



Cursive Writing

Things to Consider for Cursive Writing Instruction Grades Three and Four



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I. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide teachers with guidance for cursive writing instruction from Grade 3 to Grade 4 to use in support of the Georgia Standards of Excellence for English language arts. Classroom instructional plans for when and how to teach cursive writing are developed at the local school or school district levels. This guide does not advocate the use of any particular program to teach cursive writing. Local districts are free to develop or choose the program that best meets the needs of its students.

Cursive writing standards are required and are used to guide handwriting instruction in grades three and four. The following considerations for instructional planning include:

- Communication of cursive writing standards to parents
- Alignment of writing resources to the standards
- Individual student considerations, especially those due to physical or visual limitations

Research indicates that handwriting influences reading, writing, language, and critical thinking abilities (Handwriting in the 21st Century? Research Shows Why Handwriting Belongs in Today's Classroom, 2015). According to the researchers who presented at the 2012 Educational Summit for "Handwriting in the 21st Century," teaching keyboarding skills, while valuable, "in lieu of handwriting can leave students at a disadvantage." Among their findings, some of the benefits for teaching handwriting have shown to increase brain activity, impact performance across all disciplines, and provide a foundation for higher-order skills. There has been a growing movement by state legislatures to mandate cursive writing instruction (Zaner-Bloser, 2013).

Even though it appears that technology dominates the written word, many scholars believe there is a need for cursive writing. According to Steve Graham, a professor of special education and literacy at Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, Tennessee, "We don't live in a handwriting world, and we don't live in a digital world. We live in a hybrid world" (Zubryzcki, 2012). For that reason, many believe handwriting is essential.



II. Definitions

Cursive: (of handwriting) in flowing strokes with the letters joined together

Handwriting: writing done with a pen or pencil in the hand; script **Print or Manuscript:** to write in characters such as are used in print (Dictionary.com, 2015)

III. Standards

Within the Language Standards of the ELA Georgia Standards of Excellence, teachers will find the following standards for handwriting and cursive writing:

[ELAGSE1L1k](#) Print with appropriate spacing between words and phrases. ([page 59](#))

[ELAGSE2L1g](#) Create documents with legible handwriting. ([page 42](#))

[ELAGSE3L1j](#) Write legibly in cursive. ([page 42](#))

[ELAGSE4L1h](#) Writes legibly in cursive, leaving spaces between letters in a word and between words in a sentence. ([page 40](#))

The Teacher Guidance Documents offer grade-level instructional strategies for teachers. The page number links for the guidance document are provided above. Some of the things to consider when teaching cursive writing are listed here:

- Maintain a daily schedule for instruction, modeling, and practice
- Find opportunities across the content areas to practice cursive writing skills
- Provide time for students to have fun and to experiment with their signature and to review the signatures of famous people

IV. Suggestions for Cursive Writing Instruction

Teachers can teach cursive writing during the ELA block in Writer's Workshop. The *type* of font used for cursive instruction should be determined by the local district. (Ex: D'nealian, Zaner- Bloser)

- The first five minutes could be a whole group lesson where the teacher introduces students to the letter(s).



- The teacher would model, demonstrating how to form the letter(s) while providing opportunity for students to follow along.
- At some point during the workshop, teachers could differentiate by working with groups of students who may be having challenges with letter formation.
- Cursive writing could be practiced as students are engaged in word work activities.

Suggestions for Introduction and Practice:

- 1) Facilitate discussions about the purpose for learning cursive writing.
- 2) Strategically model cursive writing by forming and connecting/joining letters.
- 3) Discuss why it may be better to slant the paper when writing cursive, e.g., right handed students can try slanting their paper to the right; left handed students can try slanting their paper to the left.
- 4) Provide models of written cursive letters (example: cards and/or charts with letter formed correctly).
- 5) Provide opportunities for experiment and practice by including markers and unlined paper (butcher paper) for letter formation; students may enjoy practicing in small groups or centers.
- 6) Demonstrate on the white or active board using lines while transitioning students to forming letters on wide-ruled paper.
- 7) Present students with an order of learning the formation of letters not necessarily in alphabetical order but by type of hand movement/letter shape/letter space on lined paper, e.g., lower case “i”, “m”, “n”, “s”, “t”, “u”, “w” – introducing groups of letters that sit on the line, extend above the line and letters that hang below the line, letters that loop, upper case letters, etc.).
- 8) Provide areas in the room for independent or center/station work for cursive writing with different types of resources, e.g., markers, pens, pencils, water color brushes/paint, finger paint.
- 9) Letter formation introductions and practice can take about three to four weeks.
- 10) Making words and writing sentences with proper spacing can take about 3 to 4 additional weeks of guidance and practice before students can be asked to complete assignments in other content areas using cursive writing.
- 11) Written assignments in cursive may need to be modified in the beginning since it may take students more time.
- 12) For continued practice, have students to respond to reading in cursive



Suggested Order of Instruction

Many possibilities exist for the order in which to teach cursive letters. One recommendation is to teach similarly formed letters together. Another suggestion is to present lower case letters first so students can quickly begin forming words. By teaching lower case letters first, cursive writing can then be incorporated with other lessons such as spelling.

Roundabout Letters: *a, d, g, q, c*

Up-Then-Down Letters: *i, t, u, w*

Loopty Loop Letters: *e, l, h, k, b, f, j*

Humpback Letters: *n, m, v, x*

*This and That Letters: *p, r, s, o, y, z*

**Letters that have attributes of multiple letters in other categories*

(Prince Edward Island Canada Education and Early Childhood Development English Programs, 2012)

Reminders:

- Cursive letters are connected within words
- Letters are tall, short, slanted, looped, and some hang below the lines
- The point of pencil is not lifted until the end of words
- Spaces are between words when writing in cursive just as when writing manuscript or print
- There are visual similarities between letters (W,w-M, m)

Parent Communication:

- Cursive writing standards are required. Exceptions are made for students as appropriate or as indicated in an IEP.
- Discuss and provide communication regarding the purposes for cursive writing.
- Cursive writing should be encouraged and practiced at home. Parents and children can compare handwriting styles. Students and parents can work together to write advertisements or create signs in cursive for products, write letters to relatives and friends, send letters to someone in the military.
- After proficiency in cursive writing is determined at 3rd and 4th grades, students may have opportunities to choose to write in manuscript or cursive. After 4th grade, many students are allowed to choose the type of handwriting that is best for their strengths. Of course,



computer keyboarding is a skill that is needed and students should have time to learn and practice using the computer keyboarding skills throughout the grade levels. These are all important writing tools that can enable students to read and comprehend a variety of communications.

V. Resources/Bibliography/Acknowledgements

Handwriting Summit - <https://www.hw21summit.com/>

GeorgiaStandards.org - <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA-K-5.aspx>

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