



## EMERAGENT WRITING PRESENTER NOTES

This guide walks you through presenting the emergent writing in-service suite. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials. The main PowerPoint presentation and optional slides are for all professional audiences (teachers, home visitors, family child care providers). Separate PowerPoint slides address home visitors' needs. Learning activities, tip sheets, and activity sheets are appropriately labeled for their intended audience.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Presenter PowerPoint slides
- Introductory video (found on the ECLKC website)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Flip chart or large paper
- Markers

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- This presentation provides participants with information they can use to support children's writing development and connect emergent writing with school readiness.
- Encourage participants to view this presentation and think about how it pertains to the children in their centers or home-based settings.
- Green adaptation boxes throughout the presentation list suggested materials you can use to individualize the training for your specific participant group.

### LIST OF AVAILABLE CONTENT

#### HANDOUTS

- Emergent Writing Stretches Across ELOF Domains
- Tips for Families—What is Emergent Writing?
- Tips for Education Staff—Supporting Emergent Writing
- Tips for Education Staff—Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners
- Tips for Home Visitors—Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners
- Learning Activity for Education Staff—Supporting Emergent Writing
- Learning Activity for Home Visitors—Supporting Emergent Writing
- Learning Activity for Families—Supporting Emergent Writing
- Learning Activity for Education Staff—Studying Children's Emergent Writing
- Learning Activity for Home Visitors—Studying Children's Emergent Writing
- Learning Activity for Families—Studying Children's Emergent Writing
- Tips for Education Staff—Engaging Families
- Tips for Home Visitors—Engaging Families
- Activities for Families—Emergent Writing at Home
- Tools for Supervisors and Coaches—Planning for Emergent Writing
- Helpful Resources

OPTIONAL HANDOUTS

- Head Start Performance Standards Supports Emergent Writing

OPTIONAL SLIDES

- Optional Slide 1: Head Start Program Performance Standards Support Emergent Writing
- Optional Slide 2: Head Start Program Performance Standards Support Emergent Writing

OPTIONAL SLIDES FOR HOME-BASED CARE (HOME VISITORS ONLY)

- HV Optional Slide 1: Title Slide
- HV Optional Slide 2: HSPPS Support Emergent Writing
- HV Optional Slide 3: HSPPS Support Emergent Writing
- HV Optional Slide 4: Center-Based and Family Child Care Practices
- HV Optional Slide 5: Home Visit Practices
- HV Optional Slide 6: What’s Different for a Home Visitor?
- HV Optional Slide 7: Theory of Change
- HV Optional Slide 8: Parents Can Support the Earliest Stages of Writing
- HV Optional Slide 9: Parents Can Support the Middle and Later Stages of Writing
- HV Optional Slide 10: Learning Activity: Writing in your Setting

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

SLIDE	HANDOUTS NEEDED	HOME VISITOR POWERPOINT ADAPTATION	HOME VISITOR HANDOUTS	OPTIONAL SLIDES	OPTIONAL HANDOUTS
1. Writing Introduction		▪ Replace with HV Optional Slide 1			
2. Emergent Writing Stretches Across ELOF Domains					
3. Emergent Writing Stretches Across ELOF Domains	▪ Emergent Writing Stretches across ELOF Domains	▪ HV Optional Slides 2-3		▪ Optional Slides 1-2	▪ HSPPS Support Emergent Writing
4. House Framework for Effective Teaching Practices					
5. House Framework for Effective Teaching Practices					
6. Objectives		▪ Insert HV Optional Slides 4-7 after Objectives			
7. Emergent Writing	▪ What is Emergent Writing? (F)				
8. Definition of Emergent Writing					



SLIDE	HANDOUTS NEEDED	HOME VISITOR POWERPOINT ADAPTATION	HOME VISITOR HANDOUTS	OPTIONAL SLIDES	OPTIONAL HANDOUTS
9. Early Stages of Emergent Writing Development					
10. Early Stages of Emergent Writing					
11. Middle Stages of Emergent Writing Development					
12. Middle Stages of Emergent Writing					
13. Late Stages of Emergent Writing Development					
14. Late Stages of Emergent Writing					
15. Supporting Emergent Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Emergent Writing (ES)</li> </ul>				
16. Supporting the Earliest Stages of Writing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace with HV Optional Slide 8</li> </ul>			
17. Supporting Middle and Later Stages of Writing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace with HV Optional Slide 9</li> </ul>			
18. Supporting the Emergent Writing of All Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners (ES)</li> <li>Learning Activity: Supporting Emergent Writing (ES, F)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners (HV)</li> <li>Learning Activity: Supporting Emergent Writing (HV, F)</li> </ul>		
19. Activity: Writing in your Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning Activity: Studying Children's Emergent Writing (ES, F)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace with HV Optional Slide 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning Activity: Studying Children's Emergent Writing (HV, F)</li> </ul>		
20. Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging Families (ES)</li> <li>Emergent Writing at Home (F)</li> <li>Helpful Resources</li> <li>Tools for Supervisors and Coaches</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging Families (HV)</li> <li>Emergent Writing at Home (F)</li> </ul>		

