

Hazlet Township Public Schools



COURSE OF STUDY FOR

Cursive Handwriting Grade 3

July, 2026

Written by: Madelyn Arecchi

Pacing Guide			
Week	Trimester 1	Week	Trimester 1
1	Foundations: Posture, paper position, pencil grip, entry/exit strokes, connecting letters	8	Loop letters: e, l, h, b, k, f
2	Foundations: Posture, paper position, pencil grip, entry/exit strokes, connecting letters	9	Oval letters: e, l, h, b, k, f
3	Curve up letters: i, t, u, w	10	Oval letters: e, l, h, b, k, f
4	Curve up letters: i, t, u, w	11	Oval letters: e, l, h, b, k, f
5	Curve up letters: i, t, u, w	12	Oval letters: e, l, h, b, k, f
6	Loop letters: e, l, h, b, k, f	13	Trimester 1 benchmark: curve up, loop, oval letters
7	Loop letters: e, l, h, b, k, f		
Week	Trimester 2	Week	Trimester 2
14	Undercurve letters: n, m, r	21	Remaining lowercase letters: s, x, v, z
15	Undercurve letters: n, m, r	22	Remaining lowercase letters: s, x, v, z
16	Undercurve letters: n, m, r	23	Lowercase fluency
17	Descender letters: j, y, p	24	Lowercase fluency
18	Descender letters: j, y, p	25	Lowercase fluency
19	Descender letters: j, y, p	26	Trimester 2 Benchmark: all lowercase letters
20	Remaining lowercase letters: s, x, v, z		
Week	Trimester 3	Week	Trimester 3
27	Uppercase letters: A, C, O, E, I, L, T, U, W, etc.	34	Authentic writing: All letters applied daily
28	Uppercase letters: A, C, O, E, I, L, T, U, W, etc.	35	Authentic writing: All letters applied daily
29	Uppercase letters: A, C, O, E, I, L, T, U, W, etc.	36	Authentic writing: All letters applied daily

30	Uppercase letters: A, C, O, E, I, L, T, U, W, etc.	37	Authentic writing: All letters applied daily
31	Uppercase letters: A, C, O, E, I, L, T, U, W, etc.	38	Grade 4 readiness
32	Authentic writing: All letters applied daily	39	Final benchmark
33	Authentic writing: All letters applied daily		

Course Overview:

The Grade 3 cursive handwriting curriculum is designed to help students become confident and independent writers by mastering both the mechanics and the utility of cursive script. Through structured practice, students develop essential foundational habits—such as proper posture, paper placement, and pencil grip—while learning to execute smooth, connected letters. The goal is to move beyond simple letter formation, helping students understand that cursive is an efficient tool for effective communication. By focusing on letter families and consistent stroke patterns, students build the fluency, legibility, and endurance necessary to apply cursive writing in meaningful, authentic ways, ranging from crafting personal signatures to maintaining daily journals.

Course Goals:

- **Letter Formation:** Learn proper stroke, curve, and connection for lowercase and uppercase cursive letters.
- **Legibility:** Practice writing distinct, readable words and simple sentences.
- **Reading Fluency:** Begin recognizing and decoding basic text written in cursive script.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Build hand-eye coordination and muscle memory through guided handwriting practice.

Cursive Handwriting Act

On January 19, 2026, Governor Phil Murphy signed [P.L. 2025, c.284](#), which requires public schools to provide instruction in cursive handwriting for students in grades three through five. To support understanding and implementation of this law, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) issued a [February 11, 2026 Broadcast](#), which provided technical implementation details specifically designed for districts' curriculum and instruction staff, and outlined expectations for districts as they incorporate cursive handwriting instruction into their curriculum for grades three through five beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

New Jersey Administrative Code Summary and Statutes**Curriculum Development: Integration of 21st Century Themes and Skills and Interdisciplinary Connections**

District boards of education shall be responsible for the review and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction based upon changes in knowledge, technology, assessment results, and modifications to the NJSLS, according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-2.

1. District boards of education shall include interdisciplinary connections throughout the K–12 curriculum.
2. District boards of education shall integrate into the curriculum 21st century themes and skills ([N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1\(c\)](#)).

Twenty-first century themes and skills integrated into all content standards areas (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.1(a)3).

“Twenty-first century themes and skills” means themes such as global awareness; financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; health literacy; learning and innovation skills, including creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration; information, media, and technology skills; and life and career skills, including flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility.

Amistad Law: [N.J.S.A. 18A 52:16A-88](#)

Every board of education shall incorporate the information regarding the contributions of African-Americans to our country in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

Holocaust Law: [N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28](#)

Every board of education shall include instruction on the Holocaust and genocides in an appropriate place in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary school pupils. The instruction shall further emphasize the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

Diversity and Inclusion Law: N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35

<https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/socst/docs/DiversityInclusionLaw.PDF>

A board of education shall include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle school and high school students as part of the district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.36) A board of education shall have policies and procedures in place pertaining to the selection of instructional materials to implement the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35.

Core Instructional & Supplemental Materials including various levels of Texts

Resources:

Center for Collaborative Classroom Handwriting resources

[Directions for handwriting instruction & resources](#)

CLIFTER ([Cursive Letter Identification and Formation for Transcription and Early Reading](#)):

This free tool is designed to empower educators and caregivers in supporting students' cursive handwriting and early reading skills. Educators can use this link for background information and an e-learning module to inform them of how to use the CLIFTER website and materials.

CLIFTER [Lowercase and uppercase letters tool](#) -used for individual letter/word modeling videos, individual letter handouts

CLIFTER [Additional Resources](#) -used for lines, cues, cover-copy-compare, alphabet sheets, professional development videos

District-selected cursive alphabet model, student reference strip, formation cards, and lined handwriting paper.

Teacher modeling tools: document camera, dry-erase board, projected stroke animations, and verbal formation cues.

Cursive reading cards at letter, word, sentence, and paragraph levels.

Grade 3 spelling and morphology lists emphasizing roots, prefixes, suffixes, and grade-appropriate words.

Writing-process tools: graphic organizers, paragraph frames, editing checklists, dictionaries, thesauruses, and source-recording sheets.

Adaptive materials: pencil grips, slant boards, raised-line or highlighted paper, enlarged models, low-resistance writing tools, and assistive technology.

Student portfolio folder containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Climate focused and diverse mentor texts utilized to identify, model, and practice authentic cursive writing. Examples:

- "The Resilient Red Maple" teaches students about New Jersey's native trees (like the Red Maple) and how rising regional temperatures affect local habitats, soil moisture, and wildlife. Students practice writing target climate vocabulary terms that feature high-connecting letters. Target words include: forest, wood, grow, and overheat. Ensure students pause at the top connectors to ensure proper letter formation.
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi discusses the unique history and beauty behind everyone's name. Students can practice writing own name and classmate names in cursive, focusing on the height of capital letters.

Time Frame	1-2 Weeks
Topic	
Foundations/Introduction to Cursive Handwriting	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3 Language Domain (L) L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills. L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling. L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Writing Domain (W) W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	
Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills	
Essential Questions: • Why is cursive writing an important way to communicate? • How does learning cursive help me become a more fluent and confident writer? • What habits help writers form letters correctly and neatly? • How do connections between letters make writing easier and faster? • How can I use perseverance and practice to improve my cursive writing? Guiding Questions: Understanding the Purpose of Cursive • What is cursive writing? • How is cursive different from manuscript (print) writing? • When and why do people use cursive today? • Why is it important to be able to read and write cursive? Developing Foundational Habits • How should I sit when I write? • How do I hold my pencil correctly? • How do I position my paper for comfortable writing?	

- Why are spacing and letter size important?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where do cursive letters begin and end?
- What strokes are used to make cursive letters?
- How can I tell if I formed a letter correctly?
- What similarities do I notice among groups of letters?

Building Connections and Fluency

- How do letters connect to one another in cursive?
- How can connecting letters help me write more smoothly?
- What strategies help me write with greater fluency?
- How can I improve my speed while maintaining legibility?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- how to grip a pencil
- correct posture is essential to writing neatly

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- explain why people use cursive writing
- identify proper spaces, margins, and other organizational cues to keep their handwriting neat
- differentiate how cursive writing differs from manuscript (print) writing

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introduction to Cursive: Conduct a "Cursive Around Us" picture walk (signatures, historical documents, greeting cards, logos). Create an anchor chart comparing print and cursive writing. Students discuss why people still use cursive today.

Posture, pencil grip, and paper placement: "Ready to Write" station rotations practicing proper seating, paper placement, and pencil grip. Use mirrors or peer partners to provide feedback on writing posture. Play "Teacher Freeze" where students demonstrate correct writing habits on cue.

