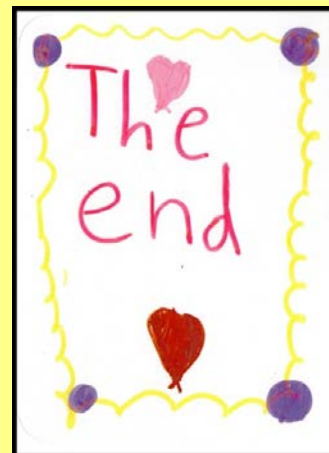
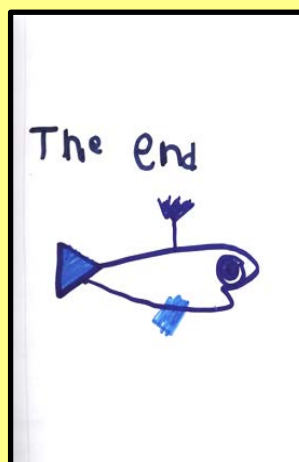
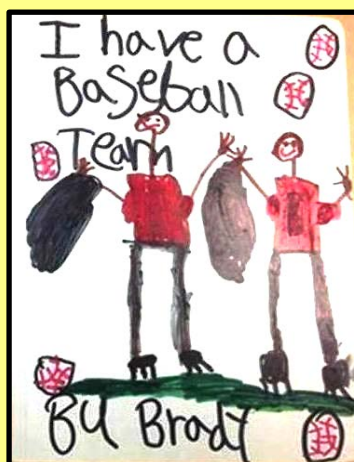
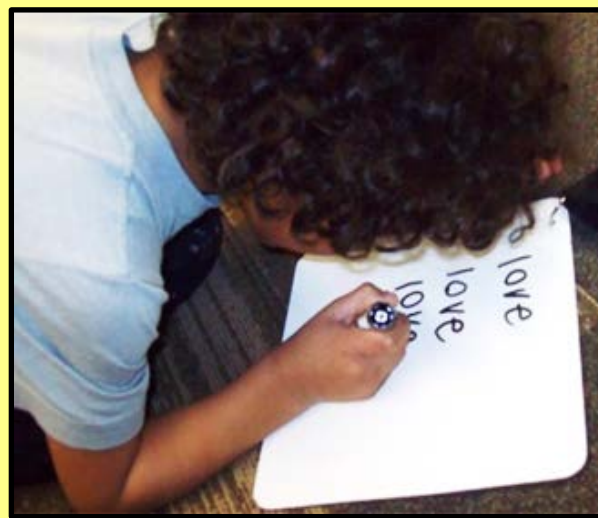
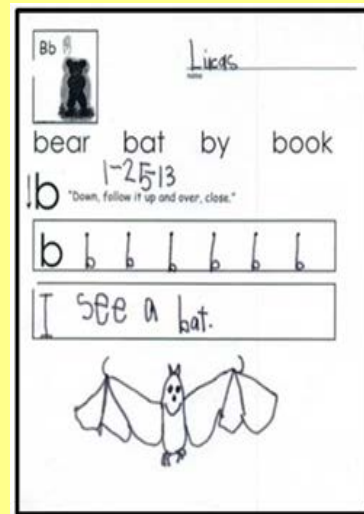


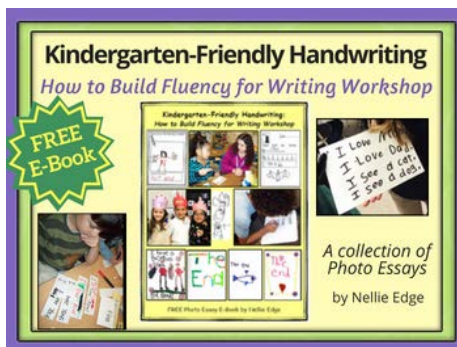
# Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting: How to Build Fluency for Writing Workshop



FREE Photo Essay E-Book by Nellie Edge

# Why Does Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matter?

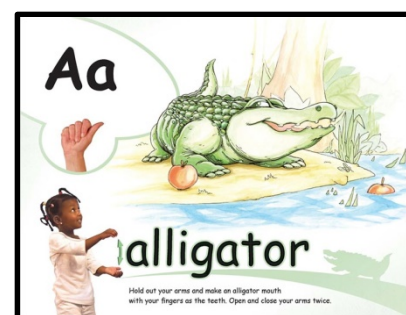
*If handwriting motions are not fluent, it interferes with the whole writing process.*



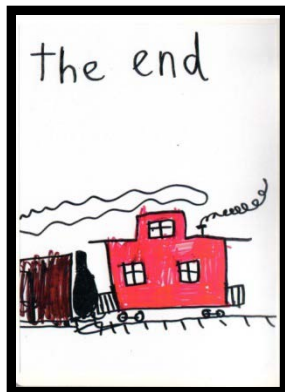
A multisensory, integrated approach to handwriting is the most time-efficient, inexpensive, and brain-friendly way we know to plant lifelong habits for good handwriting in kindergarten while building stamina and fluency for Writing Workshop!

The photo essays in this E-Book provide glimpses of an authentic approach to kindergarten handwriting that embraces the arts, differentiates learning, and invites parents to be partners in kindergarten success. Actively engage your students in these drawing and handwriting strategies and weave them into your own writing framework.

Fingerspelling, sign language, and singing are a part of our multisensory handwriting framework. These powerful strategies create multisensory memory hooks—especially for English Language Learners and harder-to-accelerate learners. (Scroll down the ABC Phonics page to find [free fingerspelling tutorials](#).)



**Developed BY teachers FOR teachers!** Over 10 years of collaboration with master writing teachers culminated in this approach to kindergarten-friendly handwriting and is documented on our action-research blogs from the 10 High-Impact Kindergarten Writing Strategies. MRIs of the child's brain prove: **Tracing over letters is NOT consistent with how the brain learns best!** Embedding handwriting into authentic writing experiences makes the brain work harder, motivates students to see themselves as writers, and directly transfers to Writing Workshop. That is why we teach children good handwriting as they practice real words and sentences, draw, and make books!



Your Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting E-Book includes:

- Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting: 10 Keys to Success
- Ten Tips for Teaching Pencil Grip
- Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters
- 16 Frequently Asked Questions
- Ten Reasons to Teach Fingerspelling in Kindergarten
- Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Resources on TpT
- Samples from T-he e-n-d The End pages

We invite you to share our journey as teacher-researchers committed to integrating handwriting into a multisensory, authentic, and comprehensive writing framework. [Join our online community](#) for weekly kindergarten blogs that wrap around Best Practices research and accelerate learning. Enjoy joyful documentation of how the brain learns best!

SMILES!  
Nellie Edge

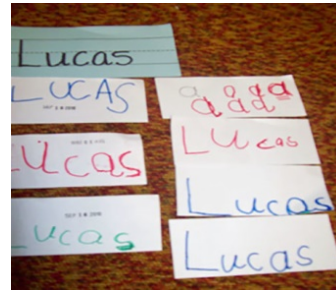


# Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting: 10 Keys to Success



Nellie Edge Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting program dramatically accelerates writing proficiency when used as designed within a comprehensive kindergarten writing program. The end result is kindergartners proudly writing, illustrating, and publishing books!

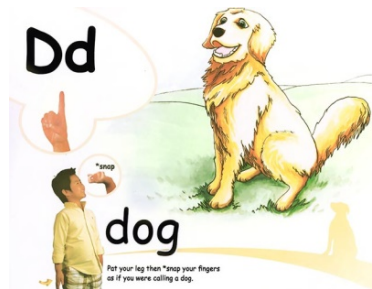
**We have decades of “best practice” and Visible Learning research**



**Name writing experts celebrate!**

**1. Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting practices are consistent with decades of visual learning research** documented by Dr. John Hatti. We give children high-expectations, crystal-clear, achievable learning targets, provide feedback, and then children learn to self-evaluate. Mastery of each phase of handwriting fluency is acknowledged and celebrated.

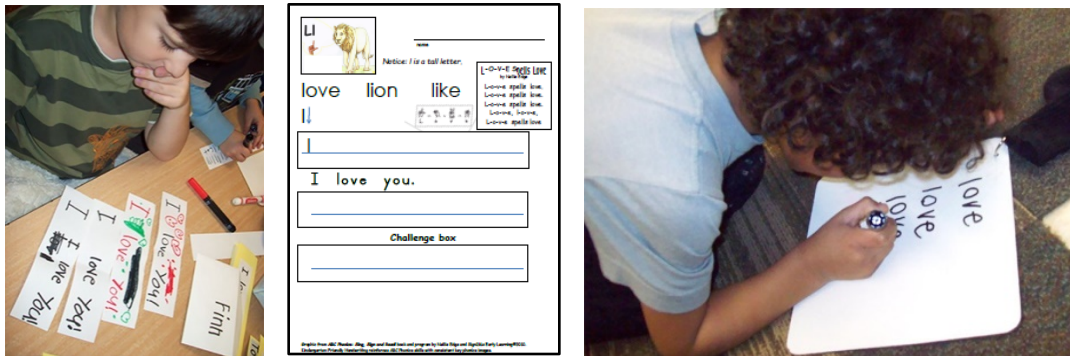
**Kindergarten-friendly handwriting creates a Growth Mindset**



**2. We consciously nurture a Growth Mindset** for our students by using carefully chosen words that empower learners. Children know what their next learning target is (*I'm remembering to make a lowercase "u"*), how to set goals, work hard, take pride in doing quality work, and think about how they learn: This is the beginning of metacognition!

