Writing Assessment: the Bridge Observational Rating Scale & the Developmental Writing Scale

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Today’s Webinar
✴ Introduce the Bridge scales and the Developmental Writing Scale, tools for authentic, dynamic, portfolio, observational assessment of emergent students.
✴ Provide examples of how authentic, portfolio assessment strategies can help us describe a student’s baseline, set developmentally appropriate goals, and monitor progress.
✴ Distinguish between how we teach a skill and how we assess it.

Today’s webinar in the 5 STEPS

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The Bridge observational rating scales:

Team

What is writing?
Translating an idea into text

What is writing NOT?
• Tracing
• Copying
• Scribing
• Making a choice from a closed set of symbols or pictures

Writing: Communication Project Skills
Student uses an app called Write My Name to trace her name.

With hand-over-hand support, student traces a highlighted or dashed-line version of her name.

Student scribbles with a crayon all over the grocery list.

Student texts a string of random letters to Mom’s supervisor from her cell phone.

The student stamps her name on the name line of the sign-in sheet before every speech therapy appointment.

The student scribbles a mark with a pencil on the name line of the sign-in sheet before every speech therapy appointment.

Student writes a string of random letters to Mom’s supervisor from her cell phone.
The teacher provides a sentence frame, "I like to go to...", to her class and the student uses her AAC to answer, "Burger King."

Using her AAC, the student and a peer brainstorm what they did that weekend. The student then uses a letter board to select "aatgf." The peer scribes this, too.

Is this writing?
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Important Concepts of Emergent Writing

It's Not About Letter Identification or Spelling
Real Words (Hanser, 2009)

Here are just a few things that beginning writers learn about during writing. These are important fundamental emergent literacy concepts that build students' print awareness and alphabetic knowledge. According to the National Early Literacy Panel (2008), print awareness and alphabetic code knowledge are critical predictors of students' later conventional literacy learning.

1. Print/braille has meaning - there is a difference between print/braille and pictures/tactuals
2. Print/Braille is connected to what we say
3. Print/braille can be "read" - not the picture
4. Print/braille have a purpose - we use them for something
5. Everyone writes — teacher, assistants, office folks, parents, siblings
6. How Print/braille is made — the concept of a pencil, what it is and how it works
7. Something happens when you write
8. People write for lots of different reasons
9. Print/braille are for sharing information and ideas
10. The student knows that they can write down the things in their head
11. The concept of the alphabet — there is a finite group of letters that can be used for writing
12. The concept of "word" — letters are used to make words
13. The letters can be put in a different order
14. Letters have names
15. Letters make sounds
16. Alphabetic principle — Each letter has its own name. Each letter has its own sound. They are connected.

• to opportunity: models of independent communication and writing with a tool our student can one day use.
• to experience: shared writing and independent writing, making personally meaningful associations with letters and words.

As parents and teachers, our job is to remove barriers:

The Bridge
How do we teach this?

- Daily models of writing: writing for the student
- Daily opportunities to write using a variety of tools: regular and alternative pencils
- Structured shared writing experiences, such as journaling
- Regular and alternate pencils
- Daily opportunities to write a variety of writing for the student
- Use the student’s AAC to write a grocery list, then invite the student to add something
- Think aloud using your phone to send a text, then invite the student to send a message
- Think aloud using your iPad to select a photo, then invite the student to post a photo

The Bridge
How do we teach this?

• Invite the student to sign cards, notes, and invitations
• Sign-in at school at every opportunity
• Sign-out library books and equipment
• Follow the student’s attempts when handwriting
• Invite the student to sign cards,

The Developmental Writing Scale

DWS Level 1:
lines and curves that appear

DWS Level 2:
continuous lines arranged linearly

When I was a baby,
I had a big smile.

DWS Level 1
How do we teach this?

books

• Shared reading of wordless picture
  • Pictures, words, and sentences.
  • Talk about the concept of pages.
  • Highlight text while reading
  • Think aloud during shared reading

DWS Level 2:
continuous lines arranged linearly
How do we teach this?

- Provide lots of opportunity and lots of options for tools for drawing and scribbling.
- Invite student to select photos or clip art or emoticons to illustrate their writing.
- Not essential. Don’t belabour this for students with significant motor impairment.

DWS Level 3:
strings of letters not grouped into words

DWS Level 4:
wordlike groupings, no recognizable words

DWS Level 5:
strings of letters not grouped into words with one possible real word
DWS Level 6:
2-3 intelligible words

- Keep ALL writing samples!
- Keep data on refusals
- Look for trends over the long-term
- The writing tool matters!
- Sort samples by tool, don’t compare writing from different tools.

Data collection and monitoring

Collect data on:
- time on task
- observed behaviours
  - selecting letters, fingers on text, selecting message in AAC

Participation:
- A. Physical prompt
- B. Gestural prompt
- C. Verbal prompt
- D. Inconsistent

Engagement:
- 1. Awareness
- 2. Response or refusal
- 3. Attention
- 4. Participation
- 5. Initiation
- 6. Mastery
- 7. Independence

Engagement:
- 1. Awareness
- 2. Response or refusal
- 3. Engagement, initiation
- 4. Participation
- 5. Attainment
- 6. Mastery
- 7. Independent/initiated

Possible Next Steps
- When in doubt, focus on conveying a message with AAC
- Describe student’s baseline using the language from the Bridge and DWS
- Develop a data collection/scoring/portfolio system: it can be as simple as a binder with sticky notes!
- Share your experiences in the Facebook group!

Questions?

The ASF Communication Training Series
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