SPELLING INSTRUCTION

MOVING STUDENTS FROM SOUND SPELLING TO CORRECT SPELLING AND BEYOND

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A comprehensive literacy program which views reading and writing as reciprocal processes includes as much time for writing as it does for reading. The more opportunities students have to apply (in writing) what has been taught (through reading), the more teachers can assess the learning that has taken place for their students (Mooney and Young, 2006). With that in mind, it is important for students to write often and in every subject. Not only does writing support what is being learned currently in any subject, but it also gives valuable insight into the next learning step for students. Writing is an important tool for teachers, not only in assessing student learning but as a way to develop students' ability to communicate their learning. One obvious communication area for student learning is the ability to spell. The more effective the speller, the more effectively they can convey their learning.

Spelling is a tool for writing. Although the writer doesn't need to know how to spell well in order to write or even read what they have written, conventional or correct spelling shows respect for the reader. In order for a *reader* to make meaning from what is written, a *writer* needs to make sure the writing is as readable as possible. Helping students think about their spelling while they write should be an integral part of instruction. In considering this, a good question for teachers to be asking is, "What does instruction look like that supports students in developing a spelling conscience?" (J. Richard Gentry, 1987)

An important component in helping students who are developing a spelling conscience is to understand that spelling is a developmental process. Spelling unfolds for students in stages. J. Richard Gentry describes spelling development in terms of five stages—precommunicative, semi-phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and correct. His stages of spelling development help explain spelling as a developmental process that moves students from constructing words orally and aurally as they write (sound spelling) to a visual approach where the writer is writing more fluently and checking visually to make sure the word or aspects of the word look right.

Because spelling is a tool for writing and the fact that reading and writing are reciprocal processes, spelling instruction should not just be confined to a spelling program. A teacher needs to consider spelling across all content areas. In order to develop students who truly understand the importance of spelling, it is important for teachers to make explicit spelling connections across content reading and writing instruction. This connection is apparent when looking at the descriptors associated with the stages of reading and writing development (M. Mooney, 2003). For example, at the emergent stage of reading and writing, descriptors state that students should be making letter sound connections using beginning and/or ending sounds, as well as having a bank of 20 known words. At the early stage, Mooney writes that students need to recognize groups of letters in words as well as recognize and use basic contractions in writing. At the fluent stage, descriptors indicate that students should be using syllabification as their main decoding skill, and in writing, playing with words such as puns, alliteration, and onomatopoeia.

Skills such as these are important in all instructional areas and students need to be supported in using them whenever they are reading and writing. (See page 3 for a developmental perspective on literacy development) In an effort to help teachers make spelling connections across content areas the following chart shows how teachers might think about broad spelling skills in relation to the stages of reading and writing development. By applying the same levels of reading and writing development to spelling development—emergent, early, and fluent—teachers can be more effective in developing the spelling "conscience" of their students in any and all instructional areas.

Emergent Spellers (Prekindergarten/ Kindergarten)

- Sight Words
  - Mom. dad, love, I, a, me, my, the, is, it, in, at, to, went, was, we, go (primary story card)
- Generalizing Words (onset)
  - my—by
  - me—be, she, he, we
  - no—so, go
- Simple Word Families (rime)
  - -at—sat, fat, cat
  - -it—sit, hit, fit

Early Spellers (First Grade/Second Grade)

- Sight words (blends, diagraphs, more difficult words—coming)
- Vowel Word Families
  - -ake—make, lake, flake
  - -ail—sail, mail, trail

Fluent Spellers (Third Grade and up)

- Academic Vocabulary
- Descriptive Vocabulary
- Word Study (affixes, root words, derivations)
- Draft Book Words (Irregular Words)
- Proofreads for Essential Words

EMERGENT SPELLERS: DEVELOPING SIGHT WORDS

In literate homes you don't have to look much past the refrigerator door to see evidence of meaningful word work with very young children. Children as young as one year of age can be seen with their parents using magnetic letters to spell out their name and/or the names of family members, as well as important messages such as "I love you." This playful writing experience is one way supportive parents engage young children in developing a sense of self; a sense of family; a sense of belonging. This family activity is also the beginning of how young children develop a basic understanding of words and how they work. Important names and messages spelled on the refrigerator door are a young child's first experiences in understanding that words are important. Through these meaningful words they begin to understand that words are consistent in shape and form and remain constant; no matter where they appear or what is used to write them.

