

#7 Subject: Cursive Writing; Its Story; Its Problem-Causing Aspects; Its Failure to Facilitate English Proficiency



Dear Jessica,

As you requested, here is an objective (as well as spiritual, since all of life is first spiritual) discussion of "cursive writing." I believe as I write that the Spirit of Truth will prevail, strengthening me to speak honestly. Our program, by the grace of God, follows what is verifiable, not what is popular, sentimental, or misleading; we dear parents have precious children to teach and disdain following false teachers and self-proclaimed critics, even if one is dear Grandma, though they and we love her intensely. So, I will speak frankly.

I mention here that, as you know, often times **a child, especially an adult child, is positioned to share insight with his parents ... I am in this position ...** but this does not diminish parenthood; in fact children's input into parents' spiritual insight, an ongoing phenomenon, elevates parenthood. A godly parent praises God for the "update," knowing he, all along, has been made party to his child's spiritual well-being; together they worship God because of His impartial grace and truth, including hitherto-unknown-to-them truth (and here I am referring to truth about "cursive writing") which now they may walk in alongside each other. Knowing that God's Spirit through the Word is the One Who leads both parents and children into all Truth; we trust HIM to teach us.

Consider these Scriptures that, among many, have humbled as well as strengthened me as I by the Spirit have obeyed truth (I'm not saying that I'm always an eager beaver to obey truth, but eventually, by the Spirit's sweet meddling in my heart, I do).

"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another." (Ephesians 4:25 [The Spirit's CAPITALIZED WORDS are from Zechariah 8:16])

"Do nothing according to contentiousness or empty conceit, but with humility of soul regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. [For even Christ did not please Himself ...] Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." (Philippians. 2:3-4; 4:5; Rom. 15:3a) New American Standard Bible

We have been positioned to tell you the truth and you are in the same position toward us. As you have come to know us, you recognize that by the strength of God's grace, we are straight shooters about our instructional choices. Many, by prayer and advice and insistence, have assisted us on this godly path. Such a person you are.

The Modern Art Form Called "Cursive Writing": Opinions and Evidences

Note that "cursive writing" is correctly explained as a transition form of "calligraphy": but calligraphy maintains separate symbols; cursive writing does not.

"All penmanship up to the time of modern cursive writing instruction was a study of separated symbols." Concerning the **modern art form called "cursive writing,"** our program provides a study of a simple style of it. It accompanies Part Three and is in its own envelope with instructions to "teach this as art during art instruction, if you wish, and for fun, but keep it out of official English instruction," since the study of it does not promote literacy. **Our Language Arts script continues to teach students' TEAMS to process print, the thing they are required to process now – while they are in guided study – but also will process throughout self-study, since printed material is not written in any of the modern "cursive" styles.** You may have to read this last sentence again. Sometimes I connect several related ideas and my sentences get longer and longer. (:>)

The reasons we do not consider "cursive writing" instruction vital to language arts proficiency is due to the **absence of objective and empirical evidence** supporting oft heard, and mostly made up, personally held, off-hand sentiments "proclaiming": Cursive writing ...

- 1) ... helps students write faster.
- 2) ... makes language arts acquisition easier.
- 3) ... is needed to enable children to read something someone else writes in cursive and to respond in the same mode.
- 4) ... was learned by Grandma; she was *good* in school, so her grandchildren also should learn it in order to be *good* in school.

We have not found one objective or scriptural argument supporting these opinions. Please join with us in continuing an "honest-to-God" inquiry into these matters so we by the Spirit will not seek to have our own way but His.

We also include in our reasoning the **presence of objective and empirical evidence** showing ...

