DESCRIPTION
Pediatric occupational therapist and author, Amy Baez, will lead an interactive workshop including a breakdown of motor learning principles and essential foundational skills needed for handwriting skills. Playful activities, insightful tips, and therapist-recommended tricks for the classroom or home will be shared to prepare children for future success with handwriting skills while building strength and confidence.

PRESENTER, AMY BAEZ, MOT, OTR/L
Amy is an occupational therapist with over 17 years of experience working with children of all ages and abilities levels as well as a variety of diagnoses. She has worked in home, preschool, private school, and rehabilitation settings. Amy has a special interest in play and fine motor skills and has published two award-winning handwriting workbooks, Treasure C.H.E.S.T. and Heads, Tummies, & Tails. Follow her on Twitter @AmyBaezTweets.

REFERENCES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
• Understand the foundational skills required for handwriting success.
• Learn the essential elements of motor learning.
• Practice new playful strategies for instruction and skill building.
• Discover helpful tips to share with parents and teachers.

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS
1. Posture & Balance: Must be able to sit upright in a chair without requiring additional support from the use of his/her arms.
2. Shoulder Stability: Must be able to coordinate and hold weight at the shoulder joint. Strength develops from the joint closest to the torso to the joints farthest at the fingertips.
3. Arm Control: Must be able to move the arm with accuracy with different levels of force and speed.
4. Bilateral Coordination: Must be able to use both hands together to accomplish a task. This should not be confused with a child switching hands when writing.
5. Visual Motor Coordination: Must be able to coordinate the eyes and hands to create and imitate formations to connect and intersect lines or maintain within the boundaries of images.
6. Pencil Grasp: Must be able to hold onto a writing tool in a functional manner. There are four functional grasps: dynamic tripod, dynamic quadrupod, lateral tripod, & lateral quadrupod.
Playful Motor
Strategies
for Handwriting Success

ELEMENTS OF MOTOR LEARNING - 3 STAGES
• Cognitive/Verbal – requires direct instruction via concerted attention & verbalization of movement strategies
• Associative - less guidance required to allow for errors to occur for self-adjustment
• Autonomous – can engage in other tasks and requires less cognitive effort

PLAYFUL STRATEGIES FOR SKILL BUILDING

Ideas For Fine Motor Play
• Use broken crayons
• Roll modeling clay
• Link paperclips
• Color with circular strokes
• Squeeze paper with hole punchers
• Draw on the floor or on a vertical surface
• Play with sidewalk chalk, tweezers, tongs, or clothespins

Ideas For Gross Motor Play
• Weight bearing poses: cow, cat, down dog, & dolphin sequence
• Balance pose: tree, surfer, and spinal balance
• Animal Races: alligator, bear, crab, duck, elephant, frog, gorilla, horse, iguana, jaguar, kangaroo
• Wheelbarrow walking
• Crab soccer

Ideas For Sensory Play
• Squeeze water from sponges
• Squish wet pasta
• Draw on sandpaper
• Play with sand or soil
• Find objects hidden in dry pasta or rice
• Play balloon volleyball with only fingertips
• Play hand clapping games
• Put lotion on a baby doll or plastic animal

Dance Activity - “Can’t Stop the Feeling”
• Cheer Arms
• Elbows to Knees
• Foot Taps
• Heads to Toes
• Shooting Stars/Black Holes
• Slow Spins
Playful Motor Strategies for Handwriting Success

PLAYFUL STRATEGIES FOR INSTRUCTION

Action Words
1st  Vertical Line: Say, “Zip down.”
2nd  Horizontal Line: Say, “Zoom across.”
3rd  Curved Line (counter-clockwise): Say, “Curve around.”
4th  Curved Line (clockwise): Say, “Make an ear.”
5th  Curved Line (downward or upward): Say, “Make a hook.”
7th  Diagonal (upward): Say, “Slide up.”

Shapes Order of Development & Action Words
1st  Circle: Counter-clockwise direction. Say, “Curve around.”
2nd  Oval: Counter-clockwise direction. Say, “Curve around.”
8th  Crescent Moon: Say, “Curve around. Lift up. Curve around.”
9th  Heart: Say, “Make a hook. Slide down. Lift up. Make a hook. Slide down.”

Numbers Action Words
#0  Say, “Curve around.”
#1  Say, “Zip down.”
#2  Say, “Make a hook. Slide down. Zoom across.”
#3  Say, “Make an ear. Make an ear.”
#5  Say, “Zip down. Make an ear. Lift up. Zoom across.”
#6  Say, “Curve around. Make a hook.”
#7  Say, “Zoom across. Slide down.”
#8  Say, “Curve around. Make an ear. Slide up.”
#9  Say, “Curve around. Zip down.”

Little Shoelace Song
“Criss Cross, Pick it Up,
Over Over, Pull it Shut,
Poke Pinch, Wrap it Up,
Push Through, Switch to Shut.”

Bonus Tips for Success
- Encourage Correct Orientation
- Divide Uppercase & Lowercase
- Focuses on Letter Formation
- Use a Kinesthetic Approach
- Use Traditional Line System