

Snapshot of Writing Workshop

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Steps in Writing Workshop:

- ◆ Child draws picture and tells "story" to teacher.
- ◆ Child writes the story using "kid writing." The teacher helps child sound out words the child does not yet know how to spell. This is sometimes called *phonics based spelling*, *developmental spelling* or *invented spelling* (*I hrd a lt v ld fundr and thr wz ltng*). Beginning writers often do not leave spaces between words and use only consonants. They gradually learn to use vowels and to leave spaces between words.
- ◆ Teacher underwrites the child's story in "adult writing" using conventional spelling so that the child has a model of correct spelling. (*I hrd a lt v ld fundr and thr wz ltng* / I heard a lot of loud thunder and there was lightning). The teacher (1) Praises the child's conventional spellings - "You remembered how to write *and*" (2) Praises the child's logical attempts to spell words phonetically - "You figured out the *h* sound at the beginning of the word *heard* and the *rd* sound at the end!" and (3) Teaches one or two new points - "The word *was* does sound like it has a *z* at the end but it's really an *s*; *thunder* really begins with a *th*."
- ◆ Teacher teaches mini-lessons about writing to the class based on students' work and needs - "I noticed a lot of children are saying the word *thunder* with an *f* sound - Watch my mouth, it's really *th*!" and "It's easy for me to read Tamika's writing because she remembered to leave spaces between her words."
- ◆ Sometimes children "publish" their work by rewriting it or typing it on a computer. Kindergarten children usually do not publish their work.

Why encourage children to use *PHONICS BASED SPELLING* for words they have not yet learned?

- ◆ Children move through stages of spelling development more rapidly because they must think about the sounds and letters in words. Children's reading ability develops more rapidly because children are focusing on the meaning of writing and on phonics.
- ◆ The content of children's writing improves because children can maintain their train of thought. They don't have to make long stops to find spellings; once they learn how to "sound out" words, they will not need constant assistance with each word.
- ◆ Children's writing vocabulary improves because children can use their rich oral vocabulary in writing.

