DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 295 CS 012 464

TITLE	Spelling in Use.
INSTITUTION	North Carolina State Dept. of Public Instruction, Raleigh.
PUB DATE	[96]
NOTE	82p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Parent Participation; *Spelling; *Spelling Instruction; *Student Evaluation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*North Carolina; *Spelling Growth

ABSTRACT

Addressing issues, concerns, and practices surrounding how children use spelling and become competent, confident spellers and writers, this booklet provides practical information, personal stories of practicing North Carolina teachers, strategies, and helpful suggestions for transitioning from textbook spelling to spelling in use. Sections of the booklet are Spelling: What's All the Fuss?; Transitions: From Spelling Textbooks to Spelling in Use; Assessment First: Planning for a Wise Writing Curriculum That Deals Responsibly with Spelling; Structures and Routines: Classroom Possibilities; More Ideas for Teaching Spelling; Involving Parents; and Assessment of Spelling Program within a Balanced Writing Program. A 32-item professional bibliography, a description of the phases of spelling development, and a list of grade-level (K-5) benchmarks in reading and writing for communication skills proficiencies are attached. (RS)

Spelling in Use

Public Schools of North Carolina

State Board of Education – Jay Robinson, Chairman
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Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the teachers, teacher educators, and consultants in the Technical Assistance Centers who participated in the preparation of this document.

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Foreword

The challenge of teaching reading and writing to students in our classrooms is one that confronts educators daily. **Spelling in Use** addresses some of the issues, concerns, and practices surrounding how children use spelling and become competent, confident spellers and writers. This document is designed to provide practical information, personal stories of practicing North Carolina teachers, strategies, and helpful suggestions for transitioning from textbook spelling to spelling in use.

The best medium for teaching spelling is in the context of students' writing and discussions of reading selections from literature, content material, informational texts, and practical texts. Classroom teachers who are reflective practitioners experience the true nature of teaching and learning as they allow themselves to become embedded in the community of readers and writers in their classrooms.

It is our hope that **Spelling in Use** will be a valuable resource for school administrators, classroom teachers, and parents. Helping children focus on spelling within the context of writing makes learning to spell meaningful and effective.

Jay Robinson, Chairman

Bob Etheridge, State Superintendent

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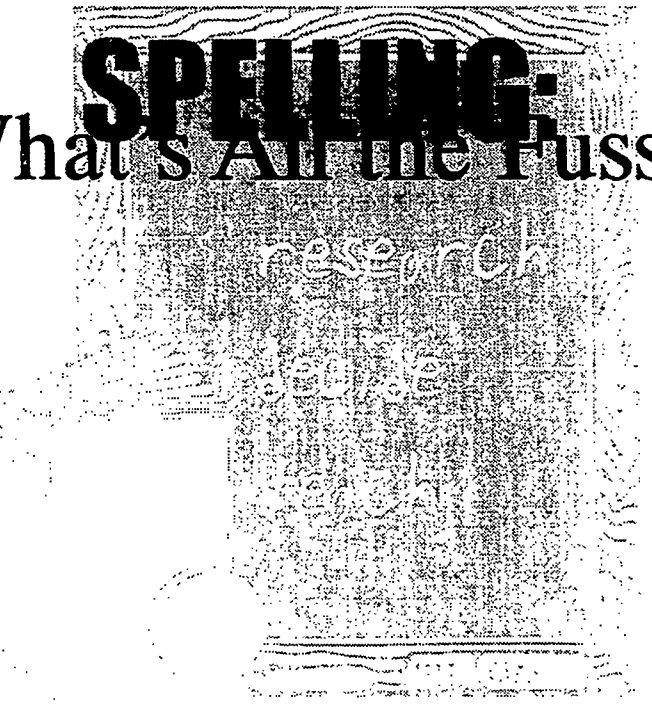
SPELLING: What's All the Fuss?



Spelling: What's All the Fuss?

Spelling. What does that single word call to mind? Many of us think of spelling drills, writing each word five times, making a sentence with each word and a paragraph with those sentences. Maybe you remember exercises **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D**, a practice test on Wednesday and the real test on Friday (unless you made a hundred on the practice test). You may recall the spelling bee or those red marks "sp" inside the quickly drawn circle hovering above some word on your page.

Perhaps the lenses we use to view spelling are somewhat foggy or out of focus since most adults remember spelling drills, exercises, and tests. As adults, our educational histories tremendously influence our perceptions of any situation regarding teaching and learning. Our histories also limit our own abilities to assess our personal learning. For example, if we remember those drills, exercises, and tests and we consider ourselves decent "spellers" today, then we are very likely to attribute our knowledge to that style of instruction.

Consider the story below written by Carl, a second grader.

I have a bull dog. his name is
B.J. He is 6 years old
He has a black nose. He is
brown. His nose is flat
B.J. can pull me down hill.
B.J. can pull me up hill
Me and B.J. are good friends

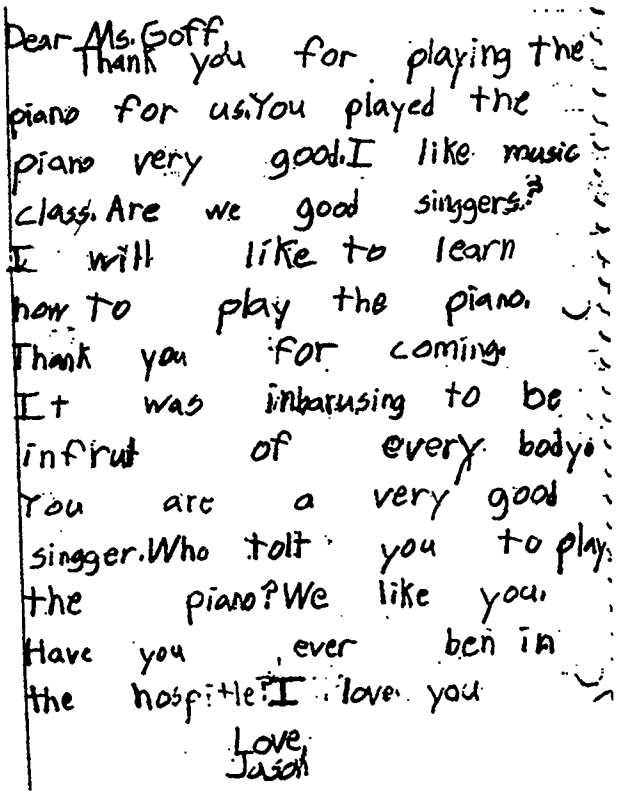
April 15

What are your immediate reactions to this piece? What do you notice? Take a few moments and jot down your first thoughts in the space below.

First Reactions:

Now look again and think about Carl's teacher. What would you say Carl's teacher values in his writing? Make a list of those things and indicate the evidence you find in Carl's piece.

Now consider this piece from seven-year-old Jason written in his second grade year.



Dear Ms. Goff
Thank you for playing the piano for us. You played the piano very good. I like music class. Are we good singgers? I will like to learn how to play the piano. Thank you for coming. It was imbarusing to be infrut of every body. You are a very good singger. Who tolt you to play the piano? We like you. Have you ever ben in the hospitle? I love you

Love
Jason

What are your immediate reactions to this piece? What do you notice? Take a few moments and jot down you first reactions in the space below.

First Reactions:

Now look again and think about Jason's teacher. What would you say Jason's teacher values in writing? Make a list of those things and indicate the evidence you find in Jason's piece.

As you read Carl's story you probably noticed the neatness, the conventional spellings, the spacing between words, and the use of punctuation. You may be thinking that this is a pretty good piece to get from a second grade student. Look closely. Carl does have the conventions present in his writing, but at what cost? Whose voice is heard? What evidence do we have of his use of strategies for using language to express the experiences and ideas of his life? Look more closely. Read the piece aloud. Whom do you hear in the piece? Is it the voice of a child? Or does it sound more like the pages of a primary reading program?

As you read Jason's story you probably notice all the spelling "errors" immediately. That's what most adults notice. But by looking into the familiar face of "error" we fail to see into the reflective eyes of approximation. Jason's piece has all the qualities we so cherish in Carl's story. Yes, look closely and you will see the letter formation, the spacing between wor[illegible]he use of capitalization and punctuation. It's all there and it is used conventionally.

One surface difference is the spelling. Look more closely. Did you notice that there were 82 words in this piece? Did you also notice that of the 82 words there were 53 different words? Did you notice that of the 53 different words 46 were spelled conventionally? That's right! There were only 7 (SEVEN) constructed or temporary spellings!

These are words very similar to those used by Carl, words like *are*, *is*, *the*, and *I*. Now note the words that Jason constructed a spelling for, words like *embarrassing*, *singer*, *taught*, and *hospital*. When would most children meet these words in a traditional spelling program? How would they be encountered? Would they spill over into the writing of individual children? Why are they missing from Carl's writing?

You may find it interesting to know that Carl, whose piece was written in **April** of his second grade year, had come to know reading through a basal reading program. He had come to know spelling through a spelling book with daily exercises and a weekly spelling list. Writing meant responding to a teacher-selected topic. Notice the similarity between Carl's written language and the "language" of many preprimers, primers, and early readers in a basal program.

Jason, whose piece was written in **September** of his second grade year, had come to know reading through the words of the authors of children's literature. He had come to know spelling as an outgrowth of his writing which was a way of finding information and sharing new insights and stories. Jason had power over words, a power that let him say what he wanted to just as he would in speech. In his letter to the music teacher, Jason focused on the message, telling what he felt was important and appropriate, using the words he chose to express those ideas. In his writing, Jason controls convention to say what he wants to say. Carl, on the other hand, limits his choice of words to those he can spell.

So what's important about the stories of Carl and Jason? They help us gain new lenses for looking at children's work. Through these lenses we can see into the thoughts and language of the child's own life and begin to understand the world from the child's frame of reference. It enables us to stop staring into the familiar face of "error" and counting the "misspelled" words, "haphazardly used" punctuation marks, and "random" capital letters. It enables us, instead, to look deep into the reflective eyes of approximation and see the child's growing understanding of voice, audience, and the purposes for writing. We see the child's movement towards controlling convention rather than being controlled by it so that he can **say what he wants to say as a writer**.

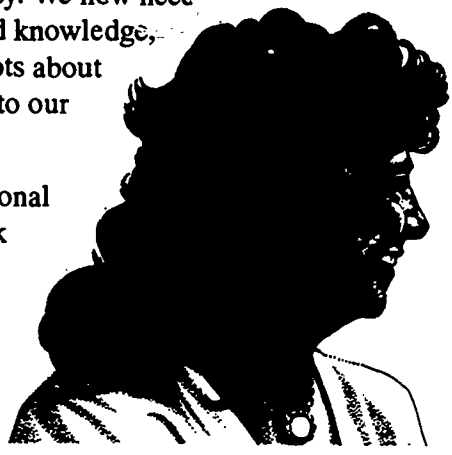
Approximation
Learners must be free to approximate the desired model – "mistakes" are essential for learning to occur.

Brian Cambourne

It is clear that writers are greatly influenced by what they read. Frank Smith (1988) put it this way, "We learn from the company we keep." This is evident in the work of Carl and Jason. Carl writes like the basal readers he knows and Jason finds his own voice to express his knowledge. What gives Jason the ability to put

his voice on paper? Ralph Fletcher (1993) contends that writers need mentors and that the best mentors young writers can have are the authors of children's literature. Jason learns through reading that writing is an act of expressing what you know. He has had numerous demonstrations of how language works in reading, writing, listening and speaking. He is comfortable with his knowledge, his language, and his ability to control written language well enough to communicate. Jason's level of comfort, his willingness to risk constructing a spelling for words he wants to write, comes from his assurance that his teacher will look past "error" and into the reflective eyes of approximation.

We have begun to see some changes in how schools approach the beginnings of reading with the attention given to emergent literacy. We now need to extend that acceptance of world knowledge, language competence, and concepts about print developed before schooling to our classroom practices with spelling.



We can't change our educational histories but we can begin to think about spelling as an extension of children's overall language development. Children do not learn oral language in one school year, nor do they learn to listen and speak through a series of lessons arbitrarily ordered into an artificial hierarchy or scope and sequence. Instead, children become producers and consumers of oral language via their initiation into a community where significant others produce and consume language. That is, they are spoken to as if they understand and they approximate the language used around them to communicate their own needs and thoughts. As individuals, children are treated as language users, fully competent members of the community. When children approximate language conventions in speech, adults tend to focus on communication. That is, adults restate a child's speech, ask questions for clarification, or respond normally as if to signal that the child's approximation was an appropriate and acceptable form. In each case, the focus is on exchange of information, the construction of shared meanings. In short, the child is treated as a speaker. If this process begins at birth and forevermore spirals in the development of oral language, should we not expect that it will be true of written language as well?

Because our educational histories limit our ability to view language learning as a natural process, we attempt to structure written language learning into discrete stages which can easily be organized into a series of lessons. That is, we attempt to make school for our children what we remember it being for ourselves. It is important to note that as *developmental stages* have been identified, there has been a tendency to organize curriculum and instruction around those stages and the characteristics of each. Such thinking about discrete stages tends to undermine the notion that there can indeed be continuous progress through normal development and forces unrealistic expectations for some children. There is also danger in trying to identify children's *levels* so as to instruct them through that level and on to the next. This line of thinking assumes that when one *new stage* begins all previous ones have been forever completed and those ahead are yet beyond reach and should become the next goal for instruction. This is not to say there is no predictable pattern of development in moving from a child's first scribbles to conventional spelling in the process of becoming a competent writer. It is just that we cannot assume that spelling develops in a lock-step progression from one stage to the next. We do not, through a series of lessons, activities, or assignments move a child along the continuum and through the stages to produce a writer who controls spelling by a given target date or grade in school.

If gaining control of conventional spelling does not proceed in a neat progression of stages, then how do competent writers learn to spell? Smith (1983) contends that "[t]here is only one way for anyone to become a speller and that is to find out and remember correct (i.e.) conventional spellings" (p.99). The only way it is possible, says Smith, for adults to write the scores of thousands of words they know is that they learned these spellings from **reading**. "The source of the information that makes us writers and speakers must lie in the language of other people, accessible only through reading and in listening to speech" (p.100). Competent writers **did not** learn to spell the thousands of words they know **one-at-a-time**. There were no single moments when competent writers suddenly came to own the spelling of each individual word they know, though most traditional spelling instruction is based on this false, one-word-at-a-time assumption.

At issue is the role of the adult in the natural development of the child's progression toward conventional spelling. We are less concerned with developing **competent spellers** than we are with developing **competent writers**. Therefore, it is more important to determine the strategies used by writers to produce spellings of words they need to communicate than to peg individuals as working at a particular level of development. Wilde (1989; 1992) contends that we should observe children's spelling strategies to gain insight into how spelling works in general and how individual children learn to control spelling as they grow into competent writers. To this end, she states that as we look at children's spellings we must be guided by these four principles:

1. Spelling is evaluated on the basis of **NATURAL WRITING** rather than tests.
2. Spelling is evaluated **ANALYTICALLY** rather than as merely right or wrong.
3. Spelling is looked at in terms of children's **STRATEGIES** rather than in isolation.
4. The teacher should evaluate spelling as an **INFORMED PROFESSIONAL** rather than as a mechanical test scorer.

This frame would have us focus on **how** children arrive at the spellings of words (conventional or not) rather than concentrating on whether the child arrived at the **correct** spelling. Among the primary goals of such a program would be to develop competent writers who use spelling to communicate — writers who learn to control conventions rather than being controlled by conventions. Toward this goal, Wilde (1989, 1992) identified five spelling strategies used by writers that must be valued by adults:

- *Placeholder*
  "I just wrote it that way."
- *Human Resource*
  "How do you spell *people*?"
- *Textual Resource*
  "I need the dictionary."
- *Generation, Monitoring, and Revision*
  "Say is *s-a-y*, huh?"
- *Ownership*
  "I know how to spell *rodeo*."

Similarly, Bouffler (1984 as cited in Cambourne and Turbill, 1991, p. 25) has identified the following ten strategies:

1. **Spelling as it sounds**
   This refers to what is generally known as phonetic spelling and is based on the assumption of a direct sound/symbol relationship: e.g. STASHON – station; SISERS – scissors.
2. **Spelling as it sounds out**
   This strategy was identified being used by children but was not seen used by adults. It involves the exaggeration of sound, so the phonetic features not normally represented are heard and represented: e.g. HUW – who; HAFH – half.
3. **Spelling as it articulates**
   This strategy makes use of the articulatory aspects of sound, particularly place of articulation. Sounds are represented on the basis of where they are made: e.g. BRIF – brief; CHRIDAGEN – tried again.
4. **Spelling as it means**
   This strategy represents semantic rather than phonological units. It underlies much standard spelling: e.g sign-signal; nation-nationality. Non-standard example: WASUPONATIM – Once upon a time.
5. **Spelling as it looks**
   All spelling involves this strategy to some extent. As its name suggests, it uses graphic patterning, or visual memory: e.g. OEN – one; SHCOOL – school; NIGT – night.
6. **Spelling by analogy**
   This strategy is based on the principle that what has been learned in one situation can be applied to another: e.g. REALISTICK – realistic; RESKYOU – rescue.
7. **Spelling by linguistic content**
   The spelling of a word may be affected by the linguistic environment in which it occurs. It is not altogether surprising to find 'any' written immediately under the word envelope' as 'eny'.
8. **Spelling by reference to authority**
   The authority may be other children, adults, or other writers (i.e. other written books or material). When other books, such as the dictionary, are used, we must employ all or some of the other strategies to find the word we are trying to write.
9. **Opting for an alternative surface structure**
   If we do not know how to spell a word, we use a word we know we can spell.
10. **Placing the onus on the reader**
    This strategy is used when text is handwritten. The writer makes the spelling indeterminate and leaves it to the reader to decide whether, for example, it is 'ie' or 'ei'.

Broadening the repetoires of spelling strategies employed by writers enables them to become more independent. Independence leads to more powerful writing. From this perspective, one role of the adult is to provide children with continuous demonstrations of various strategies for spelling. Consider the natural way adults tend to provide such support in the development of oral langugage. In this progression, the adult's role

is to provide demonstrations of language functions and forms, to engage the child in conversations (uses of oral language), and to respond to the child's approximations giving him/her further demonstrations regarding both function and form (Cambourne, 1988; Cochrane, Cochrane, Scalena and Buchanan, 1984).

If we believe that spelling is part of writing and that writing is part of the child's overall language development, we would approach spelling development in much the same way we would any facet of language development. Toward that goal we would encourage and support purposeful writing in the classroom. We would encourage children to attempt spellings independently before seeking assistance from an adult. The classroom would be filled with print resources and no strategy would be considered off limits. And, as Wilde (1989) suggests, all strategies would be supported; no one strategy would be looked upon as "better" than another. Strategies would be employed as they are needed. Children would write frequently for their own purposes using the words they select as those most appropriate for expressing their ideas.