**ES:** Indicates tips/activity sheet for education staff

**HV:** Indicates tips/activity sheet for home visitors

**F:** Indicates tips/activity sheet for families





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## SLIDE 1:

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### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information about yourself.
  - Give participants an opportunity to introduce themselves.
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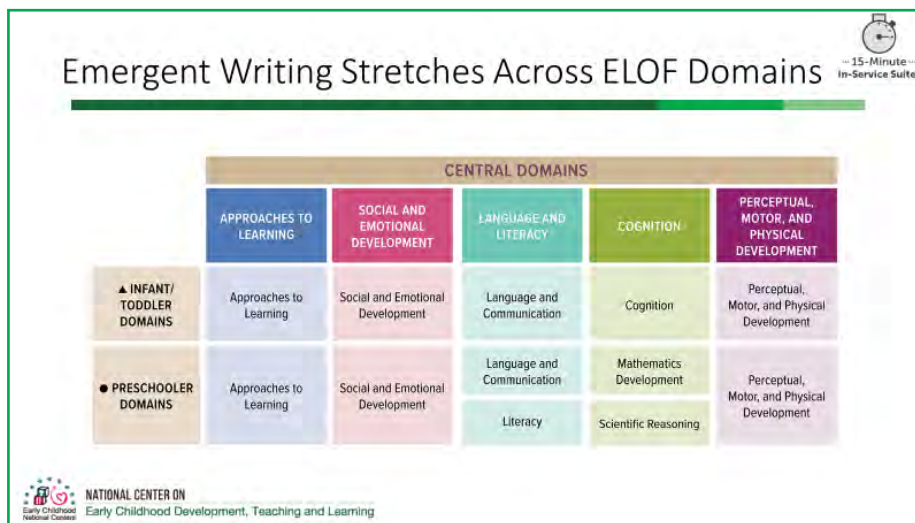
### ICEBREAKER:

- Have participants write their full name with their dominant hand. Now have them switch hands and try to write their full name again. Ask the following questions:
  - What was it like to write your name with your non-dominant hand? What were your initial feelings?
  - What skills did you use writing with your non-dominant hand?
    - Physical skills
    - Cognitive skills
    - Social and emotional skills

**Tell participants:** These are some of the same feelings that children may feel when they begin writing. And it takes trying out some new skills when learning to write. Today we will explore early writing for children birth to age 5. We will discuss the stages of writing and how you can support children's writing development in each stage. We will also discuss how writing is connected to the Early Learning Outcomes Framework and school readiness.

## ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Replace current slide with HV Optional Slide 1



### SLIDE 2:

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) provides language to help teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors understand child development and what children should know and be able to do to succeed in school. Home visitors support families' understanding of child development and promote engaging interactions between parents and their children

The ELOF helps adults implement effective program and teaching practices that promote strong outcomes for all children, including children with disabilities or suspected delays, children who are dual language learners, and tribal language learners.

Writing is embedded in multiple ELOF goals within the Approaches to Learning, Language and Literacy, Cognition, and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development domains.

## Emergent Writing Stretches Across ELOF Domains



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- Approaches to Learning
  - Initiative and Curiosity (Infant)
  - Creativity (Infant/Toddler & Preschool)
- Language and Literacy
  - Language and communication (Infant/Toddler)
  - Literacy (Preschool)
- Cognition
  - Imitation and symbolic representation and play (Infant/Toddler)
  - Counting and Cardinality (Preschool)
- Perceptual Motor and Physical Development
  - Fine motor (Infant/Toddler & Preschool)

### SLIDE 3:

#### For Infants and Toddlers

- Emergent writing begins with children's natural initiative and curiosity—found in the Approaches to Learning domain. They begin to show interest in objects and materials in their environment and use creativity through drawing and painting to increase their understanding and learning.
- By 8 months of age, children's perceptual motor and physical development allows them to intentionally reach for writing materials and use growing hand-eye coordination skills to make marks on paper and enjoy exploring language and literacy using various writing materials.
- By 36 months toddlers understand that written symbols have meaning which is found in the Cognition domain.

#### For Preschoolers

- Preschoolers communicate in many ways, including writing and drawing, to creatively express their thoughts and ideas through their many approaches to learning.
- Children exercise their literacy skills by writing. This area of development ranges from drawing and scribbling to making letter-like forms to using invented spelling.
- Preschoolers begin to understand how print works when looking at words and letters. They also begin to understand number symbols and can associate a quantity with the written numerals, growing in the Cognition domain.
- In physical development, preschoolers begin drawing simple shapes like circles. As they develop, they begin drawing letter-like forms. By the end of preschool, children begin to hold writing materials with moderate levels of precision and control—using a pincer grasp when holding a writing tool.

