

# Promoting Early Writing Skills through Morning Meeting Routines: Guidelines for Best Practices

Chenyi Zhang<sup>1</sup>  · Margaret F. Quinn<sup>2</sup>

Published online: 25 October 2017  
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**Abstract** Observational studies suggest that early writing instruction rarely occurs in early childhood classrooms, despite the importance of supporting young children’s writing development. Morning Meeting Time (MMT) routine is a typically occurring large group activity in early childhood classrooms that is interactive and familiar to teachers and children. Because it is interactive, occurs daily in most preschool classrooms, and is comprised of regular routines that can easily be modified, MMT provides a meaningful context for promoting young children’s writing development. This article describes the characteristics of MMT, discusses the rationales for infusing interactive writing instruction into MMT, and provides seven research-based guidelines for adding writing to MMT in early childhood classroom environments.

**Keywords** Writing instruction · Classroom routine · Morning meeting routine · Writing activity

## Introduction

Young children’s writing skills are critical to their overall literacy development. Throughout the preschool years, children develop considerably in early writing component

skills—(Kaderavek et al. 2009) letter formation such as name (Bloodgood 1999) and/or letter writing (Puranik et al. 2013), spelling (Zhang et al. 2017) and composing (Rowe and Wilson 2015). This development is critical as these component skills are highly related to one another (Puranik and Lonigan 2014), to children’s literacy skills more globally (Kaderavek et al. 2009), and impact later achievement in literacy (Aram 2005; National Early Learning Panel [NELP] 2008). Despite the importance of early writing, research indicates that, while teachers generally provide writing materials in preschool classrooms, writing activities and instruction occur somewhat infrequently (Gerde et al. 2015). Generally, when teachers do provide opportunities or support for early writing, it is often focused upon rote letter formation tasks (e.g., copying letters or words from word cards or tracing dots of letters) rather than in a meaningful context (Bingham et al. 2017) and teacher-child writing interaction rarely occurred (Zhang et al. 2015b). Providing interactive opportunities for young children to practice writing and scaffolding children’s writing attempts in preschool is a meaningful way to expose children to print and literacy processes. It is also beneficial to their transition into elementary/primary education, as they are expected to perform challenging writing tasks, such as spelling and composing, beginning in kindergarten. Establishing a foundation of early writing prior to school entry is particularly important given the added focus on advanced forms of writing, such as composing, in the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

Morning Meeting Time (MMT) is a typical large-group routine outside of shared book reading that typically focuses on completing a set of routinized daily tasks, such as discussions of the calendar and the weather, and attendance taking. MMT, which may be called as “morning circle time

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✉ Chenyi Zhang  
czhang15@gsu.edu  
Margaret F. Quinn  
Mquinn10@utk.edu

<sup>1</sup> Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30303, USA

<sup>2</sup> Child and Family Studies, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA

gathering”, “morning social life games” or “morning greeting” in different countries (i.e., China and Japan), is usually the first large group routine activity during a preschool day and is often among the longest large-group routines during the preschool day (Zhang et al. 2015a). As routinized large group activities are generally daily practice in most classrooms, MMT offer a unique opportunity to increase the quality of instruction without any real additional lesson planning for teachers as morning meetings are a component of daily life in the classroom. Modifying these routine activities to include writing interactions with more explicit and meaningful learning opportunities enables teachers to provide interactive writing instruction without the burden of additional lesson planning as these routines are likely already occurring.

Research suggests that, in terms of grouping size, whole class meetings account for half of the observed time in Head Start classrooms (Powell et al. 2008). Sometimes largely ignored in early childhood classrooms (Gerde et al. 2015; Pelatti et al. 2014), writing could be intentionally focused upon during large group daily routines, providing an interactive and meaningful way to involve children in the meeting and increase writing development and literacy skills more generally. Although researchers have suggested that teachers should create routinized writing activities (i.e., Wasik and Hindman 2011; Gerde et al. 2012), guidelines for embedding writing instruction into existing routines are somewhat vague. Similar to infusing research-based language instruction into typically-occurring shared-book reading activities (e.g., McGee and Schickedanz 2007; Piasta et al. 2010), this paper provides specific suggestions for infusing writing into typical MMT routines in order to promote children’s early writing and reading skills. This article, discusses the structure of the MMT routine, explains the rationales of infusing writing instruction into existing MMT routines, and presents guidelines to support teachers’ modification of MMT to incorporate writing.

