



Issue Six

Supporting Early Learners

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Partners in Learning

Dear Parents,

Children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work as partners to provide supportive learning environments. These newsletters have been written by Bev DeMonyé and Gloria Gustafson for parents wanting to help their children at home. You are welcome to email us at learningtoread@telus.net or visit our website www.readwritewithkids.com to view other resources.

Becoming a Writer

Think about when your child started to talk and how delighted you were when they first tried to say 'Mommy' or 'Daddy'. You accepted all attempts, continued to model how to say words correctly and celebrated each success. It took time for your child to move from babbling to saying first words, then stringing several words together and eventually being able to carry on a conversation. In fact, it took several years.

Learning to write is very much like learning to talk, both are developmental. The process of writing begins when children scribble, draw and pretend write. Next they begin to print letters and use combinations of letters or words to label and print words that are important to them. Eventually they learn to spell many words correctly and write simple sentences or even short paragraphs. This is an incredible and fascinating journey that takes place over a period of approximately three years.

Parents can support this journey by:

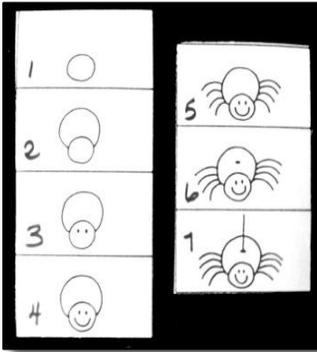
- promoting a positive attitude that your child is a writer and can write
- displaying writings and drawings to celebrate your child as an author and illustrator
- creating a writing space and providing materials (chalk, slates, markers and white boards)
- showing that writing is used in everyday life: calendars, shopping lists, cards, emails
- using prompts such as:

What is happening in your drawing? Tell me more about it.

Let me show you how to write a sentence to go with your drawing.

Can I show you how to spell that word?

The following activities take advantage of children wanting to draw and write what is personally important to them.



My Turn; Your Turn Drawing: This is a great activity to help your child draw. Look for simple pictures that can be broken down into steps such as the example shown. Fold a piece of paper in half and draw the first part on one side. Then have your child copy what you have drawn as a first step on the other side. Continue using the language: *It is my turn, now it is your turn.* until the picture is completed. The purpose of this activity is to encourage children to hold crayons and pencils correctly, improve strength and mobility of fingers, help develop hand-eye coordination and experience success in drawing something they are interested in. This activity can be expanded by adding a word or sentence to go with the picture.



Alphabet Books: Help your child create their very own alphabet book by using personal photographs, their own drawings and pictures from magazines. Make a collection for each letter of the alphabet and glue them on to letter sized paper. We find it works well to insert each page in a plastic paper protector and collect the pages in a binder. Throughout this activity you can promote oral language by discussing the pictures and how letters and letter sounds match. By adding labels and sentences, you will help your child see that letters make up words and words make up sentences. This is a long term project; enjoy it over a period of time.



Frame Books: Frame books are used as a scaffold to help children write a book of their own. Collect pictures such as the one on the left that show things your child can do. We like to use small photo albums that hold one picture per page and then write a sentence to go with the picture. This picture was used in a book called: **I Can.** Each page had a picture and a sentence such as: *I can slide. I can ride my bike. I can help make my bed. I can ski. I can help with the dishes.* Other ideas for frames or sentence starters are: *I like . . . This is my . . . I see a . . . Red is for . . .* Children enjoy reading these books again and again.



Possible Sentences: Use a photograph of your child doing something they really liked. Talk about the picture and what was happening. *What are you doing? Where are you? What made it fun?* Together make a list of words to go with the picture. Then make up possible sentences to tell about the picture using some of the words on the list. Next decide on one good sentence to go with the picture that can be written down. At first you can do the printing for your child. It won't be long before your child will be willing to do some of the printing and will want to add more sentences. When you are finished, try reading the word list and the sentence or sentences. Children love to make a book of these pages, put them in a binder and read them over and over.