SHOULD MY CHILD BE *writing their name* BEFORE STARTING SCHOOL?

This is a great question and one that gets asked millions of times.

To understand when children write their name is NOT determined by a date in the diary or a looming transition into big school.

School is a PLACE, not a marker in time when children must have achieved something by. We understand the worry and the societal expectation that a writing their name is required prior to starting school!

Please know this is NOT the case.

Ask the vast majority of Reception teachers or Kindy teachers and they'll tell you, that they don't want children to start forming letters before they join their class.

There are so many other important skills and development that come first!

Please recognise and understand that a child writing their names isn't an indication of how well they'll do at school or even if they are ready.

Their body needs to be ready first.

To understand if children are ready to formally sit and write their name, (even long after they've started school), we firstly have to talk about SHOULDERS...

Shoulders?

Did you know that shoulders are immensely important in children being able to write their name?

The reason being, that through natural physical development, children develop from the top down and inside out!

Babies firstly strengthen, neck, chest, they crawl and then come up to standing enabling them to walk. It's a natural biological process.

Children also develop from the inside out - their core strength, then their shoulders, elbows, wrists and FINALLY their fingers

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They develop what are called their pivotal joints!

Pivotal or rotary joints are; Shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers!

Let's consider and pause for a moment... shoulders are that low load, bearing joint and muscle that supports the movement of the arm!

Notice the image. Notice how he is holding his pencil - A Palmer and or emergent Palmer grip.

This is an indicator that his control is being lead by his shoulder (supported by his shoulder) and moving to his elbow and not his fingers.

His shoulder is driving the movement of the pencil and not his fingers.

It is no good us keep trying to get him to practice holding his pencil 'properly' or eadjusting his grip. It's no good us keep getting him to copy our writing and form letters on a page. It's not necessary to TEACH letters, children will do things when ready and interested.

Children have to develop the core strength, shoulders, elbows, wrists FIRST.

How? How can we help a child then? Oh my goodness that's EASY. **PLAY!**

Large gross motor play opportunities, activities and experiences are fundamental to developing those pivotal joints - before it progresses to elbow, wrist and finally thumb and fingers!

Enabling children to lift, pull, push, raise their arms, touch their nose, get dressed. Hold a spoon, feed themselves, hold a paint brush, or a crayon. Dig, climb, pull themselves up, lift, carry, swing, dance, rough and tumble play, large movements, vertical painting, climbing ladders, etc etc.

We have to stop the fixation of pushing our children to write and see and recognise that non of this quantifiable stuff (writing their name) is possible until a child has been given the opportunity to develop strength in these pivotol joints!

Reminder - Shoulders, elbow, wrist and finally fingers.

Children learn in so many different ways whilst being at home, nursery kindergarten or the childminders.

PLAY is vital to this natural process! Sooner is not better. Hang onto childhood.

Be a guardian of this precious time, children will have another 14 years in formal education.

Let them be little. **PLAY is the way!**

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