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Best Practices in Promoting Motivation for Writing

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One of the best-known educational guides for teachers of writing in elementary school, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (Graves, 1983, p. 3), opened with the statement "Children want to write." The introductory sentence was the same in the 20th anniversary edition of the book (Graves, 2003), where the author wrote in the preface that he would only add the words "if we let them." Graves's faith in children's natural will to write raises the question: Do students really want to write? On the one hand, in Graves's statement there is implicit criticism of traditional writing instruction that privileges the production of texts according to literary models and on topics often detached from students' personal interests and experiences. This criticism underlies the perspective of the so-called writing-process movement, an approach to writing instruction born in the early 1960s and developed over the following two decades, of which Graves is a major exponent. A great merit of the process approach has been to put emphasis on classroom conditions that can make writing attractive to students: student freedom to select topics on which to write, attention on the writing process rather than its products, student collaboration, and teacher-student conference. The approach also seems to have influenced the concept of motivation to write in school. According to many teachers, a motivated student is one who is willing to express feelings and ideas in written form, writes fluently, and

is never in the situation experienced by many students of not knowing what to write. On the other hand, over the past two and a half decades, psychological and educational research has shown that writing is a cognitively demanding activity and that students may sometimes be unable to write, even if they want to. Thus, from a psychological perspective, the assertiveness of Graves's statement has been questioned. Moreover, the various components of that "want" (e.g., learning goals, interest, self-concept, and self-regulation) have been investigated empirically by motivational research, and from these studies a more complex meaning of motivation to write has emerged.

This chapter has two objectives. The first is to analyze, in the light of recent research findings, the meaning of motivation and lack of motivation to write in school and of some constructs and terms frequently used in relation to this topic. The second is to outline and illustrate with examples some guidelines for instructional practice aimed at fostering student motivation to write.

MOTIVATION—AND LACK OF MOTIVATION— TO WRITE AS AN ATTITUDE TOWARD WRITING

School writing is a complex activity that requires a long apprenticeship, from preschool children's scribbles to writing words and simple sentences in early primary school to high school compositions in which students are expected to elaborate on concepts and ideas in an appropriate form. During this apprenticeship, students not only acquire the cognitive and linguistic knowledge and abilities that are the equipment of a competent writer, such as how to use genre structures and morphological and syntactic rules, but also learn a lot of things *about* writing. For instance, they come to construe writing as an engaging or, alternatively, a repetitive and boring activity and as a more or less important subject in the curriculum and a more or less relevant one for their future study and life. In sum, students develop a set of beliefs, many of which are implicit, about the functions and role of writing in school instruction (Bruning & Horn, 2000).

Recent conceptualization on motivation has argued that student engagement in a discipline includes two components (Brophy, 1999). One is a sense of competence, the extent to which a student feels able to engage in a task. The other is the meaningfulness of the activities in which a student is engaged—that is, the extent to which a learning task is perceived by the student as relevant to personal objectives. Consistent with this conceptualization, in this chapter we argue that motivation to write (rather than a will or drive) is an attitude to, or view of, writing. It is

based on the set of beliefs that students develop through writing activities, through the various situations and tasks in which they are asked to write and use their written productions. In turn, students' attitude toward writing influences their approach to specific writing tasks and the degree to which they are willing to engage in those tasks.

Lack of motivation to write can also be conceptualized in terms of attitudes and beliefs that develop through school years as the result of repeated writing experiences. We may agree with Graves (1983) that at the beginning of elementary school children really want to write. Studies in emergent literacy have shown that children are involved in various forms of preconventional writing before schooling (Tolchinsky, 2006). Unfortunately, during their school years, the will to write in many cases decreases and even disappears, and the child's discovery of writing as a way of expressing and communicating is often a promise that subsequent writing instruction cannot maintain. There may be several explanations of students' loss of motivation to write. First, writing is often taught in a rigid way, with the teacher emphasizing conformity to text types and writing conventions. Unlike reading, which children are able to use in any subject quite early in elementary school, writing is usually not perceived by students as a flexible tool for acquiring, elaborating, and communicating knowledge, but as a discipline in itself. Second, students are often given writing tasks as exercises detached from other classroom activities, according to teachers' instructional goals that students cannot share or understand. Third, writing tasks are often boring. Students are regularly asked to narrate, describe, expose, and argue in written form, but these are not always enjoyable tasks, especially when there is no audience except the teacher, and writing often turns into routine practice.