Basic curve strokes: Practice foundational strokes in sand trays, shaving cream, or on whiteboards. Complete CLIFTER stroke warm-ups using sky/grass/ground visual cues. Trace large motor patterns in the air ("sky writing").

Assessments**Formative:**

- Letter-Stroke Self-Monitoring Checklists: After completing a CLIFTER letter practice sheet, students use a mini-rubric to self-assess their own letter strokes (e.g., “*Did I close my loop? Did my stroke start on the baseline?*”)
- "Air Writing" and Sky Writing Checks: Before putting pencil to paper, the teacher calls out a cursive letter or join (e.g., "b to e") and students "write" it in the air using large motor movements. The teacher scans the room for correct starting points and directional strokes.
- "Cover and Write" Orthographic Retrieval Slip: Students are shown a print letter or cursive model for 3 seconds. The teacher covers it, and students must write the cursive letter from memory on an exit slip.

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

Alternative:

- Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing: Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough: A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., “*Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up...*”).
- High-Contrast Line Grids & Adapted Writing Utensils: Students use paper with highly defined, color-coded lines (e.g., green baseline, blue headline, red midline) and thick grip-pencils to complete transcription tasks. Grading is adjusted to measure stroke consistency rather than precise letter size.
- Student Portfolios: Students reflect on their growth by observing their folders containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies:

Deciphering Historical Documents: Show students simplified, high-resolution snippets of historical documents (like the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or vintage 19th-century family letters). Have them try to "decode" specific cursive letters and words. (*6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15*)

Historical Signatures: Teach them about famous historical figures (e.g., John Hancock, Harriet Tubman, or local historical figures) and have students practice signing their own names. Discuss how a signature is a unique personal mark of agreement and identity. (*6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15*)

State Study Integration: When learning about your state's history, symbols, or geography, use state-specific vocabulary (e.g., "monarch butterfly," "capital," or names of local rivers) for their daily cursive line practice. (*6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.EconNE.2.*)

Science:

Journals and Labeling: When students draw diagrams (such as the life cycle of a frog, the parts of a plant, or the water cycle), have them write their labels in cursive. The flowing lines of cursive look beautiful next to hand-drawn botanical sketches. (*3-LS1-1, 3-ESS2-1*)

Scientific Vocabulary Drills: Instead of writing random letter strings, have students practice their letters by writing science vocabulary words (e.g., *evaporation, mammal, gravity, force*).

Nature Journaling: Give students small notebooks to use as field guides. When they go outside to observe weather patterns or collect leaves, encourage them to write brief, descriptive observations in cursive. (*3-PS2-2, 3-ESS2-2*)

English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. (*L.RF.3.3.*)

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. (*RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.*)

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

- Students utilize the CLIFTER digital modeling videos to watch real-time letter tracing, comparing it to static printable worksheets (*9.4.5.TL.1*)

- Utilizing CLIFTER's letters-to-words transcription practice to decode historical texts or environmental print. (9.4.5.IML.6)

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking

Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. **(8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)**
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. **(8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)**

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

Human-Computer Interaction & Assistive Technologies

- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)**

Time Frame	3 Weeks
Topic	

Curve Up Lowercase Letters

Alignment to Standards

New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3

Language Domain (L)

L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills.

L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling.

L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Writing Domain (W)

W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing

W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.

Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills

Essential Questions:

- How do writers use patterns to form cursive letters accurately?
- Why is it important to learn letters in groups or families?
- How do curve-up strokes help letters connect smoothly in cursive writing?
- How can careful practice improve my cursive writing fluency and legibility?
- What strategies do successful writers use when learning new cursive letters

Guiding Questions:**Understanding Letter Families**

- What do all curve-up lowercase letters have in common?
- How can grouping letters help me learn cursive more easily?
- What similarities do I notice between the letters in this family?
- How are curve-up letters different from other cursive letter groups?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where does each curve-up letter begin?
- What stroke patterns are used to form each letter?
- Which parts of the letter touch the baseline, midline, or topline?
- How do I know if I formed the letter correctly?
- What makes each curve-up letter unique?

Building Connections

- How do curve-up letters connect to the letters that come before and after them?
- Which letter connections are easiest to make?
- Which connections require additional practice?
- How can I maintain smooth transitions between letters?

Developing Fluency and Legibility

- How can I write curve-up letters neatly and consistently?
- What can I do to improve my speed while maintaining accuracy?
- How does spacing affect the readability of my writing?
- Why is legibility important when communicating through writing?

Reflecting on Learning

- Which curve-up letter is my strongest?
- Which curve-up letter is most challenging for me?
- What strategies help me improve when I make mistakes?
- How has my cursive writing changed since the beginning of the unit?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue learning cursive?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- lowercase curve-up letters include: i, t, u, w

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the characteristics of curve-up lowercase letters.
- Form curve-up lowercase letters accurately and consistently.
- Connect curve-up letters to other lowercase letters in words.
- Write words and short phrases using curve-up letters with increasing fluency.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing the Curve-Up Stroke: Teacher models the curve-up movement using CLIFTER language and visuals. Students practice sky writing and air tracing with whole-arm movements. Create an anchor chart identifying the common features of curve-up letters.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or rice bins. Use finger tracing cards before writing with a pencil. Form letters with yarn, wiki sticks, or playdough.

Letter Family Sort: Provide letter cards and have students sort them into "curve-up" and "not curve-up" categories. Discuss what all curve-up letters have in common. Add newly learned letters to a classroom cursive wall.

Guided Letter Practice: Complete teacher-led practice using CLIFTER's gradual release model: "I Do, We Do, You Do." Use verbal cues during formation (e.g., "Curve up, touch the top line, slide down."). Practice on lined paper with baseline, midline, and topline supports.

Partner Coaching: Students work in pairs to observe letter formation. Partners provide feedback using sentence stems: • "I noticed you..." • "Try remembering to..." • "Your strongest letter is..."

Word Building: Build and write simple words using curve-up letters (e.g., *will, little, wet, jet, tune*).- Complete word dictation activities.- Participate in "Build It, Write It, Read It" centers.

Fluency Practice: Conduct one-minute writing challenges focused on accuracy first. Complete repeated phrase writing (e.g., "I will write neatly."). Track personal growth using fluency graphs.

Reading Cursive: Match cursive words to printed words. Read short sentences written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding curve-up letters in passages.

Assessments

Formative:

- Letter-Stroke Self-Monitoring Checklists: After completing a CLIFTER letter practice sheet, students use a mini-rubric to self-assess their own letter strokes (e.g., "*Did I close my loop? Did my stroke start on the baseline?*")
- "Air Writing" and Sky Writing Checks: Before putting pencil to paper, the teacher calls out a cursive letter or join (e.g., "b to e") and students "write" it in the air using large motor movements. The teacher scans the room for correct starting points and directional strokes.
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Summative:

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- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
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Benchmark:

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paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

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English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. (L.RF.3.3.)

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. (RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.)

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

- Students utilize the CLIFTER digital modeling videos to watch real-time letter tracing, comparing it to static printable worksheets (9.4.5.TL.1)
- Utilizing CLIFTER's letters-to-words transcription practice to decode historical texts or environmental print. (9.4.5.IML.6)

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking

Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. (8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. (8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

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Time Frame	3 weeks
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Loop Lowercase Letters	
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New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3 Language Domain (L) L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills. L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling. L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Writing Domain (W) W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	
Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills	
Essential Questions: ● How do patterns help writers learn and remember cursive letters? ● Why is it helpful to learn cursive letters by family groups? ● How do loop strokes make cursive writing smooth and connected? ● How can practice improve the fluency and legibility of my cursive writing? ● What strategies can I use to become a confident and independent cursive writer?	

Guiding Questions:**Understanding Loop Letters**

- What is a loop letter?
- What characteristics do all loop lowercase letters share?
- How are loop letters similar to and different from other cursive letter families?
- Why do writers learn letters in groups?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where does each loop letter begin and end?
- How do I form a tall loop correctly?
- Which lines (baseline, midline, and topline) help guide my writing?
- What makes each loop letter unique?
- How can I tell if my letter is formed correctly?

Developing Connections

- How do loop letters connect to other cursive letters?
- Which loop letter connections are easy to make?
- Which connections require more practice?
- How can I create smooth transitions between letters when writing words?

Building Fluency and Legibility

- How can I write loop letters neatly and consistently?
- Why is spacing important when writing cursive?
- How can I increase my writing speed while keeping my letters readable?
- What habits help me become a more fluent cursive writer?

