**Adjusting Pencil Pressure**

Heavy Pencil Pressure

This may be because the child has poor awareness of finger placement and movement or poor control of the smaller muscles of the hand. Sometimes correcting the pencil grip may help this problem. Some ideas for helping the child that writes **TOO HARD**:

- Try HWT's handwriting warm up activity prior to writing. Kids love it and it prepares the body for writing. (See attached handout or see page in the Printing Teacher's Guide—Laminate and hang in classroom; select different students to help lead the class in the activity).

- Try writing on different textured surfaces (sandpaper, plastic stitching material, on carpet, sidewalks with chalk, etc.)

- You can also have the child place their paper on a piece of Styrofoam (if they press too hard they will poke holes in their paper). OR try having the child write on a phone book.

- Have the student either use a #3 pencil (which isn’t as dark as #2 when the student uses too much pressure) or a mechanical pencil (tips break easily so the child has to learn to control the amount of pressure used).

- **Ghost writing.** Have the child write a word lightly on the paper and then erase it without leaving any marks. The child wins if they can do this. Cue them by saying: “Lift the pencil tip off of the paper” as they write.
Light Pencil Pressure

This may be because the child has weakness in their hands or poor finger dexterity. Some have decreased sensory awareness. Sometimes correcting the pencil grip may help this problem. Some ideas for helping the child that writes TOO SOFTLY:

- "Magic" paper. Try 3 ply or carbon paper (need to write hard so it makes it to the "pink!")

- Use a vibrating pen. (Squiggle writer can be purchased at Wal-mart).

- A weighted pencil may provide the child with more awareness of the pencil. This can be achieved inexpensively by adding nuts and bolts separated by pencil grips on the writing instrument.

- Try using a #1 Pencil (softer lead-writes darker) or thicker lead pencils.

- Place a sheet of sandpaper under the coloring sheet. Use a clipboard to stabilize.

- Make a color wheel by applying graded (light to dark) pressure.

- Offer activities with raised borders. Some examples include fuzzy drawings with markers, making drawings with colored glue, and having the child color "IN" stencils, etc.

- Try rubbing items to color and create picture (rubbing leaves, stencils, etc.)

- Use ink pens or markers.

Erasing

Try having the student use an artist’s eraser to assist in decreasing torn papers when erasing. An artist’s eraser requires less effort to erase and doesn’t leave erasure marks.

Pencil Size

Use golf-size pencils with children especially if a child has a difficult time manipulating a large or regular size pencil.

*See reference page for Amundson(3) and Olsen(9).