Thank you for your interest in CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Learning to Write and Loving It!

LEARN MORE about this title!
• use patterns as a writing base, such as developing vocabulary around ways to move (I can run, I can jump, I can skip, I can waddle, I can stroll)
• share their writing with others
• be able to read some of their own writing, even after a few days
• be risk takers (that is, be willing to reveal inner thoughts in their writing)
• see themselves as readers and writers

**Spelling in Preschool and Kindergarten**

Preschool and kindergarten children mainly use invented spelling when they write. Invented spelling occurs when young children spell words using their best judgment or make an educated guess based on their knowledge of early literacy concepts. To spell, one has to know letters, letter–sound correspondence (phonics), and concepts of print, and must have some degree of phonological awareness. For example, to spell the word cat conventionally requires one to know the letters and their sounds and be able to rubber-band the word or stretch the letters c-a-t. For young children, invented spelling helps them approximate the spelling of a word they do not know how to spell. For many kindergarten children, especially in the first half of the year, cat would appear as CT or KT. Invented spelling is truly something to celebrate.

Invented spelling is meant to be temporary, diminishing in use over the course of Grades 1 and 2. By Grade 3, children should be using conventional spelling for the vast majority of their words.

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Don Graves (1994) explained that the purpose of invented spelling is to allow children to make meaning before they know how to actually spell a word.
Why Promote Invented Spelling?

There are many reasons to promote invented spelling. Invented spelling frees children to express themselves in writing without worrying about the exact spelling of a word. It gives them confidence and makes them think of themselves as writers. We know that for children to become strong writers they need to write a great deal. If they stopped to worry about the exact spelling of every word, they would become inhibited, write very little, write only simple or “safe” words, and progress very slowly. In addition, such writing would take a long time and would be very discouraging.

Invented spelling also helps children to understand the alphabetic principle, meaning that words are made up of letters and letters stand for sounds we make when we say the words. By putting the letters together in various ways we make different words (Bennett-Armistead, Duke, and Moses 2005). Invented spelling provides for authentic, hands-on practice in phonological awareness and phonics (letter–sound correspondence). This is very important since a child’s level of phonological awareness at the end of kindergarten is one of the best predictors for how well the child will learn to read and write in Grade 1. Invented spelling also provides you with easily accessible information about the child’s phonics and phonological awareness development.

It is also very important for teachers and parents/caregivers to understand the role of invented spelling and how to effectively support spelling development at school and at home. (see Reproducible 2.6: Spelling in Preschool and Kindergarten, on the CD).

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**Parents, Please Read:**

Dear Parents,

As your child’s teacher, I want to share with you some ideas about how to support your child’s writing progress at home. Writing is a key part of your child’s learning and development, and it is important that we work together to help your child become a confident writer.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. **Encourage Writing:** Make writing a regular part of your child’s day. This could be through activities like keeping a journal, writing letters to family members, or even just writing their thoughts and feelings on a piece of paper.
2. **Be Patient:** Children need time to develop their writing skills. They are still learning the alphabet, sounds, and how to form letters. Be patient and encourage them to explore their ideas through writing.
3. **Make Writing Fun:** Writing doesn’t have to be boring. Make it fun by including themes, stories, and activities that your child enjoys.
4. **Read Together:** Reading with your child helps them understand the structure and meaning of written language. It also helps them see the connection between speaking and writing.
5. **Give Positive Feedback:** When your child writes, take the time to look at their efforts and give them positive feedback. Even if it’s just a simple “Great job!” or “I love how you wrote that!”

As your child’s teacher, I am committed to helping them develop their writing skills. I look forward to working with you to support your child’s progress. Together, we can help your child become a confident writer.

Sincerely,

[Teacher’s Name]

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**Children, Please Read:**

Dear Children,

Writing is a fun and important part of our day. It helps us think and express our ideas. Here are some tips to help you write better:

1. **Think Before You Write:** Take a few moments to think about what you want to say before you start writing. This will help you organize your thoughts and make your writing clearer.
2. **Use a Variety of Words:** Don’t always use the same words. Try using new words and phrases to make your writing interesting.
3. **Check Your Spelling:** Check your spelling to make sure your writing is accurate. If you’re not sure how to spell a word, ask an adult or look it up in a dictionary.
4. **Revise Your Writing:** After you finish writing, take a look at what you’ve written. You might be able to improve it by adding more details or rephrasing sentences.
5. **Be Proud of Your Work:** You’re doing a great job! Remember to be proud of your writing and share it with others.

Keep practicing and writing! You’re getting better every day.

Sincerely,

[Teacher’s Name]
Celebrate children’s spelling approximations each day. Encourage the children to be “fearless spellers.”

Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show one child’s use of invented spelling, but look at the difference between the two samples!

Figure 2.15
My dinky cars are little.
Is There a Downside to Promoting Invented Spelling?

Some teachers believe that invented spelling will reduce the incentive for children to learn to spell conventionally; however, the research does not support this belief. In fact, through much invented spelling and many reading and writing mini-lessons, children learn phonics, including the ability to recognize patterns found in words and the ability to write high-frequency words correctly. This leads to conventional spelling.

