

HANDWRITING DEVELOPMENT (Instructional Emphases, Instructional Strategies, Problems and Assessments)

Abstract:

Language is, and since its invention or discovery has always been, the most important means man ever devised. It is the mean more than any other with which he makes his living, he makes his home and he makes his life. As man becomes more and more social beings, as the world becomes more and more social community, and communication even grows more imperative. Language is the basic communication. Language is the instruments with which we think, and thinking is the rarest and the most needed commodity in the world. Language, however, can be separated from the facets of communications (listening, writing, reading and speaking). Yet, the focus of this scientific of study will be on the writing (handwriting) in college. The scientific study of writing (handwriting) begins with discussing the nature of the students in these grades. Writer will then describe the instructional emphases, instructional strategies, problems, and assessments measure associated with providing an isolated space (time) to practice the writing competency in these grades.

Key Words: *Handwriting, Instructional, Strategies, Composition.*

Introduction.

Today's, the responsibility for handwriting development must be shifted progressively to the students, then we, teacher must guide our *students* through several stages over a long period of time-the length depending as usual on their stages, interests, capacities, needs to a freer stages where they are able to write a "composition" or "an essay" on a topic of interests to them with few or no error.

Pupils' writing flourishes in a print-filled environment where students write as they need to write, when writing is needed for particular purpose. And basal writings provide standards of printing for the teacher to use as a guide. Most of these standards are commercially and provide criteria that may be useful for evaluation. They -students-

must be motivated to make handwriting what ever they want to -their messages, poems, stories, applications, letters, provide useful materials for the teachers in assessing students' progress in handwriting. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the school to provide the individual needs of the students through sequential program of instructional handwriting. It means that we, the teachers must provide and guide actively to make a special space to motivate and shift the handwriting competency of theirs¹.

Because he or she lives in a dynamic and rapidly changing society, college student, as he or she begins to develop self-realization as a unique individual, needs and diverse the capacities and competency in writing values in its contents and methodologies. Such a program must assess this student in understanding the social expectation on handwriting methodology to which he or she is or will be subjected. Since change is a prevailing characteristic of today's society. An affective school program will help the students understand and participate in the process of those social expectations. The college program should also be cognizant of the pluralistic society around him that requires members who recognize it's varying of handwriting methodologies.

The rationale for the college grades is to provide an appropriate space and time for the students attending it. This space requires a careful study of the college students and their needs, interests, and concerns. These needs, interests, and concerns provide a flexible learning environment for the middle school and establishment of specific goals for the handwriting.

Determining that a handwriting development college is an important decision and deciding who will be responsible for making these programs of handwriting development is equally important².

These statements are regarded as a help for the program of the college to develop their handwriting and make them -students- motivate on it, and, it is strongly recommended that "students who are going to be involved in those programs" Should be guided and the teachers who are going to give an instructional strategies of writing need an appropriate materials as a guide for them. Both of those facets will be discussed on their handwriting development as a factor needed.

Handwriting Development.

There is little writing in today's schools, according to Donald Graves. Daily writing is not part of the students school life. There is only the once a week composition. There is evidence the students in the

college including teachers, writing even less than students do, writing is a basic of education and has been neglected in school and in society³.

The back -to- basics movement has had a dramatic impact on composition, suddenly writing, once the domain of the junior and senior high school English teachers, has become a concern of elementary teachers. The college students have for many years placed a high premium on teaching to read and on requiring them to listen. Little time on instruction has been given to the area of writing. College students have spent the majority of time in their language arts program in basal reading, instruction, with numerous supplementary practice sheets and workbooks. Writing has been a very small part of their program -usually fifteen- to twenty- minute period a week. This small period has been devoted to language skills such as grammar and punctuation taught in a drill format from a textbook, a practice that is partly responsible for writing college.

College teachers usually has a set number of minutes per week which are allotted for language arts instruction, most teacher seems to have sixty to hundred and twenty minutes period per day with each class and they are expected to teach, practice and writing during a half each of that period. But some colleges allow two periods of language arts per day for each class. When this is a case, one period should be allocated and designated for writing (*block of time should be allocated for independent writing*).

