Teaching Writing in Kindergarten

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of teaching writing in younger grades, specifically kindergarten. It begins by reviewing several pieces of literature that discuss methods of, time-frame for, and the value of teaching writing in a kindergarten classroom.

Following this discussion this commentary moves into an action research section. Based on the findings of the aforementioned research, I implemented a new writing curriculum in my own kindergarten classroom. I relay the experience of adopting a new curriculum and transitioning my own kindergartners into a state of authorship. This process is largely the focus of the action research portion of this paper, but student artifacts and classroom set up (writing corner/workshop area) and examples will be included as well. Limitations of implementing this new curriculum and recommendations for continuing to teach with it in subsequent years will also be deliberated.
Introduction

Reading, reading, reading. As educators, we hear this all the time. Make more time for reading. Your students need to be reading in every class. The more students read the more successful they will be in their academics. The push for more academic time devoted to reading as well as the amount of research that has been done in early academics that centers around reading are enormous (Behymer, 2003). While all of this is true and certainly something to be strived for, there are other parts to the education equation for success that are largely being overlooked.

Education seems to have been a bit neglectful in focusing on the academic growth and development that students show when they are placed in a classroom where the teacher dedicates a decent portion of every school day to writing. Writing is reading’s partner. In her article So You Think They Can’t Write, Victoria Salvat (2012) quotes Because Writing Matters, the National Writing Project and Carl Nagin as they relay information on experimental studies for reading and writing as saying three things: “Better writers tend to be better readers (of their own writing as well as of other reading material). Better writers tend to read more than poorer writers. Better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poor readers” (pg. 48).

Reading and writing go hand-in-hand. Salvat (2012) puts it like this, “It is imperative to foster children’s desire to explore writing at the same time that they are exploring reading to enhance their understanding of concepts of print” (p. 48).

saying “Research concerning the relationship between emergent and formal literacy has shown that helping a young child learn to write has positive effects on future literacy learning” (p. 327).

While most educators would agree with the statement that writing is important, some may venture to say that it isn’t as important as reading. Some would even venture to say that teaching writing as early as kindergarten couldn’t possibly be beneficial (Casangiu, 2010). Some go even farther and say that it is an inappropriate activity for such young students (Casangiu, 2010). The aim of this paper is to disagree with such a notion. This paper sets out to establish the importance and necessity of a focused writing program implemented in kindergarten classrooms and to show one way that this can be achieved.

Teaching Writing in Kindergarten: Literature Review

Why Teach Writing in Kindergarten?

This is a question that begs to be answered, especially since there are large discrepancies from state to state pertaining to whether or not kindergarten is a requirement and how many hours of school kindergartners have to attend (Covert, 2014). This does pose an interesting predicament that some educators fear. In her article Teaching Writing in Kindergarten – an Appropriate Activity? Casangiu (2012) writes, “…the attendance at kindergarten, not mandatory, would increase the chance of differences (instead to fade!), for those who would learn to write here etc.” (p. 146) Children whose parents elect to send them to kindergarten have the opportunity to grow beyond a place their non-kindergarten attending friends may ever catch up to. Is this possible gap creation such a hindrance that it should keep kindergarten teachers from teaching writing in their classrooms? I think looking at the benefits of teaching writing in kindergarten makes it pretty clear that growth and progress outweigh this predicament. There are certainly many good reasons to teach writing in kindergarten.
In her article, *So You Think They Can’t Write?* Salvat (2012) outlines 8 strong reasons that kindergarten teachers should not only be teaching writing in their classrooms, but should be making writing time something that is highly prioritized on a daily basis.

1. Kindergartners are, generally speaking, just learning to read. They spend much of their day immersed in literacy and working on letter/sound relationships, letter formation, concepts of print, and the like. Salvat (2012) says this is one reason that writing should be taught in kindergarten classrooms. She feels that it is vital that reading and writing be taught together in order to help students have a stronger understanding of the concepts of print (Salvat, 2012).

2. Salvat (2012) quotes Routman (2000) as saying, "The most effective kindergarten and first grade teachers demonstrate and promote daily writing time as well as verbal word play" (p. 49). If we are going to offer kindergarten shouldn’t it be our goal to make it the most effective program that we can?