Even by the spring in kindergarten, there is a core group of high-frequency words that children should be encouraged to at least copy correctly in their everyday writing. These words include the children’s own names, the names of some of their classmates, and the following for-sure or pop-up words (since they pop up all the time):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For-Sure or Pop-Up Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a and he (she) i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in is it of</td>
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<tr>
<td>that the to was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly, these 12 simple words make up approximately 25 percent of the words children will encounter in their reading up to the end of Grade 3! (Note the word she has been added to make it 13.) All of these words should appear on the classroom word wall as they are important for children’s writing.
The following 13 words, together with the 12 for-sure words, compose a list of 25 words that make up one-third of the materials typically written for adults: are, as, at, be, for, from, had, his, on, or, they, with, and you. These words are even more common to the reading and writing frequently done by young children. By the end of Grade 1, at least 70 percent of what children read and write is made up of approximately 100 words. For a list of these high-frequency or Pop-Up words, see Reproducible 2.2: High-Frequency or Pop-Up Words (End of Grade 1, on the CD).

Invented spelling can be problematic if neither the author nor others can decipher the text. Invented spelling can also frustrate those very logical children who want to know the one correct spelling for a word. I have experienced such a scenario with regard to our son Colin. Colin would ask his teacher how to spell a difficult word (for example, dinosaur). When the teacher suggested to Colin to “give it a go,” that he could do it, Colin was not impressed. He knew that he did not know how to spell dinosaur, but he also knew that there was one correct way to spell it. To avoid embarrassment, children like Colin simply stop writing or write only very safe words.

“Invented spelling not only allows children to write well before first grade, but it also builds essential literacy skills.” (Neuman et al. in Bennett-Armistead, Duke, and Moses 2005, 146)
Children experiencing difficulties spelling a word should be encouraged to “give it a go,” but they should also be given support. This is a perfect opportunity for interactive writing. Have the child write the part of the word he or she knows and then help with the conventional writing of the rest.

Assist the children with spelling by encouraging them to

- sub-vocalize or stretch out (rubber-band) the sounds as the word is said aloud (for example c_a_t)
- use magic lines (a line inserted for every sound the child hears, even if she or he does not know the corresponding letter) to represent unknown letters
- write the letters they hear clearly
- use word walls and other environmental print
- problem solve with a classmate or an adult

Learning word families (also called rimes or phonograms) is also important to early reading and writing. Children who can recognize and use word families will be able to read and write hundreds of words. There are 37 key word families for the primary grades. These 37 word families allow children to read and write nearly 500 primary-level words. Begin with a few in kindergarten.

**Common Phonograms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-ack</th>
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**Check It Out!**

It is helpful to provide the children with a word and a picture to go with the phonogram or word family being introduced. Find all 37 downloadable word family cards, illustrations and corresponding word cards at http://www.etacuisenaire.com/miriamtrehearne/miriam.jsp.

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**Should Invented Spelling Ever Be Corrected or Discouraged?**

Children should be encouraged to write, write, write. They should be encouraged to draw, as well as scribble, label, and write in whatever manner
they can. Spelling is not a major focus. However, as children become more comfortable with recognizing and being able to write letters, and as high-frequency words are being introduced and practiced (generally in context and through games using the word wall and wall stories and through shared reading and writing), the concept of for-sure words should be introduced.

For-sure words are simply high-frequency words that the children use over and over again in their reading and writing. In Grade 1, there are 25 for-sure words, although by the end of Grade 1 many children are spelling many more words conventionally. By the end of Grade 2, there are 103 such words. In kindergarten there are typically 12 such words, 13 if she is added to the list (see page 38). It is important not to inhibit kindergarten writing by insisting that for-sure words be spelled conventionally. Instead, make it a game to find and copy these words correctly.

As Regie Routman (2005) and others have stressed in their work, allowing children to write these high-frequency words incorrectly using invented spelling over and over again does not help them to ultimately spell the words correctly. Furthermore, some of these words are not phonically regular (for example, the and of), meaning that the child may not even be able to use much invented spelling to “give it a go.” The good news is that about half of the high-frequency words stressed in Preschool–Grade 2 follow a pattern or word family, such as -it (Cunningham 2000). By learning word families or rimes, kindergarten children are able to read and write hundreds of words.

You need to show children that you also use invented spelling when you do not know how to spell a word conventionally. Provide the children with examples of difficult words that you may struggle with. However, do not use invented spelling as a model of a word that most adults are likely to know how to spell. Provide an honest example. Also demonstrate for the children how you rubber-band or stretch a non-high-frequency word that you do not know how to spell to make an attempt at spelling it.

The Five Stages of Spelling Development

Richard Gentry (1993), among others, has named and defined five different stages of spelling. Stages 1, 2, and 3 deal with invented spelling and typically apply to preschool and kindergarten. It is important to note that the stages are developmental but that children can move back and forth across these spelling stages. Mini-lessons held during writing workshop (see Chapter 5) and across the day help the children to grow as writers.