In the handwriting development skills in the collage grades usually has a general consideration, which could lead to the creativity of the teachers and the students' competence in handwriting inside or outside of the class; (a). Little or no writing should be practiced in class. Class time should be devoted to a listening or speaking activities which the students can not do by themselves outside of class (it goes without saying that with students who are not accustomed to writing the graphic symbols of the target language, some class time may be devoted to holding paper, pen, pencil, and putting down the graphic shapes. This need be done only when writing is introduced, however). (b). Writing should reinforce the structural and lexical items, which have been taught, as well as the listening, speaking, and reading skills. (c). Writing has been characterized as written thinking, students should be encouraged to express their ideas, experiences, thoughts, and feelings any free or creative writing they are required to do should have a content in harmony with their involving interests⁴.

Regarding the differences age of students and their interests, needs, and concerns, planned opportunities and activities, in the middle school must be developed with the following major purposes in mind:

1. *To help each student understand himself as a developing person.*
2. *To promote maximum growth in basic communication, composition, and computational skills*
3. *To build upon basic writing acquired in the middle school.*
4. *To prepare each child to understand and accept the methodology of handwriting as a developing students.*
5. *To provide instruction in and self-realization, and to foster independent learning in participating of handwriting process.*
6. *To make the students completely recognize the instructional emphases, instructional strategies, problems and assessments of handwriting⁷.*

Some students, however, are hesitant to express them in writing. The students may need guidance in deciding what to write about. They may also require help in writing mastering the basic writing skills. They may need extra stimulation and perhaps, extra structure. They -students- in the college may have defaults in writing due to their experiential background. As a result, they may feel as though they have little about which to write. Then, the specialists said that “providing adequate time for writing may be one of the most persistent problem and encounter in planning the composition or writing program. Time must be scheduled for building readiness for writing, allowing the students’ chance to reflect and organize their thought, and for the actual writing. If time for any of those is neglected the experiences will not be as valuable (lack of mastery of writing skills), and too little actual writing practice⁶”.

Writing has often been used for disciplined purposes in the school. The assigned punishment composition, “How I plan to change my attitude, study habits and so on has not contributed to the view that writing is a craft and every personal valued means of communication.

Beginning writing is difficult not only for students but also for their teachers, teachers have expressed a negative attitude toward writing. They do not want to teach writing because so few of them have been trained to do so. Many do not enjoy the act of writing and do not write unless required to do so. They often feel that they are poor writers and that the demands of teaching so many object areas do not leave them time to teach composition or to improve their own writing skills.

Writing is a lonely, painfully hard, but rewarding task. It is an important dimension of the language arts program and requires deliberate planning and teaching. Without a facilitative teacher to provide time and instruction in writing, it is no wonder that students complain that they have nothing to say or nothing of value about which to write. The teacher must be able to have students release ideas and

express what they know, and must have experiences in teaching writing skills that employ the conventions of educated English. Writing must become a valued daily necessity for students and teachers. As a powerful means of understanding the function and value of language, writing is the most difficult language skills to require. It has the potential to developing all the components of the language arts program. Writing is the most complex process in which man engages.

Words are the "stuff" of writing. Writers work with words. They are the tools that must be selected and ordered in composing a sentence, a paragraph, a poem, or a composition. Jacobs has expressed what he calls the range of world. " Words certainly do have their ways. They grow out of human experiences. They may be regarded as labels. They are used for walls and fences. They are intended to be vehicles for the conveyance of ideas--sometimes facts, sometimes opinions, sometimes sales talks, sometime directions, sometimes and feelings⁷.

One of the most important things students will learn in school is how to communicate. It is a skill that is essential to success no matter what career is chosen. Technology has changed many of the means of communicating, but the writing word is still important. Words are means of preserving thoughts, feelings, and opinions and have the power to influence others. Writing is the best means for students to discover and display what they have learned. The everyday classroom presents many opportunities for students to write. Students become writers by writing, if they receive good instruction in improving their writing⁸.

It is important for every college to provide the following *program objectives*, These program objectives of study has been prepared to provide quality educational program for students. The course of study identifies the skills and concepts teachers are responsible for teaching, gives parents and teachers a picture of what will be covered, and assures continuity to the educational program.

This course of study reflects a set of agreements of what is essential to an effective language arts program and communicates those objects to administrators, teachers, students, and the community⁹.