Lack of motivation may not be due only to unattractive writing tasks. Together with beliefs about writing, students also develop self-perceptions and beliefs about themselves as writers, their writing competence, and their ability to manage writing tasks. Being motivated to write is closely related to a student's self-perception of writing competence. Many studies over the past two decades have analyzed the role of student self-perception of competence and self-efficacy in writing.¹ As Pajares and Valiante (2006) have persuasively pointed out, the degree to

¹ The phrases "self-perception of writing competence" and "self-efficacy for writing" are often used as synonyms, although they refer to two different motivational variables: self-perception of writing is an individual's evaluation of his or her writing ability (e.g., "I am able to express my ideas clearly in written form"), whereas self-efficacy regards an individual's belief about his or her future performance in a specific writing task (e.g., "I think that I will write a good report").

which an individual perceives him- or herself able to perform a task influences his or her performance; in turn, an improved performance makes that individual feel more competent. From a motivational point of view, self-perception of competence is closely connected to an individual's involvement in writing as well as to the quality of his or her self-regulation. The relationship between these aspects is a bidirectional one: a student is unlikely to be involved in writing if he or she is not self-efficacious; in the same way, feeling competent about writing makes a student more willing to write. Availability of cognitive and metacognitive tools, such as strategies for generating ideas from memory or for self-monitoring while writing, helps a student feel competent and, therefore, more willing to write.

In sum, motivated students can be defined as those who value and are willing to use writing as a worthwhile activity or means of expression, communication, and elaboration. Motivated students are realistically self-confident about their ability to use writing successfully, and this sense of competence is a condition and a source for feeling satisfied and engaged when writing. The concept of motivation to write as defined here is different from the concept of intrinsic motivation to write adopted implicitly by the process approach and explicitly by some scholars (e.g., Oldfather, 2002; Oldfather & Dahl, 1994). In general, intrinsically motivated behavior is when an individual is gratified for his or her own sake, not for external reward, and basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness can be satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 1985). A behavior is extrinsically motivated if it is carried out under the promise of a reward or the threat of punishment. According to the self-determination theory within which intrinsic motivation is conceptualized, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are opposite poles but should be viewed as lying along a continuum including different degrees of external regulation from extrinsic motivation ("I wrote this composition to avoid the teacher's punishment or to demonstrate that I am good at writing") to identification ("Writing is an important and worthwhile activity for me") to intrinsic motivation ("I enjoy writing"). A child is often intrinsically motivated to write in early schooling, but unsuccessful writing experiences due to the increasing complexity of writing with school grade may transform his or her original will to write into extrinsic motivation, concerned with teacher evaluation rather than with the process of writing. This attitude may be difficult to change, as shown by some recent intervention studies in which writing activities were extensively used in learning different subjects in different grades, history and science in elementary school (Boscolo & Mason, 2001) and literature in high school (Boscolo & Carotti, 2003). The results of these studies confirmed the positive effects of writing on learning already emerging from re-

search on writing to learn. In general, after the interventions, participants reported that they felt more competent in writing and considered it more useful, but they did not report liking it more.

Therefore, a student's intrinsic motivation often leaves room for a more complex view of writing that implies his or her realistic self-perception of competence as well as an awareness of the difficulty of writing. This attitude should not be considered negative, as the student is willing to engage in writing; however, it can hardly be called strictly intrinsic motivation. Therefore, we think that a motivated student is not always eager to write but, with differing degrees of awareness, wants to write because he or she thinks that writing is a worthwhile activity (although not always an enjoyable one).

ABOUT AUTHENTIC AND INTERESTING WRITING TASKS

In defining motivation to write as basically a student's attitude, we have pointed out that this attitude influences involvement in a writing task. Of course, a student's involvement in a task is not only a consequence of positive beliefs, but also of the attractiveness of the writing task. What does "attractive" mean when related to a writing task? In recent years, two adjectives in particular have been used to qualify the writing tasks and activities that students feel most involved in: "authentic" and "interesting."

