Welcome to Empowering

Homeschool Conversations,

your authority in

navigating the world of

homeschooling diverse learners.

Featuring Peggy Ployer from

Sped Homeschool,

Annie Yorty from AnnieYorty.com,

Leilani Melendez from Living with Eve,

Stephanie Buckwalter from ELARP Learning,

and Dawn Jackson from Dawn

Jackson Educational

Consulting and Tutoring.

With over 75 years of

combined homeschooling expertise,

experiences and perspectives,

this group is eager to

share their wealth of

wisdom to empower your

homeschooling journey.

So grab your favorite mug,

settle in and get ready for

insightful discussions,

valuable insights and practical tips.

Give your homeschool the

power boost it needs to

successfully educate the

unique learners in your home

Hi, everyone,

and welcome to Empowering

Homeschool Conversations.

I'm your host, Annie Yorty.

Today,

we're going to talk about growing

great writers for God's glory.

And we hope you leave this

conversation with some

useful strategies to help

your diverse learners love writing.

And my guest today is Heidi Vertries.

Let me tell you something

about Heidi before we get started.

Heidi is an educator who

taught in public Christian

and charter schools for many years.

She also homeschooled her

own children and has taught

classes for other homeschoolers.

Much of her teaching

experience includes

children and teens who

benefit from learning accommodations.

In addition to teaching,

Heidi was trained as a journalist.

She worked in publishing as

both a writer and an editor.

She previously wrote Sunday

school curriculum for a

national publisher.

She also worked for a

publisher of school

curriculum to adapt social

studies programs for

learners with special needs.

Now, for many years,

Heidi has led a child

evangelism fellowship, Good News Club,

where she teaches weekly

Bible lessons to elementary aged

kids after school.

And she is the author of

Victor Survives Being a Kid,

an award-winning book for middle grades.

The reader joins the

adventure through the

perspective of a Hispanic

boy in middle school as he

looks back on his fifth grade year.

Heidi also posts blog

a blog at newsongpress.net

to help people teach

children fun and

interesting ways to write

from a Christian perspective.

So Heidi,

welcome to Empowering Homeschool

Conversations.

I know firsthand the ups and

downs of homeschooling a

struggling or reluctant writer.

And in my days or in my book,

From Ignorance to Bliss,

one of the chapters tells the story of

my daughter's journey with writing.

And many days I was at my wit's end.

I think I could have used

some of the tips we're

going to talk about today.

And I think anyone listening

is going to get a lot out

of this discussion and be

encouraged as they teach

their children to write.

Welcome, Heidi.

Thank you, Annie Yorty.

Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to be here,

and I'm happy to share any

tips and ideas that might

encourage others.

I'd like to say a quick prayer, if we may.

Absolutely.

Dear Heavenly Father,

please bless our listeners.

Please help them to know we

love them and care about

them and want them to find

some gems in what we're

sharing today so that they

can have the joy of

teaching their children and

their children can be blessed.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Amen.

Thank you, Heidi.

Let's just start off because

many of our listeners may

not be familiar with you.

So I'd like to give you a

chance to tell folks here

why you are so passionate

about teaching children to

enjoy and to develop their

skills at writing.

All right.

Well,

writing is a powerful tool and a way

to express oneself.

Children need to be helped

along with that and

especially to help them

find their own voice in their writings.

I'm going to say it a little

bit interestingly in that

when I first started

teaching writing in the public school,

we were using a method

called writer's workshop,

which I highly recommend.

It can be adapted to homeschool co-ops.

It can be done in families.

It can be used just as a

component of to adapt to

like a one-on-one situation.

And I'll share with that a

little bit more.

So the children absolutely loved writing.

They were very, very excited about it.

And we knew how to help

those who were reluctant

writers as well so they

could come along and taste

their successes too.

So times changed and schools

got really big on testing and data.

We all know about that.

So this was put aside as we

don't have time for this.

And then the schools were

using rubrics and assigned essays.

And the big deal was a child

might choose between one

or two topics,

but they were put cold in front of them.

They had to write, write,

write like a test.

And the finished product was

then evaluated.

They were later given their

scores and told what they did.

there was just no chance for

them to really embrace their writing.

And they would cringe.

The children would cringe at

having to do this.

If the writing went from

being a real joy to being a

necessary requirement that

they just had to grind through.

So that's part of what I am about.

I want children to really

find ways that they can love writing.

So we'll look at that.

And then also,

We want the next generation

to know how they can share

their Christian faith in

their writing as well as

their speaking and their

actions and so forth.

And if they go to public school,

they may feel that they

have to clamp down on all that.

But really,

children have a lot of freedom

in what they can say,

what they can write about.

But they may not even know

how to do it from an

authentic way that makes sense to them.

So that's something that's very powerful.

And in my blog posts, I...

add in ways that children

can be guided in a loving

way to consider their faith

walk and how they might

include it in various

topics that are presented.

How's that?

Is that good enough?

Well,

you've touched on some very important

things.

I think most importantly

that we do have a message

to share and our children do too.

