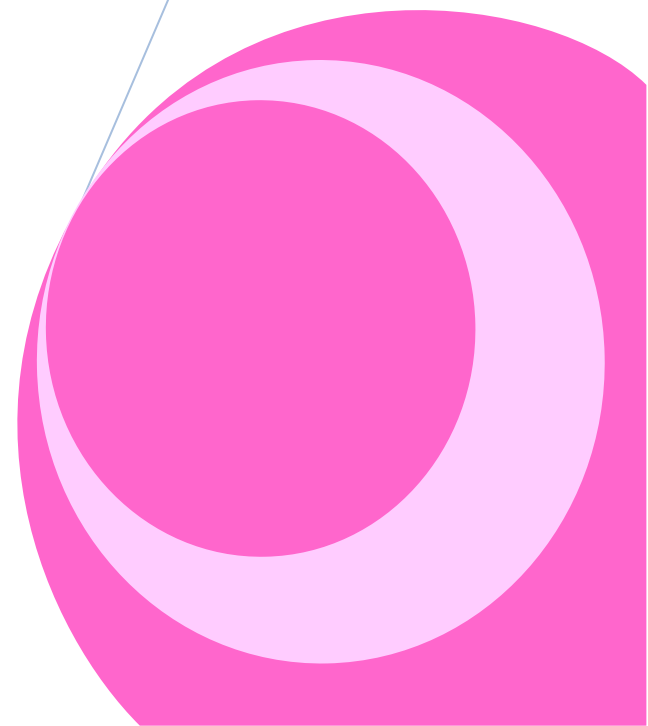


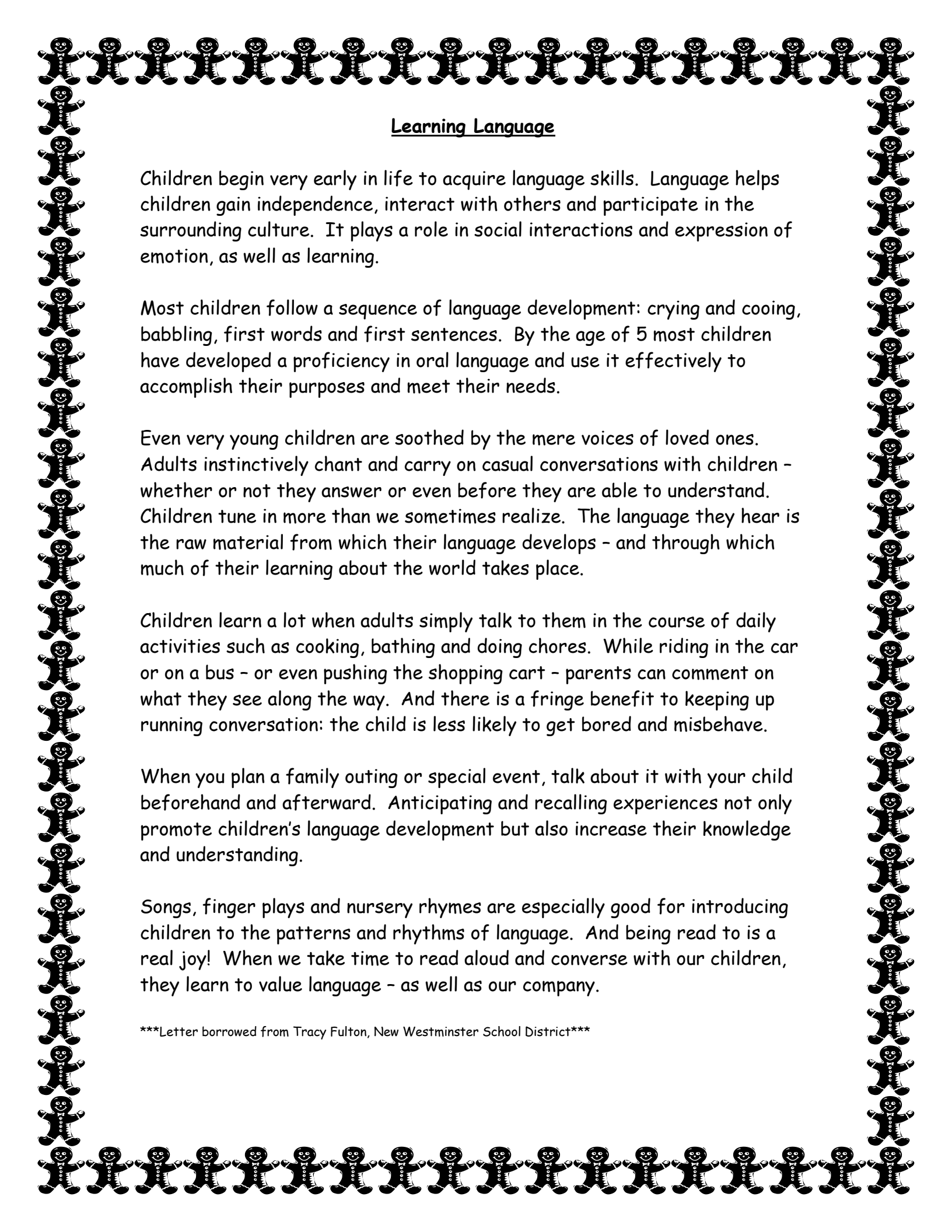
Language development

Parent Handbook

The following document contains a series of articles with activities to help your child in language development.

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Learning Language

Children begin very early in life to acquire language skills. Language helps children gain independence, interact with others and participate in the surrounding culture. It plays a role in social interactions and expression of emotion, as well as learning.

Most children follow a sequence of language development: crying and cooing, babbling, first words and first sentences. By the age of 5 most children have developed a proficiency in oral language and use it effectively to accomplish their purposes and meet their needs.

Even very young children are soothed by the mere voices of loved ones. Adults instinctively chant and carry on casual conversations with children - whether or not they answer or even before they are able to understand. Children tune in more than we sometimes realize. The language they hear is the raw material from which their language develops - and through which much of their learning about the world takes place.

Children learn a lot when adults simply talk to them in the course of daily activities such as cooking, bathing and doing chores. While riding in the car or on a bus - or even pushing the shopping cart - parents can comment on what they see along the way. And there is a fringe benefit to keeping up running conversation: the child is less likely to get bored and misbehave.