To teach from this perspective, the teacher must know children, their histories, their personalities, and their development. It is only from this knowledge that we can teach into what the child knows and is trying to do (Smith, 1987). It becomes our responsibility as teachers to determine what the child **can** do and to use that information to make decisions about what to teach and how to teach it. Teaching then becomes a cycle of **research, decide, teach**. Our goal then, would be to help children grow into the hope we have for them as competent writers in their lives beyond our classrooms.

As professional educators, our assumptions about how children learn directly influence our classroom practices and our interactions with and expectations of the children we teach. We believe that children learn most naturally under the following conditions (Cambourne, 1988, p.33; see also Cambourne and Turbill,1991):

- ***Immersion:*** Learners need to be immersed in texts of all kinds.
- ***Demonstration:*** Learners need to receive many demonstrations of how texts are constructed and used.
- ***Engagement:*** Engagement occurs when the learner is convinced that: (1) I am a potential 'doer' or 'performer' of these demonstrations I'm observing. (2) Engaging with these demonstrations will further the purposes of my life. (3) I can engage and try to emulate without fear of physical or psychological hurt if my attempt is not fully 'correct'.
- ***Expectation:*** Expectations of those to whom learners are bonded are powerful coercers of behavior. "We achieve; we fail if we expect to fail; we are more likely to engage with demonstrations of those whom we regard as significant and who hold high expecations for us." (Cambourne, 1989, p. 33)
- ***Responsibility:*** Learners need to make their own decisions about when, how, and what 'bits' to learn in any learning task. Learners who lose the ability to make decisions are "depowered."
- ***Use:*** Learners need time and opportunity to use, employ, and practice their developing control in functional, realistic, non-artificial ways.
- ***Approximation:*** Learners must be free to approximate the desired model – "mistakes" are essential for learning to occur.
- ***Response:*** Learners must receive "feedback" from exchanges with more knowledgeable "others." Response must be relevant, appropriate, timely, readily available, non-threatening, with no strings attached.

What does this look like in the classroom?

When children are immersed in demonstrations of how texts are constructed and used, the classroom is a place where written language permeates the curriculum. Children are constantly using writing for various purposes such as making entries in writers' notebooks, jotting notes for their project files, documenting the growth of a plant on the window sill, or signing in each morning as they arrive (see page 10 for the Functions of Oral and Written Language). Children are bathed in the language of authors they admire and introduced to the language of new authors by their teachers and classmates. Authors of children's literature (picture books, chapter books, poetry, non-fiction, etc.) become the mentors for the writers in the classroom. Language is one of several sign systems through which children construct new knowledge and express their understandings and questions. It is their questions that guide their inquiries and projects, it is their experiences in the world and with the language of authors that give rise to their topics, and it is the opportunity to use language in relevant ways that provides them with an awareness of and need for the conventions of written langauge. If we don't have children writing for their own purposes then we will not know what they can do or why they do it that way. We can not assess the strategies used by children if all they know of writing is filling in the blanks, copying off the board, and mindlessly proceeding through the exercises in a workbook. Until children take risks with language to say the things they have a need to say, we will not have windows into their understandings of how language works.

Beliefs

- We write to communicate.
- We value the language and learning the child has done prior to coming to school.
- The message, the content, or meaning takes precedence over form in early writing.
- Conventions are learned through immersion in repeated demonstrations of their use for functional and authentic purposes.
- Teaching is an act of responding to what the child is trying to do.
- Writing is valued and does occur throughout the curriculum.
- The focus is on the writer as opposed to the words, word lists, exercises, and drills.
- Emphasize what children can do as writers as opposed to what they cannot or have yet to do.

Functions of Oral and Written Language

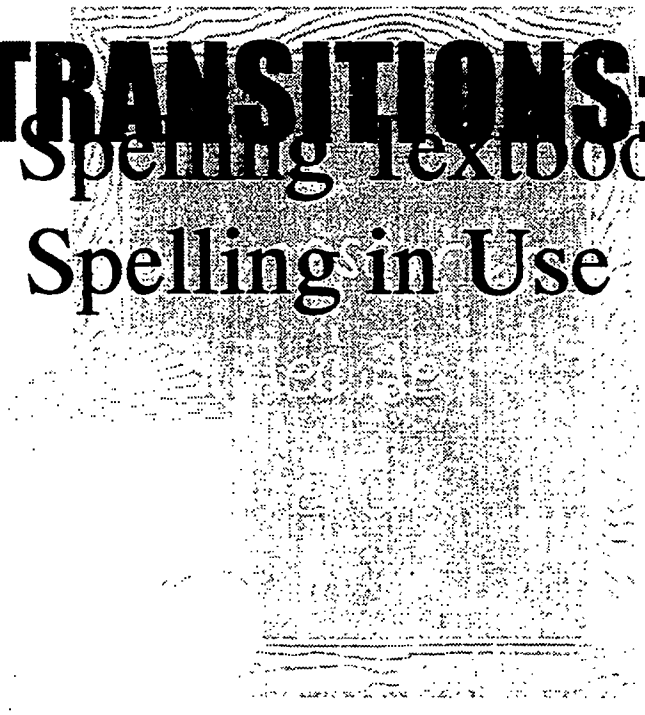
Why Do We Write?

Communication is an important part of our lives from the beginning. There are many reasons for speaking and writing. We need to be certain that students experience speaking and writing for each of these purposes. In real life, reasons for communicating don't fit neatly into categories but cross over categories.

Function	Examples	
Instrumental (language to get what we want)	- sign-up sheets - grocery lists - wish lists - planning lists - catalog orders	- messages - warnings - letters - notes - want ads - "to do" lists
Regulatory (language to control others and the world around us)	- directions - labels - rules for games - signs	- procedures - class rules - warnings - advertisements
Interactional (language to establish and maintain relationships with others)	- dialogue journals - response journals - notes - K-W-L charts - jokes and riddles	- invitations and greeting cards - letters to pen pals - message boards - classroom mailboxes
Personal (language to develop and maintain one's own unique identity)	- journals - diaries - autobiographies - show-and-tell	- travel logs - eye witness accounts - interviews - classroom newspapers - scrapbooks
Informative (language to represent the world to others; impart what one knows)	- logs - journals - directions - posters - maps - webs (upper primary) - recipes - research (K-W-L) notes - charts - brochures	- instructions - excuses - graphs - surveys - tables - math and science journals - weather reports - certificates - reports - family histories
Heuristic (language to speculate and predict what will happen)	- fantasy/science fiction tales - graphs - surveys - forecasts	- question charts - hypotheses - estimations - cause/effect diagrams - inquiry projects
Aesthetic (language for its own sake, to express imagination, to entertain)	- fairy tales - historical fiction - plays and skits - puppet shows - dramatic play - choral reading - rumors	- graffiti - bedtime stories - fables - myths - legends - songs - poems - creative movement

(Adapted from Halliday, 1975; Britton, 1971; and Kimzey, 1995)

TRANSITIONS: From Spelling Textbooks to Spelling in Use



Transitions: From Spelling Textbooks to Spelling in Use

In this chapter we tell the stories of three teachers who in the past years have made significant changes in their spelling instruction. We also include a running commentary to highlight the factors that influenced these instructional and curricular changes. We include these stories because we believe that it is important for us to remember that reflective practice is an evolutionary process. We value all the steps these teachers have made and are still making to change their instruction.

Dayle Keener, Teacher, Grade 2

I taught for several years treating spelling and written language as separate, isolated subjects. I valued the textbook because I needed it as my guide and decision-maker. I valued only standard spelling. To me, a word was spelled either right or wrong. I typically introduced the words on Monday, assigned the daily exercises, and gave the test on Friday. When I think back, I don't remember children's spelling errors. However, I didn't provide many opportunities for any errors to occur. The children did language exercises from the textbook. They copied sentences, filled in blanks, and occasionally completed matching exercises. I avoided creative writing until absolutely necessary because I knew I couldn't write well. I felt so insecure, I thought how could I help children?

The language curriculum was viewed as a fragmented and separated entity. The teacher viewed language as a subject to be taught, studied, and tested rather than as a functional tool for communicating one's way through life.

Children's voices, student ownership and spelling in use were not valued. Rather the textbook, the manual, and standard spellings were valued.

The teacher's insecurity as a writer placed limitations on the opportunities she provided for children.

A turning point came when I participated in a writing project and entered graduate school. Some books I read first were: **Writing: Teachers and Children at Work**, Donald Graves; **Reading Without Nonsense**, Frank Smith; and **What's Whole in Whole Language**, Ken Goodman. I began having the children write self-selected topics every day, keep writing folders of work in progress, share stories in teacher-supported helping circles, peer edit, followed by a final teacher-editing conference. The children published their favorite pieces of writing that they worked through the entire process. I noticed that when I valued the children's approximations in spelling, it freed them to take risks and to use more precise, interesting words, and a stronger "voice" started to appear in their writing. The former skills I taught in isolation were all embedded in the children's writing. I conferenced individually and in small groups, and had mini-lessons as needed. I started to trust myself to make decisions about what the children needed to learn next. The children had a motivation and enthusiasm about their work that had not existed before I provided writing opportunities.

Professional development (e.g. participation in a writing project, graduate school, professional reading) provided a needed knowledge base and a boost to self-confidence that enabled the teacher to work with the children in a writing community.

A slow transfer of ownership to children regarding topic, word choice, audience, and form occurred. Writing is becoming something children do rather than something they simply know.

A focus on writing frees the children from bondage to words they know how to spell. They begin to see themselves as writers and focus more on choosing powerful words and thinking about what they want to say. In short, the teacher began to trust the children as writers.

The teacher began to carefully observe children as writers.

Even though I accepted the children's individually constructed spellings, I continued to give a spelling test. I started noticing another pattern. The same children made the same grade from week

The children were growing in their developing sense of themselves as readers and writers.

to week. I could predict the outcome of the test. The test took me thirty to forty minutes to get the children ready, give the test, collect the papers, and begin another use of this time.

The teacher began to recognize that the spelling tests were only measures of short-term memory with little or no carry over into the children's habits as writers.

Most importantly, there was no transfer of learning to their writing.

Over the past few years I have tried many methods and strategies. First I tried content words in social studies and science. Then I focused on high-frequency words. This year I have been conscious about putting appropriate print in the classroom. In the writing center there is a word box with high-frequency words for each letter (i.e. words on a card, etc.). The materials that are stored in the classroom are labeled. As we have discussions (math, science, etc.), the class develops a list of words they need for that unit of study to help when they record their observations, thinking, and conclusions. At the first of the year, I chose four or five words in a spelling pattern (e.g., *-ight*, *-ould*, *-ough*, etc.). I did this simply as a management system that I could handle at the time. The children and I developed activities and games to practice the words. Now the children are using their pieces of writing or the learning log entries to select words that look close but don't quite look right. The children are coming to me and saying, "I found 'my' word (in a book they were reading). One child corrected his words in a story he had written. Both of these experiences were student-initiated. Now the words belong to the children. I don't know if the children were ready (some still aren't) or if it was more what I should have done all year. I still have questions about how to manage all the children's growth and progress. I still don't know if this is what I should be doing. I do know that the children's spelling approximations tell me what they know about print, letter sounds, chunks, and endings. What I do in the coming weeks will depend on new information I learn or what I learn from the children.

There was a shift in the source of the words; however, the teacher still controlled the lists and owned the curriculum.

The teacher faced issues of time, management, routines, and trust.

*A slow transition begins from a focus on words and a study of spelling for writing to **using spelling** in writing.*

This questioning stance is at the heart of reflective practice. Reflective teachers are constantly examining their current practices and using children as their curricular informants.

On the last few days of school, I asked the children, "What experiences this year helped you become a better speller?" They said:

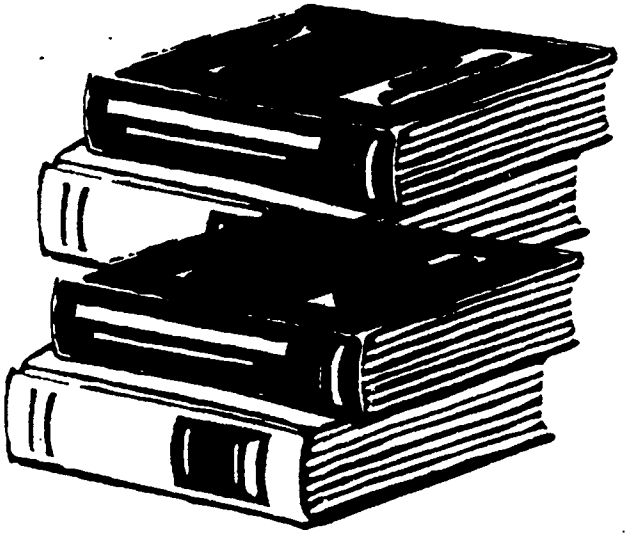
- reading
- writing
- reading and writing
- mistakes help you spell better
- charts around the room
- group discussions (about words, things to help you remember, things we notice, patterns, endings, etc.)
- personal dictionaries

- finding words or getting help from
  - books
  - writing
  - other people
  - dictionaries

I was stunned and at the same time thrilled! It was working! The experts and my mentors have been helping me gradually construct a classroom environment more suited to the developing needs of young learners.

We have an extensive classroom library with fiction and non-fiction books. The children have daily opportunities to read books of their choice, write for a variety of purposes, and talk, share, and help each other. I thought that I had to structure a spelling "program" to help spelling improve. Now I see that the spelling is in everything we do. I asked the children how they felt the partner spelling checks helped them. One child responded, "Well, that is fine, but many of the words I needed weren't on that list. I mostly used the ways we've already talked about."

The children have given me the confirmation I have been needing. I thought that the children choosing some of their own words to focus on and having a spelling check with a partner was what was helping their spelling. They may or may not have helped. What did help was the richness of all of their experiences and helping children develop an awareness of spelling. I plan to continue to improve the learning opportunities I provide the children. I am so slow in making changes in my teaching practice because I want to make sure that I am providing my children the best. I will never have all the answers to my questions. While I am finding the answers to some questions, new ones keep coming up. But I can honestly say, I am enjoying the journey. I love to teach because I love to learn.



Carol Sutton, Teacher, Grade 5

I went to the mall "yesturday." How well I remember seeing a sentence like that as I would read an entry in a student's journal. I also remember the overwhelming sense of frustration that would come over me as I would notice that the misspelled word "yesturday" had been in the list of words that had been in our spelling textbook the previous week. What else could I do? Weekly, each student had to write every word five times and even had to use the word in a sentence. In addition, the word had to be looked up in the dictionary and written with the definition beside it. I rarely skipped any of the activities in the spelling book. ***A*** on Monday, ***B*** on Tuesday, ***C*** on Wednesday were regular assignments each week. We even played games and had spelling bees with the words! I felt that I was teaching spelling, but I continued to be aware that students who could make a perfect score on Friday's test couldn't spell the same words the next time they needed to write them. Why were my students not better spellers? What could I do differently?

Early in the teacher's transition there was a sense of frustration with the lack of carry over.

The program was sequenced, highly organized, and very easy to follow. It provided the teacher with a sense of security and removed the need for her to make professional decisions based on specific knowledge of the children in her charge.

The focus was clearly on individual words, not on the building of ideas through writing.

As I reflect on the communication skills program several years ago in my fifth grade classroom, I can remember the activities of a typical day. In addition to spelling, the schedule always included a reading lesson from a basal text. There were very few "real" books in our room, and most students never read anything but the reading assignment. Lessons from our English textbooks addressed language, grammar, and mechanics skills. Workbooks and worksheets which accompanied each of our books were used on a regular basis. Occasionally my students wrote in journals, but most "creative" writing occurred only when I assigned the students a topic, explained how much had to be written, and announced the due date. To be honest, my job was not personally challenging, and many times it was actually boring. Was it any wonder that my students were not enthusiastic about reading and writing?

The textbooks had become the focus of the curriculum, not the students' growth as readers and writers. There were no obvious connections between reading, writing, and spelling. There were separate textbooks for each discipline and each discipline was taught as a specific and separate subject.

During this time, I began hearing about something referred to as the writing process. My initial reaction was that there was not enough time in the day to cover all of the material, and I certainly could not add anything else! The very idea that I could work with individual students was preposterous!

Frustration was growing with the current practices. Such frustration can lead to fear of change that can either immobilize or become the catalyst that pushes a teacher forward. In this case, it helped the teacher seek new ideas and professional development opportunities.

Fortunately, my sense of frustration with my current teaching strategies led me to continue listening to ideas about using a process approach to writing instruction. I signed up for an in-service and began by simply involving my students in finding their own topics. While students were busy working in their spelling and English books (I was not ready to give them up!), I would meet with a student to discuss his/her writing, mainly focusing on the mechanics of the piece.

The focus is shifting from spelling as content to writing as a process. With a new investment in their writing, both the students and the teacher began to see a better reason to study the conventions of language (e.g. spelling, punctuation, etc.).

As I began allowing students to choose topics for writing stories and reports, I noticed more interest in their work. As a result, most students began writing more, and I began to be aware that

spelling instruction could take place as I helped a student to edit. It was not difficult to detect when a student was experiencing difficulty with a particular spelling pattern (doubling consonants, for example) and make the student aware of it. Since the piece of writing was important to the student, he/she was more interested in what I was saying about his/her spelling. I was able to make connections that were impossible when teaching a list of words from a spelling textbook that had no personal meaning to the writer.

The teacher sees that she can plan for spelling instruction from what she observes in her students' writing. This awareness marks the beginning of a move away from textbook-driven instruction.

I was still concerned, however, that I was leaving too much to chance. I felt that I could now give up my spelling textbook, but not without replacing it with a list of words that I would teach to the students each week. Words from a reading story or a science unit were assigned each week, and students were to memorize them for the test on Friday. I guess I thought that students would find the task easier since the words I chose were from academic areas which were already being addressed. What I thought would happen did not, and again, I felt a great deal of frustration.

There was a change in the source of the words selected for spelling, making them more connected to the active curriculum. However, the teacher still controlled the words available to the children. There was no ownership for the child as the teacher moved from spelling textbooks to content-area vocabulary. Although the teacher recognized the need for change, the focus was still on words.

At this time in my transition, I had so many questions which continued to grow every day. As a result, I began reading books and articles and attending conferences and in-services that addressed writing. It seemed to me that the only lasting spelling instruction that was taking place in my classroom was when it came from an individual's writing. Nothing I heard or read told me every step to take. Every word that I needed to say was not in bold-face type. I learned, however, about ways other teachers implemented the process of writing in their classrooms, and I got enough suggestions so that I could begin trying some new strategies. I liked the challenge of making decisions concerning what a student knew and what he/she was ready to learn next. The main thing that I learned was that students learn how to spell as they read and write – not as they commit a list of words to their short-term memory. My challenge was to create an environment in my classroom so that students would want to read and write!