Teaching children in their home language is an important part of connecting writing skills to their family, culture, and developmental goals. You also support children who are learning another language by understanding what writing looks like for that particular group and (symbols, pictures, tilde, etc.) and incorporating familiar words in the learning environment. Allow children to see their written home or tribal language and offer opportunities for them to practice writing. For cultural groups without a written language, talk with families about the ways to include storytelling or non-written language into the learning environment.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

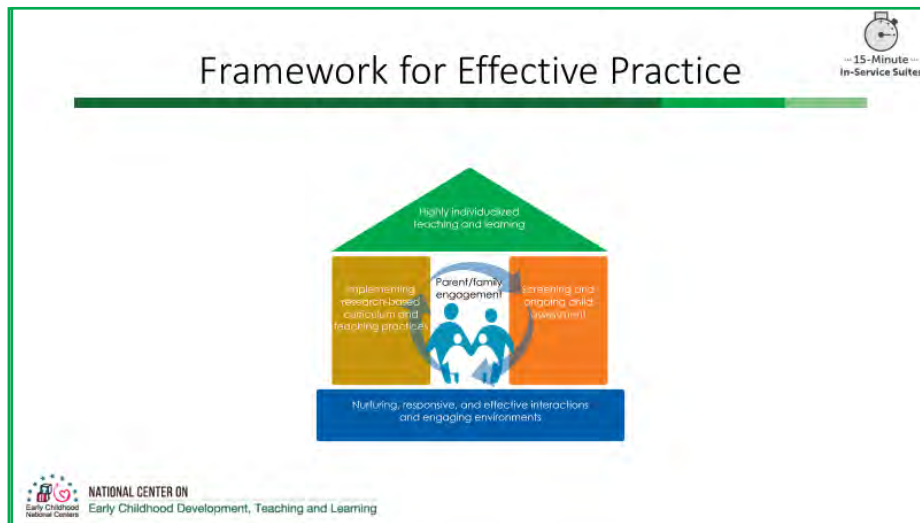
- Handout: Emergent Writing Stretches Across the ELOF Domains

#### OPTIONAL FOR HS/EHS:

- Insert: Optional Slides 1-2
- Handout: Head Start Performance Standards Supports Emergent Writing

#### ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Insert: HV Optional Slides 2-3
- Handout: Head Start Performance Standards Supports Emergent Writing

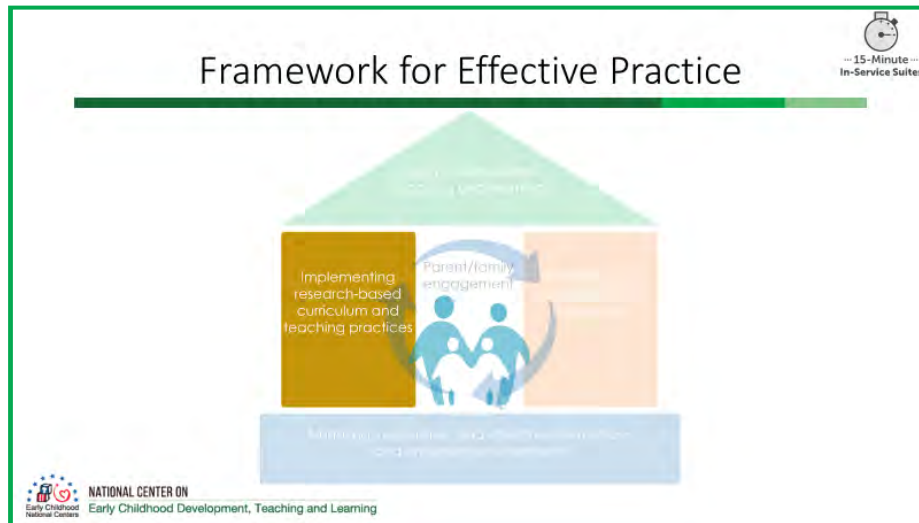


## SLIDE 4:

The Framework for Effective Teaching Practices is known as the House. The House represents five integral components of quality teaching and learning.

- The foundation: Nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions and engaging environments
- The first pillar: Implementing research-based curricula and teaching practices
- The second pillar: Screening and ongoing child assessment
- The roof: Highly individualized teaching and learning
- The center: Parent and family engagement

When connected with one another, they form a single structure—the House Framework—that surrounds the family in the center because as we implement each component of the house, in partnership with parents and families, we foster children’s learning and development.



SLIDE 5:

Here, we focus on the left pillar—implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices. It’s important to keep in mind that setting up the classroom and supporting emergent writing promotes a highly engaging environment for young learners (part of the foundation of the House Framework). Although most children will progress through the different writing levels around the same time, it will also be important for teachers to individualize teaching practices and for home visitors to support parents as they cater to each child and provide learning opportunities that support their development.



## Session Objectives



- **Identify** the significance of young children's emergent writing for school readiness
- **Describe** what emergent writing looks like in young children
- **Implement** practical ways to begin to support emergent writing in your care setting

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### SLIDE 6:

- By the end of this presentation you should be able to: (Read the objectives)

### ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Insert HV Optional Slides 4-7 to provide a foundation on Home Visiting Practices



## Emergent Writing

### Overview & Development

#### SLIDE 7:

Today, we're going to focus on understanding and supporting young children's emergent writing. We will begin with an overview of what we mean by "emergent writing," followed by an overview of the stages of emergent writing.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout: Tips for Families—What is Emergent Writing?

