

SUMMER 2007 OFFICE UPDATE

By Bridget Shultz
NCCCC Coordinator



Welcome NCCCC members, new and renewed. I am Bridget Shultz, the Program Coordinator for NCCCC. If you are a new member, you may not know me yet, as I spent the first few months of the year on maternity leave. I have been with the organization for almost 6 years now, and have seen a great deal of change and growth in the organization.

The 2007 membership year is on track to break membership records. Our membership is growing, and has become more diversified. As of mid July, we had 746 members: 282 Single Center, 301 Associate, 139 Individual, 18 Student, and 6 Retiree. The Annual Conference that was held in St. Louis was a great success, and generated a number of new initiatives for the NCCCC Board of Directors and Office Staff. Expect to see some minor changes in NCCCC this year. One of our goals is to make some of our materials electronic so they can be easily accessed by our members at any time or from any location.

Some of the most common questions I receive from our members are regarding the CAMPUSCARE-L listserv. There are three different mail options for the CAMPUSCARE-L listserv:

Mail. Messages arrive in your mail box one at a time as they are posted to the news group. This is the setting you are AUTOMATICALLY given when you subscribe. It is very easy to respond directly to messages received, but some people find that so many separate messages can clutter up their mail box.

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SO BE IT: THE ART & SCIENCE OF DECISION-MAKING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

By Holly Elissa Bruno



Imagine yourself, not as the busy professional you are today, but as a 12th century judge presiding over the Court of Law in the verdant countryside of feudal England. William, a tenant, who rents his farmland from a local lord, appears before you. The details of William's case follow in the box below. What say you?

William's Case

The law says: Tenants, who rent property from the landlord, must pay their rent on time each season. Failure to pay on time will result in forfeiture of the land. William's rent is due on the April 15th. William pays his rent on the 20th of April.

William appears before you, asking that he and his family be permitted to stay on the property.

As you consider what to do in William's case, you may be reminded of similar situations you have faced. For example, you probably know Jasmine or someone much like her.

Jasmine, a toddler teacher, is scheduled to start her day in the classroom at 6:30 am. On Monday, Jasmine arrived at 6:45. On Tuesday, she showed up at 7:05. Today, Jasmine appeared at 6:50. Jasmine's team teacher, Rayneisha, is frazzled. Parents tire of waiting to talk with Jasmine. You would rather finish that grant application than fill in for Jasmine to cover ratios for the 3rd time. As Jasmine breezes through the classroom door, she says: "Just change my starting time to 7 am. I can get here by 7, no problem!" What do you say?

As 21st century early childhood professionals or 12th century judges, we are called on to make decisions as often as we take a breath. Decision-making is both a science and an art. This article offers perspective on how to make decisions that we can live with and move on.

Dr. Phyllis Chesler observes that women are more likely to "offer suggestions instead of issuing direct commands" (2003, p. 367). A study of early childhood leaders reveals 80% are conflict avoidant (Bruno & Copeland, 1999). Taking a few moments to regain perspective on our decision-making processes may be helpful, given these findings. We all want to make decisions that "feel right" and will triumph over criticism. What constitutes a "fair" or "just" decision?

Would you like to hear the judge's decision in William's case? "Forfeit the property and quit the land," proclaimed the judge. William failed to obey the law. Breaking the law had a clearly articulated consequence: forfeiture. The judge did not take into account William's personal circumstances. He used a logical, legal, "scientific" approach.

What did it matter if William had paid on time for five years and was responsible for his wife and 11 children? So what if William traveled night and day to find a bridge still standing after the spring floods had washed out other bridges over which William traveled to deliver his rent? The "letter of the law" does not concern itself with individual circumstances. The "law is the law." Fairness is defined as applying the law the same way to every person. Administrator Frances confidently told me, "If I bend the rules for one person, I have to bend them for everyone. I don't bend the rules for anyone."