The teacher was slowly coming to understand that she would have to be the instructional decision maker if she was to focus on spelling in use. Toward that end, she realized the need to shift the focus from studying words for spelling to writing.

The teacher has a new theory base for her belief system. This theory base will come to impact her future instructional decisions.

My classroom today is very different. As I see the connections between reading and writing and I have learned to trust myself and my students more, I have gradually given up the basal reading text and have developed a classroom library. Students are learning to be better readers and writers (and, yes, spellers) as they are allowed to choose what they want to read from books that were written by quality children's authors. Opportunities for writing occur throughout the day as my students respond to the literature, write letters to pen pals, and keep logs in all of the other content areas. They are also continually drafting, revising, editing, and publishing pieces of writing.

The teacher provided many opportunities for reading and writing so that spelling growth could occur. The spelling curriculum is now generated by the work of young readers and writers; the teacher no longer abdicates her professional judgment to the distant authors of some spelling textbook.

As students are reading and writing, I am conferencing with individuals and small groups. I am able to make suggestions concerning content, and when the student is ready to edit, I can teach

The teacher is in transition toward a more comprehensive literacy program. There is emphasis given to developing a balanced writing program to develop spellers.

all of the spelling and language skills that are appropriate for this child. As I mentioned earlier, the instruction is now connected to something that is personal and meaningful to each child and not taught as an isolated skill.

Large group instruction in spelling still occurs as mini-lessons are taught to call attention to a pattern that is giving difficulty to a large number of students. I also use this time to discuss various spelling strategies so that students will have some choices of what to do when they don't know how to spell a word. Students also focus on a few words each week as they choose some words they know are giving them difficulty in their own writing. Personal dictionaries kept by each student are also helpful.

There is a focus on strategies instead of words as the teacher provides mini-lessons to demonstrate the strategies writers use to spell words they don't have ownership over.

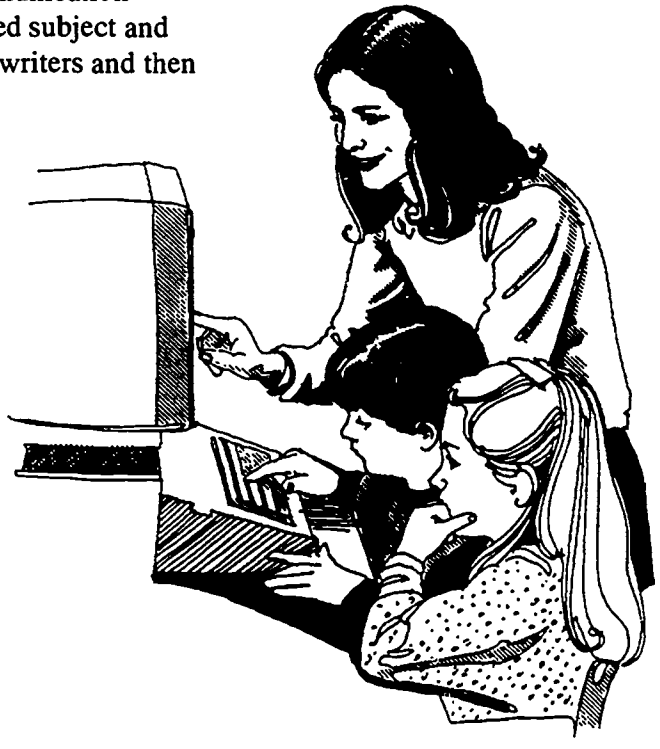
In addition, I think it's important that I continually convey to my students the importance of conventional spelling any time they are writing for another person to read. My expectations are clear as students write pieces such as pen pal letters and thank you notes as they prepare for publication. One way that I assess grades for the report card is how well various pieces are edited for spelling.

The teacher now helps the children focus on their writing audience rather than viewing writing as simply a display of their control of convention.

The story of my transition does not end here. It will be a continual process of change and growth as I learn more about the connection between writing and spelling. I am always questioning my current methods and searching for more efficient ones, but I believe that deliberate and systematic teaching and testing of a list of spelling words is ineffective. As in the past, my transition will continue to be slow but also exciting. Also, I will not discard current techniques for spelling instruction until I understand the rationale for a new practice and can explain it to administrators and parents. My goal is to be continually moving toward a total communication program where spelling is never viewed as an isolated subject and where children view themselves first as readers and writers and then as capable spellers.

This questioning stance is at the heart of reflective practice. Wise teachers are constantly examining their current practices and using children as their curricular informants.

The teacher's theory base for her belief system is clearly valued.



Sandra Lawing, Teacher, Grade 2

Anthony was my best spelling teacher. In twenty years of teaching, with some of the best spelling "teachers" I could have–Graves, Calkins, Wilde, peers, and mentors–Anthony was the teacher who made the most significant difference in my knowledge of spelling development. He was a second grader in my class the second year of my trying the writer's workshop. I knew very little about writing or spelling or how children learned either one. Anthony trusted me anyway.

He was a small, beautiful boy with black hair and big, almost black, eyes. He was still trying to make sense of print–with writing especially. He was very tentative and didn't take risks easily. The words in his meager attempts at stories would often begin with the appropriate letter and just as often end with "ony." It took me a little while to realize that when he had no idea of the conventional spelling, he used the few safe letters he already knew–those in his name!

The teacher was observant, a kidwatcher, who viewed the children in her charge as curricular informants.

The teacher is building a theory of the child that will help her make appropriate instructional decisions.

I began to watch more closely Anthony's progress as a speller and writer. With many spelling support systems in place–meaningful print, lots of books and reading, strategy lessons, etc., Anthony gradually began to use some appropriate ending letters. His progress was beginning to show on spelling tests as well. Unfortunately, there was no grading on progress–only on right or wrong. His test grade was always failing–which only undermined any risk taking that was necessary for continued confidence and growth. I was beginning to understand that the spelling test was neither a fair nor accurate record of children's progress as spellers; it was serving no purpose to Anthony as a writer or to me as a teacher. I shudder to think of the emotional trauma I was causing Anthony each week at test time.

As the teacher came to recognize that the spelling tests were neither fair nor accurate her knowledge of writing was also growing. It was at this point that she began to value spelling in the context of writing.

The transition becomes an issue of developing a theory base. This development comes about through reading, attending conferences and workshops, and participating in ongoing

I knew it was time to tackle the issue of using the spelling test as an indicator of spelling progress. It was time to value spelling for its use–within the context of each child's writing. I had already made the step out of a spelling text and had been creating a class list of words from the children's writing. I was confident enough now to give up the spelling test altogether. Could I find enough support from the administrators and parents?

I began reading a lot about writing and spelling so that I could present my "case" to the principal. I saved samples of children's writing to show progress over time. I talked with peers, mentors, and some parents. When I felt I was ready to present my case and defend my beliefs, I went to the principal. With her support, we discussed a campaign to help the parents better understand our view of spelling and writing. We wanted them to know that we still valued spelling but only within the context of real writing. We agreed that on the report card we would not eliminate the word "spelling" but would

include it with the writing grade. I wrote a letter to the parents offering my time for conferences. I made copies of articles to share with them. I put together simple writing portfolios showing their child's progress in spelling and writing. I was ready.

conversations with peers and mentors. In addition, the teacher was constantly reflecting on her practice in the classroom.

It was a successful campaign. Most parents remembered their experiences with spelling tests. Many felt they were not good spellers despite years of spelling textbooks. For the most part, as long as they could be assured that their children were making progress, they supported her decision. They felt the experiences their children were having with writing were much more comprehensive, beneficial, and a better use of time than the spelling activities they had known as children. When shown published books and written stories side-by-side with a list of isolated words, the parents felt the stories and books gave everyone a better picture of what spelling was for than the test did. The stories gave everyone something far more valuable to save, share, and celebrate. Of course, there were some parents who continued to have concerns and who still, after eight years, feel their children are poor spellers because they didn't have spelling tests in second grade!

Note that most adults know about school through their own histories as students. For many (teachers and parents) this knowledge becomes a barrier in even considering any innovative practice.

The focus had become developing the children as writers.

One year of innovative practice can no more be blamed for a child's failure eight years later than it can be credited for another's success.

Removing the fear of the test each week gave Anthony added confidence with his writing. Although he was still very tentative as a writer, he began taking more risks and using more strategies with his spelling–classmates, books, place holders. It was a relief and a boost to his writing to know that he could go back later and "fix it up"–an option he didn't have on the spelling test. I'm sure that by placing so much value on the test, I was giving Anthony, a child who had limited knowledge of print, the idea that conventional spelling was a must at all times. Yes, I'm sure Anthony's spelling grade would have probably improved with the tests. However, those tests were hiding and hindering his knowledge of writing and crippling him as a writer. I was unknowingly putting obstacles in Anthony's path to learning instead of providing the scaffolding and support he needed.

Demonstrating that she valued writing enabled Anthony to focus on what he had to say. Spelling now had a function—to permit him to communicate to an audience beyond himself. His focus could be on learning to control conventions to accomplish his own goals.

The teacher recognized that shifting the emphasis from words to writing was essential to facilitating the development of readers and writers.

Anthony trusted me to know what was best for him. I could have very easily let him and many others down. I'm glad Anthony was my teacher–but not because of what he taught me about spelling. Because Anthony taught me to put the child–not the curriculum, textbook, or grade–first, I learned to involve, teach, trust, and value the CHILD.

As they make instructional decisons, teachers must be learning advocates for their students, teaching into their strengths instead of exposing their weaknesses.

My experiences with Anthony taught me to keep a proper perspective and a watchful eye on my students. Somehow my impact on Anthony's progress as a speller pales in comparison to the significant impact he had on my progress as a teacher and a learner.

*The teacher's transition involved her becoming a teacher-researcher. She was a co-learner in a community of scholarship who learned to **research, decide, and teach.***

These three stories describe personal changes from individual classrooms. The following chart is included to highlight the common characteristics in the evolution toward a reading-writing classroom where teachers and children deal with spelling in use.

Transitions: From Textbooks to Spelling/ Writing in Use

Spelling

Original Practice

Program focuses on spelling textbook. Typical activities include:

- Completing Exercises *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*
- Writing each word 5 times
- Covering and writing each word
- Copying the definitions of words from a dictionary
- Writing sentences with spelling words
- Combining sentences with spelling words into a paragraph
- Playing games with spelling words (e.g., baseball, etc.)
- Taking a practice test on Wednesday and a final test on Friday

Writing

Orginial Practice

Program emphasizes use of English/language textbook. Typical activities include:

- Completing worksheets and exercises
- Copying exercises from charts/ chalkboard
- Focusing lessons/exercises on correctness of handwriting and grammar
- Copying basic sentence structures
- Correcting punctuation and capitalization in sentences

Teacher keeps spelling book and continues essentially the same practices except he/she omits Exercises *A-D*.

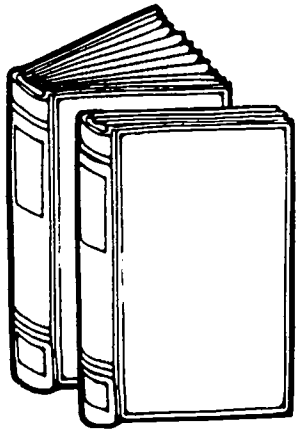
Teacher makes no change in writing program.

Teacher abandons spelling book. Teacher selects words from content areas (mathematics, science, social studies, health) and reading vocabulary for study. (Selecting content area words provides appearance of integrating spelling into the curriculum.)

Typical activities include:

- Writing each word 5 times
- Covering and writing each word
- Copying the definitions of words from a dictionary
- Writing sentences with spelling words
- Combining sentences with spelling words into a paragraph

Children write in response to teacher-selected topics (creative writing). Teacher keeps English textbook/worksheets. (Teacher determines length, form, paper, etc.)



- Playing games with spelling words (e.g., baseball, etc.)
- Taking a practice test on Wednesday and a final test on Friday

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Teacher supplements content area words with high frequency words. Teacher omits writing sentences, definitions, and words 5 times each.

Typical activities include:

- Emphasizing patterns/rules selected by teacher
- Taking practice and final tests
- Using word walls or making words

Teacher implements writing process in formulaic manner.

Typical format includes:

- Prewriting on Monday
- Drafting on Tuesday
- Revising on Wednesday
- Editing on Thursday
- Publishing on Friday
- Writing to some assigned topics
- Selecting topics for creative writing from predetermined choices
- Self-selecting creative writing topics at times

Teacher selects some words and omits content area. Students select some words to study. Teacher drops practice test, but keeps final test.

Teacher begins to trust students as writers. This trust is reflected in:

- Allowing more student choice in topic, form, etc.
- Writing more and more frequently by students
- Providing more opportunities for writing

Teacher chooses some words for whole class. Each child selects some words for his/her individual list.

Teacher demonstrates more trust in students by:

- Encouraging more student choice in topic
- Allowing students to complete pieces of writing at own pace
- Moving toward implementation of writers' workshop and organization of writers' workshop.

Teacher views child as writer by:

- Emphasizing child's increasing control over language

Teacher grows in knowledge/use of management and organization of writer's workshop.

- Examining spelling growth within child's overall language competence

Children select own words and test with a partner or individually.

Teacher emphasizes writing and teaches strategies for spelling. Teacher omits testing.

Children assume responsibility by:

- Selecting words from writing for individual study
- Forming lists for discussion and individual study
- Paying attention to strategies
- Using sources in the room to correct words in own writing

Teacher shifts responsibility for writing to students. Students are now in charge of their own writing.

Teacher teaches spelling within a balanced reading/ writing program by:

- Offering appropriate mini-lessons within writing context
- Emphasizing spelling as a service to the writer
- Helping writers learn to control conventions
- Focusing on spelling in use
- Examining students' writing samples for evidence of progress in spelling

Students assume responsibility by:

- Editing with a partner prior to publication
- Proofreading and correcting misspelled words
- Paying attention to audience, purpose, and form
- Discussing strategies and noting important points about spelling

Teacher focuses on spelling within the context of writing by conferencing with individuals and small groups. Teacher uses the **Research, Decide, Teach** model for writing and spelling.

Teacher facilitates/guides student writing by:

- Providing time and opportunity for daily writing
- Conducting mini-lessons appropriate for students
- Conferencing with students to make class/individual instructional decisions
- Researching and making instructional decisions based on information from conferencing with students, professional resources, and his/her vision of students as writers

Typical activities include:

- Working on writing every day
- Discussing writing with peers and teacher

Making self-selections about writing–how and when (topics, genres, audiences, revisions, publication, conferences).

Students read daily from a variety of genres for various purposes–author studies, topic studies, personal inquiries, and literature studies.

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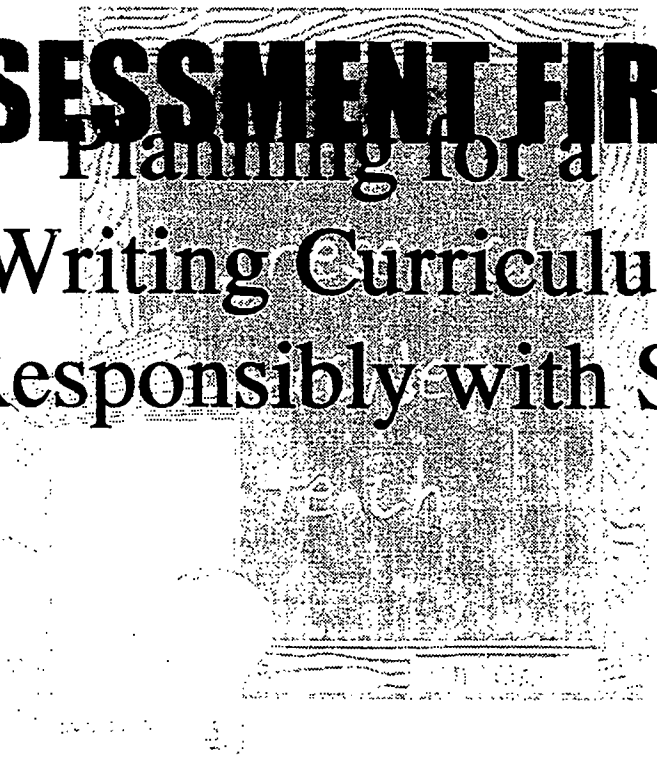
ASSESSMENT FIRST:

Planning for a Wise Writing Curriculum that Deals Responsibly with Spelling



Assessment First: Planning for a Wise Writing Curriculum that Deals Responsibly with Spelling

The key to dealing responsibly with spelling in any successful program in writing is assessment of *spelling in use*. Teachers must have ways to systematically study and assess children's *spelling in use* and then use these assessments to plan both whole class and individually appropriate instruction. Curriculum and instruction in spelling must be connected to children's writing if it is to be effective.

Planning for a writer-centered curriculum in spelling such as this takes place in a frame that always begins with **assessment research**, moves to **curricular decisions**, and then to **instructional interactions**. This writer-centered curriculum, of course, rearranges the traditional linear planning structure of curriculum first (what should I teach?), instruction second (how will I teach it?), and assessment last (did they get it?). Instead, in this "research, decide, teach" frame, assessment comes first and is not about "did they get it?" but "how are they using it?" Assessment is thought of as research into what children are doing with spelling in their writing. We ask questions such as, "What strategies are they using? What risks are they taking? How is reading influencing spelling in their writing?"

Questions like those above provide the necessary information for teachers to make curricular decisions that are appropriate for both individual children and the larger community of writers in the classroom. These decisions are embedded in the work of young writers and tied directly to a vision teachers hold for their students as competent writers and the place of spelling in that vision. For example:

- Sharisse's fourth grade teacher observes and notes that Sharisse looks up each unfamiliar spelling word she's using as she is drafting. She uses this observation to plan a lesson on **placeholder spelling.** (See page 6.)
- Marcus's first grade teacher studies his papers and sees the wide range of "risky" words he uses to say what he wants to say in his writing – words like "exactly" and "pretend" and "carefully." She plans a mini-lesson in which Marcus will share with other students about how he generates the spelling of any word he wants to use.