Reflecting on Growth

- Which loop letter is easiest for me to write?
- Which loop letter is most challenging for me?
- What strategies help me improve when I make mistakes?
- How has my cursive writing improved during this unit?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue learning cursive?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- lowercase loop letters include: e, l, h, b, k, f

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the characteristics of loop lowercase letters.
- Form loop lowercase letters accurately and consistently.
- Connect loop letters to other lowercase letters in words.
- Write words and short phrases using loop letters with increasing fluency.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing the Loop Stroke: Teacher models the curve-up movement using CLIFTER language and visuals. Students practice sky writing and air tracing with whole-arm movements. Create an anchor chart identifying the common features of loop letters.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or rice bins. Use finger tracing cards before writing with a pencil. Form letters with yarn, wiki sticks, or playdough.

Letter Family Sort: Provide letter cards and have students sort them into "loop" and "not loop" categories. Discuss what all loop letters have in common. Add newly learned letters to a classroom cursive wall.

Guided Letter Practice: Complete teacher-led practice using CLIFTER's gradual release model: "I Do, We Do, You Do." Use verbal cues during formation. Practice on lined paper with baseline, midline, and topline supports.

Partner Coaching: Students work in pairs to observe letter formation.- Partners provide feedback using sentence stems:• "I noticed you..."• "Try remembering to..."• "Your strongest letter is.."

Word Building: Build and write simple words using loop letters.- Complete word dictation activities.- Participate in "Build It, Write It, Read It" centers.

Fluency Practice: Conduct one-minute writing challenges focused on accuracy first.- Complete repeated phrase writing (e.g., "I will write neatly.")- Track personal growth using fluency graphs.

Reading Cursive: Match cursive words to printed words. Read short sentences written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding loop letters in passages.

Assessments

Formative:

- Letter-Stroke Self-Monitoring Checklists: After completing a CLIFTER letter practice sheet, students use a mini-rubric to self-assess their own letter strokes (e.g., "*Did I close my loop? Did my stroke start on the baseline?*")
- "Air Writing" and Sky Writing Checks: Before putting pencil to paper, the teacher calls out a cursive letter or join (e.g., "b to e") and students "write" it in the air using large motor movements. The teacher scans the room for correct starting points and

directional strokes.

- "Cover and Write" Orthographic Retrieval Slip: Students are shown a print letter or cursive model for 3 seconds. The teacher covers it, and students must write the cursive letter from memory on an exit slip.

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

Alternative:

- Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing: Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough: A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., "*Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up...*").
- High-Contrast Line Grids & Adapted Writing Utensils: Students use paper with highly defined, color-coded lines (e.g., green baseline, blue headline, red midline) and thick grip-pencils to complete transcription tasks. Grading is adjusted to measure stroke consistency rather than precise letter size.
- Student Portfolios: Students reflect on their growth by observing their folders containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies:

Deciphering Historical Documents: Show students simplified, high-resolution snippets of historical documents (like the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or vintage 19th-century family letters). Have them try to "decode" specific cursive letters and words.

(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)

Historical Signatures: Teach them about famous historical figures (e.g., John Hancock, Harriet Tubman, or local historical figures) and have students practice signing their own names. Discuss how a signature is a unique personal mark of agreement and identity.

(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)

State Study Integration: When learning about your state's history, symbols, or geography, use state-specific vocabulary (e.g., "monarch butterfly," "capital," or names of local rivers) for their daily cursive line practice. (6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.EconNE.2.)

Science:

Journals and Labeling: When students draw diagrams (such as the life cycle of a frog, the parts of a plant, or the water cycle), have them write their labels in cursive. The flowing lines of cursive look beautiful next to hand-drawn botanical sketches. (3-LS1-1, 3-ESS2-1)

Scientific Vocabulary Drills: Instead of writing random letter strings, have students practice their letters by writing science vocabulary words (e.g., *evaporation*, *mammal*, *gravity*, *force*).

Nature Journaling: Give students small notebooks to use as field guides. When they go outside to observe weather patterns or collect leaves, encourage them to write brief, descriptive observations in cursive. (3-PS2-2, 3-ESS2-2)

English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. (L.RF.3.3.)

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. (RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.)

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

- Students utilize the CLIFTER digital modeling videos to watch real-time letter tracing, comparing it to static printable worksheets (9.4.5.TL.1)
- Utilizing CLIFTER's letters-to-words transcription practice to decode historical texts or environmental print. (9.4.5.IML.6)

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking

Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. **(8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)**
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. **(8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)**

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

Human-Computer Interaction & Assistive Technologies

- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)**

Time Frame	4 weeks
Topic	
Oval Lowercase Letters	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3	
Language Domain (L)	
L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills.	

L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling.

L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Writing Domain (W)

W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing

W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.

Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills

Essential Questions:

- How do writers use patterns to form cursive letters accurately and efficiently?
- Why are oval shapes important in cursive writing?
- How do oval letters help create smooth and connected handwriting?
- How can practice improve my fluency, legibility, and confidence as a cursive writer?
- What habits help me become a successful cursive writer?

Guiding Questions:

Understanding Oval Letters

- What is an oval letter?
- What do all oval lowercase letters have in common?
- Why are oval letters taught together in cursive?
- How are oval letters similar to and different from other letter families?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where do oval letters begin and end?
- How do I create a smooth and complete oval shape?
- Which lines (baseline, midline, and topline) help guide my letter formation?
- What makes each oval letter unique?
- How can I check that my oval letters are formed correctly?

Developing Connections

- How do oval letters connect to other cursive letters?
- Which letter connections feel smooth and easy?
- Which letter connections require additional practice?
- How can I keep my letters connected without lifting my pencil?

Building Fluency and Legibility

- How can I make my oval letters the same size each time?
- Why are spacing and consistency important in cursive writing?

- How can I improve my writing speed while keeping my work neat?
- What strategies help me write with greater confidence and fluency?

Reflecting on Learning

- Which oval letter is easiest for me to write?
- Which oval letter is most challenging for me?
- What can I do when I make a mistake while writing cursive?
- How has my cursive writing improved during this unit?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue learning cursive?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- lowercase oval letters include: a, c, d, g, q, o

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the characteristics of oval lowercase letters.
- Form oval lowercase letters accurately and consistently.
- Connect oval letters to other lowercase letters in words.
- Write words and short phrases using oval letters with increasing fluency.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing the Oval Stroke: Teacher models the oval movement using CLIFTER language and visuals. Students practice sky writing and air tracing with whole-arm movements.- Create an anchor chart identifying the common features of oval letters.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or rice bins. Use finger tracing cards before writing with a pencil. Form letters with yarn, wiki sticks, or playdough.

Letter Family Sort: Provide letter cards and have students sort them into "oval" and "not oval" categories. Discuss what all oval letters have in common. Add newly learned letters to a classroom cursive wall.

Guided Letter Practice: Complete teacher-led practice using CLIFTER's gradual release model: "I Do, We Do, You Do."- Use verbal cues during formation. Practice on lined paper with baseline, midline, and topline supports.

Partner Coaching: Students work in pairs to observe letter formation. Partners provide feedback using sentence stems:• "I noticed you..."• "Try remembering to..."• "Your strongest letter is.."

Word Building: Build and write simple words using oval letters. Complete word dictation activities. Participate in "Build It, Write It, Read It" centers.

Fluency Practice: Conduct one-minute writing challenges focused on accuracy first. Complete repeated phrase writing (e.g., "I will write neatly."). Track personal growth using fluency graphs.

Reading Cursive: Match cursive words to printed words. Read short sentences written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding oval letters in passages.

Assessments

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

Alternative:

- Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing: Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough: A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., "*Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up...*").
- High-Contrast Line Grids & Adapted Writing Utensils: Students use paper with highly defined, color-coded lines (e.g., green baseline, blue headline, red midline) and thick grip-pencils to complete transcription tasks. Grading is adjusted to measure stroke consistency rather than precise letter size.
- Student Portfolios: Students reflect on their growth by observing their folders containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies:

Deciphering Historical Documents: Show students simplified, high-resolution snippets of historical documents (like the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or vintage 19th-century family letters). Have them try to "decode" specific cursive letters and words. *(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)*

Historical Signatures: Teach them about famous historical figures (e.g., John Hancock, Harriet Tubman, or local historical figures) and have students practice signing their own names. Discuss how a signature is a unique personal mark of agreement and identity. *(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)*

State Study Integration: When learning about your state's history, symbols, or geography, use state-specific vocabulary (e.g., "monarch butterfly," "capital," or names of local rivers) for their daily cursive line practice. *(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.EconNE.2.)*

Science:

Journals and Labeling: When students draw diagrams (such as the life cycle of a frog, the parts of a plant, or the water cycle), have them write their labels in cursive. The flowing lines of cursive look beautiful next to hand-drawn botanical sketches. *(3-LS1-1, 3-ESS2-1)*

Scientific Vocabulary Drills: Instead of writing random letter strings, have students practice their letters by writing science vocabulary words (e.g., *evaporation, mammal, gravity, force*).

