



Schreibmotorik
INSTITUT

Schreibmotorik Institut e.V.

Schwanweg 1
90562 Heroldsberg

Contact person:

Andrej Priboschek
Agentur für Bildungsjournalismus
Telephone: +49 (0)211 / 97 17 75 53
Mobile: +49 (0)175 / 43 20 675
Email: andrej.priboschek@bildungsjournalist.de

Analysis of the teacher survey for Hesse

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Combating increasing problems with handwriting: teachers from Hesse want pupils to train their motor skills more effectively

WIESBADEN, 25 August 2015. The vast majority of teachers in Hesse and in the whole of Germany see that pupils are having more and more problems with handwriting – and most teachers apparently have concrete ideas of what needs to be done to solve them. Most importantly: cultivate motor skills – if possible, as early as at preschool age. “School children are leaving kindergarten with fewer and fewer fine-motor skills. Open kindergarten concepts make it easier for children to avoid fine-motor exercises. The same applies at home: children are not sufficiently involved in everyday tasks. Kneading dough, crafting things, playing in nature/forests/meadows are all things that many children no longer get to experience”, writes a primary school teacher from Hesse.

The quantitative results of the online survey, which was carried out by the German Union of Teachers (Deutscher Lehrerverband) together with the Schreibmotorik Institut in Heroldsberg and published in April, are now being confirmed and expanded upon by a qualitative analysis of answers to an open question. The majority of teachers that took part in the survey used this chance to add a comment. This also applies to the teachers that took part from Hesse.

According to a secondary school teacher in Hesse: “Observations in secondary schools show that children that have not learned and practiced joined-up writing often find it more difficult to grasp words as single units – the word boundaries are smudged in their texts. It is also more difficult for them to organise the text neatly on the paper. This has a negative effect, even in foreign language classes. Primary schools should on no account stop teaching the children how to produce joined-up writing. Even in the digital age, it’s an important step in language acquisition.” Another primary school

teacher thinks: "Writing is a cultural technology and should be preserved by all means. Joined-up writing supports orientation and helps later when having to take notes speedily. I don't understand why the most elementary things are being dropped in schools. We don't take the numbers 6 and 9 away from financiers just because they can be easily confused."

What is particularly striking about the answers provided by the teachers in Hesse (as well as in other federal states) is that many see particular types of scripts as the reasons for problems with handwriting. "The 'downfall' of legible handwriting in primary schools has been the introduction of 'standard lettering' (e.g. in Hesse). And then there are also many parents (and unfortunately many teachers too!!!) who are of the mindset that joined-up writing is superfluous in the digital age", says one primary school teacher. Another writes: "Since I have worked with the basic script, most school children have developed very balanced handwriting styles. The twenty percent with bad writing normally have motor skill problems that cannot be solved through school intervention alone."

Graphomotor skills researcher Dr Christian Marquardt, the scientific advisor for the Schreibmotorik Institut in Heroldsberg says, "Unfortunately, as a result of the discussion about different scripts, battle lines have hardened between supporters and opposers of certain scripts. This conflict makes it more difficult to look objectively at how to address the problem of pupils' increasing difficulties with handwriting. If children and young people are having difficulties because of insufficient motor skills, then we must first improve the cultivation of these skills – and from nursery school onwards, at that. We already have the first insights from our own assessments, which indicate that learning standard lettering and then increasing writing speed at a later stage is easier and more manageable if fluid movements are taught in a targeted way from the very first lesson. Of course, we must then ask ourselves the question: which is the best script to teach in primary school? It is therefore important to further advance research in this area, so that we can make a clear recommendation."

Interested? We would be happy to provide media representatives with more statements.

Background:

How bad actually are the problems with handwriting in schools? And what can be done about it? In order to answer these questions, the German Union of Teachers (Deutscher Lehrerverband, DL) and the Schreibmotorik Institut launched a survey. Between December 2014 and March 2015, more than 2000 teachers from all over Germany took part. Teachers from primary and secondary schools were given separate questionnaires, but they both ended with the same open question: "Would you like to add a comment concerning learning to write / handwriting?" Hundreds of participants took the opportunity to provide in-depth comments.

According to the quantitative survey, which was published in April, four fifths (79 per cent) of the secondary school teachers surveyed believe their pupils' handwriting has deteriorated on average. As many as 83 per cent of the primary school teachers surveyed stated that the skills pupils require for handwriting development had deteriorated in the last few years. The results of the survey are available from the Schreibmotorik Institut website (<http://www.schreibmotorik-institut.com/en/news/media-reports/295-federal-press-conference-the-german-union-of->

[teachers-and-the-schreibmotorik-institut-present-the-results-of-a-nationwide-survey-of-teachers\)](#)

The Schreibmotorik Institut e.V. in Heroldsberg is unique in Germany. It carries out research in the field of graphomotor skills and writing ergonomics, links relevant institutions in the field of handwriting and brings together experts who have spent years examining the theory and practice of efficient writing. It has developed teaching materials for writing classes and offers seminars for teachers. The institute is supported by the writing instruments manufacturer Stabilo, but is independent and not-for-profit.