

Let's Write

GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

These guidelines are provided to assist people to think about how to write with students at different levels of writing.

They are simply a guideline to good practice. We recognise that they cannot be definitive or prescriptive as there are a lot of variables involved – but we hope they are helpful.

Supporting writers who are at Level 1 on the Developmental Writing Scale

Level 1 writers don't yet know that they are a writer and/or they don't understand that there is a difference between print and picture. They need an opportunity to scribble with print and have us attribute meaning and assume competence – which then teaches them that print has meaning and that text is a code for speech. We also give them lots of positive reinforcement because they need to develop a strong self-image of themselves as a writer. Students at this level are also often receptive communicators.

The procedure is:

1. Select a topic for writing – often we use the activity or game that the student is currently engaged with.
2. Get the student to use the flip chart (or other writing tool) to select letters; record or write down the letters as they choose them
3. Use the student's AAC system to attribute meaning – follow up any indications they might make in attributing meaning themselves
4. Write the attributed meaning under their writing and point out any similarities/celebrations. Give them lots of positive encouragement for writing.
5. Use the flip chart yourself around once per week to model the use of it for writing outside of this writing task

A demonstration video for this level is available at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yk8UNJ5vWt4>

Supporting writers who are at Levels 3, 4 and 5 on the Developmental Writing Scale

Once students know that they are a writer and they can identify in a book "which side do I read" they move up to Level 3 on the Developmental Writing Scale. (Students who are using a flip chart or other alternative pencil skip level 2 on the scale.)

The procedure is:

1. Establish topic/purpose e.g. photo of child doing something. Use their AAC system to talk about this yourself.
2. For students using comprehensive AAC systems – ask them if they have something to say about the photo/activity. If they don't, model something you might say, and then ask them if they have something to say again. For verbal students – get them to discuss what they are going to write about it. Agree on something they are writing with the student. If you don't get any language selected or generated then move onto the next step.
3. Get the student to use the flip chart, or other writing tool, to select letters. Record or write down the letters as they choose them
4. Write their target language (or the meaning you are attributing) under their writing and point out any correlations, using a phrase like "now let me show you how I would write it..."
5. Use the flip chart yourself around once per week to model the use of it for writing outside of this writing task

Once a student is at level 3 we work on modelling and talking about the use of spaces through the day to help them move up to level 4.

Once a student is at level 4, we work on modelling initial sounds in words to help them move towards levels 5 and 6

A demonstration video for this level is available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9HE7_6sYSQ

Supporting writers who are at Levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 on the Developmental Writing Scale

For conventional writers, we always make sure that we activate some background knowledge and model writing before asking the students to write. Evidence shows that modelling good writing helps students to become better writers. We can also model different strategies during these mini-lessons- we might model "thinking out loud" or "using the word wall" or "sounding it out" or other features of writing. We don't teach spelling during writing and at this level we don't focus on capital letters or punctuation – but we do continue to have a focus on spaces as needed.

The procedure is:

1. Always begin with a mini-lesson, modelling writing yourself about a similar writing task to the students'. Use this as an opportunity to model different skills across time e.g. thinking of ideas, using word wall, sounding words out, writing more, etc
2. Give the student an appropriate writing stimulus e.g. photo, video
3. Ask the student to write. Students at these levels are generally aiming to learn to write one good sentence often 3 – 5 words long.
4. As students are writing, move around and conference with the students. For students who struggle with ideas and language, move to them first. Use AAC to support them in this area.
5. If needed provide scaffolds to help support them in the writing process e.g. lines for the words they are writing or recording the sentence onto a BIGmack switch
6. Continue to move around and support students with writing. If students do not know how to spell a word, encourage them to write down every sound they can hear or use the word wall. Do not correct spelling or work on capitals, etc.
7. Finish up with a short conference about their writing, providing lots of positive feedback, particularly around the area focused on in the mini lesson, and (if needed) writing a "translation" on the back of their work or on a post-it note as appropriate.