



photos by Rebekah Barnes

Ms. Libby Beck's third graders practice writing in cursive and typing on the computer.

Cursive writing erased from Mason classrooms

Teaching cursive in third grade classrooms no longer required by state

Rebekah Barnes | Online Editor

Cursive writing is no longer vital for students to learn, as of August 8. The state no longer requires districts to teach cursive as a part of the curriculum. Fourth grade teacher Shawna Bender said she can't believe the state would make this decision.

"I was shocked that [the state] decided to do away with [cursive]," Bender said. "I understand because of the technology [aspect of learning], but [cursive has] just been a part of education for so long, it seems that it just went 'poof' very quickly."

Mason has not let this practice go, according to K-6 grade Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator Shannon Homoelle, but is researching the best options for students.

"Mason, like many other districts, is in the process of gathering research and monitoring what the state plans to assess when the Common Core [state-required curriculum] is in full implementation," Homoelle said.

According to third grade teacher Libby Beck, cursive helps students develop their fine motor skills and improve their handwriting.

Third grade student Will O'Leary said that he likes to write in cursive, just like his dad does.

"I feel like a grown up whenever I write in cursive," O'Leary said. "It's weird."

O'Leary's classmate, Ishaan Bhargava, said he likes learning a whole new way of handwriting.

"[I like cursive because] I'm good at it," Bhargava said. "It's like my secret handwriting."

Beck said that to learn neat writing, cursive should be required until at least middle school to master the form and skills of cursive. However, Beck said that she does see an importance for middle and high school students to learn computing.

Although it is taught in third grade, it is no longer required for all work in the fourth grade to be in cursive, according to fourth grade teacher Heather Nagel.

Beck said that cursive is only required for all writing for half of the year in third grade, but when students reach fourth grade it's no longer required. Beck said that she wonders why it was so important for her to teach it.

"To [third grade teachers,] it's kind of like it's a waste of our time if they're not expected to write that way in fourth grade and fifth grade and then we just keep hearing... 'Their writing is so sloppy,'" Beck said.

Some of the fourth grade students like the change to allowing print, like fourth grader Charley Lustig, who said she is not a fan of writing in cursive.

"I don't like [writing in cursive] because it takes a

long time for me to do it," Lustig said. "And my cursive doesn't really look good so I don't really like it...I was [happy when my teachers no longer required cursive] because writing everything in cursive kind of makes my hand feel tired, so I'm very happy about it."

However, Lustig's classmate Dawson Allen said he prefers cursive, even though he still has room to improve.

"[I like cursive] because it can be quicker when you learn how to do it," Allen said.

While some may think that cursive is only for elementary schools, senior Alejandro Trujillo said that he still prefers to write in cursive, unlike all his friends, which came from living in Europe as a child and being taught there.

Trujillo said that he is the only one he knows that still writes in the traditional cursive.

"I'm the only one I know that does," Trujillo said.

While a majority of high school students don't stick to the writing they were once taught, Nagel said that it's an important skill to have in future life and was saddened to hear it no longer a state requirement. According to Nagel, she's wondering if cursive may become a lost art.

"My heart dropped a little bit [when I heard the news,]" Nagel said. "[Students] are coming more as they use technology more often, [so] is the brain processing information in a different way [to benefit students] where this is going to be a lost art?"

Beck said that even though there is so much curriculum, that does not mean cursive should be excluded completely.

"I feel like...there's so much packed into the curriculum to get done that...I don't put cursive first, ... but I don't think that means I should just not do it," Beck said.

For Trujillo, as long as everyone writes legibly, it's in the hands of each person to decide which style to choose.

"Practically and fundamentally, I don't think that [cursive] has any real value," Trujillo said. "As long as we can all write in a legible way and we can understand letters, I don't think it matters how we write."

Homoelle said that Mason will have to find a way to use both technological and classic styles to best benefit students learning.

"Finding a balance between advancing technology and traditional writing will be a challenge, and Mason will continue to make decisions based on what's best for students," Homoelle said.

