

Handwriting in the media: *What's Lost as Handwriting Fades*, New York Times, 6/3/14

We post this article as well as Tim Hoffmann's (Rudolf Steiner School Class Teacher) response in the hope of drawing attention to the ongoing debate about "outdated" methods of instruction and our practice here at the Steiner School. The Times' article is rather narrower in scope than we would expect; a full exploration of the relationship between artistic activity and conceptual understanding is still needed. It is reassuring, nevertheless, to read that brain research confirms what Waldorf teachers have long believed.

Members of our community are familiar with our emphasis on handwriting. As their consciousness takes hold of the physical world and they orient themselves in space, young children fill page after page with circles, spirals, radial limbs, houses, trees, earth and sky. Such creative expression precedes learning to form letters in first grade. The very act of writing prepares students for reading. We proceed from large to small, from the concrete image to the abstraction. Upper case, then lower, and finally cursive writing in third grade. By fourth grade we are writing with fountain pens! Handwriting is an art. Like all art forms, it helps us to develop to our fullest human potential.

Suggested reading: *Understanding Waldorf Education*, Jack Petrash. See Chapter 4 *Teaching Children to Write*, Audrey McAllen, *The Teaching of Writing*, Eileen Hutchins.