

Preschool & Kindergarten Overview - ABC's and 123's

We Write To Read, Peterson Directed Handwriting

For longer than a decade kindergarten teachers have been reporting that children are coming to them with bad habits that seem to be impossible to change. It is a real and widespread problem. Modern research has provided information that points to a solution. Literally hundreds of scientific studies have provided relevant information but two are particularly important for preschool consideration.

Babcock, M. K., & Freyd, J. J. (1988) Perception of dynamic information in static handwritten forms. *American Journal of Psychology*, Spring, Vol 101, pp. 111-130.

Shadmir, R. and Holcomb, H. (1997) "Neural Correlates of Motor Memory Consolidation" *Science Magazine*, Vol. 277, 8 Aug. 1997.

Babcock & Freyd demonstrated that learned physical patterns provide information which functions during the reading process. There is little recognition among educators of the concept that physical training in symbol production has anything to do with reading skill development. This study shows that physical instruction should play an important role in every reading curriculum. Please note that the study was published in 1988.

Virtually every preschool child expresses interest in learning symbols. It is the only thing natural about our symbolic language. Everything else must be learned. Take the Babcock and Freyd study, add the information from Shadmir and Holcomb and realize that this early learning experience is far more important than many of us realize. From the beginning efforts, the brain is busy recording the movement patterns used to produce these "first letters."

The problem is quite simple. The physical movement patterns for our language were invented by adults. They do not "fit" the innate movement tendencies of a preschool child. Please visit our web site and review the presentation provided at the link, "Helping your preschool child." The animations will bring the concept into focus within a few minutes.

<http://www.peterson-handwriting.com>

Shadmir and Holcomb have provided PET scan demonstrations of the brain's reaction to physical instruction. The result they demonstrated was not only immediate, it shows profound implications far beyond reading and writing. The brain actually changed it's structure in response to the motor learning experience. The changes resulted in an almost immediate improvement in fluency.

This program, and I hesitate to call it a program, is extremely simple in scope.

It provides *non consumable materials* in print form and animated presentations on the internet and also on CD ROM. These resources make it easy for you to provide your preschoolers with motor learning experiences, at a developmentally appropriate, gross motor size, that will allow integration of symbol movement patterns which support the top-down, left-to-right directionality of our language. In the process, the activities will also be providing instruction for the child that has other far-reaching implications. The child will be learning how to use, right from the start, a special, rhythmic type of movement. This type of movement enables fluent legibility in the intermediate classroom. The teacher handbook also provides a plan for correlation of position skill instruction into the many coloring activities you are already using. See helping a left-hander on the web site above.

"I hesitate to call it a program."

It really is not a stand alone program. Rather, it is a simple plan for providing physical instruction that is rarely, if ever, mentioned in any reading/language readiness program. It is quite simply, a method that allows you to conduct a series of "aerobics classes" during which you direct the children through a few minutes of movement exercise. The movements you make will be the movements used to create basic strokes and letters of our alphabet. Use the Big Book models to relate letter sounds, capital/lowercase concepts or to direct air writing, rug writing or sand writing. Use it to direct fingertracing, exercises in the pupil text, and if you're so inclined, pencil writing on the reproducible pages. It is simple, sound and effective. The range of materials allows you to take your little ones as far as you feel they should go.