

Jeremy Thiesfeldt

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 52nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Senate Bill 431 **The Cursive Bill** *Assembly Committee on State Affairs*

Hello, Chairwoman Darling and Members of the Committee. Thank you for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 431, a bill that will guarantee that all Wisconsin students are able to write in cursive.

The state of education in Wisconsin is not good. Over half of all Wisconsin students are not proficient in reading and math, and horrifically, Wisconsin has the worst racial achievement gap in the country. Wisconsin's reading scores have been declining steadily, and, as Chair of the Education Committee, I have heard many heartbreaking stories from parents of students and students themselves who are unable to effectively read, who struggle in school, and who want tools to be able to learn more efficiently and successfully.

Surprisingly to many, cursive writing can lend a hand in the process of improving reading. This bill isn't about nostalgia of being able to read grandma's letters and primary source historical documents. It is so much more than that.

While education has many goals, I would contend that one of the most important goals of education is to maximize the potential of our minds. Teaching kids how to think happens by activating and creating neurological pathways connecting the different parts of our brains. Cursive writing actually trains the brain to integrate visual and tactile information and fine motor dexterity. Astonishingly, printing and typing do not stimulate the synchronicity between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, but cursive writing does. Cursive writing requires different muscles and uses a different part of the brain than regular writing. Studies have also shown that memory recall of the content of writing performed using cursive surpasses that of the typed word. On top of all of this, cursive can help grade students develop their motor skills.

Interestingly, victims of traumatic brain injuries and even older patients with neurological impairments and diseases seem to be helped in recreating these mental pathways through the written word.

Many students with learning disabilities, specifically dyslexia, struggle with writing in print. Studies have shown that cursive comes more natural to these students

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as they are able to write in a 'flow' way with the mind-body connection, and with a different part of the brain, and cursive can improve learning outcomes.

Fifteen states now require students to be proficient in cursive. The most recent state to pass legislation regarding cursive proficiency, Ohio, did so in a very bipartisan manner. The legislation passed their State House of Representatives 90-4 and the State Senate 27-2.

As we look at ways to better education in the State of Wisconsin, we want to look at many different areas, including where we can get the best bang for our taxpayer dollars. Cursive is something that yields positive results in the brains of our students and their learning outcomes.

As Chair of the Assembly Education Committee, I feel strongly in giving students every chance to be successful in school. Cursive is one hugely beneficial and, honestly, fairly easy tool that can be enormously beneficial to Wisconsin students.

The Wisconsin Property Taxpayers and Decoding Dyslexia of Wisconsin are both in support of this legislation, and you will receive written testimony from many others who are also in support of being able to read and write in cursive.

Thank you.

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JOAN BALLWEG

STATE SENATOR • 14TH SENATE DISTRICT

Senate Bill 431: Incorporating Cursive Writing into the State Model English Language Arts Standards and Requiring Cursive Writing in Elementary Grades
Testimony of Senator Joan Ballweg
September 16, 2021

Good morning, members of the committee. Thank you for hearing this important piece of legislation.

At a time when technology is rapidly evolving and kids are growing up without ever knowing a time before computers, it might seem unnecessary to advocate for legislation promoting cursive writing. However, I believe it is the perfect time to make sure the skill of cursive writing is not lost for our younger generations, especially when Wisconsin students are struggling to learn how to read. While it is important that kids in school learn to type and properly use a computer, there is an abundance of research that shows learning to write by hand, particularly in cursive, helps build foundational skills for literacy.

Recent reports on reading scores for Wisconsin students show they are struggling with reading. According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, 64% of fourth graders are not proficient in reading, and 34% do not meet the basic standard for the test. When you break out reading scores by race, the statistics are starker. Of the 42 states that report separate reading scores for black students, Wisconsin is in last place after falling 31 places since 1992.

Having the availability to write in cursive can greatly benefit Wisconsin students, because it helps them to learn how to spell, read, and write. Block printing, cursive, and typing each elicit distinctive neurological patterns. Cursive writing causes the brain to integrate visual and tactile information, with fine motor dexterity. Additionally, while normal printing and typing do elicit these patterns, they do not stimulate the synchronicity between both sides of the brain, while cursive can. As students with dyslexia oftentimes struggle with writing in print, numerous studies have shown that cursive may come more naturally to these students and can also improve their learning outcomes.

SB 431 requires the state superintendent to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts. The bill requires all school boards, independent charter schools, and private schools in the parental choice program to include cursive writing in their elementary school curriculum with the objective that students can write legibly in cursive by the end of fifth grade.

When Common Core standards were introduced in 2010, cursive writing was not required in the standards, but since then, at least 21 states have adopted some form of requirement that cursive be included in instruction. We hope Wisconsin can be added to that list soon. Thank you for your consideration of SB 431, and I am happy to answer any questions.



Senate Education Committee

September 16, 2021

Department of Public Instruction

Statement of Information on Senate Bill 431

Thank you Chairwoman Darling and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide information regarding Senate Bill 431 (SB 431). The bill requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts. This bill also requires a school board, independent charter school, and private school participating in a parental choice program to include cursive writing in its curriculum for the elementary grades. The bill further requires that each elementary school curriculum include the objective that pupils be able to write legibly in cursive by the end of fifth grade.

Background

The State Superintendent adopts state standards for English language arts. Local school districts determine whether they will adopt state standards, what curriculum they will use, and if additional assessments, beyond state assessments, will be used.

The Academic Standards Review Council is the group that advises the State Superintendent on the adoption of standards. It is appointed by the State Superintendent. Legislative members, however, are requested from the leaders of the majority and minority parties in both the State Senate and the Assembly. Current legislative members include Senator Alberta Darling, Senator Chris Larson, Representative Thiesfeldt, and Representative Dave Considine.

The DPI has a comprehensive process for reviewing and revising academic standards. The process begins with a notice of intent to review an academic area with an associated public comment period. The State Superintendent's Academic Standards Review Council then examines those comments and recommends to the State Superintendent whether to revise or develop standards in that academic area. Based on that recommendation the State Superintendent determines whether or not to pursue a revision or development process.

