

January 23 is National Handwriting day!

(really, I didn't just make that up!)

While it may be the age of technology, where text messaging is more common than snail mail, handwriting is still an art.

Handwriting and language are very closely linked. It is the way the majority of children are going to show what they've learned in school; on both standardized tests and in the community.

To address handwriting, practice should occur each day and quality, not quantity should be the emphasis. Regardless of the program you use, the session should include a warm up of sorts (see attached for an example) to neurologically prepare the body to write. Next, start with a very brief review of what you covered on the last lesson, and then move a bit further. Proper letter formation in the beginning is crucial, like any other foundational skill- it's a building block kids need to grow on.

Start big- writing very large letters requires children to use lots of movement which will help them learn the right letter formation.

Use all the senses- use auditory cues about the shapes of letters, use playdough spread in foam trays for kids to "write" in, write in fingerpaint or shaving cream, or sand.

To develop grasp and increase stability allow kids to work on clipboards on the floor. This also refines eye-hand coordination.

Cursive is still valuable as well. All kids need a signature. Additionally, when children have challenges with initiating and completing tasks, cursive may improve their ability to produce more written work.

It's great to hear second grade teachers are working on cursive! Keep up the great work and let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Remember, handwriting is an art...but not a lost one!!

Tracey Schaeffer, Occupational Therapist

#### Warm-ups

Shake out your hands

Fold your hands in front of you and push together as hard as you can

Keep your hands folded and put them on top of your head and push down as hard as you can

Sit on your hands and bounce up and down like popcorn

#### Pencil Aerobics

- Hold your pencil like you are going to write
  - Scoot your fingers to the eraser
  - Then scoot your fingers back to the tip
- Turn your pencil around like you are going to erase and back again.