

Enhance Your Child's Scope of Writing

Reinforce the art of writing through the creative use of journals

By L.P. Chase

Many parents share similar concerns about their child's writing ability. As an author, I witness frequent comments such as, "My child writes about the same thing all the time," or, "My child only writes negative stories." The big question should be, "How can I get my child to broaden his/her ideas?" Before I go further, I can't emphasize enough, that the more a child reads, the better writer he or she will become.

Many times a child will churn out a bunch of words, throw it on paper and feel as though they have written a masterpiece. Actually, this is a good thing, however, it isn't the final piece, is just the beginning of the writing process. If we can teach children from an early age, that the art of writing is in the re-writing, it won't be considered a monumental task, but rather a natural and fun process. By the time your elementary child reaches middle school, writing should feel comfortable not forced.

One of my favorite suggestions is for every child to have a journal. I recommend that children write in their journals every day, whether it is simply to write a word, a dream, a wish, a feeling, a song or a story. Sometimes having a private journal is a way for children to express feelings they would otherwise not talk about. The value is different for every child. Journals are something children can always refer back to and watch the progress of their writing.

Because many children don't know where to start, they inevitably end up with a blank page. This is where the parents come in. To expand upon the value of journals, parents can help children get started and encourage a higher level of thinking by labeling each journal page with a key "starter" topic or specific questions. For example, parents can write specific questions such as:

1. List three things you found interesting today at school. Why were they interesting?
2. Write about something you felt was unfair.
3. How would you have handled it differently?

Parents can also tailor these questions around personal situations, such as:

1. How do you feel about moving to a new house?
2. What problems might you encounter when you move?
3. What positive things might happen when you get there?

Once children have a place to start, the innate ability to use their imagination takes over. Encourage children to think of their journal as a continuous rough draft. The more children practice the art of writing, the easier it becomes. The scope of writing continues to expand with practice. Without practice, it tends to wither.

After prompting ideas on a few journal pages, leave a few blank ones and see just how quickly your child will begin to fill those pages. Give them the option of keeping it private or sharing it with you so they feel some independence and control.

Encouraging children to write in their journals is a wonderful practice. Additionally, taking a more active role in their journaling by helping them get started is a great way to guide your child's writing skills. You will be molding a good solid writer and reinforcing the art of writing through the creative use of journals.