Following this, a state writing committee is formed to work on writing specific standards for all grade levels. That draft is then made available for public review and comment. That public comment is provided to the State Superintendent's Academic Standards Review Council to determine if further revisions need to be made to the proposed standards and then makes a recommendation to the State Superintendent. The State Superintendent then determines adoption of the standards. *Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts* were reviewed, and

revised in 2020 based on public and legislative input and drafted by a team of more than 50 Wisconsin educators. Those revisions included the addition of cursive writing.

In late spring of 2020, the state superintendent of public instruction approved and adopted those revisions which included the addition of cursive writing into *Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts* for kindergarten through grade 6.

There are not currently any legislative requirements (beyond the sequential curriculum plan) related to specifics of English language arts curriculum. Specifically, there are no Wisconsin statutory requirements regarding the *Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts*. Although the State Superintendent adopts standards for English language arts, all decisions about standards, curriculum, and assessment are made at the local level.

Analysis

Teaching cursive writing provides learners with another way, in addition to print, keyboarding, or drawing, which are all mentioned in Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts, to capture and communicate thinking.

Given that local school boards currently determine curriculum, SB 431 would overwrite that authority in this area by placing a curricular requirement on schools and districts by requiring cursive to be part of each district's sequential curriculum plan. This bill introduces the first statutory requirement regarding inclusion of a specific skill or knowledge into Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts.

As written, the bill applies to all students. The fine motor skills required for cursive writing may be challenging for some students, including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), who may need extra supports. Authors of the bill may wish to address this issue for students who may have disabilities which prevent them from obtaining proficiency in this skill.

Cursive Writing vs. Other Writing/Typing

- The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking (Study)
 - **Link** - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0956797614524581>
 - **Summary** - Many researchers have suggested that laptop note taking is less effective than longhand note taking for learning. Prior studies have primarily focused on students' capacity for multitasking and distraction when using laptops. The present research suggests that even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing. In three studies, we found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand. We show that whereas taking more notes can be beneficial, laptop note takers' tendency to transcribe lectures verbatim rather than processing information and reframing it in their own words is detrimental to learning.
- Early development of language by hand: composing, reading, listening, and speaking connections; three letter-writing modes; and fast mapping in spelling (Study)
 - **Link** - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16390289>
 - **Summary** - The first findings from a 5-year, overlapping-cohorts longitudinal study of typical language development are reported for (a) the interrelationships among Language by Ear (listening), Mouth (speaking), Eye (reading), and Hand (writing) in Cohort 1 in 1st and 3rd grade and Cohort 2 in 3rd and 5th grade; (b) the interrelationships among three modes of Language by Hand (writing manuscript letters with pen and keyboard and cursive letters with pen) in each cohort in the same grade levels as (a); and (c) the ability of the 1st graders in Cohort 1 and the 3rd graders in Cohort 2 to apply fast mapping in learning to spell pseudowords. Results showed that individual differences in Listening Comprehension, Oral Expression, Reading Comprehension, and Written Expression are stable developmentally, but each functional language system is only moderately correlated with the others. Likewise, manuscript writing, cursive writing, and keyboarding are only moderately correlated, and each has a different set of unique neuropsychological predictors depending on outcome measure and grade level. Results support the use of the following neuropsychological measures in assessing handwriting modes: orthographic coding, rapid automatic naming, finger succession (grapho-motor planning for sequential finger movements), inhibition, inhibition/switching, and phonemes skills (which may facilitate transfer of abstract letter identities across letter formats and modes of production). Both 1st and 3rd graders showed evidence of fast mapping of novel spoken word forms onto written word forms over 3 brief sessions (2 of which involved teaching) embedded in the assessment battery; and this fast mapping explained unique variance in their spelling achievement over and beyond their orthographic and phonological coding abilities and correlated significantly with current and next-year spelling achievement.
 - "What we found is that children wrote more words, they wrote them faster and expressed more ideas with paper and pen than with the keyboard. Up to about the

sixth grade, there does seem to be an advantage for composing and handwriting,” Berninger said.

- Teaching of Cursive Writing in the First Year of Primary School: Effect on Reading and Writing Skills (Study)
 - **Link** - [Pdf](#)
 - **Summary** - We observed that children who only learned the cursive type made faster improvements in reading. This fact may be explained by a major focus of active resources on the lexical access task. The very nature of the cursive type may help students to easily memorize and recall a word unit, since in the cursive type the letters of a word are linked one to another, while in print type they are separated.
 - In conclusion, like other studies, our work tends to demonstrate how, upon training, writing and reading abilities improve in terms of written letter rate (students write faster), orthography (words are written correctly), and reading (students read and understand better). However, writing quality is a parameter to be investigated thoroughly in further studies. Considering writing type, we can observe how students who learn every type simultaneously do not achieve results as good as those achieved by cursive-only students. This finding supports the idea that the development of writing abilities in primary school is better favored by the teaching of a single type of handwriting, namely cursive handwriting. Furthermore, teaching of the cursive type generates improvement in graphic and orthographic word production by the end of the school year.

- The Benefits of Cursive Go Beyond Writing (Article)
 - **Link** - <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/04/30/should-schools-require-children-to-learn-cursive/the-benefits-of-cursive-go-beyond-writing>
 - **Summary** - Learning to write in cursive is shown to improve brain development in the areas of thinking, language and working memory. Cursive handwriting stimulates brain synapses and synchronicity between the left and right hemispheres, something absent from printing and typing. As a result, the physical act of writing in cursive leads to increased comprehension and participation. Interestingly, a few years ago, the College Board found that students who wrote in cursive for the essay portion of the SAT scored slightly higher than those who printed, which experts believe is because the speed and efficiency of writing in cursive allowed the students to focus on the content of their essays.

- Note-taking with computers: Exploring alternative strategies for improved recall (Study)
 - **Link** - <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-27380-001>
 - **Summary** - Three experiments examined note-taking strategies and their relation to recall. In Experiment 1, participants were instructed either to take organized lecture notes or to try and transcribe the lecture, and they either took their notes by hand or typed them into a computer. Those instructed to transcribe the lecture using a computer showed the best recall on immediate tests, and the subsequent experiments focused on note-taking using computers. Experiment 2 showed that taking organized notes produced the best recall on delayed tests. In Experiment 3,

however, when participants were given the opportunity to study their notes, those who had tried to transcribe the lecture showed better recall on delayed tests than those who had taken organized notes. Correlational analyses of data from all 3 experiments revealed that for those who took organized notes, working memory predicted note-quantity, which predicted recall on both immediate and delayed tests. For those who tried to transcribe the lecture, in contrast, only note-quantity was a consistent predictor of recall. These results suggest that individuals who have poor working memory (an ability traditionally thought to be important for note-taking) can still take effective notes if they use a note-taking strategy (transcribing using a computer) that can help level the playing field for students of diverse cognitive abilities.

