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Size Matters Handwriting Program: Promoting
Legibility and Carryover
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- [Fawn] Our course today is Size Matters Handwriting Program: Promoting Legibility and Carryover Across the Curriculum. Our presenter today is Dr. Beverly Moskowitz. She is a nationally recognized speaker with 43 plus years of experience as an occupational therapist. As a school therapist, she served more than 15 school districts, visiting over 60 different schools. She's the author of multiple publications and strives to teach other therapists how to implement AOTA best practices, time-saving strategies, and progressive IDEA ideals while keeping the fun going. A creative entrepreneur, determined researcher and tireless professional, she is also the author of the Size Matters Handwriting Program. Currently used in every state and four continents, its concept driven approach to teaching and remediating handwriting has been proven effective at a .001 level of significance in the largest research study ever done on handwriting. In 2010, Bev launched Real OT Solutions Incorporated. Its mission as both a service and product business is to provide consumers, therapists, teachers, parents and kids with effective, efficient, affordable and fun solutions to school needs. In 2015, she was recognized for her professional contributions and inducted as a Fellow into the American Occupational Therapy Association. Welcome, Dr. Moskowitz. We are so happy to have you back.

- [Beverly] Hi, everybody. Welcome to the Size Matters Handwriting Program. We're going to be talking about promoting legibility and carryover across the curriculum. I am Beverly Moskowitz, the author of the Size Matters Handwriting Program. I'm delighted to speak with you today. The learning outcomes for our session will include the following. As a result of this course, you should be able to identify and discuss best practices, including the underlying research regarding how to address a discrete motor skill like handwriting, you'll be able to identify and discuss concepts, strategies and materials to correct common printing issues impacting legibility, and you'll be able to

identify the SMHP concepts, strategies and materials to build teacher carryover and student buy-in.

So to review, and this course is a continuation of an earlier webinar. So, there's more on the concepts in that one. But the eight key concepts, because Size Matters is a concept driven approach, include writing lines, go lines and finish lines. We labeled the writing lines as the top, middle or dotted and bottom line. Go lines and finish lines help with directionality across the page. Letter lines is the second concept. We dissect letters into their component letter lines. One of whom is so important, he's given his own status as a key concept. Super C is our superhero. He wards off reversals. The fourth concept is that of starting points and initial lines. All letters in the Size Matters Handwriting Program start on a line except lowercase e and lowercase f. We don't even bring it up until you get to it. Initial lines are those lines that emanate from the starting point. The fifth concept is that of touch points. We count how many times letter lines touch the writing lines. And when I say touching, I don't mean getting really close.

The sixth concept is the biggie. This is the rules on letter size. We've divided letters into size one, two, and three with a color scheme of pink, yellow, blue respectively. All your uppercase letters and seven lowercase letters are size one. The size two letters include those letters that touch the dotted line and the bottom line. The size three letters are those lines that touch the dotted line and go below the bottom line. The seventh concept, which is also a strategy, is stars and dice. Kids earn stars when they make their letters the right size. Dice determines practice. And while I tell you it's all about size, that's followed by space. Space is the second most important variable. We talk about spacing in terms of spaghetti and meatballs. In between letters, there should be room for one spaghetti. In between words, there should be room for one meatball.

Research shows that handwriting must be taught. It is not a self-evident skill. Kids don't get better just 'cause they got older. Research also shows that when errors in

letter size are corrected, there is an immediate and measurable difference in the consistency, and therefore, readability of the page. Focus on size, form will follow. This is our mantra. So I want to tell you about my doctoral research 'cause I'm just like you. I'm an occupational therapist. I'm practicing 43 years. So, when I was in the school, in the trenches, as it were, I was doing everything that I was ever taught should be impactful, and I wasn't making a difference. I went back to school to learn what is everybody doing about handwriting across the country and more importantly, who's having success? So, my evidence-based practice paper was entitled, what's the effectiveness of a task-oriented approach compared to a process-oriented approach on handwriting legibility among elementary school children? And I looked at 31 process oriented articles. They include things like neurodevelopment, multisensory approaches, biomechanics, perceptual-motor training, development of fine motor skills, kinesthesia. The impairment interventions. I looked at 28 task oriented articles. Direct instruction, practice, self-instruction, whole language, normal development and cognitive strategies. Your performance interventions. And here's what I learned. Not effective.

Those process-oriented approaches, you're playing in shaving cream. To what end? Did you think that you were helping kids become better printers? You're not. If your goal is desensitization to a light medium, okay, so maybe you're working on that. It's not helping with legibility. Pencil grip, don't even refer to those kids. Once they habituate a grip, you're not changing it. And the good news is it doesn't matter. There's no correlation between pencil grip and legibility. Kinesthesia training also does not correlate with legibility. Perceptual-motor exercises. So they don't correlate with legibility. What they do correlate with is the ability to see if you got it right or wrong. So I might not totally throw out those perceptual worksheets. Inconclusive were your process-oriented approaches, like gross or fine motor warmup exercises, which I did all the time. Effective is a combination of task and process-oriented. Direct instruction partnered with something biomechanical or neurodevelopmental. High level cognitive

strategy, especially if it's combined with a multisensory approach. But the most effective of all was a task-oriented approach. Direct instruction, specific skill training, verbal feedback. My time is really valuable. Your time is really valuable. I'm always going for the most effective approach. In other words, as a discrete motor skill, proficiency in handwriting supports motor learning theory. And motor learning theory says constant and blocked practice, that's your drill work. Followed by random and variable practice. That is where you embed handwriting across the curriculum. And the research shows it cannot be just about two 15 minutes of practice in a workbook a week. You have to have strategies that enable handwriting sensibility to happen all day long.

