, G. & Moser, J. (2006). The daily 5. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Calkins, L. (1991). *Living between the lines*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Calkins, L. (1994). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cole, A. (2002). *Better answers: Written performance that looks good and sounds smart*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Cole, A. (2006). Right-answer writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cole, A. (2009). *Better answers: Written performance that looks good and sounds smart (2nd ed.)*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Culham, R. (2003). *Six + 1 traits of writing*. New York, NY, Scholastic.

Dodge, J. (2005). *Differentiation in action*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing with power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Elkonin, D. (1963). The psychology of mastering the elements of reading. In B. Simon and J, Simon (Eds.), *Educational psychology in the U.S.S.R*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Galperin, P. Y. (1992). Organization of mental activity and the effectiveness of learning. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 30(4), 65-82.

Gentry, J. R. & Gillet, J. W. (1993). *Teaching kids to spell*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, D. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Hanson, J. (1987). *When writers read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hollas, B. (2006). *6 ways to teach the 6 traits of writing*. Peterborough, NH: Crystal Springs Books.

Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., Johnston, F., & Bear, D. (2007). *Words their way* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Johnston, P. (2004). *Choice words*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Kibby, M. (1989). Teaching sight vocabulary with and without context before silent reading: A field test of the focus of attention hypothesis. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 21 (3), 261-278.

Murray, D. (1980). Writing as process: How writing finds its own meaning. In T. Donovan and E. Mc Clelland (eds.). *Eight approaches to composition teaching*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. 7-12.

Murray, D. (1982). Learning by teaching: Selected articles on writing and teaching. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.

Murray, D. (1983). *Shoptalk: Learning to Write with Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Nutbrown, C. (1999). *Threads of thinking*: *Young children learning and the role of early education.(2nd ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

O'Connor, E.A. & Simic, O. (2002). The effect of reading recovery on special education referrals and placements. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39 (6), 635-646.

Oglan, G. (2003). *Write, right, rite!* New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.

Phenix, J. (1990). *Teaching writing: The nuts and bolts of running a day-to-day writing program*. Markham, Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers Limited.

Pritchard R. J., & Honeycut, J. (2006). Process writing. In C. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 275-290). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Ray, L. W. (1999). *Wondrous words*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Routman, R. (2000). *Conversations: Strategies for teaching, learning, and evaluating*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rubin, D. (2002). *Diagnosis and correction in reading instruction*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Scanlon, D., Anderson, K., & Sweeney, J. (2010). *Early intervention for reading difficulties: The interactive strategies approach*. New York, NY: Guilford Publications, Inc.

Schulze, A. (2006). *Helping children become readers through writing.* Newark, DE:

International Reading Association.

Scott, R. (1993). Spelling: Sharing the secrets. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Gage Educational Publishing Company.

Shea, M. & Murray, R. (2000). Spelling in English: A critical thinking, problem-solving process. *Balanced Literacy Instruction*, 7(1), 37-46.

Shea, M., Murray, R., & Harlin, R. (2005). *Drowning in data?: How to collect, organize, and document student performance*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Shea, M. (2011). *Parallel learning of reading and writing in early childhood.* New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.

Shea, M. (2012). *Running records: Authentic instruction in early childhood education*. New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.

Short, K., Harste, J., & Burke, C. (1996). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Stiggins, R. (2002). Assessment crisis: The absence of assessment *for* learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 83, 758-69.

Templeton, S., & Gehsmann, K. ((2014). *Teachng reading and writing: The developmental approach.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Tobin, R. (2008). Conundrums in the differentiated classroom. *Reading Improvement*, 45 (4), 159-169.

Tomlinson, C. (1999). *The Differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. (2000). Reconcilable differences? Standard-based teaching and differentiation. *Education Leadership*. 58 (1), 6-11.

Tomlinson, C. & Strickland, C. (2005). *Differentiation in practice: A resource guide for differentiating curriculum, grades 9-12*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Turbill, J. (1984). *Now, we want to write*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published in 1930, 1933,1935).

Walker, B. (2004). *Diagnostic teaching of reading* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Walker, B. (2008). Adjusting instruction to meet students' needs. *Reading Today*, 25, (6), 18-19.

Walshe, R. D. (1982). *Every child can write!* Rosebery, N. S. W., Australia: Primary English Teaching Association.