- 1) ... writing in cursive patterns a child's neurology opposite of manuscript writing, therefore away from kinesthetically patterned proficiencies, proficiencies that facilitate (for all students) visual as well as manual processing and production of the flow of print, a flow found in all printed English material, proficiencies essential to all English literacy tasks. (Jessica, You may have to read this again, too. Sorry.)
- 2) ... some feel nauseous or develop an upset stomach from the *neurologically generated back and forth swaying effects* of cursive writing's kinesthetic stimulation.
- 3) ... anyone attempting to read another's "cursive writing" needs a heaping helping of good luck, and a reader's *personal cursive writing style* does not guarantee he is equipped to read another's cursive writing.
- 4) ... "cursive writing" ability helps some write faster but causes others to write slower, but neither *faster writing* nor *slower writing*, whether manuscript writing or cursive writing, is shown to be decisive in helping beginning learners attain penmanship's two-fold goal of "accuracy and legibility." What is shown to be decisive is "*the manner of (method of) penmanship instruction given*" and "*the reason for penmanship instruction (why and what the student is writing).*"
- 5) ... acquiring ability in "cursive writing" has shown no advantages toward improving or facilitating proficiency in English's oral/written language partnership ... in making a student a *good* student.

- 6) ... "cursive writing" disrupts acquisition of spelling, writing and reading proficiencies by removing from beginning instruction **a study of each phonogram's separate and unique distinguishing sound/symbol features which cannot show themselves as separate entities in "connected writing"** ... which is, I believe, the greatest failure of all.

We have confirmed objective and empirical evidence supporting these facts.

But, we are not left to "mere science," since the Spirit of Truth *guides us to STOP* what does not produce God's three-fold goal of instruction (I Tim: 1:5), and He also *guides us after we STOP*; the Spirit supplies all our needs just as He promises. All that remains is for us to "walk in step with the Spirit." There is no reproach in this as the sweet, gentle, all-loving Spirit works in our spirits. Praise His Name.

The Story of "Writing Styles"

NOTE: A numbered Bibliography is at the end of this e-mail. Some references are "click and look" e-mail links, and some are sites that may be accessed via your local librarian. You easily might have more internet savvy than I and may be able to bypass your librarian!

Throughout the next paragraphs, references are shown as [1], [2], etc.

"Historians soon learn not to assume that people in the past thought about and experienced [basic writing] in the same ways we do today." [2]

How did they think about and experience "basic writing" differently? How the same? I'll investigate one *liberating difference* and one *inflictive similarity*. I hope you enjoy these findings. First, let's go back before the 18th Century and look at the **history of print styles**. The story of English writing emerges in 780 when Charlemagne decreed the **Carolingian miniscule** be used in all church books. What was "miniscule?" It was a **mixture of black letter and roman typefaces**. **Black letter** was a *widely separated*, elegant (beautiful enough to be used for sacred text) writing style used by earliest monks. It used up much paper and consumed much time. **Roman style** was less elegant, though still fancy, and symbols were written much closer together, though *still separated*. Carolingian miniscule became the dominant handwriting of western Europe.

As time progressed, **an evolution of black letter/roman typefaces occurred within scribal styles**. "The impetus to change was both practical and economic: because scribes needed to write quickly and to save parchment or paper, they began to use a condensed 'frankly hurried version of the miniscule'." The "transition from the extravagantly spacious Carolingian miniscule to the efficiently bold and condensed type of script occupied four hundred years." **Roman type subsequently prevailed**. Miniscule retained a foothold in religious and legal settings, titles and headings, writings considered "high culture" as well as the *ballad*; miniscule seemed to give the ballad's text legitimacy and authority. [7]

William Tyndale's New Testament, the first English language translation of the New Testament, was printed in **roman**. [3,4] The first authorized King James Version was printed in **black letter**, but in 1611 it also was printed in **roman**. [5,6]

Click on or locate referenced internet links at the end of this letter and look at these roman style publications from the late 1600s and throughout the 1700s. I also have hard copies I can send you of the *First Folio, First Page, Shakespeare's King Henry the 4th*. European newspapers and news books in Paris (1635) and London (1659, 1667) adopted the **roman** style. [8, 9, 10, 13, 14] Printed in Boston, America's first newspaper, **Publick Occurrences** (which printed only one issue in 1690), followed suite [11], as did America's second newspaper, **The**

Bofton News-Letter (which existed for 72 years), printed in 1704 [12], **The New-York Weekly JOURNAL** (1773) [15], **Massachusetts Centinel** (1790) [16], **The Bofton Gazette and Country Journal** (1776) [17], and Ben Franklin's **Pennsylvania Gazette** (1750) [18]. Thomas Paine's **Common Sense** typifies the "look" of first time published manuscripts available to Americans at this time [19, 20].

