



Learning with Dysgraphia

# THREE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE YOUR SON'S WRITING

With the pressure to perform, and social and emotional expectations to uphold, school can be challenging for any child. Add a learning difference – like dysgraphia – to the mix and school becomes laden with stress and anxiety.

For students, dysgraphia inhibits learning and creates a disengaged perspective. This difficulty with writing can create a barrier between your son's writing and his potential, but rest assured that there are ways to help.

While little is known about dysgraphia,<sup>1</sup> according to the [Brain Balance Achievement Centers](#), there are practical steps you can take to improve your son's performance in school and mindset to achieve success. Exercise these three strategies to help your son take control of his education.

# 1

## Determine Your Son's Biggest Hindrance

Your son is vibrant, intelligent, and well-spoken. His only set back in school manifests in his writing and can be observed with the following:

- The legibility of his handwriting
- The quality of his spelling
- The organization of his thoughts into his writing
- The amount of time it takes him to complete written assignments and tests



Dr. Marcia Eckerd from [Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities](#) notes that since your son is highly articulate, it is expected that he can write in the same capacity. When he doesn't, he is erroneously labeled as lazy.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that your son is not alone. According to the [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#) (NAESP), over 75% of all children who live with dysgraphia are male and display similar symptoms to other learning disabilities,<sup>3</sup> such as [ADHD](#), [Executive Functioning](#), and Dyslexia.

Learning with dysgraphia creates frustration that develops into a lack of focus, motivation, and confidence. By taking an active role in your son's learning difficulty, you can determine the obstacles he faces in writing. Observe your son's writing and determine if he's:

- Omitting words
- Using incorrect words
- Forming letters incorrectly
- Spacing letters incorrectly
- Poorly or incorrectly gripping pencils
- Lacking proper punctuation and capitalization
- Struggling with the organization of his ideas<sup>2</sup>

**When you pinpoint the skill that your son struggles with the most, you can focus on improving one skill at a time. Through targeted skills practice, the symptoms of dysgraphia will improve.<sup>1</sup>**

# 2

## Discuss Classroom Strategies With Your Son's Teachers

Your son spends the majority of his time at school, engaged with his teachers. That's why it's vital you and your son's teachers develop a plan. Start by discussing specific classroom accommodations for your son, addressing what you've observed in your son's writing.

Education writer, author, and parent advocate Amanda Morin from [Understood.org](http://Understood.org) suggests the following classroom adjustments for children learning with dysgraphia:

Allow extra time for note-taking and test completion

Allow notes to be recorded on a laptop

Allow a voice recorder to capture lessons and lectures

Allow for writing assignments to be completed in steps

Allow for an outside proofreader to review assignments

Provide an outline or worksheet to complete notes on<sup>4</sup>



While these accommodations may assist your son with assignments and relieve some anxiety around tests, he may need additional, personalized support. If this is the case, ask your son's teachers about providing:



### A Scribe

To help your son organize his thoughts into his writing



### A Tutor

To work with your son on writing mechanics and classroom objectives



### An Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

So a specialized academic strategy can enable him to reach his full potential

# 3

## Practice Creatively At Home

Your son is capable of expressing himself through writing, and he wants to learn. By observing your son's writing and identifying areas for improvement, and meeting with your son's teachers, you're equipped with knowledge, insight, and a plan to help your son at home.

With committed, daily writing practice, your son will begin to find school fulfilling and fun. Enlist the help of games and technology to turn a disliked task into an engaging activity.

### For Younger Students:

▶ [Bright Hub Education](#) suggests activities that will develop essential fine motor skills, such as:

- Arranging beads, seeds, coins, and small toys in a straight line
- Moving to a beat in sequence, like clapping twice or stomping feet three times
- Tracing a picture using tracing paper
- Practicing coloring inside the lines
- Completing connect-the-dot activities
- Forming balls out of cookie dough or play dough
- Learning to knot shoe laces or a piece of rope<sup>5</sup>

▶ Dr. Randy Kulman from [Learning Works for Kids](#) recommends the following interactive apps:

- [Burning Fingers™](#), a speed typing and reading game
- [ControlShift™](#), a developmental typing game
- [Typing Instructor for Kids™](#), a typing skills software program<sup>6</sup>

