

THE DEMISE OF CURSIVE WRITING

Une des conséquences inattendue de l'usage d'Internet est la disparition progressive de la compétence à écrire en lettres cursives. Faut-il ou non conserver cet « art de la calligraphie » dans le programme scolaire ? Certains Etats américains ont déjà répondu par la négative. Pourtant, parents, éducateurs et psychologues de concert, mettent l'accent sur l'importance de l'apprentissage de l'écriture cursive dans le développement psychomoteur de l'enfant, et dans l'accès aux documents historiques, garants de l'héritage culturel.

Étape 1. LECTURE D'UN DOSSIER DE PRESSE

Vous allez trouver ci-dessous trois articles adaptés et réécrits au niveau B2/B2+, lesquels traitent la plupart des points débattus a ce sujet dans les médias américains.

Document 1 . The end of the line for cursive?

Forty-one states have so far adopted the new Common State Standards for English, which does not require cursive writing. Set by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NCA), the standards provide a general framework for what students are expected to learn before college. However, states are allowed the option of re-including cursive if they so choose, which is what
5 Massachusetts and California have done.

But the latest to contemplate abandoning the script is Georgia, where teachers and administrators will meet in March to discuss erasing the longhand style from its lesson plans, says Georgia Department of Education spokesman Matt Cardoza. The argument is that cursive is time-consuming and not as useful as the keyboard skills students will need as they move on to junior high and high school. Antiquated or not, cursive is viewed by
10 some parents and educators as essential to an education.

"I've been disappointed in general with the public school system here", says Lisa Faircloth, a stay-at-home mother of two in Atlanta. She says she is pleased that her 7 year-old son Joe learned cursive. "I feel like it has helped him with his fine motor skills", she says. "He shows more of an interest in art because he is able to form things he hadn't before and has new muscle movements that he didn't know before". Science backs her up.
15 Increasingly the argument that students should be spending more time learning keyboard skills than cursive is becoming overused.

"Of course it's important to know how to typewrite", says associate professor Anne Mangen at the University of Stavanger's Reading Centre. "But handwriting seems, based on empirical evidence from neuroscience, to play a larger role in the visual recognition and learning of letters. This is something one should be aware of in an
20 educational context", she stresses. In other words, those who learn to write by hand learn better.

Mangen points to an experiment involving two groups of adults in which participants were taught a new, foreign alphabet. One group learned the characters by hand, the other learned only to recognize them on a screen and with a keyboard. Weeks after the experiment, the group that learned the letters by hand consistently scored better on recognition tests than those who learned with a keyboard. Brain scans of the hands-on group
25 also showed greater activity in the part of the brain that controls language comprehension, motor-related processes and speech-associated gestures.

"Now we have studies that show for some important aspects of reading, digital technology may not be as important as handwriting. And if you don't teach kids", she adds, "they won't have access to a lot of historical documents and primary source documents because they won't have learned cursive".

Document 2 . Cursive should be allowed to die

Today many teachers herald the demise of handwriting that has been the mainstay of education for more than two thousand years now. "Cursive should be allowed to die because it is obsolete, in spite of having been taught for ages", stated Morgan Polikoff, assistant professor of Education at the University of Southern California. "How many people carry on using cursive handwriting on a daily basis? The answer is quite clear: 5 under the age of sixty, none. Keyboards have become the norm", continued Polikoff. As a matter of fact, the recently established Common Core State Standards, the standardized educational benchmarks for US public schools exclude cursive as a requirement. It's a sign of the times that some states have dropped cursive handwriting from their curricula in favour of keyboard proficiency. "Given that much of our communication is done on keyboards, what is the meaning of teaching kids two sorts of handwriting. Let's be realistic, shall we?", 10 Polikoff concluded. Nonetheless, cursive still has quite a few supporters among teachers and scholars, who claim that many a historical archive would become illegible, should cursive be a thing of the past. "Cursive writing is a cultural tradition in this country and consequently should continue to be taught at school, not only for the sake of traditional values, but also to prop up the history of our nation", Jimmy Briant, director of archives at the University of Central Arkansas, said. Suzanne Asherson, who has just published a handwriting program for 15 teachers called *Handwriting Without Tears*, certainly goes along with that point of view. She states "It's not calligraphy. It's also functional. When a child knows the mechanics of forming letters in cursive, they can better focus on their content".