Prekindergarten

Because of a young child's capacity to learn in meaningful situations, it is reasonable to expect that students in prekindergarten can learn to recognize and write words. Although spelling isn't a usual component in many prekindergarten classrooms, word activities should be included as important components of a complete early childhood education; just as they are in the literate home. In prekindergarten classrooms where students are experiencing developmentally appropriate instruction, having fun with words throughout their day should be as natural as using magnetic letters on the refrigerator door. Whether playing with words orally (See companion article: *Meaning-Based Phonics Instruction*) or having young children drawing and labeling pictures of important events in their lives (See companion article: *Comprehension Instruction*), word work should be an important component of the early childhood experience. The more opportunities teachers can create for meaningful word work in prekindergarten, the more children will understand how words work, thus helping them build a strong bank of known words, and greatly strengthening their foundation in reading and writing.

In the following picture drawn by a prekindergarten student, notice the words in the picture (I, mom, and a partial attempt at dad) that were written by the student. The teacher added what the student couldn't write independently. By having students draw pictures about

A LOOK AT HOW SPELLING INSTRUCTION FITS INTO A GENERAL PICTURE OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Grade Level	Primary Instructional Focus	Comprehension	Phonics (and Phonological Awareness)	Spelling
Birth-Three	• Oral Language • Gross Motor	Relathionships • Forming attachments, responding to and ineracting with caregivers.	Recognizing names orally (own, family, friends) Experiments with putting sounds, words together with purpose, attaching meaning	Identifies some letters in their name—may connect first letter as their name Makes connections to environmental print
Pre-kindergarten	• Oral Language • Fine Motor Control	The Picture • Drawing and telling stories	• Recognizing names (own, family, friends) • Playing with words (changing onset/rime) • Identifying similarities between words (beg. letters and/or sounds)	Recognizing and writing basic sight words in pictures and/or text below the picture (student name, sibling/ friend names, mom. dad, me, I, the, my) 10-15 words
Kindergarten	• Making connections between sounds and letters • Understanding how words work	The Text • Reading/Writing the words of the story	• Beginning hard consonant sounds • Ending hard consonant sounds • Medial hard consonant sounds • Spacing • Blends • Endings (s, ed, ing)	Weekly spelling list of sight words (which include generalizing words or simple word families 35 – 50 words
First Grade	• Narrative Elements • Expository Elements	The Writing • Elaboration of detail		Weekly spelling list of sight words Weekly spelling list of word families/ patterns (Long/short vowels) 75 – 100 words
Second Grade		The Writing • Purpose		Weekly spelling list of sight words Weekly spelling list of word families/ patterns (Long/short vowels) 75 – 100 words
Third Grade and Up	• Genres	The Reader/Writer • Author's Craft		Building Higher Level Vocabulary—Descriptive and Content

Picture drawn by a prekindergarten student

the important happenings in their lives, the teacher can regularly highlight the frequently occurring words students use. As students talk about their drawings, teachers can label the important people, details, and/or actions within the pictures. Because many of their stories involve family members and only a few different locations, many of the same words will reoccur over time. Students will see words like *mom, dad, me, home, school,* as well as names of siblings and/or friends many times and eventually have pictures of these words "tucked behind their eyes".

To promote this type of learning, teachers should encourage students to take over the labeling of these familiar words. Additionally, as the teacher moves from labeling the picture to taking dictation below the picture, s/he reminds the young writer of the words they have seen her write over and over again—*I, my, the, we, he, she*—and may ask the student to write those words too. For students who experience this kind of instruction it wouldn't be unusual for students to have a developing sight word bank of 10 to 15 known words (including names) by the end of the prekindergarten year.

Kindergarten

Students at the emergent stage of spelling stage are beginning to understand that writing is meaningful. They can usually be found conveying messages to others using letter-like figures, strings of random letters, beginning sounds, and/or an occasional word (usually a known word such as a name and/or something copied from the classroom environment). It is important at this level that teachers encourage risk-taking by allowing students to write, using what they know, to convey messages.

Once in kindergarten though, students will need a more formal systematic approach in understanding how words work. As literacy instruction shifts from the drawing of pictures to the writing of text below the picture, teachers need to have, not only a strong phonics "program" (See companion article: *Meaning-based Phonics Instruction*.), but a strong vehicle to teach sight words, especially given that many of a child's first words may be difficult to sound out. Having an increasing bank of sight words gives students more ways to think about words as they attempt to sound out unknown words. For example, if a student knows the word "***the"*** it is easier for them to get to other important sight words that start similarly, like "***this"***, ***"then"***, and ***"that"***. Whether in reading or writing, having an increasing bank of sight words in addition to strong phonic skills will help ensure more success for emergent students as they problem solve their way through text by using a combination of phonics and sight words.

