

A Tale of Three Teachers: Lessons Learned from Emergent Writers

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Abstract

Writing is a vital part of the teaching and learning process. The view of learning to write as a developmental and evolving process is well-established in professional literature, and close observation of an emergent writer as they compose text can contribute to an understanding of their writing acquisition. A multiple case study, which focused on the teachers' experiences working closely beside a single child, was conducted in the context of a graduate early childhood education course. Three focus cases were analyzed, and three cross-case themes were identified. Findings illustrate the necessity of closely examining and supporting young children's composing process, and implications for pedagogical practice, teacher education, and future research are provided.

Keywords: writing, emergent writer, emergent literacy, young authors, teacher education, early childhood, teaching writing

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Writing is a vital part of the teaching and learning process and the primary means by which a child's intellect and academic success are measured. Many adults consider writing to be a skill requiring the use of conventional text and, thus, beyond the abilities of young children (Bradford & Wyse, 2020), making emergent writing experiences almost nonexistent in some early childhood classrooms. The view of learning to write as a developmental and evolving process, however, is well-established in professional literature. Seminal work (e.g., Clay, 1975; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman, 1980; Harste, et al., 1984; Teale & Sulzby, 1986) in which researchers "tried to see writing through the child's eyes" (Rowe, 2018, p. 230) resulted in a reconceptualization of beginning reading and writing from an emergent literacy perspective (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Researchers began to provide evidence that children's understanding of writing begins naturally through active, often informal, engagement with language and text in their environment.

Children begin to explore the features of print very early in life (Bradford & Wyse, 2013; Stellakis & Kondyli, 2004) through literacy experiences that use oral language knowledge to facilitate the young learners' "own network of competencies which power subsequent independent literacy learning" (Clay, 1991, p. 1). Early dependence on oral language necessitates that much learning occurs in a social context where interactions, such as shared book reading, telling stories, and talking about experiences are central to developing literacy (Wilson, 2003).

According to Yetta Goodman (1986), reading and writing are defined as "human interaction with print when the reader and writer believe that they are making sense of and through written language" (p. 6). Writing is considered the act of composing and encompasses all means of written communication generated by young children as they dictate to a scribe or experiment producing marks on paper to express their thoughts and ideas (Dahl & Farnan, 2002; Giles, 2020; Tunks & Giles, 2007). From an emergent literacy perspective, young children's transcribed stories or characteristically unconventional marks are accepted as writing rather than downgraded to "prewriting." Recognition that young children are forming foundational understandings of print through their early attempts at writing appropriately shifts the instructional focus to children's meaning-making process rather than the conventionality of their writing (Harste et al., 1984). When children become authors receiving genuine responses to their voices and choices, they learn to express themselves and become better writers, who construct self-identities through these experiences (Dyson, 1997; Tunks & Giles, 2007). "For children to be motivated to write, and to feel as though they are accomplished authors of text, it is imperative that they develop a positive writing identity" (O'Grady, et al., 2024, p. 156)

Providing intentional writing opportunities throughout the day in early childhood classrooms increases children's engagement with writing and the practice of foundational skills in purposeful contexts (Gerde et al., 2024). Previously, close observation of an emergent writer as they created text has contributed to developing literacy theories and practices (e.g., Clay, 1975; Dyson, 1989; Gabas, et al., 2021; Kesler, 2020; Roser et al., 2014). For this study, early

childhood teachers enrolled in a graduate literacy course worked with an emergent writer for two weeks to gain insights into young children's literacy acquisition, inform their literacy teaching, and better understand themselves as teachers of writing.

Literature Review

Writing Development

Young children, who often possess clear perceptions about themselves as writers (Bradford & Wyse, 2013), use various assorted marks and formations to approximate actual words when they first attempt to communicate through writing. By age 2, children begin to imitate adult writing by representing thoughts and ideas with drawings and symbolic markings (Dennis & Votteler, 2013). These spontaneous writing forms, commonly referred to as "kid-writing" (Feldgus & Cardonick, 1999), are the result of children observing others' writing in a meaningful context and their own experimentation. As children gain an awareness of the general purpose of writing, kid-writing in the form of picture writing, scribble writing, letter-like forms, random letter strings, invented spelling, conventional spelling, and environmental printing appears (Barnhart & Heishima, 1989; Cabell et al., 2013; Sulzby, 1985; 1992; Tunks & Giles, 2007). These forms are non-sequential, and their use is situational, varying by context. At first, drawing tends to be more prevalent than writing as young children use a combination of pictures and writing used as labels or captions to communicate meaning (Baghban, 2007). Movement between different forms as an emergent writer attempts to solve problems while composing is a noted occurrence (Clay, 1975; Harste, et al., 1984; Rowe & Wilson, 2015; Tunks & Giles, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978).