### Description of the Morning Meeting Routine

In most early childhood classrooms, Morning Meeting Routine generally occurs near the onset of the school day, serving as the first large, or whole, group activity. In an observational study of 26 Head Start classrooms indicated that MMT routines were, on average, significantly longer than large group book reading experiences (Zhang et al. 2015a). During MMT, teachers gather all children forming a large circle and complete a set of brief daily, routinized activities. Routinized daily activities such as calendar time, weather report, taking attendance, discussing a classroom theme or event, and singing songs are commonly observed during MMT (Zaghlawan and Ostrosky 2011). The focus on these

routine MMT experiences may be a result of the emphasis placed upon professional recommendations to promote children’s sense of community, pro-social behaviors, and engagement in preschool activities, particularly to start the day (e.g., Sandall et al. 2005). These routinized activities are brief and interactive, allowing for children’s participation in a teacher-led group discussion. Typically, at the end of MMT, teachers use a transition activity to dismiss children to another activity (e.g., centers or playground).

As with large group book reading, MMT provides a meaningful context for teachers to support children’s early literacy development. However, while the content of the experiences in MMT may be similar across classrooms, there is a great deal of variability in how teachers lead and implement these activities. For example, in some classrooms, teachers may only point to calendar print, identify the date, and casually talk about the daily schedule for calendar time without drawing children to attention to literacy concepts inherent within these routine activities. Some teachers may prepare a more structured morning message activity during which teachers write sentences on a large whiteboard or notepad (Wasik and Hindman 2011). Even within a structured morning message activity, large variation also exists. Some teachers may write “the message” along with children’s verbal participation on a whiteboard, while others may have already written the message beforehand and children and teachers work together to read it (Hindman and Wasik 2012). Despite significant differences between MMTs depending on teachers’ approaches and classroom climate, generally all MMTs are similar in that they provide routinized activities that help begin the day. Typically, these experiences are less rich and often less enjoyable than other portions of the school day (Wiltz and Klein 2001), and as such, the routines and experiences contained within a typical Morning Meeting routine could be made more meaningful and interactive by infusing them with writing instruction.

By integrating MMT and writing, teachers can make routinized MMT experiences more meaningful while encouraging children’s writing development. The first purpose of this paper is to discuss the rationales of infusing writing instruction into MMT. The second purpose is to provide research-based guidelines for teachers to modify their existing MMT to promote children’s writing attempts and writing skills.

### The Advantages of Morning Meeting Routines as a Writing Instruction Context

Children’s writing skills develop rapidly in early childhood. These skills not only increase in terms of complexity of writing (typically following a sequential pattern from scribbling to writing recognizable letters based on letter names or spelling words based on words’ pronunciation,

Schickedanz and Casbergue 2009) but also with respect to children's understanding that writing is a communication tool (Bialystok 1992; Rowe and Wilson 2015). It is typical in a preschool classroom to observe large variability in individual children's writing skills. Some children may be capable of spelling simple words while some other children may only scribble when engaging in writing practices. In order to accommodate children's different pace in writing development, many teachers provide small group writing activities, during which children can work on similar writing tasks while the teacher provides individualized support to children's writing attempts. However, this option may over burden teachers. For example, if teachers plan to provide a writers' workshop along with a small group book reading activity (see Dennis and Votteler 2013), they may have to plan additional small group activities so that they can rotate children to complete the activities by group. During small group activities, one teacher has to sit at the small group table for the entire time to provide support to different groups of children, which may make classroom management challenging. This may explain why research suggests that writing activities occur at a low frequency in preschool classrooms (Gerde et al. 2015), and small group writing activities primarily focus on children's handwriting or mechanics (i.e., forming recognizable letters in writing) such as letter and word copying, which do not create a meaningful context for children to understand the communication function of writing (Bingham et al. 2017) but are relatively easy for a teacher to provide.