Definition of symbols used:

- I Introduce -- exposure/awareness of skill
- D Develop -- practice/use of skill
- M Master -- knowledge of skill at level of application
- R Reinforce -- reapplication and maintenance

Program Objectives for Writing in Middle Schools:

1. The students will be demonstrating the ability to write creatively and competency.
2. The student will adapt his or her writing to different purposes and audiences.

Composing. The student will be able to:

M recognize various forms of writing as communication processes.

M know that thoughts written down comprise.

D expands writing vocabulary.

D recognizes that words work together in meaningful thought units (phrase and clauses).

D varies their sentences by adding and rearranging words, phrases and clauses.

D writing original story showing simple plot.

D writes in first and third person.

D writes a poem that follows a pattern such as a couplet (two lines with an end rhyme).

D developing creative forms of writing.

I demonstrate the ability to deal with one topic per paragraph.

I write a friendly letter such as an invitation or thank-you letter.

I write narrative in logical sequence¹⁰.

Handwriting. The student will be able to:

Manuscript

M demonstrate muscle control and eye-hand coordination for writing.

M use appropriate letter-size relationship.

M use appropriate spacing of letters and words.

M write upper and lower case letters in manuscript.

M write letters and numerals from memory.

D copy from near and far.

D use headings and indentations appropriately.

I use margins appropriately.

Cursive

D/M read cursive writing

I/D use correct writing, connecting and ending strokes for cursive writing.

I/D apply uniform slant and pressure for cursive writing.

I/D use appropriate size and proportion for all letters in cursive writing.

I/D use heading indentation, and margins appropriately.

I/D use correct position of body, hand, paper, and pencil¹¹.

Those program objectives should lead to students and teachers recognize the instructional emphases, instructional strategies, problems, and assessments of handwriting or composition.

Instructional Emphasis:

In the college level, writing instructional is important because of the need for reinforcement and maintenance of skill and because of the increase demands on students for written works. Handwriting should be taught in the context of compositions and contents material rather in practice with isolated sentences. It should be viewed as a means of improving communication.

Specific goals should set for handwriting instruction. Goals which lead to the general objectives of legibility in everyday written works. Legibility rather than penmanship should be stressed. And particularly at middle school level, individualization of instruction should be provided because of the wide range of students' ability. Students can participate in a variety of independent activities to improve their handwriting¹².

In the college -especially- in the second and third year, the goals of handwriting program might be grouped into two categories: readiness and development period, teachers should continue to plan experiences which broaden the background of the students expand their vocabularies, improve their improvisation and listening skills, and provide opportunities for oral expression. Such activities are not limited to preschool and first grades; they must be considered on integral part of the writing program at all levels. During the skill development program period, teachers should plan experiences to help the students master *cognitive and affective objectives*.

Cognitive:

- To express ideas in complete sentences.
- To expand kernel sentences.
- To use a logical sequence of events.
- To recognize irrelevant words and sentences.
- To use capital letters and punctuation marks as appropriate for the primary level.
- To select fitting vocabularies.
- To write short paragraphs.
- To write friendly letters and address the envelopes¹³.

A caution seems warranted at this time. The preceding skills dwell upon the "how" of composition, the mechanical components of writing, if not greater importance, are the range and quality of ideas expressed in child's writing.

DeHaven¹⁴ notes several objectives in the affective domain.

Affective:

- To demonstrate pride in written work
- To enjoy sharing written expressions
- To appreciate the work of others
- To prize writing as a means of communication and self-expression.

Writing is a process, which leads to the development of variety of a product. As stated earlier, this process view should underlie the instructional program. The students should learn the major stages of *pre-writing*, *writing*, *revision*, and *post writing*. In the *prewriting stage*, the writer must identify a purpose, select a specific topic, identify the audience, determine the type of information (content) needed, and decide on an organizational plan. The prewriting stage is a thinking stage. Students should engage in brainstorming, reading, discussion, and other background-building activities during this stage. Haley-James¹⁵ stresses that oral language activity should both precede and occur during writing. She also observes that students write more effectively when they sense a need to write for a specific purpose or audience; further, variety of real audiences is important to their motivation and their development as writers.