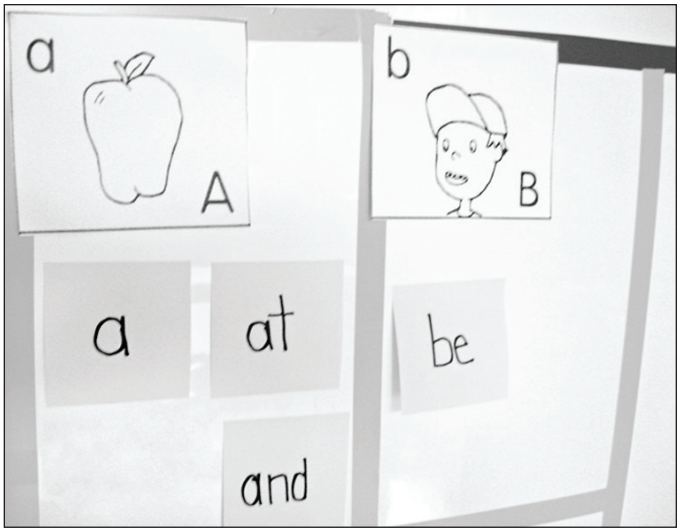
As teachers begin their spelling instruction with students it's important for the teacher to have a list of frequently used words that can be introduced to students over the first few months of school. During the first ten to twelve weeks the teacher can introduce one to two words per week to her class. The teacher needs to encourage students to use these words in their writing as well as during center time with activities that support the student in getting a picture of the word "tucked behind their eyes". By the end of twelve weeks it should be expected that kindergarten students would have about 15 – 20 words that they could be spelling and reading fluently. These words might include

commonly used words such as: mom, dad, love, I, me, my, the, is, it, in, a, at, to, went, was, we, are, go.

These words are found on the Emergent Story Card. See companion article Comprehension Instruction.

TEACHING AT THE EMERGENT LEVEL

Modeling the use of these spelling words is an effective strategy for developing students' understandings of how words work. In the following lesson a kindergarten teacher is modeling the writing of a story. Even though this is only the beginning of the school year for these kindergartners, one of the teacher's goals for this lesson is to emphasize her expectation that students use the spelling (sight) words she has taught. Notice how the teacher keeps the class's spelling words close at hand (on a word wall) to help reinforce her goal. Whether she's modeling in reading or writing, keeping spelling words in close proximity helps the teacher make spelling connections often.



A word wall containing a classroom's spelling words

Teacher: The other day I saw some kids playing outside in their backyard and that reminded me of a story that happened to me when I was a little girl. I know you like hearing stories about me when I was younger so I thought I would write about what happened to me. Would you like to hear it? It was pretty scary for me. (The teacher begins to draw a picture as she talks out her story. Because this is the beginning of the year, the teacher's picture will not contain too many details.)

Teacher: This story begins with me sliding down the curvy slide that was in our backyard. (The teacher draws herself and the slide.) Pointing to the little girl, the teacher says, "This is me." "Me" is one of our spelling words. (The teacher points to the word wall containing the class' spelling words.) I have to remember to spell our spelling words correctly every time I write them. (The teacher writes *me* above the picture of the little girl.)

Teacher: (The teacher continues drawing her story.) I suddenly had a brilliant idea. I decided that it would be more fun to jump off the slide than to slide down. (The teacher draws a thought bubble next to the little girl's face.) I remember thinking "I will jump!" Pointing to word "I" on the word wall, the teacher writes I, and then says /w/, /w/, will. Oh, that's like wagon. (The teacher writes the word "will" next to "I" in the thought bubble.) /j/, /j/, jump. Jump starts like jar. (The teacher writes jump next to will. She reads, "I will jump.")

Teacher: So up I went, climbing the steep ladder, and I jumped off the side! The teacher draws herself again, only this time she is sprawled out on the ground clutching her leg and yelling in pain.

Teacher: Let me see what should I write for my story? I know. The teacher begins to write, Ouch! Mom, Mom, (The teacher stops and says, "Mom, isn't that one of our spelling words? The teacher looks at the word wall, points to the word "mom" and says *m-o-m*. She writes the word mom twice.) The teacher continues, I hurt my—there's *my* again—*m-y, my* leg! The teacher rereads her written story once more to make sure it sounds right—Ouch! Mom, Mom, I hurt my leg!