## Definition of Emergent Writing

15 Minute  
In-Service Suites

- Children's early attempts writing begins with random marks and drawings and advances to invented and conventional spelling
- Children as young as 2 years understand that writing has meaning and communicates ideas



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### SLIDE 8:

- Children's earliest attempts at written communication are often called "emergent writing." As we'll see and discuss in the following slides, this includes everything from scribbles, to drawing, to invented, and, eventually, more conventional spelling. These stages are important to writing development and adults should encourage and promote them.
- Even children's drawings, with no attempts at letter or word writing, provide us with the important insight that children are beginning to understand that writing, even in this early form, communicates ideas or feelings. They are learning how printed language works.
  - Research shows that children as young as 2 may begin to imitate writing to convey meaning (see Byington & Kim, 2017, Rowe & Neitzel, 2010, and Dennis & Votteler, 2013).

## Early Stages of Emergent Writing

...15-Minute...  
In-Service Suites

Children often write in drawings or scribbles without using letters



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### SLIDE 9:

- In the earliest phases, children draw (of various skill levels) and scribble to convey meaning. They don't have letter knowledge and do not use letters (at least not intentionally) in their writing.
  - **Important Note:** Most children generally go through key stages on the path to emergent writing. As with nearly all areas of child development, however, it is important to know that children progress at different rates and may display skills across multiple stages at the same time. Thus, the stages we will discuss in this presentation serve as a general guideline to the developmental progression of writing in young children. The stages we discuss here are often presented differently in various models of early writing. That is, some models will combine stages you see here, resulting in fewer distinct stages of writing. It's important to recognize the general development patterns, from drawing all the way to conventional spelling.
- Keep in mind all the skills and abilities that are involved in emergent writing—including fine motor coordination and understanding that one thing (like a first letter) can stand for something like a child's name. The ELOF mentions these foundational skills and abilities.

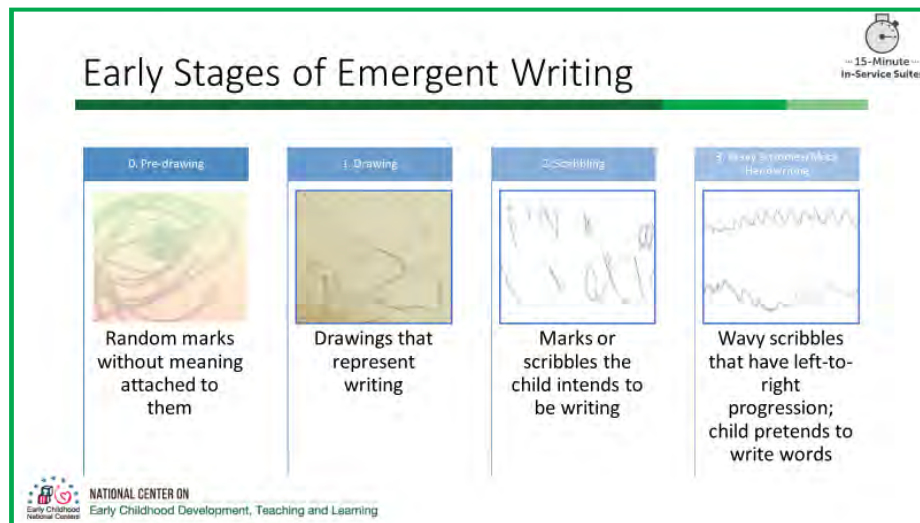
### REFERENCES:

Gentry, J.R. 2007. Breakthrough in Beginning Reading and Writing: The Evidence-Based Approach to Pinpointing Students' Needs and Delivering Targeted Instruction. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.



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## SLIDE 10:

Here, we discuss the first stages of emergent writing—drawing, scribbling, and wavy scribbles or mock handwriting.

0. **Pre-Drawing:** Infants may explore writing materials by making random marks on paper. Their marks do not carry meaning and are not intended to communicate thoughts or messages. These marks are mostly an exploration of the writing material or joy of making marks on a page.
1. **Drawing:** Children use drawings to represent writing. Drawing is the root of representational thought (the idea that a symbol can stand for something else) and the precursor to writing.
2. **Scribbling:** In this stage of writing, children may make writing scribbles (not to be confused with early scribbles that are simply drawings or pictures). Writing scribbles are marks children create to convey some sort of written message.
3. **Wavy Scribbles or Mock Handwriting:** Children make lines of wavy scribbles (again, not to be confused with early scribbles that are intended to be drawings or pictures) to symbolize language structure—right to left and top to bottom (English, Spanish, etc.). Writing scribbles are marks children create with the intent of conveying some sort of written message, just as in the previous stage. Children may verbalize their message as they are writing their message. Often, when you ask children to “read” their scribbles, they will make up some sort of message as they point to their work. Children’s writing scribbles may be accompanied by a drawing to represent their text.

## REFERENCES:

Byington, T. A., & Y. Kim. 2017. “Promoting Preschoolers’ Emergent Writing.” *Young Children* 72 (5). <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2017/emergent-writing>.

