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## Manuscript Writing Present Practices and Extension Trends Within Schools of the State of Washington

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MANUSCRIPT WRITING  
PRESENT PRACTICES AND EXTENSION TRENDS  
WITHIN SCHOOLS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington College of Education  
Ellensburg, Washington

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
John W. Wingate, Jr.

August 1956

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Brief History

Contrary to popular belief, manuscript writing is not new. It was introduced to America from England about 1922 at the time when curricular practices were being strongly challenged by the devotees of the theory of social utility. The private and experimental schools were the first to accept the newly introduced style of writing and to recognize its merits. These early schools discovered the advantages of correlating the language arts with other fields of learning, and manuscript writing served as an integrating medium within the language learnings of the pupil. Manuscript writing takes its name from the handwritten script forms found in parchment leaves and documents of the Middle Ages. These letter forms, so distinct and legible, were later superseded by Italian cursive forms when paper became more plentiful, pens improved, and engraving was introduced.

#### Definition of Manuscript Writing

To most people, "printing" means making large capital letters. When we are told to "print" instead of "write" our names,

that is usually what is done. Manuscript, or print-style writing, however, uses the block print letters only for capitals and lower case style letter forms for the small letters. There never has been, unfortunately, perfect agreement among the experts as to the correct letter forms for all the letters. The following letter forms represent the standard manuscript alphabet as worked out by Edith U. Conard,<sup>1</sup> former instructor in Curriculum and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University. *abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz*

Manuscript and cursive writing are quite different in the nature and direction of the strokes required. In cursive style, because of the joining, the letters begin with upward strokes from the base line; whereas in manuscript writing, many letters begin with a downward stroke. Straight lines and circles or parts of circles are the basic strokes. Most of the letters can be constructed in such a way that they are related to each other in the execution of the starting strokes.

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<sup>1</sup>See Conard, Edith U., Show Me How To Write, The A. N. Palmer Company, New York, 1940. pp. 48-49.

According to Hildreth, the justification for using manuscript style of handwriting was that the children could read the teacher's hand-printed text on charts or blackboards which conveyed ideas the children had been expressing in their own words.<sup>2</sup> Used in this way, manuscript handwriting became a tool for reading, spelling, and language from the very beginning of primary instruction and not as a separate school subject.

Since its inception, more and more children in the primary grades first learn manuscript style writing. The writing is large in size and without slant. For the young child whose muscle coordination is not yet highly developed, this type of writing is easy to produce and generally more legible than equal efforts with cursive writing. This last point will be enlarged upon later in this paper.

### Purpose of this Study

Some schools have been hesitant in adopting manuscript-style writing because some teachers have not used it or known how to use it, the older methods are entrenched, or the public may be conservative in their attitude toward new innovations. The critics base their chief objections on the following representative major points.

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<sup>2</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, Learning The Three R's, Second Edition, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947. p. 640.

They believe that manuscript style is a slower handwriting than cursive style, at least for older pupils and adults. Arnold<sup>3</sup> mentions that manuscript writing meets the need of the young primary students, but becomes illegible when the children grow older and wish to write more rapidly. As Hildreth points out, "Teachers complain that the upper-grade child using print writing tends to jab his pencil into the paper, fails to develop rhythm or arm movement and exerts uneven pressure. Since teachers sometimes tend to neglect handwriting when manuscript style is used, the pupils do not form good writing habits that 'stand up' when there is an extensive writing job to be done."<sup>4</sup> She further states that "Changing over from manuscript to cursive is difficult and upsetting to the pupils if it is delayed until the third and fourth grades. If the change is made earlier, the children's time will have been wasted in acquiring only partially learned habits."<sup>5</sup> The child will be confused if he retains two different styles of handwriting. Here, then, are some of the arguments against the extended learning of manuscript-style writing.

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<sup>3</sup>Arnold, E. W., The Transition from Manuscript to Cursive Writing, Elementary School Journal, XXXIII, 1933, pp. 616-620.

<sup>4</sup>Hildreth, op. cit., pp. 647-48.

<sup>5</sup>Hildreth, ibid., p. 648.

However, it seems that some educators are wondering why there should even be a change-over from manuscript to cursive. They believe an examination of all evidence is needed before they are to be convinced that such a change-over is necessary. It appears that most of the advantages of manuscript for the primary grades also hold equally well for the intermediate and upper grades. These advantages are: ease of learning and practice, good legibility, aid to reading, spelling and composition and suitability to handicapped pupils. Griffiths<sup>6</sup> and Falk<sup>7</sup> ask why the children cannot go on with the clear style of manuscript writing in the upper grades. One of their viewpoints was that changing from one style to another could nullify all the advantages gained from the first, or manuscript, style. If this is so, they state, the children might just as well have begun cursive script in the first place. This last statement is typical in the sentiment of Hildreth.<sup>8</sup>

#### Statement of the Problem

The author's question, then, is: What do our elementary schools do with this controversial skill? Do they discontinue its use

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<sup>6</sup>Griffiths, Nellie L., Manuscript Writing. Its Advantages. How to Teach It. Hall and MacCreary Co., Chicago, 1937.

<sup>7</sup>Falk, E. M., Teaching Language in the Elementary School, Forty-Third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education: The University of Chicago, Chicago, 1944, p. 162.

<sup>8</sup>Hildreth, loc. cit., p. 667.

after the second or third grade, or do they extend its instruction or use into the upper grades for practical purposes as recommended by the aforementioned authors who represent a newer scope of thinking?

### Research Conditions

Out of this question of whether or not manuscript writing should be extended into the upper grades appeared the need of original research. The author, who teaches a sixth grade class in the Highline District near Seattle, Washington, mailed questionnaires to 160 public elementary schools throughout the State of Washington, with each of the thirty-nine counties being represented. Contact with these schools was made through the principals; however, due to a small percentage of return in the original reply, the author made personal follow-up contacts with primary teachers representing those schools and school districts that failed to return the original survey. The follow-up contacts were made at the Central Washington College of Education summer-school session in 1955, at which time the author and many other teachers returned for graduate work.

In the random selection of schools to be contacted, no attention was given to the classification of the school district being represented: first, second, third or fourth class districts being determined by the population involved.

## Study Limitations

The author would like to point out the limitations of the scope of this study.

The original questionnaires were mailed to 160 elementary schools representing each of Washington's 39 counties. The author did not wish to determine one school's handwriting curriculum as being representative of each school within the same county. Courses of study are usually district wide, except in the cases of small schools within an unconsolidated district. In some cases all school districts conform to county policies.

It will be noted that, to insure validity, the author requested at least four samples of manuscript writing from each of the grade levels in which that style of writing is used. The original intent of this request was to compare the samples against the Winnetka Manuscript Writing Scale for Grades 1, 2, and 3, published by the Winnetka Educational Press, Winnetka, Illinois; and the Conard Manuscript Writing Standards--Pencil Forms, published by the Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City. To stay within the boundaries the author had established for his study, this information was withheld from inclusion in the paper.

It is sincerely hoped that the reader will be able to interpret the author's research to its fullest extent upon thoroughly understanding



the limitations that were necessary to better prepare this paper.

Following is a typical sample questionnaire, a copy of which was sent to the various schools.

November 1, 1954

Dear Sir:

Your help is urgently needed. I am very interested in the position of manuscript-style writing in the elementary schools of the State of Washington.

The point of this letter is to ask for your needed cooperation in making this study as complete and as authentic as possible. Would you please fill out the enclosed questionnaire form--not in a hurry but carefully? The questionnaire is brief and will not require much time. If possible, I would like your return by December 3rd.

Here are some general suggestions:

- 1) I need a few samples of manuscript-style writing of those grades in which it is used.
- 2) Please add any information that is needed to completely describe your particular feelings or situation. Feel free to write any amount.
- 3) Again--please try to return the questionnaire by December 3rd.

Careful record of cost will be kept, so in returning the questionnaire, any monetary expenditures you incur will be promptly refunded.

Finally, let me express my gratitude to you for your help--it will be much appreciated. Of course, a final report will be sent to you if you so indicate. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

John W. Wingate, Jr.  
c/o White Center Heights  
Elementary School  
712 Southwest 102nd Street  
Seattle 66, Washington

## MANUSCRIPT WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. If manuscript-style writing is used or taught at any grade level in your school, would you ask your teachers to submit samples? Indicate the grade level for each representative sample. For purposes of reliability, four samples from each grade level are needed.
2. Does your school use or teach manuscript-style writing beyond the third grade?
  - a. If so, how far beyond the third grade?
  - b. If not, what are the reasons for discontinuance?
3. What systems of teaching manuscript does your school use?
4. Do you think manuscript should be used in the intermediate or upper grades?                      Why?
5. Suggestions or comments regarding manuscript writing.

