INTEGRATION: HANDWRITING AND READING

Reading and handwriting share the same symbols—the letters of the alphabet—but they require very different skills and mastery processes. Understanding these differences helps you teach both subjects well and illustrates the importance of the letter teaching order for each.

Decoding for Reading and Encoding for Handwriting

Decoding requires deciphering printed words by identifying the sounds created by the letter symbols that combine to make the word. Lessons should be focused on visual and auditory skills. The teaching order for reading uses word building to develop and reinforce decoding skills. After children master the easier sounds, they are ready to move on to the sounds that are more difficult.

Encoding requires hearing spoken language and translating sounds into letter symbols. Handwriting also requires cognitive, motor, and visual recall skills. Therefore, the lessons should be multisensory. Imitating and copying help cement letter formation habits. The HWT letter teaching order supports the development of these skills because letters are taught in groups based on similarity of formation. After children master the easier letters, they are ready to move on to letters that are more difficult to form. Teaching handwriting and reading successfully at the same time is easy, but you need to be aware of the differences.

The handwriting and reading integration options shown below work best because they adhere to the fundamental principles of each discipline and incorporate lesson work from each in a way that fully supports skill development. Find the one that works best for you.

1. Separate the handwriting and reading teaching orders
Teach both programs in the recommended orders. Keep instruction separate until familiar letters appear. Then remind children of letters they know from handwriting or reading instruction.
   - During handwriting, remember reading.
     Remind students of the previously learned letter sounds.
   - During reading, remember handwriting.
     Remind students how to write letters that were previously taught.

2. Integrate the handwriting and reading teaching orders
Teach both programs in the recommended order, but supplement the particular letter lesson by teaching the basic lesson associated with the other discipline.
   - During handwriting, integrate reading instruction for that letter.
     Say, “We are learning to write letter a. Letter a makes the /a/ sound.”
   - During reading, integrate handwriting instruction for that letter.
     Say, “Take out your handwriting book. Go to the letter teaching page for e. We are going to do an extra handwriting lesson today to learn letter e.”

3. Follow the reading teaching order
   - During reading, teach in the reading order.
   - During handwriting, teach in the reading order.
   - Use the handwriting letter teaching page you need. Do the word and sentence pages after all the letters have been taught.