## Middle Stages of Emergent Writing Development



Children begin to understand that writing includes specific symbols (letters) and follow certain patterns, but they do not yet understand or have letter-sound correspondence.




### SLIDE 11:



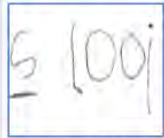
- In the middle stages of writing development, children begin to understand that writing includes specific symbols (letters) and follows certain patterns (left to right, top to bottom in most languages). However, they do not yet understand or have letter-sound correspondence. They do not know that certain letters stand for certain sounds, or that certain letters go together to form words.
- Additionally, children can often write their name and rely largely on non-alphabetic symbolic cues to “read” (e.g., McDonald’s sign—they know the writing below the yellow arches reads “McDonalds”; stop sign—they know the red octagon means stop; etc.).
- Children see letters and use them, not alphabetically. They don’t know how letters represent sounds, rather, they just know that writing is supposed to include letters.

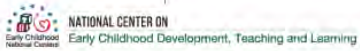
### REFERENCES:

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## Middle Stages of Emergent Writing



4. Letter-like Forms/Mock Letters	5. Letter Strings	6. Transitional Writing
		
<p>Letters and marks that resemble letter-like shapes</p>	<p>Strings of letters that do not create words, written left to right, including uppercase and lowercase letters</p>	<p>Letters with spaces in between to resemble words; letters/words copied from environmental print; letters often reversed</p>



### SLIDE 12:

Here, we discuss the middle stages of emergent writing: letter-like forms, letter strings, and transitional writing.

- **Note:** In some cultures, letters do not have a conventional English letter form. Some writing is in symbols or pictures. It is important to understand each family's culture and their form of writing.

**4. Letter-Like Forms or Mock Letters:** Children's writing includes some random letters (likely letters from their name they have practiced over and over) and letter-like forms. Letter-like forms are distinct symbols children create, not intentionally written letters.

**5. Letter Strings:** Children start to learn that letters are an important part of written communication, but they do not yet know that letters represent sounds—that comes at later stages. In addition to knowing that letters are important, they begin to model the mechanics of writing, including writing (generally) from left to right, and randomly include both uppercase and lowercase letters.

**6. Transitional Writing:** Children continue to include letters in their writing, again, without understanding of letter-sound correspondence. They may begin to represent more letters in their writing, though some letters may be written in reverse. They include even more mechanics of writing, such as adding spaces between "words." They may even begin to copy print from their environment—not to be confused with later stages of self-created writing.

### REFERENCES:

Byington, T. A., & Y. Kim. 2017. "Promoting Preschoolers' Emergent Writing." *Young Children* 72 (5). <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2017/emergent-writing>

## Late Stages of Emergent Writing Development



Children begin to understand and intentionally use letters to represent sounds, often starting with representing beginning sounds, then moving to ending sounds, middle sounds, and invented and more conventional spelling.



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### SLIDE 13:

- In the later phases of writing development, children begin to understand and intentionally use letters to represent sounds.
- Children will start understanding the beginning sounds of words and write using the first letter or the first letter followed by a string of other letters or scribbles.
- Children move to ending sounds. For example, they may spell dog “dg” since they are aware of the beginning sounds and now understand or hear the ending sound of words.
- Lastly, children will fill in the words with middle sounds—the beginnings of invented and more conventional spelling.

### REFERENCES:

Gentry, J.R. 2007. *Breakthrough in Beginning Reading and Writing: The Evidence-Based Approach to Pinpointing Students’ Needs and Delivering Targeted Instruction*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.




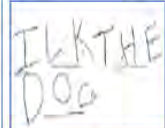
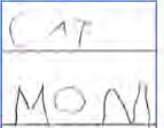

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## Late Stages of Emergent Writing



<p><b>7. Invented Spelling</b></p>  <p>Invented or phonetic spelling; different ways to represent the sounds in words; often, the first letter of the word or beginning and ending sounds represent the entire word</p>	<p><b>8. Beginning Word and Phrase Writing</b></p>  <p>Words with beginning, middle, and ending letter sounds; short phrases</p>	<p><b>9. Conventional Spelling and Sentence Writing</b></p>  <p>Correct spelling of words, generally the child's name and simpler or familiar words; sentences with punctuation and correct use of uppercase and lowercase letters</p>
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### SLIDE 14:

Here, we discuss the late stages of emergent writing: invented spelling, beginning word and phrase writing, conventional spelling, and writing sentences.

**7. Invented Spelling:** Children start to use invented or phonetic spelling (writing at least some of the sounds they hear). Invented spelling is the beginning of phonics. Children begin associating sounds with letters. It's not conventional spelling, but it's the child's invention of words and is a huge step forward in language and literacy development. Often, children will write the first letter of a word to represent the full word (e.g., child will write "B" when intending to write "bike"). Children then move into also including some ending sounds (e.g., may write "BK" for "bike." Some children will also write "BC" for bike, because they do not know when to use C or K).

