

HB 725

Education - Public Schools - Instruction in Print and Cursive Handwriting

Delegate Joseph C. Boteler, III

2/13/20

Dear Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate this opportunity to inform you about an important issue I believe our children should have access to in grade school. I am here today to tell you about hand writing instruction and how it positively benefits our children's education.

Since the adoption of the common core in 2009 cursive writing was no longer required to be taught to children in elementary schools.

1. While cursive is a lifelong skill that is not just necessary for being able to read cards or historical documents, it is *critical* for learning comprehension and retention and has been proven to help all students retain what they learned.

Learning both print and handwriting at a young age have been shown as beneficial for the child's brain development, retention and literacy in the long run.

According to the New York Times writer Suzanne Asheron, an occupational therapist, says "cursive is shown to improve brain development in the areas of thinking, language and working memory. Cursive handwriting stimulates brain synapses and synchronicity between the left and right hemispheres, something absent from printing and typing."

"The connection between the hand and brain is very powerful in young children. When they are writing they are strengthening the synapses in the brain," Kathleen Harrington a third grade teacher from St. Johns school in Massachusetts, where children are required to teach cursive in the third grade.

Mastering literacy is a key competence for success at school and in professional life ([Gut, Reimann, & Grob, 2012](#)). With respect to quality, handwriting and typing have fundamentally different properties ([Mangen & Velay, 2010](#)): Handwriting requires carefully reproducing the shape of each letter, whereas in typewriting the motor program is not related to the letter shape and, as a result, no such grapho-motor component is present. Hence, motor programs associated with handwriting provide an additional informative memory trace and may contribute to the representation of the shape of a letter ([James & Engelhardt, 2012](#)). This demonstrates that handwriting, which links rich sensory-motor representations to perceptual letter shapes, improves not only writing, but also reading performance compared with typewriting. In line with this interpretation, neuro-imaging studies showed that visual recognition of familiar letters activated not only visual areas, but also motor regions of the brain. ([James & Gauthier, 2006](#); [Longcamp, Anton, Roth, & Velay, 2003](#); [Longcamp, Hlushchuk, & Hari, 2011](#)). (*Adv Cogn Psychol.* 2015; 11(4): 136–146. Published online 2015 Dec 31. doi: [10.5709/acp-0178-7](#) NIH-Handwriting or Typewriting? The Influence of Pen- or Keyboard-Based Writing Training on Reading and Writing Performance in Preschool Children))

“We believe such differences require further attention. In printed characters, graphic movement is not continuous: the gesture stops, there are repeated stops and starts of the pencil and the motor process is broken. Instead, on the graph-motor plane, cursive is the writing style closest to the child’s natural movements.” *(Published online 2019*

Feb 7. [10.1371/journal.pone.0209978](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0209978) NIH-Teaching of cursive writing in the first year of primary school: Effect on reading and writing skills)

2. Students mastering good handwriting and cursive is also the key to making sure different kinds of learners thrive in the classroom. Cursive is very beneficial to those with Dyslexia and dysgraphia. For these learners cursive is the best option for optimal learning.
3. States around the U.S. have been recognizing this missing instruction in schools, for example:

[Alabama](#) passed a law requiring it in 2016. That same year, [Louisiana](#) passed its own cursive law. Others like Arkansas, Virginia, California, Florida and [North Carolina](#), have similar laws.

Texas is the latest state in which educators are pushing to bring back cursive and handwriting writing in elementary schools. (CNN).

According to NCSL of now at least 12 schools in the U.S require that cursive handwriting to be taught.

4. While some have said that technology is the new direction in classrooms, it does not replace the learning benefits of taking notes on pen and paper. Also, not every child has access to computers. Learning to write in in handwriting and cursive levels the playing fields for students in all schools. The learning benefits from children taking cursive are too great to overlook and that it why I hope you will support my efforts to make cursive writing in schools required to be taught in Maryland.

Thank you and I strongly urge a favorable report.