The *writing stage* is the first-draft stage. Using the result of pre-writing activity, the student begins putting ideas on paper. The student's concern at this time is the content--selecting and organizing ideas. During the *revision phase*, students review their papers primarily to make content changes. They may make additions, deletions, changes in sentence structure and transitions, vocabulary substitution, and organizational refinements. Haley-James points out that purpose and audience lead logically to revision of a certain pieces of writing. (Not all writing should be revised.) In this summary of findings gleaned from research. Glatthorn¹⁶ includes Bamberg's conclusion that there is a strong evidence that the revision process is crucial to improve writing. Teacher and peer conferences are important as the writer revises. Graves advocates the process-conference approach to writing instruction; in this approach, successive brief teacher-pupil conferences during the writing assist the student in developing a polished piece. Peers can be effective evaluators in the revision process¹⁷.

Revision can be fruitless activity if it is viewed only as a mechanical process of correcting punctuation and spelling. Editing is important, but it should come at the end of the revision stage, after content revision has occurred. Many teachers erroneously believe that teaching isolated grammar help to improve writing. In fact, the formal study grammar should not begin until grade two or three; revising writing in view of its audience should be the means for language study in the middle school.

The *post-writing stage* is the follow-up stage. Students can share their compositions to receive feedback on how well they accomplished their purpose, speaking, listening, and reading might be built around writing. Student's writing might be published at this time. Smith¹⁸ cautions that "the act of writing does not break itself down into neatly identifiable and manageable 'step', rather it is part of all our existence", thus, the writing process is continuous, cycle process. Awareness of the various stages can assist the teachers and students greatly in writing improvement; however rigid and inflexible adherence to set procedures and time constraints is not intended.

Applebee proposes that students receive more opportunities to use writing as a tool for learning rather than just as a way to indicate learned information. An effective writing program offer students a variety of experiences. Students should write:

1. *For variety of purposes--to tell story, to describe, to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to express oneself, and to explore a topic.*
2. *For variety of audiences--self, peers, teachers, parents, public, and so on.*
3. *In variety of forms--poetry, letters, journals, essays, stories, and so on*¹⁹.

Purpose, audience, and variety of forms determine the kind of writing students do--narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive. A student's developmental stage greatly influences *how* and *what* is written. The best source of writing content is student interest and experience. At the middle school level of development, according to Klein²⁰, the teacher should be especially concerned with structuring writing contexts to expand the range of audiences students address. Students in the intermediate grades and above can skillfully manipulate features of style and form, grammatically structures, and modes (kinds) of discourse. Middle school student should experience all modes of discourse (narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive). Finally, paired assignments and project in which students produce joins compositions are especially effective at the middle school grades.

Instructional Strategies:

Handwriting is a developmental process, and as such may require different strategies at different levels of psychomotor maturity. Young children scribble or smear depending upon the medium, when children are performing at this level, activities must be designed to promote coordination rather than alphabet identification. Many adults come to middle school to first grade with no previous experience in using papers and pencils. Some of these students have excellent gross motor skill, but have never had the opportunity to develop the fine motor control required for printing. These children need experiences, which will enable them to develop this ability.

Many students come to school knowing the names of the letters and are eager to write them. If the teacher prints their names on a whiteboard, these children will trace and then copy their names at every opportunity. Other students will not be able to copy from the board as they have not developed the hand-eye coordination required to copy at far distances. For these students, it will be helpful to have alphabet strips attached to their desks. Board work might be written on a portable chalkboard and moved closer to the group of students who need to copy. When students are ready to recognize and produce alphabet, the order of presentation and the forms of the letters will depend upon the practices established in the school. When writing books are used, teachers normally use the letter-forms advocated by the publisher. The handwriting instruction should be coordinated with the other language arts lessons.

In manuscript writing, the paper should be placed squarely in front of the students so she or he can make the vertical strokes without a slant. A left-handed child is likely to have a tendency to write from right to left. A teacher can help that child learn to write from left to right by putting a mark on left side of the paper to remind him or her where to begin writing. Children should be comfortable when they write. Left-handed children should have a special left-handed desk, or if they work at tables should sit on the outside. Otto²¹... points out that right-handed teachers need to expend some energy, both physical and psychological, if they hope to understand and to help left-handed pupils.