In the light of a 2010 study, writing in general, regardless of whether it is cursive writing or not, may be instrumental in stimulating brain activity. "Coupled with other experiments from our lab, we make sense of this 20 as the motor system augmenting visual processing", stated study researcher Karin Harman James of Indiana University.

Finally, Asherson points to a recent study published by the College Board, which found that SAT test essays (a standardized test for most college admissions in the US) written in cursive got a slightly higher score than those written in printed letters. However, Polikoff does not feel impressed. "Can the College Board study be an 25 indicator of anything supporting cursive? Actually, it doesn't prove that the knowledge of cursive causes higher scores. In addition, one study is far from sufficient to get to any sort of conclusion in favour of cursive. As we did with the abacus a few decades ago, it's high time we considered departing from the teaching of cursive", he concluded.

Adapté de Yahoo News, June 28, 2013 by Marc Lallanilla.

<http://www.livescience.com/37831-is-cursive-dead-cursive-writing.html>

Document 3 . Is cursive really a 21st-century skill?

The sinuous letters of the cursive alphabet, swirled on countless love letters, credit card slips and banners above elementary school chalk boards are going the way of the quill and inkwell. With computer keyboards and smartphones increasingly occupying young fingers, the gradual death of the fancier ABC's is revealing some unforeseen challenges. Is the development of a fine motor skill frustrated by an aversion to cursive 5 handwriting? And what happens when young people who are not familiar with cursive have to read historical documents like the Constitution?

Jimmy Bryant, director of Archives and Special Collections (cf. doc.2), says that a connection to archival

material is lost when students give up cursive. While teaching last year, Mr. Bryant asked students to raise their hands if they wrote in cursive as a way to communicate. None did. That cursive-challenged class included Alex Heck, 22, who said she barely remembered how to read or write cursive. Ms. Heck and a cousin leafed through their grandmother's journal shortly after she died, but could barely read her cursive handwriting. "It was mysterious", Ms Heck said. She and the cousin tried to decipher it like one might a code. "I'm not used to reading or writing cursive".

"Students nationwide are still taught cursive, but many school districts are spending far less time teaching it", said Steven Graham, a professor of education at Vanderbilt University. "Most schools start teaching cursive in third grade", Professor Graham said. "In the past, most would continue the study until the fifth or sixth grades, but many districts now teach cursive only in third grade".

"Schools today, we say we're preparing our kids for the 21st century", said Jacqueline DeChiaro, the principal of Van Schaick Elementary School in Cohoes, N.Y., who is debating whether to cut cursive. "Is cursive really a 21st-century skill?" With schools focused on preparing students for standardized tests, there is often not enough time to teach handwriting', educators said. While printing might be legible, the less complex the handwriting, the easier it is to forge, said Heidi H. Harralson, a graphologist in Tucson. Even though handwriting can change as a person ages, people who are not learning or practicing it are at a disadvantage, Ms. Harralson said. "I'm seeing an increase in inconstancy in the handwriting and poor form level-sloppy, semi-legible script that's inconsistent. Everyone has a cursive signature, but even those are getting harder to identify", Ms. Harralson said. Sally Bennett, an 18-year-old freshman at Central Arkansas, signs her name in all capital letters and never gave any thought to it until she took the ACT college entrance exam. Students must copy a prompt, with explicit instructions that they do not print. So the classroom of test-takers tried cursive, Ms. Bennett said. "I had to think about it for a minute. It was kind of hard for me to remember".

Richard S.Christen, a professor of education at the University of Portland in Oregon, said cursive can easily be replaced with printed handwriting or word processing. But he worries that students will lose an artistic skill. "But it's hard for me to make a practical argument for it. I'm not one who's mourning it. I'm mourning the beauty, the aesthetics", Professor Christen said.

Adapté de NVT, April 27,2011 by Katie Zezima.

