

School And Your Child

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Handwriting It's Less Tiring To Write "Pretty"
Forty years ago teachers treated handwriting chiefly as an act of skill. Today it's considered more as a method of communication, like the typewriter or the old Indian smoke signal.

The modern viewpoint appears to be that the content of a message is the important thing, not how "pretty" it's written.

A warning against this logic comes from Mrs. Emris R. Davis, 14-year veteran teacher of handwriting at the laboratory elementary school on the campus of Appalachian State Teachers College, Boone, N. C.

Handwriting must be legible enough for the content to be understood, says Mrs. Davis. Otherwise communication fails. And as long as one is writing, she asks, why not make it attractive, especially since a graceful style pleases the eye and actually fatigues the writer less?

Dr. Frank Freeman, dean emeritus of the University of California (Berkeley) school of education and probably the nation's foremost authority on teaching handwriting, paints a depressing picture of handwriting practices in school.

After examining 135,000 handwriting specimens collected from all parts of the country, Dr. Freeman notes that 1) students' handwriting improves comparatively little after the sixth grade; 2) an excessively wide gap exists between the best and poorest of

handwriting; 3) and the major writing faults are not in legibility of individual letters but in smoothness, evenness, and line fluency.

Dr. Freeman would suggest that formal handwriting instruction extend beyond the sixth grade and that teachers place greater emphasis on smooth, fluent strokes as an essential to really good writing.

In line with Dr. Freeman's suggestion, North Carolina several years ago adopted a plan for teaching handwriting as a separate subject through eighth grade, states Mrs. Davis.

In fact, the book METHOD OF HANDWRITING, Noble and Noble, was selected and is available to Tar Heel schools. It's now up to administrators and teachers whether the skill is taught formally beyond the sixth grade.

Just how is handwriting taught in schools today? Mrs. Davis, who instructs teachers-to-be at Appalachian State Teachers College how to teach writing, explains it this way.

The first grader begins with "manuscript writing," which consists mainly of circles (o's) and straight lines (l's). Some parents incorrectly call this "printing." There is a distinct difference between "printed" and manuscript letters. This doesn't mean manuscript writing is a "baby" method of writing, however. Actually it's better for many purposes, states Mrs. Davis.

All through the first grade and on into the second the child works at perfecting his manuscript writing. Usually he'll write an unlined paper with crayons at first. Change-over time to cursive

writing occurs in the third grade in most schools. This is the writing that mother and father use. Junior considers starting it an important milestone in his education. The youngster also begins to use regular pencils in the third grade. Pen and ink come later, in the fifth and sixth.

All along the teacher continually helps Junior improve the shape, size, space, and slant of his writing. She gives him opportunities to practice writing words that have real meaning for him, Mrs. Davis points out.

And as Junior grows older, he finds his own ways to practice. He'll write letters to grandmother, order model airplanes from cereal companies, send thank you notes, notify the milkman to deliver extra bottles of milk—all of which is good writing experience.

Dr. Freeman of the University of California, warns parents to be careful not to force Junior's writing pace too fast. Muscular coordination has much to do with his progress, says the handwriting expert. The first grader's small wrist and arm muscles, for instance, are not so well developed as the larger muscles and they need space and materials to "spread out" in their writing.

Understanding teachers and parents realize that Junior's imagination often surpasses his ability to write, and they don't fuss when he misspells or uses the wrong words. They know that accuracy and speed improve in time.

A Dayton, Ohio, firm is moving its activities to Russia. Russia is in Shelby County, Ohio.

Mr. Roberts' Sister Passes

Funeral services for Mrs. James A. Kiser, 66, of Rock Hill, S. C., sister of J. R. Roberts of Kings Mountain, were held Saturday at 2 p. m. from Cedar Street Church of God of Rock Hill.

Mrs. Kiser died Thursday in a York hospital. Other survivors include her husband, two sisters, three sons, three daughter and one brother.

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