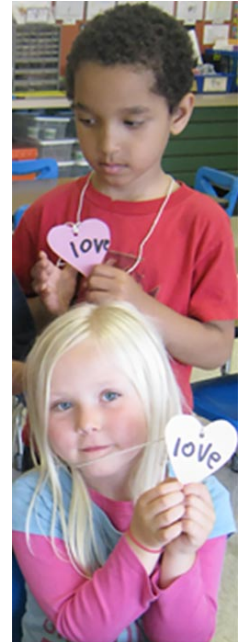
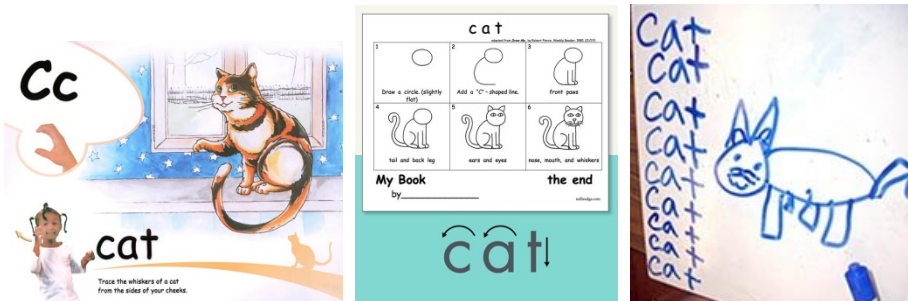
*Wow! How did you train your brain to remember that letter?*

**Integrated, multisensory handwriting instruction can prevent reading failure.**



**3. This authentic, meaning-centered approach to handwriting instruction honors Marie Clay's respected research and insights into preventing reading failure:** We build on what is known. Handwriting is taught in an authentic context: first using each child's name, then using real words that have personal meaning to a child, and finally using high-frequency "heart word" sentences that build stamina for the Writing Workshop. We teach systematically and intentionally. Fingerspelling, letter recognition, and beginning sounds of words are intentionally reinforced.

**Handwriting and drawing instruction are intertwined.**



**4. Our arts-infused handwriting curriculum teaches children to write, draw, fingerspell, focus, do quality work, and enjoy expressing themselves!** There is direct transfer to our Comprehensive Writing Workshop Model. The *30 Essential Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Lessons* are multisensory, meaningful, and memorable—the children are NOT copying workbook sheets!

**We have high expectations and involve Parents as Partners.**



**5. Teachers, students, and their parents all share high expectations for student learning.** "Parents are Partners" in teaching efficient pencil grip and good handwriting.

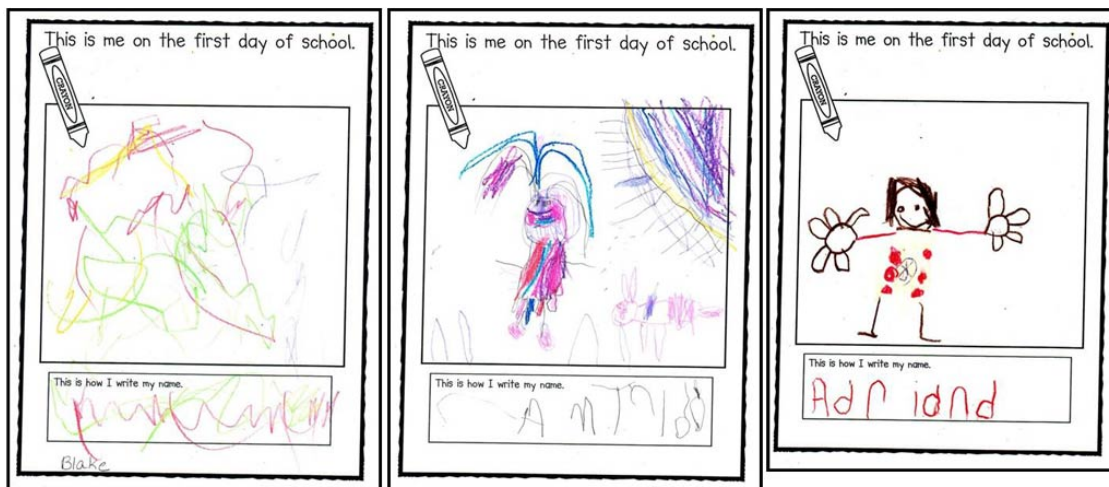


**"Saying and doing" increases handwriting proficiency and multiplies our teaching effectiveness!**



**6. We recognize that "saying and doing" increases retention of new information up to 90%.** This approach to handwriting develops Common Core Language and Speaking and Listening skills. Children verbalize handwriting directional language "curve up, around, and close" as their arms form the letter "O" in the air using "sky writing." Combining handwriting cues and consistent movement patterns takes advantage of how the brain learns best.

**Our diverse kindergartens often represent a 4-year developmental span.**



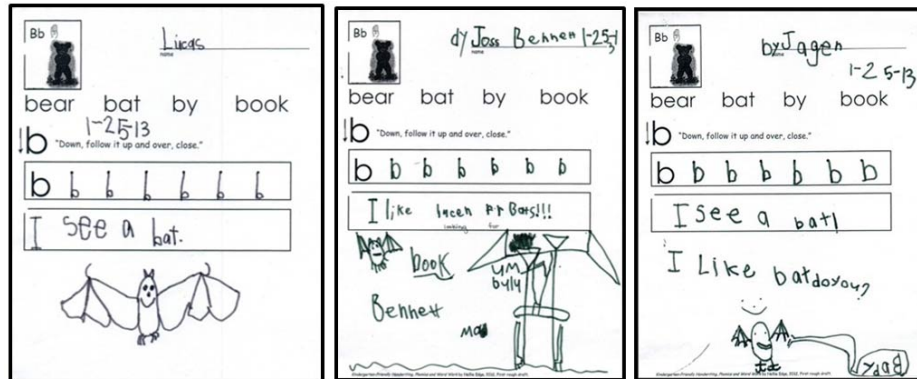
September assessment documentation from Title I Kindergarten



October Assessment documentation from kindergarten in a middle class community

7. This approach to handwriting recognizes the diverse nature of most Northwest kindergartens. Entering students often represent a 4-year span of literacy readiness! Kindergarten-friendly handwriting differentiates learning with intensive individual coaching during the handwriting process. This is especially honoring of English Language Learners and developmentally younger students: All children deserve joyful, multisensory teaching and learning!

**Kindergarten Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work practice pages are introduced after several months of systematic handwriting instruction: They are NOT used to “teach handwriting!”**



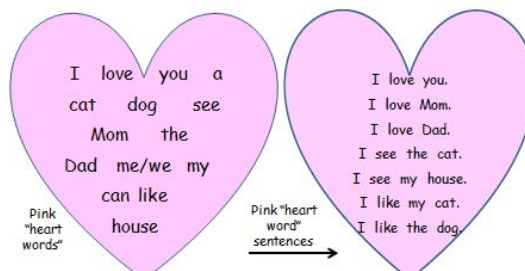
8. A-Z handwriting, phonics, and word work pages are NOT used to “teach handwriting” but rather to provide a review of handwriting movement patterns, in context, once children have mastered name writing and the pink “heart word” sentences (such as “I love you,” “I see the dog,” and “I like my cat”). This authentic approach to handwriting has direct transfer to a Comprehensive Writing Workshop in Kindergarten.

**Kindergarten-friendly handwriting builds stamina and fluency for Writing Workshop: 90% focus is lowercase letters**

The multisensory handwriting pages allow teachers to differentiate learning and provide individual coaching for hard-to-accelerate learners after the “30 Essential Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Lessons” have been introduced and practiced. 90% of our focus is on writing lowercase letters since over 90% of kindergarten writing uses lowercase. The practice books may or may not be needed for all students.



**We Call These High-Frequency Words “Heart Words”**  
Because we want to learn them “by heart” and because these words let us write heart connecting sentences



These are the words young children use most in their writing: They are slightly different than most traditional basal word lists.





**9. Kindergarten-friendly handwriting\* is one part of a powerful Comprehensive Writing Workshop Model** (\*as documented in Nellie Edge Online Seminar #2). It was developed and refined **BY** kindergarten teachers **FOR** kindergarten teachers. Evidence-based research in diverse kindergarten classrooms documents the success of this approach. The results speak for themselves.

**Teachers' high expectations facilitate quality handwriting outcomes.**

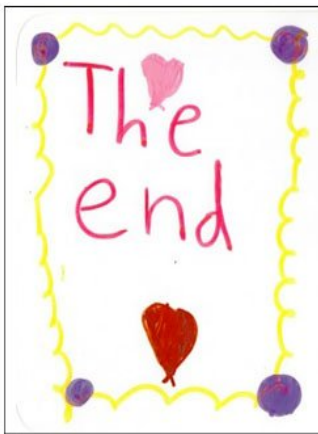


**10. Teacher expectations are huge in teaching all new skills—especially handwriting!** Children **KNOW** if teachers expect them to do quality handwriting or if sloppy work is acceptable. They will rise to meet the expectation of a knowledgeable, caring teacher. Kindergarten handwriting instruction is much more than teaching efficient movement patterns for letters. We pay special attention to how we talk to and encourage children to focus and work hard so we can easily read their writing. Handwriting is where we first have the opportunity to develop the children's focus, metacognition, self-evaluation skills, and to develop their pride in doing quality work. **Our approach to teaching handwriting aims to integrate foundational literacy skills while developing a “growth mindset” that will support children in doing well in school—and in life!**

### **Grow Your Kindergarten Writers**



**The goal of Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting is to grow proficient kindergarten writers** who have the stamina and motivation to write, illustrate and publish books. They learn to meet—or exceed—Common Core Writing Standards. **This intentional approach to kindergarten handwriting instruction** provides a framework for teachers to take their writing program to a higher level.



Our children chant, fingerspell,  
and write t - h - e e - n - d The end!

Nellie Edge Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting is NOT a traditional  
handwriting program:



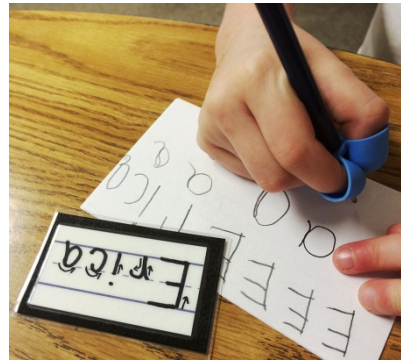
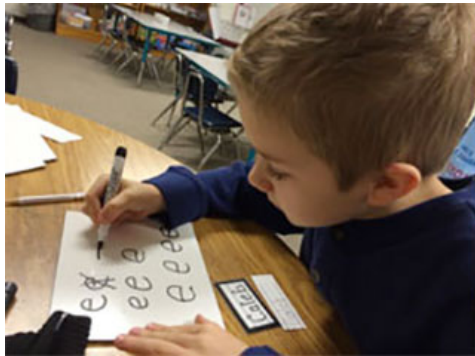
- This research-based handwriting model is **NOT mindlessly tracing** over one letter (the brain habituates after several repeated letters).
- A **one-size-fits-all approach** (While there are essential whole group and small group lessons, much of the important handwriting instruction is seen in brief teaching moments of close individual coaching and positive support.)
- **Isolated drills** separated from authentic writing and drawing work.
- **Rigid, scripted lesson plans.**
- **Tracing over dots:** research shows the brain works much harder when it is asked to copy letters from a model, rather than merely tracing over dots.

**Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting is one part of an authentic and comprehensive writing program.** Knowledgeable kindergarten teachers can integrate many of these principles into their existing practice without purchasing any resources. However, based on what works in real classrooms, we have updated and expanded our handwriting program to include *30 Essential Beginning Handwriting Lessons*, a stronger Parents as Partners program, and more direct instruction in letter recognition and beginning sounds of words.

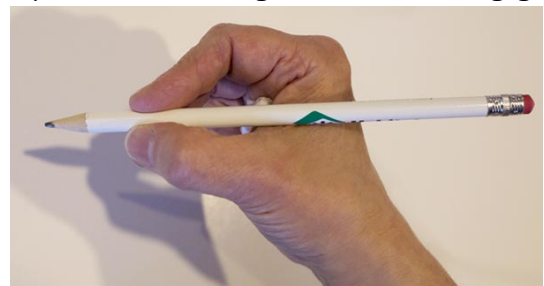


# Ten Tips for Teaching Handwriting Pencil Grip

Two of the foundation skills for kindergarten teachers to introduce during the first busy weeks of school are good handwriting grip and efficient name writing.



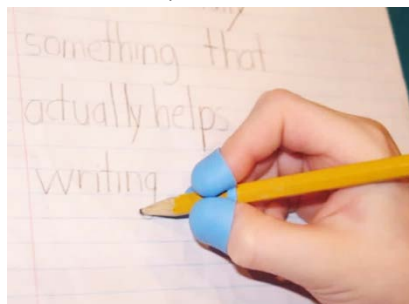
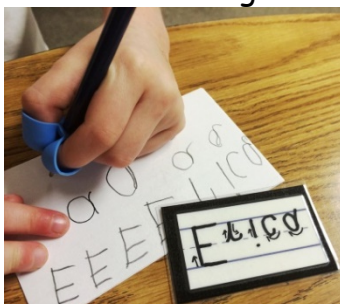
1. **Determine a child's handedness.** Ask parents. Watch the child with manipulative toys. Notice which hand the child uses to pick up crayons or small pencils. Help parents understand that a good pencil grip will help the child write better and enjoy the writing process! Share information to support left-handed writers. Have high expectations for good handwriting grip!



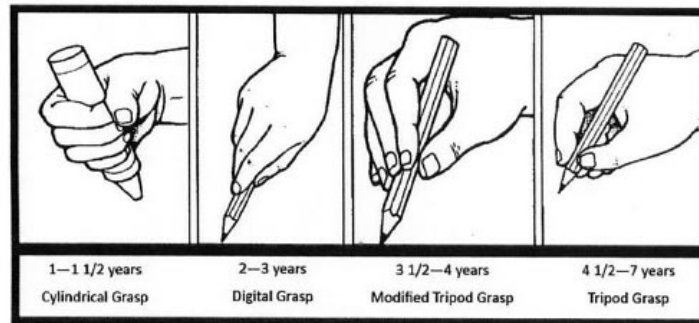
2. Ask the children who are still developing efficient grip to **hold a half a tissue, a cotton ball, or even a marble under two fingers.** This frees the pencil holding fingers to do their job. Place the child's fingers on the pencil.



3. **Teach "duck talk"** with the thumb and pointer finger and enjoy a duck talking finger play. Tell the child to put the pencil in the duck's mouth: That's how we hold a pencil in kindergarten! (We do not know the original online source for this clever strategy.)



4. Have a set of 8-10 finger grip supports available for your young writers. We like to use the C.L.A.W. Ask all of the children at the writing table to use one: *Today we get to write our names using a C.L.A.W. This holds fingers in a good handwriting position. The C.L.A.W. will help our fingers remember how to hold a pencil.*



5. Give families the parent handwriting letter with photos showing the developmental stages of pencil grip during Spring Kindergarten Registration.

Ask for their support at home with pencil grip and name writing. Often parents (and even preschool teachers) are not aware of the developmental sequence of pencil grip dexterity. Download Nellie Edge Parents as Partners Letters:

- [Developing Small Motor Skills and Efficient Pencil Grip](#)

6. Fingerspell with children throughout the day and encourage parents to reinforce fingerspelling at home. Expect firm, accurate fingerspelling shapes: Practice "l-o-v-e" (and other "heart words") and "o" and "k" every day! Remind children: *We fingerspell every day to help our brain remember letters, sounds, and words and to build our finger writing muscles.*

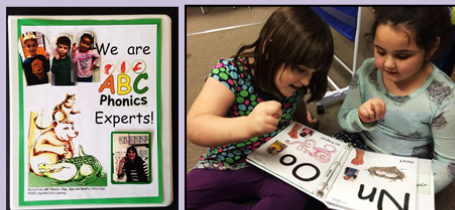


- Learn to fingerspell: Access the free instructional videos on the [ABC Phonics page](#).
- Use fingerspelling during transition times and while children are lining up.

All children can become fingerspelling experts and be honored in an "ABC Phonics Experts Book" with photos of them fingerspelling.



Early in the Year, Emphasize Accurate Fingerspelling  
Children Need to Be Experts! (See Video: Letters and Sounds)  
Here is our ABC Phonics Experts book: Children automatically read and fingerspell!



These Title I kindergarten children knew the song in September because the Head Start program used the ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read! and the school encouraged families to practice the song over the summer. We saw dramatic literacy gains!







7. At the beginning of the year, **offer children short pencils and short triangular crayons**. For the child with fine motor skill delays, occupational therapists recommend breaking thick crayons into small chunks so the only way a child can hold it is by using a tripod grip.



8. **Encourage the use of scissors** at home and at school. Using scissors correctly develops hand and finger strength for writing.



9. **Provide stamping activities and a variety of fine motor table toys for children to manipulate**. Use toys that require a two finger "pincer" grasp. Give families suggestions for fine motor development. Share How to Help Your Child Develop the Small Muscles for Writing Control

- Children can use tweezers to place beads in designs on suction cups as training for holding pencils.
- [ABC Play Dough Fingerspelling Mats](#) become an especially useful social learning and fine motor tool. Play Dough Mats and [ABC Phonics Family Reference Charts](#) are FREE downloads at the [Nellie Edge TpT store](#). **Notice** you can add images from the ABC Phonics Family Reference Chart for great differentiated learning.





Breathe,

Think,

and Focus

# 10. Let children and parents know why we care about pencil grip: What are the benefits of an efficient pencil grasp?

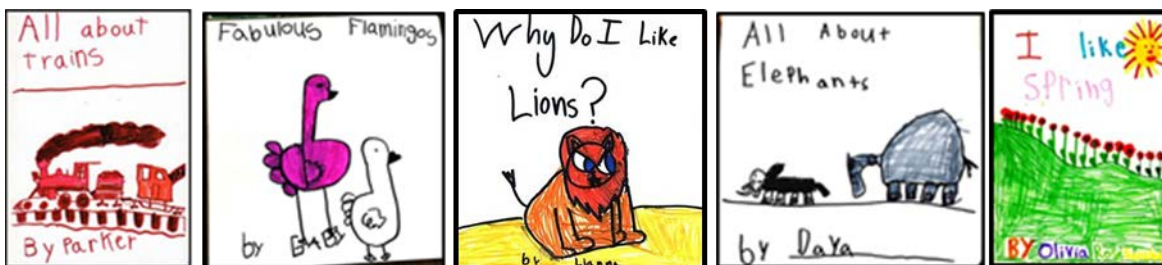
- Kindergarten friends, the reason we want to hold a pencil with a good finger grip is so we can write better and faster and so our finger muscles won't get tired.
- When you hold your pencil correctly, you will be able to see what you are writing.
- You get to think, focus, and work hard to learn new skills: the more you practice, the better you get.
- You'll practice writing your name every day at home and at school using correct kindergarten letter formation and good pencil grip. Soon it will be automatic: You won't even have to think about it... and you'll be an expert!

**To become a name writing expert, we breathe, think, focus, use good pencil grip, and learn to form our letters correctly.**



Name writing experts!

An efficient handwriting grip supports the writing process and happy, high-achieving kindergarten writers who love to write and illustrate their own published books!





# Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters!

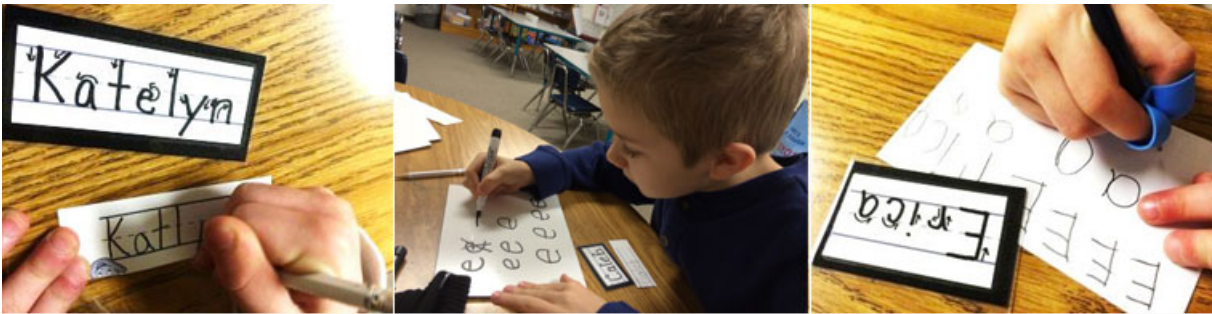
## A Preview of Nellie Edge Online Seminar #2

### Fall and Winter Handwriting Tips for Young Writers

- *If handwriting skills are not automatic, it interferes with the whole writing process!*
- Good handwriting skills facilitate rigorous Common Core writing standards: Continue working with each child's name! □
- **Have high expectations** □
- **Be intentional** □
- **Create a sense of urgency: *Your name is so important!***

K.L.1.a.-3 Print all uppercase letters

K.L.1.a.-4 Print all lowercase letters



- Even by January, almost all kindergarten **children will still need to see a Name Ticket Model** of how their name looks when printed correctly—especially when they start working on their last name too. Consider using a model on lined paper: It will help some children learn letter-size relationships among letters. Use this Name Ticket as their standard of excellence to promote efficient name writing and beginning handwriting fluency. (Fluency = speed and accuracy!) Review ♪ **"Some Letters Are Tall"** song.
- Carefully observe each child forming the letters in their **first name**. Expect each letter to be formed correctly **before letting the child practice both first and last name**. Notice pencil grasp and whether letters are being formed from the top.
- Once a child can print her first name fluently, she may also practice pink "heart word" sentences for handwriting fluency.