- Psychology professors Dung Bui, Joel Myerson, and Sandra Hale at Washington University found that taking computer notes does offer the immediate benefit of better recall than well-organized, handwritten notes. So the computer wins...at first. But then their research, they uncovered something interesting: that advantage disappears in about 24 hours. By that point, people who typed their notes actually performed worse on tests about the material. The researchers concluded that the typing note-takers had worse recall because they weren't actively summarizing and synthesizing key points.
- "Taking organized notes presumably involves deeper and more thorough processing of the lecture information, whereas transcribing requires only a shallow encoding of the information," they explained.
- The effects of handwriting experience on functional brain development in pre-literate children (Study)
 - **Link** - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211949312000038>
 - **Summary** - In an age of increasing technology, the possibility that typing on a keyboard will replace handwriting raises questions about the future usefulness of handwriting skills. Here we present evidence that brain activation during letter perception is influenced in different, important ways by previous handwriting of letters versus previous typing or tracing of those same letters. Preliterate, five-year old children printed, typed, or traced letters and shapes, then were shown images of these stimuli while undergoing functional MRI scanning. A previously documented "reading circuit" was recruited during letter perception only after handwriting—not after typing or tracing experience. These findings demonstrate that handwriting is important for the early recruitment in letter processing of brain regions known to underlie successful reading. Handwriting therefore may facilitate reading acquisition in young children.
- Handwriting or Typewriting? The Influence of Pen- or Keyboard-Based Writing Training on Reading and Writing Performance in Preschool Children (Study)
 - **Link** - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4710970/>
 - **Summary** - Digital writing devices associated with the use of computers, tablet PCs, or mobile phones are increasingly replacing writing by hand. It is, however, controversially discussed how writing modes influence reading and writing performance in children at the start of literacy. On the one hand, the easiness of

typing on digital devices may accelerate reading and writing in young children, who have less developed sensory-motor skills. On the other hand, the meaningful coupling between action and perception during handwriting, which establishes sensory-motor memory traces, could facilitate written language acquisition. In order to decide between these theoretical alternatives, for the present study, we developed an intense training program for preschool children attending the German kindergarten with 16 training sessions. Using closely matched letter learning games, eight letters of the German alphabet were trained either by handwriting with a pen on a sheet of paper or by typing on a computer keyboard. Letter recognition, naming, and writing performance as well as word reading and writing performance were assessed. Results did not indicate a superiority of typing training over handwriting training in any of these tasks. In contrast, handwriting training was superior to typing training in word writing, and, as a tendency, in word reading. The results of our study, therefore, support theories of action-perception coupling assuming a facilitatory influence of sensory-motor representations established during handwriting on reading and writing.

- The power of writing hands: Logical memory performance after handwriting and typing tasks with Wechsler Memory Scale Revised Edition (Study)
 - **Link** - <https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/62563/Frangou.Satu-Maarit.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>
 - **Summary** - Information and communications technologies have generated a multilevel metamorphose not only of the educational field, but also of the usage of hands. The shift from handwriting to typing is bringing about a change in the ways people learn to recognize and recollect letters and words, read and write. This study investigates how different writing methods affect memory retrieval. The aim is to understand how the memory performances compare after handwriting and typing tasks, and how the factor of time or age affects recollection. The Wechsler Memory Scale Revised Edition (WMS-R) was used with experimental within-subjects research design to measure memory functions of 31 University of Lapland students in 2016. Participants wrote down a dictated story with a pencil, computer keyboard, and a touch screen keyboard. Consequently, the degree of recollection of each writing task was measured and analysed with repeated measures analysis of variance. Additionally, this thesis deliberates the embodied cognition theory, as learning and memorizing are not simply information processing in nothingness. Experiences, actions and senses all play part in learning, as well as in writing process with the harmonious co-operation of brain, mind and body. The results of this study indicate that writing modalities have statistically significant effect on recollection, handwriting receiving the highest scores. These results are of interest due to the constant increase of digitalization of learning environments.

Teaching Cursive

- Cursive Swoops Back into Curriculum (Article)

- **Link** - <https://www.educationdive.com/news/cursive-swoops-back-into-curriculum/521417/>
- **Summary** - Megan Kreitlein spends every year, for the past 12, teaching her 4th grade students at Eden Elementary School in Pell City, AL, how to write in cursive. Fifteen minutes a day, her class learns each letter — both lower case and uppercase — until they're capable of turning in their assignments in cursive. Students also do an art project where they write their name in cursive, and turn it into a "cursive critter" that we display in the hall all year," says Kreitlein. "They also write thank you notes for our funded Donors Choose projects in their neatest cursive, and I've had some donors very pleased to see the cursive handwriting." Ultimately, she finds that students who don't print clearly can sometimes have beautiful cursive handwriting, which she says she finds easier to read. And to keep her students practicing, she sends a workbook home, sometimes hearing from grandparents and parents who are happy that children are still learning how to write in the curls and loops that they remember from their own childhood.
- **Ciro Scardina**, who has been teaching cursive on and off since 2002, sees the ability to write in cursive as an important ability, and started a weekly club for 3rd through 5th grade students two years ago at Public School 18 in Staten Island, NY. He now has about 15 students who meet to learn how to write in the flowing style. "The historical documents that frame our country's history were written in cursive and I think in order to truly appreciate them, it helps to read them in the style in which they were written," says Scardina. "We live in a digital world but I find it vital to keep sacred some analog parts of life." He does this by having students copy poems in cursive, and has even created a short video of some people writing in cursive so they can keep studying independently. During the club meetings, students spend 90 minutes talking, practicing and even doing hand exercises to build up their muscle strength, he says.
- We're glad cursive is making a comeback, and that's not just nostalgia (Article)
 - **Link** - https://lancasteronline.com/opinion/editorials/we-re-glad-cursive-is-making-a-comeback-and-that/article_c7edc240-62ae-11e9-a058-4f39eeb8e050.html
 - **Summary** - Amy Prechel, an occupational therapist who also teaches for Learning Without Tears, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that kids' inability to learn handwriting is a problem. "They are trying to write sentences and paragraphs and the teacher can't read what they are trying to write," Prechel said. In severe cases, students can't read their own handwriting. Prechel conducts workshops on how to make the teaching of cursive fun for students. At the seminar covered in the Post-Gazette story, she employed a hand-held puppet named Magic C, a black and white bunny with a black bow tie, black sunglasses and a cellphone. The Magic C letters are c, a, d, g, o and q. That's because after a child forms a lowercase c, additional strokes can turn it into any of those other letters. To teach writing the lowercase b, h, m, n, r and p, Prechel said, "we pretend we are professional divers. We dive down, come up and swim over."
 - Learning how to write and read cursive is an important skill because people who take hand-written notes "are synthesizing the information at the same time," she