Students who are fortunate enough to work in class environments in which they are immersed in language arts activities will need surprisingly little formal handwriting instruction. As they work at the different aspects of the composing process, they will learn the necessity for legibly and work toward that goal.

DeHave notes the following areas of concern

Forming letters

Spacing

Using appropriate and consistent size

Using lines as guides

Slanting

Most programs begin the transition from manuscript to cursive in the third grade; however, the readiness of the students, rather than the commercial program guidelines or a grade level, should determine the time for change. Third grade is generally an acceptable time because most children have not mastered manuscript writing before then. When students have reached this readiness level, practice in reading cursive writing should be provided before attempts are made to write it. Fisher and Terry²² suggest writing brief announcements or directions in both manuscript and cursive. As a group activity, the entire class could make comparisons between the two forms of writing. As the class becomes more adept in reading cursive, the manuscript copy can be gradually omitted.

Once students are comfortable in reading cursive, direct instruction in writing should be initiated. Norton recommends that stress be placed upon pointing out similarities and differences in the two styles. Students might list some differences, which they notice in cursive writing:

1. Joining the letters in a word
2. Positioning the paper to give a slant to the writing
3. Writing the entire word before crossing or dotting letters
4. Forming letters differently

It is helpful to begin instruction with cursive letters that are similar to manuscript letters. Next, emphases should be given to those that are unlike. Practice should integrate into the ordinary classroom activities. Creativity is required when extra practice is needed on specific areas. If students exhibit difficulties, plan a group lesson, using the overhead projector and samples of student writing. Guide the discussion consideration of the problem areas. After showing how improvement can be made, provide an exercise, which requires practice in that particular skill.

During a normal day, students are required to write a wide variety of material: a thank you letter to a classroom guest, first draft of a paragraph, or a spelling test, for example. A helpful teacher will remind students to consider their purpose in writing. A letter and a test require careful attention to handwriting hand skill; a first draft does not -- and should not. One of the major goals of college

handwriting program should be to help students learn to write at a reasonable speed. Speed, however, should not be emphasized during the primary years. At this point, the stress should be placed on mastering the techniques.

An analysis of handwriting skill reveals that students must be able to: (1) discriminate and identify shapes by sight and touch and (2) from the shapes by muscular movement. Since vision and muscles must be coordinated, handwriting is a sensor motor activity and should be approached on a multisensory level. Students hear and say the letter strokes at the same time they write or see them. Thus, there is auditory and visual stimulation accompanied by physical movement²³.

Cursive writing is the fourth stage in the mechanics of handwriting. The other stages are readiness skills, manuscript writing, and transition from manuscript to cursive. Each of these stages requires specific and sequential skills to be taught through direct and systematic instruction. Instruction in grade two and third will increasingly center on the use of writing to communicate. Creative writing, poetry, reports, letters, announcement, and so on are logical extensions of the handwriting instruction when basic letter formation is mastered. Real writing situations foster an understanding of the importance of legible handwriting to communicate.

Some attention to speed is necessary in the intermediate grades after letter formations are learned. The teacher may assist students in transferring good penmanship to writing in the content areas by timed exercises. Legibility and speed are emphasized.

The following from **Stewig**²⁴ is offered as a guide in determining speed attainments in cursive writing by grade level.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Letters Per Line</i>	<i>Letters Per Minute</i>
1	20 - 22	50
2	22 - 25	60
3	25 - 28	67

Good handwriting requires practice. For student in a intermediate grades, the grade expectancy is one of improved performance. Handwriting is an all-day-long skill. To be taught effectively, instruction must permeate the total curriculum and not be crammed into a ten-- to fifteen-minute period usually dominated by commercial textbooks and materials. Does illegible handwriting interfere with spelling? There is some evidence that it does. In her dissertation research, **Strickling**²⁵ found that the oral spelling scores of a group of two-graders was higher than their written scores. The conclusion that Strickling drew was that handwriting errors were the source of the

discrepancy between oral and written scores, because words missed on the written test were spelled correctly on the oral test. The difference between oral and written spelling errors was approximately 20 percent.

Milone, Wilhide²⁶ conducted a similar study with third-grade students in South Carolina. Their study suggests that there is a strong relationship between spelling ability and handwriting. Their data supported the conclusion that poor handwriting is related to poor written spelling ability.