And as parents and educators,

we are teaching them how to share

what's in their heart and

what's on their mind and

and to do it in a way

that's um winsome and

effective so yeah that's um

I love that passion and so

I um let's dive into it a

little bit before we get

into like the you know the

real practical things we're

going to talk about um

let's just talk about

writing.

The word writing can mean so

many things to different

people from the skills

physically that we need to

write to the capacity to tell a story,

you know, how do we organize our thoughts,

things like that.

So talk a little bit about, you know,

so our listeners are

tracking with us what we're

what we mean when we say we're writing.

All right,

so it's a challenge in an hour

to try to cover the waterfront of writing,

but I am here today to try

to share some ideas for beginning writers,

so young children,

as well as grade school age

and middle school and on into high school,

how to organize their writing.

I'm not going to talk about

how to organize an essay, for example.

I'm not about that today, but

there are some very early

writing skills that are so

valuable for children.

And we all know how

important it is to read to

our children so that they

will want to become readers.

Well, talking to them, listening to them,

reading to them,

having them reach us are

all building blocks too for

early skills needed for writing.

And I'm prepared to talk

some more about that.

Okay.

That sounds good.

Well,

I guess let's start by

talking about the

atmosphere that we want to

create for writing and just

making it an atmosphere

that is productive and

encouraging for our children.

All right.

And I think I'll put a

little Christian spin on that one too.

So it is nice, but let's start with this.

Many of us have heard of Mary Englebright,

trying to see, I have, yeah, here we go.

have one of her notepads.

You can see she's, yeah,

some of you might recognize her artwork.

It's very charming and it's for children.

And when she was 11, 10 maybe,

she really wanted to have her own studio.

She heard artists have their

own studios if they're serious.

And she did lots and lots of drawing.

Even as a child,

she started with

illustrations from

old-fashioned children's books.

So her parents cleaned out a linen closet,

put in a little desk,

and gave her her ink and

whatever kind of chair they

could get in there.

And she was so happy to have

her own studio.

And she said it made her

feel like her parents

really cared about her artwork.

So I think if we as parents

have a place where the

children can go for their writing,

that may be very good too

for them to really feel special about it.

But I also think there needs

to be flexibility.

So I'll try to explain.

So some people have closets

that they can capture and

remodel and maybe put in

some very special things to

create the atmosphere.

I've seen where people will

put in different,

like they'll have a

background and then they'll glue or affix,

let's just say affix,

different containers for

different markers and

erasers and paper supplies and so forth.

So there you go.

But I think...

Well, if you know the Montessori method,

it's taught that we don't

inundate children with too much.

We introduce a few materials

and they enjoy them,

and then we switch it out

and introduce some more.

So to make a cozy place may

mean a beanbag with a clipboard,

but not all the time.

It may mean that for a while,

but it may also mean a

little desk because when we're writing,

and especially some children,

maybe they have dysgraphia, they may need

They may even need an

occupational therapist to

come in to say how they

should sit at the desk and

how they should hold the

pencil and using a pencil

grip and so forth.

So we need to accommodate to

each child what are their

special circumstances.

But I would like to

encourage that there are

nice things around to

inspire the children.

Maybe you have a nice

picture of Jesus that you can show.

This one is by

It's a leading tree card,

and the artist is Danny H-A-H-L-B-O-H-M.

Okay?

H-A-H-L-B-O-H-M.

Okay?

H-A-H-L-B-O-H-M.

And he even writes,

he says that Danny is still

quick to point out that the

Lord has been the true

artist throughout his life.

And then there's another one

I'll quickly show.

It's a big one.

I think this is wonderful artwork here.

And this artist has many

beautiful pictures of Jesus.

So we want our children to

feel Jesus is their friend, right?

So we want pictures of him,

just like we put pictures

of our family and friends

around the house.

And this is by the artist Randy Freimel,

F-R-I-E-M-E-L.

And of course,

these fellows would have websites.

So

I think when we put out

different kinds of writing

materials in that environment,

we can switch it again.

Maybe we want to have little

scrolls that we make for

the children to write.

Maybe we want to put in a

prayer shawl that they can

put around them when they're writing.

Maybe we want to put in a

helmet and a sword for the armor of God.

Maybe they want to wear a

hat when they're writing.

Or maybe, just as simple as this,

they want to have

a little hat to put on,

that's their thinking cap.

And so they only wear that

hat when they're thinking

about what they're writing.

So someone doesn't interrupt them.

Yeah, so let's see.

You want to give them a variety of things,

again, to choose from,

whether it's colored markers,

choosing erasers.

I think that's a good idea,

choosing the color on the erasers.

They can't see it right on the screen,

but you get the idea.

I'm scoping funny.

That if they're going to

have to erase anything,

let them choose the color, right?

No red pens.

Well, yeah, that's...

Just a really interesting

thing that I don't think we

often think about is when

we're teaching our children how to write,

we are always more about like,

just get something on a piece of paper.

And what I hear you saying is number one,

that there's,

we need to inspire our children.