Nature Journaling: Give students small notebooks to use as field guides. When they go outside to observe weather patterns or collect leaves, encourage them to write brief, descriptive observations in cursive. *(3-PS2-2, 3-ESS2-2)*

English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. *(L.RF.3.3.)*

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. *(RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.)*

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

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Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking**Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)**

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. **(8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)**
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. **(8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)**

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

Human-Computer Interaction & Assistive Technologies

- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)**

Time Frame	3 weeks
Topic	
Undercurve Lowercase Letters	

Alignment to Standards

New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3

Language Domain (L)

L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills.

L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling.

L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Writing Domain (W)

W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing

W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.

Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills**Essential Questions:**

- How do writers use repeated stroke patterns to write cursive letters efficiently?
- Why is it helpful to learn cursive letters by family groups?
- How do undercurve strokes help create smooth and connected cursive writing?
- How can practice help me become a more fluent and legible cursive writer?
- What strategies can I use to monitor and improve my cursive writing skills?

Guiding Questions:**Understanding Undercurve Letters**

- What is an undercurve letter?
- What characteristics do all undercurve lowercase letters share?
- Why are undercurve letters grouped together in cursive instruction?
- How are undercurve letters similar to and different from other cursive letter families?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where does each undercurve letter begin and end?
- How do I make a smooth undercurve stroke?
- Which lines (baseline, midline, and topline) help guide my letter formation?
- What makes each undercurve letter unique?
- How can I determine whether I formed a letter correctly?

Developing Connections

- How do undercurve letters connect to other cursive letters?

- Which undercurve letter connections are easiest for me to make?
- Which connections require additional practice?
- How can I maintain smooth transitions between letters without lifting my pencil?

Building Fluency and Legibility

- How can I write undercurve letters consistently in size and shape?
- Why are spacing and alignment important in cursive writing?
- How can I increase my writing fluency while maintaining legibility?
- What writing habits help me become a more confident cursive writer?

Reflecting on Learning

- Which undercurve letter is easiest for me to write?
- Which undercurve letter is most challenging for me?
- What strategies help me improve when I make mistakes?
- How has my cursive writing improved throughout this unit?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue developing my cursive skills?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- lowercase undercurve letters include: n, m, r

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the characteristics of undercurve lowercase letters.
- Form undercurve lowercase letters accurately and consistently.
- Connect undercurve letters to other lowercase letters in words.
- Write words and short phrases using undercurve letters with increasing fluency.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing the Undercurve Stroke: Teacher models the undercurve movement using CLIFTER language and visuals. Students practice sky writing and air tracing with whole-arm movements.- Create an anchor chart identifying the common features of oval letters.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or rice bins. Use finger tracing cards before writing with a pencil. Form letters with yarn, wiki sticks, or playdough.

Letter Family Sort: Provide letter cards and have students sort them into "undercurve" and "not undercurve" categories. Discuss what all undercurve letters have in common. Add newly learned letters to a classroom cursive wall.

Guided Letter Practice: Complete teacher-led practice using CLIFTER's gradual release

model: "I Do, We Do, You Do."- Use verbal cues during formation. Practice on lined paper with baseline, midline, and topline supports.

Partner Coaching: Students work in pairs to observe letter formation. Partners provide feedback using sentence stems: • "I noticed you..." • "Try remembering to..." • "Your strongest letter is..."

Word Building: Build and write simple words using undercurve letters. Complete word dictation activities. Participate in "Build It, Write It, Read It" centers.

Fluency Practice: Conduct one-minute writing challenges focused on accuracy first. Complete repeated phrase writing (e.g., "I will write neatly."). Track personal growth using fluency graphs.

Reading Cursive: Match cursive words to printed words. Read short sentences written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding undercurve letters in passages.

Assessments

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

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- Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing: Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough: A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., "*Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up...*").
- High-Contrast Line Grids & Adapted Writing Utensils: Students use paper with highly

defined, color-coded lines (e.g., green baseline, blue headline, red midline) and thick grip-pencils to complete transcription tasks. Grading is adjusted to measure stroke consistency rather than precise letter size.

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Interdisciplinary Connections

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English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. *(L.RF.3.3.)*

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. *(RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.)*

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills**Technology Literacy:**

- Students utilize the CLIFTER digital modeling videos to watch real-time letter tracing, comparing it to static printable worksheets (9.4.5.TL.1)
- Utilizing CLIFTER's letters-to-words transcription practice to decode historical texts or environmental print. (9.4.5.IML.6)

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking**Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)**

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. **(8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)**
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. **(8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)**

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

Human-Computer Interaction & Assistive Technologies

- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)**

Time Frame	3 weeks
Topic	
Descender Lowercase Letters	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3 Language Domain (L) L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills. L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling. L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Writing Domain (W) W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	
Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills	
Essential Questions: • How do writers use letter patterns to write cursive accurately and efficiently? • Why is it helpful to learn cursive letters in families with similar movements? • How do descending strokes help create complete and legible cursive letters? • How can practice improve my fluency, confidence, and consistency as a cursive writer? • What strategies can I use to evaluate and improve my cursive writing? Guiding Questions: Understanding Descending Letters • What is a descending lowercase letter? • What characteristics do all descending letters share? • Why are descending letters grouped together in cursive instruction? • How are descending letters similar to and different from other cursive letter families? Learning Letter Formation • Where does each descending letter begin and end? • How do I form a smooth descender that extends below the baseline? • Which lines (baseline, midline, topline, and descender line) help guide my writing?	

- What makes each descending letter unique?
- How can I determine whether I formed a descending letter correctly?

Developing Connections

- How do descending letters connect to other cursive letters?
- Which descending letter connections feel easiest for me?
- Which connections require additional practice?
- How can I maintain smooth transitions when a letter extends below the baseline?
- How can I avoid lifting my pencil while connecting letters?

Building Fluency and Legibility

- How can I write descending letters consistently in size and shape?
- Why is it important for descenders to be proportional to the rest of the letter?
- How can I improve my writing speed while maintaining neatness?
- What writing habits help me become a more fluent cursive writer?
- How do spacing and alignment affect the readability of my cursive?

Reflecting on Learning

- Which descending letter is easiest for me to write?
- Which descending letter is most challenging for me?
- What strategies help me improve when I make mistakes?
- How has my cursive writing improved during this unit?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue developing my cursive skills?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- lowercase descending letters include: j, y, p

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the characteristics of descending lowercase letters.
- Form descending lowercase letters accurately and consistently.
- Connect descending letters to other lowercase letters in words.
- Write words and short phrases using descending letters with increasing fluency.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing the Descending Stroke: Teacher models the descending movement using CLIFTER language and visuals. Students practice sky writing and air tracing with whole-arm movements. Create an anchor chart identifying the common features of descending letters.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or rice bins. Use finger tracing cards before writing with a pencil. Form letters with yarn, wiki sticks, or

playdough.

Letter Family Sort: Provide letter cards and have students sort them into "descending" and "not descending" categories. Discuss what all descending letters have in common. Add newly learned letters to a classroom cursive wall.

Guided Letter Practice: Complete teacher-led practice using CLIFTER's gradual release model: "I Do, We Do, You Do."- Use verbal cues during formation. Practice on lined paper with baseline, midline, and topline supports.

Partner Coaching: Students work in pairs to observe letter formation. Partners provide feedback using sentence stems:• "I noticed you..."• "Try remembering to..."• "Your strongest letter is..

Word Building: Build and write simple words using descending letters. Complete word dictation activities. Participate in "Build It, Write It, Read It" centers.

Fluency Practice: Conduct one-minute writing challenges focused on accuracy first. Complete repeated phrase writing (e.g., "I will write neatly."). Track personal growth using fluency graphs.

Reading Cursive: Match cursive words to printed words. Read short sentences written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding descending letters in passages.

Assessments

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

Alternative:

- **Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing:** Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- **Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough:** A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., *"Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up..."*).
- **High-Contrast Line Grids & Adapted Writing Utensils:** Students use paper with highly defined, color-coded lines (e.g., green baseline, blue headline, red midline) and thick grip-pencils to complete transcription tasks. Grading is adjusted to measure stroke consistency rather than precise letter size.
- **Student Portfolios:** Students reflect on their growth by observing their folders containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies:

Deciphering Historical Documents: Show students simplified, high-resolution snippets of historical documents (like the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or vintage 19th-century family letters). Have them try to "decode" specific cursive letters and words. (6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)

Historical Signatures: Teach them about famous historical figures (e.g., John Hancock, Harriet Tubman, or local historical figures) and have students practice signing their own names. Discuss how a signature is a unique personal mark of agreement and identity. (6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)

State Study Integration: When learning about your state's history, symbols, or geography, use state-specific vocabulary (e.g., "monarch butterfly," "capital," or names of local rivers) for their daily cursive line practice. (6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.EconNE.2.)

