

What To Expect: A Developmental Writing Scale

A developmental writing scale for the elementary grades

EMERGING WRITERS

1. Scribble-writing: writing perceived as a magical act.
2. Initial sounds scripted: letters recognized as symbols (D=dog).
3. Final sounds scripted: comprehends the existence of words (DG=dog).
4. Missing auditory information: consonants appear first, then long vowels.
5. No distinctions made between certain sets of sounds: b-p, f-v, th-d-t. One or two vowels serve all purposes.
6. Overcompensation: scripting every nuance of sound, distinct or not.
7. Gradual replacement of scribble writing with attempts at spelling; extreme nervousness about spelling.
8. Frequent use of illustration.

DEVELOPING WRITERS

1. Nervousness about spelling persists.
2. Frequent use of empty words or phrases such as very, much, and a lot to inflate text.
3. Growing attachment to writing and physical result; tendency to count number of words used.
4. Growing attachment to act of writing as expression of inner vision. Pride of ownership: "Listen to what I wrote!"
5. Developing understanding of poetry; initially, rhyme is seen as the only distinction. Later, delight in shaping poems.
6. Use of illustration to support text.
7. Delight in expanding vocabulary.
8. Primitive attempts at revision.

EXPERIENCED WRITERS

1. Increasing fluency of ideas and words.
2. Greater facility with surface features.
3. Increasing sense of writing as means of expressing individuality.
4. Much detail, to the point of slowing down action. Later, more conscientious selection of details.
5. Delight in unusual verbs.
6. Integration of personal knowledge into texts.
7. Interest in opinions of others; text's unrealized potential is of greater concern.
8. Rereading and simultaneous self-editing become more integrated into the writing prose