Try telling that to Jasmine, "Jasmine, arrive in time to be in the classroom with the children at 6:30 a.m." Jasmine is likely to fill your ears with all the burdens of her personal life: battery trouble with her 1991 Chevy, sick daughter, boyfriend problems, Mom with Alzheimer's. Jasmine will remind you how punctual she was before her husband divorced her, and she started feeling depressed.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990) alarm bells may ring so loudly, that their clanging overcomes your decision-making confidence. Reflection on the ADA reminds you that employees with chronic depression may need reasonable accommodations to perform essential job functions. Jasmine expects you to pay attention to all her personal concerns. Children, families, and team teachers need Jasmine to meet her professional responsibilities. What decision is fair?

With both William and Jasmine, making a decision in "the spirit of the law" may be more humane and appropriate than invoking the "letter of the law." When making a "spirit of the law" decision, you take into account the "totality of the individual's circumstances." You look more deeply in order to find the root of the problem, and make a caring, compassionate decision. Whereas "letter of the law" decisions meet out impersonal and evenhanded justice, "spirit of the law" decisions, tailored to individual circumstances, are equitable. Making equitable decisions feels more like an art than a science.

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VOICE OF CONSULTANT

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Letter of the law (legal) decisions are expedient; spirit of the law (equitable) decisions take time and Emotional Intelligence (EQ). EQ is the ability to read people as well as we read books. Equitable decisions require us to use both EQ and IQ; legal decisions call more upon our IQ. Dr. Daniel Goleman (1995) estimates that 80% of our decisions require EQ. This means that most administrative decisions utilize skills such as listening effectively and hearing non-verbal messages. The deeper goal is doing what is best for children and families.

Think how efficient your work would be if all your decisions could be made like a 12th century judge. Jasmine, like William, would be out the door without recourse. As emotionally intelligent 21st century professionals, we devote hours to accommodating individual needs. Is there a middle path between law and equity? Can equitable decisions take less time?

Come back to the 12th century with me to find some answers. In London stood the Court of Chancery (later called the Court of Equity) where controversial cases like William's could be appealed. There, the ecclesiastical member of the king's cabinet decided cases using the spirit of the law. The Chancery Court was also called the "star chamber" because the ceiling paint in the hall was resplendent with stars (Dobbs, 1993). Under those stars, the Chancellor returned the property to William for having made a "good faith effort" in the face of an "act of God" (spring floods). The Chancellor of Equity acted on William's claim using an artful decision-making process, drawn from an alternative definition of fairness.

Maxims that were created in the Court of Equity, such as "making a good faith effort," are still in common parlance today. Equitable principles that evolved from the Chancery Court include:

- Equity will not suffer a wrong to be without a remedy
- Equity regards substance rather than form
- One who seeks equity, must do equity
- Equity acts in personam (takes into account the individual's circumstances)
- Equity delights to do justice and not by halves

William, Jasmine and countless others over the centuries, have benefited from this "softer", more spiritual (Chancellors could call upon their theological understanding) decision-making process.

In the swirl of 21st century complexity, we stand, like the scales of justice, seeking to balance what is equitable with what is just. Often we feel blindfolded, unclear on the standards to use and troubled by unforeseen consequences of our decisions. We may yearn to be back in the day when decision-making was simpler, and the law was the law.

In fact, things were never simpler, nor were they

ever difficult. We often must stand, holding two competing realities: fairness means taking individual circumstances into account, while upholding professional standards. In some situations, the objective, analytical decision-making process may be appropriate. In other situations, the compassionate, individualized process is more fitting.

How can we tell the difference? Traditionalists in decision-making theory counsel us to follow a 3-step process (Buchanan & O'Connell, 2006):

1. List pros and cons of the situation objectively.
2. Analyze the list: Which side has the more substantial factors?
3. Make a logical decision in favor of the weightier side.

At times this process still works. More often than not, however, our decision will be challenged. We may hear that we failed to ask everyone's opinion before deciding, or we did not notify staff about an impending change. Letter of the law decisions often meet with resistance.

New research on decision-making invites us to take a 21st century approach to this age-old dilemma. According to Dr. Malcolm Gladwell (1993), our best decisions are made intuitively, in the blink of an eye. Ruminating, according to Gladwell, can be counterproductive. Instinctively, we know what needs to be done. Our job is to trust our intuition, and take action without dilly-dallying.