told the Post-Gazette. Learning cursive, Prechel said, builds neural pathways in children because the effort lights up more hemispheres of the brain than typing. "It's also faster than print once you are fluent."

- For children with dyslexia and other disabilities, "cursive can assist them with the decoding process because it integrates hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills and other brain and memory functions," NPR reported.

Common Core

- Why Don't the Common-Core Standards Include Cursive Writing? (Article)
 - **Link** - http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2016/10/why_dont_the_common-core_standards_include_cursive_writing.html
 - **Summary** - One of the most widely cited criticisms of the Common Core State Standards is that they don't require teaching students to write in cursive. Some states, such as Tennessee and California, have added cursive to the standards. Louisiana mandates that students get instruction in cursive every year from the 3rd through 12th grades. Without knowing cursive, students "will be locked out of doing research with literary papers and archival collections," Valerie Hotchkiss, a library director at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wrote in the Chronicle of Higher Education in 2014. "They will not even be able to read their grandmother's diary or their parents' love letters." Others say cursive helps students write faster than print, and that they need it to develop a signature.

Dyslexia

- **Katie Testimony** - Handwriting is an essential component of remediation for children with dyslexia. Every remediation program or curricula incorporates explicit and systematic handwriting instruction, most often cursive, to reinforce letter to sound association for struggling readers. Programs for struggling readers should include VTAK (Visual, Tactile, Auditory and Kinesthetic) multisensory learning. Cursive provides all of those components.
 - IDA (International Dyslexia Association) states these reasons for teaching cursive:
 - Cursive is faster to write
 - Cursive becomes a unit rather than a series of separate strokes and correct spelling is more likely retained
 - All lower-case letters begin on the line
 - Handwriting engages more cognitive centers in the brain than the keyboard
 - Ability to read historical documents
- The Contribution of Handwriting and Spelling Remediation to Overcoming Dyslexia (Study)

- **Link** - <https://www.intechopen.com/books/dyslexia-a-comprehensive-and-international-approach/the-contribution-of-handwriting-and-spelling-remediation-to-overcoming-dyslexia>
- **Summary** - The main thrust of this chapter is that whilst the focus in education is the teaching of reading, the needs of dyslexics are different. Their core difficulty lies in the area of spelling first in 'cracking the alphabetic code'... In research terms it is suggested that there should be more focus on spelling and handwriting as part of literacy investigations and that a programme of early screening and intervention in Reception should be explored (i.e: cursive).

General Benefits of Cursive

- The Case for Cursive: 6 Reasons Why Cursive Handwriting is Good for Your Brain (Article)
 - **Link** - <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/585138/case-cursive-6-reasons-why-cursive-handwriting-good-your-brain>
 - **Summary**
 - 1) CURSIVE PROVIDES A FLOW OF THOUGHT AS WELL AS A FLOW OF WORDS
 - Numerous studies on the effect of writing in cursive have been completed, but one of the most influential remains a 1976 investigation from the journal Academic Therapy. It demonstrated that the act of writing words in a continuous fashion—as opposed to the interrupted format of block letters—promoted an understanding of complete words better than separate letters. Humans, after all, think structurally, not phonetically. Cursive helps reinforce that.
 - 2) CURSIVE HELPS YOU FOCUS ON CONTENT
 - When one becomes proficient in cursive, the barrier between thought and action is minimal. In fact, the College Board found that students taking the essay portion of the SAT exam scored slightly higher when writing in cursive than if they printed their answers. By not having to slow down with block printing, experts believed they could put virtually all of their focus on the content of their work.
 - 3) CURSIVE GETS THE ENTIRE BRAIN WORKING
 - Cursive may seem like just a different way of writing, but studies have found that it activates different neurological pathways than typing or manuscript writing. And reading cursive also activates different parts of the brain than printed text—one study found that in all cases they studied, when they presented information to the left hemisphere of the brain fewer errors occurred than when it was presented to the right hemisphere. But when reading cursive, this advantage was much smaller, indicating that the right hemisphere plays a much larger in reading cursive than in printed form.
 - 4) CURSIVE HELPS YOU RETAIN MORE INFORMATION

- Studies have shown that taking notes during an educational class using handwriting is preferable to typing. That's because when we type, we're able to transcribe speech almost verbatim. When we write, we have to be more selective and the brain has to process information to decide what's important enough to write down. That level of brain engagement tends to make information "stick" rather than just pass through our typing fingers.
 - 5) CURSIVE MAY HELP IMPROVE MOTOR CONTROL
 - Cursive handwriting is a fine motor skill that allows for plenty of practice. For people with developmental dysgraphia this can have a range of benefits to improve these skills.
 - 6) CURSIVE WILL MAKE YOU A BETTER SPELLER
 - The act of writing out words and thinking of them as a single unit means you're more likely to re-tain their proper spelling than if you simply typed them out. Cursive writers tend to spell more accurately as a result.
- Why Cursive? The Importance of Teaching Students to Write in Cursive (Article)
 - **Link** - <http://www.cursivelogic.com/why-cursive>
 - **Summary** - According to neurologist William Klemm, the neurological benefits of writing by hand are compounded with cursive writing. "Cursive writing, compared to printing, is even more beneficial because the movement tasks are more demanding, the letters are less stereotypical, and the visual recognition requirements create a broader repertoire of letter representation." Researcher Diane Montgomery posits that the connected letters and fluid motion of cursive handwriting are especially beneficial to students with disorders such as dyslexia and dysgraphia. Yet many fail to recognize the value of cursive. When students write confidently and legibly, their academics as a whole seem to improve.
 - Cursive has the added benefit of being both artistic and highly personal. Children no less than adults long to express their individuality and creativity. Developing a cursive hand—epitomized in the signature and carried through in a unique form of writing that others can identify and associate with a particular individual—is an important step in developing a personal style and voice. Students are not automatons, and education should include tools that encourage the individual personality.