Étape 2. COMPREHENSION ECRITE

Trouvez chronologiquement dans les différents documents ci-dessus les termes anglais correspondants aux termes français répertoriés ci-après :

Document 1 (les verbes conjugués dans les textes sont ici à l'infinitif)

Cadre/structure	Galvaudé
Autoriser	Taper sur un clavier
Effacer	Souligner
Chronophage	Expérience
Collège	Impliquer
Etre déçu par	Cerveau
Capacités motrices	Mise en pratique
Soutenir, donner raison	Numérique
Clavier	

Document 2

Qui a des formes arrondies	Efficace
Point d'appui	Se concentrer sur
Références	Contenu
Critère	Sans tenir compte de
Abandonner, laisser tomber	Déclaration
Programmes (scolaires)	College Universitaire
Compétence, aptitude	Légèrement
Néanmoins	Impressionner
Illisible	Connaissance

Document 3

Plume	Feuilleter
Encrier	Déchiffrer
Plus fantaisiste	Nationalement
Abandonner	Cours elementaire 2
Lever	Etudiant de première année
Aucun	Court message
A peine	Pleurer, faire le deuil

Etape 3. LES MOTS CLES EN CONTEXTE

Complétez le résumé des **documents 1, 2, 3** avec les dix mots clés suivants :

*HANDWRITING - PROGRESS - BRAIN - DEPLORE - MOTOR-RELATED - ADOPTED -
REQUIRE - SKILL - UNEXPECTED - DEMISE*

One of the consequences of the Internet has been the
progressive of cursive writing. So far, some forty states
have the new Common State Standards, which does not
the teaching of cursive. Some might say that it is simply the price of and schools are
preparing children for the 21st century. Others, parents and teachers alike, that a
crucial is being lost because also means better reading
proficiency. When writing a text, a child activates the part of the which controls
language comprehension, motor-related processes and speech-associated gestures.

Etape 4. LA VERSION

Traduisez maintenant le résumé en français.

Etape 5 . ALLER A L'ESSENTIEL !

Classez les informations suivantes issues des différents **documents** par ordre d'importance, en **argument majeur** de la question ou en **détail périphérique**.

Cursive is viewed by some parents and educators as essential to an education -

Students should be spending more time learning keyboard skills -

This is something one should be aware of in an educational context -

They won't have access to a lot of historical documents -

Very small proportions of adults use cursive for their day-to-day writing -

I think it's important to have nice handwriting -

The sinuous letters of the cursive alphabet are going the way of the quill and inkwell -

Ms. Heck and a cousin leafed through their grandmother's journal shortly after she died -

But many districts now teach cursive only in third grade -

I'm not one who's mourning it. I'm mourning the beauty, the aesthetics -

As we have done with the abacus, it is time to retire the teaching of cursive -

Writing in general, may also boost brain activity -

The group that learned the letters by hand consistently scored better on recognition tests than those who learned with a keyboard.

Etape 6. FOR VS AGAINST

Classez les arguments suivants « **pour** » ou « **contre** » l'abandon de l'écriture cursive.

- a. The vast method of communication is on a keyboard
- b. Cursive writing may boost brain activity
- c. Children are prone to become cyberholics
- d. Teenagers spend too much time googling people
- e. Schools are preparing kids for the new century
- f. Handwriters are better readers
- g. Today's children are losing an artistic skill
- h. Other days, other ways!
- i. Historical documents will become unreadable for the new generations
- j. Fewer and fewer adults use cursive for their day-to-day communication

Etape 7. LA MISSION : SYNTHÈSE ÉCRITE

Vous êtes enseignant(e) dans une école de l'État de l'Indiana qui vient d'abandonner complètement l'apprentissage des lettres cursives au primaire. Vous faites part de votre étonnement à vos collègues, en soulignant l'intérêt que représenterait, pour l'éducation des jeunes générations, la pérennité de cette compétence, à vos yeux fondamentale.

Votre synthèse portera sur l'essentiel des documents 1,2,3 en 250/300 mots au maximum, en essayant de vous exprimer avec vos propres termes, en dehors bien sûr des informations purement factuelles ou chiffrées (dates, chiffres...).