3. Clay (2001) is also quoted in Salvat’s (2012) article. Educators who strongly agree with all the research that says, read, read, read, might see how Clay’s (2001) following quote makes sense: “Children's writing can show the teacher where perceptions about reading are going wrong” (p. 49). Any insight kindergartner teachers can gain into the newly formed reading patterns of their students should always be welcomed.

4. Some professional educators, perhaps especially those who have never worked with kindergartners, may wonder about the role that immaturity and young age play in whether or not these students can be successful writers. Salvat (2012) has an answer for this, too. She says, “Their [kindergartners’] writing abilities form earlier than we expect” (Salvat, 2012, p. 50).
5. Salvat (2012) provides research from Vygotsky (1962) to explain the philosophy of early writing, “Gestures are writing in the air, and written signs frequently are simply gestures that have been fixed” (p. 50).

6. Expectations play a large role in whether or not students succeed in school. Often times it can be easy to under-expect of our students; they are often capable of more than we ever dream possible. Salvat (2012) gives a good reminder regarding this: “Ninety percent of children come to school believing they can write” (p. 50). If Kindergartners already believe they can accomplish the exercise of writing, half of the learning-to-write hurdle has already been conquered for us.

7. As previously mentioned, reading and writing are really in it together (Salvat, 2012). Their partnership is one that really can’t be loosened; it is challenging to get one without the other. Salvat (2012) quotes P. David Pearson, an early-reading specialist and dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkley, as saying it this way: “writing can play a central role in early-reading development” (p. 51).

8. Lastly, Clay (1991) is once again cited by Salvat (2012) to drive home the importance of teaching reading and writing simultaneously, “Because writing teaches concepts as one learns to write, it is important to have students explore writing at the same time as reading to enhance their understanding of concepts of print” (p. 52). If Kindergartners are already being introduced to reading and are expected to learn how to do so before 1st grade, writing should be emphasized just as much.
How to Teach Writing in Kindergarten?

Different strokes for different folks. This saying always pops into mind when anyone asks me how I do something in my own classroom. Of course, there are recommended and researched ways to teach particular things, but a lot of the “how” can depend on the culture of your school, your classroom, your individual students, and your personality and preferences as a teacher. That being said, there are a few different ways, according to research, to teach writing in kindergarten. This paper will discuss two of those ways. You might think of these ways as skeletons or frames – just a system to hang your ideas on for teaching writing. Then, you can tweak it to make it your own.

Both Behymer (2003) and D’On Jones, Reutzel, and Fargo (2010) discuss 2 different types of writing instruction that can successfully be implemented in kindergarten classrooms: 1) interactive writing, and 2) writing workshop.

Behymer (2003) sort of combines the two. She has developed a 6-step writing program that she uses with her students. Of these 6 steps she says, “After struggling for six years in my kindergarten class, I finally found an enjoyable and effective method of teaching writing workshop that helps my students succeed” (Behymer, 2003, p. 85). She gives credit to Kid Writing: A Systematic Approach to Phonics, Journals, and Writing Workshop (Feldgus & Cardonick, 1999), saying she adopted her ideas from their work (Behymer, 2003).

Behymer’s 6 steps to effectively teach writing in kindergarten are as follows:

1. Drawing stage – drawings are excellent prewriting organizers.

2. Guided phonics-based spelling - Behymer (2003) calls this “kid writing” (p. 85). This step is where students take the time to listen for sounds within words, progressing from
the easy to hear and spell sounds to the more difficult ones. The students practice writing the sounds they hear. They might use these to label their drawings.

3. Adult underwriting/individual minilessons – writing conventions are taught in this phase. Interactive writing can occur here, where the student and the adult write alongside each other and the adult has the opportunity to teach the child on specifics of writing that they may be struggling with.

4. Large-group minilesson – students have the opportunity to share some of their work with the rest of the class during this time.

5. Minisharing – while it would be impossible to take the time to allow every student to share every piece of their writing with the entire class, it is important to give students the time to share some of their writing. It is necessary for them to feel that their writing is important and they need the chance to be validated by someone other than the teacher or themselves. This stage gives students a chance to share their works with a partner so that no one’s work is overlooked or underappreciated.

6. Publication – revising and editing occur in this stage. Then, the student’s work is published some place. That place might be a bulletin board or in a book.