"Authentic" has been used in relation to writing with two different meanings. The first meaning is related to a student's expression of a personal point of view or feeling, the so-called writer's "voice." One of the prominent aspects of the process approach has been emphasis on the importance of expressing one's thoughts and feelings through writing. According to Elbow (e.g., 1981), a well-known exponent of this position, writing instruction should enable students to discover their voice, which results in "authentic" writing. The second meaning has recently been underlined in relation to the need to involve students in authentic writing tasks (Bromley, 1999; Bruning & Horn, 2000). According to Hiebert (1994), authentic literacy tasks are those that involve children in immediate uses of literacy for enjoyment and communication. An example is fifth graders writing to the city council seeking more traffic lights near their school and including a report they compiled. Hiebert (1994) also gave examples of inauthentic tasks, in which literacy exercises such as the use of compound words or sentence combining are practiced for some undefined future use (p. 391). While agreeing with Hiebert (1994) on the need to underline the authentic dimension of school writing, we wish to add some comments on the meaning of this adjective. The exam-

ple of a fifth-grade petition may lead to believing that authenticity is synonymous with practical relevance. Writing in a classroom may be relevant to the degree to which students are faced with a real problem that can be solved using writing, such as a petition or a letter to a newspaper. Authentic writing, however, is not only aimed at achieving a practical goal. Stressing the communicative function of writing too much might lead to quite inauthentic writing activities, such as communicating in written form with friends (it is much easier to talk in person or on the phone) or writing a journal that will be read by nobody. Studies in writing mostly conducted from a social constructivist perspective have emphasized the social dimension of writing and the importance of making students aware that writing is a fundamental tool of communication. We think that stressing the social dimension of writing does not mean only emphasizing communication; writing is also a social activity because we can share, discuss, and comment on it with others.

What children should realize is that writing is a flexible tool through which many functions can be realized and goals achieved. Any writing task can be authentic: for example, an email message is authentic as a quick way of communicating; a formal letter is also authentic but in another context. Both literary and everyday writing can be used fruitfully to make students aware of the different ways in which thoughts and feelings can be authentically expressed. A useful practice may consist of a class discussion about the similarities and differences among various texts: an e-mail written by one of them, a formal letter written to or by the teacher, a graffiti by which an anonymous young man declares his love to his girlfriend. All these messages, though different from one another, have a communicative function. In the discussion, students can be invited to express their comments on these messages and discover something new about tone, use of words, and voice—in sum, about writing as a way of communicating.

Unlike “authentic,” the meaning of “interesting” has been analyzed in depth in psychological and educational studies over the past two and a half decades. From these studies, a basic distinction between situational and individual (or personal) interest (Hidi, 1990) has emerged. Situational interest is generated by particular conditions and/or objects in the environment because of their novelty. This type of interest is usually transitory, as is the situation from which it arises. Individual or personal interest is a relatively enduring disposition to attend to objects and events and to re-engage in certain activities over time. Both types of interest are related to writing in school.

Many teachers think that giving students interesting topics for compositions or letting them choose their own topics, as suggested by the process approach, is a useful way to promote motivation to write. Interesting topics are those related to students' personal experiences

and interests (e.g., sports, games, TV, problems of adolescence), on which they are supposed to have a lot to write. This instructional practice is based on the unwarranted assumption that if a topic is interesting it is also interesting to write about. In fact, being interested in baseball does not necessarily mean being interested in writing about baseball. The problem is not finding an interesting topic, but making writing interesting. An interesting topic is a good starting point, but what can motivate students to write is the awareness that writing on that topic is worthwhile. For instance, writing an account of an event (an interesting topic) may be aimed at collecting and comparing the different ways in which the students in a class perceived and construed that event. Then, writing may be followed by students' analysis of their own and classmates' narratives and a discussion of differences and similarities in narrating compared with an narration external to the class (e.g., a newspaper). Writing on the event may be an occasion for students to express their voices and become aware of a new and authentic function of writing. These written narratives might be used a few weeks later to allow students to elaborate on their previous thoughts and feelings after rereading their work. This practice may contribute to creating a literate community in the classroom (Nolen, 2007), an idea we will return to later. From this community, we would expect students' positive attitudes to writing to develop; that is, their willingness to view and use writing as a real communicative, elaborative, and expressive tool. In other words, students develop a personal meaning of writing through classroom activities.

