



# The Kindergarten Chronicles

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## Let's Share!

### Using Student-Generated Materials

With all the instructional materials available to teachers, we know it's important to choose those that are most effective with our students. Appealing visuals are very important, but I'd like to propose that there is something even more important than the visual appeal. Students will understand and use materials that they had a part in creating. Not only will they use the materials and know how to apply them, they will have a sense of ownership and pride in the work that they helped to create. The good news is that we can make these materials just as visually appealing as those you can purchase and they are more cost effective!

One meaningful way to produce student-generated materials with kindergartners is through shared and interactive writing experiences.

Shared experiences provide the teacher with many of those all-important teachable moments. The students are typically fully engaged because they are generating the ideas for the writing. You can help them understand how writers come up with ideas for writing, you can teach conventions, letter formation, and even what good writers do when mistakes are made. As your students become more comfortable with the shared writing experiences, you can even choose to have them work along with you on white boards or paper.



**Modeled Writing and Shared Writing:** Modeled writing or shared writing is an approach to writing where the teacher and children work together to com-

pose messages and stories. Children provide the ideas and the teacher supports the process as a scribe. The message is usually related to some individual or group experience. The teacher provides full support, modeling and demonstrating the process of putting children's ideas into written language. The text becomes much richer than children can write themselves and becomes good material for children to read and should be displayed or used in the classroom. The children can illustrate the finished text, when possible. Children will love to see their work displayed and will feel successful because they can read it.

**Interactive Writing:** Interactive writing involves a sharing of the pen between teacher and children. The focus of interactive writing is on concepts and conventions of print, the sounds in words, and how the sounds connect with letters. Children actively plan and construct the text. For the most part, children also control the writing of the text. The teacher guides this process and provides appropriate pacing, assistance, and instruction when needed.

Whichever method you choose, you can create a variety of materials for your classroom. You may create display materials or books for your classroom library. You can be assured that your students will use these materials often and they will even spark discussion amongst your young learners!



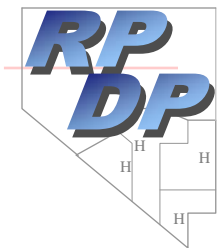
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Bill Hanlon, Director



- Ideas for Shared or Interactive Writing**
- Daily News
  - Journal entries
  - Labels and lists
  - Science observations
  - Retellings or summaries
  - Responses to literature
  - Letters or notes
  - Directions or recipes
  - Wall stories and big books
  - Speech bubbles and bulletin boards
  - Riddles and jokes
  - Calendar activities
  - Comprehension charts
  - Maps
  - Songs or poems
  - Story problems
  - Pocket chart sentence strips

## Idea Center



Now that you're excited about using student-generated materials, here are some ideas to get you started!

**Charts and Visual "Help" Tools:** This is a great way to get your students to remember steps or skills that you have taught in the classroom. Once you have taught the skill and you feel confident that your students can tell you about it, your class is ready to make a tool to be used over and over! I used shared writing with my class to help them remember what they need to do with their writing partner. They can get off-topic quickly, but all I need to do is point them to our "What Does a Good Writing Partner Do?" chart and they are right back on track!

**Thinking Maps:** We should be teaching our students early on how to use Thinking Maps. The best way to do this is to have a shared experience with your students where you use a Thinking Map. I make story elements tree maps regularly in my classroom. Story elements (characters, setting, problem, solution) can be difficult for students to grasp, but when you create a Thinking Map with the



elements and allow students to illustrate the elements, they understand and remember them!

**Big Books:** We create a big book out of our Daily News each month. These are consistently the books that students choose to read first at our Big Book Work Station. Because the students are familiar with the text (they helped generate it, after all!) they know they can successfully read it. You can also create a student-generated big book that is based on a theme you may be studying in class or a book that you have read. For example, if you've read the book, *May There Always Be Sunshine* by Jim Gill, students can each choose something they "can't live without," and illustrate it on a large sheet of paper. Put these pages together using binder rings and you have a beautiful big book that all your students will be able to read.

**Themed Books:** Not all of the books your class creates have to be big books. Each week in my class, we make a "regular-sized" book at our Class Book Work Station. I typically have a page for each child where they finish a particular sentence. I bind them all into yet one more piece of literature that the students love to read!