Teacher: What do you think of my story? Do you have any stories like that to tell? Would someone like come up and read my story? (The teacher makes a habit of having a few students come up and read her story after each lesson. After the student reads the story, the teacher asks the student to point to one or two of the spelling words that are contained within her story and

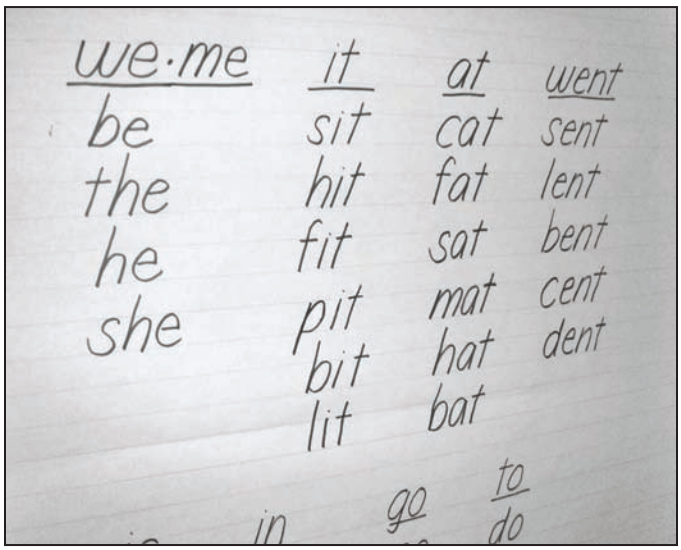
spell them for the class. This reinforces, once again, the idea that students need to know their spelling words.

In this example of teaching in kindergarten, the teacher continually referenced the word wall. By doing this during her modeling, the teacher supports the emergent writer in applying the sight words she is teaching through spelling. This was also accomplished when the teacher asked some of her students to come up and read her story. Each rereading of the teacher's story always ended with the child locating and orally spelling one of more of the class's spelling words.

This teacher also reinforces her student's knowledge of spelling words in her shared and guided reading groups. It wouldn't be unusual for the teacher to say, "Oh look—there's one of our spelling words." or "Doesn't that look like one of our spelling words—only it begins (or ends) with a different letter." By using both decoding skills and spelling words, the teacher is developing a broader range of strategies for her students to use; thus increasing their success in problem-solving as they read and write.

Generalizing Words

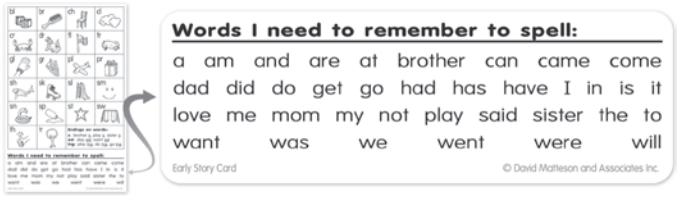
Soon after students start consistently using beginning sight words in their writing and reading, teachers need to up the ante for increasing students' sight word base. At this point in their spelling instruction teachers need to extend students' word knowledge to other closely related words. This aspect of spelling deals with generalizing known words to unknown words.



Spelling list made up from a word family

Now, the classroom spelling list is being extended and expanded by having students change the first letter of their previous spelling words (see word list on back of Emergent Story Card) in order to create a whole new set of spelling words. Simple word families are important at this point in a child's spelling development. A spelling list made up from a word family might look like: dad (one of their original words), had, sad, mad.

Having students generalize words helps build their sight word base. By the time students are at the early stage of spelling, they should have a sight word bank of 35 words. Having a strong spelling "program" at



These words are found on the Early Story Card. See companion article Comprehension Instruction.

the emergent stage helps build that word bank, as well as prepares them for the word work to come at the early stage of spelling. This period of time marks the beginning of understanding how words work. We can't teach them every word they need to know, but we can show them how words work in order to help them develop strategies to meet the challenges they will encounter during reading and writing.

THE EARLY SPELLER: UNDERSTANDING HOW WORDS WORK

The International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children has recommended that young children experience writing with invented spelling and over time move to conventional forms. (International Reading Association, 1999) When teachers encourage spelling as a tool for writing, children are more likely to engage in the writing process and are more likely to be problem-solvers as they use what they know about words to spell new words.

Teachers can capitalize on the interest and excitement of young writers by helping students see the relationships between patterns in words. Brain research

tells us that patterns are an important way we problem-solve challenges. Because of the foundation set at the emergent stage, the instruction at the early stage of spelling development can shift from memorizing the spelling of words (sight words) to problem-solving the spelling of words. This problem-solving deals with students developing a more complete picture of words by understanding different long and short vowel combinations. Using word sorts is one way teachers can help students to problem-solve the spelling of words at this level. Word sorts help student look at spelling patterns; supporting the reader and writer to "sort" patterns into memory, not necessarily words.

Teaching at the Early Level

In the following teaching excerpt, a first grade teacher is using a word sort as a way to have students practice their spelling words, but also as a way to help students see relationships between words. As you read notice how the word sort activity helps the teacher accomplish both. For this lesson the teacher has prepared a "closed" word sort by hanging up a pocket chart in front of the class. A closed sort is a sort where students are given the categories for sorting ahead of time. On the left half of the top row, he has a note card that has a picture of a rope and the word "rope." On the right half of the top row, he has a note card that has a picture of pot and the word "pot." The teacher's goal for this lesson is for his students to compare/contrast long and short vowel patterns simultaneously so they can better understand the patterns of each.