DEVELOPING MOTIVATION TO WRITE

We have argued that a basic source of students' lack of motivation is the writing tasks themselves, which may be perceived by students as boring, difficult, and/or detached from their personal experience in and out of the classroom. Now, we outline a frame for instructional practices aimed at avoiding these shortcomings and leading students at different school levels to perceive writing as a worthwhile and attractive activity. The frame consists of three guidelines, based on the conceptualization and findings of recent research on motivation and writing (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Hidi & Boscolo, 2006, 2007).

Making Students Experience Writing as a Useful Activity

The adjective "useful" may not appear to be very appropriate to writing, the instrumental value of which does not need to be underlined. In fact, "useful" has two meanings related to writing activities in the classroom.

The first is that what is written, individually or in collaboration, should have a value or relevance for the students. Later, we present an example of useful writing in the form of devising rules for group formation in a fourth-grade class. Such a project, which does not belong to a specific discipline, is aimed at producing a text as the result of collaborative work. Another example is related to students' attempts to play with genres, to which we also return later, under the heading "challenging tasks." In some cases, creative texts can be obtained from this play by modifying and renewing old texts. Over the past two and half decades, writing researchers have emphasized processes rather than products, also as a reaction against traditional writing instruction aimed at making students write "good" texts, and students' planning and revisions have often been considered more important than their written products. While recognizing the theoretical and educational relevance of the process approach to writing, we argue that one motivating aspect of writing is related to a student's production of a useful text, where "useful" means having an informative, practical, or aesthetic value. Students should be taught to value writing not only as an activity, but also for its products, particularly when they are the result of collaborative work.

The usefulness of writing does not only regard the production of a text that can be used in the classroom. There is another, less obvious form of usefulness that regards writing as a tool for learning. Several types of writing, such as notes, schemas, and outlines, facilitate students' elaboration and retention of knowledge, thus improving learning (see Tynjälä, Mason, & Lonka, 2001, for reviews). Although in recent years this function of writing has been investigated, there are very few studies on the motivational aspects of writing to learn. We present now an example of a writing activity in which writing is closely connected to the study of literature in a grade-9 class (Boscolo & Carotti, 2003). The literature teacher assigns the reading of a literary text as individual homework. Then a classroom conversation focuses on students' responses to the reading. The reactions are usually expressed orally, but some students prefer to write theirs down. The homework reading is commented on by the students and the teacher. The students take notes on the comments and organize them as a homework exercise. Regarding the literary text, students also identify with the teacher's guidance some keywords to describe characters and events of the literary text they have been given. For instance, one of the themes identified by the students in Henry James's *Washington Square* was the generational conflict between Catherine and her father. This theme is then used to interpret the text. Students' interpretations, some related to their personal experiences, are written in individual notebooks, then developed in a final report, which is discussed in the classroom. This activity helps students understand that there are various types of writing—some more informal, such as

notes, and others more structured, such as a report or composition—that may accompany an activity and give or take meaning to or from each moment of it. There is also a second consequence, more directly concerned with motivation: The shift from interest in a topic or task (formulating rules for the whole class) to the discovery that writing does not necessarily lower that interest, since it is through writing that the project achieves its objective. Obviously, the role of the teacher is crucial because the discovery should not be compromised prematurely by severe evaluation of the written product.

Fostering the Communicative Function of Writing

Traditional school writing is usually a solitary behavior through which a student can demonstrate what he or she has learned and be subsequently evaluated by the teacher. In recent years, the social dimension of writing has been greatly stressed by the social constructivist approach to literacy and literacy learning. This approach has argued that writing is a social activity not only because what one writes can be read by someone else (in the classroom, usually the teacher), but also because writing can be performed in an interactive context. Spivey (1996) has analyzed thoroughly the various aspects of the social dimension of writing: the collaborative construction of a text, the revision through which a text is amended and improved, and intertextuality, through which a writer uses what others have written. The social dimension of writing is clearly related to reading; in co-constructing a text, as in classroom collaboration, as well as in sharing written ideas and thoughts with schoolmates, the two literate practices are closely related. When the production of a text is aimed at achieving a common objective (for instance, preparing a brochure for an exhibition organized by the school or a playbill for a school performance), the planning, writing, and revising of this text can be done collaboratively. Not only is the final text communicated, but so are the salient phases of its production.

