



Dear Parent,

How glad we are to have a chance to update you on the writing your child has been doing as part of a unit of study on nonfiction writing! This is an important unit. If you think about it, most of the reading and writing that you and I do is nonfiction writing. In almost every subject area of the school curriculum, your child will be asked to write nonfiction. Years from now, your child will be assessed on state and national reading tests and history tests and science tests and college entrance tests based on his or her abilities to write nonfiction. Our current unit is important for all these reasons, but most of all, it is important because children are being given the chance to teach each other what they know. You should see how tall these children sit when they become the teachers, instructing others in how to make salsa or to do the rumba!

We began by devoting almost two weeks to writing How-To Books. You should have seen when one child read aloud his directions for doing a somersault—and I tried to follow them! The children and I were in gales of laughter as I sat in my chair—legs stuck out, head tucked to my chest,—and heard “Now turn over.” We all soon learned that it is not easy to write clear, explicit directions that take a person step-by-step through a sequence of actions.

Now, as you probably have heard, your child is writing a giant All-About Book, complete with chapters. Each book has a table of contents, and children are learning to organize their information into the appropriate chapters. They are learning also that each chapter has its own organizational structure. If a child is writing about the different kinds of something, the chapter will be sectioned into categories . . . If the child is writing how to do something, the chapter resembles a how-to book. For now, these All-About Books are based on topics in which the child has personal expertise, but it would be a small step forward for children to write similar books about a topic the class is studying together.

Sincerely,  
The First Grade Teachers