

The Foundations of Literacy

(Part Two)

by Carrie Gabbard Second Grade Teacher

"The Six Golden Rules of Writing: Read, read, read, and write, write, write."

~Ernest Gaines~



Introduction

"The Six Golden Rules of Writing: Read, read, read, and write, write, write." By Ernest Gaines exemplifies many, many truths regarding the process of literacy and its foundations. Reading and writing intertwines in guiding young learners to become effective and active in their education and development. The focus of this last article is to examine the process and developments of children as they become more immersed in the writing craft. In addition, a brief overview regarding the handwriting debate and what Holy Family School is doing to prepare our students to be successful in areas of writing.

Writing

From the moment a child grasp his or her first crayon the maturity of a writer has emerged. The development of writing begins as a toddler through scribbling and drawing. From this moment and as a child becomes more verbal his or her can tell what is happening and feel like a "writer". As their cognitive and fine motor development continues, a child moves to creating pictures that tell a "story". Children at this age love to verbally tell what is going on in their pictures to create an amazingly imaginative and detailed story. As children reach school age,

drawings are then enhanced by their development of sentences that look much like a series of random letters. Children at this stage are emerging to the next step of inventive spellers as their reading, phonemic and grammar skills continue to mature. Inventive spelling may not be the proper spelling and grammar but more often it shows that the students are able to decode and "chunk" their words as they guess on how to properly spell words. Inventive spelling emerges to conventional spelling as writers grow more in their exposure to rich texts, strong grammar, phonic and reading strategies. The final goal is for all students to be fluent writers that show a wide range of variants in their writing and the ability to captivate their readers.

Here at Holy Family School ...

* Students as young as kindergarten are treated and taught to be effective writers. From the proper pencil grip, letter formation to writing full paragraphs our students are taught the writing process and how they are truly authors and illustrators.

* On a daily basis, students are immersed in rich literary text. Rich text are books that use a variety of visual, descriptive words that really paint a picture in any reader and writer's mind. From this, children are shown how to model these examples in their own writings. Student practice the craft on a daily basis. Our teachers model, model and more model on how effective writing can really enrich and captivate a child's life.



Handwriting

If anyone happens to read the newspaper or watch the nightly news the subject has bound to have come up in a news segment: “School District Decides That Cursive Writing is Obsolete” Or “Is Handwriting Practice Even Necessary?” It has been a major debate among many educators in the idea that formalized handwriting – manuscript and cursive is unnecessary as technology is the way of the future. In many schools across the country, cursive writing lessons have been replaced with typing classes and computer program lessons. But here is some interesting research particularly on one website for parents entitled: Better Parenting (<http://www.betterparenting.com/the-handwriting-debate/>).

Many researchers and experts have pointed out the key facts that proper and formalized handwriting is ESSENTIAL in every child’s ability to develop crucial fine motor skills and cognitive processing. It is the child’s ability to formulate brainstorming thoughts and ideas. By not teaching proper formalized handwriting skills drastically hinders a child’s ability to formulate problem-solving skills, memory and language development.

Handwriting is also a strong indicator if a child has a learning disability early in their education. Poor handwriting is one aspect of signaling to the teacher that their student may need additional testing and/or resources to see if his/her student needs more assistance in their educational and learning processes.

As the second grade teacher I introduce cursive writing around January and the children become quite enthused to learn it. It not only connects in their thought processes but the children also feel it is another way to be artistic and to gain ownership over their own writing pieces.

What Holy Family Does...

* Introduces and practices formalized handwriting practice in both manuscript and cursive writing skills in our primary and intermediate grades.

* Weekly memory Bible verse practice, copy work of poems, important sentences, etc. to practice proper sentence, grammar and handwriting structure.

* Emphasis on quality, presentable work for all subject areas.

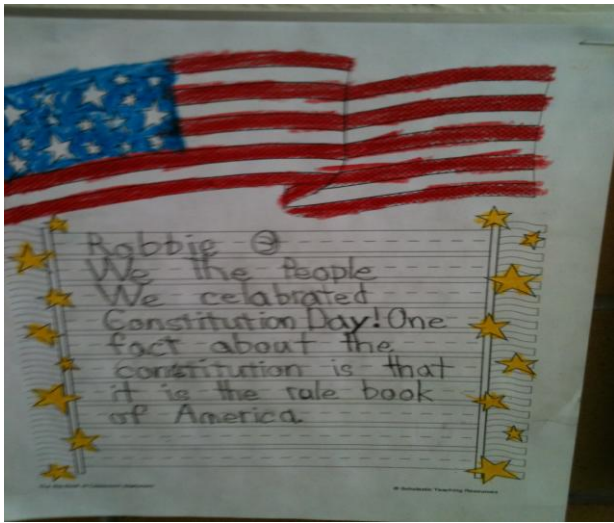
Conclusion

Overall in this whole debate is there is no reason NOT to teach proper, formalized handwriting. Every child will greatly benefit from this skill in their reading and writing as they move throughout their lives. Personally, I am very proud that Holy Family School stands by the belief that these skills are not only important but that these skills are absolutely NECESSITY for every child who walks through our hallways.

As my mother in law would say (whose also a teacher) “You are not taking my pencil out of my cold hands!”

Every aspect of literacy breaks down barriers and gives an entire universe of possibility to any child. If any child can read, write, listen and speak – that child has the entire world in their grasp and the ability to conquer whatever the world has to offer. Please encourage your child to grow and to appreciate such a wonderful world of literacy. It opens many, many doors to endless opportunities.

Again, this is to encourage conversation and if you have any questions/comments, please contact me through my email address mrsqabbard2ndgrade@gmail.com.



Robbie @
We the people
We celebrated
Constitution Day! One
fact about the
constitution is that
it is the rule book
of America.