

Penmanship still important skill for kids to have

August 5 2011, By Laurie Curtis

Laptops, cellphones, smartphones, tablets. It's becoming an e-world when it comes to messaging, but a Kansas State University education expert says that doesn't mean it's time to put a period to handwriting.

Laurie Curtis, assistant professor of curriculum and instruction at K-State, said although penmanship isn't as much of a life skill as it was 20 years ago, children should still be provided explicit opportunities to learn and practice this important skill daily.

"Historically, [handwriting](#) was considered an art," Curtis said. "It was practiced for several hours a week. I don't think we need to focus on it as much as before because computer literacy is important too, but there are many instances where penmanship is still essential."

When the act of writing is well practiced, less cognitive energy is focused on writing, allowing for the writer to focus on content and information, Curtis said.

"Cursive handwriting allows for [fluency](#) in communication," she said. "This type of fluency allows the ability to record ideas quickly and effortlessly."

Curtis also said that all handwriting helps students develop fine motor skills and it reinforces actions like buttoning a shirt or zipping a jacket.

"As young children practice writing, they are using a multisensory

pathway to remember the shapes and names of the letters they will need as they learn to read," she said. "Keyboarding, simply poking letters to form words on a screen, doesn't allow children to utilize their [motor memory](#) to enhance spelling and word comprehension."

Curtis said it's important for children to learn neatness, correct letter formation and spacing. Children also use written communication to provide valuable information to others, such as their name, address and phone number.

"Legible handwriting helps them provide that information accurately," she said. "It also helps [children](#) succeed in school assignments because good penmanship can directly affect scores on essays, [math problems](#) and spelling tests."

Provided by Kansas State University

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