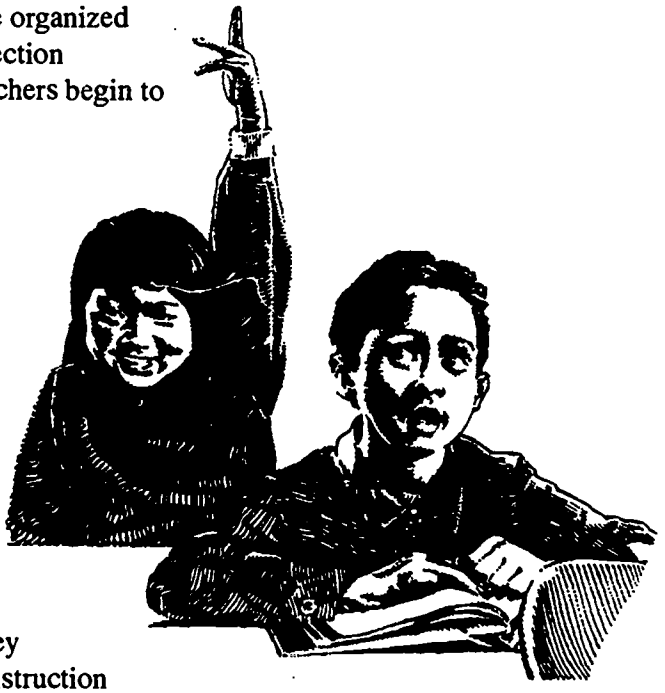
Instructional interactions that teach writers about spelling occur in several formats including one-to-one conferences, small groups, and whole class gatherings. Instructional interactions also take a variety of forms ranging from strategy sharing to focused discussions and inquiries (See pages 35 to 45 for further information.) For example:

- Roberto and his third grade students are interested in the doubling of final consonants when suffixes are added. Many of them are being thrown by this pattern as they write (including Roberto!). They make a chart in the room where students write any "doubling the consonant" words they find as they read and write over several days.

Studying the patterns of the words they've collected, the students generate "rules" that will help them in most cases with this spelling pattern.

- A second grade teacher has noticed a group of students who seem to rely only on sounding out as a generation strategy. She gathers them at a table and explains to them that words are like "people's faces" and that writers try to remember what words look like as they write – just like the faces of people they know. She tells them if they want to use a word they've only heard, but never seen "in person" as they are reading, then they rely on sounding out as a strategy.

The point should be made here that we feel this kind of "assessment first" planning should be the norm for all writing curriculum development enacted by wise classroom teachers, not just in relation to spelling. Embedding our curriculum decisions in children's writing requires that we think of assessment as research into what students are doing and move this research to the forefront of our planning. The following sections are organized in this "**research, decide, and teach**" frame. Each section includes practical classroom possibilities to help teachers begin to work within this non-traditional planning frame.



Research

Observing and Researching

To begin an assessment program of research which informs spelling curriculum, teachers must become habitual kid-watchers and observe students at work on their writing. As teachers observe children at work on writing they may ask questions to help them understand what they see, they may take notes to refer to later and plan instruction, and/or they may help a student with a spelling "bug" as they see it occuring. These teachers are trying to capture "spelling in use" as they systematically watch their students write and plan instruction based on their observations. All of the examples in this document show teachers making instructional decisions based on what they see their students doing as writers. The curriculum grows from the work of real writers.

Observing Young Writers

With less history to support them, young writers must focus more deliberately on spelling generations as they write. By observing young writers in action, wise teachers can often determine which strategies the children are using to generate spellings in their writing. The following are some observational guidelines that will help teachers as they think about the strategies children are using.

- Does the child's mouth move constantly as he or she writes? If so, the child is probably relying primarily on "sounding out" to spell. When a child begins to only move his or her mouth on more challenging words, this is a sign of growth because the child is calling out this resource only when the others prove insufficient.
- How quickly is the child writing? If the writing is extremely slow and labored then the child may be overly conscious about spelling generations and this will inhibit

growth as a writer. If the child is writing very quickly then he/she may not be drawing heavily enough from the supports that are there to help him/her. What we want is a steady, thoughtful pace to a young child's writing.

- Listen to the child's interactions as he/she writes. Does he/she use others as resources? Does he/she see himself/herself as a resource for others? Again, look for a balance in the conversations about spelling. You want children to see each other as resources for lots of help as writers, not just spelling help. But if a child seems overly focused on getting spelling help from others and is not taking enough risks on his/her own, you may need to reinforce the other strategies.
- Follow the line of the child's vision as he/she writes. Do you notice the environmental print in the room directly influencing the child as he/she writes? If so, does it seem to be a positive influence (helping occasionally) or a negative one (closing down risk taking)? Sometimes print that is meant to help a child actually hinders his/her growth. For example, a box or a dictionary of "words I want to know how to spell" may become the only words the child will use as she writes. If so, this list may need to go.

Some Questions to Ask Writers about Spelling

Young writers in classrooms where assessment precedes curriculum become accustomed to their teachers asking them questions of process. Writers who are frequently asked process questions must think about the ways in which they are working and this helps them access their own strategies. Like observations, the information these questions yield helps teachers make curricular decisions. The following questions are examples of strategy questions:

How do you think of the ways to write words?

What do you think about when you come to a word that is difficult for you to spell?

Do you notice spellings as you read?

What are some of the words that are very easy for you to spell?

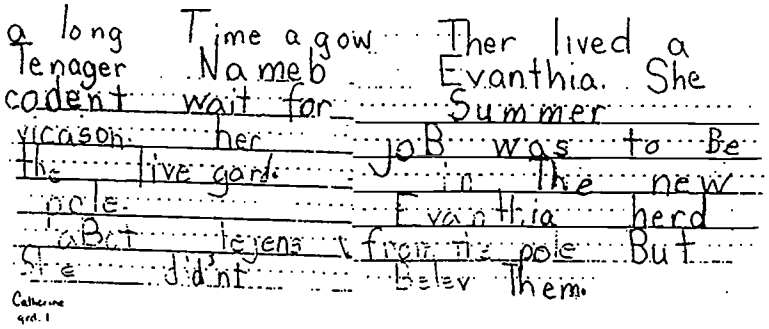
Do you ever change a word if the spelling doesn't look right to you?

Researching Pieces of Children's Writing

Documents such as writing samples should be periodically copied and saved with accompanying observations about the child's spelling in use. These documents and teachers' observational notes may be kept in folders for individual students and should be used in place of grades to communicate to children and parents about writing growth and the role of spelling in that growth. Again we will make the point that we highlight spelling because it is the purpose of this document to do so, but we feel these assessment practices are sound ones for all dimensions of children's work as writers.

When wise teachers look at children's writing samples, they frame their looking as research and, with regards to spelling, are curious about matters such as generation and placeholding strategies, risk taking, and ownership. The following two assessment tools, one a question and one a formula, are useful for looking at children's writing samples and understanding their growth.

When you see nonconventional spellings, make sure your question is, **"What smart thing has this child done to generate this spelling?"** Children do not spell in ways that do not make sense to them. The teacher's role is to identify this sense making and based on it, either confirm smart strategies and/or show children how to do something they aren't yet doing as writers. For example, when seven year old Catherine writes "Legends in the Pole" as the title of her new scary story, her teacher realizes that Catherine has spelled "pool" based on what she knows about another word pattern that sounded similar and was familiar to her – "*role, pole, hole.*" Her teacher confirms that this is a smart strategy to use when Catherine is unsure of a word, and she goes on to show her how "pool" is in fact like a number of other words she knows –"*tool*" and "*fool*" and "*cool*" and, of course, "*school.*"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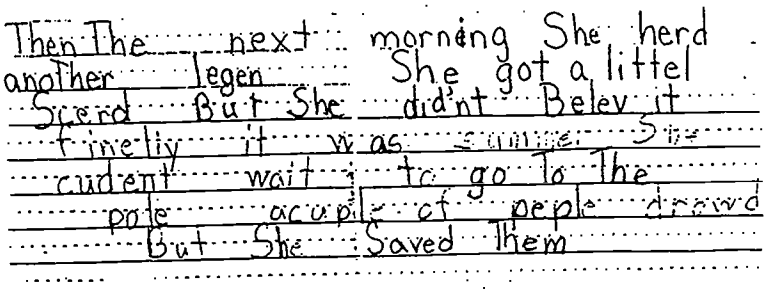
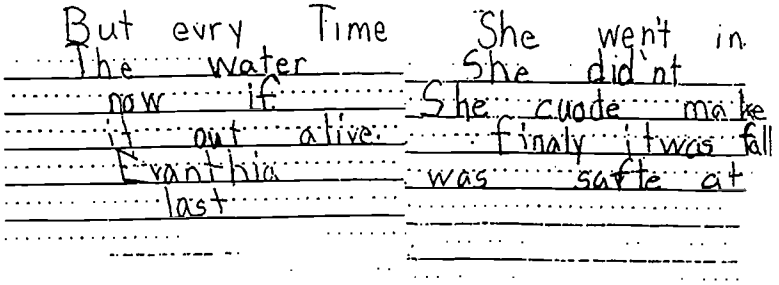
Tenager Nameb Evanthia. She
cadent wait for Summer
vicason her job was to Be
the five gord in the new
pole Evanthia herd
aBut legens from the pole But
She didnt Belev Them.
Catherine
grd. 1


Then The next morning She herd
another legen She got a littel
Scerd But She didn't Belev it
finelly it was summe. She
cudent wait to go To The
pole acupl of peple drowd
But She Saved Them


But evry Time She went in
The water She didn't
now if She cuode make
it out alive. finaly it was fall
Evanthia was safte at
last

Decide

As teachers research what writers are doing, they use the information they are gathering to make curricular decisions about what will help writers most at any given time (see vignettes at the end of this chapter for examples of teaching decisions based on observations of writers). But these decisions are not based solely on what children are doing. Teachers make decisions about how to help young writers, with spelling and all the issues in their writing, based on a vision of how these children will be as writers in the future. These teachers understand how writers deal with spelling (which is often very different from how schools and programs have dealt with spelling) and work to keep their curriculum and instruction in line with this understanding. This understanding causes wise teachers to focus on developing strategic spellers.

How Writers Deal With Spelling

- Writers know when they need a strategy other than memory to help them spell a word, and they know which strategies are most useful to help them in these cases. In this way, writers control the conventions of spelling rather than being controlled by those conventions.
- Writers have a sense of audience and of how high the stakes are (with that audience) for spelling conventionally in their writing. The degree to which writers take measures to check their spelling is related to the stakes involved with various audiences.
- Writers use any words they want to make the clearest expressions in their writing. Writers do not avoid words because they cannot spell them conventionally on their own.
- Writers are also readers who have committed the spellings of many thousands of words to memory and now "own" these conventional spellings as they write (Smith, 1988).
- When the audience stakes are high, writers rarely rely solely on their own checking of spelling. They use technology like spell checkers and human resources like proofreaders to help them check for spelling problems.

Teach

Finally, wise teachers help children with their spelling in use. These teachers share strategies with children, point out how one word is spelled differently from a similar word, and **embed talk about spellings** as words are used throughout the day in **meaningful contexts**.

- Mary Ann, a second grade teacher, reminds her students of that "*tricky r*" in "*February*" every day for a month (February, of course!) as she opens class with the calendar.
- Bill, a fifth grade teacher, shares his own spelling strategies like "*i* before *e*" (by demonstrating his thinking) when he writes on the board in front of his students.
- Carolyn writes each one of her second grade students a personal note during the week about how she sees them learning. The notes are precious to the students as they are individual attention from the teacher, and embedded in each note are the conventional spellings of a number of words that the students often use when they write back to their teacher.

This sort of spelling instruction isn't planned for, it's **anticipated** as teachers expect "teachable moments" around spelling to arise during the day and they take advantage of these moments in both individual and whole class settings.

The content of this "embedded teaching" comes primarily from what teachers know of spelling as writers themselves and is therefore focused on the strategies and information about spelling that writers really use as they write. This focus on functional uses keeps spelling in its proper place as a part of writing and allows even the youngest writers to spend their time playing with ideas, not with words. (See the **Structures and Routines** chapter of this document on pages 35 to 40 for more examples and vignettes of teaching).

Encourage Young Writers to:

- First think about how the word looks. We spell from natural visual memory more than any other information system. Just like we remember the names of many thousands of objects, people, and places, we remember that "*h-o-r-s-e*" says "*horse*" because it looks like that to us and we recognize it immediately (not that we sound it out or decode it). Help children to draw on this visual memory of words as much as possible. (See Frank Smith, "What's the Use of the Alphabet?" in ***Joining the Literacy Club***).
- Think about whether the word is a long word or a short word. Often children don't think about the proportional relationship of letters to word length. You don't want to spell "*tyrannosaurus rex*" with only two letters! Or "*leg*" with seven!
- Is the word like any other words you know? If so, make connections in the spellings.
- Is the word written nearby? We don't want to see children struggle to write "*Saturday*" when there's a calendar hanging just above them!
- Think about what sounds you hear in the word. Emphasize this one last. It has often been said that the worst spellers are the "wuns ho spel fonetikaly."

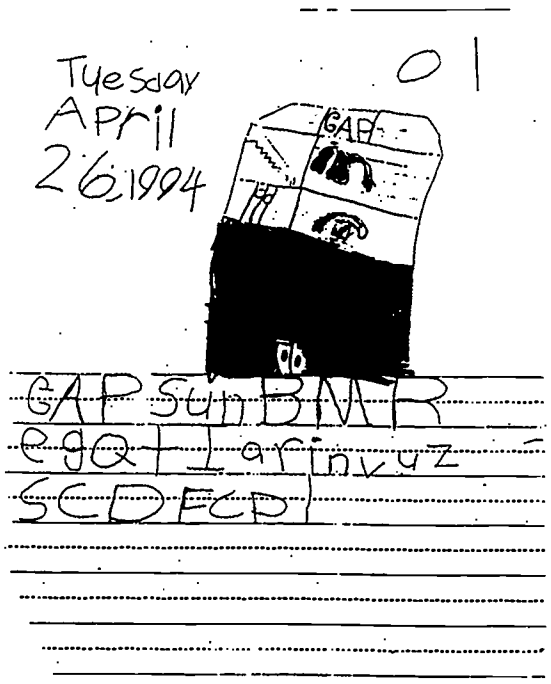
The critical thing with these strategies or any spelling strategies is that children use them wisely, drawing on the first one most and the others only when extra help is needed. Through observation, questioning, and analysis of writing samples, teachers can get a sense of how children are using various strategies to spell as they write.

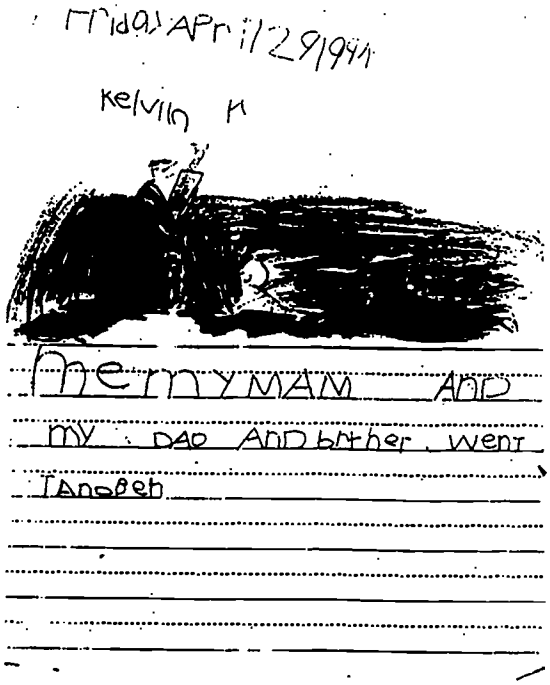
Vignettes

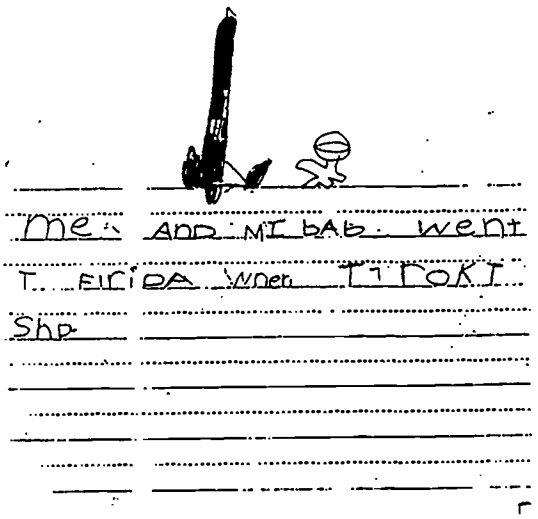
Kelvin's kindergarten teacher usually had good success with figuring out the sensible ways her beginning writers were spelling, but Kelvin was an anomaly for her. There seemed to be little or no visual or phonetic correspondence between the words Kelvin would write and the words he would read as his writing. Kelvin's illustrations were quite detailed and often included conventional environmental print, showing that Kelvin used his visual memory extensively in his art work, unlike his words. Kelvin was also making very good progress in reading, again relying on both visual memory and letter-sound correspondences to help him figure out text. When asked how he thought of how to write the words Kelvin repeatedly said, "I just think of them."

Kelvin's teacher decided to observe him as he wrote one morning to see if there were any clues to this anomaly in his actions as a writer. As she watched, she noticed that Kelvin looked around a lot as he wrote. She began to follow the line of his vision and noticed that Kelvin looked at the sign that said "*library*" and then wrote an "*l*." Next, he looked at the word "*April*" on a calendar and wrote the letter "*a*." This pattern continued as she watched Kelvin find words in the room, take a letter (usually the beginning one) from each

one and add it to his paper! Wisely, Kelvin's teacher taught *into* his process, confirming that it was useful to utilize environmental print but showing him a better way to do this. She also showed him the other strategies, especially emphasizing thinking about how a word looks because she knew Kelvin had very strong visual memory. Literally overnight, Kelvin, his teacher, and his classmates could start to read his writing because he had learned to draw on new strategies as a writer.

