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**Preparing your child for life's experiences.**

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Part One

## *Primary Language Curriculum 2*

*“Our children thus learn how to write and perfect themselves in writing without writing. Actual writing is an external manifestation of an inner impulse. It is a pleasure that comes from carrying out a higher activity and not simply an exercise.”*



~ **Maria Montessori, The Discovery of the Child, Page 226**

### **Writing in the Primary Environment**

In the Montessori Primary environment, “Writing” is comprised of two areas:

- 1) **the mechanics of writing**, which is the physical act of using a writing implement, ie a pencil, and
- 2) **the process of writing**, which is the expression of one’s own thoughts using the symbols (letters) of our language.

### **Mechanics of Writing (Handwriting)**

The children are first introduced to a variety of activities that prepare their hands for handwriting. **Practical Life** activities, such as **Polishing** a metal bowl or **Scrubbing** a table, help children learn order, sequence, the top-bottom and left-right orientation - skills that are necessary for handwriting, (and later with reading). The main focus of these activities is to improve visual-hand coordination and strength.



Table Scrubbing



Cloth Washing



Glass Polishing

Exercises or activities in the **Sensorial** area, such as the **Knobbed Cylinders**, **Geometric Solids** and the **Trinomial Cube**, also help in the development of the tripod or pincer grasp, and pencil grip.



Botany cabinet



Cylinder Blocks



Trinomial Cube

*\*Notice the children's fingers as they explore the materials.*

Weeks and months are spent practicing the formation of letters using chalk on a large **Chalkboard**, moving on to smaller chalkboards, and eventually onto paper with a pencil. Writing numbers is also introduced in the same manner. Writing connecting letters is then introduced.



The formal introduction of pencils is with the Montessori material called **Metal Insets**. We show the child how to fill in the shape with serpentine lines, with a light touch, to mimic the movements in handwriting cursive letters.



## Cursive Handwriting

Maria Montessori believed that writing of cursive letters supports the child's natural flow of hand movement. Notice that a very young child makes circular motions when playing in the sandbox, or playing in water. Young children make wavy lines as they pretend to write. In our classrooms, phonetic sounds of cursive letters are introduced simultaneously with tracing cursive **Sandpaper Letters** to provide the child with the muscle memory for handwriting. Only when the child shows consistent fine motor control and coordination do we introduce handwriting on paper and pencil.



## Process of Writing

While engaged in learning the foundational skills in the mechanics of writing, the child simultaneously learns the sounds of letters with the **Sandpaper Letters** through sound-to-symbol presentations.



*Movable alphabet: Initial sounds*



*Matching Sandpaper Letters to Movable Alphabet*

As mastery of each letter sound occurs, the child then learns that words are formed when individual sounds (phonemic awareness) are combined. Therefore, even before a child can control a writing implement, they already are able to compose their own words. What a thrilling discovery that is for the child! This is the time when we see something that Maria Montessori calls “an explosion” of expressive written skills. The child composes words, phrases and sentences using the **Movable Alphabet**.



*Phonetic words with the middle sound /o/*



Rhyming words



Movable Alphabet: cursive writing



Phonograms: spelling



Phonetic spelling



Writing a "story"



As work on phonemic awareness progresses, and as the child shows progress with the fine motor control and coordination using a pencil, the child simultaneously engages in activities that include map-making, designing metal insets, illustrating a phrase or sentence that they have “written.”



*Writing/spelling: phonograms*



*Labeling the continents*



*Map-making: South America*



*Classified Cards: Parts of a Tree*

At around this time, and as writing improves, beginning reading skills emerge. Even with the child’s early experiences with letters in cursive, there occurs a shift into reading in print. Most children have been exposed to print at home and in various environments, and so a connection is made with cursive and print letters.