Gladwell calls this decision-making process "thin-slicing." We thin-slice when our brain reaches conclusions without immediately telling us that it's reaching conclusions. The part of our brain that thin-slices is the adaptive unconscious... the giant computer that quickly and quietly processes a lot of the data we need in order to keep functioning as human beings. Another way of describing thin-slicing is the act of listening to our inner voice over the cacophony of self-doubt. Thin-slicing is not an exotic gift. It is a central part of what it means to be human. We thin-slice whenever we meet a new person or have to make sense of something quickly or encounter a novel situation. We thin-slice because we have to, and come to rely on that ability.

Of course, challenges emerge in applying Gladwell's theory. How do I discern the sound of my inner voice over the thunder of other voices? Gladwell says we can teach ourselves to make better snap judgments. We must get out there, expose ourselves to the things we do not know, to the people we have avoided, to the life experience we have yet to live. In the process, as we deepen our experience and bring light to our blind spots, we find the conviction of our inner voice. Perhaps, the spirit and letter of the law can join hands at long last.

As early childhood professionals, we resolutely encourage children to value themselves and trust their own unique worth. What if we practice what we tell our children? Gavin de Becker (1997), a security specialist, writing before the 9/11 tragedy counseled, "We have within us an intuitive power that stands ready to guide us through even the most difficult of circumstances."

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From the President

By Terri Kosik, NCCCC President



Dear Colleagues,

The "can do" spirit is a powerful and amazing thing! As I reflect upon the past ten months of discussions, problem-solving, sharing of resources, and support among NCCCC members regarding the topic of accreditation, I am truly amazed by the "can do" spirit that has emerged yet this should not be a surprise. During the past 35 years, NCCCC colleagues have provided many campus-based early childhood professionals and programs with an array of instrumental resources and networking support.

Throughout the past months, both informed and passionate discussions regarding accreditation standards, varied accreditation models, best practices and the uniqueness of campus programs for young children have transpired. We have most certainly furthered our individual and group knowledge and clarified our commitments and goals around this important topic. It is doubtful this would have occurred without the individual and collective "can do" spirit resulting in an exceptional synergy among our members.

This "can do" spirit embraces several remarkable yet simple strategies, which have certainly been at play. A problem solving mind-set has emerged integrated with responsive strategies regarding accreditation issues of particular interest to campus-based programs. In some cases, program adaptations or revisions are not possible or will take years to implement but in other cases, new approaches are emerging, new tools are being developed and new relationships within communities are being forged. It is thought-provoking to read about the diverse consulting relationships and collaborative partnerships that programs have in place within their campuses and in their larger communities. These relationships are ripe for replication across the nation.

The "can do" spirit also embraces an openness regarding new concepts and approaches. New ideas have been explored, discussed, debated and developed. There has been a flurry of policies, procedures, tools and resources shared on and off the list serve, as well as in

various NCCCC arenas. The 2007 Annual NCCCC Conference in St. Louis included a special session with NAEYC Accreditation Academy leadership. The new accreditation process and standards were presented in relationship to campus programs. Other national accreditation models were presented at the conference and provided information about alternative accreditation models to interested conference participants. Regardless of the accreditation decisions individual programs will embrace, we know that effective and successful decisions are made through a timely process of research and education.

I am encouraged by the individuality that is also embraced by a "can do" spirit in action! Individual programs must navigate the waters of change in the midst of their own unique circumstances. Each program's mission, vision, culture, configuration, budget and facility reaffirms the individual nature of change. NCCCC networking has provided guidance and answers to important accreditation and best practices questions and concerns. The "can do" networking strategies, which NCCCC members execute seamlessly and effectively have helped all of us avoid the reinvention of the wheel.

The NCCCC "can do" spirit is an amazing force to observe and experience. The recent accreditation dialogue has confirmed what many of us have experienced across decades with NCCCC about wide-ranging topics - the invaluable role NCCCC plays in our professional life. As the journey around best practices continues into the future, NCCCC members are clearly aware that their journey is not alone. NCCCC members travel new and somewhat unfamiliar territory with the support of knowledgeable and like-minded colleagues and friends.