Communication may happen during the production of a common document and, less obviously, during individual writing, such as when students take notes during a classroom discussion or lecture to prepare a report or just record some concepts emerging from the discussion that they have been impressed by. These forms of writing may turn out to be useful in subsequent classroom discussions as elements for giving students a first idea of community of discourse. Showing them that individual writing, such as note taking, also has an interactive component may help them understand the close connections between writing and classroom activities.

Nolen (2007) uses the notion of a literate community to describe those classrooms in which literacy activities establish and maintain rela-

tionships among individuals. Literate communities have social norms that facilitate the development of interest in literacy by establishing the group's shared identity as readers and writers. In these classrooms, reading and writing provide opportunities to experience writing as a tool for self-expression and communication, whereas in traditional classrooms writing is basically an individual activity. Writers and readers switch roles frequently, and the resulting communication of feedback and ideas provides multiple opportunities for interest development. In contrast, traditional writing instruction focuses more on teaching the skills of writing, and the main purpose for becoming literate is that it is an important school subject. In literate communities, students develop their identities as writers through activities in which they are involved with teachers in producing worthwhile material or expressing and sharing their own ideas with schoolmates.

Giving Students Novel and Challenging Tasks

Miller and Meece (1999) conducted an interesting study with third graders of different achievement levels and from classes with different levels of exposure to high-challenge tasks. High-challenge academic tasks were considered those that required writing multiple paragraphs, involved student collaboration, and lasted more than a single lesson. It emerged that high achievers preferred high-challenge academic tasks, whereas low and average achievers not familiar with challenging tasks felt less confident in dealing with these tasks. Regardless of exposure, all students generally disliked low-challenge tasks. Of the two criteria adopted by Miller and Meece (1999) to distinguish levels of challenge of writing tasks—complexity (length of writing and duration) and the individual/collaborative dimension—complexity seems to have particularly influenced average and low achievers' uncertainty about their ability to complete high-level tasks.

Challenge is not the same as complexity. A challenging task is one that not only presents some difficult aspect, but also stimulates a student's will to engage in it. The cognitive approach has conceptualized writing as a problem-solving process where the solution is the production of a text that fulfills the writer's communicative goal. This problem-solving dimension is emphasized in particular in two writing activities: when students' writing is aimed at achieving a goal such as communicating to an audience and when students have the opportunity to play with genres.

Through various reading and writing experiences, students get to know genres. A possible challenging task is rewriting a text (e.g., a poem, a story, a fairytale), changing some elements (for instance, the

protagonist, the setting, or the goal of a story). Rewriting is seldom an enjoyable task, but in this case it may be if the challenging objective is to invent a new story or a new poem. Two conditions have to be satisfied: first, the structure of the original text must be respected; second, any change in the original text (e.g., changing the setting or introducing a complicating event) must be consistently included in the composition. If, for instance, the story was originally set in winter, a change from winter to summer requires other changes—in the characters' behavior and/or in specific episodes—to keep the story coherent. In the classroom, this work can be carried out in small groups, each involved in producing the best new text. In elementary school, playing with writing is an activity students are willing to engage in (Boscolo, 2002). Playing means, for instance, manipulating stories by changing characters, motives, or the sequence of episodes to obtain new, more amusing, or curious endings within the constraints of text coherence. It may mean rewriting a short text avoiding certain word categories or composing a meaningful short text (a "cento") using words taken from titles of newspaper articles and reading passages or creating images and metaphors with colors to describe the seasons. This writing is called "creative" because it is aimed at creating new meanings, making children discover novel and challenging uses of language, and it is also children's first contact with intertextuality, in which they realize that new meanings are usually constructed by means of old words and phrases. Children not only enjoy themselves practicing it, but also test and increase their linguistic competence (under the teacher's guidance). Moreover, their efforts may produce texts that merit being collected in a classroom portfolio. The use of challenging tasks may contribute to motivation to write if children are able to manage them, as recent studies on interest have shown. Later, in high school, this type of play may become a fruitful tool for analyzing (no longer for fun!) literary texts in greater depth. For older students, literary competence also implies being able to work and play with texts.

WRITING DIFFERENT TEXT TYPES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: SOME EXAMPLES OF MOTIVATING LESSONS

So far, we have analyzed the concept of motivation to write and the meanings of related words and concepts. In the following pages, some examples of writing instruction aimed at promoting motivation to write are presented. They are parts of an instructional intervention designed to encourage children to experience writing as a useful and enjoyable collaborative classroom activity (Boscolo & Cisotto, 1997).