This early writing does not usually adhere to print conventions, so understanding its meaning is often dependent upon the child verbalizing what their marks mean (Casbergue & Strickland, 2016; Clay, 1975; Tunks & Giles, 2007). To make a child's writing readable to others, an adult can provide a translation written directly below (or above) the child's kid writing. This process, known as "underwriting," provides temporary support as children transition from being able to recognize and form letters to being able to match the corresponding letter to the sounds heard in words (Giles, 2020). Gradually, children come to understand the functions of printed language and realize that writing can be used for a variety of purposes (Gerde et al., 2012; Rowe, 2018). As children's awareness that writing is associated with spoken words and familiarity with the alphabetic principle increases, they begin using letters to approximate words in logical phonetic, or invented, spellings (Cabell et al., 2013; Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2017). This eliminates the need for an adult to provide a transcription of the child's oral reading for the kid-writing to be readable by others.

Between the ages of 3 and 5, adults play an important role in children's emergent writing development as they facilitate recording their thoughts and ideas in print (Hall et al., 2015). Children's participation in shared writing experiences and other writing events focused on scaffolding their understanding of print conventions and specific text features significantly

contributes to their knowledge and abilities as writers (Rowe, 2008). With their developing competence, children use words from their thoughts, environmental print, and others to write messages and gain a sense of themselves as authors. As adults show appreciation for a child's written products, they affirm the act of writing and the child as an author, helping children recognize that developing one's ideas on paper is a rewarding process (Giles, 2020).

Supporting Emergent Writers

Children gain knowledge of and interest in writing as they are continually exposed to print and writing in their environment along with opportunities to write as part of their daily routine (Giles, 2020). Adults can capitalize on and extend children's initial awareness of print's usefulness as a source of information by prompting the use of reference books, websites, and other written resources to answer questions posed during play. Such scaffolding experiences can occur through both verbal exchanges and modeling to help children understand how writing can be used to express and convey meaning (e.g., Gerde et al., 2012; Quinn et al., 2016). For example, adults can talk through the process of composing as children watch them make a list or write a message (Dennis & Votteler, 2013).

As noted by Rowe (2018), the abundance of research affirming the power of early writing experiences has been ignored by many preschool classrooms that currently offer only limited, if any, opportunities for composing. A study of 81 classrooms of 4- and 5-year-olds found that time spent engaged in writing or receiving instruction in writing averaged just two minutes a day (Pelatti et al., 2014). Emerging writers need to develop conceptual, procedural, and generative knowledge regarding print (Puranik & Lonigan, 2012). Conceptual knowledge involves learning the function of writing, and procedural knowledge, or transcription, is the mechanics of letter and word writing, which involves print awareness, handwriting, and early spelling skills (Tortorelli et al., 2021). Learning the letters and their associated sounds is an essential component of gaining procedural knowledge. Campbell et al. (2019) assert that there is a growing body of evidence that early writing helps children develop code-related skills (e.g., alphabetic knowledge and phonological awareness), which are crucial for encoding and decoding. Generative knowledge, also known as composing, represents a child's understanding of how writing works. Furthermore, composing represents children's ability to intentionally transfer their oral language to a written product through drawing, scribbling, random letters, or invented spelling (Quinn & Bingham, 2019; Quinn et al., 2021). Early childhood teachers infrequently engage in instructional practices to support children's early composing focusing instead on handwriting (Bingham et al., 2017; Bingham & Gerde, 2023; Coker, et al., 2016). Quinn & Bingham (2018) maintain, "When early childhood programs fail to engage children as writers, children miss out on the opportunities for print learning that come from exploring print processes in the familiar and meaningful terrain of their own messages" (p. 237). Conversely, interacting with children around their writing provides valuable opportunities for teaching foundational literacy skills in a meaningful context (Rowe, et al., 2022).