Again, thank you very much.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is interesting to note how little research has been accorded a field of curriculum in which the layman is so vitally concerned. As McKee states: "In general these researches have attempted to determine the relative value of manuscript and cursive writing in terms of speed and quality, the time to introduce cursive writing to pupils who have been taught manuscript writing, and the effect of manuscript writing upon achievement in reading."<sup>9</sup>

#### Literature Concerning the Relative Speed and Quality of Manuscript Writing.

A study of the physiological aspects of writing was undertaken by Gray.<sup>10</sup> Conrad and Offerman worked with a control group of adults in determining speed and quality of manuscript.<sup>11</sup> Other

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<sup>9</sup>McKee, Paul, Language in the Elementary School, Houghton Mifflin Co., The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1939, p. 480.

<sup>10</sup>Gray, W. H., An Experimental Comparison of the Movements in Manuscript Writing and Cursive Writing, Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 21, April, 1930, pp. 259-272.

<sup>11</sup>Conrad, E., and Offerman, E., A Test of Speed and Quality in Manuscript Writing as Learned by Adults, Teachers College Record, Vol. 31, February, 1930, pp. 449-467.

investigations concerned with the relative speed and quality with which children trained under one or the other of the forms are Voorhis<sup>12</sup> and the combined work of Gates and Brown, who found that manuscript was written faster than cursive in the primary grades but that, in comparison, cursive was faster in the upper grades.<sup>13</sup> Washburne and Morphett reported that pupils who learn manuscript writing in the elementary school write almost as rapidly as cursive writers when they get to high school.<sup>14</sup> Freeman concluded from reports of motion-picture studies that manuscript writing was a little slower, not due to lifting the pencil from the paper as was commonly supposed, but to frequent changes in direction as the manuscript letters are formed.<sup>15</sup>

The chief question that needs to be raised with regard to the speed factor is: Can the normal child in the upper grades, after training in manuscript writing from the first grade, write rapidly enough to satisfy all his practical writing needs without undue fatigue

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<sup>12</sup>Voorhis, T. G., The Relative Merits of Cursive and Manuscript Writing, Chap. II. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1931.

<sup>13</sup>Gates, A. I., and Brown, H., Experimental Comparison of the Movements in Manuscript Writing and Cursive Writing, Journal of Educational Psychology, XX, 1929, pp. 3-16.

<sup>14</sup>Washburne, C. W., and Morphett, M. V., Manuscript Writing, Some Recent Investigations, Elementary School Journal, XXXVII, 1937, pp. 517-529.

<sup>15</sup>Freeman, F. N., An Evaluation of Manuscript Writing, Elementary School Journal, XXXVI, 1936, pp. 446-455.

or tension and achieve a legible product? "The answer from all reliable experiments is in the affirmative."<sup>16</sup>

Children in a private school where manuscript is taught from the first grade were given the Ayres test and rated for speed of writing. Table I summarizes the data for rate of manuscript writing (number of letters written per minute) for all the forty-six fifth and sixth grade children who used that style of writing. The data are grouped according to age because these children tend to average from six months to a year younger than typical fifth and sixth graders in public schools. There were eight children in these classes who were confirmed cursive-style writers, having transferred from other schools where manuscript writing was not taught, too few such cases to afford any reliable comparison with the manuscript writers as to speed. Five of these children were ten years old. Their median rate in cursive-style writing was 43 letters a minute. The six eleven-year-olds had a median rate of 60 letters a minute, with one of these children writing at the rate of 106 letters a minute. One child, twelve years old, wrote 52 letters a minute, and one, a foreign boy of thirteen, wrote 94 letters a minute.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, loc. cit., p. 657.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 655-656.

This table is reproduced to show a representative rate of speed, and is not meant to conclude that all cursive writers aged ten and eleven are necessarily slower than manuscript writers.

These rates compare favorably with the Ayres<sup>18</sup> norms for rate of cursive writing in grades five and six. These are as follows:

	Number of Letters per Minute
Grade Four	55
Grade Five	64
Grade Six	70

Hildreth summarizes other similar experiments in the same school from which Table I was taken.

In a similar experiment with seventh graders, the results for the 25 cursive writers and 25 manuscript writers of similar age were: manuscript, 70.5 letters a minute; cursive writers, 70.0 letters a minute.

In the eighth grade, where 70 pupils were tested, 28 of whom were manuscript writers, and 42 cursive-style writers, the results were: manuscript-style writers, 80.17 letters a minute; cursive-style, 85.5. Of those writing more than one hundred letters a minute, six were manuscript writers and eight wrote cursive style--about the same proportion as the total number of pupils who used each style. The most rapid of all were manuscript writers. The manuscript writers as a group also varied more widely in speed, possibly because of the less homogeneous practice that these writers tend to

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<sup>18</sup>Ayres, L. P., Manuscript Scale for Handwriting, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1917-1922.

TABLE I<sup>19</sup>  
 RATE OF MANUSCRIPT WRITING  
 IN TERMS OF LETTERS PER MINUTE

Number of Letters Per Minute	Age 10	Age 11
114		1
110		2
106		
102		
98		
94	1	
90		
86	1	2
82		3
78	1	2
74	2	1
70	4	3
66	1	1
62	1	
58		2
54	1	4
50	3	1
46	4	2
42	1	
38		1
34	1	
30	1	
Total	21	25
Median	63	73.3

<sup>19</sup>Taken from Hildreth, Gertrude, ibid., p. 655.



receive. The legibility of the manuscript writers was superior.<sup>20</sup>

The author believes that the foregoing experiments tend to point out that manuscript-style writing is faster than cursive-style writing, practice conditions being equal, but that, as the pupils mature up through and past the eighth grade, the cursive writers become faster due to the lesser amounts of practice given to manuscript writing in the American elementary school, past the point of changing over.

Kimmins<sup>21</sup> was one of the earliest experimenters to make a thorough check on rate of writing with comparable groups using cursive and manuscript styles. His subjects were English school girls, ranging in age from 7 to 13--9, 264 in all. Table II illustrates his distribution.

Literature attempting to discover the effect and most appropriate time of changing from manuscript to cursive style writing.

It is the experts' opinion that the transition should probably take place at the end of the second grade to insure well-established

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<sup>20</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, ibid., p. 656.

<sup>21</sup>Wise, Marjorie, On the Technique of Manuscript Writing, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1924. (Preface by C. W. Kimmins)

TABLE II<sup>22</sup>

RATE OF WRITING WITH COMPARABLE GROUPS  
USING CURSIVE AND MANUSCRIPT STYLES

Number Tested	Ave. Age	Average Letters per Minute	
		Manuscript	Cursive
373	7	21.6	18.8
1536	8	25.5	21.4
1607	9	34.9	29.3
1572	10	42.4	36.1
1449	11	48.7	44.5
1509	12	55.0	49.3
1216	13	60.9	61.0

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<sup>22</sup>Wise, Marjorie, ibid. (Preface by C. W. Kimmins)

habits by the end of the elementary-school period.<sup>23</sup>

Literature related to the effect of training in the two forms of writing upon achievements in beginning reading

Additional reports have related to the effect of training in the two forms of writing upon achievement in beginning reading such as Cutright<sup>24</sup> and Long and Mayer,<sup>25</sup> both studies pointing out that pupils who are taught to write in manuscript form probably learn to read more easily and quickly than pupils who are taught to write in cursive form.

In their previously cited works, Voorhis, Long and Mayer and Cutright all relate the effect of both cursive and manuscript writing to achievement in beginning reading. They all support the belief that

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<sup>23</sup>Goetsch, W. R., The Effect of Early Handwriting Instruction, Elementary School Journal, Vol. 36, Dec., 1935, pp. 290-298. Crider, B., The Adaptability of Pupils to Manuscript Writing, Elementary School Journal, Vol. 32, April, 1932, pp. 617-622. Winch, W. H., Print-Script and Cursive-Script in Schools, Forum of Education, Vol. 4, June, 1926, pp. 123-138. Arnold, E., The Transition from Manuscript to Cursive Writing, Elementary School Journal, April, 1933, pp. 616-620. McKee, Paul, Language in the Elementary School, The Riverside Press, Houghton Mifflin Co., Dallas, Boston, New York, 1939, p. 482.

<sup>24</sup>Cutright, P., Script-Print and Beginning Reading and Spelling, Elementary English Review, Vol. 13, April, 1936, pp. 139-141.

<sup>25</sup>Long, H., and Mayer, W., Printing vs. Cursive Writing in Beginning Reading Instruction. Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 24, Dec., 1931, pp. 350-355.

manuscript (especially) tends to reinforce beginning reading because of the similarity between the printed matter in the primers and the style of the handwriting itself.

In further experiments with the speed of manuscript, not previously cited in this paper, Reeder<sup>26</sup> found that it was possible to write as rapidly in manuscript style as it was in cursive style. Turner<sup>27</sup> reported that the speed of manuscript exceeded the norms for cursive as measured by the Ayres Handwriting Scale.