Look at "**publicly-taught writing styles**" from the 1500s and 1600s and subsequent **personalizations**.

- 1) Good breeding and previous public education were factors public instruction considered when deciding which males would be taught to write and read (public instruction at this time meant all instruction not given at home) [2-page two of these six-pages].
- 2) You'll read that in the 1700s "... it was thought that women especially, did not need (out-of-home training) to express their own thoughts as much as they needed to be able to read the Christian Word." **Jessica, isn't this interesting? Colonists believed women, the ones administering home education, should be able to read the Christian Word! How lofty are God's ways!**
- 3) Look at the will of Thomas Mighill in MA (1654) [22], a handwritten Minuteman Pay Voucher to the Treasurer of the Colony of Connecticut (1775) [22], Early English Handwriting examples (1547, 1550, 1563, 1578, 1604, 1606, 1612) [23-five pages], Colonial Handwriting Samples [1], signatures on the **Declaration of Independence** (you probably have a copy), and **How to Read 18th Century British-American Writing** [2-six paged].

Two interesting facts are:

- 1) **Penmanship instruction (in the public sector) consisted of copying different "hands," or different calligraphic styles** (an *inflective similarity*).
- 2) **Different "hands" were considered proper and appropriate according to style, class, gender, occupation, ancestral homeland, and community.**

Characteristics of 18th and most of 19th century personal handwriting that made reading it difficult were:

- a) **Spelling was not standardized.**
- b) **Phonetic spelling was in use, but since spelling was not standardized, spellings of words differed, sometimes dramatically, because colonists had more than one phonogram available to spell a sound. The authors of internet article [23] state they have found 93 spelling variations for the name, Tylcoat, differences arising from speaking differences accompanied by well-known phonetic spelling choices** [23-page five of these five-pages].
- c) **Public instruction used the "copy" method of instruction, the same method used by public, private and most of home education today ... achieving the same "frankly hurried" illegible results** [2-pages three and four of these six-pages].

- d) **"Skill with handwriting" was not "standardly demonstrated,"** even among those for whom a "proper and appropriate" style was chosen and taught. Indeed, it could not be demonstrated due to the "copy" method of instruction, since copying relies on visual memory and not all possessed it to the same degree. Therefore, citizens resorted to *innovation* and *individualization*, the same as they do, today.

History 1: By 1850, the printing industry was settling in on one spelling per word (printers generally agreed on one *phonetic spelling* per word when a sound could be spelled more than one way): **choices were not made from a Phonics "how long is this word" and "how can we shorten it" perspective but from a phonetic perspective (a phonogram perspective):** They reasoned, "Which *phonogram* shall we use to spell sound 'o(o pen)' in **bu f a lo**? We have three phonograms: o, oe, ough." (a *liberating similarity*). Typesetting was a tedious process of selecting and arranging individual letters, letter by letter, so printers chose *proper phonograms* that shortened words but retained their *historically-based linguistic integrity*: *printers knew and preserved official English phonetics* [See the www.madsenmethod.com website **Bibliography** and study the book, *American English* by **H. L. Mencken**, an encompassing study of American English at this time. Ask for the 1941 edition, which is the most comprehensive].

History 2: Spelling choices historically have been governed by official English language constructs called **phonograms** (or **phonemes**) in spite of reoccurrences of advocates for invented spelling who ignore English's historically based linguistic features [**Mencken**]. For example, some would omit final e from words: **name** would "look like" **nam**, **love** like **lov**, **dense** like **dens**, etc. Here's a short phonetic spelling lesson: "official phonetic tools" tell the student, as he speaks a word for spelling, he needs final e to require a to say "**sound a**(ta ble)" in **name**; also, since English words do not end with v, he needs final e to spell **love**; he needs final e to show the word **dense** is not a plural form of Base Word "dens." Though not spoken as they once were, **final e's still fulfill the same nine historical literate phonetic purposes.**

When "official phonetic tools" (tools that assist *literate speaking and spelling*) are removed from beginning English language instruction, students are saddled with the requirement to "visually memorize" words and are denied access to "knowledge that saves." Students who do not possess natural visual memory ability need not apply for instruction!