Young children's voluntary production of emergent writing to record and share meaningful text must be met with a responsive writing pedagogy affirming the child's view of themselves as writers to effectively support the development of writing in the early years (Bradford & Wyse, 2022; Giles, 2020). Focusing on young children's written products over their process tends to expose deficits in writing development and may harm their emerging literate identities (Yoon, 2015). In contrast, interacting with and observing a young child's composing process provides insights about current knowledge levels and abilities that can inform instruction (Kesler, 2020). Engaging with children about their texts provides opportunities for individualized support to develop and expand the message being conveyed, emphasize the connection between their spoken words and written marks, or demonstrate stretching the sounds in words to identify letter-sound correspondence (Rowe, et al., 2022). Adult support should remain relevant to the child's purposes (Vygotsky, 1978) and current interests while bringing attention to text features that are just beyond the child's current level of understanding through guidance that does not impose arbitrary expectations (Ray & Glover, 2008, 2011). The most effective instruction for emergent writers occurs when adults make a concerted effort to remain neutral while prompting for clarification or suggesting alternatives and always respecting and yielding to the child's "authorial stance" (Kesler, 2020). This type of teaching is easily accomplished in shared adult-child writing events or discussions with children about their writing, which increases the opportunity for and likelihood of direct support and scaffolding matched to a child's individual needs (e.g., Neuman & Roskos, 1993). Quinn and Bingham (2018) urge teachers of young children to promote "early writing as a social practice in which children generate ideas, refine their ideas by sharing them, and try to communicate these ideas through developmentally appropriate practices," provide genuine writing opportunities during play, and "authentic opportunities to connect oral to written language through authoring and sharing texts" (pp. 228-229).

Writing their own messages is an authentic, personal example of how writing is used, which requires children to simultaneously form and test hypotheses about the content, processes, and purposes of literacy (Harste et al., 1984; Rowe, 1994). Further, composing text has a significant positive impact on an individual's reading ability (Graham, et al., 2013), and young children's ability to write words phonetically has been identified as a direct connection to improved reading scores at the end of first grade (Ouellette & Sénéchal, 2017). Given the significance of writing ability on future academic success, the composing process of emerging writers is a topic worthy of investigation. The purpose of this study was to explore early childhood teachers' experiences of working with an emergent writer. The following research questions guided this study: What impact does working alongside an emergent writer have on the learning of early childhood teachers with varying experience levels?

Methodology

A multiple case study was used to explore the similarities and differences within and between cases. This approach is popular in education when using two or more cases to provide a

comprehensive view of the same issue or event (Alqahtani & Qu, 2019). It was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of a few individuals resulting in a more robust account of participants' experiences than could be obtained through more analytical methods or a single case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Participants

Participants were a convenience sample (Golzar et al., 2022) of graduate students. All participants were enrolled in a fully asynchronous online Masters-level course *Language Development in Early Childhood* during the same semester at a large, public university in the southeast United States. Participation was solicited via email, and eight students agreed to participate in this study. Participation was voluntary, and no incentives were provided. Participants were predominantly White females, which is a demographic composition representative of the United States teaching profession (Taie & Goldring, 2020). Teaching experience ranged from 0 to 18 years with kindergarten through fifth-grade students.

Selection of Cases

Although data was collected on all eight participants, two considerations resulted in a decision to concentrate on a subset of cases rather than the entire group. The first consideration was pragmatic since focusing on fewer cases would permit a closer inspection of experiences. The second consideration emerged from the data. Although there was variability in the responses to the experience, there were noted commonalities that allowed for choosing participants using three recommended selection criteria (Stake, 2006): Does the collection of cases 1) provide illustrative examples of the phenomenon being investigated; 2) offer diversity across contexts; and 3) allow for exploration of subtle complexities and contexts? Ultimately, cases were selected to provide a view of teachers' insights regarding young children's writing development and their role in teaching emergent writers from a distinct range of perspectives. The three case subjects, who taught in three different school districts, were a White female novice teacher, an African-American male early in his career; and a White female veteran teacher. Portrayals of each case using pseudonyms for all people and places to maintain confidentiality are provided below:

Sarah. Sarah is a first-year teacher at Dixie Elementary School. Dixie is a highly rated public school with over 750 students in prekindergarten through sixth grade. Located in a suburban area in the southern part of the state, the student population, which is 87.6% White, has limited racial and economic diversity. According to state test scores, 37% of students are at least proficient in math and 63% in reading. Sarah is one of six first-grade teachers on the lower elementary campus. She says, "I am currently at my dream school teaching my dream grade, and I am loving every second of it." She admits that "Writing has been one of the weaker areas of teaching for me, especially with first graders who are still learning how to write sentences!" Sarah is pursuing a master's in elementary education and likes spending time with family when not teaching. The child with whom Sarah worked was a 6-year-old White male in her class who struggled with spelling and handwriting.

