

## Position Statement

### Instruction for Penmanship and Keyboarding; Contributions from the Occupational Therapist

Penmanship is an instructional area that is included in the English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, and is part of the Writing Strategies curriculum for all students for grades K-4. All teachers (both general and special education) are responsible for penmanship instruction, described as “legible handwriting, cursive or joined italic” in the state standards, and are qualified to provide this instruction. (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/elacontentstnds.pdf>)

Keyboarding and word-processing skills are listed under Research and Technology as an instructional area, and are included in the English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, as part of the Writing Strategies curriculum for all students in grades 4-6. All teachers (both general and special education) are responsible for technology instruction, and are qualified to provide this instruction.

It is in the best interest of all students that handwriting and keyboarding instruction be implemented on a daily, on-going basis in the classroom, and then fully integrated into all curricular content. Individualized penmanship practice sessions should be conducted by educational staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals.

Occupational Therapists (OT) and Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTA) provide services related to the underlying factors of penmanship performance, including but not limited to poor fine motor skills or visual perceptual deficits. The therapy intervention plan would include a range of strategies and activities that seek to improve fine motor control, visual perceptual skills, motor planning, posture and self-regulation needed for a wide array of school tasks. Teachers continue to remain responsible for penmanship and keyboarding instruction, with collaborative assistance from the OT staff, such as making recommendations regarding classroom practice parameters. The OT is not the primary person responsible for handwriting skills and instruction.

If decreased penmanship affects a student’s ability to demonstrate knowledge in a content area, the IEP team needs to determine other methods for the student to use. This could include typing, dictation and oral reporting to the teacher, in order to demonstrate knowledge in a content area. (Universal Design for Learning)

The IEP team, as a whole, is responsible for developing an instructional plan for students with special needs, and is directed to write IEP goals that are educationally related, and relevant to the content standards. Handwriting and Keyboarding are components of Written Language. A handwriting goal or a typing goal is not an “OT goal”.

All IEP goals are the *student’s* goals, and the related service providers select those goals that they believe their service will augment. Related Service staff provide a range of services to assist teachers in helping students achieve their educational goals, and for the OT, this includes training, demonstration, consultation, collaboration, and intervention that address the *underlying components* of skill development.

A request for occupational therapy support for fine motor and/or visual perceptual concerns may be considered only after the site educational team has considered all possible supports in the classroom. This includes the Writing Strategies content standards and instruction for penmanship, as well as utilizing simple accommodations, such as providing adapted paper (clear visual boundaries) or pencil grips. The student with special needs who has not responded to penmanship instruction may be referred for OT assessment to determine if underlying problems with fine motor and visual perceptual skills are contributing to the handwriting difficulties.

Poor handwriting alone, without other fine motor control or visual perceptual skill deficits does not indicate a need for occupational therapy support. A *cluster* of performance concerns, including but not limited to, difficulties with manipulating or using school tools, near or far-point copying, losing one’s place while reading, poor desk posture, or difficulty sequencing motor tasks, in addition to poor handwriting, would indicate a need for occupational therapy observation or assessment.