Ohio's Model Curriculum for English Language Arts

APPENDIX A:
Guidance and Supplemental Materials for Handwriting

June 2019

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Introduction

To address the instruction of manuscript and cursive writing in Ohio's schools, the Ohio Legislature passed House Bill 58, which became effective on July 1, 2019. This legislation required the Ohio Department of Education to provide information on the development of handwriting and include supplemental instructional materials in the English Language Arts Model Curriculum. The legislation states:

132nd General Assembly
(Amended Substitute House Bill Number 58)

AN ACT

To amend section 3301.0726 of the Revised Code to require the Department of Education to include supplemental instructional materials in cursive handwriting in the English language arts model curriculum.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:

SECTION 1: That section 3301.0726 of the Revised Code be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 3301.0726 (A) – Omitted

(B) The department of education shall include supplemental instructional materials on the development of handwriting as a universal skill in the English language arts model curriculum under division (B) of section 3301.079 of the Revised Code for grades kindergarten through five. The instructional materials shall be designed to enable students to print letters and words legibly by grade three and create readable documents using legible cursive handwriting by the end of grade five. The instructional materials shall be included in the model curriculum not later than the first day of July that next succeeds the effective date of this amendment and, thereafter, shall periodically be updated.

This document provides guidance for manuscript and cursive writing instruction from kindergarten through grade 5 in support of Ohio's Learning Standards in English Language Arts. This guide does not advocate the use of any specific program or handwriting style. Local districts are encouraged to choose or develop the program that best meets the needs of their students.

What is the purpose for teaching handwriting?

Handwriting (manuscript/print and cursive) is a functional tool for writers to communicate. Marie Clay, in *Becoming Literate* (1991), asserts that, "it would be reasonable that writing letters contributes to learning about them." Research presented at the 2012 Educational Summit "Handwriting in the 21st Century" indicates that teaching handwriting increases brain activity, impacts performance across all disciplines, and provides a foundation for higher-order thinking skills (Zubrycki, 2012).

The goals for handwriting instruction should include the following:

- Students can print and write letters legibly and efficiently, so writing becomes fluent and automatic; and
- Students develop a sense of pride in their penmanship (Fountas and Pinnell, 2007 & 2011).

Kate Gladstone, in her work as a handwriting specialist in Albany, New York, estimates that "while a student needs to jot down 100 legible words a minute to follow a typical lecture, a person using manuscript writing can manage only 30" (Freedman, 2005).

Communicating effectively using manuscript/print or cursive writing allows students to:

- Develop and use legible handwriting to communicate effectively;
- Develop facility, speed, and ease of handwriting;
- Use handwriting skills as an integral part of the writing process; and
- Understand the importance of content and legibility in writing for genuine audiences.

Why teach handwriting in this digital world?

Communication and collaboration are identified as critical learning skills for the 21st century (Trilling and Fadel, 2009). Students need to do this in a variety of forms. Keyboarding and handwriting need to coexist, and most students should be able to master both skills. The publishing aspect of documents has transitioned from print to computer-generated text. However, for the daily recording of thoughts and ideas in classrooms, technology is not always readily available or accessible.

The ability to read print and cursive writing gives students the opportunity to learn and connect with the past. It has only been since the development of the typewriter that many of our culturally and historically significant documents have not been created in written text. Although the debate exists as to whether handwriting still has a place in the digital age, it should be noted that experts agree both handwriting and keyboarding should not be mutually exclusive. "We do not live in a handwriting world, and we do not live in a digital world. We live in a hybrid world" (Zubrzycki, 2012).

The results of two experiments (Herbert, 2014) suggest that taking notes with a pen and paper, rather than a laptop, leads to higher-quality learning, as writing is a better strategy to store and internalize ideas long term. A similar study published in *Intech* (Mangen, 2011) found writing by hand allows the brain to receive feedback from a person's motor actions, and this specific feedback is different than those received when touching and typing on a keyboard. The movements involved when writing by hand "leave a motor memory in the sensorimotor part of the brain," which helps the person recognize letters and establish a connection between reading and writing. The researchers believe since writing by hand takes longer than typing on a keyboard, the temporal aspect may influence the learning process.

What are some general student outcomes?