Jeremy. “Mr. Jeremy,” as he is known to his students, teaches kindergarten at Dry Creek Elementary School. Dry Creek is in a rural area in the central part of the state. Dry Creek has 609 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. The student population is 54.2% White, 41.4% African American, and 3.4% Hispanic with more than 50% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. According to state test scores, 11% of students are at least proficient in math and 46% in reading. Jeremy taught third grade his first year of teaching and is now in his third year as a kindergarten teacher with the largest class (22 students) he has ever taught. He completed his bachelor’s degree with dual certification in Special Education and Early Childhood Education. He explained, “If you would have asked me in undergrad what I would be teaching, I would have said special education, but things turned out different. . . . I do love kindergarten and felt it was my calling two years ago, so I went for it. I am now pursuing my master’s in early childhood education.” Jeremy explained that “My experience teaching writing was mainly in 3rd grade and with kindergarten the focus is writing strokes and letter formation.” The child with whom Jeremy worked was a 5-year-old White female in his class. He described her as “a typical kindergartener [who] has very decent handwriting and takes pride in her drawings and colorings.”

Amelia. Amelia is one of seven kindergarten teachers at Roberts Elementary School, which is in a rural area in the southern part of the state. Roberts has 1,022 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. The student population is 63.1% White, 19% Hispanic, 9.2% Multiracial, and 8.3% African American with more than 50% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. According to state test scores, 25% of students are at least proficient in math and 51% in reading. Amelia has 18 years of teaching experience including eight years in kindergarten, six in pre-kindergarten, two years in fifth grade, and two years as a reading/math interventionist. Amelia returned to face-to-face instruction this year after teaching for three years at the district’s Virtual School, which opened in August 2020 and closed in May 2023. Amelia, who is pursuing a master’s in elementary education, says, “I’ve taught writing to 5-year-olds and 10-year-olds, and it is not my strongest subject.” The child with whom Amelia worked was a 5-year-old White male in her class. She described him as “one of the more knowledgeable students in my class. He knows all his letters and sounds, and all the sight words taught to this point. He is beginning to blend CVC words.”

Data Sources and Analysis

Data was collected in October 2023. For each case, data sources included: (a) notes and observations made by the teacher during a minimum of two writing sessions, (b) the written work of each emergent writer; (c) the teachers’ written reflection on the child’s writing; and (d) the teachers’ written summary of the overall experience, which was guided by a set of open-ended questions created by the researcher. While the first data source (notes and observations) attempted to describe witnessed behaviors, the third (reflection) and fourth (summary) were highly mediated, requiring the participants to think back on and try to

understand the experience. As Jasper (2005) notes, such “narrative and self-reflective written accounts, that are then analyzed and interpreted by the researcher, are a well established data source in qualitative work” (p. 253).

The main approach to data analysis involved a detailed examination of all artifacts that were initially reviewed to identify words, phrases, or concepts relevant to the central question (Saldana, 2021). The author’s analytic notes from this review were assessed and coded. As descriptive indicators of the teachers’ insights and understandings were grouped according to similarity, patterns describing factors related to young children’s writing development and teaching emergent writers were revealed. Based on these patterns, three major themes emerged. The author assigned the themes narrative descriptions to better communicate the nature of the codes and reveal connections across data sources.

Data triangulation was obtained by consulting various data sources and the fact that participants came from distinctly separate demographic groups. As an ongoing check in the process, each case was reviewed for any suggestion that was contradictory to the norm; no sign of disconfirming evidence was found. As a final check of validity, the three participants were asked to review the data to assess conclusions for accuracy and to detect any possibility of researcher bias. The one participant who completed this review indicated that the themes identified were a “very accurate” reflection of her experience working with an emergent writer (anonymous participant, personal communication, October 31, 2023).

Discussion of Results

This study’s central question focused on the impact working alongside an emergent writer has on the learning of early childhood teachers with varying experience levels. Interpretation of the data revealed three cross-case themes that seemed to represent participants’ views of their experience. These themes are Wonder Regarding Young Children’s Early Writing, Insight into How Emergent Writers Compose Text, and Reflections on Classroom Practice.

Theme 1 Wonder Regarding Young Children’s Early Writing Attempts

Perceptions of young children as writers were refined through their close observation of an emergent writer’s early attempts to compose text. Teachers marveled at the degree of writing motivation and print-related knowledge exhibited by an emerging writer.

