A STATEMENT FROM LEFT-IN

It was reported in the international press in January this year that Sweden was investing 104 million Euros in classrooms to replace computers with textbooks, and keyboards with pens. Denmark, The Netherlands and South Africa have recently announced a similar change, Australian governments are contemplating a similar change following disappointing literacy assessment results (NAPLAN), and media reports show other countries are evaluating a similar move. In the UK, the Department for Education has already included left-handed writing techniques in its Writing Framework.

This is not a nostalgic return to the past; it is a response to a growing body of evidence. Multiple studies from around the world over the past five years have shown that stronger handwriting and fine motor skills are linked to improved learning outcomes. Researchers have found that handwriting activates multiple areas of the brain simultaneously, whereas performing the same tasks on a tablet or computer does not produce the same level of cognitive engagement. Handwriting is one of the most complex fine motor skills a child under the age of ten will learn, and it plays an important role in reading, comprehension, memory retention, recall, and the creative process.

This renewed emphasis on handwriting has profound implications for left-handed students. If their writing skills are not supported correctly, the consequences extend far beyond untidy handwriting. Poor writing technique can affect speed, comfort, confidence, and ultimately academic performance. While some left-handed children eventually develop an effective writing style through trial and error, many do not. Most need to be taught directly and correctly, including page orientation, pencil grip, wrist position, and letter formation. Yet it is widely recognised that many educators receive little or no training in how to teach left-handed children.

Government and Education must act now!

LEFT-IN calls for urgent action to ensure that early years educators and school teachers are equipped with the knowledge, techniques, and resources needed to teach left-handed children to write comfortably, efficiently, and legibly.

- **Initial Teacher Education programmes** in universities and colleges should include evidence-based training on left-handed learning and writing development.
- **Current teachers and education professionals** should be given access to professional development and practical resources that enable them to support left-handed students effectively.

When left-handed children are taught essential motor skills correctly during their formative years, they reap the benefits throughout their lives. When they are not, they are not simply writing differently — they are being left behind.

LEFT-HANDERS EDUCATION FORUM AND TRAINING INTERNATIONAL NETWORK
www.left-in.org
enquiry@left-in.org

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