When you plan a family outing or special event, talk about it with your child beforehand and afterward. Anticipating and recalling experiences not only promote children's language development but also increase their knowledge and understanding.

Songs, finger plays and nursery rhymes are especially good for introducing children to the patterns and rhythms of language. And being read to is a real joy! When we take time to read aloud and converse with our children, they learn to value language - as well as our company.

Letter borrowed from Tracy Fulton, New Westminster School District



DESCRIBING THE LETTERS IN MY NAME...
A NAME GAME...

The point of this game is to help your child learn to really look at individual letters and their shapes. It helps children with letter recognition, with their names, and to develop descriptive oral language as well. Strong oral language and letter recognition are indicators of early reading success.

Help your child cut out the boxes below that have the letters in his/her name in them. Then, have your child choose 4 letters from his/her name and lay them in a row. Now you describe how one of those letters looks. For example, "This letter has a dot on the top." (i) "This letter has a hump." (h) "This letter is round like a circle." (o) Etc... See if your child can tell you which letter you are describing.

Give your child a turn to describe how the letters look. You may find that your child will repeat your clues. That's OK. You have modeled to your child a procedure for learning and that's what good teachers are always trying to do. Congratulate your child for a job well done!

***For more of a challenge, use more letters. Try the ones in your name... a sibling or cousin's name... the name of a favorite television show... the sky is the limit! ***



