

## The Peterson Difference - A Directed Lesson Strategy

### The Basal Series

We Write To Read is the title of the basal series. It has been in continuous use in public and private schools since 1972. In response to our constant action research, teacher suggestions, our own observations during classroom work and our constant study of motor control and cognitive research in the professional journals, revisions have occurred periodically to enhance success. Our relatively new preschool/kindergarten program titled, ABC's and 123's extends the series to early childhood in response to new motor control science and the improved understanding of the internalization process it reveals.

### Tested Recommendations

During the course of each school year we review several hundred thousand student handwriting samples via our diagnostic service. We have been doing this since 1908. While this process is primarily designed for teacher support, it is also a form of action research which demonstrates graphically, across thousands of classrooms at the end of each unit of instruction, that suggested techniques and lessons are working. It also shows us what is not working in the classroom. The "Trace and Copy" teaching strategy has proven to be far less effective than the "directed lesson" strategy.

Our specialists also work in classrooms all through the school year. We are acutely aware of the challenges you face daily. No other entity offers you comparable experience as a resource. Our toll-free line allows you to phone with questions as they arise. You can be sure that our suggestions stem from a very broad perspective.

### The Alphabet Models We Use

Please recognize that models are a hoped-for outcome that will be controlled by movement. Our models are chosen for specific reasons rooted in experience and in motor research. We use The American Standard Alphabets as a goal. Examination will reveal that the models we provide for children look different from other programs - particularly with lowercase cursive letters. The models we show are designed for *process* understanding and rhythmic execution. The child must understand the movement sequence in order to practice effective movement and to develop skills that will result in the ability to eventually use written language as a tool for learning.

We include "rhythmic movement" as an objective from the start and exaggerate the letter-building process as a result. We do this because we see that most children need help to understand the movement sequence. The display on the following page shows models from various publishers from two perspectives.

### Looking at Legibility

Covering the bottoms of the letters to focus on legibility reveals surprising similarity. So why do the words look so different when uncovered?

### Look Into The Production Process You Must Teach

The visible differences relate to the movement process that a child must use to create the product. What is the letter-building process prescribed by the program? Where will you teach the child to stop in order to keep control of the movements that will shape each letter?

### Fluent Movement Is An Important Objective

Fluent movement is guided primarily by the automatic system - the internal model. This is the reason for the developmental sequence of learning delineated in our program. Thousands of samples show that children achieve more legibility during application when instruction includes rhythmic movement right from the start. To execute *automatically* the child must understand where a movement sequence ends.

Preschool children can learn rhythmic movement sequences in gross motor activities providing the sequences are understood. They can learn directionality concepts and position skills during coloring activities. However, the strategy for instruction is critical. Daily, unguided experiences using crayons and paper result in habits that frustrate students and teachers every day. A *directed* lesson strategy clearly offers advantages for the child.

If the long term goal is to develop skills that will allow intermediate students to produce handwriting that is easy to read *and* easy to write, you must consider the teaching/learning strategy provided in a program. Trace & copy activity primarily involves the visual feedback system which cannot guide with rhythm. To teach fluent movement teachers need to embrace a directed lesson strategy to involve the internal model and the automatic, rhythmic movement it can control.

## What is the difference?

Covering the bottoms of the letters is a good way to look for the qualities that result in legibility - letter shape, consistent slope, spacing and size/proportion. It also reveals surprising similarities exist in models that look very different when uncovered.

Zaner Bloser *handle* *elephant tulip*

Harcourt Brace *handle* *elephant tulip*

Peterson *handle* *elephant tulip*

Zaner Bloser *handle* *elephant tulip*

Harcourt Brace *handle* *elephant tulip*

Peterson *handle* *elephant tulip*

Peterson Slant *handle* *elephant tulip*

### The need for printwriting is a fact of life.

Numerous worksheets that teachers rely on for instruction are not designed with handwriting and developmental abilities in mind. This may be one major reason for the decline of interest in cursive writing skill in our schools. Few workbooks or reproducible worksheets provide sufficient lateral space for cursive. The same is true of virtually every form a student will ever be asked to complete.

### Cursive writing should offer a much better tool for fluent transcription of ideas.

For dashing your thoughts onto paper cursive should offer great advantage. The movements needed for legible product simply fit human musculature much better. However, this is only true if a person learns an efficient process for using it. The concept of cursive process is not readily seen in the models provided for learning in the vast majority of workbooks. There is great misunderstanding among teachers as well as students who have great desire to learn. The following illustration is designed to illustrate the concept of cursive as we teach it.

*Cursive does not work  
like this.*

*Cursive does work like this. And, it also works like this. We call this cursive print. This format reveals the Peterson concept. Lowercase letters are rhythmic units. The units are needed for word processing with smooth, rhythmic, fluency as spelling and language skills improve. The Peterson materials are specifically designed to help students understand the process and learn how-to-use fluent movement from the start.*

For more specific information on the relationship between rhythm and fluency see the paper, "John and Jane are bright. Why can't they write?" You will find the link near the bottom of our Information Directory page on the web. <[www.peterson-handwriting.com/info.htm](http://www.peterson-handwriting.com/info.htm)>

### **Peterson Advantages:**

1. Movement Instruction with a developmental plan of daily lesson outlines across the grades.
2. Accountability and Motivation - Diagnostic Evaluation Service, \$8.65 per classroom.  
Individual and class feedback on progress at the end of four instructional units, grades 1-8.
3. Exceptionally Affordable Materials  
The current school price of each We Write To Read student booklet is \$2.65 in classroom quantities.  
The current price of each **nonconsumable** preschool/kindergarten pupil book is \$7.30.
4. Exceptional Teacher Support via the internet and/or toll-free telephone support.
5. Continuing Research toward improved instructional techniques and use of technology.  
Current projects include:  
Digital tablet-based instruction of and testing for, internalization of production patterns at primary levels.  
Software for testing and instruction of fluent movement via computer feedback using a digital tablet or the new pen-based notebook computers.