

# Encouraging Young Writers

by Ralph Fletcher

- 1) Let your child see you write. Demonstrate both real world writing as well as writing for fun.
- 2) Look for comfortable, low-pressure “writing occasions” where both you and your child can write and share.
- 3) Get material (notebook, blank paper, markers, pre-made booklets) to make writing enjoyable.
- 4) Tips for responding to a young person’s writing:
  - React first as a reader. Show how the writing affects you by responding to the meaning: “This is funny!” Or: “I didn’t know that!”
  - Try not to fixate on spelling or grammatical errors.
  - Be positive. Build on strengths. Find specific things to praise in the writing.
  - Respect the child’s ownership of the writing.
  - Suggest another reader, or a real-world purpose for the writing: “I bet Grandma would love to read that!”
- 5) For our youngest (pre-K and kindergarten) writers—
  - \*Remember that much of the meaning is carried in the drawing. Show real interest in the drawing as well as the words.
  - \*Think of emergent writing as early talk—full of approximations and errors we can delight in. These are necessary.
- 6) Keep reading to your child—even when he or she gets older.
- 7) Remember that writers of every age break easily. Be gentle.