



# Writing in the Early Years Greenfield Parent Workshop

# Writing in the Early Years

- Children need to develop gross motor skills and control before writing can develop.
- This develops their muscles ready for writing.



# Remember

- Learning to write should start with large scale movements from the shoulder, then refined to medium scale movements, such as skywriting in the air using the hand and fore-arm, and eventually into writing with a crayon or pen on paper.
- Plenty of practice of letter formation in this way provides secure foundation for the development of neat, fluent handwriting.





# How can we help?

- Young children should not be colouring in the lines yet, and should not be given too many pictures to colour.
- This is a time to learn and explore with crayons, not be confined to a specific shape.
- Using short pieces of crayons will help promote a proper pencil grasp.



# Things we can do before writing

- Large-scale movements, such as outdoor play, balancing, climbing, crawling, marching and moving to music.
- Manipulative skills, such as using tools, cooking utensils and scissors.
- Fine motor control and hand-eye co-ordination, through activities, such as jigsaws, threading and cutting.



# Three key movements

- The three key movements underpinning letter formation are
  1. vertical strokes
  2. horizontal strokes
  3. circular movements,
- When playing music, we can use cloths, juggle scarves and ribbon sticks to hold. We move our arms up and down and across with the material.

- We use colouring crayons on large pieces of paper to the same music and story again making up, down and across moves.
- When colouring we encourage scribbling first, imitation of vertical strokes second, horizontal strokes next, then circular motions.
- This is the proper developmental sequence of pre-writing skills.





# Developmental stages of handwriting skills

- 1-1½ years- *Palmar-supinate grasp*
  - scribbles on paper
  - types of scribbles: wavy, circular, vertical, horizontal or combined
  - Imitates scribbles
- 2-3 years- *Digital-pronate grasp*
  - Imitates vertical, horizontal and circular strokes on paper
  - Imitates two or more strokes for a cross



# Development of handwriting skills

- 3-4 years
  - *Transits to static tripod posture*
  - Copies a vertical, horizontal line and a circle
  - Traces a diamond, but with corners rounded
  - Imitates a cross
- 4-5 years
  - *Static or dynamic tripod grip*
  - Copies a cross, right oblique line and oblique cross
  - Copies some letters and numbers
  - May be able to write own name

# Developmental stages

- 5-6 years
  - *Stable dynamic tripod posture*
  - copies triangles and diamond
  - Prints own name
  - Copies most lower and upper case letters
  - Begins to form letters with some control over size, shape and orientation of letters or lines of writing
- 6-7 years
  - Produce legible upper and lower case letters in one style and uses them consistently (that is, not randomly mixed within words)
  - Produces letters that recognisably formed and properly orientated and that have clear ascends and descenders where necessary
- 8-10 years
  - Begins to produce clear and legible joined up writing
  - Produces clear and legible writing in both printed and cursive styles

Based on: Kellogg (1969), Klein (1982), Erhardt (1982), Department of education and science (1989), Amundson and Weil (1996)



# Opportunities for mark making.

- Trays with sand, cous cous, rice or flour – children can use their fingers to make lines, and then letter shapes.
- Using paints, indoors and outdoors, on large pieces of paper.
- Notepads for children to write their own 'shopping lists' when going to the shops.
- Letters, postcards, notices and labels.





# Writing their names

- Children must not be pushed to write.
- If your child shows an interest in writing their name please use lower case letters - do NOT write the whole name in capitals.
- i.e. **Samantha**
- If you would like your child's name card please ask.

# Pencil control

- Holding a pencil puts a strain on the thumb and first two fingers of the writing hand.
- Short bursts of writing are better than long as this can put children off writing because of painful associations.
- Help your child to develop an effective pencil grip.
- Do intervene to stop them from grasping the pencil incorrectly.
- Place the pencil appropriately between the fingers and lightly guide their hand as they draw.
- Keep it light-hearted, praise them for correct pencil grip, and make light of any regressions – just keep making gentle adjustments.





# Pencil Control

## Difficulties:

- Position on the line
- Left to right/top to bottom
- Letter/word spacing
- Letter reversals



# Pencil Control Strategies:

- Position on the line
  - raised line paper
  - Three colour lines cues
  - Ruler
  - Exercise book with coloured lines
- Left to right/Top to bottom:
  - sticker cues
  - Three colour line cues
  - Writing in boxes/grid paper
  - Sandpaper letters
- Letter/Word spacing:
  - Index finger
  - Lollypop stick
  - Small stickers
  - Little bit of 'nothing'

# Hand Dominance- strategies

- **Swapping hands:**

- Play tabletop games while sitting on less-dominant hand
- Stencils
- Using a ruler
- Opening jars/containers

- **Left handedness:**

- Avoid sitting a left hander on the right side of a right hander
- Position of paper
- Use of left handed scissors





# Scissor Skills

- Difficulties:

Grip

Cutting on line

- Strategies:

Use a guiding hand

Hand over hand assistance

Practice two handed skills:

Tearing paper and pasting it with glue

Opening jars and containers

Action songs (Song practice)

Ball games



# You might be surprised but these things help to strengthen muscles!

- Play dough
- Scissors, hole punches
- Woodwork tools, hammers etc
- Construction toys, duplo, mobilo etc
- Weaving, threading and sewing
- Jigsaws, pegboards, fingerpuppets
- Putting on and buttoning or zipping coats and other clothes
- Tying bows



# Posture!

- Children need to sit in their chair with their hips, knees and feet at a 90-degree angle. If the child's feet do not touch the floor try placing a box or stool under their feet to help with stability.

"Stack Their Blocks"



# Any Questions?

