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RESEARCHERS DISCUSS IMPACT OF HANDWRITING INSTRUCTION ON CHILDREN AT HANDWRITING EDUCATIONAL SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 26, 2012) – After hearing evidence-based research from education thought leaders and researchers on the role handwriting plays in a student's academic success, educators from across the country overwhelmingly agree that handwriting and cursive need to stay in the curriculum.

About 150 people, from as far away as Alaska, attended “Handwriting in the 21st Century? An Educational Summit” held at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. Zaner-Bloser and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) partnered on the event after educators voiced concern following the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) decision to drop explicit cursive instruction and allow each state to decide whether to teach the subject. Through presentations and workshops, attendees learned how handwriting is also a foundational skill that helps children develop in other areas, such as reading, writing, memory, and critical thinking

Dr. Virginia W. Berninger of the University of Washington told the group, “Research shows that children benefit from teaching handwriting, spelling and composing. The Common Core State Standards focus on composing, but do not mention handwriting. Yet that is the tool that makes composing possible.”

Dr. Karin Harman James of Indiana University explained her research clearly showed a link to children writing by hand and the brain activity it sparks that support the development of literacy. All the researchers agreed this is an issue that needs continued study and that it is important for districts and states to have the information they need to understand the consequences of their curriculum decisions.

In his keynote address, AASA Executive Director Daniel A. Domenech said the de-emphasis of handwriting and the elimination of cursive in particular from the CCSS is a sign of the times. “We are in a hurry to do away with basic skills because they can be replaced by technology. What happens when technology doesn't work? Cursive writing is still part of a good education.”

In a survey at the conclusion of the summit, 85 percent of the attendees believe that handwriting instruction is “very important” in the 21st century. A majority of attendees responded that handwriting should be taught from Kindergarten through 5th grade, with 95 percent believing that both cursive and manuscript should be taught. When asked about keyboarding instruction, 66 percent of the audience agreed the subject was “very important” and most agreed it should be emphasized in grades 3-8.

Handwriting standards that can supplement the Common Core State Standards and a

white paper summarizing the research presented at the summit will be available soon on the summit website: <http://www.hw21summit.com>

About Zaner-Bloser

Zaner-Bloser, a wholly owned subsidiary of Highlights for Children with more than 120 years of experience in education, is one of the premier publishers of research-based reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary and handwriting programs. The Zaner-Bloser mission is to create dynamic, appealing and effective educational programs and services. Zaner-Bloser focuses on distinctive programs that inspire all students to become engaged, literate participants in the global society.

About the American Association of School Administrators

The American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA's mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. For more information, visit www.aasa.org. Follow AASA on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AASAHQ or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AASAPage.