Ideas for Encouraging Independent Writing

The following ideas can be used for children who are able to write independently because they have been taught the necessary; that is being able to write letter(s) for the sounds in the words they want to write (see dictation sentences for the children who are not at this stage).

Some children love to write imaginative stories, especially when the mechanics are easy for them .This is to be encouraged However, many young children find it difficult to think up their own stories. It is better to let them write about something they have done, or a story they know, then to insist on them being creative before they have the mechanics stored out.

1. Draw pictures on the board. Ask the children to write a sentence about each picture. Remind them to start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

2. Encourage the writing of news .The children have to think of what they want to say, listen for the sounds in each word they want to write, and then write and then write the letters for those sounds. Remind the children to leave a space between each word .Encourage the children to read what they have written. They may even like to read it to their friend read it to them.

3. Use a set of pictures that tell a story. Altogether work out the order the pictures have to go in to make story .Then ask the children write the story themselves. Sometimes giving the first sentence on the board helps the children get started.

4. Tell the children a short story, it can just be a very simple one about a mouse that comes out of its hole and starts to eat the crumbs under the table. Suddenly a cat comes around the door and sees the mouse. The mouse runs as fast as it can and just gets back its hole in time. Some children might like to make up their own ending.

5. Tell a story. Have comprehension questions on the board. The children write the answers down, preferably in a sentence.

6. Give the beginning of the story on the board, or just tell it, the children make up the rest of the story.

7. Read poetry. Develop the ability to hear rhythm and rhyme, in preparation for attempting to write poetry

8. Develop neat hand writing – some useful rules to help the children.

a. Always form the letters correctly. Nearly all the letters go down first. The letters ‘a dog q’ all start with the caterpillar ‘c’

b. Capitals are tall and don’t join.

c. All letters are the same size except for a few sticks going up and some tails going down.

d. Letters should be close together with no bumping.

e. There should be a good space between the words.

f. Marking policy; in earlier stages of independent writing it is impossible for children to write all words coming in their minds with correct spellings. Missing sounds can be pointed out and any tricky words that have already been taught can be corrected.

If everything is corrected it is demoralizing and discourages the children from writing freely. The children’s earliest efforts at independent writing do not need rigorous marking.