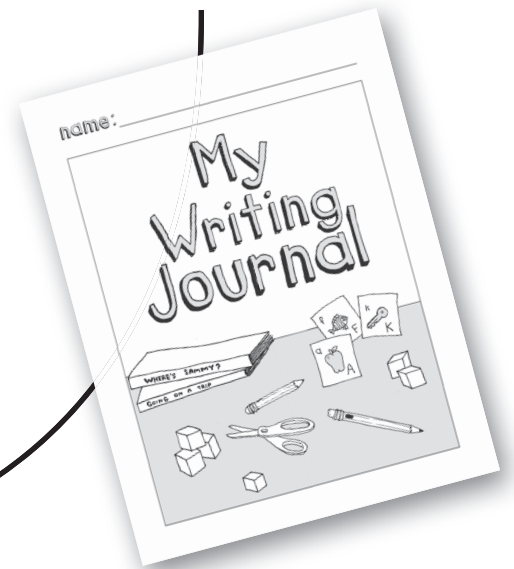


MY WRITING JOURNAL

TEACHER GUIDE

BY DAVID M. MATTESON



INTRODUCTION

My Writing Journal is a 42 page booklet designed to help students make critical transitions between the emergent and early stages of beginning literacy development. *My Writing Journal* is a developmentally appropriate teaching tool that follows the use of *My Pictures and Stories Journal* (*The Yellow Book*). *The Yellow Book*, an emergent writing journal, is used at the start of kindergarten to support picture development. Picture development fosters oral language development and fine motor control, which are two critical areas in beginning reading and writing development.

My Writing Journal supports the development of the early writer, focusing on students' proficiency in writing text below the picture. The shift, from the picture as a focus to the words or text holding the meaning of the story, is one that needs to be scaffolded with care. *My Writing Journal* helps teachers do just that. The skills for moving students below the picture are outlined in the monitoring notes section at the back of the journal, as well as in the book *KINDERGARTEN: A Transitional Year*. (David Matteson and Associates, 2012) Overall, *My Writing Journal* centers on developing understandings about writing process, basic text forms, phonics, and writing conventions. Using *My Writing Journal* across the kindergarten year will help students to:

- Write a narrative, explanatory, and opinion piece
- Plan with a sketch
- Write below the sketch using letter/sound connections
- Sound through words (beginning hard consonant

sounds, ending hard consonant sounds, spaces, medial hard consonant sounds, and long vowel sounds)

- Write basic sight words conventionally and with ease
- Extend their writing vocabulary by generalizing new words from known words
- Proofread, line out, and edit their mistakes
- Revise or add onto their stories
- Write over time

Each journal contains a section for Known Words/Word Families, 36 single-page entries for students to plan and write stories, and a section for monitoring notes where teachers can record the skills students have learned.

THE KNOWN WORDS/WORD FAMILIES PAGES

The Known Words/Word Families section in *My Writing Journal* is a resource for students to refer to when they need a reminder for writing the words they are coming to control. During the first nine weeks of kindergarten, while students have been working in *The Yellow Book*, the teacher has been helping them label their pictures with words from the *Emergent Story Cards* (see www.dmmatteson.com). These 17 sight words are the same words that make up the words in the Known Words/Word Families section. This section makes it easy for students to check their spelling of commonly used words when writing their stories.

Once these 17 words have become words that students can read and write automatically (usually by the middle of the year), kindergarten teachers can start extending students' banks of known words. Spelling instruction during the

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second half of kindergarten revolves around making new words from the original 17 words. For example, *me* (which was a sight word at the beginning of the year) becomes the basis for these spelling words later in the year—*be*, *he*, *she*, and *we*. These newly generalized words can then be put into the Known Words/Word Families section of the *My Writing Journal* so students can refer back to them whenever needed. This kind of spelling instruction is based on two ideas. First, the idea is that students learn words faster if they are meaningful (i.e. *I*, *my*, *me*, *mom*, *dad*). Second, the idea is that it's easier to spell words if students already know some aspect of the structure of words (i.e. *my*—*by*, *me*—*be*, *he*, *she*, *we*).