Alternatively, MMT, similar to a large group book reading activity, can be a meaningful context for literacy-related interactions. First, MMT is typically infused with inherent literacy experiences. While all MMTs vary slightly by teacher, there are some practices that are consistent in many classrooms, such as discussing the calendar and the weather and reviewing the daily schedule or routines. Typically, these types of activities utilize forms of print in the environment (e.g., a calendar, a job chart, daily schedule, etc.; Zhang et al. 2015a, b). For example, teachers usually point to calendar words to ask children to identify the date and month, or show children a themed word poster. As teachers are likely already infusing MMT with literacy experiences via explicit instruction of letter knowledge and explicit referencing (Justice et al. 2009) they are already promoting critical children's literacy skills (e.g., print knowledge, Wasik and Hindman 2011) that are necessary for writing development.

Second, these routinized activities are familiar to both teachers and children. Teachers usually ask similar set of questions during MMT every day during these daily tasks e.g., "Who can tell me what day it is today?" "What is the weather like today?" As such, they do not need to prepare additional lesson plans for completing these daily tasks. Modifying these and other daily MMT activities to include

writing instruction may be less challenging to teachers than designing a small group writing activity. When integrating writing with daily tasks, children are able to talk, write, and express themselves as opposed to just passively engaging in the routines. For example, in a recent intervention study of MMT (Zhang and Bingham 2016) teachers modified Morning Meeting calendar time to model writing calendar words while children wrote initial letters of the same words independently on their own handheld whiteboards. This practice allowed teachers to continue their familiar, community-building initial activities of the day while incorporating elements that allowed children to actively participate and improve their writing skills. Given the convenience and ease of MMT modification, teachers implemented writing activities in the intervention with high fidelity.

Third, MMT provides an opportunity for teachers to track children's writing development. By modifying existing routine activities to add writing practice time, teachers are able to observe children's writing attempts in a large group through repeated daily writing routines. This not only helps teachers to evaluate and estimate children's writing skills at the classroom level, but also enables teachers to observe children's individual progress in writing development over time. Further, it offers assessment opportunities that allow for seamless analysis of all students' abilities efficiently and effectively.

### Guidelines for Modifying MMT

With a few modifications of these routine activities, teachers may support children's writing development, offer individualized and group-level support, and engage children in a number of writing activities to build interest without the management challenges presented in small group writing. Based on recent literature around preschool children's writing development and early writing intervention, we are suggesting seven research-based guidelines to help teachers modify their MMT Routine to embed writing activities and infuse writing instruction. These guidelines reflect developmentally appropriate practices and can be easily integrated into preschool classrooms. To illustrate the appropriate use of these guidelines in real classrooms, we discuss the practices of one experienced preschool teacher, Ms. Webster (pseudonym), as she incorporates writing in MMT throughout the school year.

### Have Writing Materials on Hand

In order to meaningfully infuse writing into MMT routines, teachers could have a variety of writing tools and materials at hand. For example, teachers may use other large group-specific tools during MMT such as a SmartBoard or poster

paper to support writing development (Wasik and Hindman 2011). For example, Ms. Webster uses poster paper to co-construct a morning message with her children. She uses the SmartBoard to go over letter forms while children practice on their dry erase boards. In addition, teachers can use mentor texts to help children understanding writing used for a variety of purposes. Ms. Webster uses MMT to thank a guest for visiting the classroom. She demonstrates writing a thank you note by showing children what one looks like and giving them an opportunity to use the existing text to write a new note of their own.

Further, teachers should plan to have materials for children to use individually in MMT. Critical to any kind of preschool instruction is plentiful, varied, and interesting materials; the same applies for writing instruction. Teachers can prepare for a writing-infused MMT by gathering and organizing writing materials prior to the meeting for easy distribution and use. While typical preschool classrooms should contain a Writing Center replete with different kinds of paper and writing implements (Beaty and Pratt 2011; Gerde et al. 2015), it is important to think about appropriate tools and surfaces for MMT which will differ from those used at a table (i.e., Writing Center). Writing surfaces should be sturdy enough for children to use on their laps so that children can write along with teachers (for example, individual dry erase boards, clipboards with paper attached, thick notepads or notebooks). As teachers will need to see children's writing from a distance, as opposed to looking at their writing at a table, teachers may consider using markers or other writing implements that will make clear marks as opposed to pencils or pens, which are sometimes illegible from a distance.

