

Becoming a Confident, Competent, and Successful Writer Encouragement for Early Childhood Educators

The purpose of this article is to describe an ongoing journey to fulfill a commitment of mine to become a prolific writer who is able to convey ideas, thoughts, and experiences clearly to benefit those who choose to read what I write. This goal is linked to another goal to pay forward the knowledge, skills, and experiences mentors and colleagues gave to me, throughout the past 50 years, as I was moving closer to becoming a leader in Early Childhood Education (ECE). It includes the challenges and successes thus far in achieving these two goals.

Experience

The most important piece of information I received that impacted my development as a writer was during the time I was a kindergarten teacher when I became aware of the writing process. Up until the moment when I started a week-long professional development (PD) session focused on teaching writing to young children, I thought that writing to communicate thoughts and ideas to an external audience was something someone could or couldn't do the first time they wrote a piece of writing. During a week-long PD, I learned about writing as a process with specific steps you move through to get to the final piece. I felt a whole new world opened up to me to offer my thoughts and ideas as an Early Childhood Education leader to others who choose to pursue a career in this field of practice.

When I worked as an Early Childhood Advisor at the Pennsylvania Department of Education, I had the opportunity to work with teachers who were implementing the Writers Workshop Model with the children in their classrooms. I was fascinated with this new approach to supporting children in their development as writers. What I observed was one child would read what they wrote on a topic of their choosing and then the teacher and the other children in the small group of participants in the workshop would ask the child open-ended questions about what they read and offer suggestions to revise what they wrote to achieve the purpose of their writing. The children seemed to me to enjoy this experience and the process to create writing that was able to be published for an external audience.

The 5 step writing process includes the following steps:

- Pre-writing - brainstorming
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing

Pre-writing

Pre-writing is when you brainstorm what it is you want to write about. What is the purpose of the information in the article and who is the audience. This is followed by thinking about the information you think you want to include in the article, how you want to organize the information

and what topics you would like to research to assist you in writing the article. It can include using a graphic organizer or an outline to create the structure for a writing piece.

Drafting

Using your graphic organizer or outline, start to write your piece. I find the greatest challenge I have during this stage of the writing process is to trust the process and allow the ideas, thoughts, and information you gathered from research to provide evidence to substantiate what you are writing. I find I have a critical voice expecting me to have a final piece rather than allowing what I want to write to flow to complete this phase of the writing process.

Revising and Editing

This is the stage that can occur as many times as needed to believe the piece is ready to share with someone you have selected to be your thought partner/editor. I think of it as the process of refining what you want to convey to your audience and making sure your voice is clear. In fact, clear enough that you feel confident about owning the piece and being the one who ultimately decides when the piece is ready to publish.

Rewriting

During this stage, with support from an editor, rewrite the article until you get to the point where you believe you have a final piece of writing. Then it's time to publish your piece.

My hope is what I have written in this article is of value to those who choose to read it. I would like to invite those who read the article to send me your feedback, including questions and thoughts that arose for you as you read this article.

Reflections

I sometimes wonder what would be the impact of supporting young children to become proficient writers by honoring and respecting their style of writing and their voice. I believe some of the challenges I experienced and experience, while not as great as in the past, were due to having teachers who focused on their style of writing as the standard they used to judge a piece of writing. I believe this behavior over time resulted in my having a lack of confidence in my ability to write. I believe I persevered with my commitment to continuously improve my writing which resulted in my finding my style of writing and voice.

Over the years, I learned about offering a strength-based learning environment for those I seek to support on their journey to becoming proficient writers and leaders in Early Childhood. The result is I offer my thoughts and ideas to people and respect they will be able to determine if what I offer is of any value to them. I also found my ability to listen when someone is expressing their ideas or thought has improved as I listen to gather information to find out how I can support the person in either expanding their thinking about the ideas or thoughts they are expressing to me during the conversation or asking open-ended questions to better understand what they are communicating to me. This creates a learning partnership rather than the situation where I am the one with all of the answers to questions or the "right" answer to the question or perceived as

the “expert” or “guru on the issue or thoughts being discussed. I find it’s a win-win situation for both of us.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How would you describe your ability to write? What experiences do you believe contributed to your description of your ability to write?
2. Who are the most influential people who have impacted your ability to write?
3. How would you describe your style to support the development of the children you serve as writers?

Resources

<https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/implementing-writing-process>

<https://www.weareteachers.com/what-is-writing-workshop/>

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