

## Reinforcing Independent Creative Writing

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No learning is stagnant; it is a dynamic, evolving process. New ideas and thoughts keep emerging, modifying the old ones. This kind of change depends upon continuous practice, experience and the pursuit of new ideas. Because a child's interest has an important role in this process, how we can motivate a child's interest in a creative pursuit is an important consideration. How to help a child progress from standard writing (simple sentences, phrases, description etc.) to independent and creative expression (presenting any subject in their own unique style, adding logical reasoning to justify their thoughts, etc.) is a challenge for any teacher. This article tries to find an answer to that.

If creative thinking or imagination is clubbed with independent writing, then the writing shines. Using one's own unique style and word structures and conveying thoughts with logical reasoning builds independent writing. Are there enough opportunities in our classrooms to build such independent and creative writing skills in students? We need to analyse the learning outcomes, pedagogical models and opportunities provided for such a process in our classrooms.

A language teacher continuously uses different pedagogies to introduce various skills based on

learning outcomes. The learning of the skills by students is reinforced by assessing them through homework, reading, term tests, etc.

However, when it comes to creative writing, we must ask ourselves, *will there be enough time for the students to master these skills and to produce new and original writing?* The answer is *no*. Isn't it then natural for the teacher to question if it is important to cultivate the skills of independent and creative writing in children? What is the advantage of creative writing? What will a child achieve by writing stories and poems? It is not a basic necessity like food, water, air or a job for a good life. But if we look deeply into it, learning to solve everyday problems, and social and communication skills are important for life and cannot be acquired overnight. These develop only through constant practice and use. All these are part of an individual's independent thinking and creativity.

If we want to develop independent and creative writing in children, allowing them to express their feelings, experiences, ideas, imagination, speculations, and logic in various ways is the first step. Only when we open these doors for them, can children make progress towards independent and creative writing. Let us see what we can do to make this a continuous process.

*Some learning activities that are being used in Karnataka currently to facilitate independent and creative writing.*

1	Drawing a picture and writing what it is under it in their home language. Example: Draw a picture of a hand fan and write its name ( <i>beesanige</i> in Kannada).
2	Writing about life experiences and the things they see around them.
3	Writing short stories or poems about their favourite subjects and presenting these in class.
4	Using language more creatively in writing stories, poems or descriptions.
5	Writing stories in their own words from their imagination.
6	Writing about other people's experiences, or what they gather from hearing other people talking. Example: Conversations at public places, like water taps, bus stands or city junctions.
7	Poster-making - both writing and collecting materials.
8	Using nuances and the system of language in practice. Example: Changing (altering) the words in poems by understanding its meaning and rhythm.
9	Writing effectively by keeping in mind the readers and the purpose of their writing.

## Organising recitations

We give our students opportunities to write stories and poems in our classrooms. These are based on the expected learning outcomes. We motivate them to write stories and poems through which their imagination can fly to boundless horizons. With constant effort, a child will write one or two poems within a period of fifteen days or a month but if we move away from this to other learning outcomes, then the work on this skill development halts. Due to the lack of practice, the child may gradually forget the skill. That is the reason why teachers organise recitations of poems or stories in schools, so that these skills can be reinforced and kept alive, and the child can develop an interest in different subjects and styles of writing.

## School magazine

Another way of encouraging and promoting creativity among students is the school magazine. We collect stories, poems, articles, plays, book reviews, experiences, ideas, opinions and other forms of writing from children and publish these in the magazine. Students write about

their surroundings, people, festivals, fairs and programmes. They are encouraged to explore and include various aspects, such as the importance of such events, their history, and how they are celebrated. Expressing their own thoughts along with the information they have gathered, and learning to reason logically and consistently in presenting are skills that are necessary not only in higher classes but throughout life.

## Giving guidance

Children need guidance in these writing activities. Teachers can arrange workshops and invite experienced writers to guide and encourage children to write their stories and poems. In this way, they can be motivated to actively engage in creative writing. During special day celebrations and festivals, students can be given the opportunity to express their thoughts on these.

These activities should be extended outside school, for example, by creating reading clubs for students in their village or community. Children can be encouraged to work in pairs or groups so that they can motivate each other; the mutual exchange of