When students master the mechanics of handwriting, they can concentrate on higher-level thinking and communication skills needed for success in school and in life. In addition to developing higher-order thinking skills, handwriting instruction "will not only show students a specific way to form letters, it is important to note that handwriting is an expression of individuality. No two individuals will write in the same way. Individuality should be encouraged within the framework of legibility and fluency" (Atlantic Canada Elementary Language Arts Curriculum Guide, Grades E-3, 1998). "It is after students develop efficient motor memory individualization of their letter formation that handwriting will occur." (Prince Edward Island Education and Early Childhood Development English Programs, 2012)

What are some general suggestions for teaching beginning handwriting?

Students need to recognize that letters have special features (short, tall, curves), have uppercase and lowercase forms, and have sounds associated with them.

Suggestions
Provide opportunities for students to develop fine motor skills using materials such as puzzles, strings, beads, or play dough.
Provide opportunities for students to learn how to grasp a pencil, how to use lined paper, and how to sit for handwriting.
Provide opportunities for students to explore their own space through movement, dance, and artwork.
Literacy Centers could be established to create hands-on experiences using string, sand, Wikki Stix, or a wet paintbrush on a chalkboard, to practice letter formation.
Provide models for students to follow. Letter strips on the corner of students' desks can be helpful and are much easier to refer to than letters posted on a wall across the room.
Provide opportunities for students to experiment with different types and sizes of papers, colors of pencils, markers, crayons, chalk or paint.

What is the suggested grade-level sequence for teaching manuscript/print and cursive writing?

Kindergarten	Print capital and lowercase letters, correctly spacing the letters.
	Leave spaces between words when printing.
Grade 1	Print letters legibly.
	Space letters, words, and sentences appropriately.
Grade 2	Print letters legibly.
	Space letters, words, and sentences appropriately.
Grade 3	Use cursive to write capital and lowercase letters, spacing letters, words, and sentences appropriately.
Grades 4 and 5	Write legibly in cursive, spacing letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs appropriately.
Grades 6-High School	Prepare writing for publication that is legible using print, cursive, or digital tools; follows an appropriate format; and uses techniques such as the inclusion of graphics or electronic resources.

References

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Publisher Resources

In the spring of 2019, the Ohio Department of Education submitted a Request for Information (RFI) from educational publishers regarding their handwriting curricula, materials and resources.

The following publishers responded to that request:

- Educational Publishing Service
- Lincoln Learning
- McRuffy Press
- Scott Foresman: D'Nealian
- Wonders – McGraw Hill
- Evan Moor
- Learning Without Tears
- Memoria Press
- Universal Handwriting

The table below includes information that was included in the materials forwarded to the Ohio Department of Education. Lack of a checkmark is not an indication the publisher does not meet the criteria, simply, there was no evidence of that criteria in the submitted materials. This table is not evaluative, rather it exists to help districts identify what publishers have materials they may need for effective handwriting instruction.

Publisher / Criteria	Alignment to Handwriting Document		Flexibility of Delivery			Engagement			Rigor		Support Materials			
	Clear Objective	Sufficient Coverage	Whole Class/Smart Board	Individual/Group	Range of Needs	Age-Appropriate Material	Instructional Approach	Evidence of Diversity in Illustrative Materials	Appropriate Depth of Understanding	Clear Feedback	For Teachers	For Students	Enrichment/Materials or Suggestions	Intervention Materials or Suggestions
EPS School Specialty[i]		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
Evan Moor				✓		✓						✓		
Learning Without Tears[ii]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lincoln Learning	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		
McRuffy Press[iii]			✓	✓					✓			✓		
Memoria Press[iv]			✓	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Scott Foresman: D'Nealian[v]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Alignment to Handwriting Document		Flexibility of Delivery			Engagement			Rigor		Support Materials			
Universal Handwriting[vi]	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Wonders – McGraw Hill[vii]	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			

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[i] EPS School Specialty materials also included spelling dictionaries and Words I Use journals.

[ii] Learning Without Tears included multiple types of manipulatives, different mediums on which students could practice writing letters, and instructional materials for students and teachers called Keyboarding Without Tears.

[iii] McRuffy Press included student materials for instructing cursive writing in kindergarten.

[iv] Memoria Press included a copybook that encouraged students to practice cursive by copying quotes from famous people. Additionally, a left-hand-friendly version was available.

[v] Scott Foresman materials included enrichment materials in the teacher's edition and made suggestions to address multiple modalities during instruction.

[vi] Universal Handwriting included smartboard lessons and posters, along with vocabulary and writing journals.

[vii] Wonders – McGraw Hill included materials for traditional manuscript, as well as D'Nealian handwriting instruction.