And so the things that we

surround them with,

like even as you mentioned,

understanding that Jesus is,

with them in the writing.

And as an adult,

I know that when I sit down to write,

I pray before I write

because I'm inviting the

Holy Spirit to inform what I write.

And so why not teach that

practice to our children

right from the get-go?

And then I love your ideas

of just bringing in these

whimsical things that

depending on the child is going to

just make it fun and special and like, oh,

I get to go write because

I'm going to put on my helmet or whatever,

or my cape or whatever it might be that,

that your child gets excited about.

So that's,

I really can get on board with that.

I like making things fun for our kids too.

So that's, that's neat.

You mentioned the,

the presence of God in our writing.

And so

how does prayer factor into

that for our children?

And how do you encourage

that for our children as they write?

Okay.

So yes,

I totally agree just as authors

that I encourage parents to

pray with their children

before they start writing, because, um,

We want to praise God.

He's given us the living word.

And we've, through that,

learned about our loving Jesus.

And we learned about the

leading of the Holy Spirit.

So all of those things are

really important to tune

into right from the get-go.

Talk about atmosphere.

We want that as a part of our writing.

And to let them know that

Jesus is coming alongside

them to help them with their writing.

There are different ways we

can pray with them about that.

Maybe they want to make the prayer.

and then watch the adult

write down the prayer.

So modeling, writing,

that's an example of

modeling writing to show them.

They might get really excited about that.

They also might want to sing

a prayer or again,

depending on the child's

disability and all,

maybe they do hand motions,

maybe they sign the prayer

or the Bible verse.

And I will mention,

that as you heard,

I have been with Child

Evangelism Fellowship for a

long time through their Good News Clubs.

And one can often just go on the phone,

go on YouTube and type in CEF,

that stands for Child

Evangelism Fellowship,

and then Bible songs or

Bible verse songs.

And there are a ton of them

on there and you can pick out some.

There's one that's called the Peace Song

And if we had more time,

we would do it now.

But it's John 14, 27.

And it is absolutely a prayer.

It's Jesus talking to us and

to the disciples about...

how he's gonna give us

special peace and he's

gonna be there for us.

And it's amazing that he's

saying this just before

what happens to him, right?

With the crucifixion and everything.

He is so reassuring even

then wanting to be

reassuring to us no matter what.

So if the children want to

learn to sing it or,

do the motions or both, both is great.

And it gives them a little

bit of moving around.

So sometimes that's a nice

way to break up writing too,

is a little activity that's

still focused on what we're trying to do.

Well, those are great.

It gives a whole new

perspective on just getting

ready to write and getting

in the right mindset and

letting the creativity part

of writing start flowing

through us and through our kids.

So now a lot of our

listeners and our

homeschooling children that

may not yet be writing,

but that doesn't mean that

they don't have a lot to

work on to prepare for writing.

So let's talk about just

some of the specific things,

just ideas that you can

give about this pre-writing.

Why is it important?

Why don't we just hand a kid

a pencil and say, you know,

start copying letters.

There's so much more to it

that readies them for the

skill of writing.

Okay.

So we have talked about the

idea that when they see the

words in books,

it warms them up to the idea

that somebody wrote that

and they can write something too.

And we know the traditional

way of teaching the letters,

then learning the sounds,

writing their names.

We all, yeah, know about that.

So I think I could mention a

few things that the listeners might

like to know.

If your child is having troubles,

for instance, holding a pencil,

you can put hair gel, colored hair gel,

in a Ziploc bag, a freezer bag,

and seal it real well.

And then they can trace

letters into the gel.

Or you can, well,

you can make chalkboards at

home with chalkboard paint or whiteboards,

little whiteboards.

But you can also...

draw whatever it is,

let's say it's a letter,

and then your child can use

a little square sponge, make it wet,

and then they write the letter,

and then they can do a dry sponge.

Sometimes children need all this tactile,

right?

A dry sponge and write the

letter on top of the wet letter,

and then they can go ahead

and with a piece of chalk

try to write the letter or

whatever implement you're using for that.

I have an acquaintance whose

son was in a terrible accident.

So he is catching up with

what he had before.

You know, that happens.

And we all know there are

some listeners or viewers

here who might have that

situation as well.

And he can sign.

He can sign.

And they communicate that way.

And then, because that's a strength of his,

we want to build on strengths,

then they get the scrabble tiles out,

the letter tiles,

and they start to find the

letters to form a given word.

Maybe they also work in phrases,

but I've heard it as given word.

So that can be seen.

And that, in a sense, is writing,

isn't it?

In a sense, it is writing.

I know someone else whose child is

autistic and very concrete

learner dutiful but not

crazy about writing yet and

she'll show a picture let's

say it's well for the

purpose of this program

let's just say we had a

picture of david and

goliath okay and then the

idea is to ask the child

what do you see and when

the child says what he or

she sees then the idea is

okay let's write it and it

might be writing it

together depending on the child.

It might be that the child

can write a sentence at a

time and building from that.

