

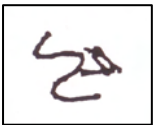
# Stages of Writing Development

As children connections between spoken and written language, they extend their understanding to include symbolic forms that are used to capture speech. Preschool-age children typically engage in reading and writing activities in casual and playful ways. Sulzby, Teale, and Kamberelis (1989, p. 77) note that children who have had frequent opportunities to write and read at home are more likely to enter conventional literacy as confident, risk-taking readers and writers.

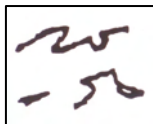
For almost all children in a literate society, learning to write and read begins early in life. Early writing develops concurrently and interrelatedly with literacy in young children who actively engage in understanding how written language works (Schickedanz 1999).

The following illustrations were developed from the works of Temple, Nathan, Temple and Burris, (1992) and D. H. Graves (1989) and from drawings compiled by Helen Faul of the California Kindergarten Association. They show the broad milestones that children achieve in art, literacy, spelling, and writing. (These stages are interrelated in young children, who make no distinction between these subject areas.)

## Prephonemic Stage



Random scribbling - The starting point is any place on the page.



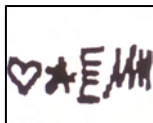
Controlled scribbling - Progression is from left to right.



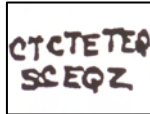
Circular scribbling - Circles or ovals flow on the page.



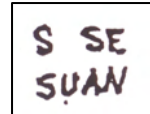
Drawing - Pictures tell a story or convey a message.



Mock letters – These can be personal or conventional symbols, such as a heart, star, or letters with extra lines.



Letter strings - These move from left to right and progress down the page of actual letters. They have no separations and no correlation with words or sounds.

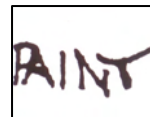


Separated words-Groups of letters have space in between to resemble words.

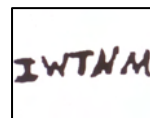
## Early Phonemic Stage



Picture labeling - A picture's beginning sound is matched to a letter (*Dog*.)



Awareness of environmental print - Environmental print, such as names on cubbies, is copied.



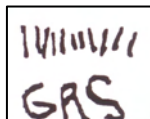
Transitional stage spelling or invented spelling - First letter of a word is used to represent the word (*I went to the nature museum*).

## Letter-Name Stage



Beginning and ending letters are used to represent a word (*cat*).

## Transitional Stage



Medial sound is a consonant (*grass*).



Medial sound is in correct position, but the vowel is wrong (*grass*).



A child hears beginning, medial, and ending letters (*I like to pick flowers*).



Phrase writing develops (*rabbit in the sun*).



Whole-sentence writing develops (*This pumpkin is mine*).

## Conventional Writing Stage



Transitional stage spelling (or invented spelling) is replaced by full, correct spelling of words.

Some teachers assess using sequences to make developmental checklists or portfolio inventory sheets. During choice time, the teacher observes and notes any writing behavior. These notes are later entered onto an inventory sheet in a child's portfolio. This compilation of records for each child shows growth over time and is a valuable tool for lesson planning, parent conferences, and statistics on student achievement. More information can be found in *The Beginnings of Writing and More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing*.

### References

Graves, D. H. 1989. "Writing: Teachers and Children at Work." *In Emerging Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write*. Edited by D. S. Strickland and L. M. Morrow. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association.

Schickedanz, J. 1999. *Much More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Sulzby, E.; W. H. Teale; and G. Kamberelis. 1989. "Emergent Writing in the Classroom: Home and School Connections," in *Emerging Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write*. Edited by D. S. Strickland and L. M. Morrow. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association.

Temple, C., et al. 1992. *The Beginnings of Writing* (Third edition). Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon.