

# Is Good Handwriting Natural and Automatic for Your Kindergartners?

Accomplished kindergarten teachers have proven these 10 strategies!

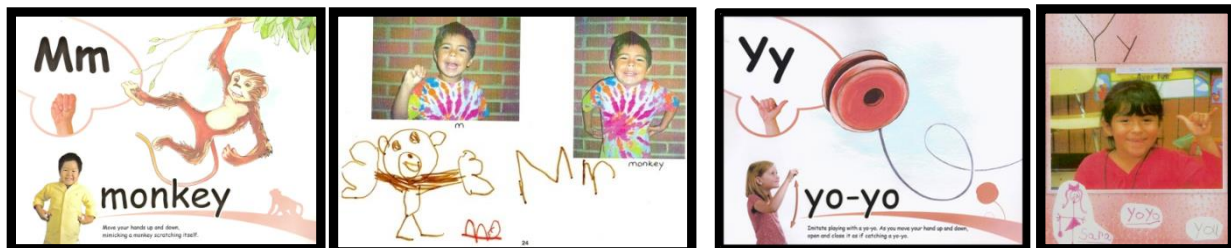
Nellie Edge Online Seminar #2 Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters! Self-Assessment Guide



*Handwriting practice is woven into authentic writing experiences that have "meaning to the child," not isolated drill!*

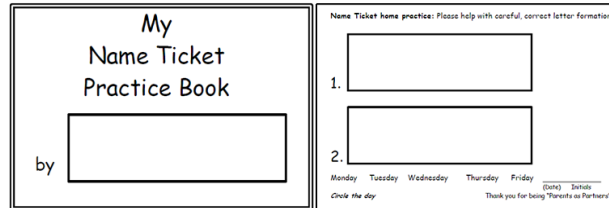
## 1. Teach Intentionally with High Expectations for Accuracy and Efficient Handwriting:

- Expect Teachers, IA's, literacy support teams, and volunteers to use the same approach to teaching handwriting and use consistent motions and letter formation language when teaching a-z.
- Have copies of the Zaner-Bloser handwriting guides and Nellie Edge handwriting language available for instructional purposes.
- **Clearly define your goal or target** for children, parents, and teachers: *Kindergarten Friends: We are going to learn efficient handwriting motions for every letter. We'll start with the letters of your name and then our pink "heart words" and sentences.*
- There is **one consistent approach to handwriting with the same visual supports** throughout the classroom: in the literacy center, in writing notebooks, for use with parents, volunteers and Response to Intervention (RTI) teams.
- **Authentic writing-to-read activities provide meaningful reasons for children to print their names clearly and build handwriting fluency.** (i.e. Children write their name on graphs and birthday cards.)
- **Fingerspelling is used during writing workshop time** and whenever children are being asked to listen for sounds or name letters so there is strong sounds-to-writing-to-reading integration. (Use a "Helper of the Day" strategy with name chart and fingerspelling/name cards.)
- **Fingerspelling is used in conjunction with teaching efficient handwriting of children's names.** Children make personal connections between the letters of their names and the key phonics symbols in the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* book, e.g. b/"b"/bear and b/"b"/Brian.



## 2. Involve Parents as Partners to Multiply Your Teaching Effectiveness!

- Parents as Partners includes: handwriting information, parent letters, home learning strategies, brain exercises for fluency, and research. Begin the year with family communication: Consider using a Family Back-to-School Scavenger Hunt, which includes giving families a name writing model of each child's name and inviting the parent to help their child print each letter according to the model. Develop a kindergarten registration packet.
- Start with the "name ticket" strategy and family Name Ticket Practice Book. Include the guidelines page and expect nightly, intentional practice.



- Give families a list of fine motor activities and games to enjoy together.
- Continue fingerspelling at home and at school to build fine motor skills.

### 3. Begin Handwriting Instruction with One-on-One Name Writing Coaching and Parents as Partners.

- Create a name ticket model for home and school showing each child how their name will look when printed efficiently. A red arrow can show children where to begin each letter.
- Teach children to look at the name ticket model and look at their name writing ticket. Talk about which letters are well-shaped and which letter is their next good handwriting goal. Verbalize the letter formation language with the child while practicing the letter in isolation. Then ask the child to do another "name ticket."



- Expect **daily** progress: Comment first on a letter the child prints clearly. Expect children to know what letter they are training their brain to print efficiently. Verbalize how important this work is: *We want you to learn to print your name clearly so it is easy for the whole class to read! Your name is so important!*
- During the first few weeks of school save the name tickets to study progress and plan instruction: both large group or individually. You may need the "O" dance lesson again or sing and mime "I Always Start My Letters at the Top!"



