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Press release / invitation, Heroldsberg, 10 May 2017

The ‘Scribble Mentors’ programme kicks off at PUMA – children get introduced to writing with motion games

HERZOGENAURACH, 10 May 2017. More and more children have difficulties learning to write at school. Motor skills training from as early as pre-school can help to prevent this. In the ‘Scribble Mentors’ programme, adults work with four and five-year-olds practicing special motion games that have been developed by scientists to improve hand and finger coordination. The start of the campaign in the headquarters of the sports company PUMA on 19 May 2017 at 10 am will show just how much fun this can be.

The adult will raise a hand and explain to the children that the thumb – the circus trainer – greets the other fingers on the hand individually. Fingertips touch each other lightly, forming an “O”. They both flex (i.e. move towards the palm) and then return to their original position. The aim of the exercise according to the instructions sheet: “The children should actively use the finger movements when colouring, scribbling and writing. The more familiar these movements are to them, the less cramping will later occur when they are holding and controlling a pen.”

The little circus exercise is an example of how motor skills exercises can look like in pre-school. Children that play the exercise developed by the Schreibmotorik Institut have fun – and at the same time also prepare in a small way for learning to write. ‘Scribble Mentors’ are volunteers who work with children to practice these fun movement exercises together. To kick off the national initiative, PUMA employees will work with pre-school children – and a special guest is taking part at the company headquarters in Herzogenaurach: footballer Kathy Hendrich has announced she will be visiting. The writing motor skills researcher Dr. Christian Marquardt, from the scientific advisory committee for motor skills of the non-profit Schreibmotorik Institut in Heroldsberg, will talk about the scientific basis of the campaign.

“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,” explains Dr. Marianela Diaz Meyer, managing director of the Schreibmotorik Institut. “Pre-schools and schools should work to counteract this, because handwriting is not just about a pretty cultural technique that could 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. As a company with particular links to sport, it is particularly important for us to emphasise this correlation. This is why we are supporting the 'Scribble Mentors' programme," says Dietmar Knoess, Global Director of Human Resources at PUMA.

In future, for the 'Scribble Mentors' programme adults throughout Germany will visit pre-schools and primary schools – as with the annual Read to Children day – in order to play simple motion games with the children to develop their writing motor skills. The Schreibmotorik Institut provides the materials. The project is part of the 'Handwriting 2020 campaign' delivered by the Didacta Association of the German Education Industry, who represent more than 250 companies and organisations both nationally and internationally, and actively participate in debates on the development of educational systems, together with the Schreibmotorik Institut. The non-profit Schreibmotorik Institut – with the support of the writing instruments manufacturer Stabilo – conducts research into the fields of writing motor skills and writing ergonomics.

The 'Scribble Mentors' programme will take place at PUMA

Date: 19 May 2017

Time: 10 am

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