Now, in the field of research, it's one thing for you to have findings. It's a whole nother thing for somebody to replicate those same findings. I stayed connected with Temple University, where I did my doctoral research. Two years later, Jillian Rai came forward and her evidence-based practice paper was essentially researching me. Her question is, what's the effectiveness of a multisensory approach compared to a task-oriented approach in teaching handwriting to elementary school children? And here's what she learned. Direct instruction accompanied by an embedded handwriting program, parent involvement, supplemental programs like homework, frequent visual cuing, mnemonics and memorable sound bite, self-instruction, self-monitoring, all features of the Size Matters Handwriting Program. So in other words. Positioning, I know you're working on it. You want to get that child with their feet flat on the floor, 90, 90, 90. That's not gonna be the bottom line. That's not going to impact legibility. Core strength, I did it too. If I don't have stability at my hips and shoulders, how am I going to have mobility at my distal fingertips? Not correlating with legibility. All those in-hand manipulation skills. In theory, yes, it seems like it should impact the ability to mobilize a pencil. But it's not. You got sensory issues? You may address those to make sure the child can participate in their school environment. It's not going to impact legibility. Perceptual

skills, again, that's going to correlate with the ability to see what you got right or wrong. Go for direct instruction.

And for all those OTs that feel like, well, I'm not a handwriting teacher, I say to you, get over it. We're all about function in school, and writing is a very important part of what students do. We can, as leaders, share with teachers how they can embed handwriting all day long. We can share research with them. It is really important that kids learn concepts and strategies that enable them to feel empowered. This is a very worthwhile use of an occupational therapist's skills and time. So let's talk about the concepts, strategies and materials that matter, especially size. So if errors exist with letter size, then the therapist, teacher or student could try teaching the rules. So as a quick reminder, the rules for letter size, I joke that they come packaged with a song and a dance.

As a quick reminder, the rule for size one letters. Letters have to touch the top line, they have to touch the bottom line, they can't go higher, they can't go lower, they can't float in the middle. Size two, they have to touch the dotted line, they have to touch the bottom line, can't go higher, can't go lower, can't float in the middle. Size three, they have to touch the dotted line, they have to go below the bottom line, can't go higher, must go lower, and if it has a belly, it has to sit on the line. Individual letter blocks. So you can get pink, yellow, blue foam sheets and cut out little squares and rectangles that the kids can build words on sentence strips. This is like mirroring the magnetic rectasquare board, the MRB. In our full day course, we make this during center time. Scoring for size, count all the letters printed. That letter goes in your denominator. Count all the letters earning stars. That letter goes in your numerator. Desktop stickers. So this is a sticker that you can put on the desk. This mirrors one of the posters, but if kids need a near point reference rather than having to look across the room to the wall, they can have this reference of which letters are size one, two, or three. The MRB. You can use this all day long. Share with the teachers how during math, social studies,

science, they can be graphing words that's meaningful to the curriculum. I'll cover them up with the magnets, write on the magnets, they're both wipe-off surfaces. Collaborative teaching. This is best practice pushing into the classroom, co-teaching, learning what the teacher's needs are, how their curriculum runs, what the expectations are per grade, and then identifying strategies to help teachers be more efficient and inclusive of your students.

The dice game. So, our dice game have 24 die in it. There's four, six, eight, 10, 20 faceted die. They are marbled and iridescent and sparkly. They have dots and numbers and sign language and foreign languages on them, and they're adorable. And I'm gonna share with you too, if you have dice in your schools, they're just as cute. The goal is to give kids a power that they can feel like they've dictated their own practice and they do by the simple roll of dice. The student workbook. So, there's one grade level of student, there's one student workbook. It's a kindergarten level, but we don't write that in the book because you do have students in higher grades that are working at this level. The first year the districts adopt the program, we encourage it for first grade. Also, for that consistency of language. 10 learning activities on each page with the emphasis on letter size. Issue the student workbook.