▶ The [Writing Wizard™](#) app helps children learn to write letters and words correctly.<sup>7</sup>

### For Older Students:

▶ The [SnapType™](#) app helps children complete assigned worksheets faster and easier.<sup>8</sup>

▶ [Understood.org](#) suggests several voice recording apps children can utilize in the classroom.<sup>9</sup>

▶ Amanda Morin from [Understood.org](#) offers strategies to help your reluctant writer improve his skills, such as:

- Incorporating writing into daily life, like writing grocery lists and reminder notes
- Using a graphic organizer
- Identifying where he already writes in abundance, like on social media, in text messages, and in emails<sup>10</sup>



While writing may be a strenuous and slow process for your son now, with the right support and guidance, he will realize his unique ability and intelligence. At Grand River Academy, young men just like your son work on an individual basis with instructors who identify and foster their needs and specific learning styles. We believe that every student can reach his potential.

Discover how GRA is empowering young men to take control of their education and [succeed beyond obstacles](#).



## About Grand River Academy

Established in 1831, Grand River Academy is a college preparatory boarding and day school located one hour east of Cleveland in Austinburg, Ohio. The academy serves over 100 young men in grades 8-12, with a post-graduate option. The faculty and staff continue to make strides in the school's mission to educate the total young man – academically, socially and emotionally to prepare them for lifelong success. The school offers small and intimate class sizes, individualized instruction and supportive faculty. Grand River Academy serves a unique and important niche - helping young men unlock and activate their full potential. We invite you to experience a distinguished all-boys college preparatory school at Grand River Academy. Learn more about our 360-degree approach and 100% college placement rate at [grandriver.org](http://grandriver.org).

### Resources:

- <sup>1</sup> Brain Balance Achievement Centers. "Tips for Improving Dysgraphia." Accessed January 12, 2016. <http://www.brainbalancecenters.com/blog/2014/03/tips-for-improving-dysgraphia/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Eckerd, Marcia, Ph. D. Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities. "Dysgraphia: An Overview." Accessed January 11, 2016. <http://www.smartkidswithld.org/first-steps/what-are-learning-disabilities/dysgraphia-an-overview/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Fischer, Jeri and Rettig, Michael A. National Association of Elementary School Principals. "Dysgraphia: When Writing Hurts." Accessed January 12, 2016. <https://www.naesp.org/resources/2/Principal/2004/N-D-Web.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> Morin, Amanda. Understood. "At a Glance: Classroom Accommodations for Dysgraphia." Accessed January 13, 2016. <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childrens-school/instructional-strategies/at-a-glance-classroom-accommodations-for-dysgraphia>.
- <sup>5</sup> Dominica, Sharon. Bright Hub Education. "Fine Motor Activities for Students with Dysgraphia." Accessed January 13, 2016. <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/special-ed-learning-disorders/65722-interventions-for-dysgraphia-fine-motor-skills-and-activities/>.
- <sup>6</sup> Kulman, Randy Dr. Learning Works for Kids. "Dysgraphia Treatment: Stop Handwriting." Accessed January 14, 2016. <http://learningworksforkids.com/2013/11/dysgraphia-treatment-why-typing-may-be-the-most-important-skill-your-child-can-learn-for-school-success/>.
- <sup>7</sup> Apple iTunes. "Writing Wizard - Kids Learn to Write Letters, Alphabet & Words." Accessed January 14, 2016. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/writing-wizard-kids-learn/id631446426?mt=8>.
- <sup>8</sup> Apple iTunes. "SnapType for Occupational Therapy." Accessed January 15, 2016. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/snaptypes-for-occupational/id866842989?mt=8>.
- <sup>9</sup> Understood. "Tech Finder." Accessed January 16, 2016. <https://www.understood.org/en/tools/tech-finder/find-tech?iid=%7b8B8F3E41-7A32-4F07-ADAD-A0BD-CEA35321%7d&gid=%7b83725350-0D65-4E51-8891-BFCAFAA402C5%7d>.
- <sup>10</sup> Morin, Amanda. Understood. "At a Glance: Strategies for the Reluctant Writer." Accessed January 16, 2016. <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/at-a-glance-strategies-for-the-reluctant-writer>.