### Write the Routines

As mentioned, teachers typically conduct MMT daily with the same routines and experiences each day. To maximize learning during MMT, teachers should consider ways to infuse writing with the MMT routines they are already doing (Gerde et al. 2012). While every MMT is different, each consists of mostly daily routines—instructional time that could be enriched and improved. The addition of writing increases children's activity in the routine. The daily routines in MMT often include taking role or discussing/singing about who is present, discussing the weather, discussing the calendar, schedule, or daily events, reviewing the current learning focus or classroom topic, and discussing home lives, among other routines. Each of these can contain a writing component to make it more active and interactive. For example, in Ms. Webster's classroom, she always begins her morning by taking attendance. Instead of simply calling names and having children orally respond that they are present, Ms. Webster decides to have children write their names on the

dry erase board (as best they can) as they join for circle in order to establish that they are in school (See Fig. 1). For additional suggestions regarding writing in MMT routines, see Table 1.

### Write Collaboratively and 'Share the Pen'

Many teachers may include a morning message in their MMT routine. While morning message is a wonderful way for children to experience print and see writing for varied purposes, often teachers may either write the message prior to the meeting or write the message without attending to the purpose, process, and product while engaged in writing (Hindman and Wasik 2012). Levin and Aram (2013) found that children's writing (i.e., spelling) improved significantly when teachers provided explanation of writing process (i.e., sound to grapheme mapping) and writing product (e.g., letter naming). Therefore, we recommend teachers use a variety of strategies when approaching morning message.

First, teachers can model writing with self-talk and thinking aloud to support children's understanding of the writing process. Self-talk is the process of mapping one's actions through descriptive language (Pianta et al. 2008). For example, Ms. Webster highlights the linearity of her writing and says, "I am moving across the paper in a straight line." By simply narrating her own actions, she is drawing children's attention to the writing. Another way to use self-talk is for teachers to think aloud. This is a slightly more complex form of self-talk in which a teacher uses language to describe her thought process (Dorl 2007). For example, Ms. Webster verbalizes her thought process thusly: "Because we are so excited about our field trip to the zoo, I am thinking I might include an exclamation point to let whoever reads this message know that this trip will be great. I am writing—'We cannot wait for our trip to the zoo!' with an exclamation point at the end."

Once children are more familiar with the morning message process, teachers might consider sharing the construction of the message. This process is called shared writing



**Fig. 1** Children take attendance by name writing

**Table 1** Suggestions for writing routines

	Adding writing #1 (beginning)	Adding writing #2 (moderate)	Adding writing #3 (advanced)
Morning meeting activity	Teachers can ask children to mark using an 'X' or check that they are present	Teachers can ask children to write the first letter of their name to sign in	Teachers can ask children to write their names on individual writing implements (note pads, clipboards, white boards) when called
Calendar/schedule	Teachers can ask children to cross off activities that have already been accomplished	Teachers can ask children for help with letter sounds for specific days or months and can model the writing of these words	Teachers can ask children to help write the day of the week, month, or date
Weather	Teachers can have children vote (using tally marks or an 'X') on questions relating to weather (do we think it will rain later?, for example)	Teachers can ask children to sound out related weather terms and can model the writing of these terms	Teachers can ask children to assist with writing the weather forecast (could use word cards/print outs with related terms)
Morning message	Teachers can ask children to circle a specific letter in the meeting message and even practice the letter form below the message	Teachers can write a morning message leaving out salient sounds and can ask children to help with filling in the subsequent sounds (Goo_ _orning!)	Teachers can model creating with ideas and the writing process with children and ask for children's help with what to write next



**Fig. 2** Interactive writing for calendar time

and it involves drawing out ideas from children as opposed to just modeling the writing process (Gerde et al. 2012). In this case, Ms. Webster asks the children, “What do you think I should write next in the morning message?” and “If I want to spell the word /z/, /z/, zoo, what letter do you think that might start with?”

Lastly, teachers can increase the participation of children even further by engaging in a process called interactive writing (See Fig. 2). Although typically used with slightly older children, i.e., kindergarten-aged (Williams and Pilonieta 2012), interactive writing can be used effectively in preschool once children are accustomed to the process of writing in MMT and co-constructing a morning message. Interactive writing involves fully relinquishing the pen to a child or group of children to write on their own. Teachers should support children as they write and draw the group’s attention to the actions of the writer. For example, Ms. Webster asks her student, Maria, to help her write an *M* for the word ‘Monday.’ She also asks an advanced writer in her class, Jamal, to construct and write the beginning of the message. For a child who uses less advanced forms of writing, Riley, Ms. Webster asks him to write ‘his signature’ at the bottom of the message.

