

All About Me
Writing with Kindergartners
by Ruth Ann Davenport

Resources:

- Request letter to parents for permission to use children's photos for book covers
- All About section from Primary Writers section by Lucy Caulkins and
- Exemplary All About pages from past year for use in teaching lessons
- Paper for writing pieces
- Read aloud stories for each lesson topic
- Binders for students work

Standards and Objectives from Utah State Language Arts Core for Writing in Kindergarten

4000-0801 --- 4060-0801 Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas
4000-0802 --- 4060-0802 Compose a written draft
4000-0804 --- 4060-0804 Edit written draft for conventions (spelling of a key words)
4000-0805 --- 4060-0805 Use fluent and legible handwriting
4000-0806 --- 4060-0806 Write in different forms and genres (personal writing for My Book About Me; share illustrations with writing, labeling diagrams)

Learning outcome: Children will draw and write about themselves and their lives. Their ability to draw usually precedes that of writing so we see the drawing child is also a thinking child with their drawings indicating their capacity for writing. These lessons aren't consecutive but spread out over the year from September through May to demonstrate the progress and development of increasing control over ideas, written, descriptive language in spelling, and the growing awareness of their own world as seed ideas. (Writing approximately every other month starting in September.) There should be daily writing 3-4 days each week to support them.

September—My Book About Me

Time: 30-40 minutes writing on another day as needed.

Objective: Students will prepare to write by listening, discussing, and responding to the genre of All About books as listed in mini-lessons and the USOE Core. They will draw a picture of what they look like now in the beginning of Kindergarten and write their name and more if possible. (Their favorite food, book, toy, etc.)

Mini-lesson: (10-15 min.) *Connect* - Let's remember the book we read yesterday, *All About Me* by Mercer Mayer. Discuss the story and what is happening in this story. What is it like to go to school and be in a new place with new people? What is different about you now compared to when you were little? We want to know more about each other and what makes you special. Discuss what we look like now. Today you will draw a picture of what you look like now. You can look in the mirror to help draw yourself. You will write your name by that drawing, so we can read it with your picture. This will begin My Book About Me that will tell others about us.

Teacher models simple drawing of their own face and body, name is written down.

Active engagement: Quick interactive drawing with several students adding features on the face---mouth, eyes, ears, hair, neck, etc. after self-examination in a mirror. At minimum, they could draw their face, but encourage drawing arms, legs, and body. Teacher assists with writing name as necessary. They can practice with several attempts as needed on white boards and moving to paper.

Link: Look at several other examples done last year and discuss the differences and similarities briefly. We will always put our names on our drawing and writing pieces, along with the date stamp to remember when we have written our pieces.

Writing workshop: (15 min.) Hand out paper for students to go to work in drawing and writing their own page. Teacher circulates and confers with individual children at different tables, visiting each table several times to assist in the name writing as necessary, accessing their names on the name plate as needed on their tables. Write their names for them on a sticky note, so they can see correct letter formation in the process of doing it.

Share time in Author chair: (10 min.) Select four students to share their drawings. Choose children with varying abilities. Comment on the details and their name writing, noting their own faces and their features. Continue sharing this through the week until all students have shared their pictures, if they would like.

November -My Family

Time: 45 minutes over several days as needed

Objective: Students will continue the process of preparing to write about their families after drawing a picture of all their immediate family members. If they want to include their pet at this point, go for it. They can label their family members with their names and something they like to do with their family. Writing as much as they can and remaining engaged needs to be flexibly adapted to the individual, from letters, one word, or a sentence. WARNING: When the year starts, plan to have parents include the names of family members on the student registration sheet so that you will have access to correct spellings. It will make life easier for you all.

Mini-lesson: (25 minutes) *Connect* Read aloud *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant and discuss the characters and their relatives. What did they enjoy together? Why? Teacher can share a family photo at this point and tell about a family activity. Ask the children: What do you like to do with your family? Think, pair, share with a partner.

Active engagement: Teacher starts by drawing a quick sketch of a small family in stick figures or whatever you can quickly do. Label the picture with names and write down a short sentence such as “We like to see scary movies.” or write “scary movies”, etc. Discuss any questions they have about their ideas for several minutes. Have them draw a friend on a white board with the name. When they’ve talked for a bit, send them to their tables for writing.

Link: We will all put our names on our pieces and write the names of our family members after we draw our family. We want to write down something our family likes to do together. You can write a word or a sentence(s) on your piece to put into My Book About Me binder.

Writing workshop: (15-20 minutes) The students return to their tables and start drawing their families and writing while the teacher circulates through the class, going table to table and supplying support in writing conferences and encouragement, answering their questions and urging them to write as much as they can.