Hodges states that "in ordinary circumstances, whenever one writes one also spells. Handwriting has a special importance in spelling because misformed and illegible letters cause words to appear to be misspelled to be misunderstood, or not to be understood at all." He continues that "since spelling and writing are simultaneous and inseparable activities, spelling and handwriting instruction can be carried on together."²⁷

These reports indicate that there is a relationship between handwriting and spelling and that students with poor handwriting are at something of a disadvantage when it comes to written spelling ability. Their handwriting seems to interfere with their spelling in the testing situation, and it is not an illogical leap to assume that the same interference is working in all written assignments.

Effective written communication, however, occurs only after two criteria's have been met. First, the writers have experienced something they want to share; and the second; they have acquired the necessary skills to write so that others can read with comprehension. These competencies are not developed from the use of isolated drill on individual skills. Instead, they spring from the understanding of why certain organizational patterns, such as sentences and paragraphs, and why certain mechanical skill, such as capitalization and punctuation, are important. This understanding of the relationship between writing skill and meaningful communication is introduced informally before the students are able to write independently, and it is taught formally as the students grow in writing ability.

When the two methods are read aloud for comparison, students can hear the more rhythmic flow of the embedded sentence.

The house is white

The house has green shutters

The house is old

The old, white house has green shutters.

It is important to remember that creativity can be developed in this activity, for there is more than one correct way. Student will also

need to learn to join simple sentences to form a compound sentence. Creating paragraph is next step in writing instruction. Rubbin²⁸ suggests that in the upper primary grades students should be able to recognize that (1) all the sentences in a paragraph is related to one main topic and (2) these sentences are arranged in a certain sequence. Students first learn to identify a paragraph visually by observing that the first word is indented. The next steps of classifying the ideas and selecting the main topic are much more complicated.

Another paragraph development instructional measure can occur as guided group activity. In this, the chalkboard is divided into three sections. In the third section, sentences are written which tell what the animal eats. The class then develops the material on the chalkboard into three paragraphs. Of course, variations of this activity, with different objects and actions, may be employed by the teacher in order to diversify the writing experiences of the class.

Finally, some specific ideas for implementation the writing process in the middle school classroom below:

1. Language experiences activities based on student experiences.
2. Sentence-building and sentence-combining exercise in which student both expand and synthesize sentences
3. Sentence frames and paragraph frames in which student fill in partially completed sentences and paragraphs
4. Patterned writing such as haiku and cinquain poems
5. Using literature as a motivator for writing
6. Content area writing--reports, problems, explanations, arguments
7. Newspapers writing--who? What?, Where?, When?, Why?, How?.
8. Varied forms--journals, messages, lists, autobiographies, poems, epitaphs, greeting, card telegrams, letters to pen pals, plays, tall tales, myths, legends, News articles, stories, songs, diaries, opinion, summary paragraph, Descriptive, and logs²⁹.

Problems:

Many college teachers are not trained in the techniques of teaching handwriting. Therefore, they either teach it incidentally or not at all after the letter formation models are presented. This presents problem as it is the handwriting teacher's responsibility to understand the developmental nature of handwriting skills and provide effective teaching skills and procedures for a quality program. The teacher requirements are knowing (1) how to write and (2) how to teach handwriting. In manuscript and cursive, the teacher's handwriting will serve as the models for the students in the class³⁰.

The model provided by the teacher and other referents (such as alphabet strips, ditto sheets, and charts) must be consistent. The needs to write neatly on lined paper as well as on unlined surfaces such as chalkboard, charts, or overhead projector are apparent. Skills in diagnosing and prescribing instruction for persistent problems in handwriting, such as confusion in visual discrimination, poor muscle control, reversal, left-handedness, and poor evaluation, are needed in the implementation of a handwriting program. It is the teacher who brings direction to the program.

During the actual composition period, students should be taught that the writing process has several components. First, the ideas are recorded. Next, this rough draft is revised and improvements are made. When the content is satisfactory, editing and proofreading take place. Conference with other students and with the teacher can help during this stage. Finally, the students copy the revised material, using their best handwriting and a pleasing format. It is not sufficient merely to ask students to read over their work, guidance must be provided. A class-designed checklist provide reminder of appropriate standards. Reading aloud often alerts students to the need for punctuation or a change in phrasing³¹.