Modeling is an important instructional technique that allows teachers to powerfully draw attention to written products, the processes involved in writing, and the varied purposes for writing. As children increase in ability, knowledge, and familiarity with this routine, teachers can add shared and interactive writing routines during MMT to further encourage children’s participation. For ideas on ways to use modeling, shared, and interactive writing to support children’s handwriting, spelling, and composing, see Table 2.

**Scaffold Writing Attempts**

Research indicates that teachers’ use of scaffolding strategies is related to children’s individual academic development (Pentimonti et al. 2017). Scaffolding is an instructional technique in which teachers provide individualized support

**Table 2** Suggestions for modeling, shared, and interactive writing around each component skill

Forming letters	Spelling	Composing
Modeling writing: morning message While writing a morning message, Ms. Webster writes the word ‘morning’ and discusses the letter, <i>M</i> : “Remember: <i>M</i> is like two mountains.”	“If I want to write the ‘good’ in ‘good morning,’ I am hearing a /g/ /g/ sound at the start. I am thinking ‘good’ starts with <i>G</i> !”	“Okay, I wrote good morning in my message, now I want to think about the next part of my message. Maybe I will discuss what we will do today.”
Shared writing: schedule In discussing the schedule, Ms. Webster reminds children that snack comes after center time: “‘Snack’ starts with an <i>S</i> —can someone help me think of how to make an <i>S</i> ?”	“After snack is small groups, what sound do you hear at the start of ‘small groups’?”	“After nap, we have a little bit of free time, what kinds of activities would you like to do during that period? Let’s write them down.”
Interactive writing: attendance While taking attendance, Ms. Webster asks Henry to write an <i>H</i> next to each child’s name who is present: “Remember, Henry, <i>H</i> is at the start of your name.”	“I notice that Julia isn’t here. Henry, can you write ‘Julia’ under ‘absent.’ Julia starts with a /j/ /j/ sound.”	“What could you write, Henry, to show that even though Olivia isn’t here now, she will be here later after her doctor’s appointment?”

for students based upon their current development level and their proximal and distal developmental goals. Teachers’ explicit instruction of writing components such as letter formation, spelling, and composing are beneficial to children’s overall literacy development (e.g., Hofslundsen et al. 2016). Young children need to coordinate a variety of skills in order to be emergent readers and writers (Puranik and Lonigan 2014; Whitehurst and Lonigan 1998). Research indicates that preschool teachers mostly offer very rote support for young children’s writing, such as reminding them to write their names on their artwork (Bingham et al. 2017). Explicit instruction around writing, as opposed to just minimal provision of writing support, helps children understand the connection between aural information and writing. By offering individually tailored and specific feedback to support children’s writing, teachers are effectively *scaffolding* children’s writing skills.

When teachers involve children in writing, they can support their individual writing abilities. For example, Ms. Webster asks Peter to write the weather report and scaffolds his knowledge of letter forms: “We know ‘rainy’ starts with an *R*.. Peter, it looks like the *P* for Peter but it has a leg.” In this instance, she scaffolded his knowledge by connecting something he knew (the letter *P*) with something he had less competence with (the letter *R*). There are many different specific ways to scaffold children’s writing including reducing choices (“What do you think comes at the beginning of May? Is it *M* or is it *L*?”), guiding (“What do we usually put next in our morning message?”), asking children to explain (“How will you write *sunny*? What does it start with?”), and asking children to draw comparisons (“Do you remember what we wrote in our morning message yesterday? How will we write this one? Will it be the same?”). Given children’s different pace of writing development, it is critical that teachers honor children’s writing, no matter the degree to which the child can write conventionally (Bredenkamp 2011). For example, after asking her students to sign in for attendance, Ms. Webster responds with equal enthusiasm to Louisa’s scribbles and Hector’s conventional writing.

**Use MMT to Assess Children’s Writing and Offer Varied Opportunities at Multiple Skill Levels**

As previously mentioned, critical to all writing instruction, activities, or experiences in preschool classrooms is that teachers are accepting of varied forms of writing. Not all children can write conventionally at this point nor should they be expected to. By only focusing solely upon mechanics (forming letters) and orthography (spelling), it is possible that children will feel less capable and that writing will be less fun and meaningful. Exploring what children know about and supporting their early composing attempts while continuing to support their development in

spelling and letter formation is key. As such, we recommend that teachers explore and assess children's writing as holistically as possible throughout the classroom. That said, as MMT offers a unique opportunity for teachers to quickly assess the writing abilities and understandings of many students simultaneously, the assessment plan we discuss here is focused upon transcription skills such as letter formation and spelling, as well as their understanding of concepts of print and the ways in which writing works.