Behymer (2003)

D’On Jones, Reutzel, and Fargo (2010) take more of a separate look at the interactive writing and writing workshop methods of teaching writing in kindergarten. They explain interactive writing in this manner:

Interactive writing is a group writing experience that helps children attend to the details of letters, sounds, and words while creating meaningful text (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). The focus of interactive writing is to provide young students with instruction on print
concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics, and high-frequency words (Hammerberg, 2001; Tompkins, 2010). The main components of interactive writing instruction include negotiating, constructing, and rereading the text. (p. 328)

D’On Jones, Reutzel, and Fargo’s (2010) definition for writing workshop is as follows:

Writing workshop is the most popular approach to writing instruction in the primary grades (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005) and is reported to be the best instructional method to implement the writing process for emergent writers (Atwell, 1998; Calkins 1994; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Graves, 1983). The writing process approach is validated by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (1996) and is mandated as the standard writing instructional approach in many states and districts (Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura, & Valdes, 2004). (p. 328)

D’On Jones, Reutzel, and Fargo (2010) facilitated a study to discover whether interactive writing or writing workshop was the more effective method concerning writing instruction for kindergarten students. Their study concluded that both methods are effective and they attribute to student growth in phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word reading ability. (D’on Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010). These two methods for teaching writing were found to be “equally effective at promoting growth of early reading skills” (D’On Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010, p. 337).

Making use of one of these two methods of writing instruction (or some combination thereof) in a kindergarten classroom really allows for the teacher to see what those young students are truly capable of. Expecting kindergartners to write raises the bar of expectation to a point that many kindergarten teachers, in years past, have not visited. Don’t be surprised when
the kids meet and surpass that bar. As Amanda VanNess (2013) says in her article, *Let Me Tell You a Secret, Kindergartners Can Write!*, “Kindergarten students are capable of real writing!” (p. 575).

**When to Teach Writing in Kindergarten**

School days are already filled to overflowing with all the different subjects that have to be taught and mandates that have to be met. This fact, combined with the fact that “writing is a prisoner of time in early literacy instruction…” (D’On Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010, p. 338), breeds the ever-present question of “When?” When are teachers supposed to find the time to teach their kindergartners to write? Especially those kindergarten teachers who only have their students for half a day or every other day.

Research shows that the answer to this question is, “Daily!” The amount of time that should daily be spent on writing instruction in kindergarten has not been agreed upon, but articles and/or studies done by the following all preach that writing must be a daily priority: Behymer (2003); Brown (2010); D’On Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo (2010); Leonard Lamme, Fu, Johnson, & Savage (2002); Puranik, Al Otaiba, Folsom Sidler, & Greulich (2014); Salvat (2012); Singh (2010).

**What Does Common Core Say About Teaching Writing in Kindergarten?**

Common Core has brought about many changes to K-12 classrooms across the nation in the last couple of years. There is now a bigger push for writing in the classroom than there has ever been before. More writing, different styles and types of writing, better writing filled with more evidence from texts, etc. Education is starting to catch on to the neglect it has been dealing the subject of writing and now the race is on to make up lost time.
A common core website, [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org), discusses some of these major shifts that educators are being faced with:

Frequently, forms of writing in K–12 have drawn heavily from student experience and opinion, which alone will not prepare students for the demands of college, career, and life. Though the standards still expect narrative writing throughout the grades, they also expect a command of sequence and detail that are essential for effective argumentative and informative writing. The standards’ focus on evidence-based writing along with the ability to inform and persuade is a significant shift from current practice.

If students are going to be expected to delve into and learn to master more and different types of writing than ever expected of them before, it is truly imperative that educators are giving students as much time as possible to achieve these goals. Writing needs to be taught from the first day students are entering schools. It is unacceptable to wait until the students are older. We can’t, or a much different and much worse gap than Casangiu (2010) feared will occur – the gap of no return in which students are set up to fail.