The classroom environment should be structured so that it provides both physical atmosphere and the supported attitude that enable students to develop effective writing skill. The room should contain areas for talking and areas for writing; material should be accessible and varied. Displaying students' work is one way of showing that writing is valued.

Some students are hesitant to express themselves in writing. This student may need guidance in deciding what to about. they may also need help in mastering the basic writing skills. They may need an extra stimulation and, perhaps, extra structure. Working on joint writing projects may furnish a feeling of security. Encouraging, but not requiring, students to share their writing may help some students feel more comfortable. Of course, participation in many successful writing experiences is the most effective way to develop students who enjoy writing and who write well.

Petty³² summarizes possible causes of writing difficulties:

- *Absence of structure and direct instruction*
- *Inadequate vocabularies development*
- *Lack of mastery of writing skills*
- *Too little actual writing practices*
- *Lack of background experiences*

- *Overemphasis on isolated drill*
- *Little exposure to literature*

Some children may have difficulty in writing due to their experiential backgrounds. As a result, they may feel as though they have little about which to write. Spiegel³³ offers a remedy for these children and their teachers. She states: "Children who have never traveled beyond their neighborhood, who have never been in a barn and smell the blend of hay and animals, who have never been jostled by noisy, impersonal crowds on city sidewalks, can begin the circuitous route toward expanding the worlds in their head by reading".

Perhaps, the most difficult problem to overcome in the teaching of composition is the regulation for responsibility for the instruction almost exclusively to the language arts teachers. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reports and Applebee³⁴ all point out the absolute necessity of writing instruction across the curriculum.

Another problem in composition instruction is that most it has consistently been negative and error. Emphasis has traditionally been placed on mechanical correctness rather than contend. It is imperative that composition instruction be a positive experience. Further, growth in composition is a long-term process. Writing requires time and effort. Both students and teachers must realize that writing is not always easy to learn or to teach.

Cazden³⁵ *Notes* that in classroom practice the abundance of time is spent in listening and reading because of the numbers of students teacher must instruct and because of over-increasing numbers of standardized tests. In a related observation, she states that sales of lined paper continue to decline as sales of duplicating paper for short-answer dittoed activities rise.

A final important problem in composition is the fact that most college teachers have received little or no preparation in *how* to teach composition. Consequently, lacking better information, these teachers teach the way they were taught, if they teach writing at all. The various commercial handwriting materials may differ in the formation of certain letters. A typical second and third grade will contain students who have learned slightly modified styles because of their use of other programs. Since school districts usually adopt a handwriting series for all college grades. Students should help children learn and use the adopted models.

Most teachers are right-handed and most students are right-handed. Instruction of students who are left-handed does require that attention be paid to several considerations.

1. Many left-handed children students hook their hand so that they are writing upside-down. Petty suggests that providing many early experiences in writing on the board may prevent this problem. Holding the pencil further from the point allows students to see as they write, and may help them not to develop this uncomfortable position.
2. Norton suggests using pencils with harder lead. Harder lead does not smear as easily.
3. The writing slant for the left-handers is different, they may write more legibly and comfortably if the paper is kept straighter³⁶.

A problem may arise concerning the time for introducing cursive writing. In many areas, this transition is dictated by a handwriting materials adopted by schools rather than the readiness of the students. Most educators agree that the beginning of the middle of third grade is best.

Sometimes handwriting problems are created through the poor practice of using handwriting exercises for disciplinary purpose. As students race to complete their punishment, they may acquire poor writing habits and negative attitudes toward handwriting.

Assessments:

It would be wise to assess and evaluate every work and handwriting of the students who has engaged with handwriting development. It measures the progress of their ability to improve their writing in every kind of the opportunities of writing.

Evaluation and assessment of handwriting is an integral part of the language arts program especially in handwriting areas, which measure and encourage growth in writing. Evaluation should be viewed as the cooperative tasks of the teachers and the students. The following procedures may be used to evaluate composition or handwriting through the school year:

1. Students' writing folders may be kept to aid the teachers, the students, and the parents in comparing and assessing progress in writing performance from the beginning, middle and end of the year. Writing is a long-term process and should not be evaluated on single piece of writing. Grades in grade book cannot show progress or lack of progress, but five or six samples of writing can.