As can be readily seen, the great majority of published research was from the latter 1920s through the 1930s. A careful examination of the details of the various investigations of manuscript writing shows disagreement in results. However, the available data supplies certain inferences:

1. Manuscript writing of children is more legible than cursive writing.
2. Manuscript writing is easier for the young child to learn than cursive.
3. Manuscript writing is more rapid for younger children than is the cursive form, but cursive writing is more rapid for older children.

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<sup>26</sup>Reeder, E. H., An Experiment with Manuscript Writing in the Horace Mann School, Teachers College Record, Vol. 28, 1926. pp. 255-260.

<sup>27</sup>Turner, Olive, The Comparative Legibility and Speed of Manuscript and Cursive Writing, Elementary School Journal, Vol. 30, June, 1930, pp. 780-786.

4. If a change from manuscript to cursive form is to be made some time during the school life of the child, the shift probably should occur in the latter part of the second grade.
5. Pupils who are taught to write in manuscript form probably learn to read more easily and quickly than those pupils who are taught to write in cursive form.

Since the bulk of what material there is roughly dates back to 1930, modern data, as the author will later point out, are definitely lacking.

CHAPTER III  
THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES  
OF MANUSCRIPT WRITING

Advantages:

Conard,<sup>28</sup> in discussing the values accredited to manuscript writing, lists eleven general statements about which the author will later discuss more fully. The following statements generally summarize the views of other researchers.

1. It is easy for children to learn because of the simple strokes.
2. Children can obtain satisfactory results early without drill on movement of form.
3. The letter forms are so simple that each child can see his difficulty and correct it.
4. The child learns one alphabet for both reading and writing.
5. This type of writing satisfies the child's keen desire to write. (One big desire of a child on entering school is to learn to write.)
6. Unnecessary curves, loops, flourishes and long joining strokes are omitted; therefore, the results are more legible than in cursive writing.

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<sup>28</sup>Conard, Edith U., Trends in Manuscript Writing, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1936, p. 3.

7. The pen may be lifted when going to the next stroke. This apparently lessens fatigue and strain on a child's immature muscles.
8. Even a child with poor muscular control can produce readable results.
9. The use of these simple letter forms lessens the tendency toward children's "eyestrain" in reading and in writing. There are fewer movements of the eyes required when reading manuscript writing; in fact, it is as easy to read as typewritten material.
10. Manuscript writing facilitates children's work in beginning reading.
11. Children who have written manuscript for a number of years can equal the speed of those using cursive writing and in most cases exceed it.

Dawson points out that: "Manuscript writing is comparatively easy to learn: Letters are discrete, movements are short, the letter-forms resemble the print in books."<sup>29</sup> She adds that: "Moreover, wide research shows that the beginner who is taught the manuscript letter-forms writes more legibly, makes fewer and less random movements, and makes more rapid progress."<sup>30</sup>

Dawson and Dingee indicate other advantages: "It, manuscript like drawing, utilizes the larger muscles of the arm and wrist. The processes of reading and spelling presumably are

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<sup>29</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., Teaching Language in the Grades, World Book Co., Yonkers-On-Hudson, New York, 1951, p. 200.

<sup>30</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., ibid., p. 200.

facilitated because of the similarity to print and the consequent ease of comparing the manuscript-written words with the printed words on the page."<sup>31</sup>

The author has found, through the medium of the ensuing survey, that parental pressure is a tremendous force in the desire of a child to be able to write.

Of manuscript writing's many factors, speed seems to be the one in which the average layman is most dubious about when used as a comparison with cursive writing. Experiments between the two styles in writing show that there is little real difference in rate of speed when the conditions of instruction and amounts of practice have been equal.<sup>32</sup>

A question often asked is whether legibility does not fall off, once manuscript speed is increased. According to Wise, "Businessmen of England have voiced their approval of manuscript writers because of their superiority in speed, accuracy and legibility. The results have been so favorable that some large industrial and commercial concerns have had classes in manuscript writing introduced in their different organizations for clerical workers."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., and Dingee, Frieda H., Directing Learning in the Language Arts, Burgess Publishing Co., 1948, p. 66.

<sup>32</sup>Hildreth, G. H., Should Manuscript Writing Be Continued in the Upper Grades? Elementary School Journal, XV, 1944, pp. 85-93.

<sup>33</sup>Wise, Marjorie, On the Technique of Manuscript Writing, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1924, p. 12.



Proof of the illegibility of most cursive writing takes the form of a growing demand on the part of banks, schools, business firms and federal organizations in requesting customers or job applicants to "please print" in filling out record forms. Hildreth believes that: "Manuscript writing is easier to read because of compact word forms that simulate the printed word forms of ordinary reading materials."<sup>34</sup>

The argument that manuscript is more legible to read is well supported by experimentation. Turner used a flash card test utilizing a tachistoscope technique to determine legibility. She concluded that manuscript writing, as compared with cursive, had a significant margin of superiority due to independence of letters, good spacing between words, and economy of line space.<sup>35</sup> The work of Freeman<sup>36</sup> and the difficulties of making manuscript quality scales all support the above conclusion.

The advantages of manuscript writing for the utilization of reading and spelling lies not only in the fact that the writing closely

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<sup>34</sup>Hildreth, G. H., Learning the Three R's, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947, p. 644.

<sup>35</sup>Turner, Olive G., The Comparative Legibility and Speed of Manuscript and Cursive Handwriting, Elementary School Journal, XXX, June, 1930, pp. 780-786.

<sup>36</sup>Freeman, F. N., An Evaluation of Manuscript Writing, Elementary School Journal, XXXVI, 1936, pp. 446-455.

resembles the print in published material but that the child can write his own materials that all can read and that he can read the teacher's manuscript text placed on the blackboard or bulletin board. "Manuscript helps reading in the beginning stages primarily because the teacher uses it in constructing reading materials embodying the children's expressions, and uses it during reading instruction."<sup>37</sup>

### Motor Development

Herrick and Jacobs<sup>38</sup> point out that the motor development and eye-hand-arm coordination of the young child enable him to form the straight vertical line and the circle, the basic forms of manuscript writing more rapidly and legibly than the more complex formations of the cursive system." Manuscript writing, then, is more within the physiological development range of young children than cursive writing. There is some evidence to support this belief.<sup>39</sup>

Drill is not needed on mechanical movement. The movements made are relatively large and there is more opportunity for the child to make the natural adjustments he is accustomed to in

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<sup>37</sup>Hildreth, loc. cit., pp. 640-641.

<sup>38</sup>Herrick, Virgil E., and Jacobs, Leland B., Children and the Language Arts, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1955, p. 271.

<sup>39</sup>Ames, L. B., and Ilg, F. L., Developmental Trends in Writing Behavior, Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology, Vol. 79, Sept., 1951, pp. 29-46.

drawing. These statements are supported by Freeman,<sup>40</sup> saying that the unit of movement is shorter, with no connecting strokes to make, thus less fatiguing than the joined-letter word forms in cursive writing. Freeman also pointed out that children with poor muscular control produce legible results.

Due to these aforementioned reasons, "Manuscript writing is learned more successfully by the physically handicapped, by slow learners in general, and by the left-handed person. The child with defective vision also benefits because of the distinctness of the separate letter forms and the superior legibility of manuscript style writing. Manuscript writing is easier than cursive for the left-handed person to learn because, in manuscript writing, there is little difference between the movements left and right-handed children make."<sup>41</sup>

The consensus of opinion as a result of research has clearly shown seven important factors in respect to the advantages of manuscript writing. These are:

1. The use of manuscript facilitates learning to read, to write, and to spell. Freedom in written expression is the result.

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<sup>40</sup>Freeman, F. N., Solving Handwriting Needs as We See Them Today, Zaner-Bloser Co., Columbus, Ohio, 1941, 32 pp.

<sup>41</sup>Hildreth, G., loc. cit., p. 646.

2. Manuscript writing, since it is easier to read, is recommended for sight-saving classes, and in some remedial classes such as reading, penmanship, etc.
3. Manuscript writing has been found to be helpful for children who are left-handed.
4. There is less strain in motor adjustments in the use of manuscript, than with cursive.
5. Since the muscular coordination required in manuscript is less than in cursive, much more legibility is gained.
6. The speed of manuscript is almost equal to that of cursive, when the conditions of instruction and amounts of practice have been equal.
7. Manuscript is easy to learn, because it is simple in form, the strokes being based on straight lines and circles.

The author will show in this paper that some teachers and administrators believe that manuscript writing is the best basic style of handwriting for upper-grade work, no matter whether the children are taught to "change-over" to cursive or not. This subject in point will be discussed among the current trends.