**GENERAL FEDERATION
of WOMEN'S CLUBS**



September 16, 2021

Good afternoon, Chairman Darling and Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 431. My name is Nancy Honadel and I am a member of the General Federation of Women's Club International with over 80,000 members. It is the largest women's volunteer organization worldwide whose mission is betterment of our communities. TODAY, I am not speaking as an individual, but rather I am speaking for and representing the 1500 GFWC-Wisconsin members throughout all 72 counties of this state. We are proud to have GFWC clubs in every one of the Wisconsin counties.

You may recall we drafted a resolution to reinstate cursive writing in our Wisconsin schools which was presented to our state convention in May of 2018 where it passed overwhelmingly. The Assembly and the Senate both drafted bills. The Assembly bill passed in 2020, but unfortunately the Senate bill did not get voted upon. Therefore, it was time to start over.

We wish to thank Senators Ballweg, Darling, Ness, Marklein, L. Taylor, Wangaard and their co-sponsors for drafting and presenting SB431 to this committee and we encourage passage.

Our research has found that at least 21 of the United States of America have passed new bills requiring cursive writing and there are several states with pending legislation. Surprisingly, New York City with 1.1 million students is also requiring them to learn cursive in the third grade. Amazing!

Psychologists and neuroscientists say handwriting affects brain development, motor skills, comprehension and memory in a positive manor. I have been mentioning our journey to everyone I meet – and their faces light up and they say “Thank Goodness you are doing something about it!” But, in the interest of fairness, I did have one man say “Why bother?” Why bother, indeed!! We are bothering because our children are missing a valuable tool in their life’s work. Professional researchers have found that handwritten notes are important because our mind integrates visual and tactical information as we are writing it.

Linking letters into word units also helps a student learn to spell words.

And often cursive is faster than printing so a student's hand can keep up with their thoughts.

Sadly, at least one generation is unable to read the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and many other historical documents. Might I add on a personal note, my two youngest grandchildren cannot read my cards and letters and they actually feel cheated that they never learned to write.

Based upon our research, these are some of the reasons we recommend passage of SB431 so our Wisconsin students have the opportunity to write in cursive:

- 1. Cursive gets the entire brain working**
- 2. Cursive may help improve motor control**
- 3. Cursive helps you retain more information**
- 4. Cursive makes you a better speller**
- 5. Cursive helps you focus on content**
- 6. Cursive helps students with dyslexia**

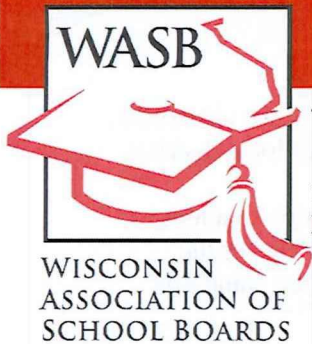
7. And last, but not least, cursive gives the student a legal signature

In summary, in order to offer our students these opportunities, the members of the GFWC of Wisconsin recommend passage of the Senate bill SB431.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

Nancy Honadel

When these students are 18 years of age, they will be able to sign your nomination papers properly!



"Leadership in Public School Governance"

JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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TO: Members, Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director
DATE: September 16, 2021
RE: OPPOSITION to SENATE BILL 431, incorporating cursive writing into the state model English language arts standards and requiring cursive writing in elementary grades.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing all 421 of Wisconsin's locally elected public school boards.

During each legislative session numerous bills are introduced to impose curricular mandates on schools. The WASB generally opposes those bills when they either impose unfunded mandates on local school districts or attempt to micromanage decisions best left to local board discretion. In general, the WASB supports local school board control of curricular decisions.

Senate Bill 431 has two parts. The first part of the bill requires the state superintendent of public instruction to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts.

The first part of the bill has likely already been accomplished. State model academic standards were modified in May 2020 to incorporate cursive writing into state English language arts (ELA) standards, *including an expectation that students should be able to proficiently produce writing through printing and cursive in fifth grade.*

The second part of the bill would require each school board to include cursive writing in its language arts curriculum for the elementary grades, and specifically include the academic objective that pupils be able to write legibly in cursive by the end of grade 5.

The bill thus imposes a curricular mandate on all school boards in the state except those in districts that do not operate elementary grades. The mandate is unusual in its specificity and in that it sets a goal by a specific grade level. It is this second part of the bill that triggers our objections.

Effectively, the bill would require *all* school districts to provide instruction in cursive writing for their elementary students, including those districts that may have chosen not to provide such instruction for whatever reason. This language effectively enshrines cursive writing in the curriculum of every Wisconsin public elementary school.

The question of how much instruction in cursive writing is enough and how much students should receive strikes us as one that is appropriately suited to local board decision making. We question the wisdom of, and raise objections to, the state Legislature mandating this requirement on all schools and students against the wishes of those school boards who have not adopted this requirement.

Wisconsin's model academic standards specify what students should know and be able to do in the classroom. They serve as goals for teaching and learning. Adopting these model standards is voluntary for local districts.

In Wisconsin, all state standards serve as a model. Locally elected school boards have discretion to adopt academic standards in each subject area to best serve their local communities. Regardless of whether they adopt the state's model standards or their own standards, they must annually disclose what those standards are.

Under s. 120.12(13), Stats., school boards are required annually to notify the parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in the school district, prior to the beginning of the school term, of the pupil academic standards, in mathematics, science, reading **and writing**, geography and history, that will be in effect for the school year. School boards are also required annually to include as an item on the agenda of the first school board meeting of the school year a notice that clearly identifies the pupil academic standards adopted by the school board that will be in effect for the school year.

School boards and their districts may, and often do, use the state's model academic standards as guides for developing local grade-by-grade level curriculum.

One of our concerns is that implementing this bill will no doubt require some school districts to upgrade school and district curriculums, and may result in changes in instructional methods and materials, local assessments, and professional development for elementary teachers. These changes will come at some cost to districts.