Teacher: Many of us have been working hard in our writing journals to correctly spell words that have long and short vowel sounds. We want to spell words correctly so that our audience can read and understand our stories. Today, we are going to examine words that have the long o and short o sound by using a word sort. We'll sort a few words together, and then you'll have the chance to sort more words on your own. At center time today you'll be sorting your own spelling words as well as sorting a few other words that you find with these same patterns in your reading book.

Teacher: I am going to hold up a card and I want you to look at the picture and read the word. Then we'll try to decide whether that word has a long o sound like "rope" or a short "o" sound like "pot." Let's try this one! The teacher holds up a card with a picture of a *"shop"* with the word written underneath. Read this word in your head and give me a thumbs-up when you know the word. (The teacher waits until thumbs are raised.) Share what you think this word is with the person sitting beside you and see if you agree with one another. If not, double check and see if one of you wants to change your mind. Class, what's this word?

Class: "Shop!"

Student using a word sort

Teacher: David, why don't you come up to the pocket chart and place the word "shop" in either the short o column or the long o column. (David places the word "shop" in the short o column.) David, tell us why you think the word "shop" goes in the short o column.

David: Well, I noticed that the word "shop" kind of sounds like the word "pot."

Teacher: Talk more David—what part of the word is similar?

David: The middle of the word "shop" sounds like the middle of the word "pot"

Teacher: I agree. The middle of both words have the short o sound.

This teacher understands that using word sorts to teach vowel sounds adds to students' ability to think more

flexibly about words. After the children have all had a chance to work with the sort, the teacher will talk to the students about any similarities among the words in each group. At this level, not only does this instruction help students develop word strategies as they write but also for decoding as they read. Many times when confronted with a challenge during reading, students will try a short vowel sound. When that doesn't seem to work, students very seldom try a long vowel sound. This teacher understands that when we teach short and long vowels together it helps students understand that when one vowel sound doesn't help them figure out the word, they can try the opposite vowel sound. Teaching the two vowel sounds together supports this important reading strategy.

Since teaching vowel word families spans first and second grade, schools may need to specify vowel combinations (both long and short) for each grade. This will help teachers know what patterns need to be taught and guide their choice of the spelling words they give to their students. These vowel combinations can be identified through the word lists schools or districts use such as the Dolch Sight Word List, or as the case with this teacher, the Essential Word List from the New Zealand Ministry of Education. Even though there are many "irregular" words on sight word lists, teachers can use the lists to identify the vowel patterns that are evident from the "regular" words they contain. This way schools and/or districts are assured that teachers aren't just teaching the words from the list but teaching patterns that support problem-solving.

FLUENT SPELLERS: UNDERSTANDING HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

At this stage of spelling development, the writer is spelling many words correctly. Because of the work in previous stages, the focus of spelling words has moved from a "hearing" process (phonics) to a "visual" process of looking at words. This means that students are now using the "picture" of words or word parts that have been "tucked" in the head over time when writing. These "pictures" have created automaticity in word retrieval. Because of that automaticity, fluency is strength for most readers and writers now, and the instructional focus is more on what is in the reader and writer's head than on what is on the written page. This means that the fluent stage of spelling development is a time for increasing a student's vocabulary, both

POSSIBLE FOCUS FOR CLOSED WORD SORTS

Comparing long and short vowel sounds	Example: *cap, lake*
Comparing long and short vowel sounds (same vowel combination/different sound)	Example: *dread, treat*
Comparing long and short vowel sounds (cvc/silent e)	Example: *rip, ripe*
Comparing long vowel sounds (different vowel combinations/same sound)	Example: *ane, ain*
Comparing short vowel sounds (same sound/different vowel combination)	Example: *taught, law*

descriptive (for use in narrative writing) and content (for use in expository writing). It is also a time to help students with irregularly spelled words like those that end with "tion". These hard-to-spell words can give even the most skilled reader and writer cause to think and problem-solve a bit.

With students now using more conventional spelling, word study is an important vehicle for them to expand their vocabulary. When students understand how to build new words from existing words, they are equipped with the skills needed to increase their own vocabulary. This understanding about word study allows the student to view words in a way that enables him/her to think more deeply about how words work and apply that knowledge to reading and writing. In order for this to occur, teachers need to create opportunities for students to study the different aspects of words, such as affixes as well as the meaning of words through word origins or derivations. Teachers need to provide many experiences with daily word work that develops these aspects of language across all content areas. When students internalize a process for looking at aspects of words and/or understanding word origins, they are empowered to take ownership for their learning. Let's take a look at some ways teachers can do that.

