

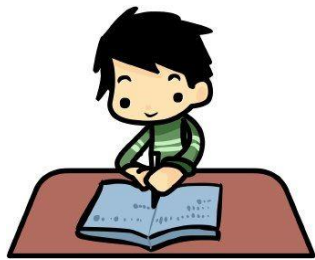
10 Ways to Promote Name Writing in the Classroom

Early Childhood
Education

Information
Brief

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Young children find writing to be a fun experience (Zhang & Quinn, in press). Early writing development often begins with name writing. Names are personally meaningful to young children because names reflect children's identity. It is no surprise that name letters are the first letters young children recognize (Treiman & Broderick, 1998) and use in their writing (Treiman, Kessler, & Bourassa, 2001). In addition, children often use name letters when writing something other than their name such as messages or stories (Treiman et al., 2001) reiterating their importance to children. Interestingly, this phenomenon of name-letter preference occurs in many places around the world (Yin & Treiman, 2013).



Expanding Literacy Skills with Name Writing

Writing one's name is an important early learning standard/goal supported by research demonstrating that preschoolers' skill in writing their name is related to their literacy skill development in later grades (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). In addition, researchers have found children's skill in name writing to be related to the number of letters children can name, their skills for detecting sounds in words, and their understanding of print concepts (Diamond, Gerde, & Powell, 2008). Clearly, name writing is a valuable early literacy skill.

There are myriad ways to promote children to write their name for many meaningful purposes

in early childhood classrooms. To be successful, opportunities to write one's name must be relevant to children's play and participation within the classroom. We describe some of our favorite name writing experiences below.

- **Attendance/Sign-in.** All teachers need to take attendance and recognizing themselves as attending school as part of a group of learners is an important conceptualization for young children. Providing an opportunity for children to physically write their name to "sign in" to the classroom or for small group participation is a meaningful way to use name writing to help children understand the concept of attendance in a concrete way. In addition, this is an opportunity for children to write for a purpose every day. It is important for teachers to draw children's attention to the name writings as they engage children in a public discussion of who is in attendance. This process reinforces the purpose of this valuable routine.
- **Sign up.** One real-world experience for children to record their names is to sign up to play in a high-traffic area of the classroom (e.g., dramatic play, construction) or to use a particularly popular material. For example, a classroom may have just two easels for art. A sign-up sheet next to this space allows children to write their name to express that they want a turn to paint at the easel. In addition, with guidance children can begin to use the list to identify who they should invite to use the space when they are finished, promoting important autonomy and self-regulation skills.

- **Class occupations.** Many classrooms promote shared responsibility and care for their classroom and learning by offering children classroom jobs. To help teachers and children remember who is assigned to each job, children should write their name on a chart listing these important roles.



- **Participation.** There are many routines to complete during the day in early childhood settings. For example, children eat snacks or meals, brush their teeth, wash their hands, and rest or nap. Teachers can create opportunities for children to write their name or record their mark as a way to confirm completion of each of these tasks.
- **Signing messages.** Young children enjoy writing messages to peers, teachers, and family members. Teachers can promote important writing concepts when they encourage children to sign their name on their messages. Successful teachers discuss with children the purpose of signing their messages and talk about parts of a letter including the greeting, body, and signature.
- **Signing artwork.** As with all great artists, young children can sign their artwork. Teachers can draw children's attention to artists signatures on art displayed in their classroom or books with images of famous works.

Encouraging children to sign their work demonstrates your appreciation for their work and promotes children to see themselves as artists.

- **Dramatic play experiences.** Dramatic play experiences offer diverse purposes for writing names in meaningful ways. In a post office experience, children can sign for certified mail or package delivery. In the clinic, children will sign in with the receptionist. At the theatre, children may write their name on the marquee announcing today's performers. At the restaurant, waiters write names on orders and customers sign their bill. Successful teachers offer writing materials and introduce these purposes for writing as children play.

Children in classrooms in which teachers provide materials and encourage their writing have higher writing skills at the end of the school year (Bingham, Quinn, & Gerde, 2017). Offering meaningful ways for children to write their name throughout the school day can contribute to this development.



Article provided by Hope K. Gerde, Ph.D.,
Human Development and Family Studies,
Michigan State University

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