In a world that is increasingly moving away from paper communications toward digital and electronic communications, we question whether spending a significant portion of instructional time in third or fourth grade or fifth grade on cursive writing is the proper choice. Educators know that achieving mastery of cursive writing can take up a significant amount of instructional time during a period when children's brains are developing rapidly.

Given that many legislators have questioned a lack of progress as a state toward improving student academic achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, this bill raises a serious question about whether schools should be spending time on other things rather than having students learn and practice cursive writing and what those things are. If nothing else, this bill should force you to ask the question: what should schools emphasize in 2021 and beyond?

For the above reasons, the WASB opposes Senate Bill 431.



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: John Forester, Executive Director
DATE: September 16, 2021
RE: Opposition to Senate Bill 431

Chairperson Darling and members of the Senate Committee on Education, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important legislation. My name is John Forester. I'm the Executive Director of the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA). In that capacity, I represent the combined memberships of five professional associations of public school administrators: the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA), the Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators (WASPA), and the Wisconsin Council for Administrators of Special Services (WCASS). The SAA also represents the 10,000 members of the Wisconsin Retired Educators Association (WREA).

The SAA, and WREA, opposes Senate Bill 431, relating to incorporating cursive writing into the state model English language arts standards and requiring cursive writing in the elementary grades.

SB 431 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts. It also requires a school board, independent charter school, and private school participating in a parental choice program to include cursive writing in its curriculum for the elementary grades. Finally, the bill requires that each elementary school curriculum must include the objective that pupils be able to write legibly in cursive by the end of fifth grade.

In anticipation of this hearing, I sought input on SB 431 from a cross-section of SAA members, primarily school superintendents and directors of curriculum and instruction. I'd like to share with you some of their thoughts on the bill.

First of all, we believe there is value in teaching cursive. Many of the SAA members I consulted with shared that their district continues to provide instruction in cursive. Some provide only minimal instruction in cursive. A few shared that they do not require instruction in cursive. But the members I consulted shared that, over the past several years, their districts have had discussions about prioritizing district instructional needs that considered the future of cursive instruction in the district.

Part of the issue comes down to limited available instructional time. It's also critically important to consider what's most relevant for students in this digital age. Communication and writing take place more commonly now with computers and other electronic devices. Districts also needed to strengthen student proficiency in keyboarding to take online state assessments. In many districts parent and community expectations have also moved districts to prioritize technology instruction at the elementary level.

Our educators in Wisconsin face some enormous challenges in meeting the objectives we have for K-12 education. In a nutshell, I would characterize these primary objectives as follows:

- To improve student achievement for all students.
- To close those stubborn achievement gaps.
- To make sure all Wisconsin students graduate college and career ready.

We currently have lots of statutory requirements directed at schools, some that help schools to achieve these objectives and some that don't. Every legislative session we see several bills that would create new instructional mandates. And we all know that there are scores of interest groups that believe that schools should be providing children with instruction in many new subject areas in order to meet laudable public policy goals. In short, these proposals, if adopted, would lead school districts to take time, money and focus away from their primary objectives.

Chairperson Darling, you know that I have great respect for the work of this committee and the challenges you face. I see this committee as the gatekeeper in the Senate for education policy. As such, I would just pose three questions for the committee as you consider this legislation.

- First, how will this bill help school districts to meet our education policy objectives?
- Given the very big challenges that we face and the important objectives we are working hard to achieve, "How would you like us to use the precious minutes we have in the limited number of instructional days in each school year?"
- Finally, "Who should be charged with the responsibility of determining the curricular priorities that best meet the unique needs of students in each of the 421 school districts – state policymakers or local teachers, administrators and school boards?"

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you should have any questions regarding our position on SB 431, please call me at 608-242-1370.

Dear Senator Darling,

I am writing in regard to SB431 which supports cursive writing in Wisconsin Schools. Please use my email as written testimony at the public hearing.

The General Federation of Women's Clubs – Wisconsin (GFWC-WI) has been pushing for the support of cursive writing for several years. In 2019 we passed a Resolution in support of cursive writing in our Wisconsin Schools. The total membership of GFWC-WI is over 1,400 women in our State of Wisconsin.

We have recently learned that 21 states have passed new bills requiring cursive writing, and several states have pending legislation. Wisconsin needs to support this important life long skill for our children's future to expedite note taking, journal writing, letter writing, and most important, signing their own name on legal documents in cursive.

There is a long list of benefits to learning and using cursive writing, including being able to read our United States historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence, Proclamations, hand written letters from Civil War soldiers, meeting minutes from women's organizations, and much more.

We thank you for your support of SB431 and urge you to vote YES to bring cursive writing back to the classroom in our great State of Wisconsin.

In Federation,

Abby Lorenz
GFWC-WI State President
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From: Rstwitkowski <rstwitkowski@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2021 6:41 PM
To: Sen.Darling <Sen.Darling@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: Cursive Writing Bill/SB431

I strongly support the bill reintroducing cursive writing in our schools and I urge you to vote in favor of it. Our students need to be able to read cursive documents and write in cursive if only to sign official legal forms. Cursive writing, in addition, personalizes the messages in social documents, cards, and friendly letters. It's a skill that enhances personal communication and can strengthen social relationships. It is a skill well worth preserving.

Susan Witkowski
Milwaukee, WI

Wisconsin Handwriting Legislation Testimonials

Sept. 13, 2021

To the members of the Wisconsin Senate Education Committee:

My name is Amy Siracusano, and I worked in public education as a teacher, learning and literacy specialist, vice principal, and adjunct professor for 23 years before becoming an independent literacy consultant. I'm now a trainer, teacher, and board member for several reading and literacy organizations, including The Reading League and the Barksdale Reading Institute.

As someone who has been involved for many years with educators, parents, and researchers in the development of educational materials for elementary school students, I have seen firsthand how children benefit from writing by hand in both print and cursive. Very simply put, the process of writing letters and words by hand—in both print and cursive—plays a vital role in learning to read, write and spell.

That's why I'm here today to express my support for Senate Bill 431, which would incorporate cursive writing into Wisconsin's model English language arts standards and require cursive writing instruction in elementary schools.

Many research studies over the past 20 years have repeatedly shown that handwriting is a foundational skill necessary for the development of students' reading skills not to mention their writing, language use and critical thinking abilities. Other studies have shown that handwriting develops cognitive skills such as thinking, reasoning, and remembering as well as fine motor skills that are necessary for daily tasks like tying shoes, using scissors, and buttoning coats.

