

Let's return cursive writing to our schools

Can you read the original Declaration of Independence? How about Mississippi's original 1817 Constitution, now on display around the state? Or a letter from your own grandmother? If you're my age or older, the odds are that you can read these important documents. If you're younger, the opposite is likely true.

What happened? Cursive writing, our traditional, cultural tool of putting thoughts on paper, has gone missing in our mandated school curriculums. I'm one who believes the benefits of teaching cursive writing are important enough to offer our students the opportunity to learn it. That's why I've introduced HB 417, "Lexi's Law," which will ensure that the practice is carried forward through the new generations. It requires students to be able to write legibly in cursive by the end of the third grade.

Because cursive writing is not one of the standardized, measured items in Common Core or other curriculum programs, the lessons many remember

from our own childhoods are no longer taught. The thinking has been that printing should be enough, and if not printing, then word processing on a computer is the next best thing.

Several experts believe that printing and word processing do not address the same "brain pattern disciplines" that writing cursive does.

Psychologists believe that learning cursive writing has many more benefits to children than just making pretty sentences. Creating the strokes and serifs and swishes in the concentrated exercise not only develops hand-eye coordination, but it gives students an opportunity at self-teaching a skill that they can basically evaluate themselves. For folks with dyslexia, the concentrated effort it takes to create cursive words is a good tool to help them, or so those who are trained in teaching students with dyslexia say.

There are those who believe that writing in cursive is much faster than printing, and thus students can take better notes because they are more likely

to be able to keep up with the lecture. And, it keeps them fully engaged in the subject matter, which word processing doesn't necessarily do.

I posed the question on social media asking whether people thought cursive writing should be mandated in our schools. The responses were amazing – the post has reached over 100,000 people at this writing and had been shared over 800 times.

Here are some of the responses in favor, which was the heavy majority of responses:

"Our son B has dyslexia. One of the things that helps dyslexics is reading cursive writing. He's in 3rd grade and he started practicing it last year in 2nd grade. I always took pride in perfect cursive penmanship. I still do to this day. It's just good southern manners in my person opinion."

"I absolutely think they should. It makes sense physiologically and anatomically. The muscles and tendons in little hands work better when work-

ing with circular motion rather than the straight block strokes it takes for printing. Plus, the high schoolers today can't read or write cursive and that's sad. They could take notes and write essays quicker if they were fluent in cursive writing."

"I teach at the community college level and I have recently begun to see students that cannot read cursive writing. I have had students tell me that they cannot read anything that I have written on the board because it was in cursive. I have great penmanship, so I was perplexed. Upon investigation, it was discovered that they cannot read cursive. Imagine the handicap that creates for these students! And this is just the beginning. We will begin seeing more and more that cannot communicate, especially read and understand."

"As a school administrator and former classroom teacher, I say it is much needed. We have very highly intelligent kids going through our education system, but when you look at their handwriting, it is not neces-

Unemployment rate falls again, lowest unemployment in more than 12 years

Mississippi's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell again in December to 5.6%. This is the lowest level of unemployment since January 2004 when the rate was also 5.6%. The December 2016 rate is one-tenth of a percentage point lower than a month earlier in November 2016, when the rate was 5.7%, and 1.2 percentage points lower than a year ago in December 2015, when the rate was 6.8%.

The number of unemployed Mississippians also dropped again in December by 1,200 to 72,200.

This is the lowest number of Mississippians without jobs since July 2001 when 70,300 were unemployed. The December 2016 figure is 15,100 lower

than a year ago in December 2015.

The Labor Force, which is made up of everyone who has a job or is looking for a job, increased in December by 4,200 to 1,288,200. Over the year since December 2015, the Labor Force decreased by 900.

The number of people working in Mississippi rose in December by 5,400 to 1,216,000. For the year since December 2015, employment in our state posted an increase of 11,100.

The preliminary projections from a separate sampling of employers are that the number of non-farm jobs in December decreased by 7,200 to 1,133,600. Over the year since December 2015, non-farm jobs decreased by 11,100.

sarily reflective of their intelligence level. It has also been scientifically proven that cursive writing helps one connect thoughts and "trains brains" to think quicker--because writing in cursive requires constantly thinking "ahead" without one even realizing it."

While the teaching of cursive writing does exist in the current education standards, it is not mandated. My bill will mandate the instruction, and it is patterned after a similar successful bill in Alabama and is

named "Lexi's Law" after the sponsoring legislator's granddaughter when he realized that the system was not being taught in schools there. I hope we end this session with our Mississippi school children better equipped to succeed because they will be taught cursive writing in their classrooms.