THE WRITING PAGES

Each page in *My Writing Journal* has a supportive layout that helps students achieve proficiency in writing. One important part of the writing page structure is the blank area at the top of the page. This space allows students to sketch out or plan their story prior to writing it down as text below the picture. Sketching supports the student in getting down all the important parts of a story quickly, as well as a reminder for what he/she wants to write.

Another important part of this structure, the area for writing, is just below the space for sketching/planning. These lines have been designed, not only to help young writers get their stories down in words, but as a way to help them form letters neatly and space their letters and words apart consistently. The space between the lines supports students in revising and editing their stories. Having a space for corrections and showing students how to use it is critical for developing the understanding that writing always needs reworking or revising.

By the end of the kindergarten year when students' writing lengthens, two pages may be needed for their stories. In this case, students can plan and write the beginning of the story on one page and use the second page to plan and write their ending. This helps build the understanding that all stories have a beginning and an ending, in a very concrete way.

THE MONITORING NOTES PAGES

The monitoring notes pages are set up for teachers to document the writing proficiency of their students. Because it's suggested that all kindergarten students start off their kindergarten year using *The Yellow Book*, the monitoring notes are organized around three broad periods of time—fall, winter, and spring. Many students won't be writing in *My Writing Journal* until later in the fall or until the end of the second quarter. Once teachers have moved students out of *The Yellow Book*, they can begin assessing students' control of skills outlined in the monitoring notes section and record dates. These skills can be assessed through observation of daily writing entries in *My Writing Journal*, through periodic writing assessments, or ideally, through a combination of both. The more often assessment of student writing occurs, the easier it will be to manage the recording of skills and to document student proficiency in writing.

USING MY WRITING JOURNAL

My Writing Journal is most effective when used with students individually or in small groups. During an individual or small group lesson with *My Writing Journal*, teachers can talk with students about what they want to write before they put pencil to paper. If they aren't sure about what they want to write about, it is a good time to talk to students about what they have been doing or like to do. This is also a time for teachers to talk about what they have noticed about their students—it could be something as simple as what the student said or did during the day. The conversation could be about a tooth that's missing or about a bandage the student has on. This kind of interaction will get students thinking about the everyday experiences they are having, generating topics to write about.

Once the student has a topic, setting up time for students to brainstorm its components is crucial in creating well-developed stories. Teachers should be available to confer with students about what they are going to put into their plan. Talking about this helps the beginning writer develop his or her story. The more detail that students incorporate in their plans, the

more detailed their stories will be. Once the student knows how *My Writing Journal* works, the teacher may not have to be alongside the student as he or she writes. At some point, most students should be able to work independently. It may still be desirable however, to

check in with students about their stories as they plan and/or write. At another time during the day, teachers can confer with students about their writing. The following section contains a teaching episode during the second nine weeks of kindergarten involving a story written in *My Writing Journal*.

Date: 11-29



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EMERGENT WRITERS

Alyssa, a kindergarten student, was moved out of her *My Picture and Story Journal* in the beginning of November after being given the *Emergent Writing Assessment (EWA)* (see *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story*). Even though she never attended preschool and still struggles with fine motor control, Alyssa scored a “4” on Oral Language and a “3” on Student Work on her last *EWA* assessment. Her teacher knows these scores are sufficient to move her to the next level of writing instruction—*My Writing Journal*. Alyssa’s teacher feels comfortable moving her into the new journal but knows that she will still need support with her fine motor skills. Alyssa understands that after she plans her story and before she writes, she needs to see the teacher. This is a routine they have developed over time to make sure her picture is well developed. Alyssa has just finished planning her story and the teacher sits down beside her.

Ms. Hubner: Tell me about your picture, Alyssa.

Alyssa: This is my dad putting the star on the tree.

Ms. Hubner: Oh, let’s write “Dad” over his head so we know who he is. Who is this?

Alyssa: That’s me.

Ms. Hubner: Why don’t you write the word “me” here (pointing over the picture of Alyssa)? What are you doing?

Alyssa: Seeing Daddy put the star on.

Ms. Hubner: That’s exciting! Let’s make the star a bit darker. (The star is not recognizable so the teacher gives Alyssa a pencil and takes her hand to help her make one.) Did you help him?

Alyssa: He used a ladder.

Ms. Hubner: That must have been a tall tree if he had to use a ladder to get the star up so high.

Alyssa: It was up to the ceiling.

