

*Commentary on Crayons*  
*Monica Ellis, England*

In our Waldorf Schools' kindergartens the “tradition” for many years has been to use the Stockmar block crayons for the children for drawing. This has been carried into the first, second and sometimes even third grade for drawing and even (Oh, horrors) for writing.

The way we learn to hold a pencil/pen is a very complex neurological developmental achievement. It involves correct “opposition” of the thumb and forefinger. It also involves the sense of balance and the sense of self-movement. Therefore, we need to learn the correct pencil hold right from the beginning! If you see a child holding a block crayon, he or she uses the most primitive hand gesture which then becomes habitual.

The block crayons were an invention by two German art teachers to use from the fifth grade upwards for a particular drawing technique. They were never meant to be for the younger children and certainly not for any form of writing. There is no possibility that you can have a correct pencil grip when holding a block crayon. A child can hold a stick crayon properly, at least when it is long enough. Good habits formed early on will make learning to write, once in first grade, much easier.

Regarding the idea that “intellectual forces are awakened too early when using a pointed crayon/pencil before grade one,” the Stockmar stick crayons can hardly be considered pointed! Please remember that in Rudolf Steiner's time neither stick nor block crayons existed. Children learned to write with scratchy pen nibs dipped in inkwells in their desks - and being in Germany they also had to write Gothic script.

In our Remedial/Special Education Needs work we see a large number of children with very poorly developed pencil holds. Please, let us start the children off with good habits in the Waldorf kindergartens. You will do them a great favor for their future schooling.