Play snowman, which is an upgraded version of a game that we played way too long, which kinda glorified a lynching. The idea would be that as you guess the wrong letters, you would add more parts to the snowman, hopefully figuring out the puzzle before the sun comes out. Hanging posters in the classroom. The posters teach the concepts. Issuing alphatriangles. So the kids have a near point reference and it puts information within their line of vision, so they may actually reference it. All the uppercase letters are outlined in pink because they're size one, the size one lowercase letters are in pink boxes, size two are in yellow, size three are in blue. If there's issues of shape, now know, we're only scoring for size, but it's not the only thing, we want to know what's going on. Everything else is an implication for treatment. So if there are

errors of shape, then the therapist, teacher or student should try practicing inside of individual letter boxes. Now there's lots of worksheets that are available inside the master guide of adapted writing paper. This is one of them. I like kids to write in white letter boxes so they can see their writing. This is called reversing polarity. You'll notice how thick the bottom line is, giving kids an extra chance to get it correct. Again, play the dice game. Use the activity books. Now the activity book series have 18 books in the series. You don't have to do an entire book one before you go to book two. You can just do the pages that practice the shape of the letter inside of individual letter boxes, which are the majority of pages, but the polarity is reversed. You will find white letter boxes. The goal is not to race through the book and just write the letter inside the box, but to actually use the contours of the letter box to frame the shape of the letter.

The letter line equation cards. This is a free download on the Real OT Solutions website. They're like playing cards. The kids would line up the letter line equation cards to form a letter. So imagine, if you had a standing tall letter line equation card along with three lying down letter line equation cards, what letter might that be? I hope you're all saying uppercase E. Simon Says Be a Letter Line. It's the same thing as the game you've always played, but now you're standing tall, you're lying down, you're smiling, you're frowning, unless Simon doesn't say. A near point reference. I'm always fascinated how many times a student has asked to copy from the board and they don't have that near point, far point gaze shift. Make sure that they have a near point copy that could be right on their line, right on the paper that they're writing on, so that they can copy. Practicing on the board so they feel the movement. If there are errors in letter or word spacing, margins or slant, draw those spaghetti and meatball lines between your letters. In between letters, there should be room for one spaghetti, and at this point, I walk around with a yellow colored pencil, I sharpen it if the student is an older grade, I leave it as a dull point or use a crayon if they're in a younger grade, and I draw spaghetti lines for the kids to see their spacing. I draw red meatballs in between my words. If the kids don't crowd the right or left margins, you can give them a free

meatball. Star those places where there was room for only one spaghetti. Score for spacing. The kids love this concept. They love feeling empowered with the ability to score themselves all the time, but again, if the kids want to score themselves, you must make sure that they have yellow and red colored pencils because if they score using their own pencil, it's unreadable all over again.

Mr. Brown is Upside Down is a great eye opener. For those kids who did not realize they have not clearly differentiated inside from outside spacing, suggest that they write something, take the paper away. Then say to them, going to hand back the paper to you. And as fast as you can, I'm gonna give you five seconds. You're going to draw a red line between all of your words. You're now going to hand the paper back to them upside down. Boom, boom, boom, they put red lines, you turn the paper right side up. It really is eye opening. They did not realize how they had left big meatball spaces in the middle of a word. How they did not differentiate inside spacing. Finger spacers. These are free downloads also from the Real OT Solution website. I try very hard to be a resource to OTs, so if you scroll down to the bottom of the homepage, you'll find something we call the free downloads, and there's folders of how to make or other resources. This is among them. So you can print out the finger spacers. What I would suggest you do is cut them individually and then laminate them individually. Hand them to the teachers. When the teachers write on the board, they use the finger spacers in between words to remind kids to do the same. So there's a left-handed finger spacer, a right-handed finger spacer. There's ones that actually have a meatball on the fingertip to remind kids that it's a meatball space.

Teach the children about margin lines. Just 'cause they're there doesn't mean it's self-evident. They have no idea. Ask them why those lines are there. Teach them about go lines and finish lines, starting closest to the go line and moving toward the finish line. Using a Popsicle stick for left margin alignment, so they know the important of writing in the straight line. If there's issues of slant, review the letter lines, especially

your standing tall lines. Angle the paper properly. Know that right-handed kids are going to turn their paper counterclockwise a quarter turn. Left-handed kids are gonna turn their paper clockwise a quarter turn so it's more comfortable. If you have left-handed kids, consider journal books that are bound on the right side or the top. Create slant boards. Again, this is a free download. There's a recipe on how to make a slant board with some foam core, an X-Acto knife, and a glue gun. When slant surfaces are the children's writing surface, sometimes, they hook their wrist a little bit less. Writing on graph paper could be helpful. Putting dark graph paper underneath their writing paper. That can help kids see verticality. Okay, so at this point, we've gone over errors of size, shape, space and slant. Take a minute to collect your thoughts. Write questions down. We will revisit all of your questions at the end of this session. If you have other questions, you can always write to me, bev@realOTsolutions.com.