Ms. Hubner: Wow! All the way to the ceiling? What happened after the star was on?

Alyssa: I told him, “Nice job, Dad!”

Ms. Hubner: I bet that made him feel happy. Let me help you write that. The teacher makes a speech bubble next to the picture of Alyssa and writes, “Nice job.”

Alyssa: (Pointing to the speech bubble) I said “Dad”.

Ms. Hubner: Oh, you said, “Nice job, Dad.” Why don’t you write Dad?

Alyssa: Writes “Dad” in the speech bubble.

Ms. Hubner: What part of the story are you going to write about?

Alyssa: Dad putting the star on the tree.

Ms. Hubner: “Dad put the star on the tree.” Okay, what word are you going to write here? (showing her where to start writing)

Alyssa: Dad.

Ms. Hubner: Right, that’s one of your sight words. How do you spell it?

Alyssa: (Talking as she spells) d-a-d.

Ms. Hubner: Right. What’s the next word?

Alyssa: “Put”

Ms. Hubner: Yes, what does “put” start with? Use your story card.

Alyssa: (Looking at the card she says “put” softly and points to the picture of the pencil)

Ms. Hubner: Yes. What’s that picture?

Alyssa: Pencil.



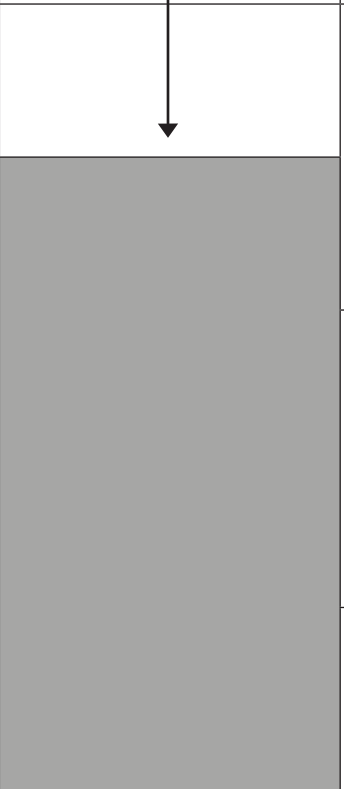
Ms. Hubner: Yes, “put” starts like “pencil”. What letter is that?

Alyssa: “p”

Ms. Hubner: Right. Write that down. You keep writing and use your story card. I’ll be back in a bit to check up on your progress.

To ensure the student was moving toward the second nine week writing expectations set by the district, the teacher gave Alyssa lots of support. Even though

A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT.

Grade Level	Central Instructional Focus	Comprehension	Phonics (and Phonological Awareness)	Spelling
Birth-Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Language Gross Motor 	Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming attachments, responding to and interacting with caregivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing names orally (own, family, friends) Experiments with putting sounds, words together with purpose, attaching meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies some letters in their name—may connect first letter as their name Makes connections to environmental print
Pre-kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Language Fine Motor Control 	The Picture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing and telling stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing names (own, family, friends) Playing with words (changing onset/rime) Identifying similarities between words (beg, letters and/or sounds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing and writing basic sight words in pictures and/or text below the picture (student name, sibling/friend names, mom, dad, me, I, the, my) 10 – 15 words
Kindergarten	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making connections between sounds and letters Understanding how words work 	The Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/Writing the words of the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning hard consonant sounds Ending hard consonant sounds Medial hard consonant sounds Spacing Blends Endings (s, ed, ing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly spelling list of sight words (which include generalizing words or simple word families) 35 – 50 words
First Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative Elements Expository Elements 	The Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration of detail 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly spelling list of sight words Weekly spelling list of word families/patterns (Long/short vowels) 75 – 100 words
Second Grade		The Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly spelling list of sight words Weekly spelling list of word families/patterns (Long/short vowels) 75 – 100 words
Third Grade and Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genres 	The Reader/Writer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Author's Craft 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Higher Level Vocabulary—Descriptive and Content

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Alyssa was working on remembering her sight words and beginning sounds, the teacher was still supporting her fine motor needs (see Literacy Development table). This teacher understands that it is important to find ways to support the developmental needs of her students, all the while moving them toward proficiency.

