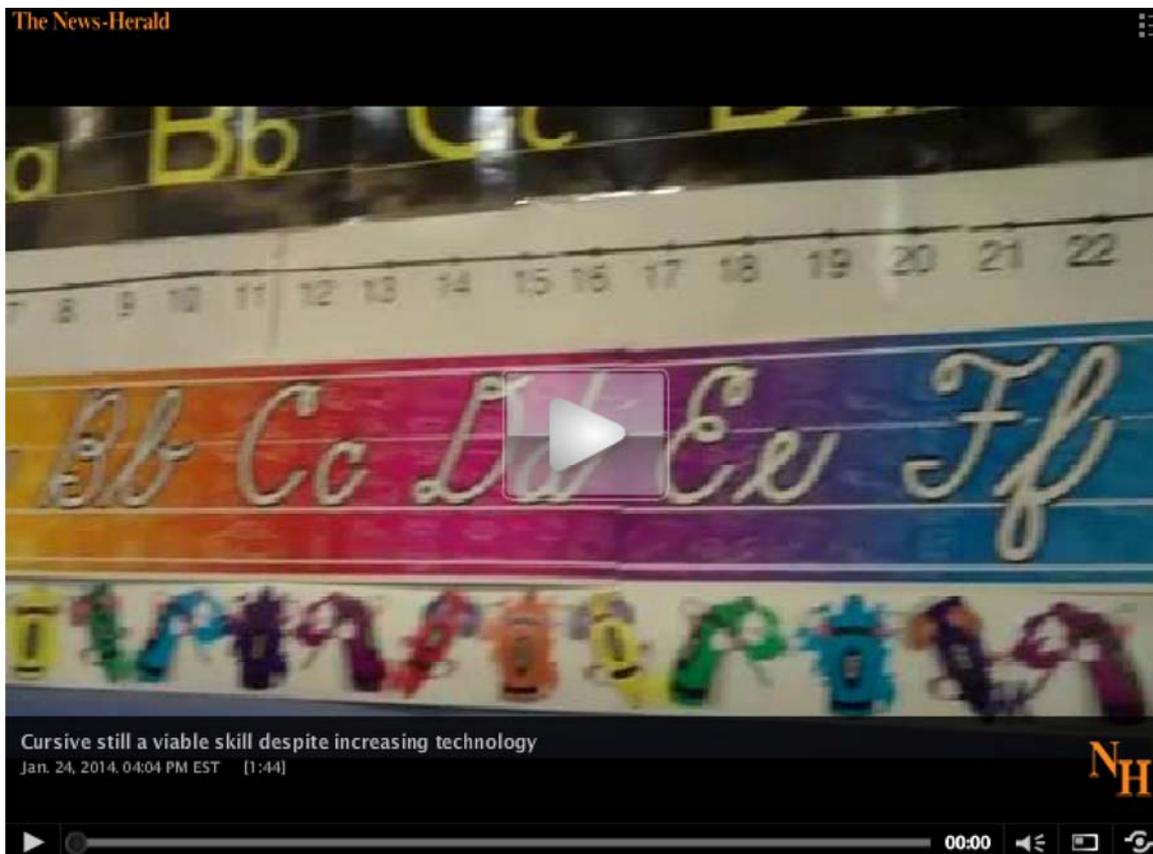


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## Northeast Ohio schools keeping cursive despite not being mandated by Common Core



By [Jean Bonchak](#), The News-Herald

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Jeff Forman/JForman@News-Herald.com

Jack Petroff works on a cursive writing exercise Thursday in Beth Gordon's second grade class at Bellflower Elementary School.

Despite keyboarding, texting and other forms of technological communication, teaching the art of cursive writing is still important among area educators.

Though not mandated by the Common Core, the skill performed by joining letters in flowing strokes and sometimes referred to as “longhand,” continues to be taught.

And even though Ohio is among the 45 states officially adopting the directive, the Department of Education said it supports the instruction of cursive writing in the classroom.

However, state Board Member Sarah Fowler who represents portions of Lake County, all of Geauga County and other nearby districts, stated that additional discussion on the matter will ensue.

“We will be looking at ‘Is it still a useful skill or has it been antiquated through technology?’ ” she said.

From a personal standpoint Fowler believes cursive writing is significant.

“Writing your name is one of the marks of a civilized society,” she said. “It’s something that has spanned time and place and has really been a useful skill for over 500 years. That’s a very long time just to throw it out because we have computers.”

State board member Tess Elshoff said she’s being proactive in her attempts to ensure cursive is retained in Ohio. She’s presenting experts on the subject at a board meeting in February and plans to submit a resolution strongly supporting school districts to teach cursive.

“It’s not only the fact of being able to sign your name ... or reading the Constitution,” she said. “It also has lasting developmental benefits.”

Fowler explained that at the state level public schools are required to teach children how to write, though the means are not stipulated. And while not erasing printing or keyboarding from their curriculums, several area schools are sticking with cursive.

Kathleen Poe, principal of Timmons Elementary in the Kenston District had this to say: “Cursive writing instruction is still a part of the primary curriculum at Timmons School. ... We have had faculty discussions, and will continue to do so, about the significance or not of cursive writing as a portion of a well-rounded educational experience for children. For Timmons teachers, at this time, they feel strongly that cursive instruction/exposure continue and that cursive instruction does not require a lot of dedicated classroom time or interfere with other Common Core priorities.”

Madison Schools teach the skill to students in third grade with continued practice in fourth and fifth grades. “Kids are still required to use cursive or print,” said Madison Assistant Principal Angela Smith. “Not everyone has technology. There has to be some way of having their assignments turned in. I have not had a groundswell of teachers asking to drop (cursive).”

Euclid Schools have no plans to drop the subject either, according to a district representative.

In Lake County, administrators in the Kirtland, Mentor and Riverside districts all pointed to the importance of students knowing cursive.

Kelly Moran, assistant principal and literacy coach at Kirtland Elementary, said district staffers are aware of the proliferation of technology in work and college environments but also “are cognizant to the fact that there are still tasks in both realms that require handwritten application of knowledge.”

She added that “handwriting is one form of communication students can use and giving students multiple tools for ways of communicating will help ensure their success as they exit the K-12 education arena.”

Melissa Mlakar, director of curriculum and instruction at Riverside Schools, said although cursive writing is taught “once you’re out of fourth or fifth grade no one makes you write (it) anymore,” and added that once students reach middle school teachers prefer they focus on content rather than what mode of written communication is used.

“Like a lot of things, we have to give them the skills but when they grow as learners they have to decide what’s best for them,” she said.

Beth Gordon, a second-grade teacher at Bellflower Elementary in Mentor, said her young students are very motivated to learn the subject and early in the scholastic year ask when lessons will begin.

“It’s another milestone,” she said. “They’ve never done it before.”

Unlike their public school counterparts, Catholic Schools are mandated to teach cursive.

Barbara Doering, principal of Notre Dame Elementary School in Munson Township, explained that the Common Core is built into the diocesan curriculum they are required to follow, and that the latter includes cursive writing.

“We feel that it still is an important part of the writing and communication process,” Doering said.

Zachary Avsec who lives in Kirtland and attends Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School said using cursive writing is “faster and cleaner” when working on his assignments.

Jayla Burton, an NDCL senior from South Euclid noted that the specific writing “gives an authenticity and a style to people’s work. Although cursive writing has a pattern and set design — each person adds their own identity to it.”

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### **About the Author**

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