**Amalgamation of Literature Review**

These articles and studies speak pretty clearly in regards to the fact that teaching writing while students are learning to read is very beneficial (Behymer, 2003; D’On Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010; Salvat, 2012). In addition to teaching students to write while they are learning to read, research says that writing needs to be taught on a daily basis, even in kindergarten (Behymer, 2003; Brown, 2010; D’On Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010; Leonard Lamme, Fu, Johnson, & Savage, 2002; Puranik, Al Otaiba, Folsom Sidler, & Greulich, 2014; Salvat, 2012; Singh, 2010).
Reading and writing, when taught together, help students to grow their literacy skills at a better pace and allow them to become stronger in both content areas (Calkins, 2013). It really only makes sense that they would be taught together.

**Action Research: Implementing Writer’s Workshop in My Own Kindergarten Classroom**

When I was trying to decide what do to for my capstone project, I was fairly immediately drawn to the idea of implementing a writing curriculum for my students. I have to admit that, at the onset of my teaching career (4 years ago), I never really dreamed that kindergarten students would be capable of writing much beyond their name, numbers, handwriting, and labeling some pictures here and there. This is a little bit ironic, considering I pride myself on pushing the envelope of my students’ potential – I know they are capable of amazing things, and I love to see just how far they can grow in a year. Maybe some of the irony of the situation is dissolved a little bit by the fact that I’ve never enjoyed writing and I didn’t think I was capable of teaching it well. I used “my students are only 5” as my scapegoat. Well, this capstone project has changed all that. My scapegoat has been killed by Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study writing curriculum and I could not be happier!

**Why Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study?**

**The Culture of My School**

There are so many options out there for writing curriculums. There was certainly a lot to weigh when I was considering what to purchase and what to implement. More than one thing played into my choice to go with Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study.

First, I had to consider the culture of my school. I knew that I had a little bit of money to purchase something with, but that it wasn’t in the finances of my school for me to choose a
curriculum that was going to cost several hundred dollars. Also, I wanted to make my purchase a curriculum that I felt my entire school could be successful using. I wanted it to be something that my school could afford to purchase for each of our K-8 classrooms if my students proved to be wildly successful writers after being introduced to Lucy Calkins.

Unfortunately, finances do play a significant role in the goings-on of many schools and that did have to be a factor in the curriculum I chose for my project. However, that certainly was not the only factor. Another thing I had to contemplate about the culture of my school is the vast array of students it contains. Ability levels, staff-to-student ratios, special education resources, classroom schedules, and overall staff attitude concerning the adoption of new curriculum are all things that affected my decision to purchase Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study:

- **Finances** – It only costs about $200 per classroom to purchase this curriculum. This is something our school can afford.

- **Ability levels** – As any school, our school serves students with a varying degree of ability levels when it comes to every subject, writing included. One thing that made me interested in purchasing this particular curriculum is that it includes an entire book on how to help outlying students; it gives guidance and ideas for teachers in regards to overachieving students, as well as for struggling students.

- **Staff-to-student ratios** – One amazing thing about the school where I teach is that in the K-5 grades every teacher has their own Educational Assistant (EA) and the 6-8 grade teachers have an EA that they share. Not all of the EA’s are present in the classrooms all day long, but knowing that there is extra staff support that could be utilized during writing workshop is wonderful. This gives our school a chance to provide students with more individualized minilessons and the
conferences that Lucy Calkins’ instructs teachers to be having with their students on a daily basis.

- Special education resources – Our school does have a SPED department, but it is very small and quite limited. The thing that makes Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study work so well in an environment like ours is that these lessons are so easily individualized. As a general classroom teacher, I can use the tools provided in the books written by Calkins to pinpoint where a student might be struggling most. Then, when they go to SPED to receive services I have data to show the SPED director the progress they are making and exactly how she might spend some time helping them to be more successful.

- Classroom schedules – Knowing how much time has to be devoted to writing instruction every day can be a bit overwhelming. Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study does help to ease this stress. Her lessons are written in order to span approximately 1 hour of daily instruction, but they can be cut down to fit 30 minute time slots if necessary. This is perfect for a school like ours where the kindergartners only go for half a day and every Friday is early release for grades 1-8.

- Overall staff attitude concerning the adoption of new curriculum – this might be the one worry I have. The last couple of years have been quite overwhelming what with all the Common Core changes and the proposition of adding another new thing might be met with sincere distaste at this point in time. That being said, it is my plan and hope to use this curriculum in my classroom for another year or two and to grow myself to the point of teaching it really well, in hopes that my
students will be wildly successful writers because of Lucy Calkins and then my colleagues will be knocking on my door to see what it is that we are doing.