Moving on, if errors exist with directionality. Therapists, teachers or kids could try asking kids where the starting points are. Before they even start to write, ask the kids to tell you, where does uppercase F start? Where does uppercase V start? Where does lowercase z start? Where does lowercase g start? And let the kids tell you so you can put the starting point. They have to know that information. They're going to teach you. Again, the initial lines are those lines that emanate from the starting point. Play the dice game. Again, consider handedness. Left-handed kids will need to swing their letters clockwise sometimes. So we often teach as O, for instance, letter O, as a super C letter. You wrap around and you make a C first. For left-handed kids, it's actually easier to make the letter O as a clock line. That's just a more natural movement for their hands and that's fine. Provide the super C desktop stickers. Issue the alphatriangles. Point out which letters are in line with a super C, so they can see which letters have to wrap around back toward go. Review verbal prompts, especially forward movement. So, not only do you write starting closest to go and you move in the direction of your finish line, but some letter lines are formed in the direction of the go line. They would be forward moving letter lines. That would be the top of seven, the slant in R, the

hump, the frown, as it were, in H. Backward moving lines move back toward go. It would be the smile in G, the first slant in K, the slant in Z are formed in the direction back toward go. Teach kids about go lines and finish lines. You can put them on their desks. Blotters or a piece of paper. If errors exist with omissions in copying, then the therapist, teacher or student should try teaching chunking.

So, chunking is the strategy that teachers use when they are teaching children about fluency in reading. They first teach kids to identify the sound that goes along with individual letters, and then they teach them to blend them into phonemes and recognize the phonemes at a time. This strategy is called chunking. That's going to make more sense when they're trying to sound out a word. That same strategy is how you have to teach kids fluency, accuracy, and speed in copying. Most likely, kids are looking at a letter, they're writing the letter, looking at the next letter, they're writing the next letter. That's a recipe for losing your place and being inaccurate. So you want to teach kids to start identifying groups of letters at a time. So suppose the word were chunking. The children would look up the board, they would see C-H, they would say it when they read it because that's also part of the strategy. Say it when they read it, say it when they write it. So they would look up and say C-H, they would look down, start writing, and say C-H. They look back up, they say U-N, they look back down, they say U-N, they write U-N. They look back up, they say K-I, they look back down, they say K-I and write. So that would be chunking two letters at a time. The goal is to help kids to chunk increasing amounts of letters at a time, increasing amount of words. So if a word is unfamiliar, they're going to chunk two, three, four letters at a time. If the word is familiar, they can read, two, three, four words at a time. And when you're scoring, you're going to note how many they wrote at a time before they had a look back up to their prompt. Start with a direct line prompt. So again, it's fascinating to me how many times kindergartners, first graders are expected to copy from the board. Sadly, we are a society now that is 12 inches from our nose. A lot of life is happening for our kids in their handheld device, and they're not developing that gaze shift ability. So you may

want to make sure your prompt is closer than the board. So, the board might be eight to 12 feet away. Maybe you need to bring it closer. Maybe it needs to be on the desk. Maybe it needs to be directly above the lines they're writing on. That's called a direct line copy. Remove visual distractions. There's actual research that shows classrooms that have reduced information, posters on the wall, the kids are scoring better in tests and show increased attention to task. In talking with your teachers, you may want to encourage them not to decorate the room until the kids are in the classroom, and then let them decide if they would like the posters, and only then may they actually reference them. Provide writing lines in the copying prompt.

Share the master guide of adapted writing paper with your teachers. Leave it in the copy rooms, leave it in the offices. I would make executive decisions on what I think teachers could benefit from, but help them to scan it on their smart boards, taking an extra few minutes to calibrate it, and then when they are modeling, writing on the board, whenever they're writing anything, you have to ask your teachers if they would pay careful attention to making sure their letter lines are touching the writing lines in all the right places. And with this good modeling, again, the kids should be chunking when they are copying. Say it when you read it, say it when you write it. Another one of our mantras. Repeat it all the time. Using finger pointers. So when kids are copying, their assistive hand is not on vacation. Their assistive hand is actually active. It's a placeholder. It's marking where the child had left off, and many times you'll find that that other hand is kinda just sitting in their lap. Maybe it's on the desk. You want to help the children to learn to use that hand to mark where they were so that after they write, they can look back where their finger was to move down to the next line, to the next line, to the next line.

Creating paper tri-folds. So, I've also been fascinated by this 'cause invariably, kids have to copy their rough draft over onto a final copy, and it's sitting at the left corner of their desk. So the kids are required to do a lateral gaze shift. That means the medial

lateral muscles of the eyes are required to exhibit excursion at different lengths. That again is a recipe for losing your place. If you take that rough draft and you fold over a few lines of text, just expose what it is that they're copying, you could place that right at midpoint. You could even place it directly on the paper so it's a direct line copy. And after they copy those few lines, you'll fold the paper to expose the next few lines. Once you do that for your teachers, you show the teachers how to help the kids copy over their rough draft by having the rough draft right at midline, they're going to use that from there on. Now you can get page-ups. They're pretty affordable nowadays and they're all over the place, but honest to goodness, if you fold your paper, that's even cheaper and readily available. Book stands can be nice. That can help put a textbook right at midline. The look up look down pages in the activity books.

So there's lots of different pages in the activity books. I don't want you to feel compelled again to do page one, two, three, four in order. Book one through to book two to book three. You are allowed to use any pages that help your students. The look up look down is a gaze shift activity where there is a prompt at the top of the page and the kids have to make the same letter in the letter boxes below. If there are issues of recall, then the therapist, teacher or student should try near point copy sample. This is for those kids that can't remember what the alphabet looks like, what their prompt looks like. Give it to them close by so they don't have to scratch their head and take time to try and figure it out. Give them an alphatriangle. So, the movement in AOTA, you should know, has been away from a deficit based evaluation to a strength based assessment. We don't really need to see how much the kids are struggling to achieve. We want to make sure the kids can write without being challenged to remember the alphabet, and if they can't remember the alphabet, give them an alphatriangle so they can reference it.

