Even in the age of technology, handwriting remains the primary tool of communication and knowledge assessment for students in the classroom (Handwriting Without Tears, 2008).

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Occupational Therapists can consult with school teams when students fail to make progress with consistent handwriting instruction and modifications. Your school’s OT may be contacted through the Special Education Chairperson.

THE ROLE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST
- In schools, occupational therapy is a support service for students identified with an educational disability.
- Occupational therapists (OTs) help students with educational disabilities improve their functional and academic performance within the learning environment.
- Occupational therapists are trained to evaluate the underlying subskills needed to successfully complete functional and academic activities.
- Handwriting is one of the many purposeful activities a student performs that OTs address in schools.

Prince George’s County Public Schools
Programs & Services
Occupational Therapy
Oxon Hill Staff Development Center
7711 Livingston Road
Oxon Hill, Maryland 20744
Telephone: 301-567-8494
Fax: 301-567-8562
otpt.office@pgcps.org

SEP-210 (11/10)
**DID YOU KNOW?**

249 teachers across the nation were surveyed about their instructional practices in handwriting; only 12% indicated their college courses adequately trained them to teach handwriting (Graham et al., 2007).

Children who experience difficulties with handwriting and spelling may avoid writing and develop the mindset that they cannot write (Beringer, Mizokawa, & Bragg, 1991).

Handwriting instruction improves handwriting, and one or more aspects of writing performance, including sentence construction, writing output and writing quality (Beringer et al., 1997; Jones & Christensen, 1999; Graham, Harris & Fink, 2000).

**HANDWRITING**

Handwriting is a complex skill. Multiple areas of the brain work together for organizing, planning, sequencing and executing motor skills required for forming letters. Primary factors that impact handwriting performance include: memory, visual perception, language processing, cognition, attention, concentration, motivation, gross motor skills and hand motor skills.

Handwriting is important. Most school assignments and tests are completed using handwriting. Even the SAT requires a written component. Students who are fluent with handwriting are better able to focus on writing their thoughts and ideas on paper.

**WHAT TEACHERS & PARENTS CAN DO**

Teachers can provide consistent, guided handwriting instruction that incorporates monitored practice, simple directions and positive reinforcement.

Parents can support classroom instruction by monitoring their student’s progress with handwriting. Coordinate with the teacher how to reinforce classroom instruction should your student need additional practice at home.

When possible, be sure students are positioned appropriately when they are writing: sitting upright, arms supported on the writing surface and feet flat on the floor.

**PRE-KINDERGARTEN IDEAS**

Some Things to Consider:

Handwriting demands may exceed the child’s developmental skills.

Developmentally appropriate instruction lays the foundation for future success with writing.

Some Things to Do:

- Provide frequent opportunities to color/paint on vertical surfaces such as easels or blackboards.
- During centers time use magna doodles, rubber stamps, trace sandpaper letters.
- During circle time, practice forming letters by writing in the air, writing letters using fingers on each other’s back or on the carpet.
- Provide fine motor activities that emphasize use of the-thumb, index and middle fingers.

**SECONDARY EDUCATION IDEAS**

Some Things to Consider:

- Students need to accomplish writing tasks in a timely manner; the writing needs to be readable at first glance to clearly convey the writer’s intentions and thoughts.
- Remedial home programs may be helpful for students who are motivated.