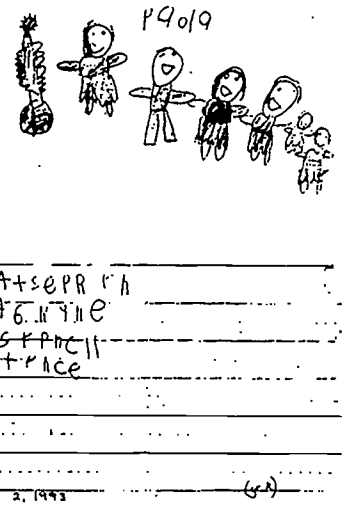


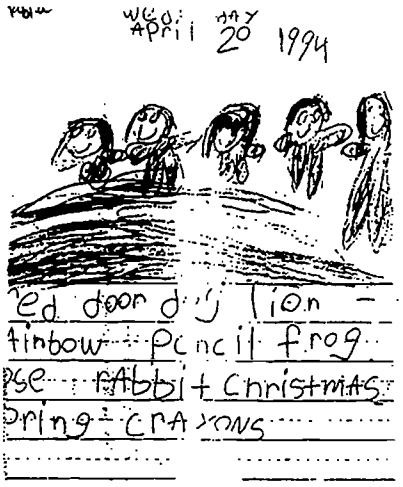


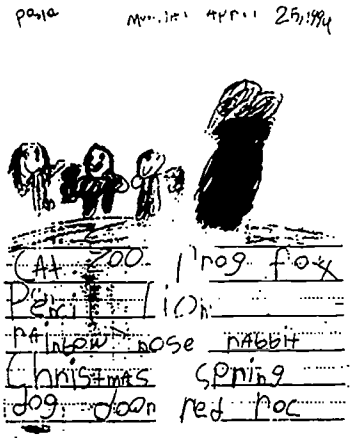


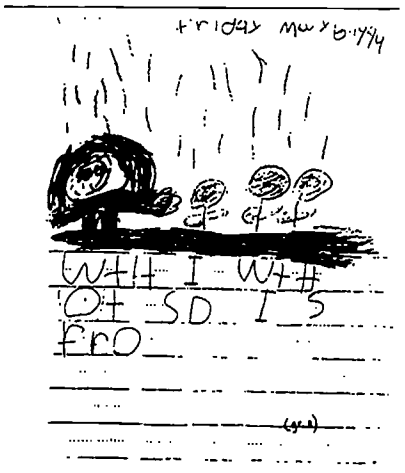
Rising to the expectations of her kindergarten teacher, Paola saw herself as a writer and went happily to writing workshop each day. She wrote about things that were happening in her life and, though shy, would share her writing with the children sitting close to her. After Christmas break, Paola's teacher decided to help her young writers by helping each of them make dictionary boxes of their favorite words so they could use these in their writing. Soon after, Paola's writing took a major turn. She was still writing about the same topics in her life, but she had lost faith in her ability to write the words she needed and began to rely exclusively on her box of words, losing all meaningful (syntax, semantics, pragmatics) word-to-message relationships.

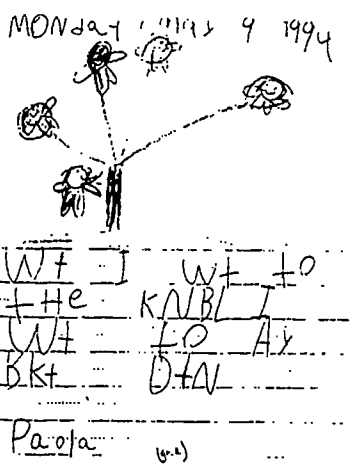
Paola's wise teacher realized that the box of correct spellings had heightened Paola's awareness of convention to a point where she lost faith in her own abilities as a writer. The teacher began to notice that other children, though they did not go to the extremes that Paola did, were mostly writing about whatever topics could be handled with the words in their boxes. After an honest conversation with her students about how she felt the word boxes were hurting them more than helping them as writers, Paola's teacher ceremoniously had the children get rid of the boxes and go back to making sense of spelling without them. Dramatically, Paola returned to the sensible strategies she had used before the box.



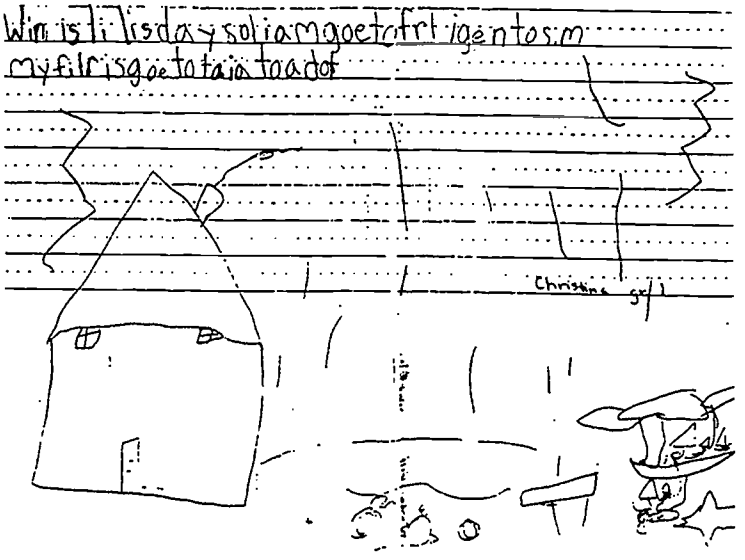








Through first grade Christina's writing showed an obvious attention to how words sound, her teacher was concerned that this young writer might be relying too heavily on this one spelling strategy because she was not seeing the growth toward convention she expected in a writer as fluent as Christina. Through observation, Christina's teacher noticed that she wrote very quickly and that her mouth moved constantly, shaping the sounds as she went. It was apparent that Christina's pencil could not keep up with her sounding out, so there was little length correspondence in her words. Christina was relying exclusively on one strategy as she wrote – sounding out. Her teacher sat beside her, confirmed thinking about the sounds of words as a good strategy, and then patiently showed Christina again how to use the other spelling strategies and suggested she make spaces between her words when she wrote. The very next pieces show dramatic growth as Christina goes to her writing with a more sophisticated repertoire of strategies at her disposal.

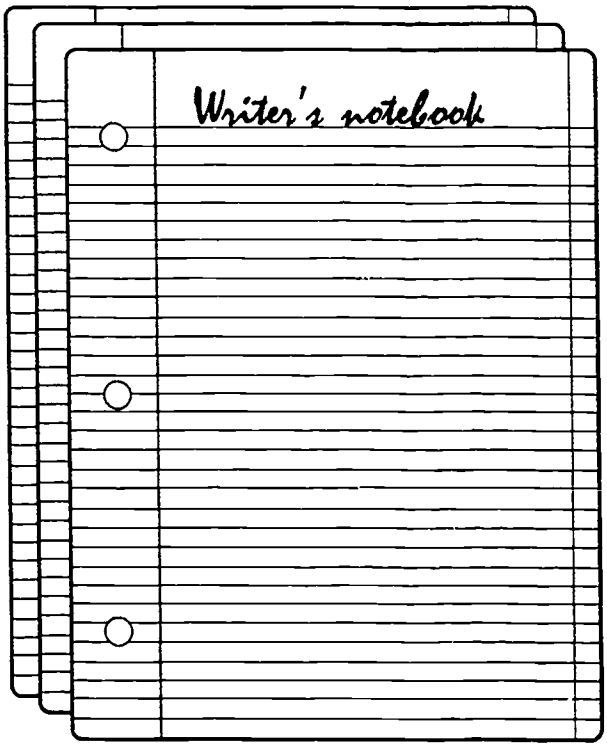


When it's the last day of school I'm going to Florida. I get to see my family. It's going to take a long

Christina gr 1
I'm going to the zoo
with my class
I and im goin to see The aminmls
I am goin Tre. I my tig
my mam is goin with me
din i goin home it la sep
din i wik p ig in

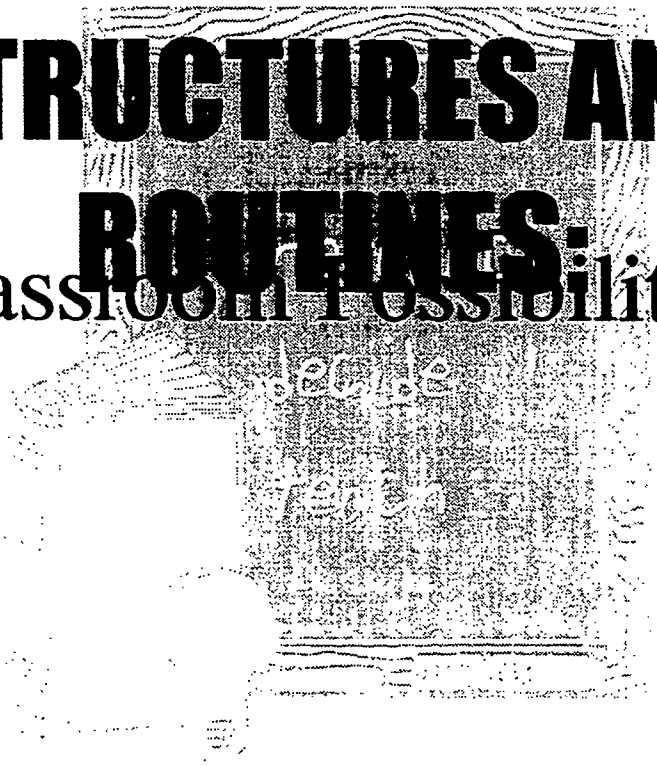
Pen pal letters from San Jose were always eagerly anticipated by the fifth graders. Since a package had arrived in the mail on Monday, Jay's teacher announced that she would like to be able to mail the return letters by Friday. As Jay worked on his letter in class on Thursday, he realized that he wasn't sure how to spell the name of his baseball team. He immediately searched out Bryan who played first base on his team. Bryan knew how to spell "*Cougars*" and was pleased to be able to share the information with his teammate. Jay finished his letter and decided to put "*Cougars*" in his personal dictionary just in case he needed it again. Jay's teacher observed this interaction and was pleased that Jay had remembered this spelling strategy that they had discussed several times in large group mini-lessons and had used it effectively.

Leesa's writer notebook was becoming more and more special to her. She was especially proud of some poems that she had written over a period of several months this year in fifth grade and recently decided to publish a collection of her favorites. After spending some time on a few minor revisions and editing with a classmate, she was ready to sign up for an editing meeting with her teacher. Leesa's teacher had been aware for some time that Leesa was showing real strength as a writer and had enjoyed encouraging her. As the two sat side by side for editing, her teacher noticed that Leesa was spelling many of her plural words with apostrophes. She took this opportunity to talk with Leesa about spelling plurals, and the two of them decided to add this information to Leesa's personal editing reminder sheet so that she would be more aware of these spelling patterns in the future. Leesa's teacher also realized that now would be a good time to remind her about when to use apostrophes in contractions and possessive nouns. In the weeks to come, Leesa began to show a good understanding of this particular spelling skill.



STRUCTURES AND ROUTINES:

Classroom Possibilities



Structures and Routines: Classroom Possibilities

One of the primary concerns shared by many teachers in transition from a spelling textbook to a study of spelling in use is the use of time. The structures and routines of the textbook are so clear cut, decisions are made and options are delineated. Moving to a more balanced literacy program where writing is the focus and spelling is studied in use can be intimidating to some teachers. As you are developing the professional knowledge base necessary for teaching into what the children are trying to do in their writing and language use, you may find it helpful to see what others have done in their own transition.

Many teachers are familiar with the typical class period for the textbook approach to spelling. In this section we will suggest a set of predictable structures that you may find useful as you move away from the textbook and begin to deal with spelling in use. We recommend that children be given at least an hour a day to work as writers. In this hour, a number of predictable things might happen, but the mainstays of the reading/writing workshop are whole group meetings, writing, and whole or small group share times.

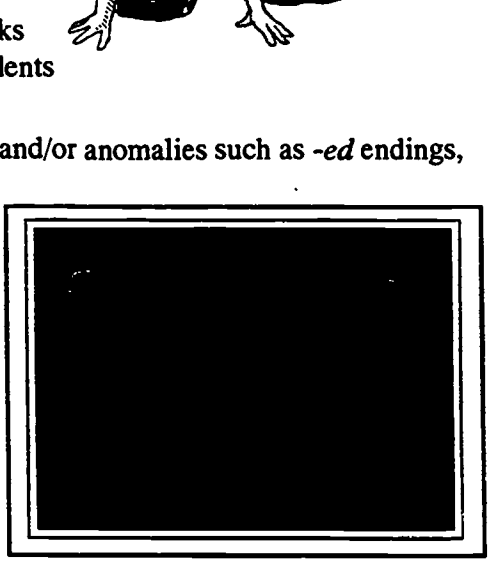
Whole Group Meeting (5 to 10 minutes)
Writing (30 to 40 minutes)
Whole Group or Small Group Share (5 to 10 minutes)

Whole Group Meeting: (5 to 10 minutes)

Teacher directed mini-lesson: students are *gathered and listening*, teacher is *teaching*. Mini-lessons are focused on various aspects of writing.

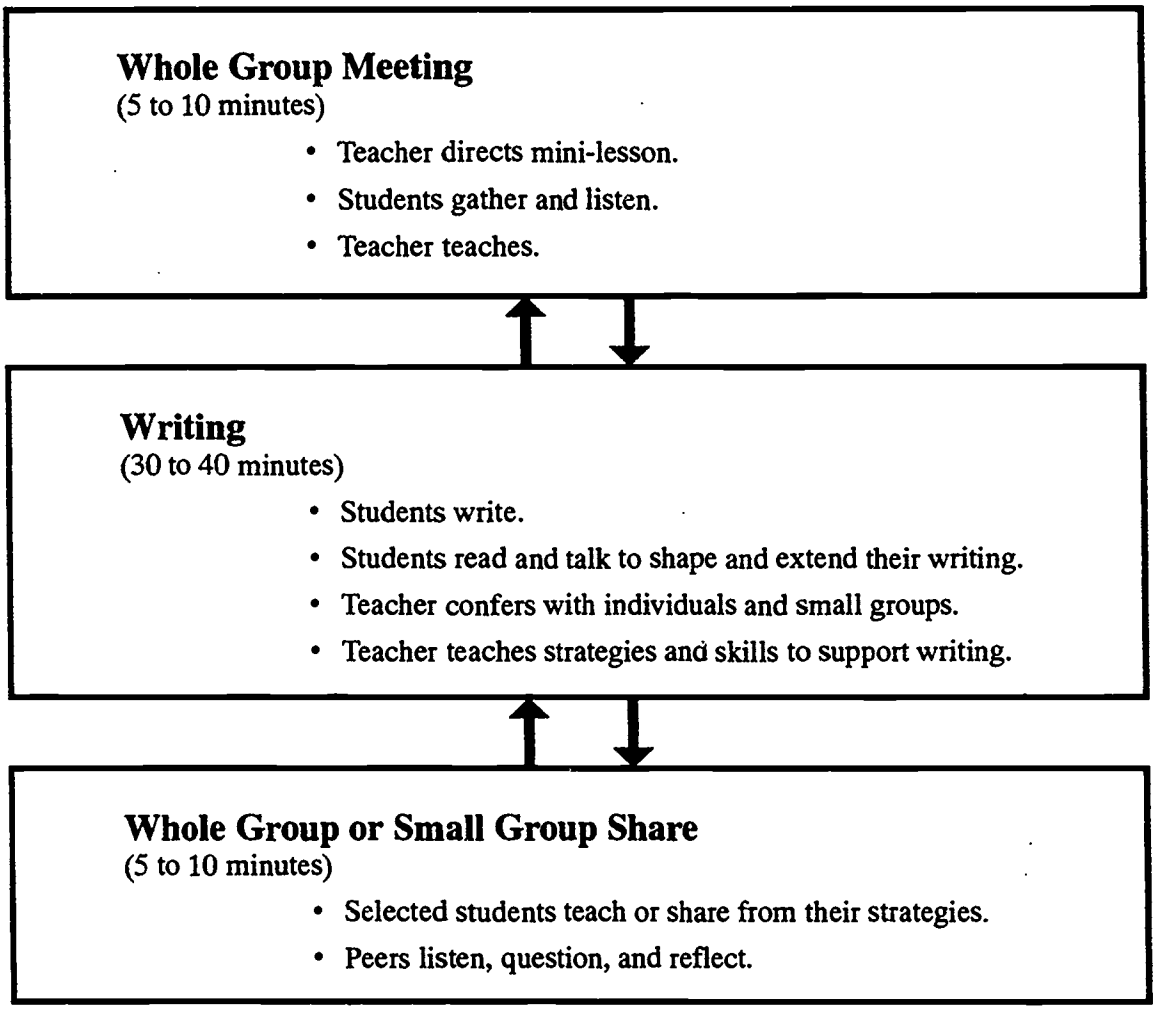
Possibilities include:

- Teacher writes in front of the students and thinks aloud as he/she generates spellings, giving students access to his/her thinking about spelling.
- Teacher leads an inquiry into spelling patterns and/or anomalies such as *-ed* endings, doubling final consonants, vowel pairs, and/or homophones. Over several days (typically) students look for these patterns as they write and read and experience the print in their environment. The patterns are collected and categorized and students generate theories about the spelling patterns.



- Teacher shows students how to use a spelling strategy such as Have-a-Go Sheet where a writer tries spelling a difficult word two or three different ways and selects the one that looks most right. Other strategies are described throughout this book. (See pages 42 to 46.)

Writing Workshop



Writing: (30 to 40 minutes)

Children write (reading and talking as needed to support their writing), teacher confers with individuals and small groups, teaching them the strategies and skills they need for the work at hand.

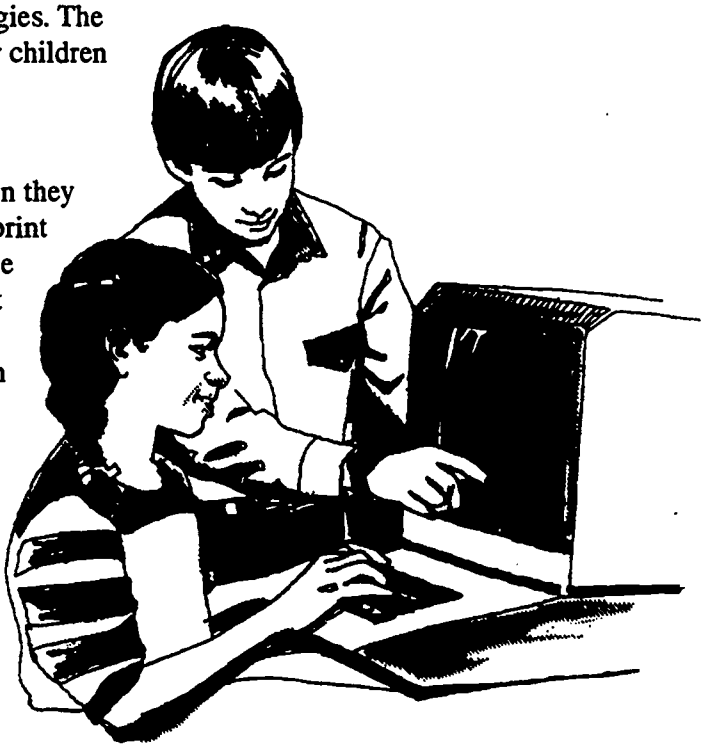
Possibilities include:

- Children are writing in many different genres such as poetry, fantasy, memoir, and informational writing. They are also writing in personal journals, notebooks, and learning logs. The teacher emphasizes different stakes for conventional spellings based on audience and stages of drafts, yet encourages writers to be attentive to their growing understanding of the conventions of writing.
- Children are invited to talk about their writing and the use of conventions as they write in the workshop. In this way, the knowledge of many writers is pooled and made accessible to the community of writers.
- The teacher confers individually and with small groups of children about their writing. The teacher then uses these conferences to teach directly into the children's writing. This teaching may include spelling strategies or patterns that a child needs while in the process of writing.

