

TEACHER Talk

Newsletter

M A R C H 2 0 0 8

FIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

JEFFERSON SCHOOL PRE-K PROGRAM

No More Cryin' in Preschool

Thanks to a very generous grant from District 64's Elementary Learning Foundation, Jefferson pre-kindergarten teachers were trained in and are now using *Handwriting Without Tears – Get Set for School*.

Handwriting Without Tears is a program that was originally developed by an occupational therapist for her own son. Letters are grouped by their formation ("magic c" on which a, d, o, q are based) rather than alphabetically. The program takes a multi-sensory, hands-on approach to handwriting. It uses body awareness, directional concepts and music to teach the basic skills that will be needed for successful handwriting. Research indicated

that this approach was needed at an earlier age and the preschool, *Get Set for School*, program was developed.

What is the *Get Set for School* program? Besides introducing Mat Man, it involves a lot of play and music! The program's theory suggests that pencils and crayons are put in a child's hand much too early. A preschooler's muscles are not yet developed to support this task. To compensate, they often develop odd grasps and motor patterns such as starting letters at the bottom rather than the top. This leads to problems later with letter formation and handwriting accuracy.

You can find out more on their website: www.hwtears.com. Even in this technological

world, recent research shows that good handwriting is essential. Thanks to ELF for helping Jefferson teachers in their efforts to help District 64 children develop handwriting skills!



Pre-K teachers & 'Mat Man' prepare preschoolers for handwriting skills.