It might clearly be seen that the advantages to manuscript style are mainly for the beginning school pupil with little or no previous schooling. However, the atmosphere of the previously cited preferences would indicate that since the primary pupil enjoys these

advantages, cannot the upper grade children also enjoy the same advantages in their work, especially when it comes to legibility, speed, ease of use and low amount of fatigue? Also may not the upper-grade teacher take advantage of manuscript writing, especially when it comes to the ease for left-handed children, less strain in motor adjustment, sight-saving classes and other remedial classes such as reading and spelling?

Awareness of the skeptic's views are necessary before any conclusions can be reached.

#### Disadvantages:

It will be readily seen that several of the disadvantages of manuscript style writing are ill-founded, based on assumption, tradition or unawareness of the methodology of its instruction and use.

Parental prejudice against manuscript writing is shown by the fact that children often ask: "Do you want me to write or print?" In the author's survey results, it will be noted that parental objection is the most common reason (in order of frequency) for not teaching manuscript beyond the third grade within the elementary schools of the State of Washington.

Hildreth discusses a survey of school patrons and leading businessmen in a community in 1944 who voted on a question favoring

cursive style writing for school instruction. She states: "310 voted in favor of cursive style writing; 72 in favor of manuscript; and 7 were in favor of both styles, or thought either was equally good."<sup>42</sup>

Three criticisms being advanced by the opponents of manuscript writing are: (1) the slow speed and less fluency of manuscript as compared with cursive, (2) the teaching of manuscript writing will result in a loss of individuality of handwriting and (3) the learning of manuscript form will not equip the child to read cursive writing, which is still commonly used in social correspondence.

According to Arnold, manuscript writing meets the need of the young primary pupils, but that it becomes illegible when the children grow older and wish to write more rapidly.<sup>43</sup> Hildreth lists a summary of further negative feelings. "Few teachers in the upper grades use manuscript writing themselves or know how to teach it. Parents complain that the manuscript writing their children do is poorer than the results formerly gained with cursive style. There are no extensive systems of teaching handwriting in manuscript style, and little instructional material is available for the upper

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<sup>42</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, Learning the Three R's, Second Edition, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947, p. 651.

<sup>43</sup>Arnold, E. W., The Transition from Manuscript to Cursive Writing, Elementary School Journal, XXXIII, 1933, pp. 616-620.

grades. There is a general belief that the banks will refuse to accept manuscript-written signatures because of the danger of forgery. The child will be confused if he retains two different styles of handwriting."<sup>44</sup>

Some children are embarrassed by not being able to write as "grownups" do. When asked if they can write, they say apologetically, "No, I can only print."<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps some of these arguments have justification. It is difficult for intermediate and upper grade teachers who do not use printscript themselves or have not learned how to teach it, to help children along very far with manuscript writing. However, when children in the upper grades are left to work the problem out for themselves, they sometimes show an unsuccessful combination of several styles and some confusion as to how to form the letters, whether or not to join, and they seem uncertain about slanting the letters. Actually, this latter occurrence also serves to point out that an individualization form of manuscript style is actually possible. All of these aforementioned arguments might add up to a need for in-service training of teachers and for providing better class instruction, rather than an indictment of manuscript writing.

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<sup>44</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, op. cit., p. 648.

<sup>45</sup>Whitman, Howard, Speak Out, Silent People (first in a series entitled: The Struggle for Our Children's Minds) Collier's Magazine, February 5, 1954, p. 25.

As previously stated, many parents and non-parent adults object to manuscript style writing because they do not consider it a true form of handwriting. This concept has undoubtedly developed through the predominance of cursive-style handwriting during the entire history of education in the American culture, coupled with a reluctance to depart from the contemporary.

Bank acceptance of manuscript-written signatures is a frequent point of discussion. The State of Washington does not have legal limitations in the use of manuscript. Acceptance appears to depend upon the bank.

One publication reports that banks are favorable toward manuscript style.<sup>46</sup>

Hildreth states that: "Individual styles are fully as possible in manuscript as in cursive writing."<sup>47</sup>

It should be pointed out that data furnishing reliable answers to some points at issue are not available. This fact seems to leave little more than personal beliefs, tradition, supposition and ignorance of the mechanics of manuscript writing as the basis on which many of

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<sup>46</sup>Legal Validity of Signatures in Manuscript Writing, Elementary School Journal, XXXIX, 1939, pp.9-10.

<sup>47</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, loc. cit., p. 652.



the skeptics stem their arguments. On the other hand, apparently some of these arguments have justification. Until several generations of children grow up using manuscript style writing throughout their school experiences, it is doubtful whether anyone will know for certain whether these arguments are sound and whether manuscript writing styles are practical for adult living.

In answer to the question of what can be done, the consensus of opinion is that the problem calls for parent and non-parent adult education and explanation as to why manuscript-writing style is taught, and of its advantages which are backed up by valid research. Lawson states: "It is only when a community feels a genuine participation in the affairs of its schools that it will stand with the administrator against unjustified attacks and accusations aimed at the educational policies and program."<sup>48</sup>

A look at current trends and the answers other educational authorities offer in seeking to better the handwriting programs will serve to become aware of the scope of the problems involved and may provide the key to future betterment.

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<sup>48</sup>Lawson, Douglas E., School Administration--Procedures and Policies, Odyssey Press, New York, 1953, p. 3.

## CHAPTER IV

### MANUSCRIPT-USAGE TRENDS

A study of educational trends in the American culture serves to point out three static aspects in the field of curriculum improvement. The first is that, as research unveils data supporting a theory that is new to the educational scene, three viewpoints are established: a traditional, a progressive, and a middle-of-the-road orientation. Secondly, the American public has consented to educational changes very slowly, as witnessed by the fact that some schools may be found today that have not changed their method of instruction or curricula in the last decade, or even longer. Third, a review of educational trends seems to reveal that, before the American public will adopt a new idea in its original state, a "meeting half way" is quicker to be favored than complete adoption of an idea or theory in its entirety.

The issue of manuscript writing's usability within the schools is a typical example. When research was published, showing data supporting the claims given, the majority of American public schools adopted the "new" form of writing. (Surveys show that

nearly 90% of the schools use manuscript writing in the beginning at least, and 7% use no kind of handwriting in the first grade.)<sup>49</sup> However, the public did not see, at the time, any reason for using this type of handwriting exclusively or along with the cursive script, beyond the first few years of learning, since available data implied the advantages are mainly geared for the beginning learner. Hildreth states the historical development of manuscript writing during this period of time by saying:

"When cursive writing was the prevailing style taught in the primary grades, there was never any question of changing over to a different style later on. Similarly, when manuscript writing was first introduced in this country, the schools adopting the new style taught it throughout the grades, just as in England, without any question of changing over to cursive style in the middle grades. Later, with the wider use of manuscript in primary grades in public schools, upper-grade teachers and parents assumed that manuscript was to be the beginning level in handwriting, and cursive, because of its wide adult usage, was to be the more advanced stage. The publishers of practice materials have contributed to this belief in urging a 'change-over' in the lower elementary grades.<sup>50</sup>

A line of thought advocating the use of manuscript up through the elementary grades, and even into high school, touched

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<sup>49</sup>Lee, J. Murray, and Lee, Dorris May, The Child and His Curriculum, Second Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1950, p. 428.

<sup>50</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, Learning the Three R's, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947 (Second Edition) p. 665.

off a sharp controversy. This controversy involved arguments stemming from parents who honestly did not believe their children could write, thinking that a true handwriting implied the cursive style.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, some groups insisted that the use of manuscript should terminate with a change-over some time during the first few years of school. As compared with later thinking along the same lines, this represented the "traditional" policy. Other groups, inspired by good results in the primary grades, expressed a desire to see manuscript style writing extended into the upper grades and, even, in high school.

Hildreth refers to the latter group when she states that: "Many teachers believe that manuscript writing is the best basic style for upper-grade work, no matter whether children are taught to 'change-over' to cursive style or not."<sup>52</sup> Elsewhere, she states that: "There is a growing movement to keep manuscript and not to change to cursive. Tradition seems to be the main reason for changing."<sup>53</sup> This last quotation is backed up by Lee and Lee.<sup>54</sup> This philosophy might be termed, as compared with the traditional

<sup>51</sup>Whitman, op. cit., pp. 23-28.

<sup>52</sup>Hildreth, op. cit., p. 647.

<sup>53</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, Should Manuscript Writing Be Continued in the Upper Grades? Elementary School Journal, Vol. 45, October, 1944, pp. 85-93.

<sup>54</sup>Lee, J. Murray, and Lee, Dorris May, loc. cit., p. 429.

use of manuscript, the progressive viewpoint.

In order to more readily recognize modern trends, a look at how manuscript writing is used today in our schools will be of help. As has already been indicated, manuscript is used generally in the first two or three grades; and, depending upon individual cases and local conditions, a change-over to cursive usually takes place at the third or fourth grade.

