

IMPACTFUL LEARNING DESIGNS

Handwriting Intervention for Dysfluent Writers

Why?

There is a growing body of research evidence that shows lower handwriting fluency is associated with poorer writing performance not only in primary but also in middle grades (Graham, Berninger, Abbott, Abbott, & Whitaker, 1997; Limpo & Alves, 2013; Limpo, Alves, & Connelly, 2017). Slow handwriting

- hampers text production,
- requires unnecessary cognitive resources to be spent on letter formation reducing attention for higher level writing processes like idea generation,
- impedes writers' ability to keep pace with their thoughts which can cause them to lose their ideas, and
- decreases motivation while increasing avoidance behaviors.

Who?

To identify which students in your class may benefit from a handwriting intervention, administer the following quick assessment.

- 1) **Alphabet Task.** Students write the lowercase letters of the alphabet fast and legibly as many times as they can in 60 seconds.
- 2) **Copy Task.** Students copy the sentence, "A quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog", fast and legibly as many times as possible in 90 seconds.

Using the results, you can identify which students may benefit from participating in a handwriting intervention. Specifically, for 1st-3rd grade students who score 7, 13, and 14 letters, respectively, below the mean and for older students who score 20 letters below the mean are good candidates.

Grade	Girls	Boys	Grade	Girls	Boys
1 st	21	17	6 th	91	78
2 nd	36	32	7 th	109	91
3 rd	50	45	8 th	118	112
4 th	66	61	9 th	121	114
5 th	75	71			

Table 1. Mean Handwriting Speeds: Letters Per Minute

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How?

Engage students in this *10-minute handwriting practice* at least 3 days a week to improve their handwriting fluency and reduce the cognitive effort spent on letter formation so that it can be used for other writing skills like idea generation and spelling.

Task 1: Letter Warm-Up (2 minutes)

To warm up, have students write the lowercase letters of the alphabet fast and legibly as many times as they can in 60 seconds. For variety, you can start at a different letter of the alphabet each day. Have them count how many letters they wrote legibly and record it on their handwriting tracker.

Task 2: Letter Rockets (8 minutes)

The second activity have students copy a sentence, approximately 26 to 34 letters long, for three minutes. Students are to copy the sentence quickly and without making mistakes. The number of letters copied is then graphed on a tracking chart. Then, students will repeat the exercise with the goal of beating their last score by three letters. Again, have students graph their progress and indicate how many more/less letters they wrote the second time.