Subvocalize. That's the whole say it when you read it, say it when you write it strategy. Placing alphabet strips on the near edge of the desk. How many times have you gone

into a classroom and that alphabet strip is on the far edge of the desk? It's now at their horizon. The kids are doing a gaze shift and they can't even see it. Consider putting it at the near point, the near edge of the desk, so they could use it. Playing Simon Says Be a Letter Line to remind the kids of the different types of letter lines that comprise different letters. Working large, drawing huge letters on the board. Playing the letter line equation game. If errors exist with space planning or line use, then the therapist, teacher or student could try, now here, I'm talking about whenever there's a box or a line on a paper, the teacher has created a test, the workbook has a big open space and the kids have to write inside of it, and for instance, if it's a box in a workbook, oftentimes you're gonna see the kids writing very large starting in the middle of the box.

So, maybe you want to give the kids thick bottom lines to help the kids to ground their letters and help them to orient to the bottom line. Give them a blotter to work on. So the blotters are cushion surfaces that help absorb some of that extraneous movement, slows down the pencil. You can make a blotter with a sheet of construction paper. Know that construction paper's made by pressing lots of little pieces of paper together. It traps some air, it absorbs some of that movement and slows down the pencil. Adapted writing paper or lined labels. So, there are lined labels that come in first, second and third grade ruling. There are six labels on a sheet. Six sheets come in a package. They're stickers. But you can sit in the classroom and put lines in the child's workbook and all those big spaces that they have, but who has time for that? So I created these lined labels. If it's a really big space, put two stickers in the workbook. If it's a small space, you can trim it to fit. Even if you did make a line, a single line would not be sufficient. The kids need the top line. They need the dotted bottom line. So, share this with your teachers. The teachers will like it so much, they'll want to order more for their classrooms. Give teachers lined paper to scan onto their smart boards. And again, ask them to make sure when they are doing that, and you'll help them calibrate it, that they pay careful attention to the writing lines when they are modeling

letter size. These things are available from Amazon. They're called staff writers. Your music teachers may have them in their closets. You want to put chalk, if you have a blackboard, markers if you have a whiteboard, in the top, middle and bottom, and then you periodically erase the middle line to create that dotted line. So, if you have errors with directionality, omissions, recall or line use, write those questions down. We're going to be revisiting all of those questions at the end of the presentation. If errors exist with case substitution, then the therapist, teacher or student should try the alphatriangle.

Again, give them a near point reference where the information is right within their line of vision. Scoring for size, especially noting the incorrect size. There's something very magical about having kids score themselves. And if you say to them, I'm going to give you stars when you make your letters the right size, they're going to want to get a perfect score. Rolling the dice to reprint words with mixed cases. So, the dice game is awesome. I've had teachers, therapists share with me that to make sure the kids are not chasing dice around the room, those kids that can't grade the release of the movement and the die go flying, are using the lids from shoe boxes. They're using the shoe boxes themselves. The kids roll the die and it lands inside the contours of the shoe box. You could do that too. Graphing words before printing them on the magnetic rectasquare boards. So, let the kids do this. The kids love writing on the board. You know there's something very exciting. They feel very grownup when they do that. Let them write on the MRB, cover it with the magnets, let their classmates try and figure out what it is. Graphing words with individual letter boxes.

So if you have, has anybody ever shown up at a class and the teacher says to you, who are you taking? Okay obviously, you want to push into the classroom, but they want that 30 minute break. One way to win over those teachers that don't understand the benefit of you pushing into the classroom and working alongside of them is to give them a gift as it were. Maybe you've taken the list of their spelling words, their

vocabulary, social studies or science terms, and you've created a worksheet. Maybe it looks like this. When the kids arrive in the morning, they hang up their coats and their book bags in the cubbies, and then they take this piece of paper, sit down and solve the puzzle. What words are these? And then they have to write them right next to it. So, that's a good way to, again, win over your teachers and remind students about the correct casing and letter size.

If you have issues of reversals, then you might want to try the wrong way pages. So, this is, in every single page in the student workbook, there's a page called wrong way. The first six books have a reversal of a picture. Three pictures are going one way, one picture is going the other way. After that, books seven to 18 have a reversal of a letter. A pair of letters, a letter and a word, a number. And again, the kids have to point out which letter is going the wrong way. Putting go lines and finish lines on your desks. So we're in blotters or on writing paper. So I would caution against using floral tape. If you want to put a go line on a desk, floral tape will stain your shirt sleeves permanently. Learned that the hard way. Highlighter tape is great. And there is a checkerboard tape that is available online, or you could take masking tape, and with a Sharpie, make a checkerboard. Put it on either side of the desk, again, to remind kids about that left to right directionality across the page and the letter lines that go across. And your alphatriangles also have go lines and finish lines on them. So the kids can reference the directionality of a letter line in reference to the go lines and finish lines.