During the Bedtime Story

- Draw attention to the title of the story on the cover by pointing to it as you read it. Talk about "titles" and "names" of stories
- Encourage your child to point to the title and "read" it from time to time. Don't insist on this.
- Draw attention to the author's and the illustrator's names. Explain that "this person wrote the story and this person drew the pictures".
- The title page and the dedication page may be commented on also
- Gradually develop your child's awareness of:
 - Where stories start, and
 - Which way the print goes
- Pointing to the print should be incidental rather than a continuous activity
- You may choose to point to:
 - The beginning of the story
 - The first word on a page
 - Unusual print... (i.e. "BOOM!")
 - Names... (i.e. Madeline)
 - Any significant feature of the book
 - Long words and short vowels
 - The words in the line of print as you read them
 - Repetitive words... (i.e. "Look! There's that word again!")
- When pointing to the pictures, be careful not to imply that the story is contained in them rather than in the print
- Encourage your child to participate in the reading by:
 - Pausing at certain points
 - Being very careful to read at a pace that allows for participation, and vary your pace
 - Engaging in "echo reading" (i.e. you read a phrase or sentence and your child repeats it)
 - Allowing for "mumble reading" to take place (i.e. the child "reads" along with you)
 - Giving your child the opportunity to "read" as much of the story as possible
 - Praising any participation
- The place for questions - theirs and yours:
 - Answer any questions that arise clearly and simply
 - Try and relate your answers to something in your child's experience
 - Stop and ask your child to predict what may happen next
 - Have your child guess what the next rhyming word may be
 - Ask how your child may have changed the story if s/he were the author
 - If necessary, unusual words should be explained briefly



WHICH LETTER IS MISSING?

By now your child may be able to arrange a sequence of letters to make his/her name. Help your child cut out the letter cards below and using them, have him/her show you how to make his/her name, putting the letters in the correct order. Be sure to have your child name the letters as s/he gets them in order. If your child can't do this yet, practice until s/he can do it without hesitation. Once your child can successfully put the letters of his/her name in order, play the game outlined below, which is called "Which letter is missing?"

Have your child close his/her eyes. As your child's "partner", take one letter out of the sequence. Ask your child to name the letter that was taken. It might help to have a copy of your child's name written on a piece of paper to help him/her be successful. Be sure to take turns so your child gets a turn to be the person who takes a letter.

The point of this game is to reinforce the names of the letters of the alphabet in and out of sequence.

Once your child plays this game easily using his/her own name, try using names of your child's choice. If your child is stuck for a name, suggest your last name, the name of a pet, the name of the town you live in, or something else of relevance to you and your child. The more meaning in the word, the more ownership your child will take for it and the more engaging the game will be.

Have fun! 😊



Make Your Own Storybooks

Children love stories and love making things so take advantage of this terrific combination and make some books with your child. Preschool children are ready to help write and illustrate stories from their own experiences or imagination. Here's an idea:

- 1) Write down a story as your child tells it. Be sure to write the child's words, not yours, and repeat the words as you write. This process helps a child recognize that print is "talk" written down.
- 2) Place an appropriate number of words at the top of separate pages of paper and reread the story with your child.
- 3) Invite your child to illustrate each page and, if s/he wishes, to create a cover, title page and dedication.
- 4) Arrange pages in order and place in a notebook.
- 5) Encourage your child to "read" this new book to you.

This same process can be used with photographs that describe a trip to the zoo, a vacation or a visit from Grandma or Grandpa.

These unique books make wonderful gifts. You might want to photocopy them (color photocopies are great!) and give them to several members of the family or close friends.

Remember, whatever the topic, we adults act only as the scribes for the child's words and as assistants in putting the book together. Children should make all the decisions about the content and creation of their own storybooks!

And, of course, HAVE FUN!

Letter borrowed from Tracy Fulton, New Westminster School District

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS - What is it?

Phonological Awareness (P.A.) is a fancy term for 'hearing and using sounds'. Research shows that students who have strong P.A. skills are much less likely to have problems learning to read.

Many children pick up P.A. skills *as* they learn to read, but making sure these skills are in place before reading instruction makes a huge difference for the 15% of students who, without P.A. training, may have trouble learning to read.

For these 'at risk' students phonological awareness skills must be taught *in order* from the easiest to the most difficult skills:

- 1) **GENERAL LISTENING** - children listen to and *sequence* sounds
(e.g. "what animal sound did you hear first?")
- 2) **RHYMING** - singing rhymes, listening to rhyming stories, making up 'nonsense' rhymes
(e.g. cat/zat), coming up with real rhymes (e.g. cat/hat)
- 3) **BREAKING SENTENCES INTO WORDS** - use only single/one syllable words
(e.g. the - cat - is - black)
- 4) **BREAKING WORDS INTO SYLLABLES** - starting with one and two syllable words and work up (e.g. baby = ba-by)
It is good to do this using names of people the child knows (Alexis = a-lex-is)
- 5) **BREAKING WORDS INTO PHONEMES "PHONEMIC AWARENESS"**
Phonemes = the smallest units of sound in English
(e.g. the word 'chick' has 5 letters but only 3 phonemes/sounds /ch//i//k)

