



Handwriting Strategies, Tips, and Tools

[September 2008](#)

Between the Lines

Handwriting in Motion

If you want to improve your students' handwriting, get them moving.

Several studies, including a recent one conducted by Michigan State University*, confirm what teachers and therapists have always known—that movement makes for better learning.

That's because kinesthetic learning (jumping, dancing, crawling, building, etc.) addresses the child as a whole. Movement stimulates the muscles and the brain, so that children are primed for learning.

Candice Mullendore, OTR/L and Stephanie Adam, OTR/L, co-founders of Pediatric Therapy Center, P.C., in Nebraska, agree. "Bodies learn through movement—rolling, falling, running, balancing, and so forth. Such movement helps refine skills used for handwriting, including tactile and visual perception."

The two explained that movement helps improve attention, which is necessary for the complex skills children need to succeed in and out of school. Their philosophy emerged from their experiences using Handwriting Without Tears as well as working with children of different learning abilities in school systems and in private practice.

"When we see students with fine motor deficits in general education, we find that they often lack spatial awareness, body mapping, and knowledge of how to use their muscles. That's why, we incorporate movement as part of a more holistic approach to improve handwriting skills."

In the school setting particularly, you have to consider bodies in space and using body parts in unison. You can't just look at handwriting; you need to look at the big picture. The Handwriting Without Tears curriculum has proven effective just for that reason—it's all about movement and multisensory learning.

"We always try to educate the teachers and help them understand the value of a multisensory approach," they said.

The two explained that every child benefits from motor-based activities. Moreover, because it's not always possible to conduct a full evaluation in a school setting, an instructional method that incorporates movement can address issues that may not always be apparent at first glance and identify problems before it's too late.

Take the case of one little boy who was referred to Mullendore and Adam from a school system because he couldn't sit and focus to do handwriting activities. "We had him jump on a trampoline and then run an obstacle course. This exercised his muscles and his mind, giving him the focus to sit down. As a result, he has now made great progress and his handwriting is improving."

"HWT makes a big difference for kids because it is multisensory and because it makes so much sense." It's all about hands-on physical learning that reaches different children in different ways.



Balance and Motor Development



Movement with Handwriting on Trampoline

It's easy to incorporate movement in the classroom. Start by introducing [warm-ups](#) to grab students' attention and stop the jitters. This doesn't have to take very long—just a few minutes. Then you're ready to go. Use the multisensory lessons in Handwriting Without Tears workbooks and get students stomping, clapping, diving, dancing, and miming their way through letter and number lessons.

Teaching with movement is about doing things that children enjoy. It's just plain fun, so they learn easily. They are mentally and physically stimulated and ready to learn because activity during the school day increases alertness and reduces boredom.

When children are engaged, they are focused and learning. This translates to better writing and better behavior.

* Effect of Physical Education and Activity Levels on Academic Achievement in Children, Michigan State University, Departments of Kinesiology and Epidemiology

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