Writing Strategies for English Language Learners

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Checklist for Effective Writing Instruction

1. Do teachers model the steps they go through to choose topics? Do they help students go through these same steps as they choose topics to write about?

2. Are students encouraged to draw on their own experiences when they choose topics? Do they write for authentic purposes?
Checklist for Effective Writing Instruction

3. Do students make connections between their reading and writing? Do they see that reading provides ideas for writing?

4. Do students keep and update a list of topics that they have written about and that they plan to write about?
5. Do students see writing as a process, and do they understand the various activities they should engage in as they move a piece of writing toward its final form?

6. Does the classroom have ample accessible literature, content, and resource books for students to reference as they write?
7. Are students allowed to invent spellings, drawing on their internal phonics and hypotheses and their pictures of words derived from their reading experiences?

8. Do students have opportunities to share their writing with others? Is there authentic response, which is both critical and sensitive to the writer’s needs?
Basic Elements of Effective Writing

- Variety of sentence structure
- Relatively free of mechanical and spelling errors
- Main points with anecdotes, examples, facts
- Mature, precise word choice
- Focus statement
- Concrete main ideas
- Unified

Focus

Organize

Support

Connections

- Structure
- Organized around a pattern
- Arranges ideas logically
- Uses transitional devices effectively
- Variety of sentence structure
- Relatively free of mechanical and spelling errors
Stages and Levels of Writing Development

- Pre-phonetic Stage
  - Levels 1 & 2
- Syntactic-Semantic Stage
- Early Phonetic Stage
  - Level 3
- Phonic Stage
  - Level 5
- Late Phonetic Stage
  - Level 4
Pre-Phonetic Stage
Level 1

- No connection between letters and sounds.
- Writing is egocentric.
- Not used to transmit information.
- The size of the letter string equals the size of the object.
Writers assume that there is a fixed number of letters in a word and that there is a variety of letters (one letter is not repeated).

Writers use the letters of their name.
Considerations for the Pre-Phonetic Stage

1. Encourage them to continue writing.
2. Variety of writing materials.
3. Markers
4. Different sizes and colors of paper
5. Have the above materials available at writing centers
Considerations for the Pre-Phonetic Stage

6. Ask students about their writing
7. Instead of correcting their writing model it
8. Meaningful print
9. Read Alouds
10. Language Experience Approach (LEA)
Early Phonetic Stage
Level 3

- There is a connection between the physical aspects of producing a word and the spelling of the word.
- Each letter stands for one syllable in the word.
Considerations for the Early Phonetic Stage

1. Usually use one letter for each word.

2. In English they may also include final consonant sounds in words.

3. Emergent Spanish writers in Spanish-speaking countries generally write vowels first.
Considerations for the Early Phonetic Stage

4. Spanish speakers in an English environment may show a mixture of vowels and consonants.

5. Operate on a syllabic hypothesis – Write one letter for each syllable in a strong of words.

6. Have begin to connect letters and sound production.
Samples of Early Phonetic Writing

- House as “hs”
- Rainbow as “rbl”. The “l” may be the result of the child pronouncing the word more like “rainbowl”
- Ladybug as “ldbg”
- Sapo as “AO”
- Mí nena toma sol as “IEAOAO”
- Pato as “PO”
Late Phonetic Stage
Level 4

- Each element of sound production in the pronunciation of a word should have its own graphic representation.
- Writers move from a syllabic to an alphabetic hypothesis.
Considerations for Late Phonetic Stage

1. Early in the stage they use one letter for each word or syllable.
2. Later in the stage students begin to connect the production of each sound with a letter.
3. From a syllabic hypothesis to an alphabetic hypothesis.
4. Begin to use both vowels and consonants.
Considerations for Late Phonetic Stage

5. If they forget a letter they write it where there is space.

6. Students at the advanced phonetic stage often assume that the name of a letter is the same as the sound it makes.
7. Students whose first language is not English may also rely on letter names during spelling, but they may think that the names for letters in English are the same as their sounds in their first language. (ex. Take as tec, me as mi, please as pls.)
Considerations for Late Phonetic Stage

8. Play with alphabet cards or magnetic letters.
9. Read Alouds
10. Language experience activities
11. Print rich environment
12. Alphabet books
Samples of Late Phonetic Writing

- “BFLF” for butterfly
- “stor” for star
- “brlfi” for butterfly
- “r” for are
- “tec” for take
- “mi” for me
- “plis” for please
- “el ptito feo” for el patito feo
Sound is the key to spelling. However, writers may overgeneralize phonics rule. They realize that one sound may be represented by more than one letter and that the same sound may be represented by different letters or groups of letters.
Considerations for Phonics Stage

1. Children realize the importance of the sounds themselves.
2. They are more focused on the sounds that result from the physical actions involved in producing the sounds.
3. Overgeneralize about relations between sounds and spellings.
Considerations and Strategies for Phonics Stage

4. Realize that one sound may be represented by more than one letter, and the same sound may be represented by different letters or groups of letters.

5. Have them find words that follow a certain pattern that they are having trouble with.
Samples of Phonics Stage Writing

- Spell all /s/ sounds with an s
- Use c to represent the /k/ sound
- Phone as “fon”
- So as “sow”
- Know as “now”
- My as “mi”
- Town as “tone”
- They as “thea”
Samples of Phonics Stage Writing

- Little as “little”
- When as “wen”
- World as “wrold”
- Dolphins as “dolphins”
- Sharks as “shaks”
- Flower as “flawr”
- My as “may”
- Like as “laic”
Samples of Phonics Stage Writing Level 5

- Not sure to use the s or z in mesa.
- World as wrold
- Confusion between b and v
  - berano for verano
  - faborita for favorita
  - vallenias for ballenas
  - tamvien for tambien
  - liones as for leones
- Primes for primera vez
Samples of Phonics Stage Writing Level 5

- Parsialmente for parcialmente
- Vien for bien
- Haser for hacer
- Primes for primera
- megus ta bi nira for me gusta venir a
In the spelling of words, meaning and syntax provide important cues that in many cases take precedence over sound cues.
Considerations and Strategies for the Syntactic-Semantic Stage

1. Children become increasingly aware that spelling systems reflect more than sounds.
2. At this stage they spell most words correctly, but they may have trouble with homophones or homographs.
3. Increase reading and writing.
Samples of Syntactic-Semantic Stage Writing

- Confuse your and you’re
- Confuse there, their, they’re
Thank you for helping all learners succeed!