Writing Development Overview

Prewriters
Children who are in the prewriting stage of development draw pictures and use scribbles to write. When asked about the print and scribbles, children at this stage will often indicate that the picture they drew has nothing to do with the scribbles they wrote. Letter formation is inconsistent and print is written in any direction. Stages include:

- Random scribbling: Children are experimenting with writing tools and have very little control of the pencil.
- Controlled scribbling: As their muscle control develops, children tend to repeat patterns. Pencil grip is fisted.
- Scribbling with a purpose: During this stage, children explain what they have drawn. People are portrayed as a head and two long legs coming straight from the head. Pencil grip may start to be a little more refined, depending on the amount of exposure the child has to writing.
- Random forms: Children make letter-like drawings. They can be in any direction. They “read” their writing and believe others can read it too.
- Random letters: Children at this stage show reversals and their letter formation is inconsistent. They will write their name and begin to copy print. Their pencil grip improves to become more conventional.

Early Writers
Early writers are beginning to take more risks with writing. They begin to notice more conventions of print and start to have an understanding of the alphabet. Kindergartners in the early stage of writing development typically do the following:

- Draw pictures to represent their thoughts.
- Understand that print is written from left to right.
- Understand that writing is talk written down.
- “Read” their own writing.
- Use one letter to represent a word, usually an initial consonant.
- Begin to show some sound-to-letter correspondence.
- Inconsistently use spacing between words and letters.
- Begin to label pictures.
- May randomly use punctuation.
- Begin to choose their own topics for writing.

Emergent Writers
As writers gain more practice and confidence, they begin to emerge into conventional writing. Kindergartners in this stage typically do the following:

- Draw pictures that match their story.
- Use approximations in writing.
- Use most consonant sounds (at least beginning and final sounds), and some vowel sounds in their writing.
- Use many high-frequency words.
- Begin to demonstrate a story plan using beginning, middle, and end.
- May randomly use periods.