Shoen summarizes the current trends for the future use of manuscript writing when she suggests "that there is no reason why some children should not learn and retain both styles of handwriting, reserving one style for note-taking and rapid writing, the other style for more formal writing purposes. Manuscript forms, once learned, are always useful for many purposes and should be retained through life.<sup>55</sup> This trend advocates neither a strict use of cursive nor a strict use of manuscript but, rather, a compatible use of both handwriting styles. This trend also suggests that no sharp change-over should be made and that the child should be permitted to use whichever style he prefers for doing large amounts of writing.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Shoen, Harriet H., Improving the Handwriting of High-School Students, Teachers Lesson Unit Series, No. 52, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1932, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup>Lee and Lee, op. cit., p. 429.

This belief that both forms of handwriting should be used compatibly is further brought out in the author's survey results.

When the decision is made to continue with manuscript writing in the upper grades, several authors agree on recommendations that should be carried out. Hildreth exemplifies the majority when she lists the following eight suggestions:

1. Talk of the activity as writing, not printing, all the way through the grades.
2. Be sure that the teachers can write manuscript style and understanding teaching this style to children.
3. Continue systematic drill and practice for those who still need it.
4. Diagnose individual difficulties and give the particular help that is needed. The chief faults tend to be writing laboriously, poking the pencil into the paper, combining two styles of letters, running words together and failing to pack the letters composing words closely enough together.
5. Teachers should realize that some casualness in manuscript style is permissible as the need for speeded-up writing increases. The firm angles of the letters need not be maintained.
6. Introduce the notion of pace and speed. Have a speed contest occasionally.
7. Refer pupils to published speed norms.
8. Use upper-grade manuscript copybooks which are now available from several publishers.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Hildreth, Learning the Three R's, Second Edition, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947, pp. 669.670.

Beale<sup>58</sup> summarizes the trends in the adoption of manuscript in public schools throughout the country. She comments that there is some tendency to teach the newer style in the junior high school, especially to shop classes or individually, to those needing remedial work in handwriting. Polkinghorne<sup>59</sup> stated that two-thirds of the schools shift to cursive in grade three or above, while 17.6% are using manuscript through all grades. Dawson says that: "Continued use of manuscript writing seems to favor the incidental learning of a considerable spelling vocabulary."<sup>60</sup> McKee<sup>61</sup> also claims that both manuscript and cursive should be used together.

The proper time for making the transition is still a moot question. "Research seems to have established that pupils will make the transition quite easily in the latter half of the second grade."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Beale, Beulah P., Trends in Handwriting, Baltimore Bulletin of Education, XX, 1944, pp. 29-32.

<sup>59</sup>Polkinghorne, Ada R., Current Practices in Teaching Handwriting, Elementary School Journal, Vol. 47, Dec., 1946, pp. 218-224.

<sup>60</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., Teaching Language in the Grades, World Book Co., Yonkers-On-Hudson, New York, 1949, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup>McKee, Paul, Language in the Elementary School, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1939, p. 482.

<sup>62</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., op. cit., p. 201.

However, Dawson continues, "Postponement of the transition is justified on several counts. In the first place, some children are eight--or even older--before they have the necessary coordination for cursive writing. An even more important consideration is that the continuation of manuscript writing seems to facilitate the child's learning to write out his ideas independently. When the manuscript forms have become automatic, the child can concentrate on what he is trying to express.<sup>63</sup>

It seems unwise, therefore, to abandon the use of manuscript at the time the child is beginning to write independently. Hildreth agrees with this subject in point when she states that, "If a change is to be made, the experts are right in recommending the end of the second grade as the time to change, to insure well-established habits by the end of the elementary-school period. Unfortunately, this is just the time when the children are getting well started in writing, have begun to enjoy writing, can actually express their ideas in clear-cut, legible script, and can read each other's and the teacher's writing. To change at this point would be to nullify all the advantages gained from the printscript style."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., ibid., p. 201.

<sup>64</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, Learning the Three R's, Second Edition, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947, p. 667.



Herrick and Jacobs state that there isn't any good demonstrable reason for favoring one particular year over any other in the elementary school program for changing over. They contend that the proper time of transition depends more on the nature of the current program, the convenience of the teacher, and the demands of the community than on factors in the development of children. They further declare that most schools and writing systems favor their own plan.<sup>65</sup>

In summary, it may be said that both forms of handwriting, manuscript and cursive, are advocated to be taught and used together in unison due to the child's need for both forms. Some material is being written in manuscript form because of its close relation to the problem of beginning reading. The fact that the child still meets the need of reading cursive form must not be disregarded. Other writing must be done so rapidly that the cursive form may be the most effective tool, depending on the taste of the individual. In all probability, manuscript writing is the first form taught in the lower grades, and the teaching of cursive form follows within a short time.

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<sup>65</sup>Herrick, Virgil E., and Jacobs, Leland B., Children and the Language Arts, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1955, p. 273.

It should be understood, however, that the introduction of the cursive form of writing does not always mean a change from manuscript form to cursive writing. It merely means that a new form is to be taught and that the child is to understand the purposes of the two types involved.

So that a clear understanding of these trends is realized, a study of current teaching procedures in the manuscript style of handwriting is necessary.

## CHAPTER V

### METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING PROCEDURES

Progress has been outstanding in the field of educational research, particularly in the fields of curriculum improvement and subject-matter methodology. Experimentation has uncovered many findings in relation to manuscript writing. Since manuscript writing provides, for most children, their first outlet in a highly desired form of self-expression, it seems reasonable that the methods of instruction are those that leave the child with a highly developed sense of satisfaction.

#### Period of Preparation

Conard traces the learning of writing to a period of preparation similar to the period of preparation before learning to read. "This may be developed by the teacher through telling or reading stories, poems, letters, and songs. She may plan activities which call for children's expression. She may provide printed materials and pictures; or build attitudes and appreciation of what others have expressed and written. They should watch the teacher

while she records these thoughts in written form."<sup>66</sup>

A method of stimulation such as this, coupled with a natural desire on the part of the child, is designed to provide the necessary environment for encouraging writing.

### Maturation

The eye and hand muscles of the young child are not mature. Therefore, it seems inadvisable to allow them to write too long at a stretch until eye-hand coordination has developed, although this depends on the physical development of a child. Conard states that "Writing for more than a few minutes at a time should be postponed until muscular control has been attained, sometimes even until late first or second grade."<sup>67</sup>

### Amount of Time Spent in Practice

As to the number of periods per week to be devoted to specific handwriting practice, Herrick and Jacobs report that: "Examination of school programs and the findings of state and national surveys of handwriting reveal that from the first grade through the sixth grade, five periods per week are preferred practice,

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<sup>66</sup>Conard, Edith Underwood, Show Me How To Write (a teacher's guide), The A. N. Palmer Co., New York-Chicago-Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1940, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup>Conard, Edith, ibid., p. 12.

especially in the first and second grade where instruction is begun. Three periods a week, usually on alternate days, are next in preference. Most handwriting instruction is given in fifteen or twenty minute class periods in the first eight grades. This corresponds with what is indicated by the research findings on the optimum length of practice periods in the acquisition of motor skills."<sup>68</sup>

There seems to be a great variability in the teaching of handwriting, and an average of the variable practices will not adequately represent either the time schedule of a particular school or the whole picture. Herrick and Jacobs further point out that there is a definite trend toward reduced instruction time as we move from the primary grades upward.<sup>69</sup>

### Left-Handedness

"Approximately four per cent of school children are left-handed. These pupils constitute a definite problem for the teacher. There is some evidence which indicates that forcing a child who is strongly left-handed to write with the right hand is conducive to the

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<sup>68</sup>Herrick, Virgil E., and Jacobs, Leland B., loc. cit., p. 268.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

development of speech defects."<sup>70</sup> Tidyman and Butterfield point out that apparently left-handedness is well established before the child enters school, and it is unwise to attempt a change. If there is doubt about the preference, simple exercises may be used as checks.<sup>71</sup> Going one step further, Hildreth explains why manuscript writing is easier for the left-handed child. "Manuscript writing is easier than cursive for the left-handed child to learn because in manuscript writing there is little difference between the movements left and right-handed children make."<sup>72</sup>

### Fundamental Skills

When the child is ready for independent writing, Dawson states that, "Authorities in language instruction recommend definite steps in building up the fundamental skills involved in independent writing. These are: (1) copywork, (2) studied dictation,

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<sup>70</sup>Freeman, F. N., Principles of Method in Teaching Writing as Derived from Scientific Investigation, Eighteenth Yearbook, Chapter 1, National Society for the Study of Education. Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Illinois, 1919.

<sup>71</sup>Tidyman, Willard F., and Butterfield, Marguerite, Teaching the Language Arts, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1951, pp. 376-377.

<sup>72</sup>Hildreth, Gertrude, Learning the Three R's, Second Edition, Educational Publishers, Inc., Minneapolis-Nashville-Philadelphia, 1947, p. 646.

(3) un-studied dictation, (4) the unfinished story, and (5) independent writing."<sup>73</sup>

### Determination of Quality

Determining the quality of the finished product seems to be a problem both to the children, the teacher and the parents. Conard says that: "The child's product should have meaning and be satisfactory both to himself and to the adult. It should be judged in terms of the goals established and in relation to the child's ability."<sup>74</sup>

McKee further states that: "It is important to see that standards of achievement in speed and quality are established. These standards should be of two types: those which should be reached and maintained by the close of the child's school life, and those which should be attained at each grade level. Both types of standards must be achievable in the sense that the pupils for whom they are intended are capable of attaining them."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Dawson, Mildred A., Language Teaching in Grades One and Two, World Book Co., Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York, 1949, pp. 67-68.

<sup>74</sup>Conard, Edith Underwood, Show Me How To Write (a teacher's guide), The A. N. Palmer Co., New York-Chicago-Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1940, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup>McKee, Paul, Language in the Elementary School, Houghton Mifflin Co., The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1939, p. 450.

Should the determination of quality be on some arbitrary standard of "perfect" writing, "artistic" writing or in terms of legibility? This problem can serve to point out two separate ways in which handwriting can be seen; from the point of the consumer, which emphasizes legibility, and the pleasure to the artistic sense, or from the viewpoint of the producer, which emphasizes comfort and "economy" of stress. Herrick and Jacobs help to solve the problem by stating: "The judgment of quality is usually based on a "total" reaction to the sample, and by comparison with other samples, rather than by the specific analysis of letter formation, slant, spacing, arrangement, and other individual components. Studies in the quality of handwriting have not found a single specific factor of handwriting which would distinguish samples of different degrees of legibility."<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps the most common way of judging the quality of handwriting is to use commercially produced handwriting scales. McKee, in discussing teaching methodology, states that:

Any method of teaching cursive writing can be used in teaching manuscript writing. Problems of movement, position, distribution of practice, and ~~slant~~ are largely the same. Of course the choice of a model is important,

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<sup>76</sup>Herrick, Virgil E., and Jacobs, Leland B., loc. cit., pp. 269-270.



although the best form of the letters has not yet been determined. Some teachers hold rigidly to one given form. Others teach several forms and allow pupils to make their choice.<sup>77</sup>

### Writing Scales in Use at Present Time

Writing scales in use at the present time include the Ayres (now a part of the New Laurel programs), Freeman (Zaner-Bloser), West (Palmer System), Thorndike Scale, Kittle, Minnesota, National Board of Examiners, Nystrom, Stone and Smalley, Winnetka Scale, Rice System, Conard Scale, Scribners System, and the "We Talk, Spell, and Write" (Scott Foresman Co.).

To start writing practice at the blackboard seems to be a wise procedure. "Beginnings may be made with blackboard writing as in teaching the cursive form. Later, children should have practice with pencil, pen and ink, and drill lessons in letter formation may be employed."<sup>78</sup> Tidyman and Butterfield add that: "Blackboard writing favors the use of large muscles; children like it, and the teacher can easily supervise the work. The pupils should, of course, assume the correct position, hold the chalk properly, and write in a large hand. The transition to paper writing

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<sup>77</sup>McKee, Paul, op. cit., p. 483.

<sup>78</sup>Loc. cit.

may be made as soon as competency in blackboard work is achieved. Here individualization is easily achieved: some may write at the board while others work at their seats."<sup>79</sup>

### Writing Materials

Crayon is not advisable in place of a pencil for beginners to use in writing because using the crayon, children need to press too heavily to make a smooth, even stroke and the results are also unsatisfactory for reading compared with lead pencil writing. "Large, soft pencils are being used quite extensively for beginning work. Practice is begun on unruled paper, but ruled paper may be introduced later. The standard ruling is one inch in the first grade,  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in the second, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in the third."<sup>80</sup>

### Bad Habits

The teacher needs to be on the lookout for bad or faulty habits which may become established. Some difficulties which have been noted in the classroom situation may be classified as physical, mental, social, and emotional. Conard lists a few defects that should come to the attention of the teacher:

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<sup>79</sup>Tidyman and Butterfield, loc. cit., p. 377.

<sup>80</sup>Loc. cit., p. 377.

## I. Physical

- A. Posture
- B. Placement of paper
- C. Pressure on writing instrument
- D. Instrument movement
- E. How writing tool is held

## II. Mental

- A. Attention span
- B. Skill
- C. Independence of working habits
- D. Neatness
- E. Attitude

## III. Social

- A. Recognition of improvement

Tidyman and Butterfield list <sup>81</sup> additional causes of faulty handwriting in a diagnostic and remedial chart for handwriting. Some of these causes are: size of letter formation, slant, letter spacing, beginning and ending strokes, word spacing and alignment.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Taken from Conard, Edith Underwood, Show Me How To Write, The A. N. Palmer Co., New York-Chicago-Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1940, pp. 22-23.

<sup>82</sup>Tidyman and Butterfield, loc. cit., pp. 368-369.

## CHAPTER VI

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

#### Return Percentages

Of 160 questionnaires released, eighty-three were returned for a fifty-one and nine tenths percent reply. The eighty-three replies represented one or more school districts from the following thirty counties: Adams, Benton, Chelan, Clark, Columbia, Cowlitz, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, Stevens, Thurston, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Whitman, and Yakima. This accounts for a seventy-six and nine tenths percent coverage of the thirty-nine counties within the State of Washington.

Twenty-nine first class districts' replies are included in the overall reply, representing thirty-four and nine tenths percent of the total returns. Sixty-six and seven tenths percent of the State's total of thirty-six first-class districts are represented in the author's compilation of data. The first-class districts responding to the author's survey were: Aberdeen, Auburn, Bellevue, Bremerton, Central Valley, Ellensburg, Edmonds, Everett, Highline, Kelso, Kennewick, Moses Lake,

Olympia, Pasco, Puyallup, Richland, Seattle, South Kitsap, Sunnyside, Tacoma, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Wenatchee, and Yakima.

All of the schools contacted through the author's survey indicated a teaching of manuscript writing within the first two grade levels, with a majority of the replies stating that the transition from manuscript to cursive writing takes place sometime within the third grade.

Thirty-three per cent of the returned replies state that manuscript writing is used beyond the third grade. The uses are, in order of frequency, for (1) map and chart work, (2) art, (3) labeling, (4) signs and posters, (5) to maintain manuscript skills, (6) lettering, (7) filling out forms and statements, (8) outlines, (9) remedial cases, and (10) slow learners.

Thirty-seven per cent of the returned replies expressed a positive feeling that some manuscript should be integrated with cursive, and extend the use of manuscript style writing into the upper grades due to the variety of uses manuscript lends itself to.

Forty-two per cent of the returned replies either are now using or teaching manuscript writing beyond the third grade, or express a sincere desire to do so.

### Systems of Evaluation in Use

Not all returned questionnaires replied as to what particular system of teaching manuscript was used; however, several different methods were offered as being in use. They are, in order of frequency: (1) "We Talk, Spell, and Write"--Scott Foresman Co., (2) Rice System, (3) Scribners System, (4) Zaner-Bloser Recorder System, (5) Stone-Smalley System, and the (6) Kittle System.

The main differences in the above-mentioned systems lie in two categories: the amount of time taken before the transition to cursive is complete, and the ways various letters are written, particularly the w, y, z, and q.

Because of the differences between various systems of manuscript letter formation, many teachers and administrators answering the author's survey, voice a strong desire that there might be a single standard system arrived at with which to teach the mechanics of manuscript writing.

In the cases of slow or mentally retarded children, several first and second grade teachers indicate that they would prefer to postpone the transition from manuscript to cursive until the last half of the third grade or, even, until the fourth grade has been reached. Third and fourth-grade teachers, however, do not seem to wish this. They complain of difficulties in spelling and penmanship resulting from

the late transfer.

The overwhelming majority of the first and second-grade teachers replying to the author's survey, indicated a firm belief in manuscript writing. Some third and fourth-grade teachers are doubtful about its use unless it is continued throughout the school experience. A few administrators seemed inclined to agree with this latter opinion. It was surprising to see the number of statements which indicate lack of community support for extending manuscript beyond the third grade to be taught. There was no mention of community distrust of manuscript writing to be merely used by the intermediate and upper grade teachers in their classes.

Many suggestions were given as to the proper teaching procedures of manuscript writing, all of which closely parallel the modern teaching trends discussed earlier.

Following is a table showing the reasons why manuscript writing is not taught beyond the third grade in the state of Washington, as covered by this author's original survey. It will be noted that several causes (listed in order of frequency) are based on ill-founded beliefs and a lack of accurate knowledge as to what research data in this field has to show.