The Culture of My Classroom and My Individual Students

I felt I really had to be careful when choosing a writing curriculum because of the young age and inexperience of my students. Due to the fact that, for this school year, my students are only getting 4 months of writing instruction with this writing curriculum (I didn’t implement it until February due to doing my capstone project in the spring), I wanted it to be something we could jump right into and make the most of in the short amount of time we had. That latter worry subsided as soon as I started teaching with this curriculum. Of course, I would have preferred to use it from the beginning of the year (I’m so excited to see the progress my students make when using it for 9 months instead of 4!), but it has been easy to settle into mid-year and my students are eating it up!

The first worry, making sure it was a good fit for kindergarten (and differing ability levels at the kindergarten age) has also been massaged by Calkins’ and her wealth of teaching-writing knowledge. Lucy Calkins (2013), in her Launching the Writing Workshop book, gives her word on promising that kindergartners can and are meant to be writing from day one:

The most important thing we can say about September in the kindergarten writing workshop is this: don’t wait! It is tempting to think that children need to know the alphabet before you launch the writing workshop or that they need to be socialized into the rhythms of the school day before you start this teaching. It is not so. You can start on Day One. Writing workshop is made-to-order for the start of kindergarten. (p. vi)
The Culture of Me as a Teacher

The last major thing I considered before making this purchase was – is this a good fit for me? Is it something that I will grow to feel comfortable teaching? It is something that I feel can help both myself and my students be successful when it comes to writing? I knew when I set out to purchase a new writing curriculum I was looking for something with the following qualities:

- A curriculum with a lot of narrative and explanation. I wanted something that I could really sink my teeth into and that gave me a lot of information regarding not only writing instruction, but why it is important, and how it can help my students to be successful.

- A curriculum that would provide some hand-holding for me. As vulnerable as it makes me feel, I must admit that I needed and wanted a curriculum that would model as much for me as I need to model for my students. I wanted something that would direct me through the process thoroughly and that would help me understand what to do for each of my students, no matter where they are in the writing process. I wanted something that would help me build my confidence as a teacher of writing.

- A curriculum that would be easy to understand. This really being my first time teaching writing I wanted something that was easy for me to get the hang of. Calkins’ Units of Study can be a little overwhelming because she provides you with so much information, but I’d rather have that than the other way around. I actually appreciate her lesson plans being written in narrative form because I can picture her teaching each session and get a good feel for the look and milieu I should be creating in my own classroom. The wealth of information she provides
is sort of a security blanket for me in that I feel I can reference her books to find answers to any and every question that may arise while I’m teaching writing.

The more I considered all of the above points, the more I grew interested in purchasing Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study. It was great to find a curriculum that checked off basically every box on my list. The fact that it came highly recommended to me by a professor and a fellow elementary teacher certainly helped as well!

**Implementation**

As previously stated, I am completing this project during the spring semester. I chose to purchase Lucy Calkins’ Units of Study in December (after researching curriculums during fall semester). I ordered it and spent the month of January familiarizing myself with each of the books and readied for a February 2 start date.

Due to my classroom and volunteer schedule already being in place for the 2014-2015 school year I had to find a time for our writing block in our current schedule. Each day my students participate in centers. They rotate through 3 different centers that last 20 minutes a piece. This is the time of day that I have been teaching the minilessons for writing. Students also have a chance to do their writing at these centers. Then, we spend another 15 minutes at the end of the day discussing things we’ve learned, creating strategy posters (see Appendix A) to help us remember how to be good writers, and sharing what we’ve created. I do not find this schedule to be ideal. It would be much better for my students if they could have their 35 minutes all in one block. Often times it seems like we are just getting on a roll when their first 20 minutes of the day is up and then when we have a chance to use those last 15 minutes we’ve lost most of our momentum. So, I’ve already written a new schedule for the 2015-2016 school year and we will
be having a 40-45 minute writing block every school day. This will allow for much better flow, more time to write, more time to teach, and more time to share.

**Growth and Improvement**

Even with the scheduling challenges and not introducing this curriculum until half way through the school year, I have seen marked progress in every one of my students and it is so exciting! They absolutely love their writing time and beg to get out their writing folders (see Appendix B), to share their stories, to create new books, to take their pieces home, etc.

