Understanding and supporting emergent writing

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Learning Links – from VEYLDF

VEYLDF

- Outcome 5: Communication
  - 5.3: Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media
  - 5.4: Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work
  - 5.5: Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking
Learning Links: AusVELS

- **English: Writing**
  - Strand: Literacy
    - Substrand: Creating Texts
  - Strand: Language
    - Substrand: Expressing and developing ideas
    - Substrand: Sound and letter knowledge
  - Strand: Literature
    - Substrand: Creating Literature
Context of today’s seminar

• Increased pressure on school teachers created by high stakes testing and community expectations – measurable outcomes
• Teachers’ uncertainty about how to teach writing
• Risks associated with pushing the school curriculum down into kindergarten and prep to meet these expectations
• Location of children between ages of 4 ½ and 6 – across kindergarten and prep
1. Contemporary children deserve and respond to approaches to teaching and learning which value contemporary literacies and children’s existing ways of knowing.
Early childhood literacy . . .

“. . . the single best investment for enabling children to develop skills that will likely benefit them for a lifetime.” (Dickinson & Neuman, 2006, p. 1).
‘... prompts a re-imagining of what children bring to early childhood learning contexts and expectations of how and what they will learn.’ (Mackenzie & Petriwskyj, under review)
Contemporary theories . . .

. . . “view literacies as multimodal, complex, culturally embedded human activities which encompass the many codes and symbolic systems humans use for constructing and representing reality and communicating with others.”

(Kennedy, Ridgway, & Surman, 2006, p. 16).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving theories</th>
<th>Behaviorist theories</th>
<th>Developmental theories</th>
<th>Socio constructivist theories</th>
<th>Critical literacy theories</th>
<th>Multiliteracies</th>
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<td>Goals</td>
<td>Children develop increasing proficiency over the of sub skills of writing.</td>
<td>Children encouraged to be active constructive learners’ engaged in discovery learning and child centered teaching.</td>
<td>Children learn with others as texts are jointly constructed. Skills and strategies learned are then applied independently.</td>
<td>Children are encouraged to analyze texts and use writing to address power relationships and social inequities.</td>
<td>Children develop awareness of and increasing competence in using a range of representational text forms to create meaning.</td>
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**Classroom practices**

- Teaching handwriting, spelling and punctuation as component skills of text composition.
- Language experiences approaches and process writing
- Shared, guided and independent approaches to teaching writing
- Genre approaches to teaching writing
- Use of digital technologies and multiple semiotics to produce texts.
Success in learning to write . . .

. . . is critical, to success with literacy proficiency generally (Cutler & Graham, 2008), reading achievement specifically (Gerde, Bingham & Wasik, 2012), and accomplishment in school overall (Clay, 2001; Fang & Wang, 2011; Mackenzie, 2009).
Writing is . . .

. . . a means of expressing or communicating in print, which involves the interaction of cognitive and physical factors (Bromley, 2007), and promotes social, emotional and cognitive development (Love, Burns & Buell, 2007). The process requires making connections and constructing meaning (Bromley, 2007).
Writing is . . .

“. . . a message-sending, problem solving activity” . . . involving the linking of “invisible patterns of oral language with visible symbols” (Clay, 2005, p. 1).

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The writing process . . .

. . . is complex cognitively, socio-culturally, and linguistically;

Writing . . .

. . . entails the interaction of cognitive and physical factors involving the hand, eye, and both sides of the brain (Bromley, 2007).

. . . develops at many levels simultaneously (Tolchinsky, 2006).

. . . is not a natural communicative competence like speech and thus normally requires intentional teaching (Olson 2009).
Reading and Writing are . . .

. . . reciprocal processes.

“oral language is a further rich resource serving both”  (Clay, 2005, p. 2).
Young children . . .

. . . begin their writing journey creating meaning by combining multimodal symbolic system or modes such as talking, drawing, singing and role-playing, long before they engage in the mature written linguistic forms of their culture (Kress and Bezemer, 2008).
If writing is the representation of speech . . .

. . . in the ideal learning situation writing should develop at many levels spontaneously and simultaneously with children building a “symbolic repertoire” of which print would be one element (Genishi and Dyson, 2009).
Early milestones

0-1

a child notices others writing – this is well before they can tell you they have noticed something (0-1 years).

I’m watching you . . .
Early milestones cont.

1-2 children begin to engage with writing tools – pens, pencils, crayons, electronic devices and possibly mark making tools that are not necessarily designed as writing tools (e.g. Lipstick). (approx 1-2 years).
Early milestones cont.

1-3 children intentionally engage with writing tools in an exploratory way – this often resembles scribble (approx 1-3 years).

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If children . . .

. . .“see an advantage in being able to write, they will apply the same focused attention to learning how to write that they applied to learning to be oral language users.” (Mackenzie, 2010, p. 30).
**DRAW**

Drawing is fun and helps your child to explore their world.
Drawing is an important form of play. Drawing helps children learn to write.

You can support your child by:
- Encouraging them to draw and talk to you about their drawings.
- Providing them with tools for drawing, e.g. paper, pencils, textiles, chalk.
- Drawing with them and adding labels to some of their drawings.
- Loading free drawing apps onto your ‘hand held’ computer for them to use.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Helping your child become a writer by:
- Reading to them 3 to 5 books every day.
- Taking them places that will feed their imagination eg. the park, the playground, the farm, the zoo, the snow, the beach, the local library or the Henty Field Days. Talk to them about the experience.
- Encouraging them to draw and talking to them about their drawings.
- Showing them how you write (with a pen, on the computer, on the phone).
- Teaching them how to write their name and if they are interested, write other people’s names.
- Encouraging them to write and giving them reasons eg. cards, invitations or recipes.
- Drawing with them.

Want to know more?
http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/educat/edu/staff/profiles/lecturers/noella-mackenzie

**TALK**

Talk about what your child has done, read together, and ask questions about the story.

You can support your child by:
- Exploring the world around them.
- Encourage them to speak about their drawings and experiences.
- Developing their language and communication skills.
- Encourage them to develop their vocabulary.

**WRITE**

Write stories, songs and poems with your child. Talk about what they are creating and why.

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When children start school . . .

. . . usually able to create spoken and visual texts (drawings) but have limited skills in written text creation (writing).

(Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013)
Children’s drawings . . .

. . . are an example of sign creation, while standard or non-standard uses of conventional print are examples of sign use.

(Vygotsky)
2. Children’s drawings are important to early writing – however drawing is not always seen as an important means of making meaning. Consequently children’s early efforts are not always valued and they are not encouraged to draw.
3. If given the models, opportunity, tools and encouragement, children spontaneously start to add writing to their drawings.
4. Drawing allows for timely and appropriate intentional input from an adult to assist an already successful meaning maker to learn another way of self-expression.
5. Drawings act as an anchor for children’s emergent writing helping them remember ideas as they learn the rules of conventional writing.
6. Children who are encouraged to draw, talk, write and share become confident, flexible writers who create more complex texts than when they are restricted to just writing.
7. Systematic observations of children as they draw, talk and explore writing provide valuable insights into their learning.

Do you agree? Why?

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If we encourage and value drawing and talking . . .

. . . we can build a bridge between children’s prior-to-school experiences, current systems of meaning making and the new system of writing.

Building on what they know and can do.
In this way . . .

. . . “writing becomes a parallel means of meaning making rather than a replacement for the drawing and talking they already do so well when they arrive at school” [or preschool]. (Mackenzie, 2011, p. 338)

Building on what they know and can do.
What will you take from today’s seminar?
Further Reading


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