

## 5. Literacy Includes Reading and Writing

The National Research Council (NRC), in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, March 18, 1998, identified three elements of reading that children need: letters, sounds, and reading for meaning. To these elements, the program adds composing—writing in letters the words and ideas in the mind. In talking of the NRC report, former Secretary of Education Richard Riley said: “The study clearly defines the key elements all children need to become good readers. Specifically, kids need opportunities to learn letters and sounds and how to read for meaning. . . . All children need these three essential elements in order to read well and independently by the end of the third grade.” The *Reading, Writing, and Phonics Too* program would also add “and to write (compose) well and independently by the end of the third grade.” Certainly, children are to read for meaning, but they are also to write to make meaning.



This program relies on the power of the child’s facility with language to move beyond making sounds and reading words and sentences to the place where students can compose their own writings. Each lesson concludes with the opportunity to write. Students should be encouraged to write at the end of each lesson, even if the writing is simple or even nonsensical. The idea is to get the flow going and keep it going. Do not keep the child out of the lessons because of difficulty with the writing. It may be slow, even difficult, at first. With effort and encouragement, it will improve quickly. In the early lessons, using oral composition is good and normal as a lead-in to written composition.