



## TRANSCRIPT

# Interactive Writing Instruction Online with Young Children

STEVE GRAHAM

Hi, I'm Steve Graham. I was the Panel Chair of the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide, *Teaching Elementary Students to be Effective Writers*. Today, teachers are having to adapt their instruction, their face-to-face instruction, to online learning. This is a really challenging task, especially for teachers who work with young children. Not only do you have to work extra hard to engage children with these kind of technologies, but now you have to use new technologies as you're helping them learn to become better readers and writers.

One research recommendation in the K-6 practice guide is to create an engaged community of writers and to encourage students to write together. There are a lot of ways that you can help students write together. This includes asking them to brainstorm ideas together, having them listen and respond to drafts of writing, but doing that as a group, and also having them help each other, their peers, when they revise and edit the compositions they produce. There are other ways that you can also help students collaborate as writers. This includes writing text together and sharing the pen, where students write an idea, share their pen with a peer, and they continue to do that until they've done their full message.

The research practice guide has other recommendations for teaching writing and provides example activities and lesson plans and gives teachers suggestions about the roadblocks that they're likely to encounter and solutions to those. In this video, Professor Nell Duke demonstrates a letter-writing lesson using video conferencing and describes the key instructional moves that she makes. Her lesson shows how you might encourage writing for a real purpose and audience, another key recommendation of the practice guide.

You will observe Dr. Duke scaffold collaborative letter writing in the following steps with children: launch with purpose and audience, negotiate the message, rehearse the message, share the pen, and scaffold and teach as needed and appropriate. Additional steps not illustrated in this video clip include: read and reread the message, illustrate the message, and provide text to the audience. Dr. Duke begins with an explanation of the benefits and opportunities of writing collaboratively with children.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Interactive writing involves young children in writing or contributing to writing a piece that's led by the teacher. It's an opportunity for children to engage in application, and really in scaffolded application, where the scaffolding is provided by the teacher. And it's a way to scaffold kids' application of their concepts of print knowledge, their phonological awareness, for example, when they count out words or separate words in their interactive writing piece,

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but also specifically, phonemic awareness when they're listening for the individual sounds inside words in writing the piece.

It also allows for application of phonics knowledge. There are opportunities for word reading, for reading fluency depending on the length of the message, but for kids to read and reread it with increasing prosody or expression. An opportunity to work on letter formation—and this is the area where I think that the added distance context is the weakest, particularly if children don't have a stylus that they're using—but still, some opportunity for letter formation. Opportunities, obviously, to write words, so spelling application, and then to apply genre knowledge. And, depending on the topic, perhaps content knowledge as well, so, for example, if children are doing an interactive writing piece about something they've been studying in science or social studies. I'm now going to demonstrate interactive writing with a group of three children, a kindergartener and two first-graders.

Great. So here I am, and I'm so lucky today to have three children with me to do some writing. I have AJ. AJ, can you wave? Hey! And I have Brianna. Brianna, can you wave? And then I have Lia. Lia, can you wave? Yay, thank you so much, the three of you, for being with me today. We're going to do some writing together using Google Jamboard.

LIA

Yay.

AJ

Yay.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Yay. All right. So I have an idea about something that we could write. And it's a little bit of a sad story. So I'm going to tell you the sad story first, OK? The sad story is that my partner, Dave—I'm married to him—Dave cut his finger. His pinky finger. Can you show me your pinky finger? You have pinky fingers, too, right?

BRIANNA

Yeah.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

He cut his pinky finger really badly, and it hurts. And he wants it to get better because he's getting kind of tired of always having a bandage on it. I'm going to show you what his finger looks like right now. You see that there? See that giant bandage on his pinky finger? And it hurts.

BRIANNA

Yeah.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

It's kind of sad, isn't it? And so I thought it would be nice if we could just write him a little note to try to make him feel better about his pinky. What do you think about that idea? And then I'll give him the note?

LIA

Mm-hm.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Does that sound OK?

LIA

Yeah.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

OK, so, AJ, can you tell me, do you have any ideas about what we could say to try to make Dave feel better about his cut pinky finger? What do you think we could say to make him feel better?