Teaching at the Fluent Level--Reading

In the following teaching scenario, a fourth grade teacher is reading with students in a small group. One student has stopped reading because he is confused and asks the teacher about a word. Notice how the teacher uses the word study skills students have been working on in spelling as a strategy they can use in reading.

Joshua: I'm stuck.

Teacher: What seems to be the problem?

Joshua: This word right here. (The student takes a try at pronouncing the word he's stuck on.) disen—ch—ant—chantment. (He points to the word.) I don't know what that means.

Teacher: You know how prefixes and suffixes work. I bet you can figure it out by using parts of the word like we do in spelling. What's the root word?

Joshua: Enchant?

Teacher: Yes. What does "enchant" mean?

Joshua: Isn't it like a "spell"?

Teacher: Well, think about the story. Does a "spell" make sense?

Joshua: No. Could it mean happy?

Teacher: Yes. Why do you say that?

Joshua: Because the character isn't happy.

Teacher: Okay. That makes sense. What does "*dis—enchant"* mean?

Joshua: Not. It means "not happy.

Teacher: Right. Disenchant is a verb and means "not happy". When you add the suffix "*ment"* to the end of a word, it becomes a noun. Disenchantment is a noun. Knowing prefixes and suffixes can help us use words more flexibly. It can really help us with our reading and writing ability. Let's talk more about this when everyone is done reading—finish reading the passage.

The teacher in this teaching episode understands that word study is helpful at the fluent stage of spelling development. She knows that students need explicit instruction in understanding aspects of words and word origins or derivations and that spelling is the vehicle to help her accomplish that. When students understand prefixes, root words, and suffixes as well as word origins, they can be more intentional in their problem-solving during reading and writing. At this level much of the problem-solving students do revolves around vocabulary. She knows that they more experiences her students have with word study, the more skillful they will be in using vocabulary in order to create meaning as they read and to produce quality pieces in writing.

Teaching at the Fluent Level--Writing

After the teacher finishes with her reading group, she decides that she needs to talk more about the kind of words that Joshua had trouble with in reading group. The teacher feels that this is a teachable moment for <u>all</u> her students and asks them to take out their spelling notebooks for a mini-lesson. She wants them to understand that by adding a suffix like *ment* to the end of a word, its usage changes. The teacher knows that

this is an important skill that can support students as they write, especially in the area of word choice and sentence fluency.

The teacher asks her students to turn to the section on "Word Study" in their spelling books. The students' spelling notebooks are tabbed into four sections. The first section is marked "Interesting Vocabulary". That section contains vocabulary (and definitions) students find interesting and can use to enhance their writing. The second section is marked "Academic Vocabulary". Among the other technical words and terms used during the school day, science and social study vocabulary is a big part of this section. These important content words are recorded and defined in this section. The third section is for "Challenging Words". This section is where students record the correct spelling for words they have misspelled in their journals. The last section is reserved for "Word Study". This section is for the direct teaching of word work for such skills as using affixes and understanding word origins or word derivations. During this short lesson notice how the teacher reinforces the spelling book as a resource for student writing.

Teacher: Something happened in reading group earlier that had to do with figuring out a difficult word and its meaning. I thought I'd talk to you about the problem because it's like the spelling work we do in our word study. The issue was figuring out this word. (The teacher writes *"disenchantment"* on the white board.) Let me show you how we figured it out. First, we looked at the affixes or prefixes and suffixes of the word so we knew what the root word was. (The teacher underlines the affixes as she talks though the word.) In this word the prefix is *"dis"* and suffix is *"ment"* which leaves the root word *"enchant"*. (The teacher circles the root word.) We figured out the meaning of *"enchant"* through the context of the story. We knew that *"dis"* means *"not"* and thought *"enchant"* must mean "*happy*" because the character was not happy. The character was *"disenchanted"*. But the part I want to talk to you about is the suffix *"ment"* and what that does to a word. I think this will be a good piece to add to our word study section.

