

An Act to Require Elementary School Students to Learn Cursive Writing

The author of these notes< Elisabeth Nelson-Smith of Gardiner, Maine, suggests addition of the term “*cursive mode*” to LD78’s title and other places where the term “cursive” appears

Related Information

Handwriting terminology challenges in 2025

- competing interpretations of the word “cursive”* (many Americans think only of *looped cursive*)
- a less known form of cursive is *semi-connected print writing*, aka *italic*, *chancery italic*, *chancery cursive*

Benefits of semi-connected print writing (italic, a different “cursive mode”)

- simplicity
- legibility/clarity
- recognizability of letterforms (cf. Swiss type designer Adrian Frutiger’s study of basic concepts of recognizable alphabet forms)
- comfortable for the hand
- semi-joined version allows pen lifts within words
- potential for rapid, legible writing
- different speeds for different purposes – an adaptable tool
- can write it with pointed or broad-tipped writing tools
- can be casual, quick, or more formal
- can use for optical character recognition
- effectiveness and automaticity is attainable for various tasks, including note-taking
- handwriting research (formal and informal) suggests some favorable aspects of this kind of handwriting

Learning

- learning starts with a print script (print writing)
- learning proceeds with connecting the same letters (versus changing to a different style script)
- people of all ages learn and enjoy it
- some learners discover (re-invent) this form of writing on their own
- can teach yourself from books and apps
- can learn and write it on tablets
- adults can learn at the same time as children and youth and help each other
- basis for national handwriting learning styles in many English-speaking countries and others (please see Primarium by TypeTogether - <https://primarium.info>)
- in 2025 many related fonts exist

Challenges to revitalizing effective/fluent handwriting include

- competing definitions of the term “cursive” (many US people think only of *looped cursive*)
- teacher and community buy-in, learning, and training are important
- the Digital Divide - access to devices for digital practice

Sometimes viewed as “un-American” – this is not necessarily true

- A few Americans in the early years practiced clear, efficient and semi-connected print-writing or slightly hybrid writing forms (print writing, semi-connected, and looped cursive)
- Exs: William Bradford (Mayflower Compact); Martha Ballard diaries; other documents from the area that is now Maine; John Adams and some other signers of the Declaration of Independence)

Learning to Read Cursive

- Many handwriting methods now include learning to read looped cursive in their curricula
- Kate Gladstone wrote “Read Cursive Fast” and says she has taught children and adults to read looped cursive in as little as an hour; Getty-Dubay Handwriting Success and the late Nan Jay Barchowsky’s Swansbury curricula also teach the reading of looped cursive

Reasons for including italic writing as an option in curricula

- allowing choices of writing curricula
- concern for children and youth learning effective life skills
- preparation for life-time learning and adaptability to changing life demands and circumstances
- preparation for future citizens and workforce
- helpful for international communication and friendships with people in many other countries; may sometimes be needed for collaboration where handwriting is required
- freedom to study and record information when there is no available working device, no power, etc.
- along with other handwriting methods, useful for some children and adults with hand injuries or deformities that make typing more difficult (the author of this list has one deformed finger)
- a fluent, effective writing and its possible uses benefit confidence?
- has stood the test of time (Renaissance forms were revived in the twentieth century)

Relevant legal information about italic writing

- allegedly there are no copyrights on the original written alphabet forms from the Renaissance, so it is OK to create derivative handwriting models (source: Jonathan Dubay of Handwriting Success LLC)

Questions

- Do we know yet whether the implementation of specific educational handwriting systems affect international education rankings of countries, or state rankings?
- Please see Primarium.info for examples of children’s writing models used in various countries.
- Suitability of various handwriting methods for children with different learning requirements? (Physical and occupational therapists often use looped cursive writing teaching methods.)

Credits-

The author of these notes is grateful to Kate Gladstone, Jonathan Dubay, and the late Nan Jay Barchowsky for sharing their extensive knowledge; also her past handwriting teachers, co-workers, and handwriting friends. The display script used in this document is Microsoft Segoe Script.