

Mission Statement

The Banjul American Embassy School is an international community providing a high quality, accredited American-Style education for students. In partnership with our community, we empower students to become enthusiastic, creative, lifelong learners who value integrity, cultural diversity and global responsibility.

Parent Conferences: We would like to thank all the parents who attended their child's conference yesterday.

Support Staff Luncheon on Saturday: Since Diane Zemichael's time we have been holding a support staff luncheon each year to say thanks to the support staff for all they do all year to support us in our efforts to make BAES the very best school that it can be. We invite the support staff's families, we play soccer, take pictures, dance and eat. During this week when you see one of the support staff either custodial or security please take a moment to say thanks.

Holiday Bazaar. The holiday bazaar is just around the corner. Can you help? Can you bake something special with a holiday flair? Can you be here next Thursday and or Friday to help decorate? Can you be here at 2:00 on Saturday the 12th at 2:00 to set up? This event is open to the community and will be the only one this year that is. Please remember that for this event and all BAES sponsored events students must be accompanied by a parent.... Not a Nanny, not a Driver, a parent or guardian.

Holiday Program: Please let me know if your family.... Or a group of families have decided to do something for the Holiday Program on December 10th.

School Finishes at 12:00 on the 18th: We will have a busy week from the 14th-18th with lots of learning and lots of fun. Please be sure that students are picked up promptly at 12:00 on the 18th.

Here is a great article that supports why writing is a focus at BAES this year. This shares how you can help your child build his/her writing skills.

How To Inspire Your Kids To Write and Why It's So Important

By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S.

Associate Editor

~ 4 min read



In addition to writing being my profession, it's also a prime passion. And it's a passion that I'd like to pass on to my kids, once I actually have them. But it isn't because I want my future kids to become writers like me.

It's because writing is a magical medium. It's a vehicle for communication, connection and creativity. It's an opportunity to learn and grow, have fun and sharpen your senses.

Author, educator and literacy expert Pam Allyn agrees. In her book, *Your Child's Writing Life: How to Inspire Confidence, Creativity and Skill at Every Age*, she says that kids need to start writing early because writing helps to cultivate emotional growth, develop critical thinking skills and improve school performance.

Being able to express yourself is a "skill and gift. By cultivating this capability in your child, you are giving him the priceless power to share his thoughts and ideas with the world in a meaningful way."

In her book (which I highly recommend), Allyn provides parents with five keys to inspire their kids to write. The suggestions aptly spell the acronym WRITE: Word Power, Reading Life, Identity, Time and Environment. Here's a bit on each key to get you started.

1. Word Power. Kids love learning new words, and they typically pick them up very quickly. In fact, before kids even know how to read, they learn at least nine words a day, on average, Allyn explains. She suggests teaching your kids new words regularly. These might be words you read in a magazine, newspaper or on the Internet. Also, share with them words that involve their interests. She lists three great ways to share the power of words:

- *Write notes or letters to each other using new words.*
- *Create a word jar by writing out your child's favorites on a piece of paper and dropping them in. Create a ritual to look at what you've collected at week's end.*
- *Talk about the words you hear in songs.*

2. Reading Life. There are many benefits to reading aloud to your child, including indirectly teaching them about grammar and syntax and how stories are told and supporting their future writing, according to Allyn. She suggests reading books from all genres, even using picture books to create your own stories.

Also, pick books based on your child's interests and passions. Keep rereading books to your kids; this helps them develop a "writer's ear. Look for heart-stopping moments of beautiful language, or the just right phrase, or simply an unbelievably perfect turn of the plot, or a glorious description of a character that makes you fall in love with him or her..."

3. Identity. Allyn thinks of writing identity as encompassing two parts: 1) how your child likes to write, such as where they like to write, using what tools and during what time of day and 2) "what she sounds like when she writes and the modes she prefers." Writing identity takes time to develop, Allyn says.

As kids develop their unique identity, Allyn suggests praising distinctiveness in their writing. For instance, you might commend them on how they use dialogue or describe events with great humor or any other idiosyncratic qualities.

Other ways to encourage your child's identity are by sharing their work with others, displaying it (like creating a book of their stories) and keeping earlier pieces.

Allyn also suggests cultivating your child's writing identity by asking them to complete certain phrases. Some that she offers: "I am the kind of writer who...;" "I get inspired as a writer when...;" "My favorite writer is...;" "I like to write with a ... (pen, pencil, crayon, laptop, iPad);" "Writing makes me happy because..."