I’ll never forget the first lesson I taught using Calkins’ Units of Study. I expected it to be slow-going and for most of the work that students did to be drawing, but I’ve never been happier to be proved so wrong. There were students filling pages with colorful pictures and matching text the very first day (See Appendix C for student artifacts, first day and otherwise). Their invented spelling and writing efforts were impressive. They were not only sounding words out to make complete sentences, but they were considering writing conventions that we had learned earlier in the year. They chose topics they knew a lot about and wanted to teach others about. I think the thing that amazed me more than anything else was their independence. I had my conference binder (See Appendix D) with me and I had the opportunity to have great conversations with students about their individual work because they were so eager to get started. I expected much more hand-holding to have to occur, especially in the beginning.

There are two areas of growth that have made me a particularly happy teacher: 1) my struggling students have been just as successful as my overachieving students, and 2) my students’ love for writing is now incredibly evident.

There were a few students who I expected to have a lot to say and to be able to get the majority of their ideas down on paper using both drawings and writing, but I didn’t expect it to
come so easily for a few of my students who are on IEP’s for speech and language or who have been struggling to learn to read. They may not have as many stories or books or books that are as long as some of the students who are great readers, but they have created some quality work. They have grown so much in their motor skills, phonological awareness, letter-to-sound relationships, and writing conventions. They haven’t been afraid to try writing and they have pushed themselves to new heights (with a little nudge from Calkins).

I never remember having a love for writing or getting excited about creating stories or books. This is something I will never let my students know. I want them to have what I didn’t. I want them to see their potential and to grow in all areas of literacy. I want them to love both reading and writing. That is starting to happen for my students and it makes me incredibly excited!

One more very notable area of growth is in my students’ reading. All the research included in the literature review section of this paper discussed what a causal relationship reading and writing share and I am watching that play out in my students. Their reading has grown tremendously and it is so great so see the recall and the true understanding they have when it comes to reading or writing any text. Their understanding of the English language has grown so much deeper in such a short amount of time.

Limitations and Recommendations

Scheduling, as stated prior, has been the biggest limitation to implementing this curriculum this year. I believe that once I make the changes I have planned for next school year most limitations will be lessened, if not erased.
Three other limitations have caused our progress to be a little slower than I had hoped for: 1) our school is on a modified year-round schedule. I implemented this in February and we get out for the summer at the end of May, which would give us 4 good months to work through this curriculum, but because of that modified year-round schedule we have 1 week off in the month of February and 2 weeks off for spring break. That has eaten at our progress a little bit. Next year that will even out because we will have all 165 days of school to work with, 2) teaching this during centers means that whenever a parent volunteer is sick or centers have to be canceled, we miss writer’s workshop for that day. Teaching it outside of centers next year will fix this problem, and 3) my learning curve has certainly had a limiting impact. This is something that is to be expected whenever implementing a new curriculum. This limitation will be eased over time as I have the opportunity to grow in my teaching experience.
References


Puranik, C.S., Al Otaiba, S., Folsom Sidler, J., & Greulich, L. (2014). Exploring the amount and
type of writing instruction during language arts instruction in kindergarten classrooms.


Appendix A

Strategy Posters

What we should look like while we write.
**Name Chart:** This contains the name of every person in our class. When students are searching for a sound to put in a word they can reference this chart to help them find it.
When We Are Done, We Have Just Begun!: When a student thinks they are finished with a piece of writing, they reference this chart to see if they should go back to keep working on that piece or start a new one.
Revising Chart: This chart helps students remember what they can revise in their writing.
Appendix B

Writing Folders

Every student has a writing folder. The outside of the writing folder says “______’s Writing Folder.” The inside has an “In Progress” pocket, and a “Complete” pocket. The sticky note on the inside of each student’s writing folder has their last name printed on it. They have been working on learning to add their first and last names to their work, just like real life authors.
Appendix C

Student Artifacts

February 2015

These two pieces were created by two different students during our very first lesson. They aren’t completed in this picture, but it is where they started. Their topic had to be something they could teach others a lot about. The one on the left says, “Cheetahs live in the zoo.” The one on the right says, “My family is fun. I like it. My family is fun to me.” (See pages 29 and 30 for more work done by these students to show their growth over 2 months).
April 2015