Teacher: (writes *"ment"* at the top of the white board. Underneath she writes "disenchant" with a *"v"* next to it.) Enchant is a verb. Let me think of how I would write a sentence using *"disenchant"* as a verb. (The teacher writes, "The boy was <u>disenchanted</u> with his friend's sarcastic attitude."). Now, look what happens when I add "*ment*" to the end of "*disenchant*". (The teacher writes *"disenchantment"* under *"disenchant"*. Hmmm, let me think about a sentence with "*disenchantment*" in it. (Thinking about the sentence she just wrote, the teacher writes, "The <u>disenchantment</u> of the boy was evident when he heard his friend's sarcastic comment") Look at what happened, not only did we change the word, we changed the sentence structure as well. (The teacher points to where the word "*disenchant*" and "*disenchantment*" falls within each sentence.) When I wrote a sentence with the word "*disenchant*", which is a verb, it came after the subject—boy. But when I changed the word to "*disenchantment*", which is a noun, the word came before the subject. It gave us a completely difference sentence structure. So knowing how affixes work, not only helps us with word choice, it helps us with sentence fluency as well. Let's do more with this.

Teacher: Copy this example in your "Word Study" section so you'll have this to refer to and then we'll try another word that works like *"disenchant"* and *"disenchantment"*. How about the word, "commit". (The teacher writes "*commit*" underneath the "*disenchant*" work.) "*Commit"* is a verb. I want you to write a sentence with "*commit*" in it and then I want you to change "*commit*" to a noun and write a sentence for that as well. Let's see how that changes the sentence structure when we change "*commit*" from verb to a noun. Any questions? Be prepared to share tomorrow.

This fourth grade teacher understands that her spelling instruction doesn't stand alone. In supporting her students in word study, the teacher understands its importance whether she's teaching reading, writing, or spelling. Having a similar teaching strategy and hearing the same language from the teacher, no matter what subject they are in, is a strong support for students as they develop their understanding of words and vocabulary. The teacher is able to do this because she has a strong structure, both in her head and in the resources her students use. The teacher is also driven in this direction because she knows that as students move up in their reading and writing levels, she needs

to keep up with the kind of skills they will need to problem-solve the issues they will face. At this level it's vocabulary that gives students the most trouble and they need strategies to help them with that.

CONCLUSION

Spelling is a critical aspect in the development of a child's education. Although spelling programs offer much support to teachers, most tend to keep teachers in the mindset that spelling occurs at a certain time and place. When spelling is taught that way, it doesn't promote the idea of spelling as a tool for reading and writing. The broad structure outlined in this article offers teachers a way of moving beyond the idea that spelling is a list of words to memorize. It supports the idea that spelling is a problem-solving activity that supports all the learning our students do. By thinking about spelling development in terms of reading and writing development, teachers can begin to make stronger spelling connections between reading, writing, and content areas. The more teachers can accomplish this, the more success they can create for the learning in all content area within their classrooms.

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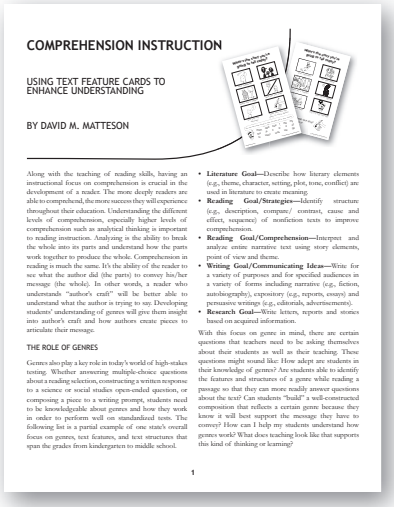

COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

USING TEXT FEATURE CARDS TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING

BY DAVID M. MATTESON

Along with the teaching of reading skills, having an instructional focus on comprehension is crucial in the development of a reader. The more deeply readers are able to comprehend, the more success they will experience throughout their education. Understanding the different levels of comprehension, especially higher levels of comprehension such as analytical thinking is important to reading instruction. Analyzing is the ability to break the whole into its parts and understand how the parts work together to produce the whole. Comprehension in reading is much the same. It's the ability of the reader to see what the author did (the parts) to convey his/her message (the whole). In other words, a reader who understands "author's craft" will be better able to understand what the author is trying to say. Developing students' understanding of genres will give them insight into author's craft and how authors create pieces to articulate their message.

THE ROLE OF GENRES

Genres also play a key role in today's world of high-stakes testing. Whether answering multiple-choice questions about a reading selection, constructing a written response to a science or social studies open-ended question, or composing a piece in a writing prompt, students need to be knowledgeable about genres and how they work in order to perform well on standardized tests. The following list is a partial example of one state's overall focus on genres, text features, and text structures that span the grades from kindergarten to middle school.

- **Literature Goal**—Describe how literary elements (e.g., theme, character, setting, plot, tone, conflict) are used in literature to create meaning.
- **Reading Goal/Strategies**—Identify structure (e.g., description, compare/ contrast, cause and effect, sequence) of nonfiction texts to improve comprehension.
- **Reading Goal/Comprehension**—Interpret and analyze entire narrative text using story elements, point of view and theme.
- **Writing Goal/Communicating Ideas**—Write for a variety of purposes and for specified audiences in a variety of forms including narrative (e.g., fiction, autobiography), expository (e.g., reports, essays) and persuasive writings (e.g., editorials, advertisements).
- **Research Goal**—Write letters, reports and stories based on acquired information.

