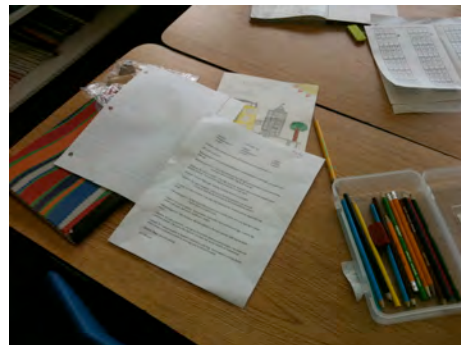




## Q & A

### Why do our children learn to write before they can read?

The development of language and communication of thought is unique in Montessori classrooms. Oral language development is enhanced in a number of ways – the children are read to often (from a wide variety of books); there is continuous encouragement of self-expression and communication through freedom of conversation; picture-card matching games are used to enrich vocabulary. Written language materials take children through a preparation for writing beginning with muscle memory (Sandpaper Letters), and then putting together symbols and their sounds (Moveable Alphabet), while simultaneously developing the muscular control needed to wield a pencil (Metal Insets). As children progress with the Moveable Alphabet, they discover that they can compose words by combining the sounds and their symbols. The children's desire to record their work permanently becomes a natural motivation to make the transition to writing. At about the same time, they realize they have "discovered reading" as they sound out their Moveable Alphabet creations!



When the children arrive in the *elementary* classroom they are reaching a new level in language development. They can write their own stories in cursive. They read real books, rather than customary primers for first and second graders. They gain an understanding of the function and placement of words in sentences as a precursor to grammar and analyzing of sentence structure. They study word types, such as antonyms, homonyms, contractions, and compound words. In addition, they acquire many language facts; facts of geography, facts of nature, facts of art and music history. They discover facts of social history. All of these facts become a basis for the children's further curiosity. It is then the sharing of ideas and books that provides the spontaneity and momentum of Montessori elementary education.