STAGES:

- a) Child learns to hear and identify the first sound of a word (rat, mop)
- b) Child learns to hear and identify the final sound of a word (cat, pin)
- c) Child learns to hear and identify the middle sound of a word (can, dog)

TEACHING HINTS:

- ***The child is working with *sounds* not letter names (e.g. 'cat starts with /k/'). Letter names come later - this is *listening* training. ***
- Start with 'continuous' sounds (the kind you can keep making until you run out of air) e.g.: *f, l, m, n, r, s, v, w, y, z* and all vowels - *a, e, i, o, u*. Children usually have an easier time hearing these sounds (although the vowels can be difficult).
- When you teach a new skill, follow these three steps:
 1. Model it (you do it while the child listens/watches)
 2. Guide (you and the child do it together)
 3. Independent Practice (child tries it alone)



WRITING ON MY BACK...
A LETTER RECOGNITION GAME USING NAMES...

This game involves writing letters on each other's back. It is very engaging to children and has a playful quality that makes children want to play more. The physical action of making a letter on your child's back adds a kinesthetic element, and can reinforce the way letters are made.

Help your child cut out the boxes below that have the letters in his/her name in them. Then, have your child lay out his/her name letters in order. Now tell your child you are going to write one of those letters on his/her back. Use words to describe what you are doing to make that letter. For example, "I am going straight down. Then I'm crossing it. The letter is in your name. Which letter is it?" (t) Your child may point to the letter, but not yet know its name. Just say "Yes, it was the t. Now you make a "t" on my back. If your child can't say or point to the letter, then you point to it and say "It was a t. A "t" looks like this." Then point to the letter. This is part of the learning.

Once your child can recognize all of the letters in his/her name, move onto names of a grandmother or grandfather, a favorite restaurant, a store you visit often, etc.

On the back of this paper, have your child practice printing his/her name. Be sure to have him/her print it using a mix of large and small letters (I.e. Sandy and not SANDY)



The Write Stuff

Long before a child learns to form letters with a pencil or marker, s/he has taken many steps toward learning to write. Children must have many opportunities to use their hands to do various things before they can successfully print letters.

