

February

2010

Reading Matters!

From the desks of the Early Literacy Coaches

Want your students to write more? Handwriting fluency may be getting in the way...

Berninger, V.W. & Wolf, B.J. (2009). *Teaching students with dyslexia and dysgraphia: Lessons from teaching and science*

Chapter 5: Teaching Writing

**Handwriting is to Writing as
Phonology is to Reading**

Handwriting:

- **Continuous stroke is easier for dyslexic students than ball and stick formations since you have to pick up the pencil less often**
- Begin with gross motor and move to fine motor movements (*sky write then move to paper*)
- **Put tape on desks to help position paper for students (*make sure it's okay with the custodians*!)**
- K, 1 Teachers-work on manuscript writing; 2 Teachers-review and practice, make sure students are fluent and accurate before beginning cursive
- **When practicing, students should write, then trace over, each letter rather than write and rewrite since the quality of the letters typically decline (*it was recommended to use a pencil with no eraser... students could write the letter, then flip pencil over and trace with the other end*)**
- Lowercase letters should be taught first (*remember this pertains to handwriting*)
- **Have students say the name and sound of the letter when writing (helps a lot with letter reversals, too)**

Spelling and Composition:

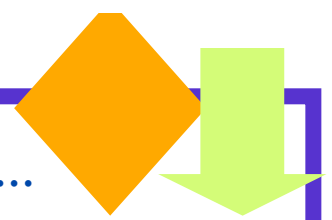
- Multisensory approach to teaching spelling is supported (*use your Elkonin boxes, magnets, and remember to "touch-n-say"*)
- **Practice with spelling single words, then phrases, then sentences (*Dictation! Revisit our website for templates*)**
- Move to combining sentences to create paragraphs
- **While computer use is important, it does not take the place of explicit, direct instruction.**
- Phonology, orthography, and morphology are all important aspects of spelling (*segment the sounds in words, talk about the patterns, and discuss the meanings of morphemes: ed, ing, er, est*)

Principles to Keep in Mind:

- Never assume that what is taught is necessarily what is learned
- One exposure is not enough for many kinds of learners

"Handwriting-that is, letter production-supports written word production-that is, word spellings-which are the building blocks for generating written text that expresses ideas. " (p. 87)

Let's not put the cart before the horse...



You may not be able to read a doctor's handwriting and prescription, but you'll notice his bills are neatly typewritten.
- Earl Wilson

"Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else." ~Judy Garland

Activities to Improve Pre-Writing Skills

- ** Wheelbarrow walking--child's hands are on floor, pick up feet and "walk" child on his/her hands.
 - ** Slinky--shift back and forth with palm up.
 - ** Floor activities--large mural painting, floor puzzles, coloring when lying on stomach on floor.
 - ** Working on a vertical surface, especially above eye level. Activities can be mounted on a clip board or taped to surface or chalkboard/easel. Examples: pegboards, Lite Brite, Etch-a-sketch(upside down), Magna doodle, outlining, coloring, painting, writing.
 - ** Clothespins/pinching. Put letters on clothespins and spell words by clipping on edge of shoe box. Use a clothespin to do finger "push-ups" by using the pads of the thumb and index finger to open a clothespin and count repetitions.
 - ** Bead stringing/lacing with tip of finger against thumb
 - ** Use tongs/tweezers to pick up blocks/small objects
 - ** Finger plays/string games such as Cat's Cradle
 - ** Squeeze sponges to wash off table, clean windows, shower, etc.
 - ** Tear pieces of construction paper into small pieces and paste the different colors of paper on a simple picture from a coloring book, or make your own design.
 - ** Dot-dots, color by number, mazes
- <http://www.yorktown.org/occupational-therapy/ot-handwriting.htm>
- ** Go to this website for more information on appropriate pencil grips and paper placement. **