"Phonics" instruction removes "phonetic tools" from English language instruction by not explicitly teaching them, but *pretends instruction* by presenting "visual images" containing "tools at work" which require instruction in order to attain understanding, but the dear child is merely asked to memorize meaningless arrangements of symbols.

We still suffer from invented spelling's ignorance. Notice how dictionaries give **judgment** as the preferred spelling but list **judgement** as an acceptable alternate spelling, **another example of ignorance of final e's nine historical literate phonetic purposes.** **Question: Why may the literate English student not drop e from phonogram dge in "judgement?"** You and I know, but *advocates for invented spelling do not even understand the question.* "What is a phonogram," they ask. They do not know (have not been taught) English phonetics, yet they wish to tamper with the language! **I re-emphasize the critical point: if final e is removed from words, as invented spelling envisions, nine tools for literate spelling also will be removed.**

Then when students study invented spelling, their speaking, spelling, writing, and reading success will be relegated to this consideration: "**Which of you was born with a good visual memory?**" What crafty Enemy is at work here? Is it not he who seeks to devour, rob, kill, and destroy God's created ones ... he and his children?

History 3: How can we solve the problems of "illegible handwriting" as well as "spelling variations?"

A change in the "method of instruction" would solve the "illegibility" issue. The printing industry already solved the "spelling variations" issue.

History 4: When did **print**, as a form of personal handwriting, originate?

From the first. "**Printing**" **issued from the church**. English has always been *printed*; "**printing**" means each symbol is separated from the others.

History 5: When did "**Cursive Writing**" (connected writing), as a form of personal handwriting, appear?

Also from the first as individuals adapted the art of calligraphy, just as you and I adapt our personal penmanship regardless of how we were taught. The "**art of calligraphy**" **issued from the church**. You have noticed handwriting examples cited in this review reveal "**frankly hurried combinations of randomly separated along with randomly connected symbol combinations**". This was the result of **experimentation and individualization** (we use the correct meaning of individualization: "individualization" is what the *student* devises and not what the teacher devises).

Modern "Cursive Writing" instruction is intentional instruction to connect symbol combinations. Modern "Cursive Writing" instruction has in mind to teach students to connect all symbols in each word. This "intention" is new in the history of penmanship instruction.

History 6: Did the **public method of penmanship instruction** ever change from the look and copy and remember method of instruction?

No, it remains the same to this day and produces the same results (the *inflicting similarity*).

The Instructional Norm Was to Learn One Style of Penmanship; Teaching Two Styles of Penmanship Is New; Citizens Began Teaching a New Style of Print.

History 7: **The instructional norm (public and at home), from the 14th through the 18th century, was to learn one style of writing (the *liberating similarity*)**. Public writing styles were determined by factors already discussed. **Evidence favors that the forefathers believed they should teach the child to write in the style of print he was to read**. The widely taught "in-home" style was the **roman style found in Bibles**.

History 8: **As publishers edged toward a simpler ball and stick separated type style (because it was easier to carve from wood and to prepare molds for lead typeset), citizens moved toward teaching printers' chosen styles**. It just naturally occurred.

Sometime during the last half of the 1800s, the idea of teaching two styles of penmanship, cursive and printing, evolved. The concept envisioned teaching (by the "copy" method) a "common style of connected writing," one that was an "**innovation of the roman style**," and another style called "**print**," named after publishers' terminology, which was like type set's *individually separated letters*. **The idea of teaching two styles of handwriting was new in the history of penmanship. The idea of teaching print that matched that in available reading material was old, very old.**

