



May 2005 Issue IV

Healthy Handwriting Habits Program

By Laura Faye Clubok, OTR/L

It has been, and continues to be, an enormous privilege to serve the kindergarten children of St. Catharine School in the Healthy Handwriting Program. By now, many of you have heard of this outstanding program – unique in parochial schools in Ohio – which already has helped over 100 children to develop successful hand skills to prepare them for a lifetime of handwriting. Not only that, the program has offered parents guidance on how to reinforce good habits at home.

But before I go on, you might be wondering why it is necessary to have a special program to teach typically developing kindergartners how to write efficiently. Some people assume that children just “pick up” the skills that create good handwriting. Not so! Handwriting, like math, science, and history, has to be taught. There was a time in recent years that educators concluded that we no longer needed to teach handwriting skills anymore, thanks to the rising importance of computers. But they soon realized that from taking notes in school, to writing a phone message, there are times when computers are actually less efficient than writing. So we now have come the full circle, and we are back to handwriting instruction in schools. At St. Catharine, that used to begin in First

Grade. What is unique about the Healthy Handwriting Habits Program is its focus on Kindergarten – the first grade in which children practice writing.

How it all got started

Several years ago, while I was providing occupational therapy services for a child with special needs who attended Mrs. Rearick’s Kindergarten class, I offered some suggestions for accommodations to enable that particular child to be successful with handwriting. *Each time that I would make a suggestion intended to benefit that child, Mrs. Rearick would reply, “But that suggestion would help all of the children, so let’s have all the children do that”. Of course, I agreed with her wholeheartedly; accommodations for one child often do benefit all children.*

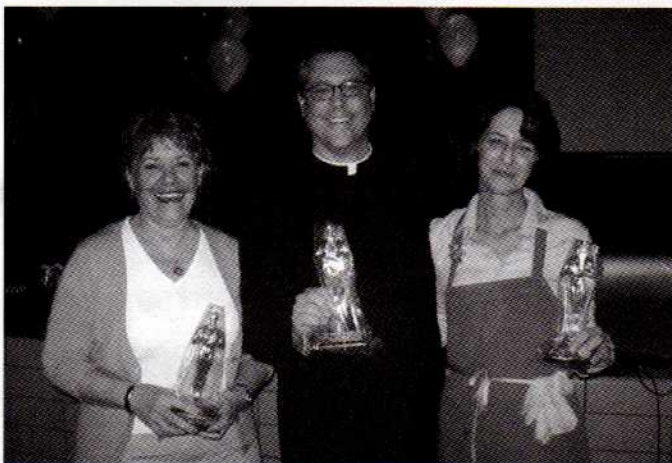
The catalyst for the program was my and Mrs. Rearick’s realization that not only were children coming to Kindergarten with a wide range of ability in their basic hand skills – writing, cutting, drawing, crafts – but also that many of them actually had developed inefficient skills that needed remediation.

Practice doesn’t necessarily make perfect – practice makes permanent. The longer one waits to correct bad habits, the harder it

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“CEAD MILE FAILTE”

Our 3rd Annual SPICE St. Patrick’s Dinner was another sell out success and a truly wonderful evening for all who attended the party at St. Catharine School. SPICE supporters enjoyed a night filled with delicious Irish food, plenty of “Irish Spirits”, live music, Irish Step Dancers and more than a “Wee bit of Blarney” throughout the night. Special thanks to Molly Baumann, party chairperson, her extraordinary committee, and to all who donated their time, talents and goods for the night. Also thanks to Deanna Maynard and Liz Crossman for their culinary talents.



Janet Weisner, Principal, Fr. Richard Weyls, Pastor, and Marian Knox, Education Specialist being honored at the St. Patrick Party.



Susie Bateman, Deanna Maynard, and Liz Crossman taking a break from their preparation of the St. Patrick Party Dinner.