A quote from Mr. Fred Rogers seems truly significant to our important work in our individual programs and to our quest for delivering the highest quality programs to our children, families, staff, campuses and communities. "If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself you leave at every meeting with another person." (taken from *The World According to Mr. Rogers*)

I enthusiastically serve as NCCCC President through September, 2008. It is an honor and pleasure to work closely with the inspirational NCCCC membership and board as we continue to support one another with our important work around best practices.

Terri Kosik
President

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Biographies

Holly Elissa Bruno . . .

author, teacher and keynote speaker in early childhood education leadership, describes herself as a "recovering" attorney. As an attorney, Holly Elissa served as assistant attorney general for the state of Maine, in the criminal law division. She was selected "outstanding professor" at the University of Maine-Augusta, where she also served as Dean of Faculty. Holly Elissa's articles have been published in *Child Care Exchange*, NAEYC's *Young Children*, and The Southern Early Educational Journal. Her keynotes have delighted audiences from Budapest to Milwaukee, and Boston to Tampa. She teaches management courses for Wheelock College, and has been a featured speaker at the NAEYC annual conference, NCAA, NBCDI, NAACP, Smartstart, Head Start, and numerous state and regional conferences. Her early childhood leadership and administration textbook, based on emotional intelligence research, theory and practice, will be published by McGraw-Hill in time for the fall 2008 semester

Paul Travers . . .

is a Child Care Specialist in the preschool classroom at the Meramec Campus Child Care Center of St. Louis Community College. He has completed training in both Project Construct and Parents as Teachers and has worked in the early childhood field for eight years. Paul has presented on the topic of writing and young children at several workshops and he believes strongly that the experiences young children have with their parents and teachers profoundly affect their success later in life. He can be reached at ptravers@stlcc.edu.

Patti Endsley, LPN . . .

has worked with children and families for over 15 years in many capacities. She fulfilled the dual role of owner and director for a private child care center. Currently she serves as the health & nutrition provider at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Child Development Center. This role allows her to work with providers, children, & families to increase their knowledge of best practices in health and safety. Additionally, she serves as a state child care consultant for the Louisiana Department of Health & Hospitals.

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HELPING PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD TO SUCCEED IN POTTY LEARNING: GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS!!!

By Patti Endsley, LPN and Child Care Health Consultant

In child care we often look for clues from the children in our care to help them. We often search for clues when a child is not feeling well, when there are changes in behavior, and even as a child grows and develops. Signs are often readily available for us to decipher in their progress. Potty learning is no different. The key factor to success is for both parent and child to be ready for this next step. It is very important for parents to understand that success is dependent on both the parent and child being ready for this stage of development.

As child care providers we must also respect, listen and understand that each parent has a different approach, sometimes subtle, to potty learning. This may have been influenced by family, culture or even environment. Parents must be ready to devote the time and attention to facilitate potty learning. This takes on different meanings for different parents. As a mother of three, the oldest being 20 and youngest 15, I have learned over the years that all three were trained differently, neither better nor faster, just not the same. I learned from each experience and gathered valuable information for future use. One lesson I learned was to avoid comparisons between different children, siblings or genders. Focus on each child and their own unique progress. Communicate with the parent about the environment or any changes occurring in the child's or family's life. This information will provide us with clues as to how to work best with the child and family.

We must recognize that our job is facilitating successful progress. Providing the supplies that a child needs to be successful, such as change of clothes, wipes, pull ups or training pants is essential. We must also provide an environment that is conducive for success. Reducing stress and often changing our lifestyle is necessary so that a child can be successful.

Whether you are approached by parents or you initiate the discussion about readiness for potty learning, this is an opportunity to set the stage for successful outcomes. Maintaining an open dialogue around the expectations of both parents and child care providers is critical. Communication between parents and child care providers supports children's success.

So what are the signs of parent readiness to facilitate potty learning?

Parents must say yes to all of these questions to be ready to embark on the trail of success to potty learning.

1. **Is the child ready for potty learning?** Often parents can be tempted to hurry children in developing skills for several reasons. Maybe it's the cost of diapers, birth of another child or a friend's child pottyng before ours.
2. **Have you decided on a training method?** Will we use pull ups or cloth training pants. Parents should discuss options with caregivers and with family

members. Make sure everyone is supportive and on the same page. Dissension among adults can be a stressor that may be picked up by the child.