(For more information on conferencing, see ***Teaching Narrative: Write On*** or ***Writing in the Real World: The Primary Grades***.)

Whole Group or Small Group Share: (5 to 10 minutes)

Selected students are teaching from their strategies. The selected students teach, the teacher listens, and other children listen and question.



Possibilities include:

- Children are encouraged when they read, write, and explore the print in their environments to make note of spellings that interest them. When the class comes together for sharing, children may offer the spelling anomalies they found for others to consider. This helps children to realize the fact that our language is meaning-based and alphabetic, but not necessarily phonetic (Smith, 1985; Goodman, 1993; Mills, O'Keefe, and Stephens, 1992).
- As the teacher confers with the students he/she looks for individuals using interesting spelling strategies. The teacher may ask these individuals to share their strategies with the class later.

Most of the direct instruction in spelling occurs in the mini-lessons. These may be for the whole group when the teacher decides that a strategy is one that will be of benefit to the entire writing community. More often, however, these will be directed to small groups and individuals as the teacher confers with children about their writing. In most cases the mini-lessons focus on strategies such as those identified by Sandra Wilde and by Wendy Bouffler and described in Chapter 1 of this book (see pages 6 to 7). A mini-lesson might address such specific skills as when and how to use contractions, how to make plurals, how and when to add *-ed*, strategies for remembering how to spell words like *separate*, *dessert*, and other words with which children tend to show repeated difficulty. For accountability purposes, teachers make a note of all the lessons they teach whether they be with groups or individuals. Mini-lessons can focus on strategies, spelling patterns and rules, and even gimmicks (memory aides) that help writers generate spellings. Some examples of each type of mini-lessons are below:

Strategy – Beverly, a fifth grade teacher, speaks to a small group of her students. "I've noticed," she says, "When you guys are writing your drafts you spend a lot of time looking up words you don't know how to spell. Let me make a suggestion. When I'm writing and I'm unsure of a spelling, I often write it on a Post-It® note two or three different ways and go with the one that looks most right to me. This technique saves me time while I'm drafting and I always know I can go back again later if I'm still unsure. So, will you guys try this out for awhile and let's talk about how it's working for you. If you like it, we can share it with the class – maybe on Friday."

Other examples:

If you are having trouble with a spelling, try and remember what the word looks like. Before you finalize a writing project, have someone else help you check your spellings. (See Wilde, ***You Kan Red This!***, 1992, for other useful strategies).

Patterns and Rules – Kevin, a second grade teacher, gathers his whole class around him. "I need to show you all how to do something in your spelling. Lots of you use words that end in '*ing*' like *having* and *taking* and *giving*." Kevin writes these words on the board. He asks his students, "What were these words before we added the *-ing* to them?" Quickly several students answer with the correct root words. "Did you notice," Kevin asks, "that the final '*e*' is dropped off each one before we add the '*-ing*'? This is something you can usually count on in your writing–that you need to drop the final '*e*' on a word when you add *-ing*. Will you help each other to remember that point as you're writing? I'll leave these examples posted on our chart for a while just to help you."

Other examples:

plural endings
adding prefixes and suffixes
possessive forms
contractions

(See Wilde, ***You Kan Red This!*** (1992) for other useful patterns and rules.)

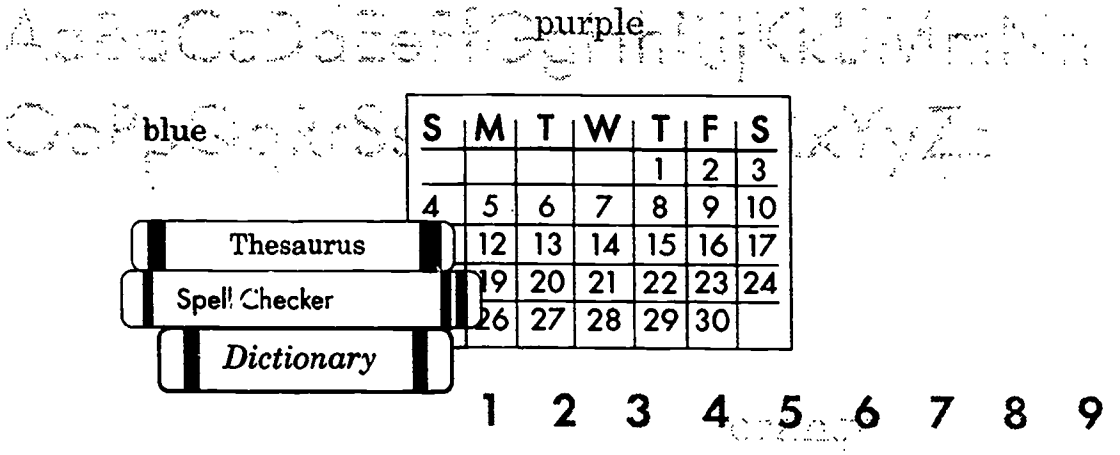
Memory Aids – Mary Ann, a third grade teacher, is discussing a draft of a letter to the principal that three of her students have written. She notices the word "*separate*" spelled as "*seperate*" in their draft. She exclaims, "Oh, '*separate!*' I used to misspell this word all the time and someone once told me to remember that there was '*a rat* ' in the middle of that word and I've never forgotten that it's '*arate*' instead of '*erate*.' Maybe that will help you guys. Will one of you tell the class about this quickly when we meet for our share later?"

Other examples:

A double helping of *dessert* gives you two *s's* in this word. The princi*pal* is your pal.

In a more traditional approach to spelling instruction, the structures and routines are dictated by an arbitrary scope and sequence determined by distant and unseen "experts." Curricular and instructional decisions are never left to the teacher, the one person who has the most intimate knowledge of the readers and writers in the classroom. When spelling instruction is a matter of moving the children through the spelling book, teachers do not have to make any decisions about what to teach and when to teach it. However, when writing is the focus and spelling instruction is an embedded part of this instruction, teachers must rely on their own knowledge of spelling in use. This knowledge comes from their own experiences as writers, from professional resources (Wilde, Bouffler, Cambourne, Graves, Calkins, etc.), from kid watching, and is refined through reflective practice.

Other than direct teaching, a balanced literacy program requires a supportive classroom environment. Such an environment would be rich with print. This could include menus, schedules, color words, numbers, directions, mail boxes, the alphabet, a calendar, instructions, a class list, sign-up sheets, books (organized by author, genre, title, topic), maps, address book, return address for the classroom and any other print that would support the work of young readers and writers. In addition to environmental print, writers will need resources such as dictionaries, thesauri, spell checkers, and computers to support their spelling growth. Naturally, decisions about what to include in the environment would be made on the basis of the age and development of the children. Learning to use the sources in the room is a valuable strategy to any young writer.



Small Steps that Make a Difference

Reflective practitioners take deliberate steps in making changes in their classrooms. Each small step enables them to support their students in becoming confident, competent, and independent writers and spellers. Consider the suggestions listed below.

I will value student attempts by:

- Accepting what students have written.
- Sharing with others.
- Celebrating progress.

I will base instruction upon student needs by:

- Knowing the phases of spelling development.
- Recognizing strategies used by students.
- Helping students understand strategies to use as they write.
- Teaching or pointing out strategies students might use in their writing during conferences with them.

(See spelling strategies on pages 6-7.)

I will make a time and place for writing by:

- Providing appropriate blocks of time.
- Engaging students in all steps of the writing process according to their development.
- Providing areas of the room where materials and resources are easily accessible for use in writing.

I will involve parents in the writing curriculum by:

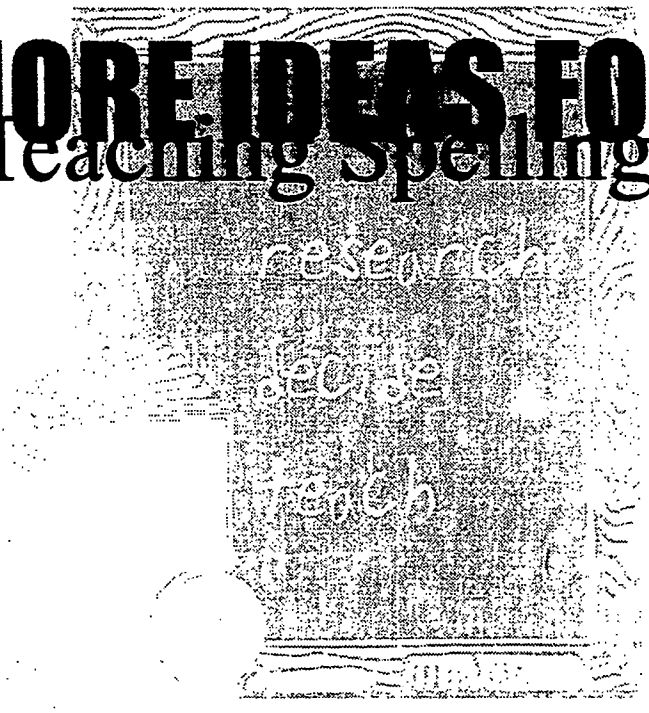
- Explaining spelling development and process.
- Sharing a child's writing folder and portfolio with his/her parents.
- Inviting parents to observe and participate in the writing process in action in the classroom and at home.
- Explaining the strategies that children use when spelling.
- Providing appropriate homework activities and games.
- Explaining strategies parents can use at home to assist the child.

(See suggestions and letters for parents on pages 47 to 51.)

I will demonstrate how spelling works for my students by:

- Talking about ways I spell unknown words as I write with and for students.
- Allowing students to help me figure out conventional spellings.
- Modeling strategies I use as I spell throughout the day in a variety of settings.
- Including demonstrations as I write for children and with children.

MORE IDEAS FOR Teaching Spelling



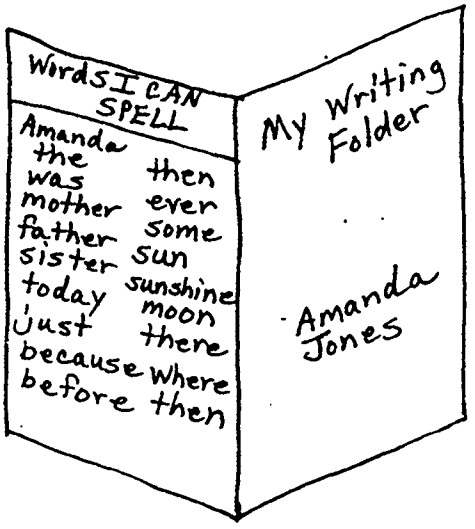
More Ideas for Teaching Spelling

Conferencing and Proofreading

When teachers conference with students as part of the writing process, they can assist students in learning to proofread their writing and to develop a spelling consciousness. They may assist students as part of editing selected pieces for publication. For example, they may teach students to circle words they are uncertain about on drafts of their writing. Then the students may check their spelling with another resource or may try the Have-A-Go procedure to bring the words to standard spelling with the teacher. Also, teachers may assist students in using what they know about spelling to generate the spelling of unfamiliar words by analogy. (See the fifth entry of this section for details of Have-A-Go procedures.)

Mini-lessons

A mini-lesson is a brief meeting where the whole class focuses on a need, strategy, or issue that will enhance or extend students' writing. The focus of the mini-lesson may derive from the teacher's observation and assessment of what students need. The mini-lesson provides time for the teacher's direct instruction through demonstration. It is a place to build on what students already know and to help them deal with specific problems or to focus on words they should be using in their writing. A mini-lesson is a way of modeling proofreading strategies, spelling strategies, and teaching specific spelling patterns that children are trying to use in their writing.

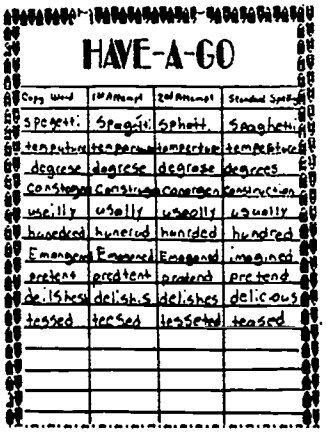


Writing Folders/Journals

Lists kept in students' writing folders provide easily accessible references for them to use in their everyday writing. These lists may be high-frequency words or student generated lists. Two possible examples are *Words I Can Spell* and/or *Words I'm Learning to Spell.* These word lists can provide words for individual or partner study or games.

Games, Activities, and Resources

Games and activities provide opportunities for children to focus their attention on visual patterns and to engage in problem solving related to visual patterns. *Hangman, Concentration, Junior Scrabble,* and other games are described in the resource books listed in the bibliography. Lists of common spelling patterns, homophones, prefixes, suffixes, and root words are included in the resource books listed in the bibliography.


HAVE-A-GO

spagetti	Spagiti	Sphetti	Spaghetti
temperture	temperure	temperture	temperature
degrese	degrese	degrese	degrees
construge	Construge	Conergen	Construction
usuilly	usully	usoully	usually
hunedred	hunered	hunrded	hundred
Emergend	Emergend	Emegend	imagined
pretent	prodtent	pratend	pretend
delishes	delish.s	delishes	delicous
teesed	teesed	teesseted	teased

Have-a-Go

This activity enables the student to approach spelling as a problem-solving activity and helps him/her develop strategies for spelling. The child identifies a word presenting difficulty in his/her own writing and then attempts to spell the word in the first column. The second and third columns may have second and third attempts. The fourth column has the conventional spelling. Students are encouraged to find conventional spellings using a variety of resources –find it in print, ask a peer, parent, or teacher, or check the dictionary.

Group and Individually Generated Resources

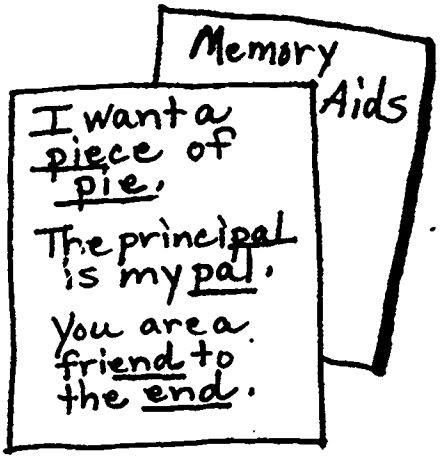
The class or individuals develop dictionaries, topic lists, word banks, word meaning books, pattern lists or books. The following examples illustrate how these materials might look.

I can...

- write something down and come back to it.
- write what I know, circle it, and come back to it later.
- ask someone who might have a clue.
- try it out on my Have-A-Go sheet.
- look around the room or in books.
- write it the way it sounds and come back to it later.
- check my personal spelling dictionary.
- use a spell-check on my computer.

Memory Aids

Because a love of words and a curiosity about words help students develop as spellers, words can be studied as a source of interest. Specific examples can help students remember the differences between particular words such as homonyms or homophones. These examples may be kept in a book or on a chart for everyone to see.



Written Conversations

The teacher writes a question on a chart so that everyone can see and students respond in writing. This activity provides opportunities for the teacher to model words students are writing and to give positive feedback on spelling attempts. A variation of written conversations is a dialogue journal.

Spelling Buddies

Students assist each other in learning to spell words. They study together, play games together, or act as a resource for each other. They also "test" each other on specific words that are important such as words needed in their writing or words that they continually misspell.

Spelling Celebrations

Students describe the process by which they came to spell a word conventionally stating the strategies they used. Specific words and successful strategies are brought to the attention of other students in this way.

Spelling Explorers

In a writing draft, students circle words or underline words they believe may be misspelled. The teacher brings the class together as a group. On a chart or the chalkboard, he/she makes four columns for all children to see. He/she then writes words as spelled by the students in the first column and writes alternate spellings in the second and third columns. As a group, the teacher and students discuss the rationale for choices. The students check a resource for the conventional spelling and write the conventional spelling in the fourth column.

Word for the Day

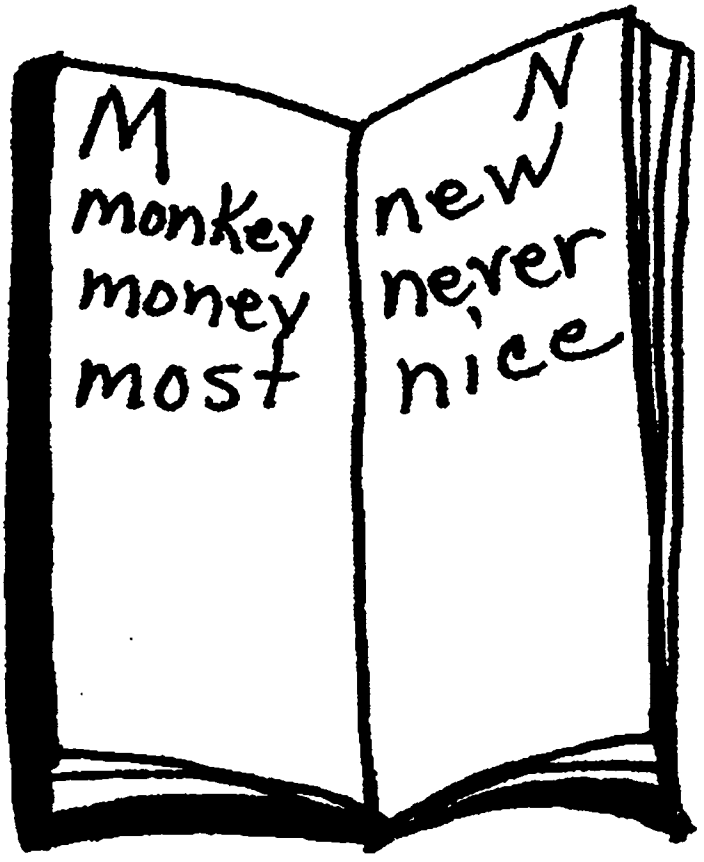
The teacher selects a word or has the class select a word to be the focus for the day. The teacher encourages students to try their hands at spelling the word on a chart or the chalkboard some time during the day. At the end of the day, the teacher and students examine the different attempts and circle the conventional spelling.

Class Journal

The students and teacher compose together in a shared writing experience that builds on students' experiences. The teacher demonstrates the writing process as he/she records the text. The text can be read and reread and serves as a record of class activities.

Personal Dictionaries

The teacher provides each student with an alphabetized list of high frequency words with lots of blank space to add new words of the student's choosing. Two pages for each letter of the alphabet may be a good beginning. Additional pages may be added as students increase their lists of words. Sources for words may be the student's own writing or words of interest to the class.