*Rep. Tom Miles represents House District #75 in Rankin and Scott Counties and can be contacted at tmiles@house.ms.gov



Imagine a Perfect World

Try this. Imagine a perfect world. Whatever that means to you...imagine it. Does that mean peace? Then envision absolute tranquility. Does a perfect world imply joy? Then create your highest happiness. Will a perfect world have love? Ponder a place where love has no bounds. Whatever heaven means to you, imagine it.

Get it firmly fixed in your mind. Delight in it. Dream about it. Long for it. And then smile as the Father reminds you from the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "No one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." No one has come

close. No one. Think of all the songs about heaven. All the artists' portrayals. All the lessons preached, poems written and chapters drafted. When it comes to describing heaven, we are all happy failures!

From "The Lucado Inspirational Reader."

UpWords, with Max Lucado is a popular daily Bible devotion. This Max Lucado devotion offers wisdom and insight for applying Biblical truths to the ups and downs of everyday life. Reading daily devotions provides strength and encouragement in your daily walk with Jesus Christ.

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Obituaries



MARION MONTGOMERY GARLAND

Marion Williard Montgomery Garland was born on May 7, 1929 to the late Mr. and Mrs Samuel (Maude) Montgomery. She was the youngest of three children born and raised in Holmes County Mississippi where she received her education. She confessed hope in Christ at an early age and was a strong believer all of her days.

Marion met and married the late Robert Garland on August 31, 1946.

Family was very important to Marion. She was an extremely loving and nurturing mother, grandmother and sister. She had a passion for little children. She spoke weekly with her brothers and her children by phone, sometimes daily. She loved visiting with family and preparing meals with love. She loved the holidays when everyone would come to visit. Her family and friends will truly miss her greeting cards containing small surprises. She was a housewife and a great caregiver as well. She

patiently cared for her mother, stepfather and son during their declining years of life.

Marion departed this life on January 11, 2017 in the evening.

She was preceded in death by her mother and father, her son Robert and her brother Samuel Montgomery.

She leaves to cherish her memories five dedicated children, Robbie Nixon (Ron) of Durant, MS, Joycelyn Johnson of Durant, MS, Gregory Garland (Ruthie) of Memphis, TN, Marva Garland of Stone Mountain, GA, Joseph Garland (Esther) of Snellville, GA; one loving brother Joe Nathan Montgomery (Louise) of Chicago, IL; and a host of grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and friends around the country.

The family wishes to express their sincere gratitude for all acts of kindness shown towards them in their hour of need. Your love makes the load we bear a little easier. God bless you.

RICHARD E. BARDWELL

Richard Earl Bardwell, 80, of Durant, MS passed away at his residence on Tuesday, January 17, 2017. A graveside service was held on Friday, January 20 at 2:00 p.m. at Seneasha Cemetery in Goodman. Southern Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements.



N.A.
open group meetings every
Friday, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at
New Roads Counseling
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Lexington
662-230-2682

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SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 4

IN A PUZZLE By Jill Pepper

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EXPRESS GRAIN COMMODITY PRICES

| Crop | CBOT Month | Delivery Period | Futures Price | EGT Basis | Net Price | Change |
|----------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Wheat | Mar 17 | 2017 Jan | 4.33 | -0.57 | 3.76 | 0.05 |
| Wheat | Jul 17 | 2017 Jul | 4.62 | -0.30 | 4.32 | 0.03 |
| Corn | Mar 17 | 2017 Jan | 3.70 | 0.03 | 3.73 | 0.04 |
| Corn | Sep 17 | 2017 Aug | 3.90 | -0.12 | 3.78 | 0.00 |
| Soybeans Sidon | Nov 17 | 2017 Aug Sep | 10.25 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Soybeans G'wood | Mar 17 | 2017 Jan | 10.58 | -0.07 | 10.51 | -0.18 |
| Soybeans G'wood | Nov 17 | 2017 Aug Sep | 10.25 | -0.04 | 10.21 | -0.01 |
| Soybeans Minter City | Nov 17 | 2017 Aug Sep | 10.25 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Rice | Jan 17 | | 9.650 | | | -0.170 |
| Rice | Sep 17 | | 10.420 | | | -0.110 |
| Cotton | Mar 17 | | 74.63 | | | 1.590 |
| Cotton | May 17 | | 75.17 | | | 1.500 |

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