

writing well: it's all about attitude

by Donna Rafanello

Professional writing, like any skill, takes practice and patience. Directors of early childhood programs, like many professionals, underestimate the amount of time they dedicate to writing-related tasks. This article is part of an occasional series dedicated to highlighting directors' writing responsibilities. Exchange's Writing Project offers support to directors (and other early childhood folks) in improving their writing skills both for their work-related writing, as well as in publishing their writing. If your confidence in your writing is less than what it might be, maybe what you need is an attitude adjustment.

To discover your attitude toward writing, complete the following Writing Attitude Survey (Podson, 1997) by *circling* the response that corresponds to your attitude. Calculate your score by



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summing your scores in each column and adding them together for your Grand Total. The possible scores for this Writing Attitude Survey range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating a more positive, more confident writing attitude.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does my fear of writing get in the way of my being effective in my professional role?
- Do writing tasks take me longer to complete because I lack skill in this area?
- What experiences have I had in sharing my writing with others?
- What would have to happen for me to prioritize writing as a professional responsibility?

Now let's take this a step further. Let's examine our writing behaviors to determine our level of confidence and competence with regard to writing tasks. Calculate your score by summing your scores in each column and adding them together for your Grand Total. The possible scores for this Writing Behavior

Inventory range from 0 to 64, with higher scores indicating the development of more efficient and effective professional writing behaviors.

So what's the next step? Now that you have determined your attitude toward writing and assessed your writing behaviors, you have an opportunity to make changes that will assist you in your professional role. Whether your goal is to improve your effectiveness as a teacher or director by improving your writing skills or to publish an article in a professional journal, this personal insight will prove invaluable. After all, we tend to perform tasks better when we have confidence, rather than when we feel it is an area of weakness.

Take the next step in your professional development by setting goals for yourself related to your writing. And if Exchange's Writing Project can be of assistance, let us know. That's why we're here. Good luck! And happy writing!

Reference

Podsen, I. J. (1997). *Written expression: The principal's survival guide*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Writing Attitude Survey

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I avoid writing whenever possible.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am afraid of writing when I know it might be evaluated.	5	4	3	2	1
5. My mind seems to go blank when I start writing.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Expressing my ideas through writing is a waste of time.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I like to write my ideas down.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I like to have my friends read what I have written.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I'm nervous about my writing.	5	4	3	2	1
12. People seem to enjoy what I write.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I enjoy writing.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I'm not a good writer.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.	1	2	3	4	5
18. It is easy for me to write good letters.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I don't think I write as well as most people.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Writing is a lot of fun.	1	2	3	4	5

TOTALS

GRAND TOTAL

Writing Behavior Inventory

	Never	Rarely	Don't Know	Sometimes	Always
1. I set aside a specific time during the day to work on writing tasks.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I gather information I need before I begin writing.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I use prewriting techniques to generate ideas (for example, outlining, mindmapping, freewriting).	0	1	2	3	4
4. I identify the specific purpose for each document.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I usually develop a working draft.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I review my draft for style, purpose, and audience.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I develop a second draft.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I proofread to check for common writing problems.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I am sensitive to my audience's problem or concern.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I avoid educational jargon.	0	1	2	3	4
11. My writing presents a professional image.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I have developed routines to organize incoming paperwork and answer routine correspondence.	0	1	2	3	4
13. I use a computer to produce my written materials.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I submit all written reports on time.	0	1	2	3	4
15. I collaborate with staff on documents.	0	1	2	3	4
16. I often seek feedback on my documents.	0	1	2	3	4

TOTALS

GRAND TOTAL