Let me see.

Oh, yes, I have here.

I was thinking that another

kind of writing for early

writing skills is maybe you

don't have Christmas cards these days.

They're not as common,

but you can probably get some off of eBay,

I bet, or something like that.

But get some Christmas cards and maybe,

let's see, cut out the words, right?

Cut out the words and then...

together with your child, rearrange them.

Maybe you can make a

different sentence and they

can have fun with that or

try to think what did it

say and try to put it back together.

It's okay if it's not perfect.

It's all about trying to have fun,

isn't it?

But just find different ways.

I know people used to say, well,

get a cereal box and read

the cereal box together.

But I think we can use other

materials to help with writing.

And I think I'm starting to

ramble a little bit, but I want to say,

Annie,

correct me if I'm losing your question,

but there are some Bibles.

I want to show this one.

It's the Action Bible.

And they have most of it's

BSV regular Bible.

But they have some graphic

novel or comic book, if you want to say,

style.

And your children may love

to do writing like this where they,

let's say they hear a Bible

story and then give them a

chance to retell the story

in their own words.

And then write down some of

the key words that either

they said or you think they

should know from the story or both,

right?

So they have that as like a

poster where they can look

at that to help them as

they then say what they

think they want to put into

the bubbles for retelling

their Bible story.

Right, yeah.

These are all like

wonderfully creative ideas.

And I think,

We feel like we're rambling

a bit maybe because there are so many.

The sky's the limit when it

comes to these ideas.

I recall giving my children

pictures and then letting

them caption them and

making little photo albums,

things like that,

because they're things that

they're interested in.

They were pictures of

something they did and it

made it interesting for them.

And also it was in bite-sized amounts.

It wasn't like here, fill two pages.

It was,

let's just take it at the level

that we're at and put a

little at a time on the paper.

And also even things like,

I think you mentioned telling,

narrating what you see in a

picture or what you're

thinking about in your head,

even those things are

preparing for writing.

There's a storytelling

aspect to writing and then

there's the physical mechanics of it.

We know that the physical

mechanics are far more than

just our hands.

Our shoulders,

our trunk muscles are all involved.

So it is,

you mentioned things like

movement and those are all

important to get those

muscles developed so a

child can do each part of

the writing process.

Because if they're being

inspired and if they're excited,

then they do want to write something.

And if they like it, then they might say,

let's put it in and make a

scrapbook that they can get

out different times and

share with people and add

in pictures to it.

they're remembering the time

I went to a ball game.

Maybe there's a ticket or

something that they can add in, you know,

how scrapbooks are.

So they can make something

that's maybe small pieces,

but it's still glued

together as one beautiful

thing that takes on its own

shape over time too.

Right.

I love how we're really

focusing on the motivation

because for kids that

struggle to write books,

That's very demotivating.

I mean, when it's hard,

who wants to do that?

But if you can add some

element to it that makes it more exciting,

then it provides a reward

for the hard work that

they're going to do for the writing.

So I love that.

Love capitalizing on strengths.

Find what your child can do

and really try to direct

your efforts in that area

and they're going to be much

more motivated because

they're going to be successful.

Yes.

And I think it's important

to celebrate with the child

the completion of each of the stages,

whether it's the thinking about,

as we could call it pre-writing,

pre-writing is more than that,

but whether it's the thinking,

like getting your topic, celebrate it.

Well, how do you celebrate it?

Well, I have an idea.

Yeah, I'd love to hear more about this.

I love celebrations.

I think it's biblical to celebrate.

So let's jump into that a little bit,

see how we can celebrate at

each level of that writing

to keep it going.

Yeah.

So, of course, traditionally in schools,

there might be a sticker chart,

and there's nothing wrong with that.

You know, they've reached a certain point,

and they get a sticker.

Kids like stickers,

and they can put a sticker on.

There's some nice Christian

stickers out there.

That's all good and

Well, good.

And I'm not saying don't do that,

but you may want to bump it

up a little more.

I was looking online

yesterday and on Amazon,

they have this inexpensive church.

It's the inside of a church

that it's like a Lego, not Lego brand,

but it's like a Lego.

And

different stages of the

writing let's say they

finish the pre-writing well

hey that's the foundation

so maybe you can build the

foundation so after they

that's the celebration they

can now build the

foundation if this is a

child that likes hands-on

activities um and and then

the different stages like

when they've done the um

First draft, right?

Then maybe by that time

they're putting up the

windows and they see the

light of God coming in and et cetera.

But let's just say the child

doesn't go for that as a incentive.

And by the way, you might want a menu.

How are we going to celebrate?

So they can choose what they want.

But maybe then pick some

other things that build

good Christian character.

Like maybe they want to go

and kind of have to anticipate this,

right?

But maybe you have a little

house plant or a little

outdoor plant that they can

plant after they have

achieved a certain level

with the project of writing.

Maybe they need some time to

play with a kitten in the

house or something like that.

Again,

all of those work in nurturing and

responsibility and God's creations.

