



Professional Learning Module
Emergent Writing for Early Learners

Setting Up a Writing Center

A writing center supports writing development by providing children with materials to initiate writing experiences. A writing center is not the art area. The purpose of the center is so children will have access to a variety of resources and materials that support them in becoming writers. A writing center can be highly motivating and powerful for children.

How does a writing center support emergent writing?

Child-initiated activities are opportunities for children to practice or expand what they are learning. If children are to become readers and writers, they need the spaces, places, and tools that allow them to engage as readers and writers. A well-stocked writing center will contain unique materials which are updated on a regular basis to motivate children to return and explore new materials. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- A comfortable writing center will include enough room for two or three children to write together with a variety of materials and resources for children to use. If possible, include a wall space to post their drawings and writings.
- Periodically, add materials that support theme related concepts and skills. For instance, following a science book or experiment, children may be asked to draw and write about the book or experiment.
- Include items from other centers such as cars or building blocks. Matchbox cars can be used to practice descriptive words (red, fast) while building blocks can be used to create simple building plans, "I need 4 squares and 2 triangles to build my house."
- Provide name cards for children to easily locate and use when writing their names. Use a ring binder or wall of words with frequently requested words for children to refer to when writing. This will help children make the connections between writing, print knowledge, and vocabulary.
- Be sure to join children when they are in the writing center to talk about their writing or take dictation to model the writing process. This is also an opportunity to observe children's writing. Remember, the focus should be primarily on the process, not the product, of children's written expression. All children can have meaningful writing experiences, even if their contributions do not yet form accurate letter forms or complete words.

Basic supplies for a writing center can include:

- ABC chart posted at the child's level
- Picture dictionary
- Variety of blank paper (e.g., colored, unlined, stationary, computer paper)
- Envelopes (variety of sizes)
- Date stamp
- Variety of writing tools (e.g., markers, crayons, pencils, gel pens, pens)
- Small note pads
- Journals – blank paper stapled together or in a ringed folder
- Blank books (e.g., pages with upper- and lower-case letters, heart, circles or diamond shaped books)
- Clipboards
- Chalk and chalk boards
- Dry erase boards and markers
- Post-it notes