The intervention was based on the view of writing as a flexible tool and a collaborative activity. It had three major features. First, writing took place throughout learning activities from beginning to end. In elementary school, children are often asked to write a report on a scientific activity or a classroom discussion as a means of concluding the activity and producing final material for a teacher to evaluate. In the intervention, writing was used extensively in relation to the moments or phases of an activity, not only at the end of it; for instance, a science experiment conducted in class provided an opportunity for students to experience various types of writing, such as comments, notes, and impressions as well as the final report. Thus, the teacher's focus was on presenting writing as a flexible, multipurpose tool, not on making the children conform to "good" text types.

Second, writing was proposed as an activity connected to crucial classroom situations. The different functions of writing in meaningful classroom activities, such as science experiments and classroom discussions, were stressed, in contrast with more typical instruction in which writing is taught as an ability related to other language skills but separate from other subjects.

Third, writing was performed as a collaborative activity. Students worked in groups during the various phases of the learning activities and produced collaborative texts. Even the writing they did individually, such as taking notes, was used for participation in group activities. Collaborative writing had important implications for the teacher's evaluation of children's texts. The written work of the experimental group was revised by the teacher and classmates. Revision by classmates was carried out in a collaborative activity in which each writer was also a reviser. The relationship between writer and reader/reviser was therefore symmetrical, and revision was not perceived as risky or threatening. The teacher did not emphasize and correct children's mistakes but facilitated self-correction and helped them improve. It should be underlined that the extensive use of collaborative writing did not exclude individual writing in situation-oriented classes. Individual writing was aimed at consolidating children's writing ability by having them practice writing on topics closely connected to the classroom activities they were engaged in, such as organizing notes taken during a discussion, exposing the phases of a common project, or highlighting the positive and negative aspects of discussing. Individual writing was an occasion for practice through which the children could also reflect on classroom collaborative activities.

The intervention was articulated into three segments, focusing first on argumentative, then narrative, and finally expository discourse. The activities of each segment had a common sequence:

- *Problem presentation:* The starting point for classroom activities was a stimulating problem children had to solve. The problem might involve some aspect of classroom life (how to form groups), text production for a real audience (writing the plot for a play to be performed), or a science experiment.
- *Idea generation:* The children contributed to solving the problem by expressing their ideas in classroom discussion. The generation of ideas was facilitated by a set of writing activities aimed at allowing the children to regulate their participation (e.g., note taking, recording impressions, regulating speaking turns).
- *Discussion and evaluation:* The ideas recorded were discussed, compared, and evaluated. Writing was still used as a regulation tool, but children's activities also focused on text production.
- *Synthesis and production:* The children's ideas became a product, used to compose a collaborative text (in the case of argument and narrative) or to check understanding (in the case of exposition).

We illustrate this sequence in relation to three text types: argumentative, narrative, and expository.

Argumentative Text: Writing the Rules for Group Formation in the Classroom

Problem Presentation

The teacher proposed some stimulating and involving questions. The most popular of these was "What should the criteria for group formation in your class be?" The teacher explained that the criteria adopted would actually be used for group formation in the class. Other questions that were considered included whether home tasks are useful to learning and whether a recent and very popular series of stories for children including horror and sex elements should be considered appropriate material for young readers.

Idea Generation

Collective discussion followed the question, combined with writing to serve the following functions: (1) as a tool for regulating turn taking ("While waiting, write your idea on a sheet of paper, so you will not forget it"), (2) as an informal tool for recording ideas expressed by other students as well as oneself, (3) as a tool for determining the most important points during the discussion, and (4) as a tool for synthesizing the

results of the discussion. The children were encouraged to formulate their first conclusions and use their informally written ideas to dictate the points of agreement on the criteria of group formation to the teacher, who wrote them on the blackboard.

Discussion and Evaluation

Children discussed in small groups one of the conclusions they had reached during idea generation (i.e., a criterion proposed for group formation). They used their notes to recall the previous points and to guide the discussion. They also took new notes on colored paper, according to a strategy suggested by the teacher, with one color for a positive contribution, another for a negative suggestion, and another for a "stroke of genius." For example, for the argument that "groups should be formed with children of different competence levels," a positive contribution was "if a child is in a trouble, he or she can be helped by the other group members"; a negative suggestion was "if a child isn't specialized in anything, he or she can do nothing in the group"; and a stroke of genius was "all children have to learn." This phase ended with the construction of the first draft of texts in the small groups.

