

THE EVIDENCE FOR HANDWRITING

CRITICAL PART OF LITERACY



Children can express their knowledge and understanding through their writing (Dinehart, 2015) and as such handwriting is a critical skill required for classroom participation and is a key component of literacy (Limpo & Graham, 2020). Kindy children may spend 42% of their day in pencil and paper activities (Marr et al, 2003) however up to 25% of typically developing children experience difficulty with handwriting (Marr & Dimeo, 2006)

HANDWRITING IS COMPLEX

Handwriting is complex (Feder & Majnemer, 2007) and children need to be able to master basic physical skills before they can achieve letter formations (Asher, 2006), including a functional pencil grip, adequate in hand manipulation and mastery of prewriting patterns (Asher, 2006; Bazyk et al., 2009; Cornhill & Case-Smith, 1996; Taverna et al., 2020). Gross and fine motor skills (Fawcett et al., 1996) and self-regulation (Berninger et al., 2006) also impact on handwriting development.



MASTER THE BASICS FIRST

Prewriting patterns need to be mastered before addressing letter formations (Asher, 2006). Letter formations need to be mastered before addressing legibility factors (Fancher et al., 2018).



INSTRUCTION IS IMPORTANT

Evidence tells us that to support handwriting success, explicit instruction and repetitive practice is required (Santangelo & Graham, 2016; Wallen et al., 2013). Whilst evidence exists for some programs, not one program can be deemed superior. Handwriting instruction is often overlooked in the classroom to focus on other curriculum areas (Cahill, 2009).



SOME WAYS ARE BETTER

As we learn about letters and sounds, what they look like and sound like, we should also be learning how to form that letter (Fancher et al., 2018). A sensory motor approach can be an effective approach for children up to 7 yrs and a cognitive approach from 7 yrs and up is then beneficial.

Self editing of handwriting is a great way to build handwriting skills (Hoy et al., 2011).



PEGGY LEGO

Berry Johnston, of Lil' Peeps OT for Kids, is a paediatric Occupational Therapist, in Perth WA, working and collaborating with schools and families. Berry also owns Peggy Lego, The Art of Handwriting, and facilitates teacher workshops on handwriting. Berry is currently completing her PhD (OT) through Curtin University evaluating the efficacy of the Peggy Lego Program.



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