Cursive writing has its own special benefits. Research confirms that it helps with fluency, spelling and composition. It bolsters the speed and ease at which students write, leaving more brain function for higher-level needs such as planning, content development, sentence construction, and critical thinking. And it has been shown to help children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and other oral and written language disabilities.

Cursive writing enables students to write with more efficiency than manuscript (print) which in turn allows students to get their thoughts onto paper with more ease freeing up cognitive desk space for extended writing pieces. Cursive writing assists with students who continue to reverse letters (e.g., b, d) in manuscript writing, and it is a critical skill in being able to read historical documents in middle and high school.

I strongly believe that cursive writing is an important tool in the educational toolbox that can help our children build a strong foundation for academic success. Don't we owe it to our kids to give them every possible chance to succeed in school?

I'm not suggesting we ignore the realities of our digital world. Children also need keyboarding instruction, but it's not an either-or proposition. There is value to learning both. Students must have solid transcription skills—including handwriting, spelling, and keyboarding—to become proficient writers (see research by Virginia Berninger, et. al., *The Simple View of Writing*). That's why so many states are re-introducing handwriting—including cursive—into their education standards and core curriculums. Texas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Virginia and North Carolina are among the 21 states that have enacted laws in the past few years requiring public schools to teach cursive handwriting to their students.

I hope you will consider joining these states in bringing cursive back to the classroom.

Amy Siracusano, MS Ed.
National Literacy Expert and Consultant
amysiracusano@gmail.com

Misconceptions and Facts about Handwriting

Misconception: There are no benefits to *learning* handwriting.

Facts

- Handwriting is a foundational skill necessary for the development of students' reading, writing, language use and critical thinking abilities. The process of writing letters and words by hand (both printing and cursive) plays a vital role in learning to spell, read and write.
- Handwriting is a core component of literacy. Solid familiarity with the visual shapes of individual letters is an absolute prerequisite for learning to read, and letter formation helps with letter recognition.
- Direct handwriting instruction, both printing and cursive, helps improve cognitive development, hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills, none of which is gained through typing on a keyboard.

Research excerpt: Letter formation is a key component in reading and writing skills: independently writing by hand helps students learn and memorize letters much more efficiently than does simply tracing, copying or typing them. (Longcamp, Zerbato-Poudou, & Velay, 2005).

Misconception: There are no benefits to *using* handwriting.

Facts

- Elementary school students write most assignments and tests by hand (print and cursive), and **research** shows students produce 80 percent of their work in school by hand. (Graham)
- In most elementary schools, students rarely use word processing software for writing, and not all schools have enough computers or laptops available.
- Some studies have shown that handwriting produces better results than typing words on a keyboard. Elementary age students who wrote compositions by hand, for example, wrote faster, wrote longer pieces and expressed more ideas than students who typed.

Research excerpt: Fluency in handwriting is strongly related to the quality and quantity of students' written texts as late as eighth grade. (Christensen and Jones, 2013)

Misconception: There are no benefits to learning or *using* cursive handwriting, which is an outdated form of communication.

**Facts**

- Research indicates that cursive writing helps students take lecture notes faster and retain more information than using a laptop.
- The act of writing by hand helps students (and adults) retain information more effectively than when keyboarding, most likely because handwriting involves more complex motor functions.
- For developmentally typical students in grades 4 through 7, fluent cursive writing consistently predicted both higher level spelling and composing skills at each grade.
- Students who don't learn cursive are often challenged with signing their names on important documents and reading materials written in cursive.

Research excerpt: Handwriting fluency strongly predicts students' ability to produce more complex written text. (Christensen & Jones, 2013)

Misconception: Cursive writing instruction is viewed negatively by teachers and the public.**Facts**

- Cursive handwriting enjoys overwhelming and broad parent and public support. Public opinion polls consistently show that 70 to 75 percent of the public support a requirement to teach cursive.
- Teachers, physical therapists and occupational therapists enthusiastically support cursive handwriting.
- Many college professors will not allow students to use laptops during lectures because they become distractions to learning.

Research excerpt:

Misconception: Teaching handwriting takes too much time and encroaches on a teacher's time to teach other subjects.**Facts**

- Experts recommend that students need a minimum of 10 to 15 minutes throughout the day of explicit instruction.
- Teachers can incorporate handwriting instruction into other classroom subjects such as reading, spelling, social studies and science.
- Handwriting can also be taught as students write word problems for mathematics, prepare books reports and work in other language arts areas.

Misconception: States would be out of line to require cursive writing.**Facts**

- 28 other states require the teaching of cursive writing.



- Many other states are considering similar legislation requiring local school districts to teach this important academic skill, which is fast becoming a national trend.
- Asking schools to teach cursive handwriting is similar to asking them to teach basic mathematical skills. Both are foundations for higher level learning.

Misconception: Handwriting instruction does not need to be mandated through legislation. It is enough to include it in the state standards.

Facts

- Many states direct educational curriculum through state law, not by the school board of education policy. Some state laws do not currently address handwriting instruction.
- For some states, school districts have taken different approaches to teaching handwriting. Some provide explicit instruction for handwriting and many do not. A state-mandated requirement may be critical to ensure all students across the state are able to write and read cursive.

Misconception: Students don't use handwriting on standardized tests.

Facts

- The essay portions of the SAT and ACT college entrance exams are still written by hand.
- Essays with sloppy or illegible handwriting may receive lower scores simply because they are difficult to read.

Research Excerpt:

There is a reader effect that is insidious. People judge the quality of your ideas based on your handwriting. (Graham 2015)

Misconception: Handwriting instruction is not beneficial for all learners, including ELL and special needs students.

Facts

- Handwriting instruction can be valuable to all learners, helping improve academic outcomes.
- Handwriting instruction for ELL students teaches students to recognize and name upper- and lower-case letters, allowing them to begin associating letters with the sounds they make.
- Print instruction teaches ELL students the foundational concepts of print, i.e., printed letters and words run from left to right and from top to bottom.
- Learning cursive has been shown to support students with dysgraphia or dyslexia because they have to lift their pens/pencils fewer times when forming letters.

