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Press release/invitation

Handwriting Day: scientist demonstrates effective early promotion of writing motor skills

Next week it is Handwriting Day. More and more children are having problems with handwriting – a preventative approach to promoting motor skills can counteract this. Four- and five-year-olds at a pre-school in Cologne demonstrate just how effortless this is in practice under the guidance of a scientist from the Schreibmotorik Institute.

HEROLDSBERG; 16 January 2018. Every year on 23 January, the USA celebrates National Handwriting Day. The perfect opportunity to take a look at the problematic handwriting situation in Germany: more and more children – as made clear in representative parent and teacher surveys in Germany – have problems developing “legible, fluid handwriting” over the course of their literacy lessons in primary school, as is required as part of the nationally applicable educational standards. This topic is very important to parents and teachers.

“Kindergartens and schools can very easily counteract this, because handwriting is not just about a pretty cultural technique that can be done away with in the time of digitalisation – it’s about educational opportunities. Neuroscientists point out a correlation between motor skills and cognitive development in children”, says Dr. Marianela Diaz Meyer, ergonomics expert and managing director of the Schreibmotorik Institut in Heroldsberg. “The majority of teachers are seeing a correlation between a student’s handwriting and their school performance. It can be surmised that problems with handwriting tend to be more prevalent in children from educationally disadvantaged families. Improved promotion of writing motor skills could therefore contribute to improving the educational opportunities for children such as these.”

The day before Handwriting Day, the Schreibmotorik Institut will demonstrate what such promotion might look like in a childcare centre. Four- and five-year-olds will be taught writing motor skills in a fun way under the guidance of Dr. Diaz Meyer. Media representatives are warmly invited to the event, which will be held on Monday, 22 January 2018 at 10 a.m. Accreditations will be possible immediately (see contact).

The event is part of the “Handwriting 2020” campaign, which has taken initiative so that the requirements and opportunities for learning handwriting can be improved both in educational institutions such as childcare centres and schools, and with the family at home. All children should have the opportunity to develop legible and fluid handwriting. Increasing digitalisation provides opportunities for combining learning motor skills with modern technology.

The founding members of the “Handwriting 2020” campaign are the Didacta Association of the German Education Industry [*Didacta Verband der Bildungswirtschaft*], who represent more than 250 companies and organisations both nationally and internationally and actively participate in debates on the development of educational systems, and the non-profit Schreibmotorik Institut from Heroldsberg that – with the support of the writing instruments manufacturer Stabilo – conducts research into the fields of writing motor skills and writing ergonomics.

Background: January 23 is the birthday of John Hancock (1737-1793), the first signatory to the American Declaration of Independence. His handwritten signature on the document is prominent due to its size.

More than 96 percent of parents believe that learning handwriting is still important today; almost two thirds of those believe it to be very important. However, over 23 percent have observed that their child has trouble writing for more than 30 minutes at a time. Extrapolated to all of Germany, this amounts to 1.2 million children between the ages of six and twelve who cannot write legibly for longer periods and without cramping. These are the results of a representative survey of mothers in Germany that was carried out by the Schreibmotorik Institut with the support of the Bundeselternrat last year. Further results from the parent survey can be found here: <http://www.schreibmotorik-institut.com/index.php/en/news/press-releases>

Teachers in Germany are seeing more and more pupils with handwriting problems. This is based on a survey carried out in 2015 by the German Union of Teachers [Deutscher Lehrerverband, DL] together with the Schreibmotorik Institut in Heroldsberg. According to the survey, four fifths (79 percent) of the secondary school teachers surveyed believe their pupils’ handwriting has deteriorated on average. As many as 83 percent of the primary school teachers surveyed stated that the skills pupils require for handwriting development had deteriorated in the last few years. According to the teachers surveyed, half of all boys (51 percent) and a third of girls (31 percent) have problems with handwriting. Further results from the teacher survey can be found here: <http://www.schreibmotorik-institut.com/index.php/en/news/press-releases>