**We Call These High-Frequency Words "Heart Words"**  
Because we want to learn them "by heart" and because these words let us write heart connecting sentences

I love you a  
cat dog see  
Mom the  
Dad me we my  
can like  
house

Pink  
"heart  
words"

I love you.  
I love Mom.  
I love Dad.  
I see the cat.  
I see my house.  
I like my cat.  
I like the dog.

Pink "heart  
word"  
sentences

These are the words young children use most in their writing:  
They are different than most traditional basal word lists.

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- Remind children when they are writing their names on papers during the day to **"Breathe, think, and focus...and do quality work!"** We use American Sign Language (ASL).

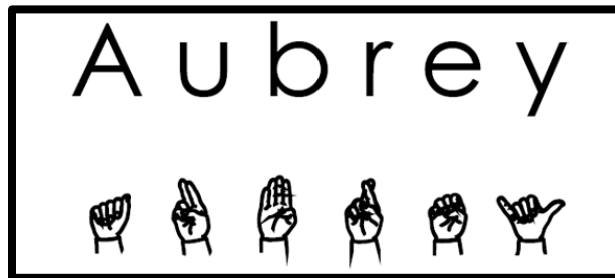


Breathe

Think

Focus

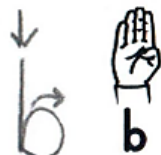
- Continue fingerspelling everything:** It develops writing strength in the finger muscles while building memory hooks for letters and sounds.



- Children need a **consistent routine** and a **short, targeted, systematic time** for daily **name writing practice**, **"heart word" quick writes**, and **a, b, c, d fluency drills**. In some classrooms, this works best first thing in the morning as part of "settling-in time"; other teachers provide this practice after recess and before independent "choice time." Expect ALL children to take the a,b,c,d "Handwriting and Fingerspelling Challenge" in September. Make connections with the **ABC Phonics: Sing, Sing and Read!** program and fingerspelling throughout the curriculum.

## a,b,c,d Challenge

name \_\_\_\_\_



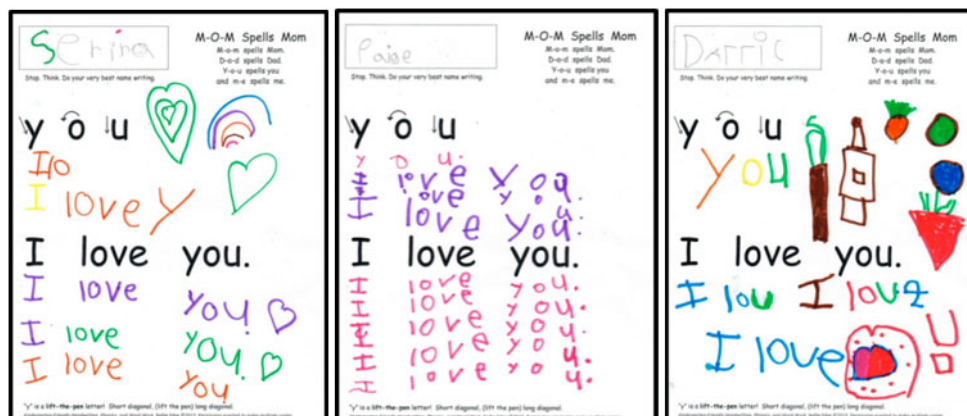
Photos from ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read! published by Sign2Me.



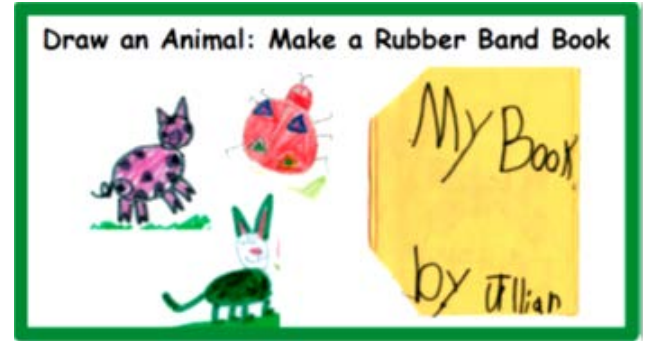
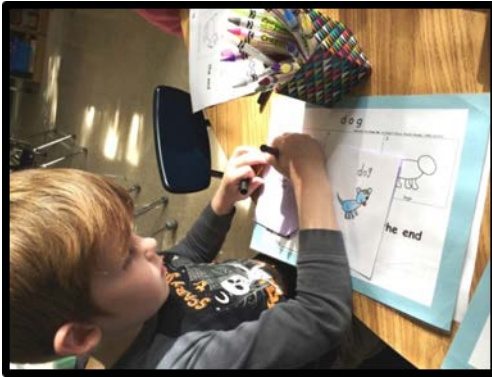
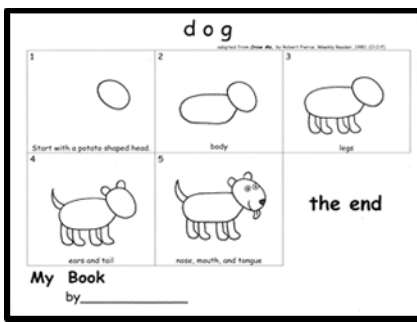
- In still other classrooms, the children are expected to **always do their best name writing**. Some teachers check the students' names on their illustrated "I Can Read" Anthology (Notebook) pages or other art/writing pieces which gets finished before recess. This becomes their "ticket" to go outside. **Expect good name writing throughout the day!**
- Reteach the concept of **continuous motion** and **lift the pen** motion using spiral and twinkling art star projects if needed. (See "30 Essential Beginning Kindergarten Handwriting Lessons" by Nellie Edge on TpT.)



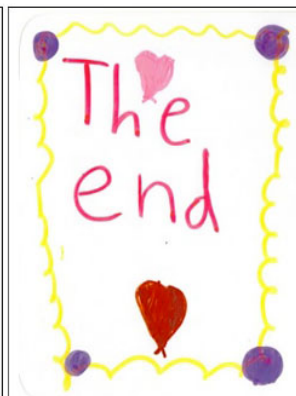
- Review the touchstone sentence: **I love you**. Notice how children are making the lowercase "y"—have them verbalize "short diagonal, long diagonal." Let them write fancy "I love you" secret messages (to take home and hide) as soon as they have demonstrated **mastery!** By January, they will add "I love you **because...**" (Opinion writing) or "I like cats/dogs **because...and because...**"



- **Review minilessons for the word "dog" and "cat"** to work on the counterclockwise "O" movement. Use white boards. Then introduce the Independent Writing Tote so the children can build fluency by writing, drawing, and making books about dogs and cats and other animals. Children love making books!



- Review handwriting motions within the context of **high-frequency "heart word"** sentence patterns before children do independent book making activities. Expect quality handwriting: "I see the dog." Teach children how to draw a house. Sing, sign, and write ♪ "I see my house..." or "This is my house, h-o-u-s-e" from the [Sing, Sign, Spell, and Read! CD](#) and video clip.
- Before children engage in the Book Making/Word Work Fluency totes, use white boards to reteach and review letter shapes for "My Book, by," and "the end." Always have **multiple copies of the language models at the table** as a memory scaffold for quality handwriting.



- Send home a first name—and later first and last name—model and the **Name Ticket Practice Book** again asking families to help the child practice twice a day (especially after your Fall or Winter Literacy Evening!). Parents value good handwriting and appreciate that it is being taught. Include the Name Ticket Model of the child's name.





- **Notice children's independent writing:** Record letter formation problems so you can provide appropriate individual or small group instruction. (We understand this is very challenging in large half-day programs however, we believe it will be the norm in quality all-day kindergarten models.)
- **Honor children as "name writing experts"** once they have learned efficient handwriting motions for each of their letters. The experts can each make a crown and have their pictures taken for a class book or receive a badge or certificate. Kindergarten children love recognition for having worked hard and achieved an important learning target.



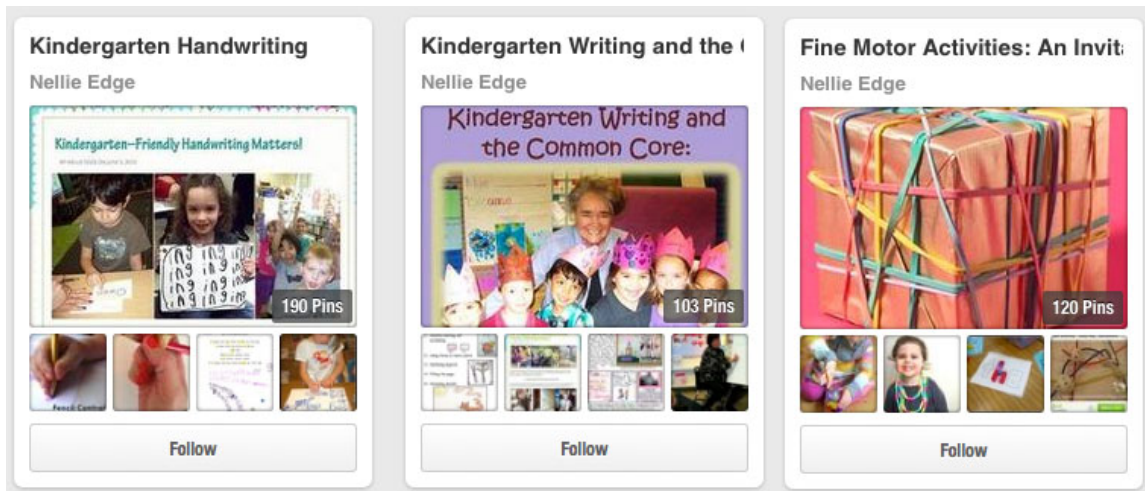
- **Expect good handwriting for the pink and purple "heart words":** include writing the word with fluency as a part of becoming a master of each new set of words! Once pink and purple words are mastered, children will be able to efficiently write every lowercase letter except j, q, and z.