Text Production

The group works were read to the whole class, and a composition was written collectively: (1) for each group, a child read the draft aloud, soliciting comments and requests for clarification, while other members of the group took notes on suggestions for how to improve the text as well as on informal comments and reflections; (2) the drafts of each group were used for the collective composition, which was carried out through self-dictation (that is, the children discussed and selected the best criteria, formulated them orally with the teacher's help, then wrote them in their notebooks); (3) a small group of students wrote the formulated criteria on a poster in the classroom.

Narrative text: Creating a Narrative

Problem Presentation

The children had to find interesting topics with concrete objectives on which to write for a real audience; in this case, they were to prepare a booklet of stories as a Christmas gift for their parents. Other possibilities were to write a funny story for a pen pal or the plot for a play to be performed at the end of the school year.

Idea Generation

In collecting ideas for a tale, the children freely expressed their ideas, which the teacher wrote on the blackboard. The children also wrote their own and their classmates' ideas on cards.

Discussion and Evaluation

These ideas were analyzed and evaluated in a collective discussion. For example, the class agreed on a narrative core, "a girl who can express five wishes for Christmas." Children recorded comments, doubts, and suggestions. The ideas about characters, place, episodes, and sequence were organized, and several alternatives in sequence were explored in collective or small-group discussions. The children used their idea generation notes to propose changes and/or to plan story development.

Text Production

The collaborative construction of the plot and first sketch of the narrative were performed as a writing workshop:

- The material generated in the planning phase was used to construct the text.
- When in doubt, the children used a dictionary and asked the teacher and other children for advice.
- The children showed their written materials to classmates to check clarity and coherence. Classmates' advice stimulated the writer to revise and try a new, more satisfactory elaboration.
- Children read their own stories, and others were invited to make comments and criticism. Sometimes it was the writer who expressed his or her doubts.
- The stories of several children and/or groups were integrated and connected: for instance, children who wrote stories with a similar character or narrating a similar event were invited to integrate them into a more complex one.

At the end, the best stories were selected by the students and included in the booklet.

Expository Text: Checking a Hypothesis

Problem Presentation

Some scientific topics (e.g., the transformation of kernels into popcorn; what happens to sugar in water) suggested by meaningful situations (e.g., a school party) were proposed to the children.

Idea Generation

The teacher invited the children to write some questions (e.g., What inside an ear of corn becomes popcorn?) in order to:

- Explore children's previous knowledge of the phenomena.
- Guide their first discussion and observation during the experiment.

Discussion and Evaluation

What children had written about their knowledge was read aloud and discussed. During the discussion, a child could change his or her hypothesis by correcting with a different color of ink. During the experiment, writing was used:

- To describe the procedure, materials, conditions.
- To collect data (e.g., about weight and water level) to be represented in a table (numbers and drawings were used as well as words).
- To record comments about what was happening. Since the children paid great attention to the experiment, systematic recording was difficult (and probably boring) for them.

Text Production

Children used all their written comments concerning previous knowledge and setting up the experiment. They modified what they had written by adding or replacing information, commented on what they had understood about the observed phenomenon, and corrected their initial hypotheses. In this phase, writing was used by the children to check their understanding.

In the intervention, the teacher had several roles, which included having children "discover" a problem, stimulating idea generation, and regulating discussion, and two main functions regarding writing in particular. The first was to introduce children to the uses of writing in new and meaningful situations. The teacher suggested how to use writing (for instance, showing how to use note taking to remember or record salient ideas in a discussion), modeled the writing behavior, and helped children solve problems in collaborative composition. The second function was to help children become self-regulated writers. The teacher discussed writing difficulties with them both individually and in small groups, suggested solutions and strategies, and gave feedback on ongoing and final productions. At the end of the school year, the children were evaluated

by the teacher, who took into account the collaborative texts as well as other texts written individually during school, but outside the experimental intervention.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PROMOTING MOTIVATION TO WRITE