Science:

Journals and Labeling: When students draw diagrams (such as the life cycle of a frog, the parts of a plant, or the water cycle), have them write their labels in cursive. The flowing lines of cursive look beautiful next to hand-drawn botanical sketches. (3-LS1-1, 3-ESS2-1)

Scientific Vocabulary Drills: Instead of writing random letter strings, have students practice their letters by writing science vocabulary words (e.g., *evaporation, mammal, gravity, force*).

Nature Journaling: Give students small notebooks to use as field guides. When they go outside to observe weather patterns or collect leaves, encourage them to write brief, descriptive observations in cursive. (3-PS2-2, 3-ESS2-2)

English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to

process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. (*L.RF.3.3.*)

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. (*RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.*)

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

- Students utilize the CLIFTER digital modeling videos to watch real-time letter tracing, comparing it to static printable worksheets (9.4.5.TL.1)
- Utilizing CLIFTER's letters-to-words transcription practice to decode historical texts or environmental print. (9.4.5.IML.6)

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking

Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. (**8.1.5.AP.4:** Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. (**8.1.5.AP.3:** Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. (**8.2.5.ED.3:** Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)

Human-Computer Interaction & Assistive Technologies

- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR).
(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)

Time Frame	3 weeks
Topic	
Remaining Lowercase Letters	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3 Language Domain (L) L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills. L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling. L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Writing Domain (W) W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	
Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills	
Essential Questions: • How do writers use previously learned cursive strokes to form new letters? • Why is it important to recognize patterns when learning cursive writing? • How do practice and perseverance help me become a fluent cursive writer? • How can I use what I know about cursive letter families to learn unfamiliar letters? • What strategies can I use to improve the accuracy, fluency, and legibility of my cursive writing? Guiding Questions: Understanding the Remaining Letters • What characteristics make the letters s, x, z, and v unique?	

- How are these letters similar to other cursive letters I have already learned?
- Which previously learned strokes can I use to help form these letters?
- Why are these letters taught after learning the major cursive letter families?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where does each letter begin and end?
- What stroke patterns are used to form s, x, z, and v?
- Which lines (baseline, midline, topline, and descender line) help guide my writing?
- How can I tell if I formed each letter correctly?
- What makes each of these letters different from one another?

Developing Connections

- How do s, x, z, and v connect to other cursive letters?
- Which letter combinations are easiest to write?
- Which connections require additional practice?
- How can I create smooth transitions between these letters and other lowercase letters?
- How can I keep my pencil moving smoothly while writing words?

Building Fluency and Legibility

- How can I write these letters consistently in size and shape?
- Why are spacing and alignment important when writing cursive?
- How can I increase my writing speed while maintaining neatness?
- What habits help me become a more fluent and confident cursive writer?
- How can I use self-checking strategies to improve my handwriting?

Reflecting on Learning

- Which of the remaining letters is easiest for me to write?
- Which letter is most challenging for me?
- How has my cursive writing improved since the beginning of the year?
- What strategies help me when I am learning a difficult letter?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue developing my cursive skills?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:

A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:

- the remaining lowercase letters include: s, x, z, and v

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- writing in cursive takes practice and persistence
- cursive letters follow distinct motor patterns
- letter spacing and size are important

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the characteristics of the remaining lowercase letters.
- Form remaining lowercase letters accurately and consistently.
- Connect remaining letters to other lowercase letters in words.

- Write words and short phrases using remaining letters with increasing fluency.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing the Remaining Letters' Strokes: Teacher models the remaining movements using CLIFTER language and visuals. Students practice sky writing and air tracing with whole-arm movements. Create an anchor chart identifying the common features of remaining letters.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or rice bins. Use finger tracing cards before writing with a pencil. Form letters with yarn, wiki sticks, or playdough.

Letter Family Sort: Provide word cards and have students sort the descending letters into placement areas in words such as "beginning of word" and "middle of word", and "end of word" categories. Discuss what all remaining lowercase letters have in common. Add newly learned letters to a classroom cursive wall.

Guided Letter Practice: Complete teacher-led practice using CLIFTER's gradual release model: "I Do, We Do, You Do."- Use verbal cues during formation. Practice on lined paper with baseline, midline, and topline supports.

Partner Coaching: Students work in pairs to observe letter formation. Partners provide feedback using sentence stems:• "I noticed you..."• "Try remembering to..."• "Your strongest letter is.."

Word Building: Build and write simple words using remaining letters. Complete word dictation activities. Participate in "Build It, Write It, Read It" centers.

Fluency Practice: Conduct one-minute writing challenges focused on accuracy first. Complete repeated phrase writing (e.g., "I will write neatly."). Track personal growth using fluency graphs.

Reading Cursive: Match cursive words to printed words. Read short sentences written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding remaining letters in passages.

Assessments**Summative:**

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
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- **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
- **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
- **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

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- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

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- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

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- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. (8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems

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- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3:** Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)

Time Frame	3 weeks
Topic	
Lowercase Letter Fluency	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3	
Language Domain (L) L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills. L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling. L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	
Writing Domain (W) W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	
Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills	
Essential Questions: • How does fluent cursive writing help me communicate effectively?	

- Why is it important to write with both accuracy and speed?
- How can practice help me become a more confident and automatic cursive writer?
- What habits help writers maintain legibility while increasing fluency?
- How can I use cursive writing in meaningful ways in my daily life?

Guiding Questions:**Understanding Fluency**

- What does it mean to write fluently in cursive?
- How is fluency different from simply writing quickly?
- Why are accuracy and legibility important when writing cursive?
- How can cursive writing become more automatic over time?

Applying Previously Learned Skills

- How can I use all of the lowercase letters together when writing words and sentences?
- Which letter connections feel smooth and automatic?
- Which letter combinations still require practice?
- How do previously learned letter families help me write more efficiently?

Building Speed and Endurance

- How can I increase my writing speed while maintaining neatness?
- What strategies help me write for longer periods of time?
- How can I pace myself when completing a writing task?
- Why is it important to maintain proper posture, pencil grip, and paper placement during extended writing?

Developing Legibility

- Is my writing easy for others to read?
- How can I make my letter size and spacing more consistent?
- How do smooth connections improve the appearance of my cursive writing?
- What can I do if my writing becomes difficult to read as I write faster?

Reflecting on Growth

- How has my cursive writing improved since the beginning of the year?
- Which lowercase letters or connections are my greatest strengths?
- Which letters or words do I still need to practice?
- What goals can I set to continue improving my cursive fluency?
- How can I celebrate my growth as a cursive writer?

Authentic Writing Applications

- When might I use cursive writing outside of school?
- Why is it important to be able to read and write cursive?

- How can I use cursive to write notes, letters, stories, or journal entries?
- How does cursive help me express my ideas clearly?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- Cursive writing is a form of written communication used to record and share ideas.
- Cursive writing uses continuous strokes to create smooth connections between letters.

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- Effective handwriting allows writers to communicate ideas clearly and efficiently.
- Repeated, purposeful practice builds fluency, confidence, and automaticity in cursive writing.
- Handwriting should be neat, consistent, and easy for others to read.
- Cursive can be used in everyday life for signatures, personal correspondence, note-taking, and reading historical and contemporary texts.

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Demonstrate appropriate posture, pencil grip, and paper placement.
- Identify and describe the characteristics of cursive letter families.
- Recognize and apply common cursive stroke pattern
- Form all lowercase cursive letters accurately and consistently.
- Reflect on their strengths and areas for growth as cursive writers.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Reviewing Lowercase Letter Families: Complete a "Letter Family Relay" by sorting all lowercase letters into their CLIFTER groups (curve-up, loop, oval, undercurve, descending, and remaining letters). Create an anchor chart reviewing common stroke patterns. Conduct rapid letter naming and formation drills.

Warm Up Fluency Practice: Begin each lesson with 1–2 minutes of cursive stroke and letter practice. Practice writing the alphabet from memory. Complete "Rainbow Writing" using different colors for repeated practice.

Building Word Fluency: Write high-frequency words in cursive (e.g., *because*, *where*, *there*, *when*, *about*). Participate in "Beat Your Best" timed writing activities focused on accuracy first and speed second. Practice word ladders using cursive.

Phrase and Sentence Fluency: Copy short phrases and sentences using proper spacing and alignment. Practice writing common sentence starters (e.g., "My favorite..." or "I like to..."). Complete sentence dictation activities.

