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Dear Parents:

This year your child is involved in a writing program that is based on years of research and successful practice. It has a few special features that I want to explain.

Your child will be doing a great deal of writing this year. I am convinced that frequent writing is essential to your child's language development. We will be doing a lot of journal writing and quick-writes that I call Type One and Type Two writing. We also will be doing more formal writing, which will be stories and other compositions. We call these pieces of writing Type Three and Type Four.

Most of your child's finished compositions will be kept here at school in a folder rather than sent home. We keep the papers here so that your child and I can review the steady progress made during the year and so that we can use some of them for practicing new writing skills. I urge you to come visit to review and discuss your child's writing.

A special feature of Type Three and Type Four writing is focus correcting. On each piece of writing, we will concentrate on a few key aspects such as end punctuation or reasons to support a point of view. We call these focus correction areas. Focus correcting is based on the belief that student writing improves more quickly when the student works to improve a few writing skills at a time. The focus correction areas are always discussed and taught before writing begins, and you will know immediately what they are because they are written at the top of your child's paper.

Parents often ask how they can help at home. Below are a few simple things you can do that will help improve your child's writing:

- Be a writer yourself. Seeing adults, especially parents, write reinforces the importance of writing. Write notes, make lists, play word games with your child. It makes a big difference.
- Be a helper and encourager, not a critic. Praise your child's efforts at writing. Ask your child to read what she or he has written out loud and ask if it sounds right. This is a strategy we use at school. Respond to the message of the writing and focus on the positive — not on mistakes.
- Read to your child. Reading and writing skills go hand-in-hand. Try to read to your child 15 minutes a day.

If you have any questions or comments about our writing program or about your child's progress, please contact me.

Sincerely,