Motivation

All three teachers expressed surprise at the degree to which the children genuinely enjoyed their writing sessions. About serving as a scribe for her child’s dictated story, Sarah commented, “He eagerly shared his pizza story and seemed enthusiastic about the task. It surprised me how comfortable [he] was with sharing his story orally.” Jeremy and Amelia shared similar revelations commenting, “I learned that children truly do have a story to tell and have so many things in their head they are trying to get out,” and “He was so excited to hear his own words coming to life in a story,” respectively. Children’s intrinsic motivation to write is valuable since participation in early writing experiences provides increased understanding and acquisition

of skills foundational to later independent reading and writing. As Amelia pointed out, “For young writers, the positive reactions of others to their writings provide the motivation for them to continue to write and publish more of their creations.”

Concepts of print

Jeremy noted that the child he worked with matched her choice of writing utensil to her purpose, saying

She had pencils and crayons to use to help get her message across. She started drawing first. She took about six minutes to create a picture of her favorite food. It was a round cheese pizza that she told me was her favorite . . . I asked her to write about it. So, she then took the pencil and proceeded to write.

For Jeremy, the act of switching from crayon to pencil demonstrated an understanding of the difference between drawing and writing that a child may not have been able to verbalize.

Additionally, Jeremy observed the child’s knowledge of sentences revealed through her use of print conventions (capitalization and punctuation) in her writing - “I Lik PS.” (I like pizza.) – although it was not consistently applied – “i is ue” (It is yummy!).

Amelia, who described her writer as “a bright student,” noted his attention to phonemic awareness when writing saying, “He also told me the beginning sound of lions was /l/ and that lion rhymed with ‘tyin’.” She also noted the advanced vocabulary uncovered through conversation surrounding his writing and used in his text. “While he was drawing, we talked about the movie *The Lion King* (1994) and how he liked Simba. When he finished, he told me what was happening in the picture while I wrote what he said: “Lions love to eat, and these lions are eating iguanas, so they can survive.”

Theme 2 Insight into How Emergent Writers Compose Text

Teachers mentioned the positive impact of recording and sharing children’s stories on their view of themselves as authors and noted the importance of adults in demonstrating how to write. Jeremy explained, “It is vital that we publish children’s work at the beginning of their writing and literacy development . . . [because it] allows the child to build motivation and excitement for writing.” Sarah shared that “Through this experience, I learned that even young writers who struggle with spelling can take pride in their writing . . . [His] confidence visibly grew as we worked on his story.” Similarly, Amelia noted,

Writers in this stage are just beginning to grasp the basic concepts of print and are experimenting with this form of self-expression. By acknowledging their work and effort, we can instill in the child the importance of writing as a way of communicating their thoughts and ideas.

Dictating and Translating

Teachers expressed their awareness that the ability to form letters on paper is not necessary for young children to compose text and affirmed dictation as a valuable strategy for emergent and early writers. Amelia stated her support of recording children’s oral stories

proclaiming, “Based on my experience, most children love to talk and can be very amusing with their stories. So why not write them down? The children can tell a grown-up or older child about their picture or a story, and the experienced writer can write what the young writer is saying.” Sarah expanded upon this idea stating,

Knowing that their words are valued and being transcribed into written form can motivate them to engage in writing activities. His initial reluctance to write was linked to concerns about spelling and handwriting. Dictating allowed him to focus on the content without those barriers.

Jeremy expressed his desire to implement underwriting to make children’s nonconventional print readable. He stated, “I am eager to keep trying this with my class to see how I can better help them get the information and stories out of their heads onto the paper.” Statements from Sarah and Amelia corroborated the importance of taking dictation and transcribing children’s initial attempts at communicating in print in supporting writing development. Sarah said, “It showed me how much modeling truly helps students, especially the ones who struggle” and Amelia stated, “The students watching me write will encourage them to begin writing their own stories.”

Publishing

Amelia noted her writer’s apparent sense of audience, stating that “He drew his family, including his older brother. . . . He was going to share his story with his brother” and asserted “Writing for an audience gives the writers an excellent reason to write and gives their work purpose and value.” Jeremy supported publishing children’s early writing attempts with this declaration, “We need to display [nonstandard print] and allow children to feel the excitement and accomplishment of what they have done. . . . As adults, we need to show enthusiasm, excitement, and curiosity for what they have written.” Sarah concurred that “offering young children the opportunity to see their thoughts and ideas transformed into tangible, published works instills a sense of pride and confidence in their abilities as budding writers.” Overall, participants viewed publishing with emergent writers as a valuable opportunity for children to grow as authors. From considering their readers when writing to receiving public affirmation for their work, all three teachers recognized the benefit of publishing as a means of developing emergent writers’ knowledge and skills.