3. **If both parents work, the start of potty training should be on a weekend.** Our goal is to make sure that the child succeeds, starting on a busy Monday morning in child care is asking for failure. It is much easier for a parent to start with one child then for a child care provider to have the same success rate and have a group of children on a hectic Monday morning.
4. **Is there no crisis at home?** This could be as simple as a new move, new job for parents, start of a new school or classroom change, sickness at home, new sibling or any changes to normal day to day variations. The success of potty training is dependent on consistency and routines. We must make the changes in our lives so that our child can thrive.
5. **Are you ready to devote extra time and energy to this project?** You will have to make changes in your life and routines for a while during this process. Some sacrifices and adjustments will have to be made. Taking shortcuts, and going back to diapers or ignoring a child's needs, will often cause confusion for the child. This may be an inconvenience, but it will only last for a short while.

Look for these signs of readiness to achieve success in children potty learning. The more signs that are present the more likely children are to achieve success.

1. **Age factor and speech development.** Studies have shown that potty training success is often between 18 and 30 months. But we know we must look at the individual child. Speech also plays a big part of success. A child who can understand and verbalize their needs will often be more successful.
2. **Does a child stay dry for at least 2 hours at a time?** This shows some maturity with bladder usage and functions.
3. **Does the child let you know when he/she is wet or has had a bowel movement?** Is he/she uncomfortable wearing wet clothing and usually ask to be changed?
4. **Does your child have the motor skills to sit and bend, pull up clothing or change clothing?** A child should have these skills to take on the responsibility of potty learning. Taking care of themselves is the beginning of some basic acts of responsibility and accountability. Independence

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is an important step. Even if the clothes are on backwards, at least the child tried to put on the clothes.

5. **Can your child follow simple directions?** Potty learning is an act of sequencing. Following directions plays an important part in the process.
6. **Does your child trust and feel comfortable about the process; do they understand what is happening?** It is very important that your child trust adults who are caring for them.
7. **Does your child like to imitate others, including parents, caregivers and other children?** If you child enjoys imitating others, especially pottyng, then potty learning will come easier.
8. **Does your child show pride, joy or excitement when they learn a new skill?** If a child shows excitement for learning any new skill they may approach potty learning with the same enthusiasm and master this skill.

We often see children that resist potty learning at some point in the process. This can happen for a number of reasons, such as too much pressure, inappropriate training techniques, anxiety or fear about the process or even the toilet. Independence or control issues from parents or caregivers, or medical causes such as bladder infection or severe constipation can cause a delay in the process. Consistency and understanding will go a long way.

Once you have discussed routines and training style with the parent, reviewed readiness signs and have the essential supplies, you are ready to proceed with the process.

The following are tips for both caregivers and parents to make the process successful:

- Discuss appropriate intervals to take the child to the bathroom. Too short of an interval may only train the bladder for shorter periods of time and dribbling may occur. About every 1 to 1 1/2 hour is a good interval. Never expect a child who has been waiting for a turn on the swing to choose going to the bathroom over their turn. Take children before going outside or starting an interesting activity.
- When a child has an accident, change quickly while reassuring that it is alright. Have the child assist in the beginning of changing themselves and as time goes they will take on that responsibility.
- Arguing with the child or punishing slows down the process. If at the end of a long day you enter child care and see your child in a different set of clothes, do not mention that first. This gives the impression that the process is more important

then they are. Adjust your timelines to meet with your individual child's timeline for the process. If a battle occurs over pottyng, the child will win. They have the control.

- Encourage independence. Allow the child to go to the bathroom by themselves. Just take a few minutes to child proof the bathroom. Expect some dawdling and curiosity. Be sure to place any cleaners or medications in a child proof locked cabinet. Place a regular door knob instead of a locked system. Children will play.
- Dress the child for success! Use clothes with an elastic waist that are easy for the child to slide on and off independently. This will encourage independence.
- Avoid using potty chairs. They spread germs easily. Children will often imitate adults emptying contents and can cause contamination of surrounding environments.
- Remember handwashing is essential.
- Training pants should be used before regular underwear. It is often best to start with training pants covered with plastic pants. As a child progresses and has fewer accidents, you may remove the plastic pants and have the child wear just the training pants. Once accidents are infrequent introduce the child to regular underwear. Plastic pants may still be necessary at nighttime or naptime.