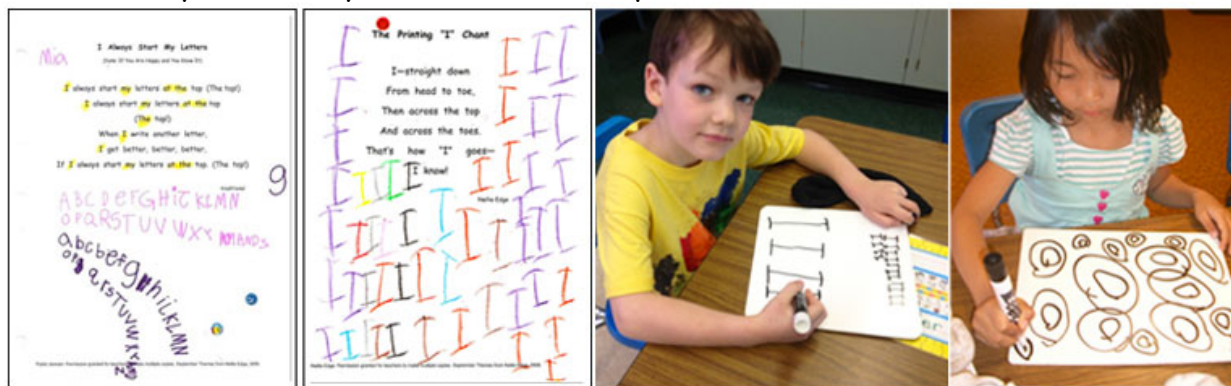
- For children who are still challenged by the skill of holding a pencil, **ask to have an occupational therapist, doctor, or learning specialist screen the child** for large motor integration and strength. Can the child crawl? Cross the midline? Are their arm and shoulder muscles strong enough to support handwriting? Can their fingers form a web for pencil control? Again, continue fingerspelling to build fine motor skills.

See our [Pinterest Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting](#) board for useful articles from occupational therapists.

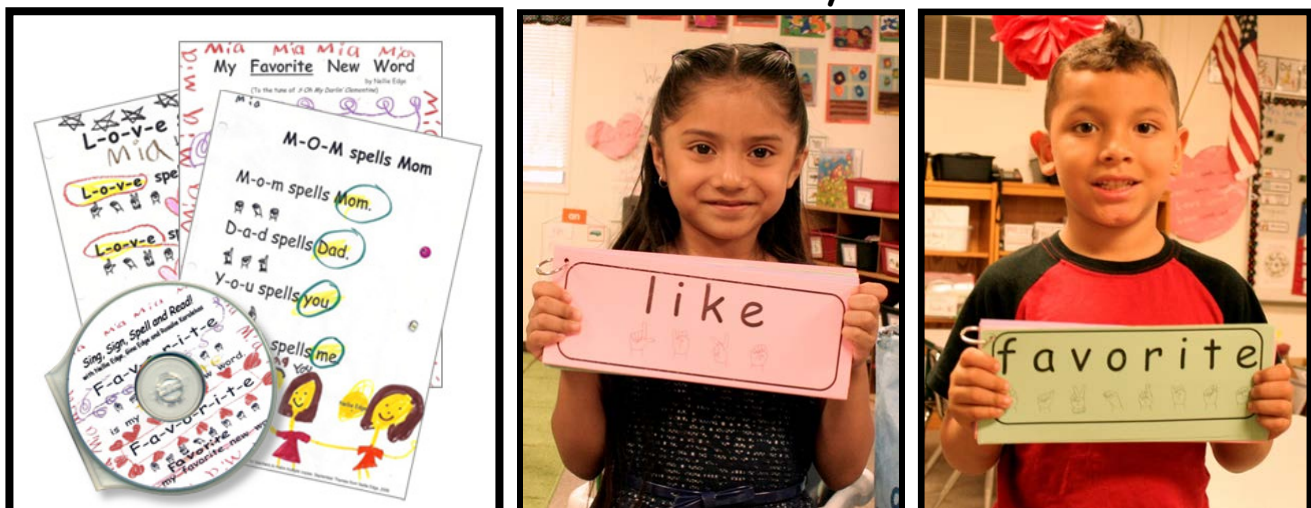




Sing the handwriting songs and chants when you [SCROLL DOWN](#) on the [Handwriting page](#): "I Always Start My Letters at the Top", "The I Chant", and "O Dance."



**Teach handwriting while simultaneously practicing high-frequency "heart words" to accelerate literacy.**



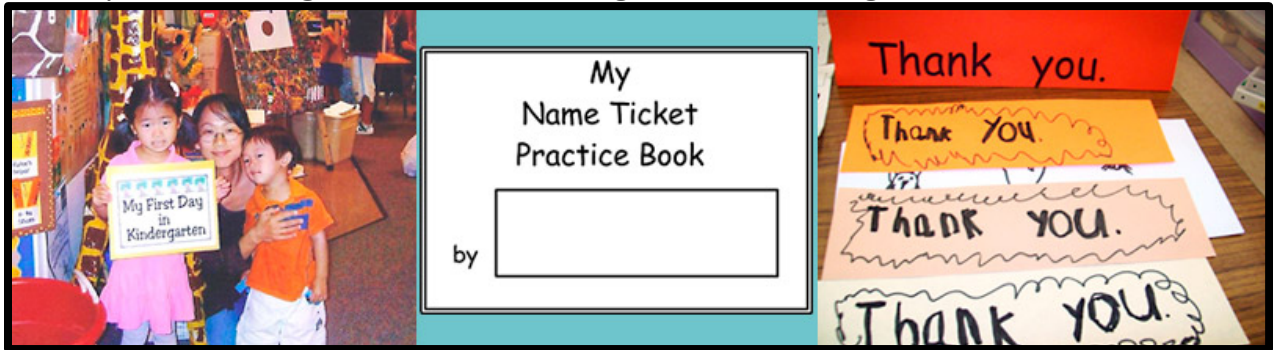
Families love singing along and being "parents as partners" in joyful accelerated literacy learning. Master kindergarten teachers send these components home with children:

- Copies of our **Sing, Sign, Spell and Read!** CD
- "I Can Read" Anthology pages
- Fingerspelling word cards
- (Permission granted to make multiple copies for family literacy.)

# Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters: 16 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

A Nellie Edge Kindergarten Blog

## A Follow-up to Kindergarten Handwriting Matters! blog



We are delighted with the response to our first article: "[Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters!](#)" on our new monthly kindergarten blog. This is a follow-up FAQ in response to many emails and questions.

1. **What is the font that you use for adding fingerspelling under a child's name?** We use the inexpensive fingerspelling font from [educationalfontware.com](http://educationalfontware.com). You can download the font by going to that web address, click on "Buy new academic single user license," then scroll down to what they call the "Nellie Edge Special" (we do not receive a commission!) Click "Buy" and it will let you buy (through Paypal), download, and install the font for \$5.



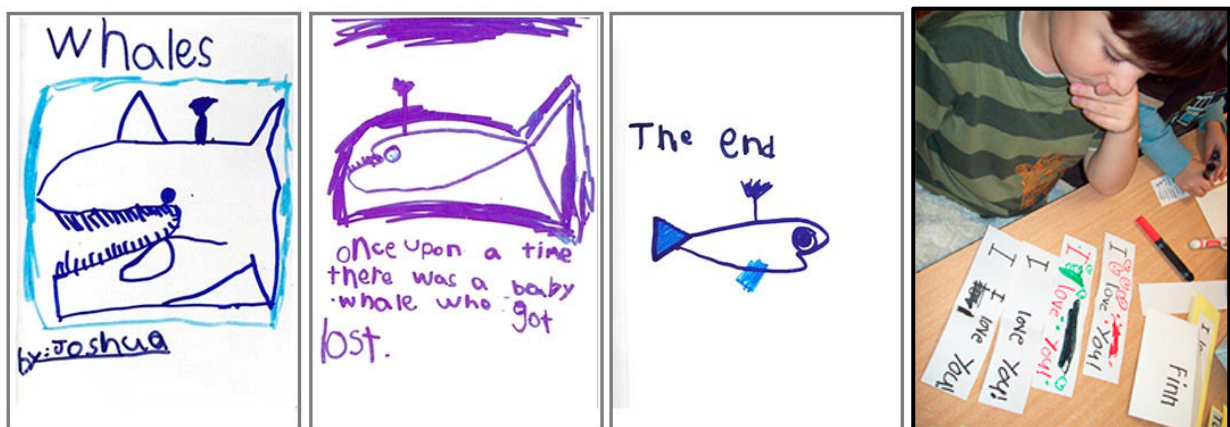
2. **Why do you use unlined paper? What font do you use to get the arrows on the child's Name Ticket?** At the beginning of the kindergarten year (until children have control over basic letter shapes), we use unlined paper and provide the blank Name Ticket for daily practice. **It may cause unnecessary frustration to painstakingly write between three lines** before they have developed automatic control of letters. The brain simply does not learn well on cognitive overload. However, once letter forms are fluent, many teachers switch to three-lined paper for the Name Ticket model and practice paper. For the arrows, I usually handwrite them; **the first directional arrow is red**. Zaner-Bloser sells a font that we like that includes **letter forms**

**with arrows** both on lined and unlined paper. [http://www.schoolfonts.com/cursive-font-blockletter/Letters\\_zaner-bloser\\_style.htm](http://www.schoolfonts.com/cursive-font-blockletter/Letters_zaner-bloser_style.htm)

3. **How do I teach handwriting in 2nd grade if the children did not get handwriting instruction in kindergarten or in first grade?** Efficient handwriting motions and pride in doing quality work should be firmly entrenched by 2nd grade so children's primary focus can be on



producing thoughtful writing pieces that meet rigorous Common Core Standards. That is why K-2 teachers and district literacy coaches need to design a consistent, coordinated approach to handwriting instruction. It is very difficult, time-consuming, and tedious for 1st or 2nd grade teachers to have to reteach movement patterns for efficient handwriting if the foundation has not been laid in kindergarten. Consider using our original blog article as a starting point to begin this important dialog and collaboration within your school community because if handwriting skills are not efficient, it interferes with the whole writing process! By the 2nd grade level, we would hope teachers could continue modeling good handwriting and showcasing student examples of what "quality handwriting" looks like. Students might be engaged weekly in copying over a poem they have memorized with their "best handwriting", and recopying an occasional writing piece for final publications. Kindergartners and primary grade students all appreciate the motivation of book publishing to inspire their best handwriting efforts. Set the standard: We do quality work in this classroom!