Reading and Writing Connections: Match printed sentences to cursive sentences. Read short passages written in cursive. Highlight specific lowercase letter families in cursive texts.

Developing Writing Endurance: Participate in "Write for Two" activities, gradually increasing writing time from two to five minutes. Complete sustained cursive journal entries. Practice copying short poems or quotes.

Partner Fluency Practice: Conduct peer reviews using a cursive checklist. Practice partner dictation where one student reads a sentence and the other writes it in cursive. Share and

discuss fluency goals.

Self Assessment and Reflection: Complete weekly self-assessments on fluency, spacing, and legibility. Graph personal fluency growth over time. Set individual goals for improvement.

Assessments

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

Alternative:

- Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing: Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough: A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., "*Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up...*").
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- Student Portfolios: Students reflect on their growth by observing their folders containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies:

Deciphering Historical Documents: Show students simplified, high-resolution snippets of

historical documents (like the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or vintage 19th-century family letters). Have them try to "decode" specific cursive letters and words. (6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)

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State Study Integration: When learning about your state's history, symbols, or geography, use state-specific vocabulary (e.g., "monarch butterfly," "capital," or names of local rivers) for their daily cursive line practice. (6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.EconNE.2.)

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Journals and Labeling: When students draw diagrams (such as the life cycle of a frog, the parts of a plant, or the water cycle), have them write their labels in cursive. The flowing lines of cursive look beautiful next to hand-drawn botanical sketches. (3-LS1-1, 3-ESS2-1)

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Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. (L.RF.3.3.)

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. (RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.)

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

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- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

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- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking

Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. **(8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)**
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. **(8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)**

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- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

Human-Computer Interaction & Assistive Technologies

- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)**

Time Frame	4 weeks
Topic	
Uppercase Letters	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3	
Language Domain (L)	

L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills.

L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling.

L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Writing Domain (W)

W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing

W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.

Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills

Essential Questions:

- How do uppercase cursive letters help writers communicate clearly and effectively?
- How can recognizing patterns help me learn uppercase cursive letters?
- Why is it important to use uppercase letters correctly in writing?
- How do practice and perseverance help me become a confident cursive writer?
- How can I apply uppercase cursive letters in meaningful ways in my everyday writing?

Guiding Questions:

Understanding Uppercase Letters

- What are uppercase cursive letters?
- How are uppercase cursive letters similar to and different from lowercase cursive letters?
- Why do writers use uppercase letters?
- When should uppercase letters be used in writing?
- How are uppercase letters organized into families or groups?

Learning Letter Formation

- Where does each uppercase letter begin and end?
- What stroke patterns are used to form uppercase cursive letters?
- Which uppercase letters are easiest to learn based on patterns I already know?
- How can I tell if I formed an uppercase letter correctly?
- Which lines (baseline, midline, and topline) help guide uppercase letter formation?

Developing Connections and Usage

- How do uppercase letters connect to lowercase letters in words?
- Which uppercase letters require special attention when connecting to other letters?
- How can I use uppercase letters correctly in names, titles, and sentences?
- Why is consistency important when writing uppercase letters?

Building Fluency and Legibility

- How can I write uppercase letters neatly and consistently?
- How can I improve my fluency while maintaining legibility?
- What writing habits help me produce my best cursive work?
- Why is spacing important when writing words that include uppercase letters?

Reflecting on Learning

- Which uppercase letter is easiest for me to write?
- Which uppercase letter is most challenging for me?
- What strategies help me improve when I make mistakes?
- How has my cursive writing improved since learning uppercase letters?
- What goals can I set for myself as I continue developing my cursive skills?

Authentic Writing Applications

- How can I use uppercase cursive letters in my daily writing?
- Why is it important to write my name correctly in cursive?
- When might I use uppercase cursive letters outside of school?
- How do uppercase letters help readers understand written text?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- Uppercase cursive letters are used to begin sentences and write proper nouns, including names, places, days of the week, and months.
- Uppercase cursive letters have distinct formation patterns and are often grouped by common strokes and shapes.
- Some uppercase cursive letters connect directly to lowercase letters, while others stand independently.

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- Uppercase letters serve an important purpose in written communication.
- Recognizing similarities among uppercase letters makes them easier to learn and remember.
- Uppercase letters are used in specific places, such as names, titles, and the beginnings of sentences.
- Uppercase cursive letters are used in signatures, personal correspondence, journaling, and other forms of everyday writing.

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Accurately form all uppercase cursive letters using correct stroke sequences.
- Identify common patterns among uppercase letter groups.
- Use baseline, midline, and topline guides when forming uppercase letters.
- Distinguish between uppercase and lowercase cursive letters.
- Write first and last names correctly using uppercase and lowercase cursive letters
- Apply uppercase letters appropriately at the beginning of sentences and in proper nouns.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Introducing Uppercase Letters: Conduct a picture walk of items that use uppercase cursive (signatures, certificates, invitations, historical documents). Create an anchor chart titled "When Do We Use Uppercase Letters?" Compare uppercase cursive letters to uppercase print letters.

Identify Uppercase Letter Families: Sort uppercase letters by similar stroke patterns. Discuss how some uppercase letters resemble lowercase letters and others have unique formations. Add each newly learned letter to a classroom cursive alphabet wall.

Multisensory Letter Formation: Practice uppercase letters through sky writing and air tracing. Form letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or with playdough. Use large chart paper for whole-arm movements before transitioning to lined paper.

Guided Letter Practice: Follow the CLIFTER "I Do, We Do, You Do" instructional routine. Use verbal formation cues while practicing one or two letters at a time. Complete "trace, copy, cover, write" activities for each uppercase letter.

Name Writing Practice: Write first, middle, and last names in cursive. Create personalized nameplates for desks or lockers. Practice signing names as an introduction to signatures.

Uppercase and Lowercase Connections: Practice connecting uppercase letters to lowercase letters in names and proper nouns. Create word lists of classmates, cities, states, and months of the year. Highlight connection points using colored pencils.

Word and Sentence Application: Write sentences using proper capitalization. Complete sentence dictation activities focusing on beginning capitalization. Rewrite familiar poems or songs using cursive..

Reading Uppercase Cursive: Match uppercase cursive letters to printed letters. Read names and short passages written in cursive. Complete a "Cursive Detective" activity by finding uppercase letters in texts.

Developing Fluency: Conduct one-minute uppercase writing challenges emphasizing accuracy and consistency. Practice writing names, places, and titles repeatedly. Complete "Beat Your Best" fluency activities.

Assessments**Summative:**

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective

rubric:

- **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
- **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
- **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

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Time Frame	6 weeks
Topic	
Authentic Writing: All lowercase and uppercase letters	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3 Language Domain (L) L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills. L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling. L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Writing Domain (W) W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	
Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills	

Essential Questions:

- How can I use cursive writing to communicate my ideas effectively?
- Why is cursive writing an important skill in everyday life?
- How does fluent cursive writing help me become a more confident writer?
- How can I apply my cursive skills in authentic and meaningful ways?
- How do practice, reflection, and perseverance help me grow as a writer?

Guiding Questions:**Understanding Authentic Writing**

- What is authentic writing?
- Why do people use cursive writing outside of school?
- How can cursive help me communicate with others?
- What are some examples of real-world writing that use cursive?

Applying Cursive Skills

- How can I use uppercase and lowercase cursive letters together?
- How can I write words, sentences, and paragraphs fluently in cursive?
- How do I maintain proper spacing, size, and alignment while writing?
- How can I use cursive writing to share my ideas clearly?

Developing Fluency and Endurance

- How can I write for longer periods of time while maintaining legibility?
- What strategies help me write more fluently?
- How can I improve my writing speed without sacrificing neatness?
- How do proper posture, pencil grip, and paper placement support extended writing?

Writing for Different Purposes

- How can I use cursive to write letters, notes, stories, and journal entries?
- Why is it important to write my name and signature clearly?
- How can cursive be used to create cards, invitations, or posters?
- How does my audience affect the way I write?

Reflecting on Growth

- How has my cursive writing changed since the beginning of the year?
- Which cursive skills are my greatest strengths?
- Which skills would I still like to improve?
- What goals can I set for myself as a cursive writer?
- How can I celebrate my growth and accomplishments?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- Cursive writing is a practical and meaningful form of communication.

- Writers use cursive for a variety of purposes, including letters, journals, stories, cards, notes, and signatures.
- Uppercase and lowercase cursive letters work together to create complete words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- Writing fluency and endurance develop through repeated practice and authentic application.

