

HANDWRITING WITHOUT TEARS

COMPILED BY PEGGY A. ENABNIT, OTR/L (8/11/2011)

An overview for K-3 Montessori Teachers

Handwriting without Tears

Handwriting without Tears :

By Jan Z. Olsen, OTR and Emily F. Knapton, OTR/L

www.hwtears.com 301.263.2700



Is Handwriting Still Important?



- children in kindergarten are now spending 42 percent of their fine motor time on paper and pencil activities during the school day (Marr, Cermak, Cohn & Henderson, 2003)
- *85 percent of all fine motor time in second-, fourth- and sixth-grade classrooms was spent on paper and pencil activities. (McHale & Cermak)*

Standardized Testing



- A written component is now included in the elementary years.
- handwritten essay to the
- College Board SAT in 2005 further emphasize the importance of handwriting

Who Needs the Help

- 10 to 30 percent of elementary school children struggle with handwriting (Karlsdottir & Stephansson, 2002, as cited in Feder & Majnemer, 2007).
- illegible handwriting has secondary effects on school achievement and self-esteem (Engel-Yeger, Nagakur - Yanuv & Rosenblum, 2009; Malloy-Miller, Polatajko & Anstett, 1995).
- children enrolled in an eight-week handwriting intervention program outperformed their peers in all measures of writing, achieving a 46 percent improvement in the quality of written text beyond the journal [control] group (Medwell & Wray, 2007)
- Strong evidence that structured handwriting instruction leads to improved writing performance, academic success, and overall student self-esteem.

Teaching Handwriting



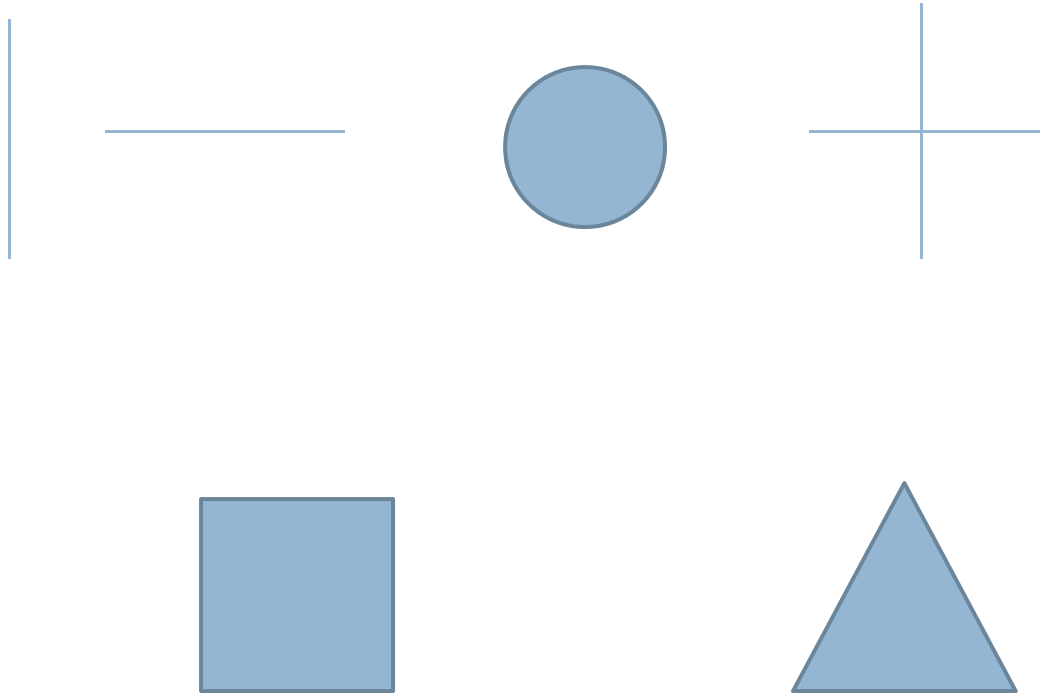
- specific and direct handwriting instruction is important
- 12 percent of teachers rated their formal preparation to teach children handwriting as adequate.
- teachers overwhelmingly responded that handwriting should be a separate subject

Best Practices

- newborn to eight-year-old children learn best from methods that are consistent with **developmentally appropriate** practice (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 1996)
- Researchers tested legibility and found that children using a **vertical manuscript outperformed** those using a slanted version (ERIC Development Team, 1997).
- there is **no support to claims** that slanted forms of the alphabet facilitate transition from manuscript to cursive writing (ERIC Development Team, 1997; Graham, 1993).
- 52 percent of third grade teachers today noted **uniformity of slant as a problem** (Graham et al., 2007).

Developmental Shapes

Gessell, Arnold, and others 1940



HWT is based on the developmental principles of Arnold Gessell, PhD, M.D.

Teaching Letters



- Upper Case First
 - All the same size all start on the top
 - When learned 50% of all of the lower case letters are also mastered (size differences)
 - Frog jumps
 - Corner Starters
 - Center starters
 - Magic C letters are taught and reinforced throughout training.

Capitals Slate Board Gray Blocks

- F E D P B R N M --frog jumps
- H K L U V W X Y Z --starting corners
- C O Q G S A T J –center starters
 - ▣ Multisensory learning
 - ▣ Correction of Error right
 - ▣ Teach and evaluate learning and skill

Lower Case-Kindergarten



- c o s v w t (1st five same as capital)
- a d g (high frequency, magic c shape helps)
- u i e (vowels) u k y j (same as capitals)
- p r n m h b (diver letters)
- f q x z (finally f—tricky start)

Double Line Paper Chalkboards



- Double lines for white board
- Chalkboard –model then...wet, dry, try (pg 48)
- Double line paper specific for grade level

- Use of hand activity to delineate Capital, small, tall, and descending (pg 54)

The Physical Approach and Positioning

- Table at the height of bent elbows with arms to the side
- Feet on the floor
- Face the children as you teach
- Use similar types of prompts for consistency
- Teach proper prehension
 - ▣ Air writing or coloring games
- Use small crayons or small pencils
- Use vertical writing services- easels, community art, sign in procedures.

Speed and Legibility

- ❑ **Memory-** Recalling a letter's name, sound randomly from a list.
- ❑ **Orientation-** Facing letters the correct way without reversals.
- ❑ **Placement-** Resting letters on the baseline
- ❑ **Size-** Writing the correct size with uniformity
- ❑ **Start-** At the top (except d and e)
- ❑ **Sequence-** Writing letter parts in correct order/direction and the same way each time.
- ❑ **Control-** Printing neatly
- ❑ **Spacing-** Keep letters close in a word but leave spaces between words.

Learning the TOP!



- Top down 5 lines slow
 - Alternation lines, up and down slow
 - Top down fast
 - Alternating fast
-
- Accuracy and control decrease when not starting at the top

Mr. Smiley / Directionality



- Either start at Mr. Smiley or
- Or draw towards Mr. Smiley.

- Teach right hand through hands shakes, dabs of lotion on R index finger, rubber bands on R hand.

How to Administer the Screener



- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7rucNX2ANw&feature=player_embedded#at=79

Scoring the Screener



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgrmxfdHpfU&feature=related>