

Especially for practitioners working with young children! 

A Place for Writing

Literacy-Rich Experiences

What is the practice?

Writing can be a special event for children ages 3-5 if they have their own writing materials and a special place for writing. Having a “writing box” is a great way for young children to see themselves as writers with their own ideas and all the tools they need to express them. A writing box puts different types of writing materials in one place so that they will be on-hand whenever a child gets the writing spark.

What does the practice look like?

Fill small plastic bins or similar containers with a wide variety of materials that preschool children can use to draw, write, and create. You can have writing boxes that the whole class can participate in making and then share, or you can give each child the task of creating his own writing box out of an old cigar or tissue box. Place the writing bins in different, easily accessible places in the classroom such as the art and housekeeping areas. The writing bins should have materials that will interest your children and motivate them to write. These might include markers or pencils in bright colors or notepads decorated with popular characters.



How do you do the practice?

Your class's writing boxes depend on the children's interests and preferences. Getting children to help in their construction and maintenance is a great way to keep them involved and excited about writing as part of their everyday classroom experiences.

- Take an ordinary plastic bin that is large enough to hold papers and writing tools. Your children can help decorate it using stickers, bits of ribbon, and other trims.
- Fill the bin with many different types of writing materials—small packs of crayons, wide-lined paper, construction paper, sharpened pencils, recycled paper, small writing notebooks, washable markers, and erasable colored pencils. Adding cellophane tape, envelopes, stickers, and other materials to the box can enhance their writing experiences.
- If children are making their own individual boxes, give them a chance to pick out some of their supplies and to make choices about what materials they will use.
- Using small sets of pencils, markers, crayons, and paper will keep the children from becoming overwhelmed with choices and items to clean up. Extra stationary, old greeting cards, or used papers with a blank side can also be used. Crayons that don't roll, extra-thick pencils and markers, and child-sized safety scissors with rounded tips work well for preschoolers who are developing fine motor control.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Do your children spend time using the materials in the writing box?
- Do they show you books, cards, papers, or other writing that they have created?
- Have your children shown interest in trying to write with different tools, or are they exploring new uses for writing?

Take a look at more places for writing

Our Own Errands List

Five-year-olds Angela and Latoya play together in the housekeeping center of their preschool classroom. Angela pretends to be the mother and Latoya is the child. Using her "mom" voice, Angela tells Latoya, "We have to go to the bank and then we'll go to the store." She gets the play checkbook and puts it in a purse. "Oh, where's our list? We have to have a list." She puts the purse down and takes out a pencil and sheet of paper from the writing bin the teacher keeps in the housekeeping center. Angela sits down with Latoya and asks, "What do you want for dinner, daughter?" Latoya answers, "Pizza and ice cream!" Angela writes random letters on the page and says, "OK, and what else do we need? Milk. And eggs. And cookies." She writes each of the words on the page using invented spelling, as Latoya looks over her shoulder. When Angela is finished writing, she gets the purse and the girls pretend to go to the bank and the store.

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"I miss you, Grandma"

At circle time, three-year-old Mira tells her peers and early childhood teachers about her grandmother's visit to her house over the weekend. Later that morning, she tells her teacher, Miss Anna, that she misses her grandma. "Would you like to write her a letter and let her know you want to see her again soon?" Miss Anna asks. Mira nods and the teacher suggests she get some paper and things to write with from her writing box. Mira chooses some colored pencils and soon is busy drawing short lines and squiggles on the paper. Then Mira reaches for a crayon and colors on the paper. "Oh! That's a nice letter," comments Miss Anna. Mira hands her the paper and she pretends to read the writing. She puts it in an envelope and places it in Mira's cubbie for her mother to take home to mail. "Your grandma will be so happy to get your letter," the teacher tells Mira.

Greeting Card

Four-year-old Ava has a developmental coordination disorder that affects her fine motor skills. Her occupational therapist is ill and she tells her mother that she's going to make her a card. Ava takes her writing bin from her dresser and pulls out the thick markers and crayons that her therapist explained to her parents would be easy for her to grasp. Her mother clips a large sheet of paper onto a writing board so that the paper will stay in place. There are some large-sized animal stickers in the box and Ava puts the stickers on the paper. She uses the markers and crayons to draw and color a flower. The crayons are non-rolling, so Ava can set them down and retrieve them with ease. She asks her mother how to spell "get well" and her mother patiently sounds out the letters and waits as Ava slowly writes each one. When she is finished, her mother puts the letter away to give to the OT when they next see her.