All of those are good rewards.

to give them, maybe they want to paint

a picture of what they've written so far.

Now, granted,

some children do actually

think better if they draw

or doodle before they write.

And I think it's good to

keep that in mind that some

of them are just so naturally that way.

I wouldn't say don't do that.

Let them do the natural.

But if they're like hanging

in there and postponing the

writing too much, it's time to say, okay,

well,

we'll finish this as a reward when

you get your so-and-so 15 minutes,

20 minutes of writing done today.

uh so those are some things

there are other things um

that would work out well um

again maybe singing a song

maybe ordering a song if

they're a musician let them

pick out a hymn that they

want to have to play on the

guitar or the piano uh yeah

there could be all kinds of

nice rewards at different

stages of the writing right

um again our children are

so different that um

know what motivates one

won't motivate another so

we have to just kind of

tune in to what um what

they um what floats their

boat you know what what'll

set their heart on fire

there with that and I like

how you mentioned you can even bring

bring them into it saying, you know,

when we do good things, when we work hard,

then we do want to reward you.

And so think about what

would that reward look like?

And, and our rewards, you know, often,

I think almost all can be

very educational.

You know, they're just at it.

They may think, oh, this is play, but,

you know, it's educational.

So you can give them that

menu that keeps the learning going.

But my kids love to be able to to,

you know,

make little books and things

like that that they could

share with other people.

I think that's when they get

to see the purpose for their writing.

beyond just there's

something on a piece of paper and oh,

that's now in a notebook or

folder somewhere.

But when it comes out and

they get to show someone

else or read it to them or have it read

you know,

in the company of some grandparents,

you know, siblings, your pet, whatever,

you know.

Very rewarding, even as an animal,

very rewarding.

And then you can ask the grandparents,

please tell the child how

it has blessed them as well.

So they get some good

feedback to motivate them further.

You know,

there's another little thing that

kind of comes into my mind here.

So I have this

Easter egg, I don't know,

the print comes out

backwards on the screen.

Here's another idea for a reward.

These are a little harder to come by.

This happens to be Billy

Graham's Bible promises,

but they're little cards,

and there are other ways

you can get this.

But the one I pulled out says,

I can do all things through Christ,

which strengthens me, Philippians 4.13.

So you can,

before your child knows about it,

you can put it in the egg and hide it.

children love to look for things, you know,

it's the whole discovery,

discovery approach.

And then when they find it, then, you know,

they can open it and you

can do whatever celebration

you want and reading it.

And it might turn into

another writing assignment,

but maybe later you don't want to,

you know, you haven't to balance it,

but just,

just in ways to have like a

little quick game.

And yet still, like Annie said,

it's a learning because

they're looking at the Bible verse.

If you do this,

I want to encourage that

you also take a moment and

look in the Bible,

whether it's one for an

older child or one for a younger child,

and see, show them where it comes.

Oh, I can't get that.

Show where it comes in the Bible.

And like one of these,

it'll probably be what

story is it connected to?

You know,

it's not going to be matching exactly.

But in the other Bible,

it's good for children to

actually see the source of

Bible verse truth.

Very true.

Those are all great ideas

and I encourage our

listeners to just think

about their own children

and what will motivate them

and just ways again to make it fun.

Yes, make it fun.

We often wonder as parents

teaching this like what kind of structure

should we provide?

How much structure do our

children need when they're

developing their writing skills?

Okay.

So I might shift a little

more towards the second grade,

third grade,

if you're thinking like grades, you know,

eight and up for some of my

thinking here.

But I

Yeah.

So we want to inspire them

and get them excited and so forth.

There's so many beautiful

ways we can do that.

We can talk more about that,

but they also need support

and they need us.

You don't have to share your

goal with them necessarily,

but you set realistic goals

of what you want them to achieve.

Maybe it is to write a sentence.

Maybe it is to write a paragraph, but, um,

Maybe it is to write a letter, right?

But set a realistic goal and

figure out how you can help

them get to that point and

make it bite size so they

don't get overwhelmed.

But there might be certain

stages of the writing where

they start to feel lost.

And one thing,

this is put out in the

literature to help people

with dysgraphia.

But honestly,

when I taught third grade and

fourth grade and fifth grade,

graphic organizers were

used a lot for everybody.

So I have a little snap here of one,

but it's usually much larger than that.

But the idea is that there

are worksheets that have

all the key elements in it

to help with their

pre-writing or their planning.

So for example, this one,

Hamburger Style Graphic Organizer,

it's like a hamburger bun.

So the top of the bun is the

topic sentence.

And then the, the, the tomato,

the hamburger and the

lettuce are supporting details.

And then the bottom bun is the conclusion.

And that's your five sentence paragraph.

But anyway,

there are lots and lots of

graphic organizers available online and,

um,

that can help with providing

some structure because

children generally do need structure.

And if they also understand

the stages of writing,

that's what I talked about

a little bit earlier with

the writer's workshop,

that each stage is very important.

And as authors,

and I think most adults

would understand this,

that coming up with the idea is powerful.