EARLY WRITERS

In the following teaching scenario, the third quarter of kindergarten has just begun. The students in Mrs. Edwards' kindergarten class have already learned a lot about writing and spelling. She knows this knowledge will be helpful as they enter this period of her district's writing expectations, where students will be experiencing different types/genres of writing—specifically explanatory and opinion.

Mrs. Edwards sees Groundhog Day as a natural opportunity to introduce opinion writing since it has been in the news. Notice how she gets students to understand this new kind of writing while also continuing the skills they have been learning during the first part of their kindergarten year. It is the beginning of the day and the teacher has gathered her students at the rug for Morning Meeting. They have been going over the calendar, discussing concepts of yesterday and today.

Mrs. Edwards: Does anyone know what's special about today?

Student: It's Groundhog Day.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, how did you know?

Student: My mom told me.

Mrs. Edwards: Well, she's right. It is Groundhog Day. Does anyone know what happens on Groundhog Day?

Student: He sees his shadow.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, the Groundhog sees his shadow if the sun is out, but if the sun is *not* out, will he see his shadow?

Students: (All) No!

Mrs. Edwards: That's right. Remember when we went outside during a sunny day and we traced the shadows that our bodies cast on the ground? Could our bodies cast shadows on a cloudy day?

Students: (All) No!

Mrs. Edwards: Right. You can only see your shadow if the sun's out. Well, the story behind Groundhog Day is that if the groundhog sees his shadow he will be scared and run back into his home in the ground. The story says that if that happens we will have six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't see his shadow, the story says that spring will be here shortly.

Today, during writing, I want you to look outside the window and make a prediction about whether or not you think the groundhog will see his shadow. I want you to write your *opinion*—an opinion is what you think or feel—in your journal today. That's your writing today—to tell us your opinion about the groundhog. Will he see his shadow or not? Do you think we'll have six more weeks of winter? Or do you think that he *won't* see his shadow and spring will be here? When you write your opinion, I want you to tell me why. (Changing her voice a bit) "I think he will see his shadow because..." or "I don't think he will see his shadow because..." Did you hear me use the "because"? "Because" is an important word when you give or write your opinion. Alright, who can tell me what you will do today in writing?

Student: (All have their hands raised)

The following interaction occurs between Mrs. Edwards and a student a bit later in the day when she has a few minutes to confer with students about their writing.

Mrs. Edwards: Hi, Jack. I see you're finished with your writing. Are you ready to read me your opinion about the groundhog? First, tell me about what's in the picture or plan.

Jack: That's the sun and this is the groundhog who's in his house in the ground. I made hills.

Mrs. Edwards: Great! Read me your opinion, will you?

Jack: (Nodding his head, he points to the first word and takes a deep breath.) I... (He stops and looks at the next word.)

Mrs. Edwards: What's the matter?

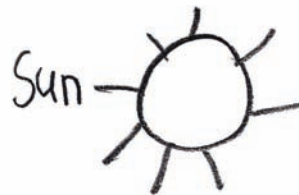
Jack: I can't remember that word.

Mrs. Edwards: Oh, that's one of your opinion words. It starts like the word "Thursday." /th/ /th/ /th/

Jack: (Moving his lips) /th/ /th/

Mrs. Edwards: (After waiting a bit) The word is "think."

Date: 2 - 2



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Jack: (Using his finger he starts over) I think the groundhog will see his shadow because the sun is out.

Mrs. Edwards: Great work! Look right here. You said “I think the groundhog will see his”

Jack: a. It’s a.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes. What do you think sounds better? I think the groundhog will see *a* shadow or *his* shadow?

Jack: His shadow.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, I think that sounds better too. (Pointing to the space above the word “a”) Let’s line out “a” and write “his” right here.

Jack: (Makes the change.)

Mrs. Edwards: You did a lot of work on this opinion piece. You wrote your sight words correctly and worked hard to sound out the harder words. (Being concerned about the letter reversal in the word “groundhog”), Let me show you what the word “groundhog” looks like. Just under the word Jack wrote, she writes the word correctly. Look at the “d” in my word and the “d’ in your word. What’s different?

Jack: It goes a different way.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes (showing the direction with her finger), it points this way like your other “d” (pointing to the “d” in shadow). Why don’t you write the word “groundhog” over the picture of the groundhog and make sure the “d” is facing the right way?