MMT offers opportunities for teachers to assess writing in ways that are less burdensome than typical assessment which may take place in free choice, centers, or small group times. Traditionally, teachers often assess children's writing by examining the sophistication level or phase exhibited in the child's writing. While researchers offer varied understandings of the different levels that children might demonstrate during the period of early writing, generally these tend to focus upon children's ability to form letters and spell words. According to professional guidelines, children's written products can be effectively and efficiently placed within four levels of development: (1) drawing and scribbling, (2) letters and letter-like forms, (3) beginning invented spelling (one sound), (4) more advanced invented spelling (more than one sound). By assessing just conventionality, teachers may only receive a partial understanding of children's writing abilities. As such, we encourage teachers to also assess children's composing, or the degree to which they understand that writing and oral language go hand-in-hand and the degree to which they are able to reflect their intentions in their writing (Rowe and Wilson 2015), though this might be best done outside of MMT.

Given that infusing MMT with writing opens up many opportunities for teachers to see children's written products and writing processes, it offers an efficient way to monitor and assess the whole group (or individuals) rather effectively. For example, at the beginning of the year, Ms. Webster asks her students to write their names on their individual dry erase boards in order for her to mark them present. By incorporating writing into her attendance routine, she made the routine itself more meaningful, offered children a more active role in the routine, and is able to quickly assess the current developmental level of her students. She continues to take attendance in this way and gets a snapshot of her students' name writing abilities each morning. Other activities can also be assessed beyond name writing. Ms. Webster asks her students to write what activity they were going to choose in centers during her schedule discussion. By doing so, she can clearly see her students' orthographic knowledge, their knowledge of concepts of print (e.g., writing is linear and moves from left-to-right). She records this information and is able to use it during her writing workshop and in the Writing Center during center time. By doing both this assessment activity and the name writing activity, she is able to establish

specific plans and ways to individualize instruction to meet children's current strengths and needs.

### Use Writing to Build Community

As MMT is an instructional tool used to 'start the day,' it is often viewed as critical to teachers in terms of community building and children's comfort in the classroom (Zaghlawan and Ostrosky 2011). By incorporating meaningful writing activities to these standard, everyday practices, teachers can even further support peer relationships, classroom community, and social-emotional development. To enhance peer relationships in MMT with writing, teachers can encourage children to share with one another, discuss each others' writing attempts, and draw comparisons. While discussing summer plans near the end of the school year, Ms. Webster (as opposed to individually talking to each student about their upcoming summer) asks children to write or draw something they look forward to in the summer. After doing so, the children are asked to pair up and share what they wrote or drew and then invites several children to share to the whole group what they discussed in their pairs. Not only does this type of activity infuse writing, it allows for each child to be heard and builds peer relationships.

By including writing in MMT, children are likely more actively involved. As such, the routinized activities of MMT, designed to build community and start off the day, are significantly more meaningful as children play an active role. As opposed to merely answering "here" orally, children can sign their names to indicate their attendance, as children's names are personally meaningful. Giving children specific jobs such as meteorologist or calendar kid is a wonderful way to build leadership in young children. By adding writing to these roles, children are more active in the process and likely the pride associated with these jobs and roles will grow.

### Keep Writing Components Explicit and Brief

It is important to keep the primary purpose of MMT as a community-building activity. Teachers should infuse writing interactions into existing routines without making the MMT into a structured literacy large group activity. Since MMT is a repeated daily routine, teachers do not need to provide in-depth writing instruction to make sure every child completes a writing product and receives individualized support for their writing. Instead, teachers should keep MMT writing practices brief and recognize children's progress in writing over time. We recommend teachers only modify MMT to include one teacher-mediated writing component (i.e., children write along with teachers' modeling of writing), and one child independent writing component (i.e., children write independently by themselves), rather

