

Dear Parents,

This letter is intended to give you an overview of the work we have started in the area of writing in Grade One. As you know, writing has always been regarded as one of the basics in a child's education-and we will put a great emphasis on writing over the next year. Your child will grow in leaps and bounds as a writer. Our emphasis will be on writing itself: your child will learn to plan, draft and revise stories and best of all, to write with confidence and skill. In the beginning, your child may only draw a detailed picture, be able to tell a story about it and write one or maybe two sentences. Over time, they will begin to label parts of their picture and eventually, write multiple sentences.

Every day, we set aside time for reading, math, read aloud ... and writing. The children will refer to the time that is set aside for writing instruction as "the writing workshop", which is a title grown-up author's use. It makes sense to borrow this term from the world of published authors because children learn to write like published authors. Like authors, children are usually writing *something* for *someone*. They may be writing stories or a book review or poems or how-to books...and they may be writing for each other, for readers across the school or for you. Like authors, they choose their own topics and write rough drafts, which they revise and edit before publication.

The writing workshop lasts between 45 minutes and 1 hour. It always begins with the children coming together for a mini-lesson in which I give explicit, direct instruction in the skills they need. Then, students write while I confer with individuals and small groups of children whose needs may be similar. Each writing workshop ends with me making a second teaching point and with writers having time to read their own and each other's work.

Your child's writing will change in dramatic ways over the next year. Most will soon be labeling their pictures and writing sentences under their pictures. A child's first sentence will be hard to read, but like everything else, that will change. The sentences will become easier to read as your child learns to leave spaces between words, learns and uses a repertoire of familiar words and becomes more skilled with using phonemic awareness and phonics. We will, of course, continue to review letters, sounds and the spelling of high-frequency words at other times of the day, as well as during writing and this instruction will help children write stories that all of us can read.

You can be certain that I will monitor and celebrate your child's progress so that your child moves step-by-step towards being able to write more conventionally. This is my job; your job is to admire whatever your child brings home, to make your child feel like a famous author, to enjoy the brave, smart work your child does when he or she is just learning to spell and doesn't yet have it right, but is willing to try anyhow...and above all, your job is to be interested in the content of whatever your child writes.

If you have any questions or comments at all about our writing workshop, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thanks very much for your cooperation,
Mrs. Tanya Smith