

Good handwriting and good grades: Researcher finds new link

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Who cares about handwriting, anyway? It's the 21st century, after all. We have iPads and iPhones, computers that spell check and fonts that go from French script to Freestyle and back to Times New Roman.

But to Laura Dinehart, an assistant professor at Florida International University's College of Education, [handwriting](#) matters. A lot.

In research funded by the Children's Trust and soon to be published in the Journal of Early Childhood Education and Development, Dinehart discovered that 4-year-olds who demonstrate strong handwriting skills are more likely to excel academically in elementary school. Research on the importance of handwriting is just beginning to emerge, and Dinehart's findings establish a new link in understanding how penmanship plays a role in a child's academic development.

We talk about reading, we talk about math, but no one talks about handwriting," Dinehart said. "It's not even a subject area in many classrooms anymore. We don't ask kids to spend time on their handwriting, when in fact, the research is clear that kids who have greater ease in writing have better academic skills in 2nd grade in both reading and math."

Dinehart took a sample of 1,000 2nd grade students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools and linked their grades and academic scores back to the information gathered from them when they were still in pre-

kindergarten.

Students who received good grades on fine motor writing tasks in pre-k had an average GPA of 3.02 in math and 2.84 in reading – B averages. Those who did poorly on the fine motor writing tasks in pre-k had an average GPA of 2.30 in math and 2.12 in Reading – C averages.

More impressively, those who did well on the fine motor writing tasks in pre-k scored in the 59th percentile on the Reading SAT in second grade (just above average) and in the 62nd percentile on the Math SAT. Kids who did poorly on the fine motor writing tasks in pre-k scored in the 38th percentile on the Reading SAT in second grade and in the 37nd percentile on the Math SAT.

There is still much research to be done, and many questions to answer. What exactly is happening when a child’s academic performance improves when his or her handwriting is practiced? Exactly how much practice is necessary before results are seen?

Dinehart will attempt to answer those questions in the second part of her research. However, one thing is clear.

“People should take a second look at how important handwriting might actually be,” she said. “And public schools should rethink how much they focus on handwriting in the classroom and how those skills can really improve reading and math.”

For tips on how parents can encourage their children to practice their handwriting, click [here](#).

Provided by Florida International University

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