It's what spurs you on.

So that's a legitimate

component of their writing is

the pre-writing and coming

up with their idea.

And how do you enrich them

to come up with those ideas?

Do you go on certain field trips?

Do you watch certain video clips?

Do you read certain books?

Do you interview certain people?

So forth and so on.

How do you enrich them?

But once they come up with their idea,

we don't want them to be overwhelmed.

So just say, well, just pick one.

Just pick one that you think

you'd like to learn about.

Well, that's where the,

it's often called KWS,

L chart comes in handy,

where the child can write

down what he or she knows,

what he or she wants to learn,

and then on a given topic, of course,

and then to go ahead and work on that.

And then at the end,

then list what did he or

she learn about that topic.

So those are the components

for building then their

sentences and their report

writing or however you want

them to write.

It gives them some structure.

All of this is called

working towards the first draft.

And when they write the first draft,

a lot of children think they're done.

And if they're happy with it,

that's great.

And it may be that that

particular topic needs to

be just done there.

But they need to also be

encouraged a little further

along that it's okay to revise.

and that's not a punishment

and that's not a criticism

of their work or anything like that.

It's like polishing a gemstone.

How can we revisit it?

So revisiting oftentimes

means giving it a little bit of time,

certainly at least a day

before they go back and take a look.

But if they haven't explored

that with other people's work,

it may be painful for them

to try to do that on their own work.

So maybe that begins with storybooks.

For instance,

we all know the one I think about the,

Well,

we know that three pigs and then we

know that one from the

viewpoint of the of the wolf.

Right.

So just switch out like how

stories could be different

when you're reading books.

Maybe think how could they

have changed that ending?

Or how could they have made

this more funny?

Or how could she have been kinder?

Just things like that to get

them thinking that it's

okay to think about

changing up stories and revising things.

And I'm going to pause there

because I think I'm talking

too much and I want to hear your answer.

Yeah,

I want to just touch back on the

structure

talking about that structure

that you offered.

I love the point that you

make that children do feel

overwhelmed sometimes by

the like just the

possibilities of you could

write about anything or how

or what goes first, what goes second.

And those graphic organizers

do really help.

I remember doing that hamburger one,

actually, some years ago.

But yes, even authors, you know,

adult authors who are

writing fiction or even me

as an I write nonfiction mostly.

I do organize my thoughts

first and I have some idea

of where I'm going,

how I want to start it out.

what information I want to include.

I may do a little outline of some sort.

And certainly fiction authors,

many of them do the same thing where they

write maybe some description

of characters or just kind

of plot out the action in

some basic form before they

actually start writing.

So I think when when our

kids get that outline,

that's almost like that's a

big green light.

Then if they have the skills

to put their pen,

their their writing instrument,

whatever it is,

to paper or computer or whatever,

that when they have that organizer,

it just gives them a green

light to start doing it.

It puts some guardrails on

the writing so that they

know what lane they're in.

So I love that idea.

And then, well,

you started to touch on

this idea of feedback.

And you're right.

I remember, you know,

my kids would finish one

thing and then they were like,

oh, isn't that good?

I'm done, you know?

And I know, yeah, I know as an adult,

I have to come back to my work.

It feels great to finish,

but I rarely put something

out to publish until I let

it sit for a couple of days.

And then I get back and read it again.

I'm like, hmm, I could, yeah,

change a few things.

You notice it after the fact.

And I like how you're talking about

making that a positive experience,

letting kids know that this

is a normal thing.

You can hear where you can

improve and they're going

to feel even better about

their finished product when

they have tweaked it or, you know,

learn how to evaluate their

own work after you model it for them.

And I love the idea of

instead of just doing their work,

you said,

pick something else that you're reading.

Take the book that you're

reading and talk about how

that could be changed.

How could the ending change

or could the point of view

be different or something like that?

That's fun.

And it teaches them the

skill of critiquing and

then they'll be able to

hopefully transfer it to

their own work even.

Right.

And how to have fun with

adjectives and verbs.

They have various ways.

You can have a treasure box

full of adjectives and verb cards and

Maybe they pull them out and

play with some sentences

and see if they want to

switch in or add in some of

the cards that they see there.

So just to play with words,

to have fun with it.

Absolutely.

And when I've done writer's

workshop with homeschoolers,

I like natural things.

So I had these seashells.

Each child had a seashell.

And then whatever they were

working on at the given time,

they would put into their seashell.

Like this one says, pre-writing.

My finger.

It says pre-writing.

And so when I would go

around and check the

children as they were writing,

because Rita's workshop

includes also teachers

meeting one-on-one with the

writers during the writing workshop time,

I would know where they were.

So I would know how to

approach them and what

they're working on.

And so then, again, that makes,

like you're saying,

makes it legitimate that

they're building blocks.

so then then we had the uh

whoopsie that we had first

draft there we go first

draft and we had revise and

then another I want to talk

more about edit in a moment

but we had edit and then we

had publish there you go

publish so but but when uh

with writer's workshop um after a session

we would gather as a group.