The role of the teacher is crucial in promoting motivation to write for two reasons. The first reason is that a teacher's beliefs about writing influence the ways in which he or she organizes the writing setting and instructional practices. For instance, the way a task is organized reflects both the role of writing in the curriculum and the teacher's view of writing and writing instruction. A view of writing as mainly focusing on reproducing text types or, alternatively, on students' personal elaboration of knowledge and experiences has implications for how specific writing tasks are organized in the classroom and how writing is related to other disciplines. Making students aware of the multiple functions of writing in a literate community, which we have considered a necessary step in promoting a positive attitude toward writing, requires the teacher to believe that writing is not only a relevant subject or ability in the curriculum, but an important experience through which students should be helped to find a personal meaning in literate practices. Moreover, the teacher's view of writing also influences students' motivation to write. If a teacher views writing as a basically individual ability, he or she will tend to promote motivation mainly through assigning interesting topics when possible. If, instead, motivation is viewed and valued as an attitude to be developed and improved through meaningful activities, the setting of writing tasks will be clearly different.

The second reason is that writing instruction is a complex matter that requires the teacher to choose tasks, activities, and strategies carefully and focuses in particular on the following aspects related to motivation to write: interest, collaboration, and evaluation. Writing tasks cannot be always interesting, novel, or aimed at successfully achieving tangible results. Becoming a competent writer requires a student's involvement as well as exercise—that is, a balance of more involving moments, in which writing appears novel and interesting, and less involving ones, in which a student organizes his or her learning experiences through writing. We think that while students view writing in the classroom as consisting of meaningful experiences, they may also view less challenging tasks as important, not necessarily boring aspects of their becoming writers.

This balance should also characterize the use of group versus indi-

vidual writing in the classroom. The examples of good practices in this chapter are all of collaborative writing. We view collaborative writing as an essential element for leading students to appreciate and enjoy writing as a process and product, but collaborative and individual writing should be viewed and adopted in a dynamic relationship. Opportunities for collaborative writing may be those in which ideas are generated, written texts are compared and revised, and a common product is obtained and evaluated. Individual writing, on the other hand, may be the moment at which students express their thoughts and voices, being aware that what one writes individually may be the source of other collaborative experiences with classmates, or in which they elaborate a meaningful experience, for instance by practicing a genre discovered through a classroom activity.

The teacher's evaluation of student writing is also related to the individual-collaborative dimension of writing in the classroom. We do not ignore that poor evaluation may be unavoidable in a class and may lower students' self-efficacy beliefs and self-perception of competence and, subsequently, their interest in writing. A writing portfolio, through which a student may become aware of his or her advancement in writing, is now a self-evaluation method adopted in schools as a tool that documents the development not only of writing competence, but also of motivation to write, through a student's narration and description of his or her involvement, satisfaction, and frustration in various writing experiences (Calfee, 2000; Calfee & Perfumo, 1996). We think that, when learning to view writing as a meaningful activity, students should also be helped to recognize and face its complexity. Being motivated to write also means being able to manage the challenges and difficulties of writing; giving students the necessary tools to face these challenges requires the teacher to analyze carefully the task difficulty and students' levels as well as self-perceptions of competence.

A CONCLUDING REMARK

This chapter was based on two main assumptions. The first assumption was that young children may be intrinsically motivated to write, but through various writing activities over their school years they often develop a negative attitude toward writing and toward themselves as writers. The second assumption was that instructional practices may influence a student's attitude either positively or negatively. Promoting motivation to write means reconstructing students' attitudes toward writing through activities from which a view of writing as a meaningful activity can emerge. In other words, motivating students to write means

helping them construct positive beliefs about writing and replace negative ones. It should also be clear that this construction is neither quick nor easy, and during the long apprenticeship of learning to write students and teachers may find occasions for disappointment. Teachers, in particular, should be aware that the development of beliefs may not be linear and that students should be supported in their efforts to become not only competent but motivated writers. We conclude this chapter by applying the concept of motivational scaffolding (Renninger, 1992) to writing. Interest in writing should be supported as well as interest in learning. The meaningful writing activities that a teacher organizes to stimulate and sustain students' motivation to write may be isolated moments of classroom life for students, interesting and enjoyable but not sufficient to create an enduring attitude toward writing. It is up to the teacher to create continuity among these moments, such as by pointing out the contributions of individual students, outlining the value of the results attained, and inviting students to find new and challenging writing tasks.

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