AJ

We hope you feel better. It's OK.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

It's OK, it's going to be OK? And we hope you feel better? Those are good ideas. Brianna, do you have some ideas about what we could say to make Dave feel better?

BRIANNA

Mmm, yes.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

What do you think you might say?

BRIANNA

Might say—hmm...

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Well, AJ had a couple different ideas. Let me share a couple of his ideas and see what you think might work well. He said, "Maybe we could say, 'We hope you feel better,' or maybe we could say, 'It's going to be OK.'" What do you think?

BRIANNA

It might be OK?

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

It might be OK?

BRIANNA

Yes.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

OK. What do you think, Lia? What would you like to say to Dave about his hurt finger?

LIA

Ummm, it's probably going to get better. I have be...I bet everyone writing this note has had cuts. And it hurts a lot. Mm-hmm.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

OK, it's probably going to get better. So that—

BRIANNA

Was it AJ?

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

And everybody, all of you've had cuts on your pinky fingers before, haven't you?

AJ

Mrs. Duke? Dr. Duke?

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Yes? Uh-huh?

AJ

One time I smashed my fing...my sister smashed my finger.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Oh, ouch.

AJ

With a big rock. With a big rock.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

That sounds like it would really hurt. Did it get better?

AJ

Mm-hmm. It was...it was on my pinky finger.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

It was your pinky finger, the same as Dave. Brianna, have you ever had a cut or ever hurt yourself?

AJ

And it had blood. Lots of blood.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Oh, lots of blood. Yikes. Let's hear Brianna.

BRIANNA

Well, I was sliding a...well, I was sliding a piece of paper on my pinky finger, but I accidentally got a cut.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

And did it get better?

BRIANNA

Yep!

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Oh, wow. All right. Well, I'll tell you what, you've all had cuts or owies on your fingers that have gotten better. And so, I think that it's a great idea for us to tell Dave that. So let's all go into our Jamboard now.

AJ

Yeah.

LIA

OK.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Can you all go in to Jamboard, our Jamboard? And if we're writing a note or a letter to somebody, sometimes we start a certain way. We sometimes start saying, "Dear." "Dear Dave," we would say. OK? So we'll start with the word dear. Should I start writing...let's see. You think I should start writing down here? Would down here be a good place for me to start writing "Dear Dave"? So let's start by figuring out what letter we're going to write first. So the word is dear. Can you all say dear?

LIA

Dear.

AJ

Dear.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Can you say dear? Yeah? And how about you, Brianna? Can you say dear?

BRIANNA

Mm-hm. Dear.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Dear. And what sound...

AJ

Dear.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Can you make the sound you hear at the beginning of dear? D- d- dear.

BRIANNA

D. D.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

I heard somebody say D. We hear the d-sound, and that—and we use the letter D for that sound.

AJ

D. D, D, D, D, D, D, D, D, D.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

So, AJ, I'm going to ask you to be the first writer. Can you please make a letter D at the top of the paper?

AJ

Mm-hm.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Can you write a D? Oh, I see, the line straight down. That's the beginning of the D. There you go. D. All right. And then I'm going to write the next couple of letters in the word, the next couple of letters. Whoops. I've got the wrong...and now, let's listen for the last sound we hear in the word dear. Dear. Dear. Could you make the sound you're hearing?

BRIANNA

R-.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Rrr-. Dearrr. Everybody say the Rrr.

LIA

R-.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Yeah, that's right. It's the rrr- sound, and we use the letter R for that sound. Lia, could you put an R where it goes up there on the paper? There you go, that's right. So you put the letter R. All right. So now, we have to leave a space right here. We're going to leave a space right here, and then we're going to write the first letter of Dave's name, 'cause we're writing, "Dear Dave." So that's going to be Brianna's turn. Brianna, can you make a D somewhere after this red mark? 'Cause I'm putting a space here between the words. So after that red mark, could you make a D? Your D is going to look just like this D. Can you make a D after the red mark?

BRIANNA

Uh, yeah.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

You know what? I can kind of help you a little bit get it started.

BRIANNA

I don't see a...