I strongly support the bill reintroducing cursive writing in our schools and I urge you to vote in favor of it. Our students need to be able to read cursive documents and write in cursive if only to sign official legal forms. Cursive writing, in addition, personalizes the messages in social documents, cards, and friendly letters. It's a skill that enhances personal communication and can strengthen social relationships. It is a skill well worth preserving.

Susan Witkowski
Milwaukee, WI

September 14, 2021

Dear committee members,

I am a member of the school board for the School District of Sheboygan Falls, parent of an eight and fifth grader in the district, and a taxpayer. From all three perspectives, it would be valuable to compare detailed financials of our district to those of others. How do our base salaries, retirement contributions, and other benefits compare? How does our educational efficiency—our average ACT score per dollar invested—stack up with our peers? Comparing our district with others would show us where to look locally for improvement and where to look to across the state for best practices.

Currently, there is no practical system for this kind of comparison. The School Financial Services of the DPI website has pages on dozens of topics. With enough patience, you can find a few scattered pages with cost information. There is a spreadsheet that compares per-student costs of all districts, but only for the very high level categories of education, transportation, facility, and food service. There is also a portal with costs broken down by more detailed accounting categories, but each report is separate PDF for each district, with no way to rank districts by cost per student in a given category.

Investing in the DPI website will quickly pay for itself. Schools already provide uniform financial reporting to the DPI. Improving categorization and making the compilation user friendly will save leaders across the state countless hours in their data analysis. Additionally, better accessibility will help engage local residents throughout the state in their districts and spur healthy, competitive interest well-run schools.

Thank you for your consideration.

Edward Brey

337 River Oaks Dr

Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

920-912-2852

Good afternoon:

Regarding the Cursive Writing Bill, I am writing to you today in both my capacity as a District Administrator and as a father of school aged children. I believe that this personal experience has shaped my view of cursive writing as an administrator. In my capacity as an administrator I tend to fall in the conservative camp with regard to my approach to curriculum...I am a basics guy: reading, writing, arithmetic. I am not into the latest most fashionable education trends, CRT doesn't have a place in my thought process and doesn't belong in school. Each year we tend to water the system down further and further with more and more mandates. I taught civics years ago, my job was to teach about the Constitution, the 3 branches of government, the separation of powers, and the Bill of Rights. While we might discuss politics, it was not for me to bring my personal views into the conversation...each person needs to be taught how to think critically and come up with their own conclusions.

While I believe that cursive writing does have a place in schools, I do not believe it should be mandated by the state. Let local districts make that decision. At this time, I have only one elementary teacher really proficient in teaching cursive writing. If this is mandated, does that mean I now have to send some of my folks back for more training and who will cover that expense? Is this something the state will pay for as it would be a state mandate? Is there a prescribed curriculum that will have to be followed or standards? Again, who will pay for the costs of this implementation?

This brings me to my personal experience. My 14 year old daughter has an absolute eye for art and is very fond of things such as learning how to do cursive writing. She was exposed to cursive writing in 2nd and 3rd grade and did well with this experience. On the other hand, my 17 year old son hated it and outright refused. This in his mind was a torturous experience. He happens to be ambidextrous and as a result struggled to pick which hand he would write with or throw with or shoot a bow. He struggled with printing and so cursive was not in his cards. We moved the summer that he was entering 3rd grade and his previous school had not mandated cursive. The new school did, but after just a couple of weeks of trying and seeing the absolute struggle he had, the teacher simply had him doing other work and excused him from cursive. By the way, he is an avid reader, great with social studies, ok with English and Math.

I am opposed to a state mandate and think that this is a waste of time and resources. I am not opposed to schools offering and exposing students to cursive if that is what the local school board desires. Additionally, our schools are have several very real and complicated challenges to address in the near future and focusing on cursive writing as a new requirement simply does not make sense when we are experiencing severe shortages of staff, when we are trying to address the significant learning loss and simply trying to navigate the politics of the pandemic. With all of this disruption to education, why would we add more to the plates of the schools...we have to focus quickly on the basics, not further unfunded mandates.

Those are my two cents. Please note this is an email and not hand-written. I too had cursive writing in school and while I did not find it torturous, to this day you would neither want to try to decipher my printing or cursive, so typing it is for me.

--

Kyle Cronan
Port Edwards School District Administrator
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HOME OF THE BLACKHAWKS

Dear Senator Darling,

I understand SB431 bill is due to be reviewed this week at the committee level. Unfortunately I cannot attend to testify which I did two years ago in support of the Cursive Writing requirement statewide.

I am a member of General Federation of Women's Clubs International through my local Brown Deer Junior Woman's Club. Our research has found that at least 21 states have passed new bills requiring cursive writing and there are several states with pending legislation. Surprisingly New York City with 1.1 million students is also requiring students to learn cursive in the third grade.

I have been mentioning our journey to everyone I meet – and their faces light up and they say “Thank goodness you are doing something about it”. But in the interest of fairness, “Why bother?”.

Why bother, indeed! We are bothering because our children are missing a valuable tool in their life's work. Professional researchers have found that handwritten notes are important because we are synthesizing the information as we are writing it. Linking letters together into word units also helps a student learn to spell words. And often cursive is faster than printing so a student's hand can keep up with their thoughts.

Based on our research, these are the reasons we recommend passage of the bill so our Wisconsin students have the opportunity to write in cursive:

1. Cursive gets the entire brain working
2. Cursive may help improve motor control
3. Cursive helps you retain more information
4. Cursive makes you a better speller
5. Cursive helps you focus on content
6. Cursive helps students with dyslexia
7. Cursive gives the student a legal signature
8. And last, but not least, it allows kids to read hand written letters!

I have spoken to a number of people about this topic. An 11 year old student who attends a private Montessori school in Milwaukee knows cursive, but students in the Brown Deer School System are not taught and haven't for at least 15 years. A grandmother lamented that her adult daughter had to recently teach her son cursive in order to complete a homework assignment. My sister-in-law, who happens to be an elementary school teacher in the Kenosha Unified School District, states: “Some teachers like me do teach cursive, but most don't. It is not built into our curriculum. Definitely teach it. People need to know how to read it.”

I believe we need a consistent implementation throughout the state. Therefore, I along with our members recommend passage of Bill SB431 so that when these students are 18 years of age, they can sign your nomination papers properly.

Thank you for your attention.

Erin Epping
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