



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Two Are Better Than One!

Writing Partnerships

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Many kindergarten teachers have their students journal everyday. You may ask students to write about your daily read-aloud or you may have them write a personal narrative, but either way, it can be frustrating to get your students to develop their ideas and to write about a variety of topics. Often kindergartners will stick with what they know, writing almost the same thing everyday. A great way to help your students branch out is through writing partnerships.

I learned about writing partnerships when I took the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum* class through RPD. When I read about partnerships, I thought, "No way will this work with kindergartners," but it has been one of the more successful ideas I have implemented. It is difficult for a teacher to give every child feedback everyday, but with writing partnerships, peers can validate each other's writing.

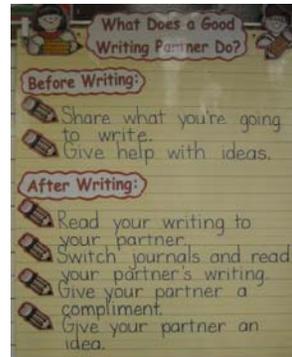
Each student has a writing partner to work with on a daily basis. Students participate in before-writing activities and after-writing activities. This helps them develop ideas and get assistance from classmates when they are coming up "blank".

You can do partnerships in a variety of ways. You can pair students based on ability level (you may want to incorporate peer tutoring into your partnerships by assigning a more capable writer with a struggling writer, or you may want to match ability levels). You can allow students to choose their partner, or you may want to have your partnerships change frequently. There is no "best" way to do this; just what works best with your style of teaching.

Before Writing: When it is time for students to write (after your read-aloud, for example) and while students are still seated on the floor, ask your students

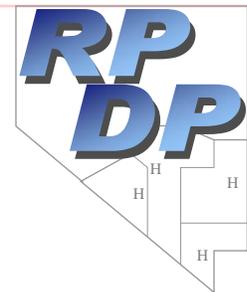
to sit "eye-to-eye and knee-to-knee" with their writing partner. Or you may have them face their partner while sitting at their seats. The important thing is that they make eye contact with their partner and show a real interest in what their partner has to say. Now your students do two things: 1) Share their ideas with their partner; and 2) help their partner with ideas, if needed. As the teacher, you should simply listen to make sure your students are staying on topic. Once they have finished sharing ideas, they immediately begin to write.

After Writing: When students have been given an appropriate time to complete their writing, it is time for them to participate in four after-writing activities: 1) Read your message to your partner; 2) switch journals and read each other's writing; 3) tell your partner something you like about his or her writing (illustration or words); and 4) give your partner an idea for something he or she can add or change in his or her writing. You may be surprised at how much your students look forward to writing once you incorporate writing partnerships into your classroom. You will learn a lot about your students as you "eavesdrop" on their conversations with their writing partners!



A poster is a great visual tool to remind writers of their responsibilities.

www.rpd.net



Bill Hanlon, Director



Writing partners love to share their work with peers! They validate each other's work and share ideas.

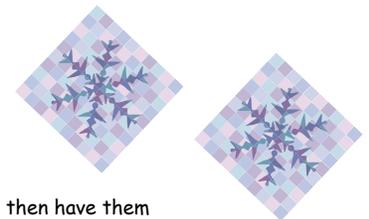
What's In a Name?



What's in a name? A lot, especially if you're a kindergartner! It's time for our students to learn to write their first and last name with spelling and capitalization. The best (and really only) way to help them meet this benchmark is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.

Students should practice writing their names on a daily basis in order to achieve mastery of this skill. The best way to start them on the road to mastery is to have them trace their name. You may

use a highlighter to write your students' names, then have them write over the highlighter. A great resource is <http://www.handwritingworksheets.com/>. You can make custom tracing sheets for each of your students, then keep a master and make as many copies as you need. If you have students practice their name daily and tell them that once they can do it on their own they won't have to practice anymore, you will find that your students are VERY motivated to learn this! If you give homework, this is a great homework activity too.



Coming next month: Ideas for Nevada Reading Week!