The goal for both parents and child care providers is to encourage and facilitate the process of potty learning. It may take all or a few of these tips to be successful. Learn from the mistakes you make and remember to keep an open mind and open lines of communications. Avoid stressors such as fussing about an accident or what happened to their clothes, enjoy the time with the child. Give some control to the child such as dressing, wiping and routines. Learn to relax; the process will go by a lot quicker. Have fun!

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WRITE ON!!!

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN AGES 2-5 TO WRITE

By Paul Travers, Child Care Specialist, Meramec Community College, St. Louis, MO

The Blue Room at the Meramec Child Care Center on the campus of St. Louis Community College – Meramec is an active classroom composed of children ages three to five years old. Our preschool uses the Project Construct approach which is a child-directed and process oriented curriculum that allows children to explore topics in which they are truly interested. Encouraging children to write is a major component of this curriculum.

After working with pre-school age children for the past five years, I have realized that in order to encourage children to write, we must first overcome several myths about children and writing.

Myth #1- Children must achieve a certain level of physical and mental readiness before written language can occur. It was once thought that literacy development occurred naturally through maturation. We now know that literacy development hinges on interaction with caring and supportive adult role models. A child with a rich history of literary experiences will have a much better chance at developing the skills necessary to become a writer.

Myth #2- Children learn oral language naturally, but they acquire written knowledge only through direct instruction. Both oral and written language can only develop through meaningful interactions with adults. These skills do not occur naturally.

Myth #3- Oral language must develop before written language can begin. Oral language is not a prerequisite to writing. In fact, oral and written language can and do occur simultaneously.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG WRITERS

Before we can begin to encourage young children to write, we need to identify important characteristics of young writers. First, learning to write begins very early in life. While it is difficult to pinpoint when, it occurs long before kindergarten or even preschool. Literacy develops from real life settings in which reading and writing are used to accomplish goals. Writing needs to be functional and not isolated skill exercises. Also, children do not learn to read first and then learn to write. Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelatedly in young children. Further, children learn through active engagement when constructing their understanding of how the written language works. Simply put, children learn to write by writing. Finally, each child exhibits a unique pattern and timing in acquiring skills and understanding related to writing.

HOW CAN TEACHERS ENCOURAGE WRITING?

First and foremost, teachers need to support, welcome, and accept correct and incorrect conclusions about writing. The errors children may make are an important part of the learning process. They will have many years to perfect their writing

skills. We need to have faith in the children's ability to discover and develop their own writing theories. Teachers also need to ensure an atmosphere exists that is conducive to exploration and to good feelings about writing.

When a child asks for help, I believe it is the teacher's responsibility to urge the child to try to write it themselves. We, however, can offer a guiding hand along the way, but must accept and honor their judgments. Also, it is important to leave the initiative up to the child. The teacher should give the child access to writing but not require it. The most important thing we can do to support the children's beginning efforts at writing is to provide materials in a well supplied writing center. The writing center is the key to building a community of writers in the early childhood classroom.

I believe writing demonstrations are appropriate as long as mastery is not the goal. The goal, instead, should be to engage children in meaningful and expressive literary experiences that will extend their understanding of written language. For example, a Morning Message can be used by the teacher to model the written language. The content of the message should come from the teacher and children and should be relevant to the children's lives.

I have found that teachers have a variety of views on the topic of dictation. Most agree that the teacher should tell the children that he/she will be writing down their words and then follow their word order as closely as possible. Many teachers believe that any writing done by the teacher should be on the back of the child's work or on a Post-It note.

Teachers must make sure the child understands that they are not using dictation because the child cannot write. It is simply another form of writing. The techniques teachers use will depend on the circumstances of a particular situation and the knowledge of that particular child.

A literacy curriculum that encourages young children to write needs to support the success of each learner. The curriculum needs to be focused on learning while letting the children explore language in all its complexity. Classrooms must be places where children can see others using language for real purposes. It is in this environment where a child, given the opportunity, will have their writing skills blossom.

Helpful Resources

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