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An Efficient Use of Class Time?

Re: What's Lost as Handwriting Fades. Our thanks to Maria Konnikova for an important contribution to the debate on handwriting. As teachers we are under constant pressure to use time efficiently and, with a focus on measurable outcomes, to eliminate all unnecessary, antiquated practices. As teachers, though, we also know firsthand the real life value of such archaic seeming skills as writing by hand. What recent brain research purports to show, i.e. that a brain is more fully engaged when the student is writing by hand rather than typing or even tracing, this is self-evident in the classroom: children comprehend and remember when their bodies are active. They learn with their hands!

(For a cogent account of the synchronous evolution of hand and brain, we recommend Frank Wilson's 1998 classic *The Hand*. In this regard, ontogeny seems to recapitulate phylogeny.)

The only flaw we can find in Ms Konnikova's otherwise fine article is that she does not answer her title's implied question. What are the consequences of an education in which the hand's role is reduced to the manipulation of keyboards and pads? A full answer to that question is overdue.

We simply conclude: longhand writing demands attentiveness and patience, it fosters artistry and eye-hand coordination, and, finally, it reduces the tools of written expression to a bare minimum, connecting author and text with an immediacy other media cannot match. What a student writes by hand is truly his or her own.

Let's not give this up. In the bigger scheme of things, it really is efficient.

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