Share time in Author chair: (10 min.) Select four children to share their various pictures with written pieces with the class that show varying abilities, from capable to struggling. Discuss comments from teacher and other students to note the author strengths and ask questions about the pieces. As needed, work a second day to complete by coloring pictures and rereading the written messages. Continue sharing each day for a short amount of time until they have all had an opportunity.

January—My Friend(s)

Time: 45 minutes over several days, as needed.

Objective: To prepare to write and draw a piece about a friend or friends for inclusion in their My Book About Me binders.

Mini-lesson: (20 minutes) *Connect* Read aloud *Will You Be My Friend?* by Eric Carle, a story about friends and why they are friends or not. Who are the main characters? Discuss how they became friends. What brought them together and how do they play? What is a friend? Why do we need friends? Can you have more than one? Take turns with your neighbor seated nearby and tell who your friend is and why they are your friend.

Active engagement: Teacher shares a quick friendly experience and draws a simple picture of the friend with their name near the picture. Tell why they are your friend. Write down a sentence or two about your friend to demonstrate your thinking aloud on why you made a friend so that the students can write down their own ideas.

Link: Today you can draw a picture of your friend (s) and write their name by the picture and write down why they are a friend to you. Show a past example or two of friend drawings with names written by the picture. Use white boards to practice. Notice out loud how they have improved in their writing and drawing.

Writing workshop: (15-20 min.) Children pick up their own paper for drawing and writing when ready. If they want to include several friends, remind them that they can just draw the face and then write the name of the friend above the face, if that helps. Cycle around to help with any concerns, like spelling names or drawing their friend. You can have a student name chart that is numbered in alphabetical order that would facilitate the process of writing the names correctly through the year.

Share time in Author Chair: (10 min.) Select 4 students on different ability levels to share on the Author Chair as they work towards completing their friend pieces. Draw the students into oral language that describes their friends and why they are friends with them in their written piece.

March—My House or Classroom at School

Time: 30-45 minutes

Objective: Children will draw their environment either at school or at home and label items in it. Be sensitive to the fact your students may be in varying states of homelessness, or living with other families. If this is true for an individual, then encourage them to describe and draw the classroom or a part of it that they like best.

Mini-lesson: (20 minutes) *Connect* Read aloud to the class *A House is a House For Me* by Mary Ann Hoberman that discusses the different kinds of houses people have around the world. Children everywhere have different houses made out of many building materials. Tell them that they can draw a picture of their house or room inside the house. If they want to draw the school classroom or a part of it they like, that works too. The idea is to show what is important to them about their environment, as well as the people in their lives from the other lessons through the year. Another insight into the students' minds. After finishing the drawing they can label the items in their diagram to list and spell as much as they can on their own, with some support. They can tell what the home looks like (describe) and tell about its importance to them.

Teachers can look into Session X in the Lucy Caulkins *Primary Writing Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports* entitled Making Labeled Diagrams for excellent scaffolding in modeling during this lesson.

Active engagement: Remind the children to think of their house or classroom and imagine drawing and labeling the parts or things in their picture. Then use white boards to practice their drawing.

Link: Remember to plan out in your mind how you will draw your picture on paper and then label its parts.

Share time on Author Chair: (10 minutes) Select 4-5 students to share their diagram drawings and read the labeling and respond to their pieces.

May—My Teacher and Me

Time: 30-45 minutes (More time can be used to edit for publishing in binder.)

Objective: to use the language arts instruction in concepts of print, phonics, comprehension, word study, vocabulary, and writing over the whole year to complete this last assignment in the best possible way for each individual.

Mini-lesson: (20 minutes) *Connect* Teacher can read aloud from *My Teacher Sleeps At School* by Leattie Weiss or *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown. Simply explain that the last piece of writing will be to draw their teacher and one last picture of themselves together. Then write about what they learned in Kindergarten in a list or in sentences. They can tell about their teacher also.

Teacher sketches self with a child and writes names below. Then teacher writes, after brainstorming topics with class learned during the year and listing them:

We have learned letters, numbers 1-30, the weather and words. I have new friends too! All of you! I like to teach children who are smart like you. Etc.

Active engagement: Think about how you will draw your teacher (face or whole body) and your face. What will you write that is important to you about Kindergarten and your teacher? Practice with white boards first.

Link: Teacher listing on the board in a brainstorm session some of the topics that they have learned about in Kindergarten this year is good support for their motivation to write and describe it as completely as they can.

Share time in Author's Chair: (10-15 minutes) Select a handful of children to share their final pieces each day through the week and ENJOY! OR have an Authors Party and invite the parents to share their writing binders at a graduation from Kindergarten celebration.