PRECOMMUNICATIVE STAGE (prekindergarten to beginning of kindergarten)	PRECOMMUNICATIVE STAGE TO SEMI-PHONETIC STAGE (middle to end of kindergarten)	SEMI-PHONETIC STAGE TO PHONETIC STAGE (end of kindergarten to beginning of first grade)
Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing/forming letters (lower case focus) 	Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning sounds (consonants) • ending sounds (consonants) • spaces between words • medial sounds (consonants) 	Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuation of beginning sounds, ending sounds, medial sounds, and spaces between words • consonant digraphs (th/ch/sh) • consonant blends (bl/tr/fr) • word families • endings (s, ed, ing)
Possible teaching focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing own name, family member names, classmates’ names, and environmental print • labeling drawings • playing games with pictures and letters on alphabet sound cards 	Possible teaching focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alphabet sound cards • spelling lists • basic sight words 	Possible teaching focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alphabet sound cards • blend sound cards • word sorts • student spelling lists/books
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows alphabet symbols represent words and/or text 	Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows concept of word 	Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows there’s a letter for every sound • understands spelling permanence

Jack: (Confidently, he copies the word.)

Mrs. Edwards: I just want to show you one more word. It's the word "shadow." You got the beginning but it has a little more. It's like our sight word "had." Listen "had—shad." (The teacher writes the word "shadow" under the student's spelling of shadow, emphasizing the word part "ad.")

The teacher in this scenario understands that not everything in a student's writing needs to be corrected. She is more concerned with developing meaning and appropriate writing/spelling strategies. (See the spelling table on p. 8) With the word "groundhog," she was concerned with the student's letter reversal of the "d." The teacher understands that reversals are normal developmental errors but she also understands that kindergarten is a time to have students attend more closely to how letters are formed and how basic word patterns are spelled. This is why the teacher also chose to focus on the word "shadow." The student had been taught the spelling pattern of "ad" and the teacher wanted to reinforce previous teaching. Word families are an important skill if students are to develop strategies that allow them to read and write longer text.

A NEXT STEP IN THE CONTINUUM

By the end of kindergarten, some students will have mastered the writing skills outlined in the monitoring notes pages at the back of *My Writing Journal*. For those students, the next step in their development as a writer can be supported by another effective teaching tool—*My Draft Book*. *My Draft Book* continues where *My Writing Journal* left off. Not only does it support a student's ability to elaborate or incorporate more detail into their writing (see Literacy Development table p. 5), it deepens students' understandings of writing process and text forms. *My Draft Book* was designed with first grade in mind. It contains DMA's benchmarks for first grade and would be an effective next step for any students finishing instruction in *My Writing Journal*, whether they are still in kindergarten or just beginning first grade. For more information about *My Draft Book*, visit www.dmatteson.com for your free download of *My Draft Book* Teacher's Guide.

CONCLUSION

Kindergarten is a year of transitions for our youngest students. Whether it's the transition from preschool or home to kindergarten, or from oral language and drawing activities to more academic or content area activities, stages of development are important aspects of learning for educators to consider. Using developmental teaching tools like *My Pictures and Stories*, *My Writing Journal*, and *My Draft Book* can help teachers and administrators keep child development in mind, and deliver instruction that can ultimately expedite development and learning.

To gain more information about developmentally appropriate literacy activities and teaching in kindergarten classrooms, read *KINDERGARTEN: A Transitional Year*. This book outlines the year in a way that shifts the kindergarten experience from a *one size fits all* or a *ready or not* program, to one that meets the needs of each kindergarten student.

Other DMA resources worth considering are:

Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story (Matteson and Freeman 2005). This book contains detailed teaching episodes that outline a more formal structure to developing picture detail and oral language. *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers* supplies teachers with a formal continuum that supports them in the assessing and teaching of young children. In doing so, the book also supports teachers in developing teaching objectives as well as organizing the assessment information for use with parents, colleagues, and school administrators.

Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers: A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words (Matteson and Freeman in press) is a companion book that looks at the role of picture detail and oral language in early experiences with reading. *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers* helps give a balanced picture to literacy, and like *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers*, it gives teachers a structure for assessing and teaching.

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