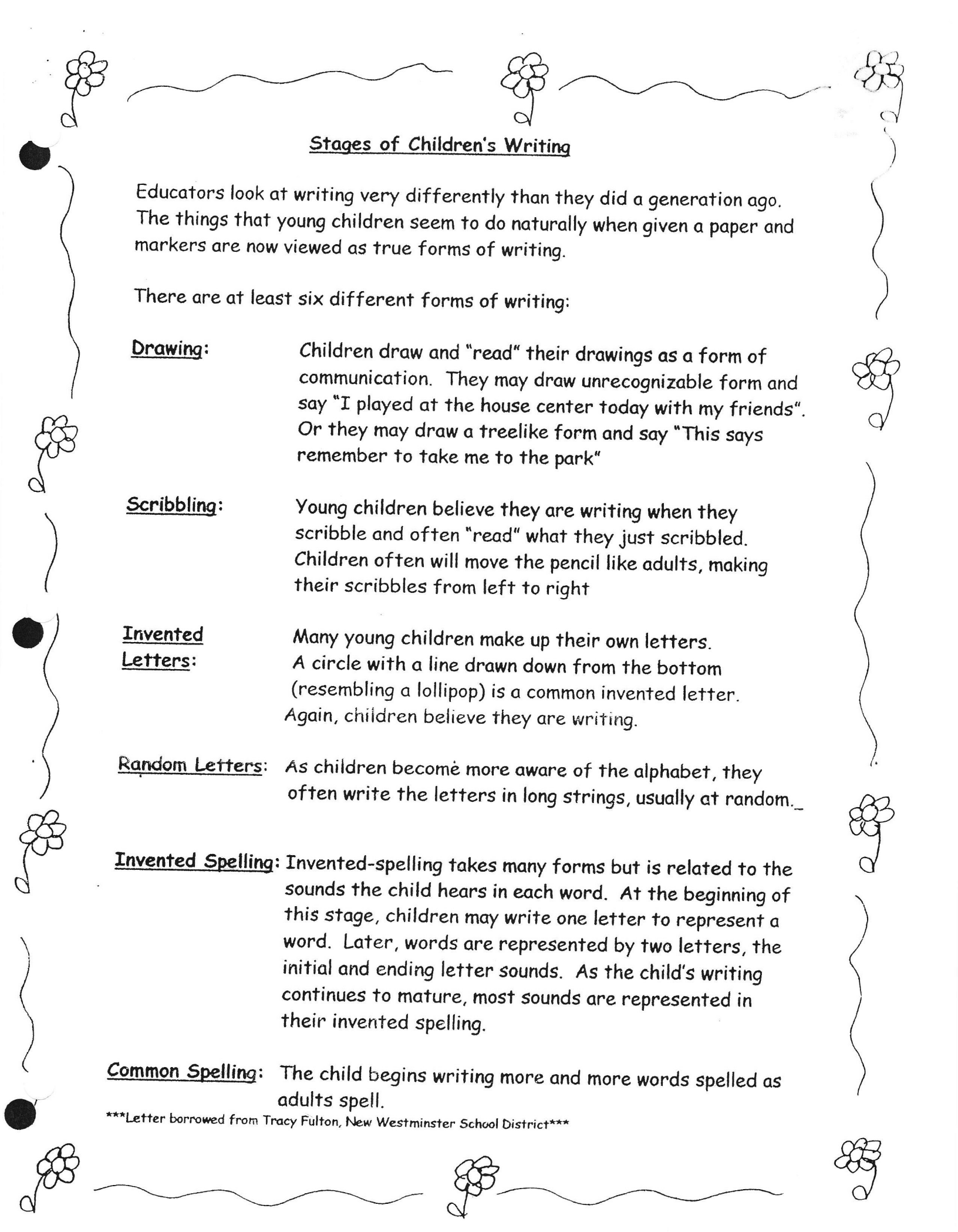
Molding with clay or playdough, using large and small Lego's, picking up beads and playing with knobbed puzzles all prepare the fingers and hands for writing. Scribbling with markers and crayons, controlling a pencil for use with a stencil, using chalk on the sidewalk and painting with fingers/large brushes are a few of the ways children practice for later writing.

We stock our room with plenty of paper, paper clips, staplers, markers and crayons, and we make sure that these materials are available for children to use. Children may want to "write" notes to their friends or messages to their teacher or parents. They use writing materials in their dramatic play - making signs for a store, tickets for a show, menus for a restaurant, and so on.

As children experiment, developmental stages of writing become evident. Children move from random scribbling to controlled scribbles, to random alphabet letters, to consonants that represent words. Only with lots of opportunities to practice can children move through these stages.

If your child does not have a proper pencil grip, cannot purposefully manipulate a crayon or simply shows no interest in learning to write, s/he is probably not ready to do so. Take care not to push. Children enjoy learning a new skill only when they are ready for it. Getting ready is just as important as mastering the skill.

Letter borrowed from Tracy Fulton, New Westminster School District



Stages of Children's Writing

Educators look at writing very differently than they did a generation ago. The things that young children seem to do naturally when given a paper and markers are now viewed as true forms of writing.

There are at least six different forms of writing:

Drawing: Children draw and "read" their drawings as a form of communication. They may draw unrecognizable form and say "I played at the house center today with my friends". Or they may draw a treelike form and say "This says remember to take me to the park"

Scribbling: Young children believe they are writing when they scribble and often "read" what they just scribbled. Children often will move the pencil like adults, making their scribbles from left to right

Invented Letters: Many young children make up their own letters. A circle with a line drawn down from the bottom (resembling a lollipop) is a common invented letter. Again, children believe they are writing.

Random Letters: As children become more aware of the alphabet, they often write the letters in long strings, usually at random.

Invented Spelling: Invented-spelling takes many forms but is related to the sounds the child hears in each word. At the beginning of this stage, children may write one letter to represent a word. Later, words are represented by two letters, the initial and ending letter sounds. As the child's writing continues to mature, most sounds are represented in their invented spelling.

Common Spelling: The child begins writing more and more words spelled as adults spell.

Letter borrowed from Tracy Fulton, New Westminster School District