



Slate

Post & Lesson Plan

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816 State Street Madison, Wisconsin 53706

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Slate

Before chromebooks, iPads, and even lined paper, students still had to complete their assignments. In the past, students did most their schoolwork on a slate.

A slate is a small, rectangular blackboard made from slate stone. They had two sides and the edges were wrapped in leather or wood to protect students' hands. In the 1800s, schools used slates to teach students reading, writing, and math. Students used slates because paper and ink were expensive. Students used slates to complete class work and practice their lessons. Students also took slates home to practice what they learned in school.

Teachers at the Scandinavian Raspberry School in Wisconsin used slates in their teaching. At first students used slate pencils to write on their slates. This was like using a light rock to write on a dark rock. Later, slate pencils were replaced with soft chalk. The soft chalk was popular because it made writing smoother. It was easy to erase homework written on a slate. After the teacher checked the student's work, students just used a cloth or a wet sponge to clean their slates. Because they only had one slate to write on, students erased their work many times during a day. This forced students to memorize their lessons every day.

Penmanship or handwriting was very important in the past. Most students learned how to write correctly by copying their teacher. The teacher would write letters, words, or sentences on the chalk board at the front of the room. The students would copy the spelling, shape, and spacing of what the teacher wrote onto their own slate. Students with good handwriting were asked to write on the large chalkboard at the front of the room. This was a special honor.

In the 1880s, Austin Norman Palmer introduced a new writing method called The Palmer Method. Austin Palmer struggled to write in the fancier writing system called Spencerian that was being taught in schools. The method Palmer invented made writing quicker, neater, and more consistent. It had fewer curls and was simpler in form. People who used the Palmer method wrote without moving their fingers and wrists. Writers wrote letters with round up and down strokes with a locked elbow. Locking their elbow in one place kept a steady speed, as writers did not lift the chalk from the slate or the pen from the paper. Businesses used Palmer's method first. It helped them complete their work faster and make more money.

Much like the slate, new ways of teaching have replaced The Palmer Method as technology changed. These new handwriting methods teach both print and cursive writing skills. And just like students do not use slates any more, many students no longer learn to write in cursive. Do you?

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WISCONSIN 101: www.wi101.wisc.edu

SLATE

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Enduring Understanding

How do objects help us understand the story of Wisconsin?

Essential Questions

- Why do we save things?
- What makes the things we save important?
- What questions do we ask of objects?
- How do objects tell a story of the past?

Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies

Social Studies Inquiry Practices and Processes

- Communicate and critique conclusions. **(SS.Inq4)**

Behavioral Science

- Examine individual cognition, perception, behavior, and identity (Psychology). **(SS.BH1)**
- Examine the progression of specific forms of technology and their influence within various societies. **(SS.BH4)**

Economics

- Use economic reasoning to understand issues. **(SS.Econ1)**
- Analyze how decisions are made and interactions occur among individuals, households, and firms/businesses (Microeconomics). **(SS.Econ2)**

History

- Use historical evidence for determining cause and effect. **(SS.Hist1)**
- Connect past events, people, and ideas to the present, use different perspectives to draw conclusions, and suggest current implications. **(SS.Hist3)**



Content Questions

- Why do some people benefit from good penmanship? What are the benefits of penmanship?
- How did slates assist in the learning process? Why was this good school tool to promote learning?
- How did technology change how we learn in school?
- How did technology change the importance of penmanship?

Educational Goal Assessment

- Summarize the importance of handwriting.
- Articulate how school supplies have changed today.
- Compare and contrast school supplies of the past and of today.

Suggested Performance Task

- Activity #1, Writing Wars!
 - Have students practice writing the alphabet and numbers one to ten in The Palmer Method and the Zaner-Bloser Method. After writing in both ways have the class make a plus and minus list for each method? Have the students vote on which method they like and why. See attached worksheets.
 - <https://dihomeschooler.com/2013/04/08/self-teaching-handwriting-course-free/>
 - http://characterwritingworksheets.com/downloads/alphabet_zaner-bloser.pdf
- Activity #2, Handwriting, Why?
 - Divide students into pairs or groups of four. Have them make a list of where neat handwriting is important and why. Using the slideshow have the students think about why handwriting is important in these settings. Have the students record it on their worksheet and have the class share their ideas. (See attached slide show and worksheet below)
- Activity #3, Memorization versus Recording
 - Students that used slates needed to remember their lessons, as they did not have a record of their work. Present the information on one of the following lessons allow the students to complete the lesson, collect the work, and then quiz the classroom on the lesson. After the short quiz have the students record the pluses and minuses of learning like those children. Lastly have the students think about what school supplies they use now that help them learn. (See attached slide show and worksheet below)



Additional Resources:

- Links to Wisconsin 101
 - Door County Bookmobile
<https://wi101.wisc.edu/door-county-bookmobile/>
 - Creating the Door County Bookmobile
<https://wi101.wisc.edu/2017/11/01/creating-the-door-county-bookmobile/>
 - Settlement Cook Book
<https://wi101.wisc.edu/settlement-cook-book/>
 - The Stout Institute and Educational Innovation
https://wi101.wisc.edu/2016/03/09/stout_institute/
- Links to Wisconsin Historical Society Resources
 - School Group in Classroom
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM39010>
 - Mrs. Jenkins' Schoolroom
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM11547>
 - Nakoma School Class
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52320>
 - Oneida Classroom
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM25836>
- Natural Slate Splitting
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcuySbMqk-8>



Handwriting, Why?

Directions: Make a list of three places where handwriting is important. Tell us why it is important there.

PLACE	WHY?
1.	
2.	
3.	

Directions: Make a list of three places where handwriting is important. Tell us why it is important there.

PLACE	WHY?
1. Cake - Cursive	
2. Cake - Printing	
3. Signatures	
4. Postcards (Mailing)	
5. Protest Signs	



Memorization versus Recording

Directions: Record your thoughts on what was good and bad about learning a new lesson by memorizing or having a record of what you did. Under each write down why you think it is a plus or minus.

MEMORIZATION		RECORD	
Pluses	Minuses	Pluses	Minuses
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?

List 3 school supplies that help you learn.

1.
2.
3.



Memorization versus Recording

Quiz Answers

Log Marking Hammer Quiz

1. Lumberjacks marked the wood at the end of the log.
2. Lumberjacks marked the wood so that the mill knew who cut them. This made sure the company made money and the lumberjack received the money for his work.
3. Lumberjacks cut trees down in the winter months. They did this because the branches were bare. They also did this because it was easier to drag the logs along snow and ice.

Cradleboard Quiz

1. Babies were placed in the cradleboards.
2. Cradleboards allowed women to have both hands free when doing tasks. It kept children close so adults could care for them. It allowed tribe members to watch over the children and keep them safe.
3. Native women wore cradleboards on their backs. At times, they did lean them against a tree.

Pasty Quiz

1. Miners filled the pasty with meat and vegetables.
2. Miners left crust for the "Tommyknockers" or "Knockers." Knockers showed the miners where to look for deposits of galena.
3. Pastys had a thick crust, which miners could eat with their dirty hands. The thick pastry kept the meat and vegetables warm until lunchtime.

Badger Wheelmen Pin

1. The second Badger Wheelmen race was in Milwaukee, WI.
2. Members wore the pin.
3. People joined clubs like the Badger Wheelmen's Club to share their love of bicycling, to improve themselves, and the world around them.