

Dear Parents/LC's,

I wanted to give a couple tips on using the Handwriting Without Tears (HWT) and Cursive series. This is a great curriculum for teaching handwriting and cursive. It is not published by K12 and that is why on your OLS there is really not a whole lot of direction other than "spend 10 minutes working on handwriting" -- in fact, if I remember correctly your OLS instructions actually tell you to get through as many pages in 10 minutes as you can. I don't exactly like that statement, to me it sounds like "rush through as much as you can...It's the number of pages you can get through that counts!" No, no, no -- the whole point behind this series is for the student to take their time and use proper grasp and strokes. So, next time you read that, think to yourself "have your child work for 10 minutes on handwriting, encourage your student to use the proper strokes (starting points and segment direction), pencil grasp and posture. The HWT series is very teacher led direct instruction. Especially during the beginning of the year when students are just learning the proper formations. :)

K. So I mentioned above, that this is a great curriculum -- it really is! If I were in a classroom, teaching K-3rd grade I would totally be using this series! In fact, I cringed when my own children came home from school with print/cursive worksheet pages that started with Aa, then Bb, then Cc, and so forth. I ended up purchasing this series on my own and having them practice handwriting/cursive with me! The series has been developed so that students learn to write letters based on stroke patterns.

As much as I love the program, I must say the Teacher's Guide (TG) had me a bit puzzled at first. I had to read it, read it again and then one more time just to try and get a grip on what the heck I was supposed to be doing. So, here is a very basic highlight of what I think you may find helpful:

First of all, the TG will refer to a lot of extra manipulatives and pieces that you can purchase to go along with the curriculum. This is not required and you will have success without the extras. I did purchase the Rock, Rap, Tap and Learn CD and loved it. Other items I just made myself, like I already had a student chalk board at home, so I just drew a smiley face in the top left hand corner to mark the starting point. For the beginner paper, where it's outlined as a box for the student to create the letter inside of - then they have a little dot for the starting point -- I just drew my own on a white piece of paper then made a bunch of copies. I noticed this year, that K12 actually has a link for more writing paper for the upper levels, so that's great. If you want to purchase extra stuff from HWT, you can go to their website www.hwtears.com or, you might try youtube for some of the songs.

Now what: In the back of the TG on the very last page, you will find an outline of the letters and numbers you are teaching. It will show you the proper stroke pattern for each letter. Make a copy (or two) of this page for YOUR reference. You can have your child use it too, later in the year when they have learned each letter and need a quick reminder.

Also towards the back you will see a Teaching Guidelines Chart. This is formatted for you and will give you a great layout for what to do each week/day. I highly recommend using this chart as an outline to direct your handwriting lesson. It will have you teach lessons based on activities from your TG as well as pages to complete in the Student Book (CH- Cursive Handwriting LN - Letters Numbers and so forth). Sometimes, especially during the first week or two, it will only have activities outlined in the TG -- you can be creative to pick a game or activity that you can make the tools for if it is referring to a manipulative you do not have.

Finally, get to know the terminology and use it when directing your student. In the younger years, when students are just learning print, you will notice that they use Big Line, Little Line, Big Curve, Little Curve when they talk about how letters are made. You will also hear Starting Corner or Starting Point and Frog Jump Letter etc. Another important term that will be used throughout the years has to do with Magic c -- you will learn a little chant about what letters begin with Magic c. This will be used in print as well as in cursive. Look through the beginning of your TG for more information on terminology. You should know

what terms like "Magic c, up like a helicopter, up higher, slide down, bump and travel away refer to and when you are directing your child you will want to use these terms consistently.

So, make a copy of the last page showing the letters, use the Teaching Guidelines Chart at the back of the TG and use the terminology outlined in the book. If you work on following those 3 steps, I am confident you will see success!

Learning handwriting and learning cursive is HARD! It is not something that a child can just be expected to do automatically. Think about how difficult it may be for you to write a note or letter using your non-dominant hand...And, you have been working those skills way longer than your child has (even using your weaker hand). By helping your child strengthen their handwriting skills you are helping them in so many ways. Think of the paragraphs and papers they will be writing in years to come - let's allow your student to spend their time thinking of the great words and descriptions they want to portray in their writing, not how to form the letters correctly. Plus, you do want to be able to *read* them...right?... :)

Thanks you guys for the opportunity to help you and your child have a successful school year. I am excited to support you! Please let me know of any questions, comments or concerns. I am always happy to help!