We like giving children pencils for little hands from Handwriting Without Tears® [www.hwtears.com](http://www.hwtears.com)

- Pencil grip matters: Review that section of the online seminar and Nellie Edge Handwriting Blogs for useful tips. Give parents the letter showing the developmental progression for pencil grip.

4. **Provide Meaning-Centered Writing Invitations that Are Personal, Intentional, and Engaging: Teach with Passion!**
- Teach the "O Dance" to build counterclockwise movement patterns.
  - Create a sense of urgency: *We are working hard to write letters efficiently so our classmates and teachers can read our handwriting. We ALL want to be name writing experts!*
  - Use a Gradual-Release-of-Responsibility (Optimal Learning) Model. First the teacher models how to write a word or letter, children first practice in the air, on their individual white boards, and finally individual children perform a "real world" writing event such as "I love you" secret messages.
  - **Create a Growth Mindset with Specific Empowering Language**
    - *When you focus and work hard, just look at what you can do!*
    - *You already know how to print the letters of your name! **Wow! How did you learn them?***
    - *You already learned a-g. If you **keep practicing**, soon you will be an abc handwriting expert!*
    - *You learned how to print all of the pink "heart words"! **Aren't you proud of yourself?***
    - ***You worked hard!** Let's take a picture with you and your ABC Handwriting crown!*
    - *Wow! You almost know how to print every letter efficiently. Which ones are you still working on?*
    - *Let's train your brain to remember the "f" in the word 'from.' We can say the language and practice together... You are becoming an expert at printing more and more words!*
  - Intentionally integrate handwriting reviews into word work and writing workshop mini-lessons.
5. **Make Learning Visible, Provide Ongoing Assessment and Differentiate Learning**
- Give children a crystal clear picture of what they are expected to learn.
  - Save children's sample "name tickets" and assess children's progress regularly: What letters are needed to be learned or relearned next?
  - Do the teacher, student, and parent all know what the current handwriting target letters are? *Lucas, what letter are you teaching your brain to remember this week?*
  - Coordinate special help with the parents, volunteers, special ed., and/or reading teachers.
  - Harder-to-accelerate learners may need more practice with one word or "heart word sentence". Do sky writing. Use white/erase boards for practice or an Etch-a-Sketch along with paper and pen practice.
    - *Kindergarten friends, keep practicing every day at school and at home! Practice makes permanent!*
6. **Connect Handwriting with Fingerspelling and Directed "Heart Word" and CVC Word Work (RF.K.1, RF.K.2.)**
- Use Name Word Walls and Helper-of-the Day fingerspelling cards.
  - Use fingerspelling as a support with writing workshop and writing across the curriculum.
  - Provide multisensory CVC word work and a systematic focus on teaching high-frequency "heart words." **Writing teaches reading!**
  - Provide intentional reviews of quick letter/sound recognition. (Much of this happens within the writing process.)
  - Fingerspelling and "sky writing" helps the brain remember letters and correct handwriting motions.
7. **Teach for Mastery, Provide Brain Exercises for Fluency and Celebrate Learning! (RF.K.1, RF.K.3., SL.K.6.)**
- Reread the pages on brain exercises for fluency and provide these short ABC retrieval practices late in the year in a developmentally sensitive manner. (Remember not to create cognitive overload)

by expecting the letters to be written on 3-line paper. Give less experienced children additional support. Build on success!)

- Acknowledge each student's mastery of their name with community or individual learning rituals: a certificate, badge, crown, or photo taken for the name writing practice book.
- It is important that each child can accurately fingerspell and quickly recognize a-z and key phonics sounds early in the year. This facilitates the handwriting process which in turn supports the reading and writing process.
- Provide short bursts of engaging, multisensory handwriting practice sessions several times each day in the beginning of the year.
- **Provide additional support for harder-to-accelerate students** in collaboration with parents, volunteers, and special needs teachers. The entire team needs to understand how handwriting supports the reading and writing process. Study weekly name writing samples and kid writing pieces to plan instruction.
- For additional support, see the Handwriting Blogs at [www.nelliedge.com](http://www.nelliedge.com) and view the Nellie Edge Pinterest boards: "Kindergarten Handwriting" and "Fine Motor Activities".