Words for a Home-Made Dictionary

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and
another
any
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as
asked
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away

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because
bed
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ready
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room

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school
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snow
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some
something
soon
started
stay
still
summer
sure

take
teacher
tell
than
that
the
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them
then
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things
think
this
thought
three
through
time
to
today
told
too
took
town
tree

until
up
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use
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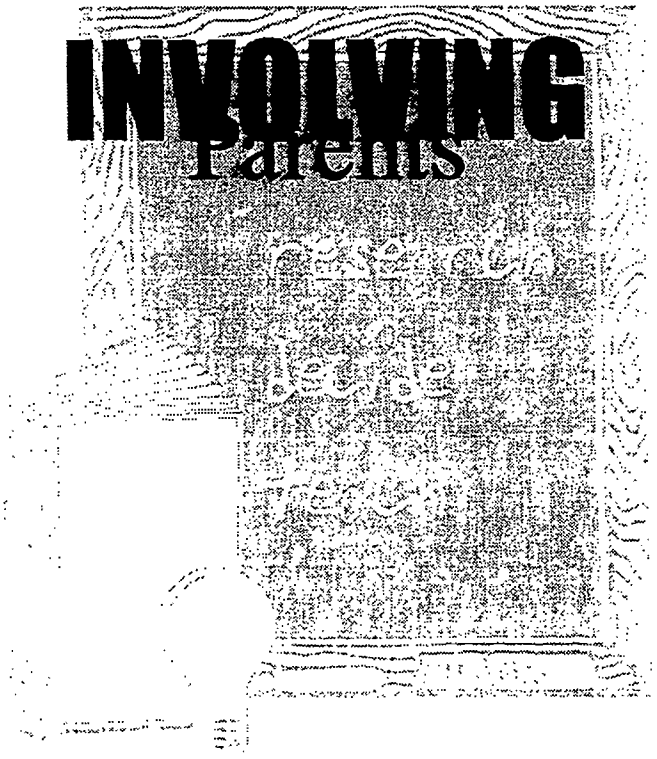

INVOLVING
Parents

Involving Parents

Involving and educating parents is important to the success of children's spelling development. It is necessary to help parents understand the stages of spelling, strategies used in becoming independent spellers, and the role of temporary spelling in the process.

Involve parents by:

- Explaining the writing program in the classroom.
- Helping parents realize that spelling is developmental and that with instruction and opportunities to experiment children grow from temporary spelling toward conventional spelling.
- Documenting children's spelling growth by showing parents their children's writing folder or portfolio (explain the meaning of the pieces to parents).
- Encouraging the use of word games as a way to develop an interest in words and spelling.
- Pointing out the importance of a variety of reading experiences at home.
- Emphasizing the importance of a variety of writing experiences at home.
- Inviting parents to collect samples of children's writing at home and look for indications of growth.
- Making parents feel comfortable in visiting the classroom and volunteering during writer's workshop or other portions of the school day.

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents:

Spelling is taught as we write in our classroom. Children are permitted to take risks in spelling. We call these attempts "invented" or "temporary spelling." From these attempts, we learn what students can do and what the teacher needs to teach. Young children progress through various stages of development. Enclosed is some information about children's spelling development.

It is important to remember to:

- Encourage your child to write regularly at home for a variety of reasons.
- Give your child the opportunity to share his/her writing with you.
- Let your child see you write for different reasons (e.g., lists, letters, notes, stories).
- Respond to your child's writing by telling what you like about the piece. Ask him/her to tell you more about the piece or write more.
- Write notes to your child.
- Ask questions about your child's writing (e.g., ask specific questions about a detail or place).
- *Celebrate* your child's attempts at writing (e.g., put them on the refrigerator, show it to a grandparent or neighbor, etc).
- Provide a variety of writing tools for your child (e.g., pens, papers, markers, etc).

Please come to our class to observe your child as he/she writes. The writing folders are available for you to see. I will be happy to meet with you and your child to show you the best work and to discuss your child's progress.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to Parents of Kindergarten and First Grade Children

Dear Parents,

Learning to write and read are of utmost importance to children. In our classroom, we write and read all day. We want children to feel free to take risks in writing, to develop the confidence to write, to learn the value of writing, and to experience joy through writing. You may observe any of the following practices as your child learns to write:

- Some children will write through pictures.
- Some children will string letters together as they write.
- Some children will "chunk" consonants as a way of spelling.
- Some children will include some vowels in their spelling.
- Some children will correctly spell words they frequently use.

Some things you might do at home are:

- Read to and with your child. Talk with your child and ask questions about the book or material you read.
- Listen to your child read.
- Encourage your child to read environmental print (e.g., cereal boxes, detergent boxes, labels on cans, toothpaste labels).
- Let your child see you write for different reasons such as messages, grocery lists, letters to family members, notes, and stories about personal experiences.
- Encourage your child to write notes to you, letters to grandparents, labels for objects at home, to-do lists, messages for the refrigerator, and stories about personal experiences.
- Write to your child – notes in his/her lunch box, messages on the refrigerator, and love notes under the pillow at night.
- Provide a variety of writing materials such as pens, markers, and crayons, and have them easily accessible in several places within the house.
- Focus on the message that your child has written rather than on his/her spelling errors.

Children learn to write by writing. In first grade we want children to learn to express themselves in writing, to become confident as writers, to enjoy the writing process, and to understand the many different purposes for writing.

You are a valuable partner in helping your child learn to write. Thank you for assisting us by encouraging your child in his/her writing.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to Parents of Second and Third Grade Children

Dear Parents,

This year your child will be doing much reading and writing in school. Learning to write and read are of utmost importance to children. We write and read all day. We want children to feel free to take risks in writing, to develop confidence and fluency in writing, to learn the value of writing, and to experience joy through writing.

As children write, they may use some temporary spelling. The more they read and write the more they grow into standard spelling. We have regular mini-lessons that help children explore some common spelling patterns such as consonant blends (*thr, chr, ck*) and plurals (*-s, -es, -ies*). As children improve in spelling, they are encouraged to proofread writing for a final draft. As part of this process, children are using dictionaries and learning to pick out misspellings and developing a sense that a spelling looks right.

Some things you might do at home are:

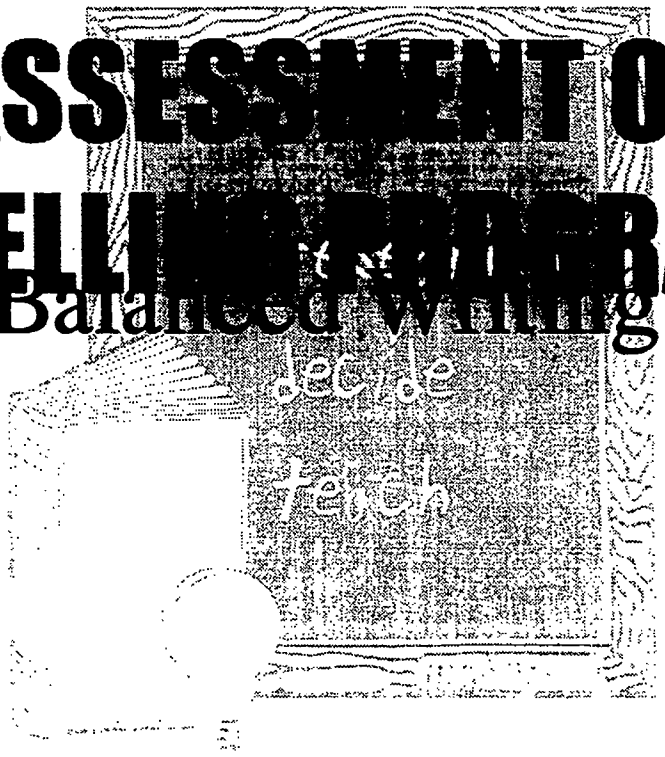
- Read to your child often.
- Focus on what the child has written rather than on his/her errors in spelling.
- Provide fiction and non-fiction books for reading.
- Let your child write for different reasons such as messages, lists, letters, and notes.
- Encourage your child to write often.
- Encourage your child to reread his/her writing to himself/herself out loud.
- Provide a children's dictionary.
- Model and assist your child in exploring the dictionary.
- Make certain that your child realizes that he/she can find both spellings and meanings of words in the dictionary.
- Always acknowledge your child's spelling attempts by pointing out the correct parts. Ask if he/she can change or add more.

We want children to learn to express themselves in writing, become confident to write, enjoy the writing process, produce different types of writing (stories, poems, letters, lists, recipes), and write for different reasons in their everyday lives. In order to grow in their writing, they must be given the time and opportunity to write.

You are a valuable partner in helping your child learn to write. Thank you for assisting us by encouraging your child in his/her writing.

Sincerely,

ASSESSMENT OF SPELLING WITHIN A BALANCED WRITING PROGRAM



Assessment of Spelling Program within a Balanced Writing Program

Teacher Self-Assessment Checklist

Monitoring and assessing students' progress in spelling is important to both teacher and student. The teacher will monitor and assess strategies the students consistently use and new strategies students are beginning to use. Based on this information, the teacher will plan for instruction and document progress to report to students, parents, and administrators.

In order to monitor and assess spelling the teacher needs to:

- Know stages of spelling development.
- Know strategies and processes students use.
- Understand the recursive nature of the writing process.
- Observe strategies students use as they write.
- Observe students' growth in independence in spelling in their writing.
- Talk with students about what they do when they do not know how to spell a word.
- Document each student's progress through the following:
    - Use of modified miscue for spelling.
    - Analysis of checklist for student reflection.
    - Analysis of questionnaire about spelling strategies.
    - Maintenance of folder of student writing samples.
    - Record of information gathered about spelling.
    - Provision of format or method for recording spelling development.
    - Evidence of student learning throughout the curriculum in real-life situations.
- Save samples reflecting student development in various stages.
- Provide many varied opportunities for students to write and read.
- Provide opportunities for students to revisit drafts.
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own work.
- Involve and inform parents.

Teacher Self-Assessment: Learning Conditions for Spelling

_____ I surround my students with print used for real purposes.

_____ My students know I value reading and writing.

_____ My students see me read many times daily.

_____ My students see me write many times daily.

_____ I model spelling attempts for my students.

_____ I use dictionaries and other sources to check my spelling attempts.

_____ I expect that my students will write.

_____ I expect my students to develop spelling strategies.

_____ I value my students' attempts at spelling.

_____ I appreciate what my students can already do.

_____ I am interested in content as well as spelling.

_____ I accept temporary spellings unless we are editing.

_____ I model spelling strategies for my students.

_____ I encourage spelling approximations.

_____ I assist my students.

_____ My students choose the words they want to learn to spell.

_____ My students want to write.

_____ My students believe they can write.

_____ I provide the tools for writing.

_____ I provide a place for writing.

_____ I provide time for writing.

_____ My students write for real purposes and audiences providing reasons to learn to spell.

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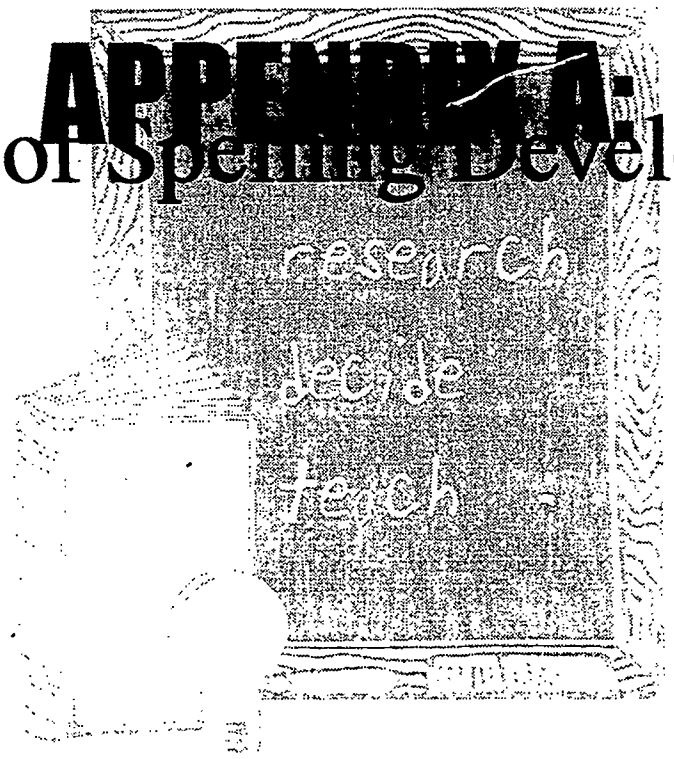
APPENDIX A: Phases of Spelling Development



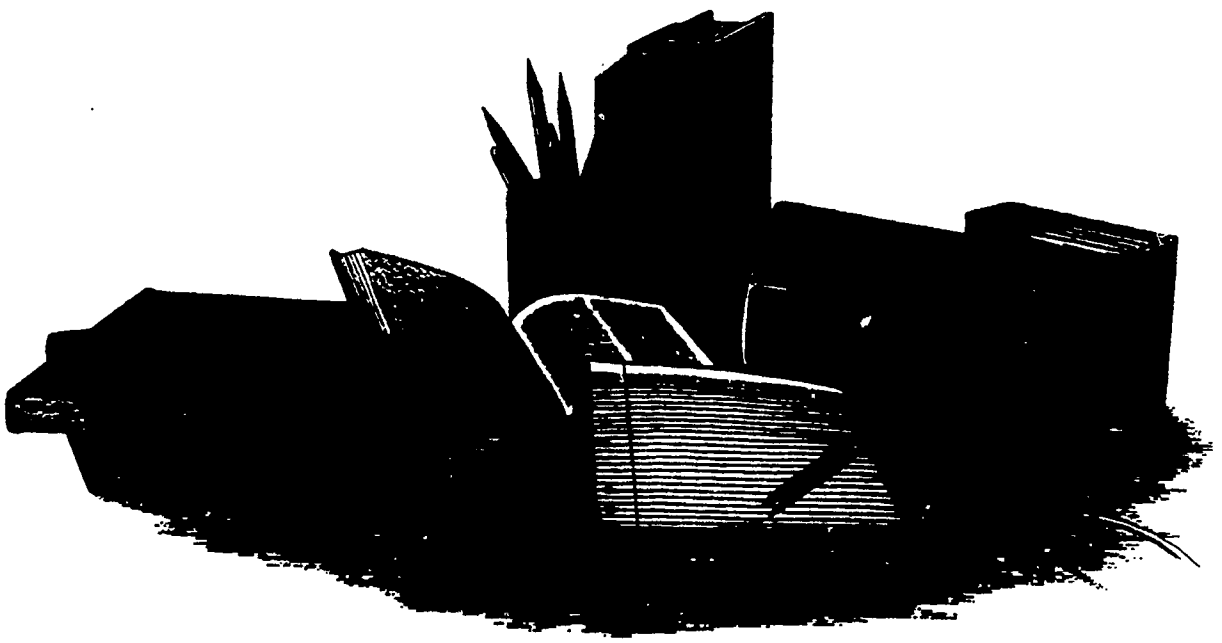
Spelling Development

Spelling is developmental. Most children go through phases as they learn standard spellings. One step in the process is the use of temporary or invented spelling. Temporary spelling results when children generate hypotheses about spelling before they know the full conventional spelling of a word. These temporary spellings allow students to make meaning and not interrupt their thought processes before they know how to actually spell a word. Observing the spelling development in children's writing informs instruction and guides the teacher in knowing how to help the children's progress as writers. Temporary or invented spelling is not the goal but is a phase of development and a strategy used in developing conventional spelling.

Developing writers often use similar patterns of usage in their spelling. Identifying these patterns of growth helps teachers guide students' future experimentation with written language. Temporary spelling is just one of many strategies children and adults use to attempt the spelling of words they are not sure how to spell. Invention is usually based on how words sound. However, spelling is much more complex than that. Children and adults also use visual memory (*Mom, Dad*), meaning (*Latin and Greek roots*), visual and morphemic patterns (*-tion, -ly, -est*), and punctuation as strategies. It is helpful if the teacher and parents keep these phases in mind as benchmarks to document progress. (See Appendix A on pages 59 to 63 for more information.)

The focus of instruction needs to be on teaching children strategies for generating and checking their spelling rather than teaching to particular phases.

> Since learning to spell correctly occurs over time, the emphasis in spelling instruction is on focusing conscious attention on spelling strategies through many varied reading and writing experiences.



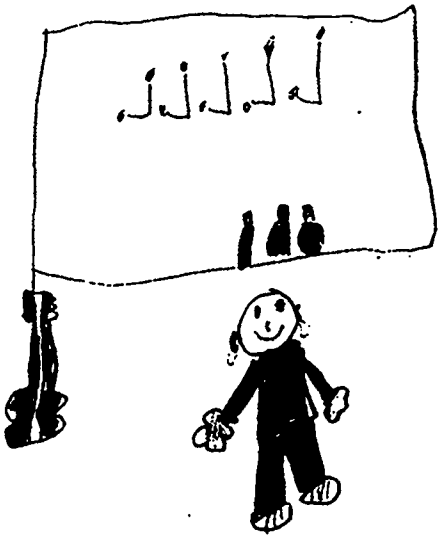
Phases of Spelling Development

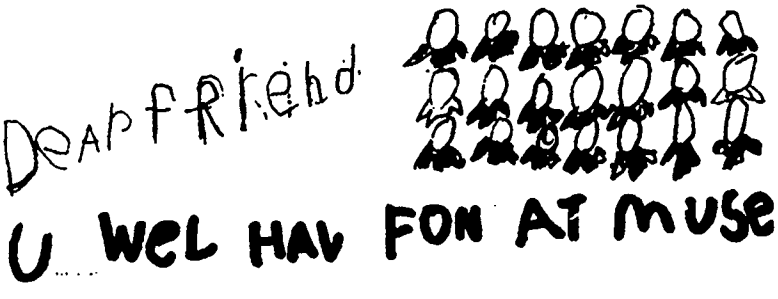
Early Emergent

- Strings letters and numbers together demonstrating some knowledge of the alphabet.
- Possesses no knowledge of letter/sound correspondence.
- May not know left-to-right directionality.
- May include symbols as part of the word.
- Uses upper and lower case letters interchangeably.