**4. When do you teach spacing between words?** Right from the start of the kindergarten handwriting journey with the power sentence, "I love you." We have the child verbalize as they write "I (space), love (space), you (period or exclamation mark.)". Frequent teacher modeling and reminders will be needed. Children soon learn that they are writing for readers, and the spaces allow everyone to more easily read their sentences. Here again, the teacher's expectations become evident in the children's writing. Notice the spaces between words in these examples of "secret" messages.



## 5. What do you think of the commercial handwriting programs?

I have not personally used any commercial handwriting programs, however I am told that some programs start kindergartners working first on capital letters, which is a concern. We want kindergartners to be writing and reading lowercase letters right from the first days of school so we can build a classroom of prolific and engaged young writers who meet rigorous standards by the end of the year. Our colleagues who have used commercial handwriting programs have indicated that the training programs and materials can be expensive and practicing individual letters on worksheets does not transfer to the writing process as well as opportunities to build whole word fluency. With limited budgets, time restraints, and diverse kindergarten learners, **we prefer approaches to handwriting that differentiate handwriting**

**instruction** while simultaneously teaching high-frequency "heart words" and reinforcing phonics skills. Our experience also has taught us that the counterclockwise "o" motion starting on a diagonal (as in "o, a, c, d, g") is more easily generalized with fluid movement than starting the "o" at the center line as is taught in some programs. That said, "If your handwriting program works well for you, use it!" Consider weaving fingerspelling and handwriting practice with high-frequency words into your literacy framework. There is no one right way for every teacher to incorporate handwriting instruction into a day filled with meaning-centered learning. We developed our integrated approach to handwriting in collaboration with master kindergarten teachers; our goal was maximum fluency and transfer to the writing workshop in the minimum amount of time.

*Handwriting practice is woven into authentic writing experiences that have meaning to the child—not isolated drill!*



### To summarize our priorities for kindergarten handwriting:

- Teach lowercase letters right from the start: begin with the child's first name.
- Weave capital letter practices into authentic writing experiences. See article, [How Do We Teach Capital Letters?](#)
- Use multisensory memory hooks to accelerate the handwriting development.
- Avoid a one-size-fits-all, isolated skills approach.
- Teach o, a, c, d, and g as continuous motion letters.
- Do not waste limited budgets on consumable materials.
- Teach for immediate transfer to writing workshop.

**6. Why do you recommend teaching ball and stick rather than D'Nealian?** The vertical manuscript alphabet is more quickly mastered by young children. It is easier for them to learn to read, write, and spell using the same visual alphabet. See the article, [The Great Handwriting Debate](#) on our website. with summary of research by our colleague Julie Lay. The alphabet system that children use to learn to read and to write needs to be visually consistent. (Note: we



have borrowed some ideas about efficient continuous motions for forming the letters o, a, c, d, and g from the D'Nealian approach.)

**7. How do you work with the left-handed student?** There are some excellent resource links for working with the left-handed learner on our Nellie Edge [Pinterest Handwriting board](#). Also see article from our teacher's guide called, [How to Work with Left-handed Writers](#). It is important to be aware and sensitive to the unique challenges for the left-handed child learning handwriting. For example, when we provide large muscle patterning, the left-handed child grasps both hands together to perform the movements.



**8. How does the Sing, Sign, Spell, and Read! program fit in with handwriting?** The "O" Dance and our handwriting songs and chants for 32 high-frequency "heart words" are recorded on this CD and accompanying anthology collection. Music, sign language, movement, and dance provide a multisensory and memorable link between high-frequency words, phonics, and handwriting. It simply multiplies our teaching effectiveness! [Purchase NEW Music CD and 32 printed pages from our online bookstore.](#)

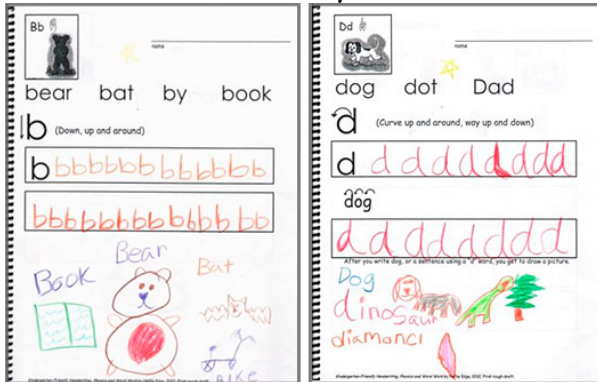


**9. When do you actually start using the handwriting books?** The Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work writing and drawing books are designed to reinforce handwriting patterns that have already been introduced and rehearsed using "heart words". We want most children to already have internalized basic handwriting motions before presenting them with these invitations to demonstrate handwriting using real words and sentences. Some teachers start these books in November while others (depending on the level of the writing progress) wait until as late as January. These pages provide an opportunity to target instruction (with small groups) to children who have been harder-to-accelerate while providing meaningful cognitive challenges for all learners. (Again, first see our blog article about how we teach efficient handwriting motions from the beginning of the year.)



**10. What is your recommendation for eliminating the "b" and "d" confusion?** Good first-teaching research from the Reading Recovery™ folks informed our approach to teaching "b" and

"d" ... First we intentionally teach "d" using the language "curve up and around, way up and down" with the words "dog" and "Dad". Children learn to draw a dog and build fluency with power sentence patters: "I love my Dad." "I see the dog." Later we consistently teach "b" using a different beginning language and movement pattern "down, up and around." Children write the words "book", "by", and "bat". It is essential that children verbalize the directional language cues which immediately cue the brain differently. If one letter is woven into authentic literacy



experiences for a week of writing (and drawing) projects before the other is introduced, children should avoid "b" and "d" confusion. Teaching both of the letters "b" and "d" with the same initial downward movement pattern is what creates the confusion for less experienced learners.

**11. I notice you often don't use lines. What kind**

**of paper do you recommend? When do you use three-lined paper? Does it matter?** Here again, K-1 teams need to decide on a consistent progression and there is no "just one right way" for every child. My colleagues often begin the year with drawing lessons and labeling on unlined paper. Within a month we use "kid writing" paper with a white space for children to use and a shaded space for adult underwriting. By mid-year most children no longer need adult underwriting and we use single-lined paper. In May, some teachers invite children to experience the traditional (first grade) "three lined paper!" During the beginning of the year, however, until children are more proficient, we want our young writers putting their energy into learning good handwriting motions and getting their ideas down in print rather than consuming so much energy focusing on how to navigate three lined paper. Cognitive overload slows down the learning process.



**12. How do you help children who come into kindergarten without the fine motor skills to hold a pencil?** This is a constant challenge in our large, diverse kindergarten classrooms, especially in half day programs, when teachers are feeling tremendous time pressure. I have heard (I do not have research or statistics) of preschools programs where teachers are wisely suggesting that developmentally younger children enter kindergarten a year later. Some researchers are recommending that boys start kindergarten at age five and a half since often their fine-motor skills are delayed that much behind girls. Once our states are funding a quality kindergarten model, we hope to see a more integrated approach to early literacy (preK-1) with options for some children to have an extra year in a strong developmental preschool or kindergarten which emphasizes language development, self-regulation, and small muscle skills.



There are currently pilot projects supported by National Institute of Child Health and Human Development where they are targeting afterschool programs with kindergarten and first graders involved in skills to develop executive functions such as following directions and visual-motor skills such as cutting paper. We have attempted, as much as possible, to integrate both



of these skills into our approach to handwriting, word work, and phonics. Children need time and opportunity to cut and paste, build with Legos, create models with clay, and copy drawing models.

We like giving children pencils for little hands from Handwriting Without Tears® [www.hwtears.com](http://www.hwtears.com)

**Fingerspelling is the best multisensory tool we know of to develop both finger muscles and ABC/Phonics memory connections in young children.** We are happy to see more preschool and Headstart teachers using it. See the [ABC Phonics tab at nellieedge.com](http://nellieedge.com) for more details about this proven approach to accelerated literacy.

See article, [Activities for Developing Fine Motor Coordination](#).

**13. What do you tell parents about teaching handwriting in kindergarten?** Parents are Partners in every aspect of building strong literacy foundations. This includes handwriting: We provide name-writing models and ask parents to help their child in daily name writing practice at home on specially designed Name Ticket Books. We send home skinny books (and other blank books) for children to engage in meaningful word work using high-frequency "heart words". There are several sample parent information letters included in our handwriting teachers' guide. We find parents are very pleased that we care about building good handwriting skills and are very supportive of our efforts. See [Name Ticket Practice Book](#).

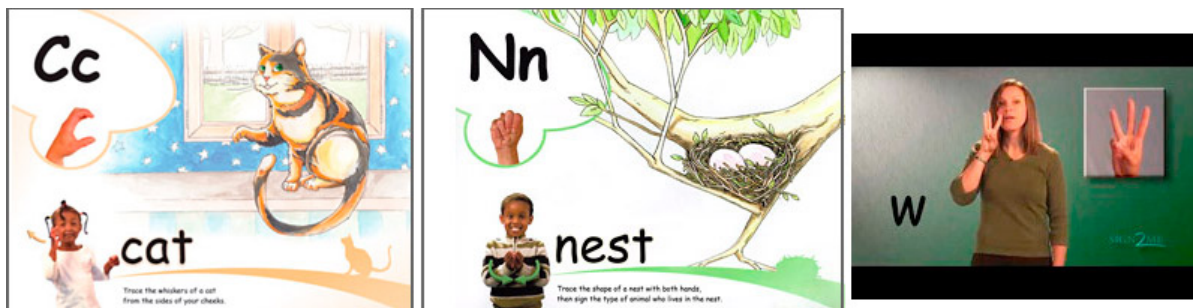


**14. How is your kindergarten-friendly approach to handwriting different than traditional handwriting programs?** Kindergarten-friendly handwriting is integrated with phonics and high-frequency word work (rather than primarily being taught as isolated drill). It is multisensory and includes fingerspelling and experiences in the arts. This approach does not require buying consumable workbooks each year; nor does this require the services of occupational therapists. (Though we wish all schools had one!) Our approach has a strong "Parents as Partners" component and has proven successful in meeting the accelerated writing standards of the Common Core. Traditional handwriting programs appear to progress slower, and be more expensive and time consuming to implement. The handwriting skills of older, traditional programs often do not introduce letters

within the context of real words, so the transfer to actual "kid writing" is not as strong. Our focus from the start is on developing proficient writers. This begins with highly differentiated instruction where each child learns how to print their first name.