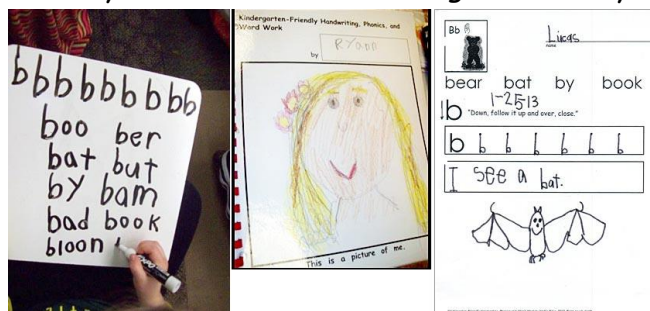


### 8. L-o-v-e is Our First Power Word. "I love you" is the Handwriting Anchor Sentence.

- First expect mastery of each child's first name. Teach the letter "o" and the word "love".
- Monitor the children as they practice writing "I love you" repeatedly on white/erase boards. Notice the "y" in the word you. Practice martial arts movement: "Y - yuh!" to internalize the movement pattern.
- Invite children to write secret "I love you" messages to hide at home.

### 9. Use Handwriting to Teach Life Skills.

- We are developing focus, self-regulation, persistence, goal setting, and metacognition: *How did you train your brain to remember that letter?*
- We are teaching children to work hard and be kind. *You worked hard and really focused to remember that the letter "y" starts with a short diagonal. I bet you feel proud of yourself!*



10. **Take the Next Step to National Board Certification – Kindergarten Teachers as Action-Researchers and Literacy Leaders: Use Self-Assessment Guidelines**

- Articulate to the children and school community why Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters!

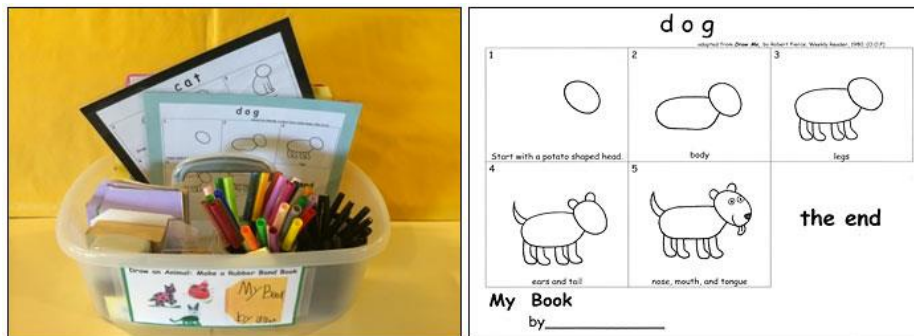
*The reason we are learning to fingerspell is that multisensory teaching helps the brain remember the letters and sounds, and fingerspelling builds writing muscles!*

- Integrate fingerspelling and handwriting into the curriculum throughout the day.

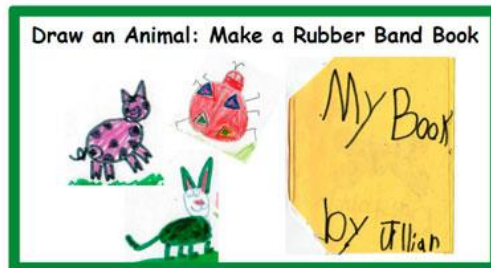
*When a student is not struggling with letter formation, he is freer to write fluently.*

Regie Routman

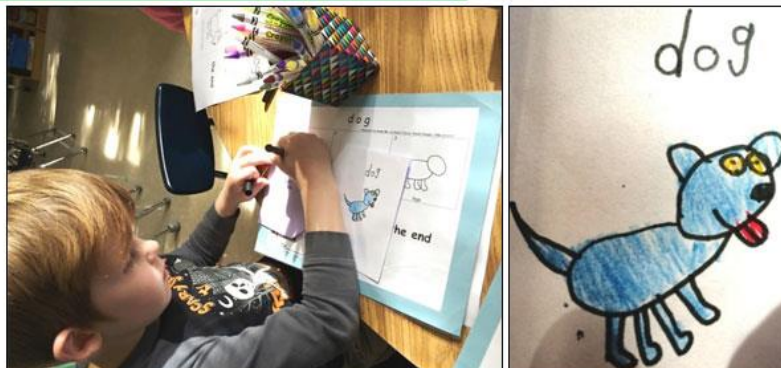
- Become a literacy leader in educating parents and colleagues about why Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters.
- Study the Common Core State Standards and read *Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* by John Hattie.



Download free drawing templates



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Nellie Edge

Study Nellie Edge Online Seminars: Joyful Path to Accelerated Literacy  
(All resources included)