Public Education Teaches Both Styles by the Copy Method

History 9: We know that children, turned over to public education at that time, were taught handwriting via the **copy method**, and we know the results. Sadly we have duplicated them. **We reason that non-public colonial education did not use the "copy" method of instruction, or they would have experienced the same illiterate results evidenced then as well as today.** But in-home education (since education was largely administered at home and since most colonists during our nation's "literacy heyday" could not afford public education) produced a nation of literate citizens of whom France and England were jealous, and said so, wondering that "the farmer, merchant and banker communicate [can speak, spell, write and read English] on the same level." **This is proof non-public colonial education taught differently than public education [Mencken].**

Obvious to us is this: Modern Home Educators must make a change in method of instruction if they wish to achieve results different from Public Education's Evolutionary Phonics Method. Hallelujah! 😊

Sherry, the one who edits our posted writings, injected the "Hallelujah" comment. I left it intact. It testifies to what many hearts have learned. I remember when I first learned it!

Here is a further note about Sherry: As you know, on the *Teacher's Report Card [TRC]* you are asked to check whether you are a new teacher or an experienced teacher. Sherry said, "Sharon, on my next *TRC* I will not check "experienced." I am a "new" teacher! This way of teaching is making me a teacher. I am teaching my son!"

Simultaneous Multi-Sensory Explicit Instruction vs. the Copy Method

History 10: Question: Where did phrases like **recite as you write, spelling is first, speaking leads the way to learning, measuring spoken and written syllables** originate? They did not originate nor were they preserved in the public sector; no supporting evidence has been found to oppose this reasoned statement. Another question: How is it that colonial parents used **simultaneous multi-sensory explicit instruction** (what Madsen Method calls the **four-member neurological TEAM method of instruction**) before "scientific educators" and "neuro-surgeons" *discovered and named* it? More questions: 1. Could it be that the Teacher, the One who guides His children into all truth, guided them and guides us, too! 2. Could we turn, as they did ... yes, they did ... from evolutionary educational philosophies to the Living Word? 3. Can we duplicate their method and results? Answers: He would. We could. We can and do! How exciting!

Artistic instruction in "connected writing," using our stand-alone artistic teaching material, introduced after students are 100% proficient with the English Phonogram System, **teaches cursive writing's basic connecting strokes via the usual explicit SAY & DO instructional method** (the same method we use to teach "printing"). Therefore, your student(s) will study and then be equipped to *apply with understanding* each studied basic connecting stroke. Due to

neurological TEAM knowledge, they will do this more proficiently than students who are taught by the "copy, trace, memorize appearances of shapes" method. **We expect over time that our well-taught students also will "individualize" their "cursive writing styles," but it will remain legible due to the explicit instruction they received:** "Individualization of writing style" will not become an "illegible writing style" due to lack of explicit instruction which leads to a "**frankly hurried personalized style**," which was common in colonial days and is still common in public and home education when children are instructed by the failed "copy, trace, memorize appearances of shapes" method.

Conclusion:

I conclude that a beginning student (defined as a student who is learning English precepts for the first time, whatever his age and whatever the precept, who is training his neurological TEAM to be proficient in the inseparable oral/printed English partnership) should be studying the form of writing he will be manually and visually processing.

The above pages are a condensation of my research on the subject of *The Story of Modern Cursive Writing*. It forms the basis for instructional choices found in the Madsen Method.

Interviews with Cursive Writing Proponents (excerpts from my interview notes with cursive writing authors and/or their programs)

No proponent could state, "All students who use my cursive writing program become proficient in cursive writing." None could produce evidence that cursive writing facilitates language arts proficiency. Each supported his philosophy by referencing himself and/or citing early 1900 developments in philosophies of penmanship instruction. Even well-known Samuel Blumenfeld, when I spoke with him at a MA Convention, cited his personal cursive writing training as reason to do to others now as was done to him then (Read his **two-page cursive writing article** in *Practical Home Schooling (PHS)*, summer 2007). I also noticed he believes "rote learning" is beneficial: He writes, "(It is a) **fact that rote learning is the easiest and most efficient way to instill knowledge by memorization so that it forms a solid foundation on which to build an intellectual superstructure.**" (See *PHS* article #34, 2000) Why does he not know that the current, rote "trace/copy method of cursive writing instruction" does not "**form a solid foundation on which to build an intellectual superstructure**" for 66% of 4th graders and 80% of 8th graders? [*National Assessment of Educational Progress: U.S. Department of Education, 2005*]

Proponents "show off" examples of student's cursive writing along with their evolutionary designed Phonics philosophy, trace-copy-memorize "cursive writing" instructional materials. Each had little understanding that **what a child puts down on paper does not "show" what he knows, it only "shows" what he can do visually.** But **examining the curriculum by which the student was taught tells what he knows,** because a curriculum is first a method of instruction: It "tells" if the student "memorized" or if he "attained understanding."

