



Interactive Writing

An Activity Supporting Student Writing

Introduction:

Interactive Writing is an excellent K–2 teaching and learning activity that supports strong reading and writing connections. Interactive writing is a process that involves teacher and students as coconstructors of written text. This collaboration is called “sharing the pen.” Through interactive writing, students learn about the process of writing as they plan and write together with the support of their teacher.

During an interactive writing lesson, a teacher can demonstrate concepts and conventions of print, phonological skills, early reading strategies, and how words work. For the most part, students are in control of the writing leading to an increased knowledge of spelling. Students learn to develop spelling patterns similar to the decoding and phonics strategies students use for reading, again, strengthening the reading and writing connection. They learn how to construct words through linking letters, letter clusters, and sounds. Since the written texts created are read and reread many times during and even after the lesson, students are exposed to sight words and word recognition increases.

Interactive writing can be used with both whole and small groups of students. This introduction to interactive writing will provide one visual of how an interactive writing lesson might go. For more information about interactive writing see: *Interactive Writing*, by McCarrier, Pinnell and Fountas.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper taped to a wall or chalk board to write on
- Marker or chalk for writing
- White tape or white labels to correct and revise writing

The essential elements of interactive writing are as follows:

- 1. Provide active learning experiences:** There are many ways for teachers to create opportunities for writing. Students share many common experiences at school that can be written about. Students can share experiences and news about life at home or in the community. Reading and responding to a story a teacher has read is yet another way to share a learning experience. Whatever way a teacher chooses to activate a writing experience, the important part is that students are active in the process and that the teacher is drawing from students' prior knowledge of an experience they shared together.
- 2. Establishing the topic (talking):** What will we write about? The topic for the interactive writing activity comes out of the students' shared common experience. Teachers facilitate a conversation with students about their shared experience as they shape sentences they will later take to print. In the video, you will see the teacher and some of her students talk about an experience they've had with worms. In this step, the teacher encourages students to express themselves in ways that meaningfully capture their experience.
- 3. Composing the text (negotiating):** How will we say what we want to write? The wording is a coconstructed effort between the teacher and students. The teacher facilitates a conversation to develop a story or a sentence. She has the students repeat what they will write several times before beginning to write. The teacher does this so the students remember the sentences and can predict the next word when it comes time to write.
- 4. Writing the text (constructing):** The teacher and students "share the pen." The students write as much as they can. It takes a skilled teacher to notice what the students can do. She chooses her students carefully, knowing that participation and pacing in the lesson is important. The teacher is also modeling, questioning, and focusing students' attention on concepts, such as conventions of print and sounds in words. The teacher should ask different children to contribute to the writing.
- 5. Reread, revise, and proofread:** The teacher asks students to reread what has been written. This will often create opportunities for students to suggest revision and for the teacher to help students clarify the meaning. The importance of this step is to help students understand that, as writers, we are always checking the text to make sure it makes sense, sounds right, and that what we meant is being communicated.

6. **Revisit text to support word solving:** There are times when a teacher will revisit text after an interactive writing experience. This is a good opportunity to work on word solving and word work. When a teacher works on word solving with her students she is helping them to understand the inner working of words. This helps students figure out unknown or unfamiliar words, to see spelling patterns in words, and to connect words and meaning by how they look.
7. **Summarize the learning:** At the end of an interactive writing experience, the teacher should go over some salient learning points with the students. Summarizing the lesson reinforces what has been learned. By highlighting some new learning, the teacher is making sure what they've just done together will show up in the students' independent writing. In other words, summarizing helps students consolidate information so they can apply it on their own.
8. **Extend the learning:** The writing that teacher and students have done is purposeful and can be used as a reference, if displayed in the classroom. Children can illustrate the story, or a teacher may make copies to be read and reread. There are endless possibilities for teachers to take one piece of writing and extend it in many ways.