Mississippi Senate Bill 2273:
An act to require the state Board of Education to ensure instruction in cursive writing as a part of the basic elementary education curriculum; to exempt the Mississippi School for the Blind and the Mississippi School for the Deaf from the provisions of this act; and for related purposes.

Section 1: The standard course of study shall include the requirement that the public schools provide instruction in cursive reading and writing, implemented across the curriculum, so that students create readable documents through legible cursive writing by the end of fifth grade, and that students pass with proficiency a teacher-constructed test demonstrating the students’ competency in both reading and writing cursive. This requirement shall be applicable beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to the Mississippi School for the Blind and the Mississippi School for the Deaf.

Section 2: This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2017.

Guidance document published by the Mississippi Department of Education:

National Handwriting Day: January 23 each year, established in 1977

Some Handwriting History:
- Hieroglyphics
- Cuneiform Script
- Phoenician Alphabet
- Greek Alphabet
- Etruscan Alphabet
- Latin Alphabet
Handwriting in the United States:

- By the 1700s, penmanship schools existed
- 1850s to 1920s – Spencerian script was the primary form of cursive handwriting used in many schools
- Late 1880s – Palmer Method was introduced
- Typewriter came into use in the late 1800s
- Zaner-Bloser Method of Arm Movement was introduced in 1904

Why teach handwriting?

- Handwriting helps develop reading circuitry in the brain.
- Handwriting makes better writers and spellers and predicts reading and academic success.
- Handwriting makes both children and adults smarter.

Non-motor processes related to handwriting:

- Working memory
- Naming letters
- Planning to form letters
- Incoming visual and touch sensory information
- The orthographic loop of working memory

But why bother?

- Digital communication is ubiquitous.
- Cursive is “old” technology.
- College papers are typed and often submitted electronically.
- Tests often are given online.
- It is more important to spend time on other subjects, including keyboarding.

BUT

- It is often more convenient to write notes, lists, etc.
- Cursive is faster than manuscript.
- Handwritten correspondence has greater impact.
- Elementary students still turn in handwritten assignments.
- Everyone should have the ability to read cursive.
- Cursive writing is a powerful link to human development.
What are the goals of handwriting?

- Legibility and Fluency

Why cursive instead of manuscript?

- Cognitive and motor skills development
- Literacy development
- Brain development
- Memory
- Written expression
- Learning disabilities
- Fewer problems with letter reversals
- The joining of letters makes it more likely that words will be written in the correct direction
- In cursive writing, the student knows that graphemes representing discrete sounds can be combined to make a word.
- Cursive writing reduces spatial difficulties
- One study showed more benefit for students with regard to acquisition of grapho-motor skills and increased automaticity when compared to manuscript or manuscript/cursive.

Automaticity in handwriting

Research suggests that automaticity in handwriting predicts length and quality of written composition in elementary, middle, and high school and in college.

What is required for handwriting?

- Posture
- Visual perception
- Phoneme/Grapheme correspondence

Handwriting is an integration of orthographic codes (letter forms), phonological codes (names/sounds of letters), and graphomotor codes (written output).

When teaching handwriting, there must be explicit instruction, frequent feedback, and frequent practice.
Handwriting at the DuBard School:

- Correct slant of paper
- Correct pencil grip
- Skills are taught steadily and gradually with improvement as the goal.
- Writing readiness activities
- Tracing, hand-over-hand
- Use of commercial pencil grips
- Children write in one color
- No unnecessary loops or fancy strokes
- Lower-case letters begin on the line
- Practice on paper and at the chalkboard
- Different kinds of paper are used for children’s different needs
- Copying
- Whether copying or generating written work, children always say what they write!
- Sometimes writing activities are delayed due to very poor motor skills or poor motor development in general.

DuBard Smart Font coming soon from V Letter!

Questions?

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www.usm.edu/dubard
References


Latin alphabet. [https://www.omniglot.com/writing/latin.htm](https://www.omniglot.com/writing/latin.htm)


Pencil grip information. [www.charlotteoccupationaltherapy.com](http://www.charlotteoccupationaltherapy.com) and [www.theanonymousOT.com](http://www.theanonymousOT.com)