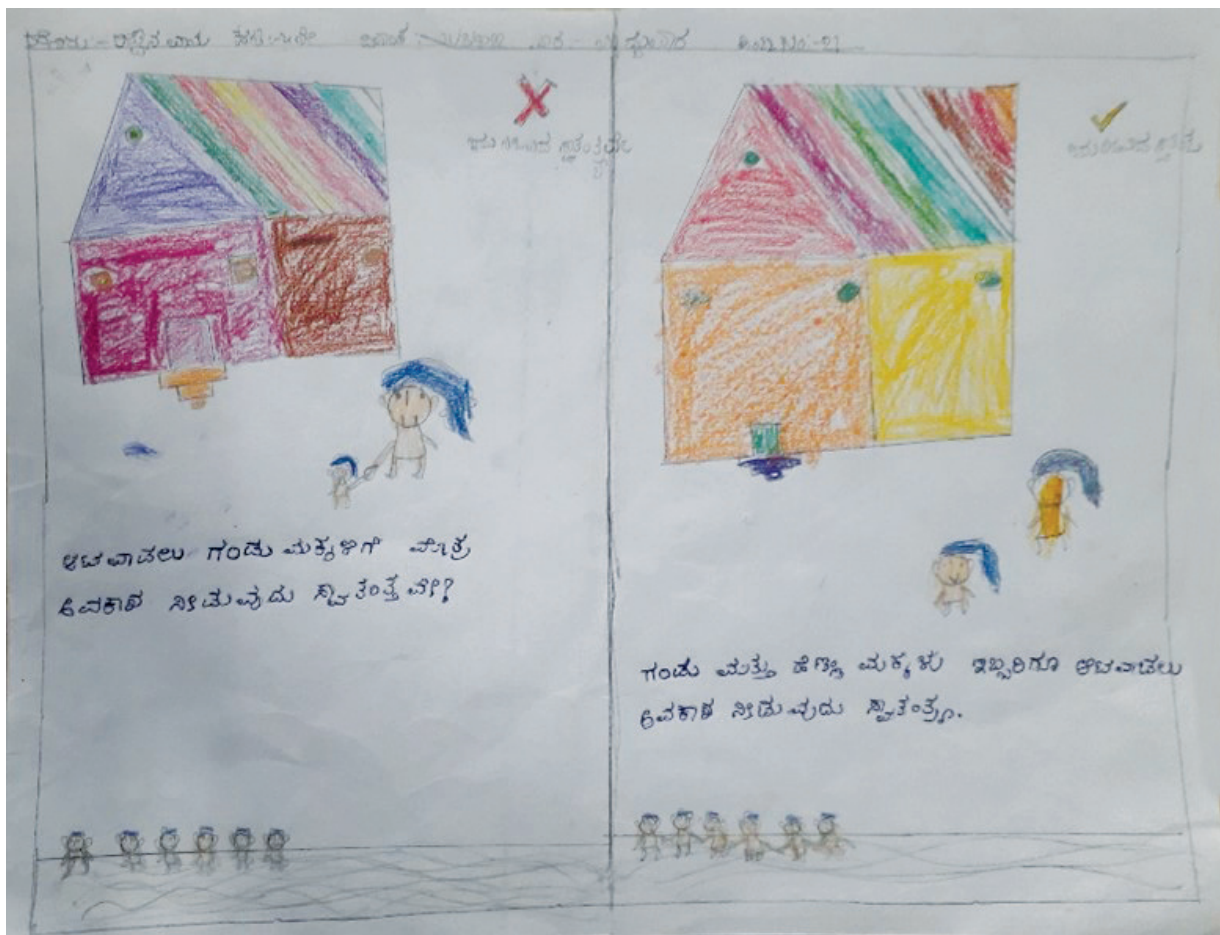


Figure 1. A student's art and writing expressing her view on gender discrimination.

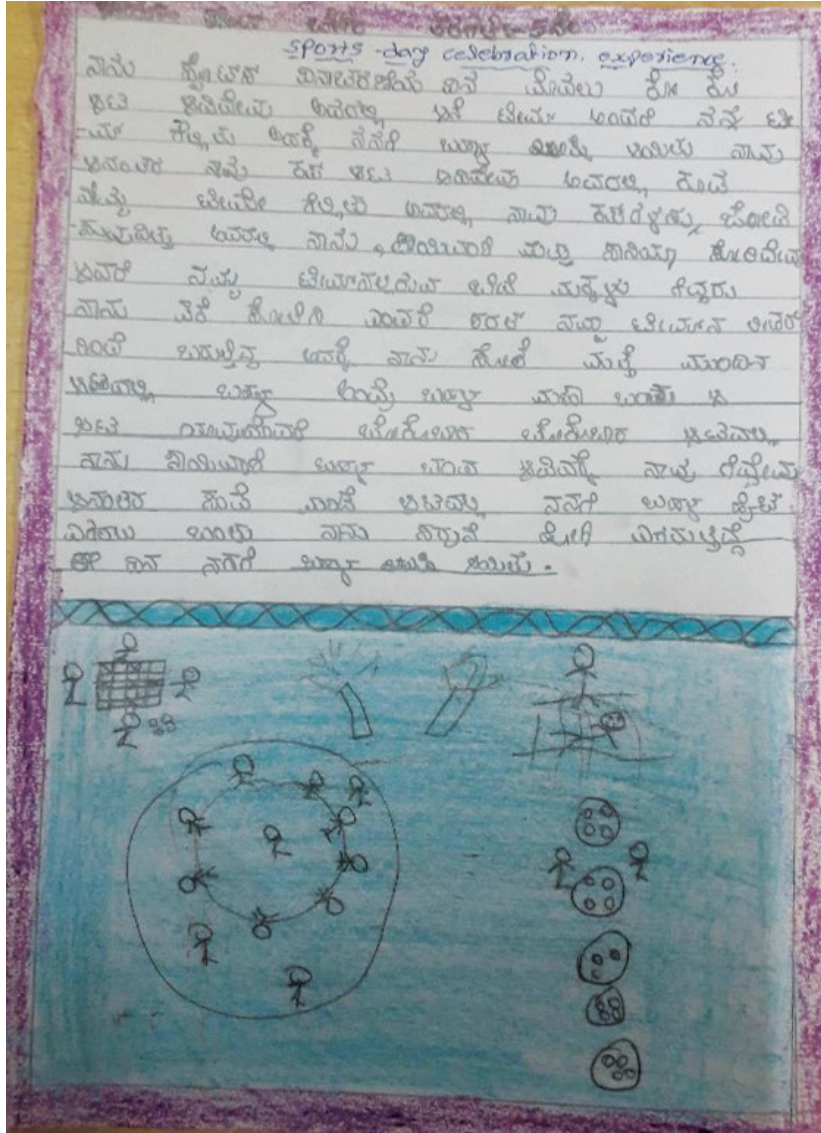


Figure 2. A student depicts the Sports Day celebration in school.

ideas will also help in honing their creativity and writing skills. The important thing is for teachers to realise that independent writing is an important

skill and needs reinforcement and practice; Teachers need to create opportunities to reinforce these skills.



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