Table III

Reasons why manuscript writing is not taught beyond the third grade by those schools covered in this paper

Reasons	Frequency
a. Parental pressure	34
b. Physical coordination (failure to foresee the extended use of manuscript writing after adequate coordination permitted the learning of cursive)	18
c. Custom or tradition	10
d. Belief that cursive is faster than manuscript	10
e. Belief that cursive has more social value (1) Legal status (2) More "accepted)	6
f. Don't really know	5
g. Just following district policy	5
h. Cannot see benefit in continuing manuscript	4
i. Sloppiness of manuscript in upper grades	3
j. Belief that cursive is easier to write	2
k. Belief that manuscript lacks individuality	1
l. Too much time required to teach both manuscript and cursive	1
m. Belief that cursive writing is more efficient	1
n. Belief that learning extended manuscript would hamper the learning of cursive	1
o. Belief that the child would become lazy and not want to learn cursive	1
p. Due to workbooks, and other materials, being written in cursive	1



## Summary

The overwhelming majority of administrators and primary teachers firmly believe in manuscript writing as a productive tool of communication.

In the cases of slow or retarded children, the child is often allowed to continue with manuscript writing in a remedial classification.

There is a growing demand on the part of intermediate and secondary teachers to include activities involving manuscript writing into their scope and sequence of studies. This is true especially in the areas of social studies, art, mechanical drawing, arithmetic and miscellaneous labelling, lettering, filling out forms and data sheets. This need of manuscript style writing to supply the appropriate medium for these aforementioned subject areas seems to be one of legibility.

The favored grade level for the transition from manuscript to cursive appears to be one of proceeding according to the individual's need. In most cases, the Washington school child completes the transfer to cursive writing not in the second grade, as proposed by many leading educators, but rather in the third grade. Many reasons were offered for this, among them:

1. Children are ready to recognize and use two forms of writing without undue difficulty.

2. A child should write fluently in manuscript before a shift to cursive is made. (The quality of manuscript generally predicts the care with which the child takes up cursive.)
3. An earlier transition may cut off interest in creative writing, just as it is beginning to develop and makes the whole problem of writing more difficult than it has any need to be.
4. The time given to the transition may be a month or longer.
5. During the second grade the children have reached a point where manuscript writing has become a tool which they can use with ease and confidence. Adding another form of writing at this time seems tragically wasteful from the point of view of overall learning.
6. Manuscript writing is finding increased usage throughout school and adult life.

#### Conclusions:

The development of manuscript writing in the State of Washington is mainly a fight to combat public objection. The average layman, while extremely interested to develop the best possible curriculum for providing a wide scope of experiences for the child, seems unusually swayed by the traditional implementation of cursive writing to recognize the full face value of manuscript writing. That manuscript is at all acknowledged a form of handwriting is a step in the right direction when one considers the answer from a parent

regarding handwriting on the secondary level. The question asked of a mother was how she liked the legibility of her son's manuscript. Her answer was, in effect, that she thought it high time her son learn to write, not just print. Parent education with respect to the child's physiological development, writing readiness and social usages and advantages of manuscript writing may offset the deeply ingrained feeling many parents express in their reluctance to accept an advantageous medium of handwriting.

The attitude toward manuscript writing as expressed by the average elementary-school principal seems to be one of enthusiastic acceptance with regard to the primary grades. However, it is still the clear minority of administrators that volunteer their personal feeling that manuscript writing has been, and still is, underestimated with respect to its educational implications. As one administrator answered to the author's question of whether the administrator thought manuscript should be used in the intermediate or upper grades, "No. Penmanship is required and should be used." This statement reflects its philosophy onto the teachers within his building. Perhaps we should not directly criticize the classroom teacher for his short-sightedness. The opposite philosophy of instruction was expressed by an administrator who stated this to the author. "I would like to see both systems of writing used. Our children develop a considerable

proficiency in manuscript writing in grades two and three but lose the ability through lack of practice in the intermediate grades." Perhaps an organized backing should develop first to lend "moral support" to those administrators that hesitate to exercise a curricular alteration, due to group pressure.

Perhaps one important reason why manuscript writing is not extended alongside cursive writing in the upper grades, is a lack of teacher conception of the child-centered advantages given to manuscript writing. When verbally interrogated, a fifth grade teacher gave the following answer to the author's question of whether he thought manuscript should be used at his grade level. "No. Children have developed cursive writing so why should the students continue to use manuscript writing?" On the other hand, several administrators answering the author's questionnaires stated a demand from upper-grade teachers requiring manuscript writing for use in art, social studies, arithmetic and language arts. Several school offices are equipped with their various forms, applications, registration records and miscellaneous records all requiring the person entering the information to please print.

The extended use of manuscript writing in the future, coupled with the use of cursive writing, will not be borne out of educational pressure or lack of patience, but, rather, by using common sense

as to ease of learning and a thorough understanding as to the objectives of education.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

In assuming this study, the author purported to ascertain both the potential and the limitations of manuscript-style handwriting.

A more important goal was to probe the existing fallacies and beliefs that surround one of the most controversial areas in the field of language arts, manuscript-style handwriting. The most important goal was to diagnose the usage and extension trends of manuscript writing within the elementary schools of the state of Washington.

As the reader will notice in the results of the study, even some professional school leaders' false notions as to the speed, legibility and social value of manuscript writing seem to determine the handwriting curriculum within the particular school involved. Custom and tradition, both unscientific, in support of its continuance also play a large role in the adoption of curriculum design.

The average school patron seems to lack accurate information in regard to manuscript writing, as testified by the large number

of cases of parental objection which were indicated in the reasons for not teaching manuscript writing beyond the third grade in Washington schools. In analyzing parental objection, one dominant factor emerges. This factor is the belief that (1) manuscript is not a true form of handwriting, the only true handwriting being cursive, and (2) manuscript writing is a "juvenile" style, meant only for the learning and use of primary-grade children.

A quick review of the important contributions that manuscript writing has made to the learning program will serve as an aid in forming one's own feeling toward manuscript. There seems to be no appreciable difference in rates of speed between manuscript and cursive-style writing. The normal individual in the upper grades, secondary school and adulthood, after training in manuscript writing from the first grade, can write rapidly enough to satisfy all his practical writing needs without undue fatigue or tension and, still, maintains a high degree of legibility. As previously pointed out, proof of the illegibility of most cursive writing takes the form of a growing demand on the part of banks, schools, business firms and federal organizations in requesting customers or job applicants to "please print" in filling out record forms.

Many replies to the author's survey indicated a growing use of manuscript writing in the upper grades for art work, mechanical drawing, map and chart work, labeling, arithmetic, as an aid to

spelling and reading and remedial instruction. This, according to some authorities of the progressive vein of thought, is just the start of a program designed to get the maximum use of manuscript styled writing. When today's school children graduate with a knowledge of the wide variety of usage of manuscript writing, tomorrow's parental pressure should decrease. Some authorities agree with the opinion that much of today's parental pressure is a result of the predominance of cursive style handwriting during the entire history of education in the American culture. The current trend would provide the youngsters with a dual instruction of both forms of handwriting, in order to best utilize the distinct advantages of both to their fullest extent. The public elementary schools within the state of Washington seem to be aware of this fact; and, while the majority of the schools continue to drop manuscript writing after the introduction of cursive, the growing desire on the part of teachers and administrators alike to continue the usage of manuscript writing indicates the future fulfillment of current, validated trends.

Much research has supported the teaching of manuscript writing for the young school child because of his particular degree of motor development, eye-hand-arm coordination, ease of adjustment to manuscript mechanics and the ease of manuscript writing for the physically handicapped, slow learner and the left-handed child. The



use of manuscript facilitates learning to read, to write, and to spell. Individualization of manuscript writing is quite possible. All these advantages are supported by published research data.

Disadvantages accredited to manuscript writing stem, as previously stated, to personal beliefs, the customs of society and a reluctance to depart from the contemporary.

Current trends in the usage of manuscript writing seem to compromise with the traditional and progressive elements by slowly evolving a policy of retaining both styles of handwriting, the use of either one depending on the purpose involved. This trend has been aided by the fact that the adult encounters many useful purposes for manuscript writing; and, for this reason, it should be used more extensively in school in order that adult retention be more complete.

Modern teaching methodology has pointed out one very important fact. Each individual child must proceed to learn at his own individual rate of speed. Teaching procedures of manuscript writing utilize this fact by extending the change-over from manuscript to cursive, in certain cases, in order that the child may proceed either normally or remedially at his own rate of speed, since it has been found that expecting any child to conform with pre-arranged graded standards will often lead the child into mental, emotional and social deviations from the norm. A period of preparation serves to develop motivation to learn to write. Motivation coupled with a natural desire

on the part of the child (often produced by parental pressure), is designed to provide the necessary environment for learning to write. Most handwriting instruction is given in fifteen or twenty-minute class periods in the first eight grades. Five class periods per week appears to be the preferred custom in the primary grades.

