

## **Response**

### **Recommendation**

At this time, given the District data and multiple initiatives in literacy instruction, the WPS recommendation in 2019-2020 is to:

1. Continue to follow the state standards with regard to cursive writing and keyboarding.
2. Continue to expand the Self -Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) initiative, writing in response to reading to improve students reading comprehension skills. Note that Grades 3 through 6 are beginning year two of this initiative District wide. Students and teachers in grades 7 through 10 are in year 1 of implementation.
3. Review the teaching of cursive writing, keyboarding and related research in the early literacy committee work over the next two years to identify the best course of study and mastery for students in the domain of written communication and the related rationale. Historically instruction in cursive would begin mid-year in grade 2.

### **Background**

Katherine Tarca from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Schooling was contacted in September 2018 and confirmed, "The only cursive we require is signing your given name by the end of fourth grade and your full name by the end of fifth. These standards were added in 2017 . Otherwise the standards include language such as 'write legibly in print or cursive...' wherever relevant, to mention cursive without mandating its instruction.

In October 2018, principals were surveyed to assess where and to what level cursive writing was being taught and required. At this time, few of our schools are currently teaching and requiring cursive writing in daily work. However, cursive is still used as a intervention strategy for students receiving occupational therapy who are experiencing difficulty with letter reversals or significant challenges with fluency related to letter formation.

The state has curriculum frameworks related to the teaching of keyboarding that were published in 2016. (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/dlcs.pdf>) As of spring 2019, state assessments related to accountability measures (e.g., ACCESS and MCAS) are all online and require keyboarding. Students should master keyboarding by grade 4. The requirement to master keyboarding has been addressed over the past three years with a typing/keyboarding program available to schools and students across the grades to facilitate the skill development.

## **Current Research**

The issue of teaching cursive writing, similar to the research in education on screen time, considers the impact on brain development. However, the research is not definitive at this time. Educational researcher on writing, Graham (2016), states: a. "While many people say that cursive writing is faster than printing because the writer doesn't have to lift his or her pencil from the paper, the research bears that out to be only minimally true" and b. "People also say that print is easier to read than cursive, but the research isn't definitive on this". Graham 's stance is that teachers have numerous demands and time constraints and teaching one handwriting style is sufficient. Berninger (2013), an educational psychology professor , wrote in an article for the National Association of State Boards of Education , "No clear research evidence supports one being better than the other" in reference to printing and cursive. She notes that different parts of the brain are activated by the tasks of printing, cursive writing and keyboarding and suggests teaching each is important. She references the varied scripts available on the computer in her rationale.