And again, a family can do this.

Family can divide up.

Maybe they want to do the

whole story as a family,

or maybe they want as a

homeschool group to do.

Anyway, they can gather together.

And then those who want to can say, yes,

I'd like to be an author's chair.

And they share what they've

been working on regardless

of what stage it's at.

Because they may say,

this time I'd like to get

some feedback about whether

you'd like my story.

And then everyone knows this

is not the time to criticize.

And then besides,

I don't call it criticize.

I call it constructive feedback.

And people are encouraged

before they ever give

constructive feedback to

first give a compliment.

And so anyway, yeah.

So for the kids to begin to

realize that there are

different legitimate stages

in their writing.

Yeah,

if you set that expectation right at

the beginning,

like with those little signs you had,

they're like, oh, well,

that's each part is going

to happen at some point.

And then it's all normal.

Whereas if you let them just

think in their own mind, well, I finished,

the story came to the end

and now we're done.

You know, so it's,

you're providing that

structure as their teacher, right?

to understand that there are

different components.

Right.

And not everything has to be

brought to totally done and

ready to share or co-publish.

But some things can just stay as is.

Because maybe the child

wants to work on it later.

Like maybe it's a poem and they think,

you know, I need some time on this one.

I'm going to put this aside,

just like an artist does, right?

I'm going to put this one aside.

I'm going to work on

something else and see how

far that gets me.

And I think that's okay to

let them have that room

Yeah, these are all good things.

I like just how we can,

at every stage of this,

just thinking about what

our children's level is and

picking up there and

finding a fun motivation

and a way to provide an

achievement with a realistic goal.

So there's something that's

achieved that they can understand, Hey,

I did that.

And then they are motivated

to go to the next level.

So that,

and our kids are all at different stages.

I, I always, I,

this always comes into a

conversation when we're

homeschooling that your

child is not in a race with

any other child.

You know,

we don't need to compare them to

what little Johnny is doing, you know,

and

our neighbor or whatever.

But this is just you coming

alongside your child and

seeing where they're at and

helping them take the next

growth step in writing.

And the listeners might find

it very neat to hear that, for example,

let me see if I put my book.

Okay.

I have a book that was

recently published by Lauren Vignola.

arose from heaven,

and she was a normal child

until she was two,

and then she came down with brain cancer,

and basically the doctors

didn't think she was going to live.

Well, the story tells of that,

how many times she

experienced what she

believes are miracles from God,

and how she was able to

be healed in different ways.

She still has disabilities.

But when the doctor said

she's going to be blind and

never see again,

and then she was able to see.

And when she wrote her book,

she wrote it with big keys on a keyboard,

and it talked it back to her.

So she had

family and a friend more

that would help her with

how she would organize her

thoughts and make sure it

would be clear to the readers.

But she's written a book,

so that should be an inspiration.

Then there's an author

people may have heard of called Avi,

A-V-I.

And he still has dysgraphia.

And my goodness,

he's a fabulous writer of

children's books, middle grade.

I particularly like the book Secret School,

but he's written adventure

stories in historical

settings and very captivating.

And he's won Newbery Awards.

That's the best, right?

Newbery Award.

And he has dysgraphia.

So he's

come along with it through the years.

And he had a post just

recently where he said, well,

spell checks really helps a lot.

And, uh, so I'm,

I'm thinking going back

just a bit ago when we're

talking about when a child gets stuck,

I had stuck in the writing.

I had a child who was, um,

middle schooler and I was

working with him, not my own child,

another child.

And he was stuck on writing.

He just, you get a writer's block.

Everyone can get writer's block.

And, um,

So I said, okay, do you have a cell phone?

He did.

We put it on.

I said, why don't you talk about it?

And he got to see his words

forming on the whatever

notes or whatever he was

using for his app.

And he was thrilled.

He was thrilled.

He got unstuck.

And then from that,

he was able to go ahead and

do his own writing as well.

So I'm not saying all should be technology,

but there is a helpful time for it,

I think.

I think it's exciting.

It can be used as a wise tool.

But parents will certainly say, too,

for fine motor skills and

learning how to write that

we need to stick with our

tried and true old ways

that we have with normal

writing and good posture.

And how do you hold a pencil?

And how do you form those letters?

And if a child has trouble,

I'm going to go way back.

And just give me a second, Annie.

But if a child's having troubles with

Like heights on letters,

there are different ways you can do it,

right?

Like you can say sky for the

tall letters and you might

say grass for the shorter

letters and ground for the

ones that go below the line.

And maybe the child gives you a thumbs up,

right,

for each time the letter is going

to go high to the sky, maybe a fifth.

for the ones on the line and

maybe a thumbs down for the

one that goes down the line,

but we know tactile, right?

We wanna sometimes hit them

with learning their letters.

So that's my ramble.

All right, I'm ready.

Yeah, well,

there's lots of little tricks

like that that will stick

in the mind of the child,

especially like you

mentioned when there's

something tactile or

physical that goes along with it.