Each did not know and was not interested in taking on new information (new to him) about how to teach the "neurological TEAM way," disbelieving that **ALL** students learn optimally when so instructed. Each proponent would have to *agree to be educated to this how-to-teach truth*, then go back to the drawing board and develop a scripted SAY & DO program, as we have done. Most of his present visual-memorization, copy, trace, guess, just-get-it-done materials would go in the trash, and of course, each had a program to sell. So do we, but it is not an "**enslaving, just get it done, make yourself look good whether or not you know anything**" offering. Finally,

each was willing to continue peddling a program that does not lead all students (statistically) to proficiency but leads **MOST** (statistically) to speaking, spelling, writing, and reading failure.

Dear Jessica, thanks for bearing with me, since I took a long time to put this review together. I hoped my teachers and I could share our efforts with others, so I included official and technical data. I hope it helps you as, by the Spirit, you consider His will in this matter. I do not wish anyone to follow me (walk alongside me, yes, but not become a follower of me), but *I pray we will follow God's Spirit, and we will meet at His Throne of Grace as we do!*

Bless you in all you do. "Hi" to your family. Call or e-mail anytime.

Love in Christ,

Sharon

P.S. Thanks to Sherry Frattini for editing **Letters to Teachers**, thereby improving my understanding of the inseparable oral/ written English Grammar partnership.

www.madsenmethod.com 800-640-3607 info@madsenmethod.com

Website Bibliography: www.madsenmethod.com

Internet sites [referenced in the text by number]:

- 1) www.onhgs.org/colonialscript.htm
- 2) http://dohistory.org/on_your_own_toolkit/writing.html
- 3) www.greatsite.com/images/facsimiles/fac_tyndaleNT_open.jpg
- 4) www.greatsite.com/images/facsimiles/fac_tyndaleNT_mark.gif
- 5) <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/1d/Kjv-hebrews.png>
- 6) Christian Book. Slideshow. 5/562118. **The First Booke of Moses, called Genesis.**
- 7) www.english.ucsb.edu/emc/ballad_project/background_essays/blackletter.asp
- 8) Plesk. Images. Rare Newspapers. **Paris Gazette**. 1635. Ebayings. Image 018.
- 9) Plesk. Images. News Book. **Mercurius Politicus**. 1659. London. Rare Newspapers. Ebayings. Image 053.
- 10) Plesk. Images. Rare Newspapers. **London Gazette**. 1667. Ebayings. Image 013.
- 11) Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Journal. Spring 2003. Images. Occurrence. **First Issue (Only Issue) of America's First Newspaper**. 1690. Boston.
- 12) Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Journal. Spring 2003. Images. News Letters. **John Campbell; America's Second Newspaper**. 1704.

- 13) History Buff. Archives. British Newspaper; ***The Rehearsal***. 1707.
- 14) History Buff. Archives. British Newspaper; ***The Spectator***. 1711.
- 15) www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/bookmarks/zenger/zenger1.jpg
- 16) www.earlyamerica.com/image/earlyamerica/past/past3.jpg
- 17) www.earlyamerica.com/image/earlyamerica/past/past2.jpg
- 18) www.earlyamerica.com/image/earlyamerica/past/past.jpg
- 19) www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/milestones/commonsense/title.jpg
- 20) www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/milestones/commonsense/intro1.jpg
- 21) <http://images.rarenewspapers.com/ebayimgs/12.1.2007/image070.jpg>
- 22) www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/bookmarks/minutemen/Minutemanpay.jpg
- 23) www.btinternet.com/~tylcoat/handwrit.htm