**Table 3** Recommended practices for MMT writing routine

Guideline	Recommended practices
Include writing materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare writing materials that are developmentally appropriate for children (e.g. lightweight clipboard and markers), and effective to large group setting (e.g. large white board for teachers to write)</li> <li>• Display writing materials with consideration of easy access to children to complete daily routinized tasks (e.g. providing materials in circle area)</li> <li>• Highlight children’s writing products by discussing children’s works during activities and displaying the products around the room</li> </ul>
Modify routine MMT activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed writing into 1–2 daily MMT routines that are most familiar and interesting to children</li> </ul>
Model writing and share writing with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model writing processes, products, and purposes and the use of writing materials</li> <li>• Embed opportunities for shared writing during MMT</li> <li>• “Share the pen” create opportunities for interactive writing</li> </ul>
Scaffold children’s writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce choices of letters when prompting children to write a specific letter</li> <li>• Guide children to link writing to their daily experience</li> <li>• Extend children’s existing knowledge of literacy concepts by explaining not only the connection between letter names and print, but also letter sound and print</li> <li>• Prompt children to explain the connection between letter sound and letter print (e.g. “how do you know S comes first in sunny?”)</li> <li>• Prompt children to write a specific letter by using a familiar word (e.g. “let’s write the letter W, /w/ /w/ sound, it reminds me of another weather word wet”)</li> </ul>
Build community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to share writing</li> <li>• Develop leadership and embed writing in classroom jobs/roles</li> </ul>
Keep it brief and explicit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep embedded writing activities brief without prolonging the existing MMT</li> <li>• Rotate daily routinized tasks that include writing</li> </ul>

than completely changing the entire MMT to be a writing activity. For example, Ms. Webster asked children to write their names by themselves on a handheld whiteboard at the carpet when children transitioning from breakfast to MMT. Then, Ms. Webster completed weather time by modeling writing weather words (e.g., Sunny and rainy) on a large whiteboard, while children write the same word along with her. Ms. Webster then completed other daily tasks without asking children to write. Further, she rotated which daily tasks might contain a writing element regularly. One day, she might have her children practice signing in for roll call but the next day, she might use a morning song to establish who is present. By keeping writing elements explicit and brief, the MMT does not become overly exhaustive or long experience while still maintaining its community-focus and children’s interactive role within the activities that make up the meeting. See Table 3 for ideas and information regarding this and other writing and MMT guidelines.

## Summary

This article presents research-based guidelines for incorporating writing into MMT. Additional resources to support the practice are in Table 4. As MMT occurs in many, if not most, early childhood classrooms, it is an important part of the day which current research may indicate is not providing rich instructions. By incorporating writing into MMT, teachers can make highly routinized activities more meaningful, interactive, and fun and can create new learning opportunities to build on children’s writing skills and emergent literacy. By selecting materials purposefully, developing ways to efficiently and effectively incorporate writing into MMT, modeling writing practices, products, and purposes, scaffolding children’s writing attempts, using MMT writing routines to assess children’s writing skills across all writing components, using writing to build community, and making writing brief and explicit within

**Table 4** Additional resources for teachers

Articles	<p>Cabell, S. Q., Tortorelli, L. S., &amp; Gerde, H. K. (2013). How do I write...? Scaffolding preschoolers’ early writing skills. <i>The Reading Teacher</i>, 66(8), 650–659</p> <p>Quinn, M. F., Gerde, H. K., &amp; Bingham, G. E. (2016). Help me where I am: Scaffolding writing in preschool classrooms. <i>The Reading Teacher</i>, 70(3), 353–357</p>
Online resources	<p>Responsive Classroom (2017). <i>What is morning meeting?</i> &lt;<a href="http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/what-is-morning-meeting/">http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/what-is-morning-meeting/</a>&gt;</p> <p>Deborah Stewart (March 2013). 10 tips for circle time in the preschool classroom. <i>Teach Preschool Blog</i>. &lt;<a href="http://www.teach-preschool.org/2013/03/25/ten-tips-for-circletime/">http://www.teach-preschool.org/2013/03/25/ten-tips-for-circletime/</a>&gt;</p>

the meeting, teachers will offer an MMT that is more instructionally effective and interactive while meanwhile, encouraging and supporting children's writing development. Early writing is key to current literacy and future outcomes therefore, teachers' support is invaluable.

**Funding** Funding was provided by Spencer Foundation (Grant No. Post-doctoral Fellowship).

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