4. Time. Between school and extracurricular activities, you probably feel like there's little time left to add another activity to an already overflowing pile. But making time for your child to write gives them the opportunity to express themselves and to practice.

As Allyn writes, this gives "your child the gift of an outlet for all of the thoughts, ideas, questions and creations that fill his or her mind." She suggests parents create a writing center with different writing tools, and keep a notebook and tools in the car, too. This way your child can write whenever he or she wants.

5. Environment. According to Allyn, the essentials for a writing environment are a "surface, writing tools, good [lighting](#) and inspiration." When their daughters were young, Allyn and her husband carved out a space for them in the kitchen. This way when they cooked dinner, everyone was together as the girls created.

Have inspiring books within reach (and ones that match their interests), and help your kids create a space that complements their interests and passions. Make your child part of the process as much as possible, Allyn underscores. She suggests asking questions about the tools they like to use (pencils or markers), the type of surface (desk or clipboard), the lightening (too bright or too dim) and whether they'd like to listen to music. And be sure to listen to these preferences without making judgments.

Writing Prompts for Kids

So what do you suggest your kids actually write? Allyn has four prompts to kick start kids' storytelling. You can ask your kids "to write, draw or talk in response."

- *What he remembers (use baby photos, artifacts, your own stories to get him going)*
- *What he observes (everything around him, something he noticed on his way to school or on a class trip)*
- *What he wonders about (this is a fun one; find out what your child is thinking by asking about his wonderings. These will change on a daily basis!)*
- *What he imagines (about the future, by creating a pretend universe, by inventing a news story)*

Kids: On Writing

Many of us have a negative reaction to writing. We associate it with painstaking research papers, anxiety-producing exams and a whole lot of hard, gut-wrenching work. Now, don't get me wrong. Sometimes writing is hard and emotional and exhausting. But it's also a lot of fun.

Like many of us, "children have come to equate writing with hard, laborious work," Allyn writes. But "the pleasure and excitement of writing something that matters to you personally is uplifting and often really energizing."

In the introduction of *Your Child's Writing Life*, Allyn makes an important (and beautiful) point that I'd like to leave you with:

Living a writing life is living with our eyes wide open. Langston Hughes could not have written about the sorrow of the crystal stair on one day and the gloriousness of the "slim curved crook of the moon" on another unless he was someone who was living, as Annie Dillard has said, the "wide-awake life." This book is about teaching our children to stand, as she describes, underneath a pouring waterfall.

Have a great weekend!

Sharon



Important Dates

December 4th

December 5th

December 10th

December 12th

December 18th

January 11th

Board Meeting

Support Staff Luncheon

Holiday Program 6:00

Holiday Bazaar 3:00-7:00 (2:00 set-up)

Holiday Begins

School resumes at 7:55

Bell rings at 8:00

Auditions for **Annie Jr.**

December 14-16, 2015

BAES students in grades 1 and up are invited to audition for various roles in our spring musical, Annie Jr.

How can you prepare for the auditions?

Look at the attached "Characters" page and select roles that interest you. Some characters have mainly speaking parts, but the entire cast will be singing the song, "Tomorrow-Reprise", (see attached p. 103) so everyone will be expected to sing the marked lines during the audition.

For the special roles that require more singing, refer to the "Songs By Character" page and go to www.youtube.com. Type the name of the song you want to practice and click on the Annie Jr. performances. Practice the songs every day this coming week. Singing in front of family or friends will help you to feel more comfortable when it's time for auditions. Use good facial expressions and gestures as you practice.

On the day of the auditions, you will be asked to sing parts of the songs in front of a small group of teachers or parent volunteers. (Please note that parent volunteers will not be involved with auditions that include their children.)

An audition schedule will be posted next week so that you will know exactly where and when to audition during the three day audition period, December 14th to the 16th.

Please remember that once you join the cast of *Annie*, you will be expected to attend both Monday and Thursday afterschool sessions starting January 18th. Even though the afterschool sessions are scheduled to stop on March 3, we will continue our practices up to the performance date, March 24th.

Please feel free to call me at #9989596 if you should have any questions.

Annie Jr. is a fun musical! Ms. Amal's daughter, Amira, gave a memorable performance of Grace when BAES performed Annie Jr. many years ago.

We hope this production will create memories for you!

Mrs. Sanyang

