Dysgraphia: What is it Really?  
Part 2- Intervention

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Instruction for Students with Dysgraphia

Handwriting  Spelling
“…done right, early handwriting instruction improves students’ writing. Not just its legibility, but its quantity and quality.”

~ Steve Graham, 2010

Why Cursive?

- Increases speed of handwriting
- Reduces occurrence of reversals in writing
- Provides more consistency in where to begin formation of each letter
- Continuous strokes encourage linking of letters into lexical units—which supports accurate spelling
- Linked with brain functions related to self-regulation and mental organization: “Cursive helps you connect things” (Berninger).

Note: Cursive letter formation is only functional after it has become automatic, and automaticity comes only with sufficient practice.
Effective Handwriting Instruction

• Short sessions
  • 50-100 minutes a week

• Teach letter identification
  • Name each letter as it is practiced

• Provide a model of the letter marked with numbered arrows

• Students practice writing letters from memory

• Practice all learned letters instead of practicing one letter over and over

• Teach pencil grip and paper position

• Develop fluency

Sitting Position for Writing

• Both feet flat on floor

• Both hands on the desk
  • Writing hand holding the pencil
  • Non-writing hand holding the paper

• Back straight

• Slight forward lean

• Desk clear
Pencil Grip

Handwriting preference and pencil grip: for most children, dominance is established by kindergarten age, but few may be insecure for knowing which hand to use for writing as late as 8 or 9 years old.

Redirection for pencil grip: “Stop, pinch, lift.”

Teaching Students with Dyslexia and Dysgraphia, Berninger & Wolf, 2009

First Things First-Holding a Pencil

• Address awkward or incorrect pencil grip ASAP
• Try different commercial pencil grips
• Consult with an occupational therapist

Steve Graham, 2010
Letter Formation

• Letter identification is an important part of handwriting instruction
  • It serves as a memory cue for retrieving the motor movements needed to form the letter.
• Ask students to say the name of the letter as they write it
• Ask students to write the letter that comes next in a sequence (g, h, i, __)

Steve Graham, 2010

Sequence of Instruction Manuscript

Teaching the letters in ABC order may not be the best approach
  ◦ The easily confused letters b and d are too close together
  ◦ The easily confused sounds of letters are also close together (vowel sounds like bad, bed)
  ◦ Therefore, be sure to separate easily confusable letters/sounds
  ◦ Teach letters in a sequence that allows for quick word writing (a, m, p, s, t, i)

Sequence of Instruction Cursive

• The same considerations for manuscript apply to cursive.

• Teaching the cursive letters in groups according to the approach stroke is a way to help students recall the motor sequence.

Approach Stroke Groups

Best Practices

• Direct Instruction

• Model correct formation
  • Visually and verbally

• Optional: Use numbered arrows to help students remember which way to move the pencil next.

• Encourage practice using visual memory.
  • Look, say, cover, write, check

• Practice letters in isolation then within words

• Encourage children to critique their own handwriting (circle your best R)


Handwriting Techniques

• Cursive Writing is recommended. (Manuscript is for reading.)

• Skywriting- model with the whole arm, making the strokes very large.

• Describe the strokes the arm is making.

• Use arrows and lines to show the sequence and direction of strokes.

• Practice each letter, then each sequence of known letters each day until the alphabet is learned.

• Practice with tactile surfaces.
Begin with Gross Motor

Skywriting
Write a large model of the letter on the board. As you write it, name the letter and repeat the stroke description.
Repeat 3 times

Transition to Fine Motor

1- In box 1, trace letter with finger and say, “Name it- A. Swing under, over, stop. Back around, stop. Pull down. Release.” Repeat 3 times
2- In box 1, trace letter with marker or pencil. Repeat 3 times with verbiage from step 1.
3- In box 2, make a perfect copy using verbiage.
4- In box 3, close eyes and make a copy using verbiage. (Option: Add skywriting with eyes closed.)
5- In box 4, link the sound to the formation of the letter.
Fine Motor

After skywriting and the transition to fine motor, then it’s time for perfect practice.

Gradual Release of Responsibility

I Do  We Do  You Do
Multisensory

See it
Say it
Feel it
Hear it

Effective Spelling Instruction

Include these guiding principles in instruction:

We spell by

• Phoneme-grapheme correspondence.
• Letter order and sequence patterns, or orthographic conventions.
• The position of a phoneme or a grapheme in a word.
• Meaning (morphology) and part of speech.
• Language of origin.

Moats, L. (2005)
Orthographic Conventions

• Syllable types

• Orthographic Rules

• Irregular words

Moats, L. (2005)

Questions?

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References


Dyslexics can learn to read and write and teachers can teach them: 3 lessons from research and teaching. Presentation by Berninger and Wolf at the Washington State Dyslexia Summit June 10, 2006, Seattle Hilton.


References


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