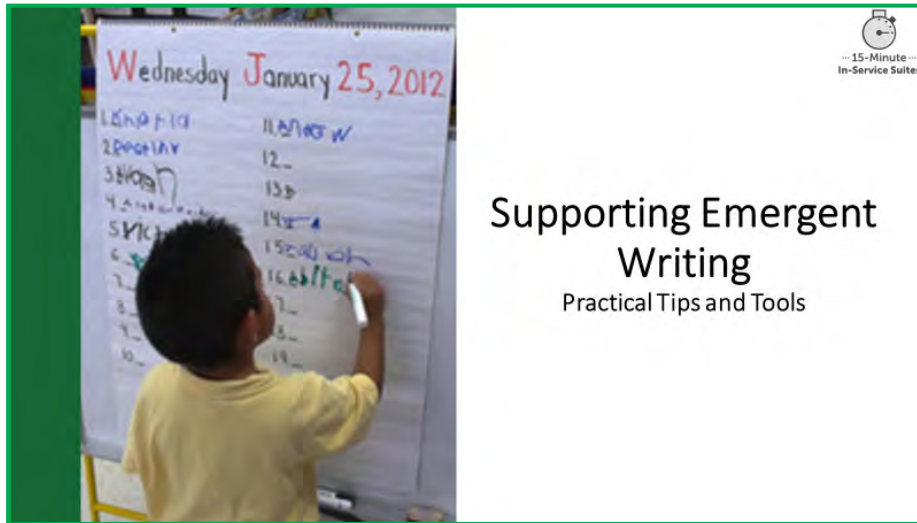
- It is very, very important to support and encourage this invented spelling! It is a sign that children are beginning to make the connections between letters and the sounds they make—even if they are using the wrong letter, like writing "BC" for "bike."
- Keep in mind that words with complex beginning and ending sounds (e.g., "Sh", "Ch," "Tr", and the like) may be difficult for children to fully hear and parse out, so you may not see children writing these sounds just yet.
- If children use the wrong letter for the word and use a letter that makes the same sound, don't discourage them. Do not change the child's writing to the conventional spelling. At this stage, it can be detrimental to children's writing and discourage them from sounding out words on their own.

**8. Beginning Word and Phrase Writing:** Children add some middle sounds in word to beginning and ending sounds in their writing. For example, children may write "BIK" or "BIC" for "bike." Children may also start writing short phrases, perhaps beginning with those they have seen written by the teacher or in books. This moves into novel phrases children come up with on their own.

**9. Conventional Spelling and Sentence Writing:** Children start using conventional (correct) spellings of some words, particularly "easy" words or words they are familiar with. You can still expect to see some invented spellings. Further, children will begin writing full, yet simple, sentences, perhaps even using ending punctuation. They may even begin using some correct upper and lowercase letters (usually starting sentences and their name with uppercase letters, but not yet using them for all other proper nouns).

### REFERENCES:

Byington, T. A., & Y. Kim. 2017. "Promoting Preschoolers' Emergent Writing." *Young Children* 72 (5). <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2017/emergent-writing>.



**SLIDE 15:**

There are many activities and practices teachers, parents, and other caregivers can use to support children's practice and love of writing. We will discuss some ideas here. Don't forget to check out the tips, tools, and resources for this in-service suite on the ECLKC!

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff—Supporting Emergent Writing

## Supporting the Earliest Stages of Writing



- To support pre-drawing, early drawing, and scribbling:
  - Provide writing materials for children and encourage their use
  - If children can talk, ask them to tell you about their drawing
  - Revisit children's drawing the next day and have children again tell you what it is or says



### SLIDE 16:

The tips on this slide are particularly useful for supporting children who are just beginning in writing. This may include infants and young toddlers, children who have or are suspected of having a delay or diagnosed disability, or children who are dual language learners learning to write in both their home language and English.

- To support pre-drawing, early drawing, and scribbling:
  - Provide children with writing materials and encourage their use. This can include paper, cardboard, and wood for children to write and draw on and lots of different kinds of tools to write with such as crayons, markers, paint, etc. Determine which materials are appropriate to use for the age and fine motor abilities of the children. For example, it takes a while for finger muscles to develop and most children under 3 are more comfortable holding a larger “fat” pencil or crayon. Don’t be afraid to let children take the lead here, making random marks and scribbles as they please.
    - Remember—there’s a difference between drawing to convey meaning and drawing as an art activity. We don’t want to take over and make sure children’s drawings are perfect if they’re trying to convey a message. Let them “write” as they please!
  - Provide lots of writing examples in the environment, such as labels for toys, centers, and children’s cubbies.
  - Model writing for children to see. When writing messages on the daily board or writing notes home to parents, speak out loud and write the words on paper to build the connection between spoken and written language.
- Promote language development as children draw and write. If children can talk, ask them to tell you about their drawing or scribbles.
  - If children tell you about their drawing or scribbles, write below or on the back of their work to capture their message. This can be as simple as a label for their drawing (e.g., “dog”) or a longer message (e.g., “The dog is big”). Make sure that you’re using conventional writing and that it doesn’t take over the child’s work.
    - Drawings can serve as an important scaffold for later writing (Thompson, 2005, 21). For example, if children make writing scribbles on their page, encourage them to draw a picture that will help them remember their message.