**15. What handwriting apps do you recommend for the iPad?**

"Zaner-Bloser Handwriting ABC" (\$1.99) and the free app called "Little Writer" are the ones my colleague Winter Curry recommends. We caution you against apps that have children tracing over all uppercase letters to create words.



**16. What's the easiest way to learn fingerspelling?** Our publisher, Sign2Me, has generously provided quality instructional You-Tube videos to accompany our [ABC Phonics: Sign, Sign, and Read!](#) book and CD. You can access them from the ABC Phonics tab on our website. One of the excellent video tutorials teaches fingerspelling. Consider using it in the classroom and learn right along with your children!

**Teacher expectations are huge in teaching all new skills—especially handwriting!** Children KNOW if teachers expect them to do quality handwriting or if sloppy work is acceptable. They will rise to meet the expectation of a knowledgeable, caring teacher. Kindergarten handwriting instruction is so much more than teaching efficient movement patterns for letters. We pay special attention to how we talk to and encourage children because handwriting is where we first have the opportunity to develop the children's focus, metacognition, self-evaluation skills, and to develop their pride in doing quality work. Our approach to teaching handwriting aims to integrate foundational literacy skills while developing "habits of mind" that will support children in school—and in life!

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Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work is [available online on Nellie Edge Kindergarten TpT](#). It includes

- A detailed teacher's guide
- 30 Essential Beginning Kindergarten Handwriting Lessons
- A-Z template pages for Student Practice Books
- "Parents as Partners" in Kindergarten Handwriting Guide

The entire program is included FREE as a part of Nellie Edge Online Seminar #2: "Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters!"

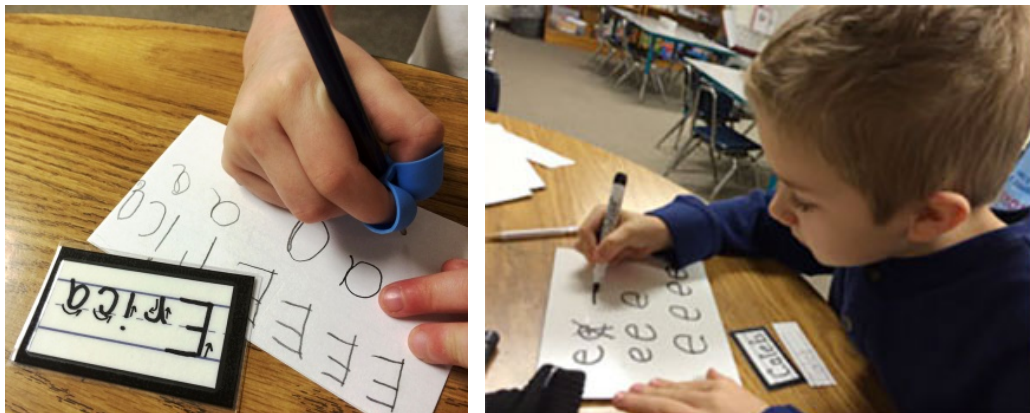


# 10 Reasons to Teach Fingerspelling in Kindergarten



**1. Fingerspelling helps the brain remember letters and sounds:** It becomes the memory hook to ABC/Phonics mastery. Fingerspelling will enhance the effectiveness of any ABC/Phonics program.

*How did you teach your brain to fingerspell every letter in your name?*



**2. Fingerspelling develops fine motor dexterity** for efficient pencil grip and handwriting proficiency.



**3. For English language learners, fingerspelling provides an additional pathway to learning success** with letters, sounds, and high-frequency “heart words.” (Many English language learners master fingerspelling faster than their English-speaking classmates.)

***Wow! You learned to sing, sign, fingerspell, and read another new word!***



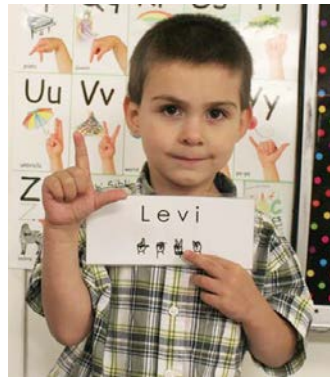
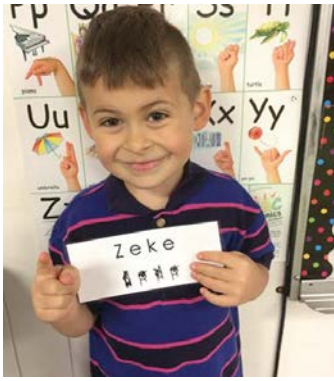
**4. While teaching fingerspelling, thoughtful educators develop metacognition and a growth mindset:** We teach children to focus, work hard, set goals, and think about their learning.

***Look closely, keep practicing, and you can teach your brain to remember!***



**5. The strategies used to teach fingerspell are supported by decades of visual learning research.** Teachers and children have crystal-clear, achievable learning targets. Teachers provide specific feedback, children learn to assess their progress, and mastery is acknowledged and celebrated! (Read John Hattie’s book, *Visible Learning for Teachers*)





**6. Fingerspelling provides additional support for children who are highly kinesthetic learners:** All children are having the experience of learning a new language together while building stamina for writing workshop.



**The more you practice, the better you get!**

**7. Learning to fingerspell provides a family literacy experience,** multiplying our teaching effectiveness. Free online ASL video clips and abc support for at-home practice are available. Let parents know that fingerspelling not only builds hand-eye coordination for writing but also develops strength and dexterity for athletics and playing a musical instrument.

**Parents as Partners multiplies our teaching effectiveness.**



8. **Fingerspelling teaches young children a new language.** American Sign Language (ASL) is the third most commonly used language in the United States.

*Childhood is for language. ~ Lewis Thomas*



9. **Learning to fingerspell builds children's pride in mastering a new communication skill.** It teaches children to focus, observe closely, work hard, and develop visual motor integration.

*You worked hard, and now you're an expert at fingerspelling every letter from A to Z. You must feel proud of becoming a master of fingerspelling!*

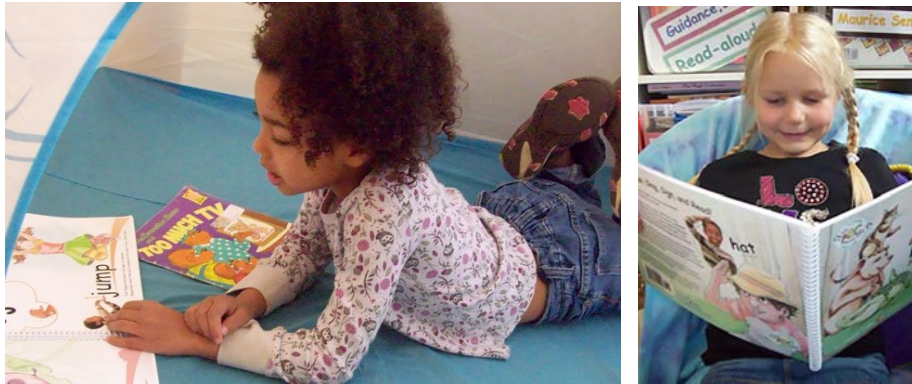


10. **Fluency with fingerspelling provides a memory hook to phonics during Writing Workshop** while children are learning how to encode sounds to print.



When children fingerspell, it triggers the letter/sound memory. It also enhances the memory for high-frequency "heart words."

**Wow! How did you teach your brain to remember that?**



## **Learn to Teach Powerful Fingerspelling in Just a Few Minutes a Day**

Free Resources at [www.NellieEdge.com/ABC Phonics](http://www.NellieEdge.com/ABC Phonics)

- Learn to Fingerspell: View FREE instructional videos from Sign2Me
- See glimpses of fingerspelling for ABC and Phonics learners with FREE teacher supports
- See document: ["Parents as Partners: Why We Teach American Sign Language and Fingerspelling"](#)
- See document: [How to Make Name/Fingerspelling Cards](#)



- Download FREE [ABC Phonics Family Reference Chart](#)
- See document: [Excerpts From Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analysis Related to Achievement](#) by John Hattie, Routledge Publishers, 2009
- *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* Book and wall charts are available at [www.Sign2Me.com](http://www.Sign2Me.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) "

# Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting by Nellie Edge

A multisensory, integrated, authentic approach that builds stamina for writing workshop!

## Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work

Teacher's Guide  
by Nellie Edge

**What Does Quality Kindergarten Handwriting Look Like?**

- Every letter is formed correctly: Letters are tall, small, or they fall...
- Good spacing between words
- Print is easy to read

**Why is Good Handwriting So Important?**

- So we can write better and faster
- So our finger muscles won't get tired
- So everyone can read our writing
- So we can build our reading and writing brain

**Let's Learn to Draw Stars and Create Designs!**

A Talking Star  
Vertical  
Horizontal  
Diagonal  
Diagonal

Then across the top  
Add across the base  
That's how "A" goes!

The artist can draw each shape taking stars.  
Practice on paper like stars from the gallery. (Copy right)  
The one who stars the "A" can draw.

## 30 Essential Kindergarten Handwriting Lessons

**What Does Quality Kindergarten Handwriting Look Like?**

- Every letter is formed correctly: Letters are tall, small, or they fall...
- Good spacing between words
- Print is easy to read

**Why is Good Handwriting So Important?**

- So we can write better and faster
- So our finger muscles won't get tired
- So everyone can read our writing
- So we can build our reading and writing brain

**Why Do I Like Lions?**

**All about trains**

**I like Spring**

## Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work

An Optimal Learning Model that Builds Stamina for Writing Workshop

**Aa**  
alligator apple at  
a (Curve up and around, up and down.)  
I see the apple.

**Bb**  
bear bat by book  
b (Down, up and around.)  
I see the bear.

**Cc**  
cat can candy  
C (Curve up and around.)  
I see the cat.

**Dd**  
dog dot Dad  
d (Curve up and around, way up and down.)  
I see the dog.

Notice each page provides a lesson in letter recognition, fingerspelling, and beginning sounds for differentiated learning targets.

Key phonics images from *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* by Nellie Edge and Sign2Me Early Learning, ©2010.