“CEAD MILE FAILTE”

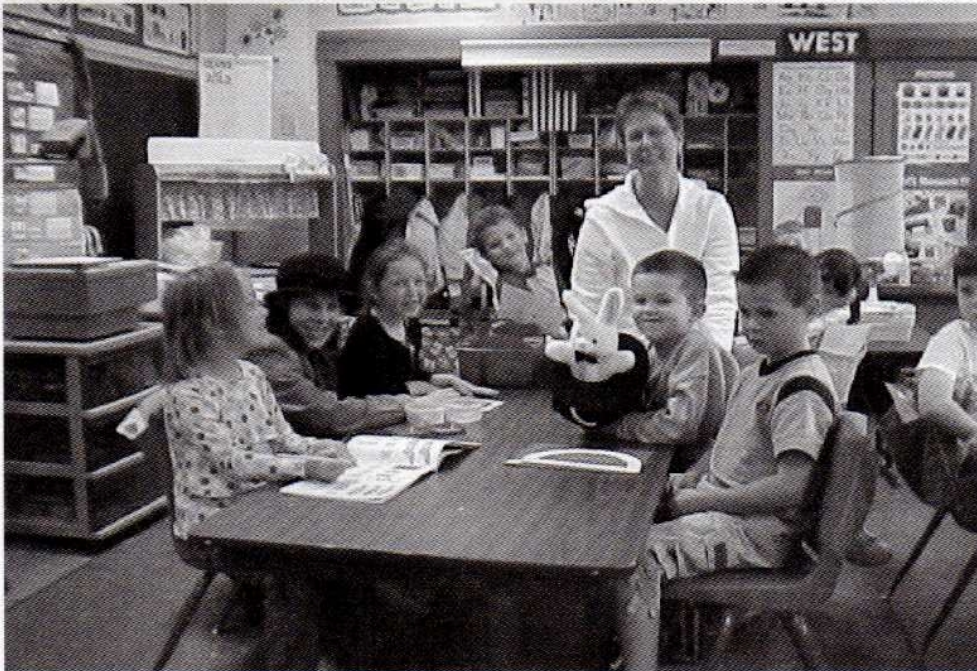


Marilyn Trapp, Mindy Trapp, and Jeanne Zettler are evidence of “The wearin’ of the green.”

SPICE Mission Statement

St. Catharine SPICE Program recognizes that each of our parish children are unique individuals with different learning needs. The SPICE Program supports serving the educational needs of these children. We believe that children have different learning styles that provide diversity in the classroom environment.

Working together with the support of the SPICE program, the parish community, pastor, administration, teachers, and parents can help to provide understanding, information, creativity and willingness to address special educational needs.



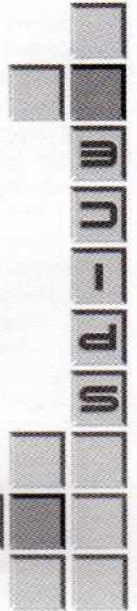
Laura Clubok, Occupational Therapist, and Carol Rearick, Kindergarten Teacher, working with the Healthy Handwriting Habits Program.

Continued from page 1 becomes. So we designed the program to foster the development of good handwriting habits in all of the Kindergarten students at St. Catharine School – not just those with special needs.

One of the unexpected benefits of this program is our improved ability to identify children who struggle with hand writing for a variety of reasons, such as a learning disability, difficulty with the motoric aspects of writing, or ingrained inefficient habits.

These issues frequently are not evident before kindergarten, and identifying these children in First grade is too late. By then they are facing additional academic demands and the habits already have been ingrained.

This program would not be possible without the generosity of SPICE. St. Catharine students, staff and parents continue to benefit from SPICE supported programs.



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Columbus, Ohio 43209

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What SPICE is Providing

Additional funding for:

- classroom aides, tutors & interpreters
- speech and occupational therapists
- teacher and staff continuing education
- classroom support materials and software
- individual grants for summer tutoring and specialized programs

An awareness that special needs exist with students in our parish.

An atmosphere that supports these students' needs.

Creates a model for other parishes within our Diocese and beyond.



Mary Ginn Ryan, CoFounder of SPICE, shown in the recent DVD production.

This SPICE is Patented

There has been so much outside interest in what St. Catharine is doing and our SPICE program, that the Parish has produced a DVD explaining its philosophy and the role of SPICE. Limited copies are available.

St. Catharine SPICE Program has recently received a Trademark License for SPICE from the U.S. Patent Office.

We are happy that other parishes are modeling our program – and they are! But we want to be sure that they are in agreement with our Mission Statement and further the philosophy that St. Catharine is practicing.