This is one of my favorite reversal tricks. I share with kids that b stands for boys and p stands for people. Boys and people need to look where they're going so they don't walk into the walls. Okay, not us girls, 'cause we dance backwards. But I'm joking, everybody, but if you could pretend that there's a nose on your b or your p, if it is not facing the finish line, it is not a b or p. So you don't actually have to draw a nose, but if they could envision, where would the nose be? Boys and people have to look where they're going. If it's not facing that way, that's another way to correct the b p reversal.

D and g will then take care of themselves because they do face backwards. And there's a zillion reversal worksheets that you can download online. So, if you have questions for case substitutions and reversals, take this moment to write them down. We're gonna revisit all your questions shortly. If you have difficulties building student buy-in, then you might want to consider playing the dice game all day, every day. So my preference is handheld die, small die. I like how they feel, I like how they promote both the transverse and the longitudinal palm arches, I like the in hand manipulation skills that they develop. I still want to develop those skills. It has implications for lots of other functional tasks. I like the graded movement when you release it that it encourages.

And that said, if you have kids that are really into apps, there's an app. There's an app called Simple Die. It sounds like dice are clicking. You can download that onto your phone. Your kids might enjoy that. Ask your principal if they would be willing to designate a wall outside their office as the Wall of Fame. And once the kids have mastered letter size, they get to write their name on a sentence strip and hang it up outside the principal's office. It's a status symbol. Teach the students how to score themselves. Best practice shows that when kids have a say in their practice and the ability to self-monitor, there is a buy-in. When you teach the kids the rules, it's essentially like you've given them the answers to the test. They can score themselves, they can score their classmates, they can become peer mentors.

Run handwriting clubs. Handwriting club was a real hot ticket in our school. The children all found that to be a desirable place to be because we're playing the dice game. They're issuing stars, they're teaching each other. It was a very empowering session. And you can structure handwriting clubs during the school day. You can have a grade level, first grade handwriting club, second grade. Maybe it's a before school activity. If you have a private practice, you can run handwriting clubs. There's a lot of therapists that talk about having handwriting clubs over the summer. Families, parents

value handwriting, and they will enroll their kids. Make it a short term, four to six week program, multiple times a week. Very intensive focus on handwriting. You're going to see terrific results very quickly. Issue certificates of achievement. So this is a free download also. The bottom of that Real OT Solution website, you can download this certificate, if you'd like, or you can make your own. But I would make a big deal when the kids graduate from handwriting club of issuing this certificate. They get their name on it, looks really fancy. Make yours fancy too. Where you award the kids for consistently making their letter size one, two, or three, maintaining their spaghetti and meatball spaces, and accuracy and copying. If you are in school, I'd call the kids up to the front of the room and I shake their hands. Congratulations, you have successfully graduated from handwriting club.

Create your peer mentors. Again, very powerful. When you charge kids to be the teacher, they feel like hot stuff. And they get to then share with their classmates. The classmates sooner listen to somebody who is closer in age to them. When it comes to hanging the posters, I said this before. They're not decoration. If you give them to your teachers, strongly discourage them from just hanging them on the walls over the summer before school begins. The goal is to teach the concept and then bring out the poster. Share with the kids. So, this poster gives you all the information about the concept. Would you like it as a reference? And if they don't enthusiastically say yes, then gonna make an overture as if you're gonna put it away. If they say, oh no, no, but I want it, then ask them, do you want it over here, over there? Listen, we don't really care, but we want the kids to care. We want them to decide where they want it hung and let them help hang it. Let them come over with the stapler, the thumbtacks. When they have a say in where it hangs again, that builds the buy-in and they may sooner reference it because they know where it is.

Award star worthy letters, you can do this all day. You don't have to write all over the whole page. Just pick out a representative word or two on a page. If difficulties exist

with teacher carryover, then you might want to try pushing into the classroom. Collaborate, co-teach with the teachers. There are plenty of teachers who do believe in the importance of handwriting. Without even knowing the evidence, they intuitively realize how important it is. They grew up practicing handwriting, learning about handwriting and practicing it. They just can't fit it into the day because they are busy. And it's so important for us to understand that teachers went to school thinking they were gonna be teaching, not sitting in the hallway all day long, collecting data. So if we have that understanding that they are also overwhelmed and it is not our job to give them more to do, they may sooner welcome you into the classroom. They may sooner listen to the words you use to promote handwriting consistency. They might want to learn the rules so that they can reinforce them all day long. Share how the MRB can be used all day, in all subjects. During science, during social studies. The kids are writing words during math. They're writing word problems. You can use it at any time in the day.

