

Dear Parents,

I hope this letter gives you an overview of the work we are doing in the area of writing. As you know, writing has always been regarded as one of the basics in a child's education—and I can promise you that I will put a great emphasis on writing and that your child will grow in leaps and bounds as a writer. Our emphasis will be on writing, itself; your child will learn to plan and draft stories and poems, and best of all, to write with confidence and skill.

If you peek at the daily schedule in our classroom, you will notice that every day, we set aside time for reading, math, story . . . and writing. The children refer to the time that is set aside for writing instruction as "writers' workshop," which is a title grown-up authors use. It makes sense to borrow this term from the world of published authors because children learn to write like published authors. Like authors the world over, they are usually writing *something* for *someone*. They may be writing stories or book reviews or poems or how-to books . . . and they may be writing for each other, for readers across the school, or for you. Like authors, they choose their own topics and write rough drafts, which they revise and edit before publication.

Writers' workshop lasts almost an hour three to five days per week. It always begins with the children coming together for a minilesson in which I give explicit, direct instruction in the skills they need. Then students write while I confer with individuals and small groups of children whose needs may be similar. Each writers' workshop ends with me making a second teaching point and with writers having time to read their own and each other's work.

Your child's writing will change in dramatic ways across this year. At the start of the year, some children will pretend to write, just like they may pretend to sing like a movie star or to steer an airplane like a pilot. Soon these youngsters will be labeling their pictures with labels that each contains a letter or two. Once those labels become more complete, I will have children write sentences under their pictures. A child's first sentences will be hard to read because the child won't yet have learned to leave white spaces between words, but like everything else, that will change (and in the meantime, I will try to write tiny translations along the edge of the page). The sentences will become easier to read as the child leaves spaces between words, learns and uses a repertoire of familiar words, and becomes more skilled with using phonemic awareness and phonics. We will, of course, teach letters, sounds, and the spelling of high-frequency words at other times of the day as well as during writing, and this instruction will help children write stories that all of us can read.

You can be certain that I will monitor and celebrate your child's progress so that your child moves step-by-step toward being able to write more conventionally. This is my job; your job is to admire whatever your child brings home, to make your child feel like a famous author, to enjoy the brave, smart work your child does when he or she is just learning to spell and doesn't yet have it right but is willing to try anyhow . . . and above all, your job is to be interested in the content of whatever your child writes.

I will post the classes writing progress on the classroom website to keep you informed about the work we are doing in the teaching of writing, and you can expect that you will be invited to join us in an author celebration at the end of the year. I will let you know more about this as the date approaches.

Thanks for your support . . . and for your child!

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Monteiro