That's important for many of our children.

A finger between words to

get the spacing in can help.

Sometimes people call it the spaceman.

I wouldn't want to put a

device there myself.

I think the finger works better.

Maybe they can draw a little

face on the fingernail.

I don't know.

Well, there's all kinds of things.

We get really creative when

we have children who learn differently.

Doesn't mean they don't learn at all.

So we want to keep that in

mind as parents that even a

child who maybe because of

their disability can't do a

certain part of the writing process,

we can, you've already touched on this,

that there are some

you know,

accommodations we can make so we

can maybe bypass that one

thing and let them keep

growing in another area that they can do.

We find the part that they

can do and really work on it.

Um, we can modify activities.

We can come up with little work around,

you know, like cues,

like you've mentioned.

Um, so sometimes I don't,

we have just a couple of minutes left.

If there's any thoughts you have about,

um,

a child who maybe can't do a

certain part of the process,

but can do something else,

how a parent can sort of

work around that.

Okay.

Well,

also it's very important for children

to see the parents modeling

what is being expected and

they're learning a great deal,

even if they can't do all the pieces,

just seeing an example in work.

And of course, again,

parents have to decide how

to modify that based on their children.

So there can just be a sweet

agreement when you're

working on something that

if they get to a part that

you know is going to be

really hard for them, you say, well,

how about if we do this part together?

Or how about if you let me

do it for a moment?

But you don't want to do too much.

Let them feel empowered.

But just say, OK, we'll just do this,

or we'll do a workaround.

life is full of workarounds for all of us.

So maybe there's a special

workaround for them to hop

over a step that's going to

be a little too hard for them.

And that's okay.

Yeah.

Okay.

Well,

I think we've given a lot of great

tips to parents and also,

as you just mentioned,

empowered them to adjust

freely based on their own

children's needs and

desires and motivations.

And

and to just bring them into

that process where it

becomes fun and exciting

for them to write instead

of a dreaded chore.

I know I could have used

some of these tips back

when I was teaching the

writing to my daughter, for sure.

But I see we're getting to

the end of our time together here, Heidi.

If there's a final thought you want to add,

feel free.

And then I'd like to just...

make sure listeners know how

they can stay in touch with you,

how they can access some of

your resources.

All right.

I'll just add in that when a

child has written something

and you're wanting to ease

them into revision,

you might ask them to think

about it like a movie or a retelling and

Ask them, is it clear?

Is it clear to them?

And ask them to read it aloud.

Reading aloud is very helpful,

very helpful.

And it may be the next day

because that's helpful too.

Give it a little time to season.

But if it's not clear to

them when they're reading aloud,

chances are it's not clear

to the readers either.

And not to worry because

there are ways to fix the

writing to make it more clear.

But if they notice that,

Maybe they'll notice that

the setting needs a little

more description or the

characters' emotions aren't

really coming across like

they want them to.

What can they do to make it more clear?

Yeah,

so I think that would be one thing I

would suggest for them.

I have other blog posts that

you're welcome to look at

at newsongpress.net slash blog.

And there is, well,

the current one is about

writing tips for children

who are disabled.

And then at the end of that post,

there is a list,

an archive of the different

topics for the different

blog posts that are there.

So that can help you to see,

like maybe you want to help

your child with writing

about an adventure this summer

a how-to writing or writing about animals,

things like that.

And in fact,

I'll make a real quick talk

that there's a woman who

wrote a beautiful book called,

I'm gonna draw down Frank on my title,

but how he's, oh, I'm not remembering it,

but it's a story about a

donkey who leads Jesus into Jerusalem.

And he comes across as he's

disabled because he doesn't

have the right kind of hee-haw sound.

And through the story,

you realize that no God

gifted him with the

hallelujah sound that he can make.

I'm praising Jesus.

Oh, that sounds sweet.

It's a very sweet storyline.

So I think that to look at

that post can help people

who are trying to look for,

there's more than one post,

to help look for storylines

to help see how to shape the story.

Yes.

Well,

I would also mention that Heidi does

have a book,

a charming book that I think

your middle grades would really enjoy.

And if you go to her website,

you're going to find a free

teaching guide for this book,

Victor Survives Being a Kid.

So that's a picture of the book there.

You can learn more about it

at her website,

I would also note that all

of these links that we're

talking about will be in

the show notes as well.

So you can find it there.

And I want to just say thank you so much,

Heidi,

for sharing these practical tips to

help us motivate our

children to love to write

for the glory of God.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

God bless all of you.

Thank you.

Yes.

Thanks so much, Heidi.

And now I want to tell you

about our next episode of

Empowering Homeschool Conversations.

We will be rethinking ADHD,

giving attention to dreams,

humor and discoveries.

Sounds like that's going to be a good one.

Until then, take care and God bless.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

This has been Empowering

Homeschool Conversations

provided by Sped Homeschool,

a nonprofit that empowers

families to home educate

diverse learners.

To learn more, visit spedhomeschool.com.

Thank you, Anne.