

RECOMMENDATION No. 23

concerning

THE TEACHING OF HANDWRITING

(1948)

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened at Geneva by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Bureau of Education, and being assembled on the twenty-eighth of June for its eleventh session, adopts on the thirtieth of June, nineteen hundred and forty-eight, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering the value of essential techniques as instruments of culture and teaching and as indispensable elements in fundamental education,

That writing is not only an educational technique but also a means of expression and an art which should combine a personal style with the maximum elegance,

That the rhythm of modern life demands more and more speed in writing,

That the advances made in educational psychology and experimental teaching suggest the possibility of methods progressively better adapted to the latent capacity of the child,

That the purpose in view is to enable every child to write as well as he is able at a reasonable speed,

Whilst taking into account the diversity of languages and systems of handwriting,

R 23

Submits to the Ministries of Education of the various countries the following recommendation:

1) The improvement of the teaching of handwriting should be the constant concern of school authorities and educationists;

2) While enjoying a large measure of autonomy, the teacher should be able to base his teaching on methods already perfected in accordance with the most recent discoveries of educational science;

3) A sufficiently long period of concrete, sensory and motor initiation, enabling the child to use his creative ability, ought to precede the learning of letter forms and the actual technique of writing;

4) The systematic teaching of handwriting ought not, therefore, to begin with very young children;

5) In order that the teaching of handwriting may be vital and functional, it should be given simultaneously with the teaching of reading;

6) A clear, plain and harmonious handwriting should be evolved from simplified letter forms, adapted to the perceptive and assimilative powers of the child;

7) It is desirable that the form of the characters put before children should evolve in accordance with current aesthetic ideas;

8) In the early stages, implements inducing suppleness of the hand should be used: soft brushes, soft pencils, blunt pen nibs;

9) Once the elements of writing have been mastered, a cursive writing combining quality with speed should be taught, though each child should be allowed to develop his individual handwriting;

10) Handwriting should not be considered as an end in itself but as a means to be improved whenever written work is done;

11) For children between 12 and 15 years of age — when the handwriting of adolescents changes — it is desirable that corrective teaching should be given, adapted as far as possible to individual needs;

12) The institution of objective scales designed to aid the evaluation of handwriting is desirable;

13) Teachers should be trained to give a rational teaching of handwriting, and should themselves have neat and legible handwriting;

14) In view of the importance of health considerations in the teaching of handwriting, particular care should be taken in the choice of furniture, of writing materials, and of lighting for classrooms.