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- Writers use cursive to share ideas, tell stories, and communicate with others in authentic ways.
- As cursive writing becomes automatic, writers can focus more on expressing their ideas than on forming letters.
- Practice leads to confidence and independence.
- Different writing tasks require thoughtful choices about content, organization, and presentation.
- Cursive is used for signatures, letters, invitations, journals, and reading historical and contemporary texts.

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Apply uppercase and lowercase cursive letters appropriately in written communication.
- Write words, sentences, and short paragraphs in cursive.
- Demonstrate consistent letter formation, spacing, alignment, and legibility.
- Use proper capitalization and punctuation in cursive writing.
- Write with increasing automaticity and confidence.
- Sustain cursive writing for extended periods of time.
- Maintain neatness and readability while increasing writing fluency.
- Apply cursive skills across multiple writing tasks and settings.
- Write personal narratives, letters, journal entries, and notes in cursive.
- Create and use a legible cursive signature.
- Read and interpret cursive text.
- Use cursive writing to communicate ideas to a variety of audiences.
- Reflect on personal growth throughout the cursive curriculum.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Reviewing Cursive Foundations for Authentic Writing: Begin with a daily CLIFTER warm-up reviewing letter families, connections, and common handwriting errors. Students complete a "Cursive Readiness Check" reviewing posture, pencil grip, paper placement, spacing, and alignment. Create a class anchor chart: "What Makes Cursive Writing Successful?"

Connecting Letters to Real World Writing: Explore examples of cursive in everyday life (signatures, cards, historical documents, handwritten notes). Students participate in a "Cursive Scavenger Hunt" by locating examples of cursive around the classroom or in provided samples. Discuss why people use cursive and how it helps communication.

Signature Development: Students analyze different signatures and discuss characteristics of effective signatures. Practice writing their first and last names in cursive using proper uppercase and lowercase connections. Create a personal signature that is readable, consistent, and unique. Reflect: "What makes my signature represent me?"

Letter Writing Practice: Model the parts of a friendly letter (date, greeting, body, closing, signature). Students write a handwritten letter in cursive to a classmate, family member, or community member. Use a cursive writing checklist for peer feedback: Correct letter formation, proper spacing, legible writing appropriate capitalization

Cursive Journaling: Establish a weekly cursive journal routine. Students respond to prompts requiring multiple sentences written in cursive. Example prompts:

- "A time I showed perseverance was..."
- "My favorite memory from this year is..."
- "Something I want others to know about me is..."

Fluency Through Meaningful Writing: Conduct "Write It Smoothly" practice where students copy short passages, poems, or quotes in cursive. Focus on maintaining consistent size, spacing, and connections. Students compare early and later samples to observe growth.

Cursive Note Taking Activities: Students practice writing short notes, reminders, and lists in cursive. Create classroom jobs, schedules, or announcements written in cursive. Discuss how fluent handwriting supports efficient communication.

Creative Writing Applications: Write and illustrate a short story completely in cursive. Create a handwritten book with a title page, chapters, and illustrations. Publish a final copy demonstrating handwriting skills.

Reading Cursive Text: Students read handwritten notes, historical excerpts, or teacher-created cursive passages. Practice identifying uppercase and lowercase letters in connected text. Complete "Cursive Detective" activities by finding challenging letter connections.

Peer Feedback and Revision: Students exchange cursive writing samples with partners. Use feedback stems:

- "Your writing is easy to read because..."
- "One thing you could improve is..."
- "A strong cursive skill you demonstrated is..."

Portfolio Reflection: Students compile cursive samples from throughout the year. Compare beginning-of-year and end-of-year writing. Write a reflection explaining their growth as cursive writers.

Assessments

Summative:

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- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

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- Understanding handwriting as an early human technology that paved the way for modern keyboards, voice-to-text, and optical character recognition (OCR). **(8.2.5.ITH.3: Analyze the impact of a technology on the individual, society, and the environment.)**

Time Frame	1 Week
Topic	
Grade 4 Readiness	
Alignment to Standards	
New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 3	
Language Domain (L)	
L.WF.3.3. Demonstrate command of the conventions of writing including those listed under grade two foundational skills.	
L.WF.3.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of encoding and spelling.	
L.KL.3.1. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	
Writing Domain (W)	
W.WP.3.4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing	
W.RW.3.7. Engage in independent and task-based writing for both short and extended periods of time, producing written work routinely.	

Learning Activities & Key Concepts and Skills

Essential Questions:

- How can I use cursive writing as a tool for effective communication?
- How does continued practice help me become a more fluent, confident, and independent cursive writer?
- How can I apply my cursive skills across different subjects and real-world writing situations?
- Why are accuracy, fluency, and legibility important when writing in cursive?
- How can I take ownership of my growth as a writer and continue improving my handwriting skills?
- How do strong foundational handwriting skills support my success as a fourth-grade writer?

Guiding Questions:

Reviewing Cursive Foundations

- What cursive skills have I learned throughout third grade?
- How do lowercase and uppercase letters work together to create words and sentences?
- Which cursive letter families and connections do I know well?
- Which letters or connections still require additional practice?
- How can I use what I already know to solve handwriting challenges?

Building Fluency and Automaticity

- What does it mean to write cursive fluently?
- How can I increase my writing speed while keeping my work readable?
- Why is automatic letter formation important?
- How does repeated practice improve my handwriting?
- How can I maintain smooth connections between letters?
- How can I write longer pieces without losing accuracy or legibility?

Developing Independence as a Writer

- How can I monitor my own handwriting progress?
- What strategies can I use when I notice my writing becoming difficult to read?
- How can I use feedback to improve my cursive writing?
- How can I set realistic goals for my handwriting growth?
- How can I take responsibility for producing my best work?

Applying Cursive Across the Curriculum

- How can I use cursive in writing assignments, notes, and projects?
- How can cursive help me communicate ideas clearly?
- When might cursive be useful in fourth grade and beyond?

- How can I use cursive when writing responses in different subjects?
- How does handwriting support organization and expression of my ideas?

Strengthening Legibility and Writing Habits

- Are my letters formed correctly and consistently?
- Are my words spaced evenly and easy to read?
- How do size, alignment, and spacing affect my writing?
- How do posture, pencil grip, and paper placement support writing success?
- What adjustments can I make to improve my handwriting?

Reflecting on Growth

- How has my cursive writing changed since I first learned it?
- What cursive skill am I most proud of?
- What areas of cursive writing have improved the most?
- What is one handwriting goal I have for fourth grade?
- How can I continue practicing cursive independently?

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Enduring Understandings:**A: STUDENTS WILL KNOW:**

- Cursive writing is a practical and meaningful form of communication.
- Writers use cursive for a variety of purposes, including letters, journals, stories, cards, notes, and signatures.
- Uppercase and lowercase cursive letters work together to create complete words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- Writing fluency and endurance develop through repeated practice and authentic application.

B: STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT:

- Cursive writing is a valuable communication skill.
- Accurate letter formation, connections, and handwriting habits create a foundation for fluent writing.
- Writing is successful when others can easily read and understand the message.
- Handwriting skills can support learning in language arts, science, social studies, mathematics, and everyday situations.
- Mastering cursive is a process that continues beyond third grade through consistent use and refinement.

C: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Demonstrate accurate formation of all uppercase and lowercase cursive letters.
- Apply knowledge of cursive letter families and stroke patterns.
- Identify and correct common cursive formation errors.
- Use appropriate starting points, stroke sequences, and connecting strokes.
- Write letters, words, phrases, and sentences with increasing speed and accuracy.
- Demonstrate automatic recall of cursive letter formation.
- Write multi-sentence responses, journal entries, letters, and creative pieces in cursive.
- Apply appropriate capitalization and punctuation when writing in cursive.
- Read and interpret cursive handwriting from a variety of sources.

- Use cursive writing for practical purposes, including signatures, notes, and personal communication.

Suggested Learning Activities:

Cursive Skill Review and Readiness Check: Begin with a CLIFTER spiral review of lowercase and uppercase letter families. Students complete a cursive self-assessment identifying letters, connections, or words they want to improve. Review proper posture, pencil grip, paper placement, and writing routines. Create a personal cursive goal for the unit.

Letter Family Fluency Practice: Complete timed practice of cursive letter families (curve-up, loop, oval, undercurve, descending, remaining letters). Practice writing alphabet sequences in cursive while focusing on smooth transitions. Use "Write, Check, Improve" routines where students compare their work to a model. Identify which letters are automatic and which need more practice.

Building Cursive Automaticity: Conduct daily "Cursive Fluency Bursts" (1–3 minutes). Students practice writing high-frequency words and common phrases. Use repeated writing of personal vocabulary lists, classroom words, and academic terms. Track growth in speed while maintaining accuracy.