This short book was created by the same student who created the story on the right on page 28. It is actually the same story as shown on page 28, but it shows the student’s revisions and continuous work over a span of 2 months.
I am playing soccer for the day. I won the medal, but I have more players and the score. I won the trophy, but that can be daring.
February 2015

This piece was one of the very first pieces created by one of my students who told me two things when we began using this curriculum, “I don’t add color to my pictures,” and “I don’t read, so I don’t write.” He has a vivid imagination and really great ideas, but he struggles to get them on paper. (See page 32 for another piece created by this student that shows growth over a 2 month period).
This piece makes me so thrilled! It was created by the same student who created the work on page 31. This 5 page story reads, “Garden. Mom is picking a carrot. Mom got the carrot out. Mom is making carrot soup for dinner. Having dinner.” He still isn’t keen on adding color to his pictures, but he is writing!
February 2015

This work was created by a third student. They chose to make a book all about soccer because they are on a soccer team and they felt it was something they could teach others about. (See page 34 for another piece done by this student to show growth over 2 months).
April 2015

This student (whose work is also shown on page 33) created a book about Easter. The 3 pages read, “I look for eggs to eat candy to share my...I like to look for eggs, Easter eggs. We have a bag. I like to play. We are looking for eggs on Easter.”
February 2015

This story was inspired by *The 3 Little Pigs*. It is sort of a fractured fairytale. The student writes, “The dragon was trying to wreck the house because it was mad.” (See page 36 for another piece done by this student to show growth over 2 months).
April 2015

This piece was created by the same student whose work is on page 35. This book is all about flowers. It reads, “Flowers need sun to grow. They need water to grow. And you can pick them and share them with your friends. I like flowers.” At this point, this student is still working to finish the final page of this piece.
February 2015

This student was creating books from the very first day we started this curriculum. This story was also inspired by *The 3 Little Pigs*. They wrote, “The second little bunny made her house out of bricks. The first little bunny made her house out of candies. The third little bunny…” (continued on another page). (See page 38 for another piece done by this student to show growth over a period of 2 months).
April 2015

This student also created the work on page 37. This student was writing very well from the beginning so her growth isn’t as noticeable when simply viewing her work. Her growth has really come in verbal organization of her story ideas and processing details that need to be included. This story reads, “The Flower Book. Sunflowers are pretty. Sunflowers can have sunflower seeds. Roses are fun because they are pretty.”
March 2015

This story was written by a pair of students. One of the students is a struggling reader and the other started off the year really struggling, but has made amazing progress. They are writing about soccer and chose to add labels to their nets. They even included the title of “Soccer” at the top. The horizontal lines all represent action – something we had discussed adding to our story during one of our minilessons. (See page 40 for a piece created by each of these students a month later).
April 2015

These pieces were individually created by the students who partnered up to create the work on page 39. Neither student knew the alphabet when they began Kindergarten. Their work on page 39 shows that they were beginning to understand sound/text relationships by labeling their pictures. Here, each student has done some writing on the lines of their paper to depict what is happening in their stories.
March 2015

This is another partner story. These are two of my higher students, but one of them in particular loves to draw, but does minimal writing. They were a good pair – they challenged each other a bit. Their title page included both of their names, a title (The Spider), and a picture. (See page 42 for works individually created by these students a month later).
April 2015

The student on the left is the student who loves to draw, but does minimal writing. This is really his first attempt at adding written words to their work. The yellow marker is hard to read, but it says, “The dragon and the knight are fighting.” He also added the labels of “dragon” and “knight” to his drawing. The student on the right created a story about baby snow leopards. It reads, “I know about baby snow leopards.” On the lower part of the page the baby snow leopard says, “I didn’t mean to do that.” This student is very capable of writing, but wavers a little bit in this area. Drawing is his preference and I have to work to pull the writing out of him.
This is a story that we created as a class, using our mind’s eye to think of the many details we could include in a story about what recess looks like at our school. This was one of the first chances students had to add labels to their stories. They used their invented spelling and name charts (See Appendix A) to help label everything in our picture.
This binder has several pages dedicated to each of my students. I fill the pages with notes every time I conference with one of my students about their writing.
An example of notes for one student after a few conferences.
An example of some notes after conferencing with writing partners.