The following steps are recommended in building up the fundamental skills involved in independent writing: (1) copy work, (2) studied dictation, (3) un-studied dictation, (4) the unfinished story, and (5) independent writing.

The determination of quality of the finished product seems to be a problem. However, the standards must be achievable and the finished product judged in terms of the goals established and in relation to the child's ability. Studies in the quality of handwriting have not found a single specific factor of handwriting which would distinguish samples of different degrees of legibility.

Writing materials and teaching techniques are all designed to stress a development of the child's individuality with legible results.

Faulty habits are not only physical, but mental, social, and emotional as well.

### Conclusions

Any basis for formulating conclusions must be relative to one's own educational philosophy. Consequently, individual interpretations are necessary.

However, certain fully evident facts stand out which deserve criticism. The American public is still hesitant to fully accept manuscript as a desirable style of handwriting for personal use beyond the learning stages of the first and second grades. Why parental objection is so strong, the author cannot answer except to point out that as previously stated, the concept that manuscript is not a true handwriting has probably developed through the predominance of cursive style handwriting during the entire history of education in the American culture right up to 1922, coupled with a reluctance to depart from the contemporary. A misinformed public as to valid data with respect to our educational system can actually stunt any scientific growth within the system. The experience of numerous schools indicates that community distrust often takes the form of one chief claim: that the schools do not teach the fundamentals.

The author feels that the following public-relations areas should be given thorough study and action:

1. Dealing with community distrust. The defense against school attacks lies in the gathering of facts.
2. Build understanding of crucial issues. Good publicity avoids cheap sensationalism, narrow provincialism and "shadowboxing." Valid school issues should avoid the self-conscious type of promotion that creates its own issues.

3. Securing community participation in the total enterprise of planning, evaluating and improving the entire process which we call education.

The author firmly believes that without a strong and unified public-relation program conducted at the "grass-roots" level, not in formal committees discussing the language arts program on an abstract level, will the schools be able to run ahead of the treadmill they are on, as they now are in trying to educate the public to validated methods and procedures in various areas of learning that the public does not understand. This seems especially true at the elementary-school level, at which time the average parent wants to know how his child is being taught, what he is being taught, and takes a critical interest in the school's scope and sequence of learning instruction. Without aroused public interest in curriculum improvement and school administration, both from within and out of the teaching ranks, our public school systems could not progress as far as they have in the last half century or as far as they have yet to go.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

As the author stated previously in this paper, there is a lack of modern data concerning many facets of manuscript writing as it appears today in our school systems. If the disadvantages ascribed to manuscript are valid, data must be produced to show

positive evidence to support the claims. On the other hand, the several advantages that the author has discussed in this paper are not entirely accepted by the public. It would be interesting to examine the answers of a polled public, in various sections of the country to determine the difference of public opinion regarding manuscript writing as influenced by various local conditions.

A study of the stress and extension given manuscript writing within parochial, private, military, and other selective schools and academies has not been attempted.

Perhaps of equal emphasis, since one of the main purposes of our schools is to prepare our children for their adult contributions to society, is to measure the effect of manuscript writing upon the various forms of business life.

There seems a definite need for arriving at a standard and uniform system of teaching manuscript handwriting. This research, the author believes, would have to culminate in the cooperative efforts of district representatives or administrators before a system could be successfully adopted.

Since the trend of extending the use of manuscript writing in the intermediate and upper grades of the elementary and junior high school leads directly into the secondary school, it would be of important interest to know of the extent the secondary schools employ

the widely discussed subject--manuscript writing.

Creative expression is an essential part of growth and development. School children may not add to the imaginative literature of the world anything of lasting value but they add materially to their own mental and emotional health through the production of even the crudest product of creative writing. It is not for the product that creativity is important, but for the expansion of the child's own sense of personal worth. Who can deny the valuable asset of learning to write?

## APPENDIX

## COMPILATION OF RETURNED SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

## REGARDING MANUSCRIPT WRITING:

"Much desired until children learn to read--manuscript agrees in form with the printed word. Reading is primary objective of the first and second grades."

"As you know, educators are being accused of not teaching writing as well as it was taught in the 'good old days.' We have a teacher that spends about an hour a week on manuscript and cursive writing. The results were good. Some teachers feel they don't have the time to devote to handwriting as they can't cover all of the materials now."

"A survey has not been made in the district for several years. However, we are prepared to make a check this coming year and will no doubt follow through manuscript for all twelve grades."

"I think it is important to learn and will be useful all through school."

"Children have developed cursive writing so why should the students continue to use manuscript writing?"

"Some people think it makes for better cursive writing when the child is ready for it."

"It should be required course for primary teachers."

"None other than a feeling that manuscript writing should be continued in the upper grades."

"By the time pupils reach the grade two level, many of them are ready and anxious to learn the cursive writing. Parents are anxious for them to learn. To wait too long means a good deal of the readiness value is lost. For this reason and to take advantage of the natural enthusiasm of the younger pupils, our second grade teachers make the introduction to the cursive writing sometime during the second semester."

"Personally, I see much merit in manuscript as much of our contact in writing is in this form."



"Last year the first and second grade teachers in Walla Walla made a study of the use of manuscript writing."

"We have accepted the philosophy that the principle purposes of using manuscript writing at primary levels are that it makes for easier and better cursive writing when used as a pre-requisite, and that it keys in with the printed symbols of primary books to make one less learning during the crowded primary grades. We feel that from grade three on, cursive writing is more orthodox and faster, and therefore justifies its place in the curriculum at those levels."

"The work in grades 4-5-6 was added several years ago in order to enable the children to keep their ability to do the fine manuscript work they were able to do in grade 3. This amount of practice has proved to be very helpful in maintaining this skill."

"I am in favor of manuscript writing because beginners find it easier. It is more like the printing of the written page and is more readily understood."

"Manuscript writing should be used throughout the grades for special types of work."

"I think we should follow our handwriting guide--more and better cooperation between schools in this respect."

"Although the trend has been to drop manuscript once the cursive is begun, requests have come from art teachers that we make an attempt to keep the ability to use manuscript throughout the grades."

"In cases where children are retarded in reading or where the child shows poor coordination, we delay the introduction of cursive writing."

"I would like to see both systems of writing used. Our children develop a considerable proficiency in manuscript writing in grades two and three, but lose the ability through lack of practice in the intermediate grades."

"Most parents want youngsters to learn cursive writing. Students may use manuscript writing for written work if they wish. The writing instruction, however, covers only the cursive writing."

"A uniform practice throughout state would help with the transfer."

"Try to have the child able to do both as well as he is able."

"We feel that manuscript writing should be taught so students learn only to make straight lines and circles."

"Manuscript and cursive can be successfully used together."

"Members of our faculty feel that cursive writing should be used by the student as soon as he is capable of doing so."

"I personally believe that we should teach manuscript writing at least through the third grade."

"Essential in the first and second grades due to carpal bone development--too slow to continue in use beyond the third grade. Also there is no necessity for it in terms of children's maturation."

"I feel that if manuscript was carried through the entire schooling in place of cursive that the writing would be much easier to read. However, to be a success this change would have to be nation wide."

"We find that a gradual transition, during the third grade seems to cause less trouble for the youngsters than it does at an earlier period."

"We are pleased with the skill children develop in manuscript writing. They acquire the skill easily with little strain and tension. Their writing is legible and clear."

"I personally feel that parents expect us to teach 'penmanship' and they think of cursive writing. I also feel we should include some training in manuscript writing in each grade since it is a real practical skill for later life."

"It (manuscript) should be part of the entire program of teaching writing. The method used should fit the cursive method used. Manuscript writing skill, once attained, should not be lost. There are many uses of printing, pupils need to retain that skill. Reteaching manuscript writing will act as a remedial measure in cursive writing. We are in the process of re-evaluating our system and studying others. No suggestion of changing our dual system has been made except to retain manuscript skills."

"I've heard of schools that never teach cursive but stick to manuscript throughout. However, I do not subscribe to that thought. Nevertheless, the grade level for the changeover is, in my opinion, subject to examination.

"I think we do not teach enough manuscript. I think we should teach it along with other writing even through high school."

"Our teachers feel that manuscript should be taught in grades one and two only, because at that time they are ready for cursive. The transition to cursive is apparently easily made at this time."

"We think all teachers should teach manuscript writing in the same manner. We find that there are several different ways to make some of the letters."

"We have never taught it (manuscript) beyond the second grade. We start to make the transition to cursive writing at the beginning of the third grade."

"It is the most natural form of writing."

"When children become accustomed to writing in manuscript they develop speed, and can write plainer. After all, everything they are asked to write for public use demands printing. Licenses, order blanks, registration blanks, etc."

"Manuscript writing has its place in our educational system. I believe a person should be encouraged to use the form, either cursive or manuscript, which is most legible. What else do we expect of a person's letter form? Legibility seems to be the purpose."

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