

Steps4Kids®

2009

Ed Expo

Dallas, TX

March 5 – 7
Booth: 2239

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THE "WRITE" APPROACH TO TEACHING HANDWRITING

HOT TOPIC:

What to teach?

D'Nealian®, Zaner-Bloser® or another style?

Over the years there has been much debate over whether children should be taught the slanted strokes of the "modern manuscript" (associated, for example, with the D'Nealian® style) or the straight up and down strokes of "traditional manuscript" (embodied by the Zaner-Bloser® style for example).

D'Nealian® was introduced in the latter half of the 20th century by Donald Thurber, a former primary school teacher and has been marketed as a way to simplify the strokes used in printing by making the strokes more similar to cursive writing. The D'Nealian® approach teaches slanted letters that often end with small strokes upwards which some teachers believe better prepares students for cursive writing.

Some school districts have adopted the D'Nealian® approach relying upon the statements on Mr. Thurber's website that his D'Nealian® approach reduces the number of strokes required to write traditional block printing, therefore making it easier to master. See www.dnealian.com.

Sue Bredekamp, Ph.D, special consultant to the Head Start Bureau and Director of Research for the Council for Professional Recognition, states that the "evidence is not conclusive and writing slanted alphabets can engage young children in fine motor skills that are beyond their physical ability. Preschool children are likely to have even greater difficulty with D'Nealian® handwriting because of their limited fine motor skills. ... The recommendation is to promote writing using straight lines, not just because they are easier for children to form but because they look more

like the print that children will see in books."¹

Per "Handwriting Instruction: What Do We Know?" (Koenke, K), research has not shown that one approach is better than the other and that both have their added benefits. One study showed that children using a traditional approach produced more legible work; another study showed that children using the D'Nealian® approach reversed fewer letters. "Regardless of the program, copying leads to better results than just tracing **When verbal instructions such as rules for correct letter formation, are added to demonstration, children do even better.**"²

Regardless of the program selected, legibility -- not conformity with a commercial style -- remains the benchmark of a student's success. To help children master legible writing, Steps4Kids handwriting DVDs teach both upper and lowercase letters using soothing verbal instructions supported by easy-to-follow visual demonstrations to help children copy the letters shown. All writing demonstrations use video modeling and are filmed from the child's perspective which studies have shown can increase success and improve retention of lessons.³

Our **Steps4Kids to Write Their ABCs** DVD (winner of over 5 national awards), demonstrates a fluid printing style

that reduces pencil lifting but which is similar in appearance to traditional manuscript. The ABCs DVD can be used to supplement programs that teach traditional manuscript/printing styles such as Zaner-Bloser®, Palmer®, or Handwriting Without Tears® (HWOT®). Also in development is our **Steps4Kids to Write Modern Manuscript** DVD which demonstrates strokes using an approach similar to D'Nealian® printing. Included in each of our printing DVDs are colorful graphics with over 100 sight words and drawing breaks using the letters to reinforce writing and reading skills.

In July 2008, Steps4Kids, LLC launched the **Steps4Kids to Write Cursive** DVD, earning awards from Parent's Choice, *CreativeChild Magazine*, Dr. Toy and The Toy Man™. Our cursive instructional DVD demonstrates cursive writing similar to D'Nealian® cursive and intersperses our exclusive **Look2Write™** writing game breaks to foster recognition and use of cursive letters. Viewers are shown colorful photographs filled with items that begin with the cursive letters shown and race to see how many items starting with the letters shown they can write down (:30 display on DVD but teachers and parents can pause the DVD for longer practice and participation).

February 2009 marked the release of our mini Steps4Kids Practice Pads (the size of a DVD case), which consist of high quality paper stock and 3 different styles of lined paper with extra white space to help early writers avoid line confusion when practicing!

Since 2005, the mission of Steps4Kids, LLC has been simple: to provide affordable tools that can be used consistently at school as well as at home to make learning fun and successful for the students learning and for the adults devoted to teaching them!



¹ "HeadsUp! Reading", <http://www.huronline.org>, Fact #23. Dr. Bredekamp is the co-editor of "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs," published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1987, 1997, and 2009 Editions), and the co-author of "Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children."

² "Handwriting Instruction: What Do We Know?" *Eric Digest*, (Koenke, Karl; Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Urbana, IL, Eric Identifier: ED 272923.)

³ See, e.g.: "Video Modeling Interventions for Individuals with Autism," (Delano, M., *Remedial and Special Education*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January/February 2007, pp. 33-42); "Video technology and Persons with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities" (Sturmey, P., *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 2003, pp. 3-4);

All products are made in the USA.