2. Dictated paragraph may be used as an informal evaluation of students' handwriting abilities. Skills in correct punctuation, capitalization, spelling and paragraph form are assessed.
3. Original paragraph may be used to determine the degree of proficiency in organization, vocabulary and mechanics.
4. Student-teacher conferences to evaluate handwriting for specific objectives during the writing process may prove an effective means for the teacher and the student to receive feedback and diagnose problems. Corrections made under teacher guidance provide aid in analysis and evaluation in locating errors.
5. General or holistic evaluation methods may be used to get a total impression of a written work. General comments and impression can be recorded.
6. Students may work in pairs or as a group to edit individual or class handwriting against a class or a standard guidelines. Editing groups provide means of expanding ideas, responding to the writing of others. Increasing critical reading skills and developing realistic writing standards.
7. Student may evaluate his or her own written work against the standard. Original (first-draft) and edited handwriting may be used as an evidence of a skill in self-evaluation³⁷.

Evaluation of student handwriting should take place after the revising and editing stages and after the student has completed the final draft. Prior to this time in the writing process, teachers should be helping students to improve their writing for contents and for mechanics. Too often, evaluation comes after the first draft instead of after the final draft. In such cases, the first draft is the final draft. Teachers need to teach student to write as many drafts as may necessary in order to make the handwriting the best that the student is capable of writing. After the assessment, it might be beneficial for the students to do a revision, incorporating the suggestions for improvement³⁸.

All students' handwritings do not need to be evaluated. There are many ways, including peer evaluation, for assessing the handwriting, which are selected for teacher evaluation. It is important for teachers to point out students' strong as well as to diagnose deficient as the evaluate student compositions or handwriting. Underlining "beautiful thoughts", noting growth in vocabulary, and praising individual improvements can be excellent motivators for the student writers.

There common methods for evaluating and assessing students' handwriting are holistic scoring, analytic scoring, and primary-trait scoring. And explanation of these scoring procedures follows:

1. **Holistic scoring.** Briefly, holistic scoring involves reviewing a paper for an overall or "whole" impression. Individual characteristics such as grammar, usage, syntax, spelling, and creativity undoubtedly affect a rater's response, but none of these factors is addressed directly. Generally, a four-point scale is used in ranking papers; model papers are used as guides in assigning scores.
2. **Analytic scoring.** Analytical scoring is quite different in that it involves isolating the characteristics of "good" writing--for instance, organization, syntax, mechanics, and style--and scoring them one by one. Again, a four-point scale may be used. However, in addition to model papers, readers receive a scoring guide, which defines each characteristic in explicit terms and offers a specific criterion for assigning scores at each level. This scoring approach allows one to report not just how students performed overall, but how they performed with respect to syntax, word choice, and some other trait.
3. **Primary-Trait Scoring.** Primary-trait scoring presumes that all writing is done in terms of audience, and that successful writing is that which has the desired effect upon that audience. For example, a set of directions for assembling a bike provides clear, orderly information; a campaign speech arouses support. The most important--or *primary*--traits in a piece of writing are those, which cause it to have its desired effect. These traits are isolated and scored independently. Whereas analytical scoring focuses on traits important to any piece of writing in any context, primary traits differ from case to case, depending on audience and situation. The primary traits for the bike assembly instructions, for instance, might be organization and clarity; for the campaign speech, word choice and syntax³⁹.

Teachers could also use modifications of these scoring procedures as they work with writing samples for intermediate-grade students. The evaluation processes may lead to adjustments in the pace and in the plan for instruction for individuals or for student groups. Handwriting evaluation, however, may bring about more successful application of the fundamentals and provide insight into the facets of legibility. The evolution and assessment process can be effective if self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teachers-evaluation are employed. The purpose of these evaluations is to locate strengths and weaknesses in the element of legibility so that appropriate instruction and practice may be determined. Published handwriting scales may be used by students and their peers as the basis for making judgments about the legibility of handwriting samples.

The assessment process should include regular responses to the student writing over a period of time. It is also recommended that students keep writing folders to enable teachers, students, and parents to view progress.

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