With this focus on genre in mind, there are certain questions that teachers need to be asking themselves about their students as well as their teaching. These questions might sound like: How adept are students in their knowledge of genres? Are students able to identify the features and structures of a genre while reading a passage so that they can more readily answer questions about the text? Can students "build" a well-constructed composition that reflects a certain genre because they know it will best support the message they have to convey? How can I help my students understand how genres work? What does teaching look like that supports this kind of thinking or learning?

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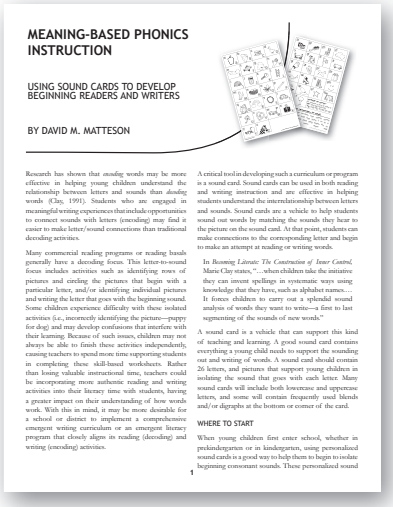
Comprehension Instruction



MEANING-BASED PHONICS INSTRUCTION

USING SOUND CARDS TO DEVELOP BEGINNING READERS AND WRITERS

BY DAVID M. MATTESON

Research has shown that *encoding* words may be more effective in helping young children understand the relationship between letters and sounds than *decoding* words (Clay, 1991). Students who are engaged in meaningful writing experiences that include opportunities to connect sounds with letters (encoding) may find it easier to make letter/sound connections than traditional decoding activities.

Many commercial reading programs or reading basals generally have a decoding focus. This letter-to-sound focus includes activities such as identifying rows of pictures and circling the pictures that begin with a particular letter, and/or identifying individual pictures and writing the letter that goes with the beginning sound. Some children experience difficulty with these isolated activities (i.e., incorrectly identifying the picture—puppy for dog) and may develop confusions that interfere with their learning. Because of such issues, children may not always be able to finish these activities independently, causing teachers to spend more time supporting students in completing these skill-based worksheets. Rather than losing valuable instructional time, teachers could be incorporating more authentic reading and writing activities into their literacy time with students, having a greater impact on their understanding of how words work. With this in mind, it may be more desirable for a school or district to implement a comprehensive emergent writing curriculum or an emergent literacy program that closely aligns its reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) activities.

A critical tool in developing such a curriculum or program is a sound card. Sound cards can be used in both reading and writing instruction and are effective in helping students understand the interrelationship between letters and sounds. Sound cards are a vehicle to help students sound out words by matching the sounds they hear to the picture on the sound card. At that point, students can make connections to the corresponding letter and begin to make an attempt at reading or writing words.

In *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control*, Marie Clay states, "...when children take the initiative they can invent spellings in systematic ways using knowledge that they have, such as alphabet names.... It forces children to carry out a splendid sound analysis of words they want to write—a first to last segmenting of the sounds of new words."

A sound card is a vehicle that can support this kind of teaching and learning. A good sound card contains everything a young child needs to support the sounding out and writing of words. A sound card should contain 26 letters, and pictures that support young children in isolating the sound that goes with each letter. Many sound cards will include both lowercase and uppercase letters, and some will contain frequently used blends and/or digraphs at the bottom or corner of the card.

WHERE TO START

When young children first enter school, whether in prekindergarten or in kindergarten, using personalized sound cards is a good way to help them to begin to isolate beginning consonant sounds. These personalized sound

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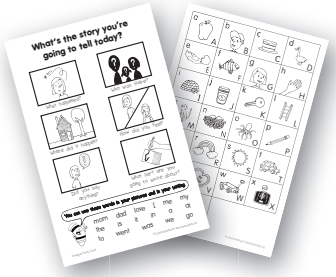
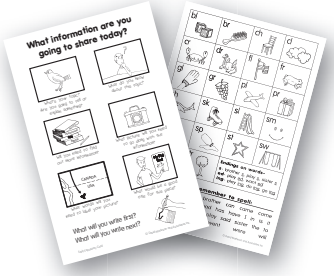
Meaning-Based Phonics Instruction



Emergent Story Card

Early Story Card



Early Expository Card

Fluent Text Features Card

See our website for ordering information. http://www.dmatteson.com