Theme 3 Reflections on Classroom Practice

Teachers recognized the professional benefit of individually engaging an emergent writer by indicating that the experience contributed to their increased understanding of how emergent writers can be best supported in early childhood classrooms. Sarah stated,

I loved being able to see my student’s reaction at the end of this process. Overall, these sessions with [him] highlighted the importance of providing young emergent writers with a supportive and collaborative writing environment. It showed me how much modeling truly helps students, especially the ones who struggle.

Jeremy noted, “Being a kindergarten teacher, I often spend most of my time teaching letters and sounds. I now want to incorporate more writing instruction that allows the students to tell me what they want me to know in their kind of writing.” Amelia concluded, “Taking the time to let the children dictate stories is time-consuming, but this has shown me how beneficial it can be. The children love it. It connects writing to speaking, and I get to know the child better.”

All three teachers recognized the importance of emergent writers composing and sharing stories. There was a collective awareness that publishing helped children improve as writers and develop a sense of themselves as authors, which made it worth the time and effort required. Although Jeremy was the only one to explicitly state his desire to increase writing instruction, Sarah’s and Amelia’s positive perceptions of dictation indicate that it may become a more prevalent classroom practice.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include limited generalizability and possible researcher bias. The small number of participants and specific context of this investigation minimize the ability to transfer any conclusions drawn to a wider body in other settings. Case study analysis takes many forms and lacks the routine procedures established for other research methods making analyzing case study data a challenge (Yin, 2012). Despite efforts to prevent my subjective feelings from influencing the interpretation of the information acquired, having a researcher’s subjective opinions or preconceived ideas intrude on the assessment of data is a risk in all qualitative research.

Conclusion

According to Gerde et al. (2015), the predominant approach to writing instruction is often tacit, rarely focusing on how children are creating text. Further, modeling and scaffolding practices to support early writing were observed to be mostly focused on handwriting proficiency rather than composing (Gerde et al., 2023). Composing, however, is a necessary practice that helps young children understand the purpose of the writing process while providing opportunities to engage in complex and multidimensional learning about print (Casbergue & Strickland, 2016; Rowe, 2018). Working with an emerging writer asking specific questions to guide the composing process may help prospective and in-service teachers get a more comprehensive picture of young children’s writing development. This increased understanding, achieved interpersonally, can be an effective way to motivate their implementation of appropriate writing experiences for developing authors in the early childhood classroom.

Implications

After a close examination of three cases, it is posited that teachers learned a great deal about the developmental aspects of learning to write and supporting young children as writers through time spent composing with a single child. They witnessed the value of teacher modeling through dictation on children’s knowledge of print and the positive impact having one’s story read and enjoyed had on the confidence and motivation of emergent writers. Sarah’s observation

that a simple story can contain personal details and express emotions of importance to the child summarized the participants' shared understanding that composing and publishing help young children with developing literacy skills discover their writer's voice. Emergent writers thrive when instruction focuses on children's interaction with print as a meaning-making process rather than the conventionality of their writing.

Continued research focused on how the understandings gained through experiences working closely beside a single child is needed along with studies investigating how insights gained from such experiences are translated into child-centered writing instruction. Additionally, researchers need to expand studies focusing on the accomplishments of emergent writers to include investigations of effective developmentally appropriate writing activities that can be used to develop teacher preparation and professional development programs endorsing the best instruction for young writers.

Information about emergent writing and the significance of appropriate early writing experiences needs to be as impressed upon early childhood teachers to the same degree with which increasing awareness of the importance of early reading experiences has been historically addressed. According to Gerde et al. (2024), "Teachers can promote children's early writing and reading development when they integrate writing experiences across the day during common classroom routines and transitions" (p. 1). Teacher educators can communicate the significance of appreciating and encouraging children's initial attempts at composing to future early childhood educators in authentic, meaningful ways. Thus, it is recommended that teacher educators continuously strive to adapt and improve current methods to create even more powerful experiences around learning how children become writers and how to support emerging writers as they transition from using early, experimental forms of writing to the use of conventional print while fostering the development of their identities as authors.

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