Provide low tech options for making writing lines. This is how I began. I didn't have an MRB when I was figuring this out. I had a whiteboard with markers. I had black markers, I had colored markers, and I'd make my lines on the board. And you can do that too. Now, I will share the MRB is faster, but this worked fine until I got an MRB, and now it's easier just to use that, but certainly, don't not start because you don't have one. Be a handwriting center in the classroom. I was in a school that did not believe in handwriting instruction, so I asked the teacher if I could push into the classroom. They really did believe that it was self-evident and not important. So I asked to be a handwriting center and I was a very popular center. The kids wanted to sit at my table. The children want to learn the rules. They want to please you. And there was this erroneous thought for many years, I think it was a fallout from the whole language movement, that said, don't correct young kids. You'll so devastate them, they'll never want to try again. So, I was pretty shocked by that position, and I was a handwriting center. And I would show the kids how to make a letter. They would make

the letter and I would say, good try. I would erase the letter, hand it back to them and say, try again. And you know what happened? Nobody died. I mean, it was just a misconception that the kids are going to be too devastated to try again. The kids want to please you. So, the teachers were pretty surprised by that finding too that the kids didn't, they were okay if you corrected them, 'cause there actually are rules about printing that you want them to follow, and in modeling for the teachers that then realize that that was okay for them to correct the kids. You're not hitting them over the head. You're showing them the right way to do it and you're rewarding them for doing it correctly. Teach the rules. You're gonna be singing and dancing all day long. And I have had people say to me, is there really a song? So, there actually is. There are a few variations of it. We've had a therapist have her students sing the rules to Yankee Doodle. Another sang it to Camptown Races. So yes, if you can actually put these rules to a song, please do. Share it with me.

Place stars above the letters mastered. So if your classrooms have alphabet strips above the board, put a star above those letters that you have already instructed the kids about. So that thereafter, every time the children make an uppercase E or an uppercase F, they're making it the right size. They're responsible there on after for making their letters the right size. Share the strategies for scoring. So when I'm scoring, I might make little circles so the kids can see, well, here's where the gap is, here's where you went too high, this was supposed to be touching. When you make your letters touching at the top and the bottom like an uppercase C, I'm gonna give you a star. Three letters, one star. Actually, that should say one out of three. My bad. Teach and share the alphatriangle. Again, just 'cause there's cool information doesn't mean that anybody sees it. Point out how all the uppercase letters are outlined in pink. How the size one lowercase letters are in pink boxes, size two are yellow, size three are blue. The super C letters are in line with a C. The starting points are noted. The sound symbol correspondence pictures. How to rotate the alphatriangle, 'cause that apparently is not self-evident either. And just as an aside, know that the alphatriangle is

also an exact 12 inches. The kids could use it as a ruler or a straight edge, and the teachers might really enjoy the multipurpose features of the alphatriangle. Share the adapted writing paper. The adapted writing paper is entirely reproducible. We make the master guide extra long so the spiral doesn't show in the copier because I want you to have beautiful writing paper at your disposal that you can use over and over again.

Suggest the teachers walk around with dice. For those teachers who say to you, listen, I believe in handwriting practice. I don't know how to fit it into the day. Ask them just to walk around with dice. Once the kids learn how this works, when they hear the clinking of dice, their ears perk up, they look at each other, they say, is she walking around with dice? 'Cause they know at any moment, you could stop by their desk, point to a letter and ask them, so tell me, how'd you do? What size is this letter and what's the rule? And you'll only have to stop a couple kids. But I promise you, the rest of the classroom saw that interaction and they're thinking letter size now too. Teach the concepts, and that really depends on the grade. You can go through the concepts pretty quickly in higher grades. It may take you a week or two to go through the concepts in your lower grades. So, questions on follow through? Take a moment to write them down. And now we're ready for questions. The size, shape, slant, case substitution and reversals, directionality, omission, recall, line use, and follow through.

If you want to learn more about the Size Matters Handwriting Program, know there is a three part self-study webinar series. It's available from realOTsolutions.com. You can earn .7 CEUs. Part one is two hours, parts two and three are each two and a half hours. You can also bring a full day workshop to your school. There is the day one workshop covers all the content of the webinar. Either the webinar series or the day one workshop in its entirety count as a prerequisite for the Therapist Certification Course. So that would be the day two program. At the end of the certification course, you would take a post test. Passing the post test enables you to write at the end of

your signature. Put on your transcript that you are a certified SMHP therapist. And I am delighted to bring any of these workshops to your neck of the woods. In conclusion, printing can be as easy as one, two, three. Perfect scores are possible and your students can become Size Matters Program champs. Because when it comes to neat printing, size matters. Thank you all so very much for participating. It has been an honor to talk to you for this past hour. Here are some of the references that inform the Size Matters Handwriting Program. If you would like to order any of the supportive material, please use the code OT.com for a nice discount. And again, I'm looking forward to speaking to you. Thank you so much for coming.

- [Fawn] Thank you so much, Bev, for a great talk today. We do have some questions coming in. The first is, what was the name of the tool that music teachers use for handwriting on the board? Can you state that again, please?

- [Beverly] They're called staff writers because of writing musical staff. So if you look it up on Amazon, look it up under that name. Listen, I'm gonna suggest you just go to your music teacher's closets. I bet they have a whole bunch of them sitting on the shelves there.

- [Fawn] Question coming in is, are there additional considerations or strategies for students with dyslexia who write with letter reversals?