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

So I made some dashed lines on your Jamboard, and you can trace over them to make your D.

AJ

Me? Mommy?

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Yep. That's Brianna. Very nice, Brianna. That's the first letter in Dave's name. "Dear Dave." And I'll write the rest. "Dear Dave." So now we've written "Dear Dave." And you said you were going to say, "It will be OK." That was something that each of you said, something about his finger will be OK, right? So—

BRIANNA

I said that.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

You said that. You sure did, Brianna. You said it would be OK, just like *your* cut was OK. And Lia thought that it would probably be OK or might be OK, and AJ thought it might, just like his finger was OK. So we're going to say, to say the sentence, "It will be OK." Can you all say that with me? Ready? It will be OK.

AJ

It will be OK.

BRIANNA

It will be OK.

LIA

It will be OK.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Let's say it again. It will be OK.

AJ

It will be OK.

BRIANNA

It will be OK.

LIA

It will be OK.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

All right, now we're going to count how many words are in that sentence. Are you ready?

AJ

Mm-hm.

BRIANNA

Yeah.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

Ready? It will be OK. Now, OK is just one word. Let's do it again, ready? It will be OK.

AJ

It will be—

BRIANNA

It will be OK.

LIA

It will be OK.

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

So how many words did you count there? Can you hold up your fingers for how many words you think you have? Brianna's holding up four fingers. That's what I think, too. And AJ's holding up



four fingers. And Lia is! We're all in agreement that it's four words that we're going to write. OK, so I'm going to go back over to our Jamboard, and we're going to do, "It will be OK."

NELL KRISTINE DUKE

So in that interactive writing lesson, you saw several steps. You saw me launch with a purpose and an audience for the writing. And here, we want to seek authentic audiences, people who actually want or need or would appreciate what's being written. And to have a real purpose, a real-world purpose for the writing. If you want to offer children choice about what they do in their interactive writing context, a good way to do that is to survey or interview them ahead of time—you can do this with the whole class—and offer a few different purposes and audiences for interactive writing, see which one each child prefers, and then group them accordingly.

You heard us negotiate the message that we would write together. And you heard us rehearse the message. And you can do that in parts. So in our case, we separated the "Dear Dave" part from the sentence that would follow. You can do things in the rehearsal like count the number of words, which you saw me do. You can talk about where on the page to start. So there are a number of different ways to incorporate some teaching and guided application even in the rehearsal.

Then you share the pen. And it can be useful, both on paper and, in this case, online, for each child to write in a different color so that you can just be tracking who's writing what and can use it as sort of an assessment tool. You can also have children practice, either on paper, or on a whiteboard, or online, so that when one child is forming a letter, for example, the other children are also having an opportunity to do that, just in a different place or space.

You scaffold and teach as needed and as appropriate. And what you want to do as a teacher is to be thinking, when it's each child's turn, about what would be an appropriate contribution for that child. Or put another way, pick or call on the children based on what you think would be an appropriate contribution for them. So, for example, for a child who's very, very early in letter formation, contributing the letter O might make more sense, whereas a child who is more advanced in their letter formation might be able to contribute a trickier letter like G.

Then you read and reread the message as many times as feels right to you. And that, again, is just more reading practice, more eyes on print, so we always love that. I'll give the children the opportunity to illustrate if time permits. And then, of course, make sure to provide that text that they've written to the actual audience, and getting some feedback. So if you email, for example, what the children have written, just getting an email back and reading that to the children at another time is a really great way to reinforce that their piece really did eventually get to the audience that was intended.

There's lots of research to show the positive impacts of interactive writing, and I've shared three references on the screen. One of the things that I want you to notice here is that interactive writing as a technique has been shown to be effective at fostering literacy development at pre-K, at K, and at grade 1. And that's somewhat unusual and lovely to see a technique that works across that range of grade levels.

STEVE GRAHAM

We hope that you will download the practice guide to look at the other recommendations that are made for teaching writing. This includes providing daily time for students to write,

teaching students how to engage in the writing process, teaching students to write for a variety of purposes, and teaching students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.

NARRATOR

To access this video and related resources, visit the REL West website.