- Revisit children’s drawing the next day and have children again tell you what it says.
  - For toddlers or older children, you can even revisit children’s drawings or scribbles later. Having children draw a picture to accompany their scribbles (or any writing, even at more advanced stages) can help children to re-read their writing later.
  - Having children revisit or re-read their writing helps to instill the idea that a piece of writing conveys one message; it doesn’t change meaning each time they read it (unless it’s been edited, of course).

### ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Replace current slide with HV Optional Slide 8



## Supporting Middle and Later Stages of Writing



- Start with name writing
- Model writing throughout the day and in different contexts
- Engage in shared and independent writing with children
- Include authentic opportunities for writing throughout the day
- Encourage peer scaffolding

Remember... You are supporting a *process*, not an outcome.

### SLIDE 17:

Use similar strategies to support the middle and later stages of emergent writing.

- Start by writing the child's name.
  - For most children, their first experiences writing letters, spelling, and using uppercase and lowercase is while writing their names (Both-de Vries & Bus, 2008). This early writing experience helps children learn that strings of letters (words) and writing in general has a purpose.
  - “Name writing proficiency provides a foundation for other literacy knowledge and skills; it is associated with alphabet knowledge, letter writing, print concepts, and spelling (Cabell et al., 2009; Drouin & Harmon, 2009; Puranik & Lonigan, 2012)” (Byington & Kim, 2017).
  - Ways to incorporate writing children's names.
    - Use sign-in sheets and routines at check-in or check-out. At first, they may write their names in wavy scribbles, then include more letter-like forms, and even some letters. They'll likely start by writing just the first letter of their name, before moving into writing their entire name (some letters may be backwards at first). It is also important to remember that most children will begin by using all uppercase letters. Eventually, they will learn to use more conventional uppercase and lowercase letters.
    - Include meaningful opportunities for children to write their names, such as labeling their work or belongings or writing their names during a dramatic play theme!
    - Talk with children about their names. Notice how many names start with the same letters, the length of the children's names, and names that rhyme. Communicating with children about their names also helps to build their phonological and print awareness.
- Model writing throughout the day and in different contexts.
  - It is important for children to see adults model the writing process correctly.
  - When modeling writing in the classroom (or even the home), don't be afraid to use self-talk to talk out loud while you're writing. For example, if you're writing the Message of the Day, model your thought process while planning what you will write. For example, “Let's see. I want to write about what we're going to do outside today. We're going to play ball and do chalk drawings. I know, I'll write, ‘We will play ball outside today.’” You can then write and re-read your message. Importantly, you can also re-read your message later in the day, perhaps after you've gone outside and played ball.

- As you're modeling, you can also point out some of the mechanics of writing, or practice sounding out or spelling a word. Choose 1 or 2 quick things to focus on in a message. Be sure you're focusing on what the children are currently learning. For example, if most of your kids are at the scribbling stage, you wouldn't want to focus on conventional spelling and punctuation!
- Also, don't be afraid to model writing in different content areas. For example, write down your observations and draw your predictions during science. Use writing in the dramatic play area by writing down a menu, a grocery shopping list, or someone's order. Lastly, model writing while you write notes home to parents. These activities help build children's connection between everyday experiences and writing.
- Engage in shared and independent writing with children.
  - Have children describe their drawings to you or dictate their messages. You can also create opportunities for children to engage in independent writing. You can even use a hybrid model where you do some of the writing and so do children. For example, during group time children may take turns telling the group about their trip to the zoo while you write down the key points. Or children can draw a picture about their trip to the zoo and you can write what the children say or encourage them write it themselves!
- Include authentic opportunities for writing throughout the day.
  - Write for a purpose and set up the environment such that children do the same. One great way to do this is to set up your centers with writing materials and prompts. Include reasons to write in each center. The NAEYC article "Promoting Preschoolers' Emergent Writing" includes a table with some great ideas for each typical classroom center (Byington & Kim, 2017).
- Encourage peer scaffolding.
  - Encourage children to work together in their writing. They might write a story together or check in with a friend, if they're not sure which letter they should use when trying to sound out a word. This supports both children's writing, fosters social and emotional skills, and builds a strong sense of community.
- Organize your classroom.
  - Create a literacy-rich classroom and provide children with opportunities to see written words and use various materials to write and draw. Have a word wall with common words the children use. Give children individual notebooks to write in, record their science observations, or to tell you about their weekend.
  - Offer different kinds of writing materials and tools outside of paper, crayons, and paint. Try technology such as tablets, laptops, and old cell phones (for pretend texting) as a form of written communication.
- Finally, it is important to remember that you support a process, not an outcome. While children may start writing during their time with you, this process will not be complete or perfected by the time they leave your care. Writing skills develop across the school years and beyond! Your job is to support children's growth in the process and learn to enjoy writing.

## REFERENCES:

Byington, T. A., & Y. Kim. 2017. "Promoting Preschoolers' Emergent Writing." *Young Children* 72 (5).  
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2017/emergent-writing>.

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. 2018. "Planning Language Approach (PLA): Big 5 for All."  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/planned-language-approach-pla-big-5-all>.

## ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Replace current slide with HV Optional Slide 9



## Supporting the Emergent Writing of All Children

— 15 Minute —  
In-Service Suites

- Accept all levels of children’s writing
- Accept children’s writing errors as learning or teaching opportunities
- Be mindful of children’s physical abilities to write
- Allow children to write in whatever language they are most comfortable
  - Be aware of general differences between writing in English and writing in children’s home language



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### SLIDE 18:

- Accept all levels of children’s writing.
  - Take the time to discover the writing stages children are in. Know that children develop and progress in different ways and at different paces. Meet the children where they are in their writing to move them forward. Working above the children’s current writing level will only frustrate you both, perhaps discouraging children from wanting to write at all.
  - Don’t forget, drawing to convey meaning is an early form of writing!
  - When children scribble to convey meaning, it’s a fundamental step toward conventional writing. If children’s scribbles are nonsensical, encourage children by asking them to describe what they wrote and then write it down on their paper, with their permission.
- Accept children’s writing errors as learning or teaching opportunities, but also keep realistic expectations, based on children’s stage of writing.
  - This applies to all children but can become especially important for children who are suspected of having a delay or disability or who are dual language learners (DLLs) and who may have another form of writing that is particular to their culture.
  - As with all learning, a big part of the writing process involves making errors.
  - For all children, it’s important to try to understand why they make the errors, and to also think about whether the errors are to be expected based on their stages of writing. For example, you would expect a child at the Letter String stage to write long strings of letters with no spaces, and you wouldn’t expect them to sound out words.
- When children make errors in their writing, we want to make sure we’re not overwhelming them by jumping in and getting them to fix every error, as this may leave them overwhelmed and discouraged. Choose one or two small errors (such as writing lowercase bs and ds in the right direction) to focus on and address with children.
- Some children may not have the fine motor skills they need to grip a crayon or marker. For children who have motor challenges associated with writing, use assistive devices and technology, such as a tablet or laptop, to help them communicate and practice writing.

- Allow children to write in whatever language they are most comfortable.
  - This is particularly focused on children who are dual language learners and tribal language learners.
  - If you have older children in your care whose home language follows a different structure than English, be sure you are aware of the general differences between the languages (e.g., different types of characters, different directionality, etc.). This could help explain any errors children make or confusion they may have. If you don't speak the children's home language, ask family members or members of the community to explain these differences for you.
  - Be sure to have examples of children's written home language in books, posters, signs, etc. so that children can see the familiar print in their learning environment.
  - Please see the tip sheets and resources page for additional information and links to other resources that you mind find helpful.

\*\*Keep in mind that when talking about children who are DLLs and children who are learning or developing a Tribal language, it is important know that these two terms have different meanings for each population. For example, Tribal programs do not identify themselves with being DLLs.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff—Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners
- Handout: Learning Activity for Education Staff—Supporting Emergent Writing
- Handout: Learning Activity for Families—Supporting Emergent Writing

### ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Handout: Tips for Home Visitors—Supporting Children who are Dual Language Learners
- Handout: Home Visitors—Supporting Emergent Writing
- Handout: Learning Activity for Families—Supporting Emergent Writing



## Learning Activity: Writing in Your Setting



- Select samples of children’s writing from your care setting, and review their drawing and writing
- In which stage(s) of emergent writing are children?
  - Don’t forget to consider whether the sample shows children’s teacher-supported or independent writing
- What supports can you put in place during writing for children to help them develop in this area?
- What learning opportunities can you put in place to encourage children to practice writing in a fun and meaningful way?

### SLIDE 19:

**Note to Presenter:** If there is time, have participants go through the activity on the slide to get them thinking about the content covered in the presentation, as it relates to the specific children with whom they work.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout: Learning Activity for Education Staff—Studying Children’s Emergent Writing
- Handout: Learning Activity for Families—Studying Children’s Emergent Writing

#### ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Replace current slide with HV Optional Slide 10
- Handout: Learning Activity for Home Visitors—Studying Children’s Emergent Writing
- Handout: Learning Activity for Families—Studying Children’s Emergent Writing

## Review

...15-Minute...  
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### SLIDE 20:

- Children as young as 2 begin to understand that writing has meaning and communicates ideas.
- Most children go through key stages on the path to emergent writing. As with nearly all areas of child development, however, it is important to know that children progress at different paces and may often display skills across multiple stages at the same time.
- Provide writing materials and encourage children to use them. This can include paper, crayons, markers, and technology like tablets and laptops, etc. If children can talk, ask them to tell you about their drawings or scribbles. Revisit children's drawing the next day and have children tell you what it is or says. Model writing throughout the day and encourage both independent and peer scaffolding!
- Remember—you are supporting a process, not an outcome.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout: Tips for Education Staff—Engaging Families
- Handout: Activities for Families—Emergent Writing at Home
- Handout: Helpful Resources
- Handout: Tools for Supervisors and Coaches

### ADAPTATION FOR HOME VISITORS:

- Handout: Tips for Home Visitors—Engaging Families
- Handout: Activities for Families—Emergent Writing at Home