## Parents as Partners in Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting

**Developing Small Motor Skills and an Efficient Pencil Grip Are Important Parts of Learning How to Write—and Enjoying the Process!**

Dear Parents,

Good handwriting matters, beginning with a good pencil grasp!

If handwriting motions are not efficient, it interferes with the whole process.

As your child develops a better pencil grasp, the writing process becomes easier.

(This drawing shows typical progression of preschool development of pencil grasp. We were not able to locate its source.)

**A Family Guide to Support Handwriting Development**

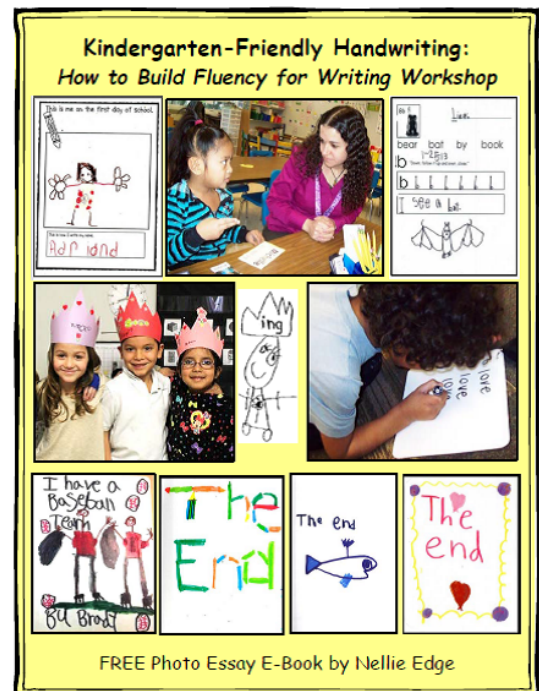
**Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii**



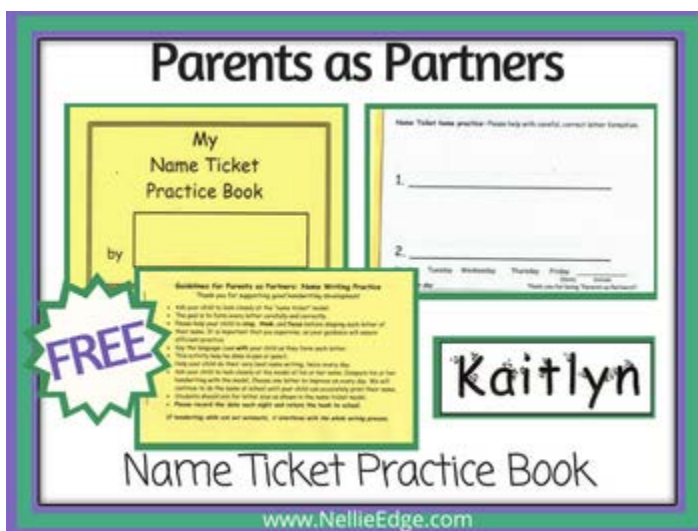
# Additional Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Resources on TpT



Kindergarten Handwriting MasterClass  
Intensive Power Guide from  
Nellie Edge Online Seminar #2



**FREE e-Book:**  
*Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting:  
How to Build Fluency for Writing Workshop*  
A collection of photo essays



FREE Parents as Partners  
Name Ticket Practice Book



FREE Play Dough Mats with abc,  
Fingerspelling, and Handwriting Guide

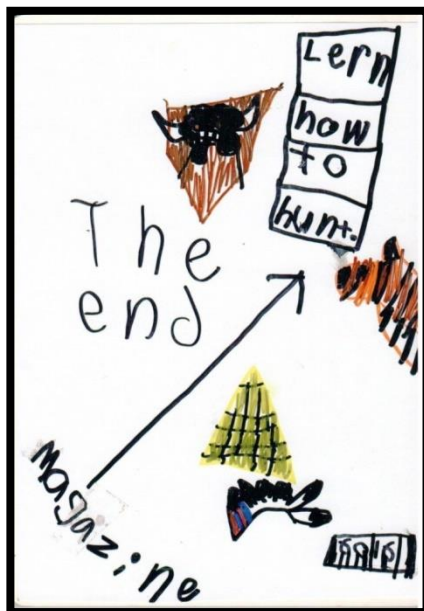
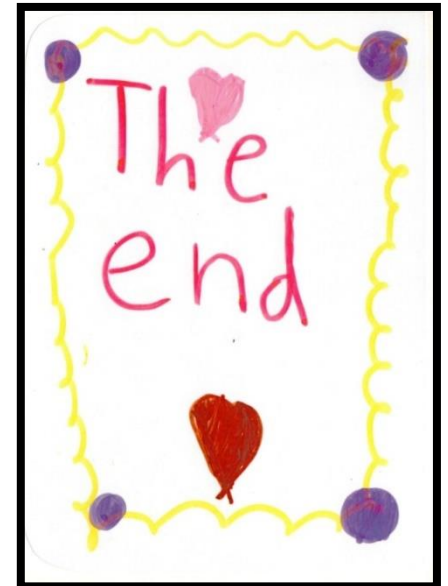
## Additional Nellie Edge Support for Kindergarten Handwriting Includes:

- *Sing, Sign, Spell, and Read!* CD and program with handwriting and sight word songs and "I Can Read" Anthology pages
- Kindergarten Family Learning Calendars

# Kindergarten Authors and Illustrators Learn to Fancy Up "The End" Pages

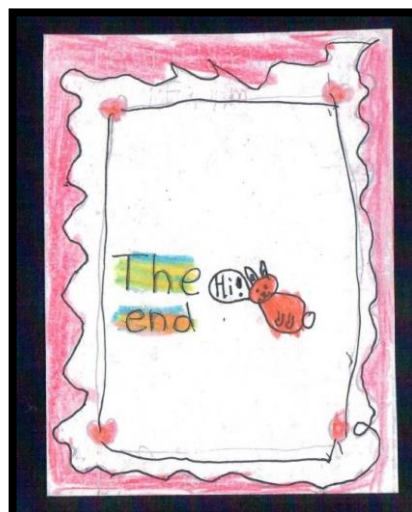
Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting provides authentic word  
work and builds stamina for writing workshop

Children produce unique and creative work.



**T-h-e e-n-d. The end!**

Enjoy spelling chants from  
*Sing, Sign, Spell and Read!* CD by  
Nellie Edge, Gina Edge, and  
Rosalie Karalekas



Teachers have permission  
to make multiple copies of  
*Sing, Sign, Spell, and Read!*  
program  
for Family  
Literacy.



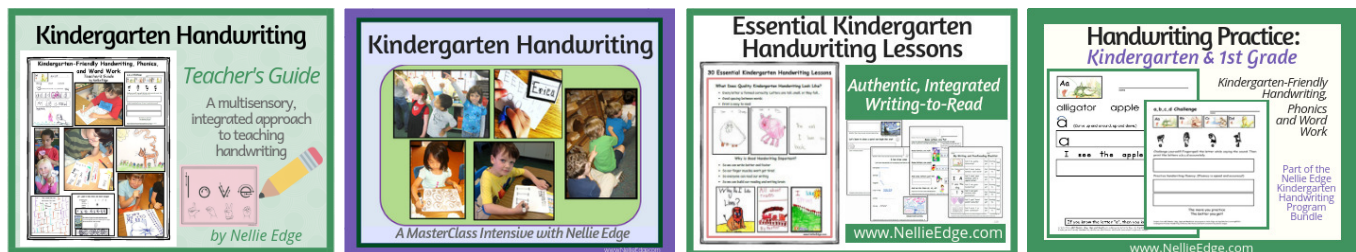
**All kindergartners love to write, draw, and make books!**



## Purchase the Nellie Edge Kindergarten Handwriting Program Bundle and Save!



### What is included in the bundle?



### Additional handwriting support on TPT



### What does this program look like in diverse kindergarten classrooms?

Scan through [Handwriting Page](#) on my website, [nellieedge.com](http://nellieedge.com).

### What is the easiest way to learn how to implement these practices?

Study [Nellie Edge Online Seminar #2](#): "Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting Matters!"  
(Handwriting resources included free in this seminar)

- View step-by-step videos of authentic and proven best practices
- Give children the gift of lifelong habits of legible handwriting beginning with their name
- Weave handwriting into authentic literacy lessons and learn to fingerspell!
- Simultaneously teach handwriting and multisensory sight word lessons
- Involve Parents as Partners to accelerate the learning process
- Build the reading and writing brain
- Return often to Nellie Edge Online Seminars to review handwriting strategies (as well as ABC Phonics and Sight Word Work) throughout the year

*If handwriting motions are not fluent, it interferes with the whole writing process.*

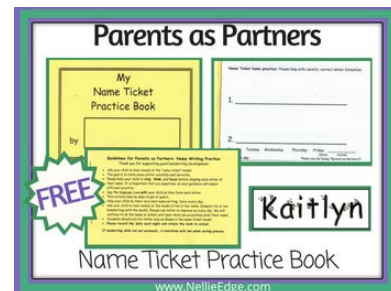
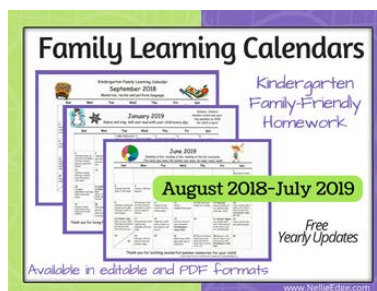
## Thank You for Your Interest in My Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting, Phonics, and Word Work Program!

If you have any comments or questions please email me at <mailto:info@NellieEdge.com>. Remember rate the product and to leave feedback on our store to earn TpT money credits to put toward future purchases! [Follow my store](#) to be notified of new Nellie Edge Resources products. **All new items are listed at 50% off for the first 48 hours after posting.**

This item is a free digital download from my TpT store.

As such, it is for use in one classroom only. This item is bound by copyright laws and redistributing, editing, selling or posting this item (or any part thereof) on the Internet are all strictly prohibited without first gaining permission from the author. Violations are subject to the penalties of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. You are welcome to recommend this product to others as long as there is a direct link for purchase from Nellie Edge Resources. Please contact me if you wish to request special permissions.

Again, thank you for your interest in Nellie Edge Kindergarten Handwriting Resources. If you like this product, be sure to check out our other early literacy resources:



SMILES and Happy Teaching!  
Nellie Edge

[www.NellieEdge.com](http://www.NellieEdge.com)