- [Beverly] Here's the crazy thing. In the first research study, there were marked changes, visible changes in reversals, and it was only addressed through the use of go lines and finish lines. That visual seemed to give kids the information they needed to know what forward was. So, really do try it out. It works.

- [Fawn] Two people are asking that they missed what you had talked about with the dice game. Can you go over that just a little bit further, please? How do they practice that after rolling the dice?

- [Beverly] Okay, so the dice game is ridiculously simple and it was an accidental discovery. When kids are given the power to choose how many times they're gonna practice, you've given them control over the lesson. So, the kids roll the die. They get to pick out, first of all, whatever die they want to use. In my dice game, as I said, I have a variety of die. I have four, six, eight, 10, 12, 20 faceted die. I often joke with the kids that if you irritate me, I'll give that to you on purpose. You'll be there all day. But the kids roll the die. Whatever number comes up is how many times they have to make a star worthy letter. So, if they roll a five, they have to make five star worthy. If they make five letters and only two of those are star worthy, they're still making you that letter. So, dice can determine initial or remedial practice. Again, it's very empowering when kids have a say in the practice. The research shows that when they do, that's part of the buy-in.

- [Fawn] Okay, let's see here. Someone asked, I'm curious as to how the choice of colors for pink, yellow and green were chosen.

- [Beverly] Well, it's pink, yellow and blue. And gosh. Kinda like random. I'm not even a pink girl, to be perfectly honest with you. It started more out as a salmon color, and the blue was a little bit more teal looking, and then in manufacturing the MRB, the magnetic rectasquare board, we had to actually mix different colored plastic pellets and get a consistency of color. With the salmon, it was very difficult. We kept getting striations in it. And pink turned out to be a pure color. So it actually came about, it was like reverse engineering. The people that were manufacturing this told us what they could consistently manufacture for us. So, pink, yellow, we backed into pink, yellow and blue. Also, I will tell you that it used to be a darker shade, if you were with me from the beginning when we first launched. These were all darker shades, and again,

because of the MRB manufacturers, it was harder to see the writing when it was darker. So we lightened up the colors so that when kids write on top of the different pink, yellow, blue tiles, you could see their writing. That's a funny question.

- [Fawn] Okay, we'll take a few more questions here. How do you best use these tools with your lower functioning kids in the school?

- [Beverly] Great question. So, first remember that Size Matters is concept driven. And as a concept, all shades of gray are fine. There is no right and wrong. We have a lot of people whose specialty is your low incidence kids. That was my specialty for the longest time. I loved working in the life skill classrooms. You may adapt, and I'm giving you all permission, I'm deputizing you all right now to adapt the program to fit your kids' needs. So make your letter boxes bigger. And as I said during the presentation, I like reversing polarity. I learned that from my vision therapy colleagues. About the importance of having a white background to zero the kids' attention into where you want them to look. With a darker background, again, to focus their attention. So, make a larger letter box. Make a thicker bottom line. In the master guide of adapted writing paper, you'll see a variety of paper. As I said, you have permission to copy that whole book. But you can make that bottom line thicker still. You can make it a red line if you wanted to, so the kids know they have to stop on red, and make the top line green, so they know they have to start on green. So, you can have them do a trace it, make it. Work it at, work their copying at a direct line version, so their prompt is immediately above the lines they have to write on, or do a trace it, make it. So their prompt is within their same visual field when they're looking at it. We're having great success with our low functioning kids. And let's be realistic. If you have a child who is low functioning, is it essential that they write every letter of the alphabet? Or is what they really need to write their name? Their initials. One letter that would be their signature. They probably don't need to write everything. Make sure that they can write something that will be indicative of their name.

- [Fawn] Okay Bev, we're gonna take one more. This person is asking, she says, I work with several preschoolers, age five, who have an autism spectrum diagnosis and are headed to kindergarten next school year. These kids are academically ahead and are starting to write letters and words. How much do you start working on size with the preschool age group?

- [Beverly] Okay, another great question. People ask me all the time, what do I recommend for preschoolers? Play! I recommend play. Kids to be sitting on the floor, climbing the apparatus, working with their hands. That said, listen, I know I'm speaking to the, preaching to the choir here. You all know that. Kindergarten is first grade nowadays. Preschool is like kindergarten. Kids are expected to come into kindergarten with a certain skillset. So that said, I'm hearing great feedback around the country from people sharing that our kids on the spectrum really enjoy the rules. The rules speak to them. You know these kids like to have boundaries. They like the structure and the rules give them the structure. So, share with them the rules, sharing them the touching means touching, and you can actually get very physical about touching the lines. But the rules speak to them, and I'm also getting terrific feedback about their receptiveness to the MRB, the magnetic rectasquare board. They like how it feels. They like the contours of the magnet. They like how they slide around the board. So you can start having them graph the letters in their name or common word wall words.

- [Fawn] Thank you so much for a great talk today. I think we're going to wrap up. I hope everyone has a great rest of the day. You join us again on Continued and occupationaltherapy.com. Thanks, everyone.

- [Beverly] Bye bye.