Word Connection Practice: Practice commonly used word families and challenging connections. Create a "Connection Challenge" chart featuring difficult letter combinations. Students highlight connection points in words. Practice transitioning between uppercase and lowercase letters in names and proper nouns.

Sentence Fluency Development: Copy and write meaningful sentences while focusing on smooth movement and spacing. Complete teacher dictation activities using grade-level sentences. Practice writing sentence starters such as:

- "I learned that..."
- "My goal is..."
- "One thing I noticed..."

Writing Endurance Practice: Increase writing time gradually (3 minutes → 5 minutes → 10 minutes). Students complete sustained cursive writing tasks such as journal entries or responses. Discuss strategies for maintaining legibility during longer writing periods. Reflect on how writing habits affect endurance.

Cursive Across the Curriculum: Practice writing science vocabulary, social studies terms, math explanations, and reading responses in cursive. Create cursive vocabulary cards. Complete short written responses using cursive. Discuss how handwriting supports learning in all subjects

Independent Cursive Practice: Students create personal practice plans based on their goals. Choose words, letters, or connections to practice. Reflect weekly on progress. Celebrate growth through student portfolios.

Peer Feedback and Coaching: Partner students for cursive conferences. Use feedback

stems:

- "I noticed your..."
 - "Your writing is easy to read because..."
 - "A goal you could work on is..."
- Students revise based on feedback.

Portfolio Reflection: Students compile cursive samples from throughout the year. Compare beginning-of-year and end-of-year writing. Write a reflection explaining their growth as cursive writers.

Assessments

Summative:

- Cursive Spelling Dictation Test: The teacher dictates 5–10 grade-appropriate spelling words that only use the cursive letters taught in that unit. Students must spell and write the words entirely in cursive.
- Letter-Stroke Category Mastery Rubric: At the end of a unit (e.g., the *undercurve-to-slant* letters: *i, t, u, w, p, r, s*), students copy a short pangram (sentence containing all letters) in cursive. The teacher grades based on a specific, non-subjective rubric:
 - **Baseline start:** Did letters start at the baseline?
 - **Connections:** Are the connections continuous and correct?
 - **Form/Legibility:** Are letters distinct and easily identifiable?

Benchmark:

- Cursive Copy-Fluency Probe (1-Minute Copy Test): Students are given a short printed paragraph. They are instructed to copy as much of the paragraph as they can into cursive in 1 minute. The teacher calculates **Letters Correctly Formed Per Minute (LCFPM)** to evaluate if handwriting has become automatic enough to support working memory during composition.

Alternative:

- Sensory & Textured Letter Tracing: Instead of a traditional pencil-and-paper assessment, students form cursive letters in sand trays, shaving cream, or on textured sandpaper cards.
- Verbally Directed Formation Walkthrough: A student who struggles with motor control verbally guides the teacher or a peer on how to write a letter (e.g., "*Start at the baseline, curve up to the midline, slant down back to the baseline, loop up...*").
- High-Contrast Line Grids & Adapted Writing Utensils: Students use paper with highly defined, color-coded lines (e.g., green baseline, blue headline, red midline) and thick grip-pencils to complete transcription tasks. Grading is adjusted to measure stroke consistency rather than precise letter size.
- Student Portfolios: Students reflect on their growth by observing their folders containing baseline, trimester benchmarks, authentic applications, self-assessments, and final samples.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies:

Deciphering Historical Documents: Show students simplified, high-resolution snippets of historical documents (like the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or vintage 19th-century family letters). Have them try to "decode" specific cursive letters and words. *(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)*

Historical Signatures: Teach them about famous historical figures (e.g., John Hancock, Harriet Tubman, or local historical figures) and have students practice signing their own names. Discuss how a signature is a unique personal mark of agreement and identity. *(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.2, . 6.1.5.HistoryCC.3: 6.1.5.HistoryCC.15)*

State Study Integration: When learning about your state's history, symbols, or geography, use state-specific vocabulary (e.g., "monarch butterfly," "capital," or names of local rivers) for their daily cursive line practice. *(6.1.5.HistoryCC.1, 6.1.5.EconNE.2.)*

Science:

Journals and Labeling: When students draw diagrams (such as the life cycle of a frog, the parts of a plant, or the water cycle), have them write their labels in cursive. The flowing lines of cursive look beautiful next to hand-drawn botanical sketches. *(3-LS1-1, 3-ESS2-1)*

Scientific Vocabulary Drills: Instead of writing random letter strings, have students practice their letters by writing science vocabulary words (e.g., *evaporation, mammal, gravity, force*).

Nature Journaling: Give students small notebooks to use as field guides. When they go outside to observe weather patterns or collect leaves, encourage them to write brief, descriptive observations in cursive. *(3-PS2-2, 3-ESS2-2)*

English Language Arts:

Spelling & Sight Word Reinforcement: Writing spelling words in cursive forces the brain to process the word as a continuous unit rather than a series of disjointed, individual strokes, which can actually help with spelling retention. *(L.RF.3.3.)*

Character Journaling: Have students write a short diary entry from the perspective of a character in a book they are reading, pretending the character wrote it by hand. *(RL.IT.3.3., RL.PP.3.5.)*

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

Technology Literacy:

- Students utilize the CLIFTER digital modeling videos to watch real-time letter tracing, comparing it to static printable worksheets (9.4.5.TL.1)
- Utilizing CLIFTER's letters-to-words transcription practice to decode historical texts or environmental print. (9.4.5.IML.6)

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

- When a student encounters a "scrambled" or illegible word connection, they must act as a "stroke detective." They analyze where the transition stroke failed and apply spacing or height corrections to solve the legibility problem. (9.4.5.CT.4)

Creativity and Innovation

- Regular transcription practice requires drafts and continuous adjustments. (9.4.5.CI.4)

Personal Financial Literacy and Civic Responsibility

- The shift from isolated letter formation to fluid, joined letters culminate in the personal signature. Discuss how a cursive signature acts as a secure, legally binding personal "key" for opening bank accounts, signing library cards, and protecting against identity theft (consumer protection). Students design and practice their own distinct, flowing cursive signature. (9.1.5.FP.2, 9.1.5.EG.5)

Computer Science & Design Thinking**Algorithms and Programming (Standard 8.1.5.AP)**

- When transcription breaks down (e.g., joining a high-connecting *o* to an *r*), have students pause. They decompose the "bug" by isolating the transition stroke from the letters themselves to practice the connector alone. **(8.1.5.AP.4: Break down problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems to facilitate development.)**
- Have students write the "code" for a letter. If they forget step 2, the "program" fails to output the correct letter. **(8.1.5.AP.3: Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals.)**

Engineering Design and Systems (Standard 8.2.5.ED)

- Introduce students to different "writing interfaces" (standard pencil, triangular grip pencil, dry-erase marker on a whiteboard). Have them evaluate which "hardware tool" provides the optimal friction and tactile feedback for executing the CLIFTER stroke paths smoothly. **(8.2.5.ED.3: Follow step-by-step directions to assemble a product or solve a problem, using appropriate tools)**

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Modifications (ELL, Special Education, At-Risk Students, Gifted & Talented, & 504 Plans)**ELL:**

- Work toward longer passages as skills in English increase
- Use visuals
- Introduce key vocabulary before lesson

- Teacher models reading aloud daily
- Provide peer tutoring
- Use of Bilingual Dictionary
- Guided notes and/or scaffold outline for written assignments
- Provide students with English Learner leveled readers.

Supports for Students With IEPs:

- Allow extra time to complete assignments or tests
- Guided notes and/or scaffold outline for written assignments
- Work in a small group
- Allow answers to be given orally or dictated
- Use large print books, Braille, or books on CD (digital text)
- Follow all IEP modifications

At-Risk Students:

- Guided notes and/or scaffold outline for written assignments
- Introduce key vocabulary before lesson
- Work in a small group
- Lesson taught again using a differentiated approach
- Allow answers to be given orally or dictated
- Use visuals / Anchor Charts
- Leveled texts according to ability

Gifted and Talented:

- Create an enhanced set of introductory activities (e.g. advance organizers, concept maps, concept puzzles)
- Provide options, alternatives and choices to differentiate and broaden the curriculum
- Organize and offer flexible small group learning activities
- Provide whole group enrichment explorations
- Teach cognitive and methodological skills
- Use center, stations, or contracts
- Organize integrated problem-solving simulations
- Propose interest-based extension activities
- Expose students to beyond level texts.

Supports for Students With 504 Plans:

- Follow all the 504 plan modifications
- Text to speech/audio recorded selections
- Amplification system as needed
- Leveled texts according to ability
- Fine motor skill stations embedded in rotation as needed
- Modified or constrained spelling word lists

- Provide anchor charts with high frequency words and phonemic patterns