Emergent

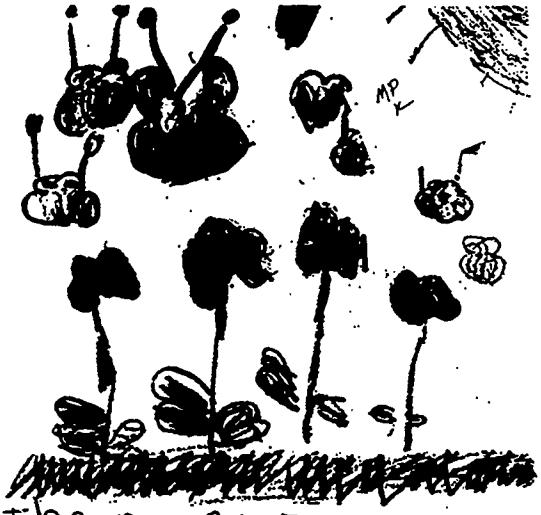
- Begins to use visual memory to spell some words conventionally (e.g., *Mom, Dad, Susan, John*).
- Uses one, two, or three letters to represent a word.
- Begins to use letter-sound correspondences.
- Uses letters to represent words with or without spacing.
- Often begins words with initial consonants.
- Often uses letter-name strategies.
- Begins to grasp left-to-right progression.
- May not be aware of word segmentation.





Developing

- Grasps letter/sound correspondences.
- May represent essential sounds in words.
- May be consistent in writing specific sounds with specific letters.
- May substitute incorrect letters with similar sounds.
- May omit nasal consonants.
- May add an incorrect vowel after a correct vowel.
- May represent past tense in different ways.
- May represent syllable with the letter *r* when the word contains *r* in the syllable.
- Clearly defines word segmentation and separation.



The BOTRFLIS R HALPe

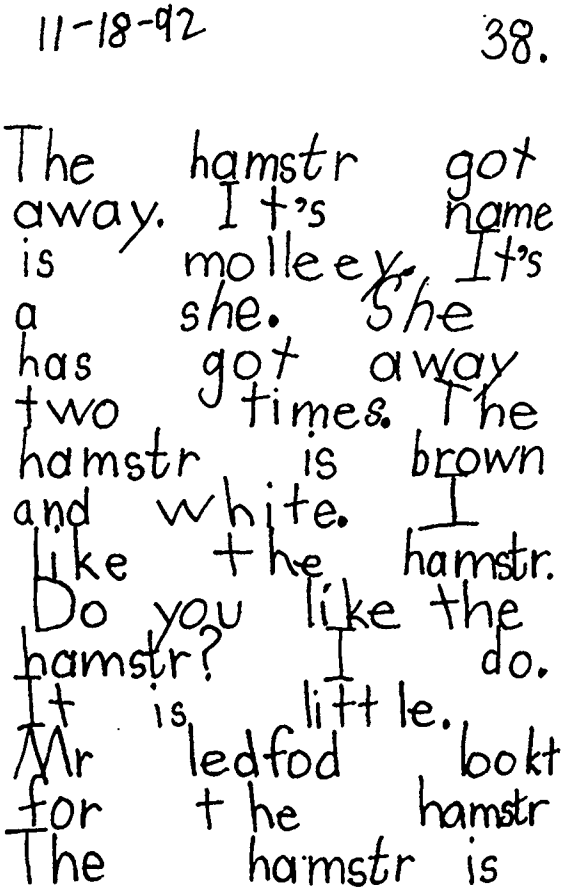
The FLIWRS gRO.

My Kusun APRIL cameto play With me She playd BasBd She Brot HreBoyfrinde Hisname

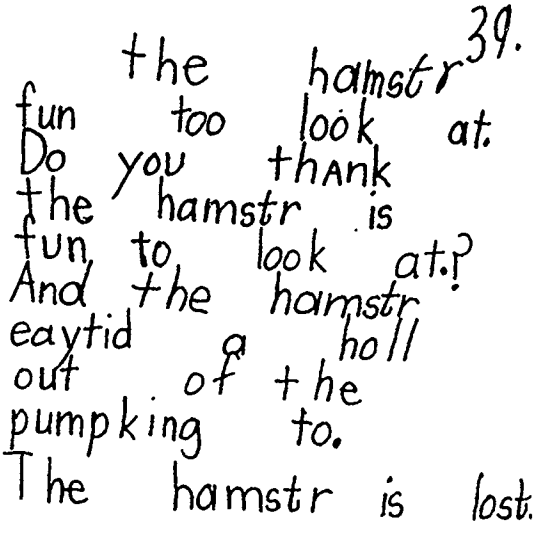
I haev a baby puppy. It is a grl. It socs a botl.

Early Independent

- Uses vowels in every syllable.
- Uses nasals before consonants.
- Inserts vowel before the *r* at the end of the word.
- Adheres to basic conventions of English spellings, (e.g., *eightee* for *eighty)*.
- Uses more conventionally spelled words in writing.
- Spells a greater percentage of words conventionally.
- Attempts to use rules.
- Uses vowel digraphs and consonant blends.
- Spells inflectional endings correctly, (e.g., *-s, -'s, -ing, -est)*.


11-18-92 38.

The hamstr got away. It's name is molleey, It's a she. She has got away two times. The hamstr is brown and white. I like the hamstr. Do you like the hamstr? I do. It is litt le. Mr ledfod bokt for the hamstr The hamstr is


the hamstr 39.
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eaytid a holl
out of the
pumpking to.
The hamstr is lost.

Journal writing

Independent

- Usually occurs around age 8 or 9.
- Demonstrates knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, compound words, and silent consonants.
- Gains knowledge of generalizations and uses them in new situations, (e.g., *-ing, -ed, -er, -est).*
- Masters uncommon spelling patterns in words with irregular spellings.
- Recognizes incorrect spellings and can suggest alternatives.
- Spells large body of words automatically and fluently.

(Adapted from Gentry, 1994; Snowball and Bolton, 1993)

My Fingers 3rd grade

About when I was three years old I was coming out of the grocery store. We went to put the bags in the car. The grocery man was about to close the trunk when I put my fingers in the way! Mom and him gasped but right when it was coming down I moved my fingers! My Mom said that it was my garding angel that moved my fingers away.

Stephen said get some scales that go like this U and put the water in and weigh it. We haven't any scales like this.

we weighed the jar. It weighed 4 pounds and 4 ounces

To find out how much the water weighed we took away the weight of the jar from the weight of the jar and water together.

I said find something that doesn't weigh anything, and put the water in it. We couldn't find something that didn't weigh anything.

Mikael said We know how much the jar and water weigh together 9 pounds and 3 ounces

Grade 3
Learning Log

Miss Branney said If we find out how much the jar weighs ---

APPENDIX B:
Communication Skills Proficiencies Grade-Level Benchmarks in Reading and Writing

Communication Skills Proficiencies Grade Level Benchmarks for Reading

Kindergarten

Kindergarten children realize that print conveys meaning and they try to read and write. They show preferences for particular books and join in to "read" a refrain in predictable books. They naturally memorize some of their favorite books and respond to literature through discussion, art, and drama. They are curious about the print that is all around them and are beginning to find out some of its secrets.

Characteristics of a Reader: Perceives self as a reader and writer.

- Participates and listens during reading situations.
- Joins in to read refrains in predictable books.
- Develops a repertoire of favorite books, poems, rhymes, and songs.
- Chooses books as a free time activity.
- Engages in talk about books and stories.
- Uses book language while pretending to read.
- Demonstrates awareness that print conveys meaning by trying to read.

Reading Strategies: Uses strategies to gain control of print.

- Uses concepts about books such as:
  - Knows the front and back of a book.
  - Turns pages correctly.
- Uses concepts about print such as:
  - Knows left-to-right and top-to-bottom directionality.
  - Points to words one-to-one as teacher reads.
  - Knows concepts of word and letter.
  - Knows where to begin reading.
  - Knows letters of own name and letters from environment.
  - Recognizes own name in print.
- Uses pictures as cues to meaning.

Reading Comprehension: Understands that print conveys meaning.

- Discusses meaning of stories.
- Responds to texts in a variety of ways such as orally, artistically, dramatically, and through other projects.
- Recounts through retelling details, events, and ideas from familiar stories and other literary materials.
- Recounts through retelling concepts and details from informational texts.
- Comments on and reads some environmental print.
- Follows pictorial directions.
- Reads own dictated stories.
- Demonstrates sense of story.
- Pretend reads predictable pattern books.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Writing

Kindergarten

Kindergarten students are becoming aware of the purpose of written language in the environment. They write their own names and use a mixture of drawings, letter strings, and words. Since they perceive themselves as writers, they choose to write as a free-time activity.

Characteristics of the Writer: Perceives self as a writer and reader.

- Shows preferences for particular pieces of individual or group writing.
- Contributes to group stories.
- Chooses to write as a free-time activity.
- Perceives self as a writer.
- Demonstrates understanding that print conveys meaning by trying to write.
- Demonstrates a knowledge of the difference between picture and print.

Composing Process: Uses strategies to gain control of print.

- "Reads," understands, and explains own writing.
- Writes with left to right and top to bottom directionality.
- Uses letters of own name in writing.
- Writes using signs, letters, and other symbols in immediate environment.

Composing Products: Uses print to convey meaning.

- Copies words from signs in immediate environment.
- Writes own name.
- Uses a mixture of drawings and writing to convey and support an idea.
- Retells story or experience using pictures and letter strings.
- Dictates a personal narrative.
- Draws and writes signs, labels, and notes to record observations and ideas.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Reading

Grade 1

First graders want to read, listen to, and talk about a wide range of texts, narrative picture books, poems, short chapter books, and short informational and practical materials. They predict, sequence, and summarize story events. They expect the text to make sense, and if necessary, they make a second attempt and reread. These students take risks when reading and talk about themselves as readers.

Characteristics of the Reader: Exhibits the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a reader.

- Expects the text to make sense.
- Reads books voluntarily and chooses own books for reading.
- Talks about self as a reader.
- Takes risks when reading.
- Uses intonation and expression to indicate comprehension.
- Relates reading to personal experiences before, during, and after reading.

Reading Strategies: Uses one or more of the following strategies as appropriate to construct meaning from text.

- Searches pictures for clues.
- Predicts based on semantic, syntactic and graphophonic cues (the initial letter, final letter, and/or letter clusters).
- Searches, predicts, monitors, and cross-checks using semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues with teacher support and independently.
- Makes a second attempt if word doesn't sound right or make sense.
- Rereads to check predictions and clarify meaning.
- Uses commas, end punctuation, and quotation marks as clues to meaning.
- Sets purposes for reading.

Reading Comprehension: Constructs meaning from literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Reads narrative picture books, poems, short chapter books, and short informational and practical materials.
- Hypothesizes and predicts to infer story events.
- Identifies main idea and relevant details.
- Retells and sequences story events.
- Interprets, classifies, and organizes information from literary, informational, and practical texts.
- Responds to texts through applications and extensions.
- Draws upon prior knowledge.
- Responds personally to stories, poems, informational texts, practical materials, and student-authored text.
- Identifies actions and consequences in familiar stories.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Writing

Grade 1

First graders write to tell about an experience, to tell a story, or to describe using both words and pictures. They use phonetic spelling as a strategy. They know what letters and words are and talk about these terms when they are writing and are growing in their knowledge of standard spelling.

Characteristics of the Writer: Possesses the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a writer.

- Chooses writing for publishing and shares writing voluntarily.
- Responds to writing of others.
- Maintains a list of books read in a reading log.

Composing Process: Uses one or more of the following strategies to write literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Uses vocabulary of print such as *letter, word,* and *question mark.*
- Uses invented spelling (consonants, consonant clusters, and vowels) that can generally be read by others.
- Uses a prewriting activity such as drawing, brainstorming, or storyboarding with teacher support.
- Revises individual or group writing by adding on in response to questions.
- Uses upper and lower case letters appropriately.
- Innovates on a narrative, poem, or informational text.
- Experiments with a variety of sentence patterns.
- Capitalizes proper nouns, the pronoun "I", and the first word in a sentence.
- Writes legibly with recognizable words.
- Uses words from signs and other sources in immediate environment.
- Puts words together in a sentence format and writes multiple sentences on a topic.
- Spells some high frequency words correctly.

Composing Products: Writes literary, information, and practical texts to convey meaning, to learn, and to clarify thinking.

- Writes lists, captions, signs, notes, and letters.
- Writes to tell about an experience, to tell a story, or to describe an object, person, or place.
- Uses words and pictures to convey simple narrative, factual information, and ideas.
- Draws and writes in learning log to record observations and ideas.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Reading

Grade 2

Second graders want to read, listen to, and talk about a wide range of texts including chapter books, information books, and practical materials. These students expect what they read to make sense and absorb language and ideas as they read. At this stage they are skillful and confident in using the cueing systems in concert to make predictions about words and content. They are beginning to read silently for extended periods of time for pleasure and information.

Characteristics of the Reader: Exhibits the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a reader.

- Chooses more than one type of book.
- Shows preference for particular subjects, titles, authors, and/or illustrators.
- Seeks recommendations for books to read.
- Improvises in role play in response to texts.
- Chooses to read when given free choice.
- Reads silently for extended periods.

Reading Strategies: Uses one or more of the following strategies as appropriate to construct meaning from text.

- Continues to predict based on semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues (using increasing knowledge of letter clusters and vowel patterns).
- Searches, predicts, monitors, and cross-checks using semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues independently.
- Experiments to see what makes sense.
- Makes a second attempt if words or phrases do not sound right or make sense.
- Reads on and rereads to check predictions and clarify meaning.
- Uses analogy by identifying a word as being the same or almost the same as a known word.
- Uses chunking by using familiar word parts to identify unknown words.
- Reads and rereads to become an independent reader.

Reading Comprehension: Constructs meaning from literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Reads picture books, chapter books, and informational and practical materials.
- Retells story recalling characters, events, setting, problem, and solution.
- Discusses and expresses opinion on literary, informational, and practical materials.
- Identifies relationships between characters.
- Makes inferences, draws conclusions, and recalls concepts and specific vocabulary from literary, informational, and practical texts.
- Discriminates between reality and fantasy.
- Recognizes cause and effect relationships.
- Appreciates author's humor.
- Confirms and extends predictions.
- Identifies and compares information.
- Identifies narrator of a selection.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Writing

Grade 2

Second grade students write for pleasure, for recording observations and experiences, and for conveying information. They write sentences of their own on one topic, with a clear purpose, with some detail, and with a sense of story. They understand that text can be changed, are beginning to revise and edit, and are using more standard than invented spelling.

Characteristics of the Writer: Possesses the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a writer.

- Chooses to write on more than one topic.
- Chooses to write for pleasure.
- Writes about personal experiences in narrative writing.
- Shows understanding that text can be changed by choosing to revise.

Composing Process: Uses one or more of the following strategies to write literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Uses invented spelling (consonant clusters, vowel patterns, and letter clusters) that can generally be read by others.
- Uses more standard than invented spelling.
- Begins to use word sources to correct invented spelling.
- Checks written work by reading it aloud.
- Uses a prewriting activity such as drawing, brainstorming, webbing, or storyboarding with teacher support and independently.
- Revises by adding beginning, middle, or ending.
- Edits for common capitalization and end punctuation.

Composing Products: Writes literary, informational, and practical texts to convey meaning, to learn, and to clarify thinking.

- Constructs several sentences on one topic in a logical order.
- Shows beginning, middle, and end in narrative writing.
- Uses detail in narrative and informational writing.
- Produces writing and artwork to reflect understanding of text.
- Writes notes, letters, and invitations with awareness of audience.
- Records observations and asks and answers open-ended questions about new information or ideas by writing in learning log.
- Writes in reading log/response journal to record opinions of selections read or viewed.
- Creates characters, settings, and events from experience and immediate environment.
- Produces writing and artwork to reflect personal response.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Reading

Grade 3

Third graders read many types of texts–literary, informational, and practical. They distinguish between fact and opinion and note and chart details. These students interpret poetry and infer main ideas, lessons, or morals in a variety of prose. Students in this grade use a variety of reading strategies to construct meaning from text. They choose to read silently for extended periods of time for pleasure and information.

Characteristics of the Reader: Exhibits the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a reader.

- Recommends materials for others to read.
- Reads materials on a variety of topics.
- Reads for a variety of purposes such as for pleasure, to gain information, or to support an opinion.
- Describes personal reactions to poetry, informational, practical, and narrative texts.
- Perseveres when the task requires reading silently for extended periods of time.

Reading Strategies: Uses one or more of the following strategies as appropriate to construct meaning from text.

- Continues to predict based on semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues (using increasing knowledge of letter clusters, vowel patterns, affixes, and roots).
- Searches, predicts, monitors, and cross-checks using semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues independently.
- Reads on and rereads to check predictions and clarify meaning.
- Uses analogy by identifying a word as being the same or almost the same as a known word.
- Uses chunking by using familiar word parts to identify increasingly complex unknown words.
- Notes unknown words for later study.
- Paraphrases information from text in own words.
- Uses text aids such as headings, bold print, and italics.
- Focuses on details of print only when meaning is lost.

Reading Comprehension: Constructs meaning from literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Reads literary, informational, and practical text.
- Interprets poetry and recognizes stanza and rhyme as characteristics of poetry.
- Infers main idea, lesson, or moral in a variety of prose including fairy tales, tall tales, fables, legends, and myths.
- Compares traits of characters as evidenced in the text.
- Compares and contrasts characters, events, episodes, and/or stories.
- Compares and contrasts poems, informational selections, or other literary selections.
- Distinguishes between fact and opinion.
- Recognizes the author's use of figurative language such as simile or metaphor.
- Supports ideas by reference to evidence presented in texts.
- Summarizes and records information.
- Notes and charts detail.
- Discriminates between cause and effect relationships.
- Understands and interprets maps, charts, diagrams, and other visual representations.
- Compares and contrasts information in printed and visual form.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Writing

Grade 3

Third graders write a variety of poetry and prose and can support their ideas with references to their reading. They use a variety of prewriting activities, revise their writing by adding detail, and recognize incorrect spelling.

Characteristics of the Writer: Possesses the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a writer.

- Shows originality in word choices.
- Uses excitement, humor, suspense, originality in word choice, or some other creative element.
- Creates characters and events from outside personal environment.
- Writes in response to literature, informational, and practical texts.
- Chooses to write for pleasure.
- Begins to write for extended periods of time.
- Incorporates feelings and personal experiences in narrative writing.
- Uses vocabulary, ideas, themes, and structures from books in writing.
- Records what the student knows, wants to know, and has learned by writing in learning log.

Composing Process: Uses one or more of the following strategies to write literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Shows recall of visual patterns by using conventional spelling most of the time.
- Uses punctuation conventionally.
- Assesses own performance in reading by writing in learning log.
- Uses paragraphs to organize information and ideas and maintains the topic focus.
- Uses a prewriting activity such as drawing, brainstorming, webbing, or storyboarding independently.
- Revises by adding detail for elaboration.
- Marks incorrect spelling when editing writing.
- Edits to verify and self-correct spelling.
- Experiments to vary word order in sentences.
- Uses concepts of order and time in writing.
- Critiques books in reading log/response journal by discussing what makes a good book or why a particular author or genre is preferred.

Composing Products: Writes literary, informational, and practical texts to convey meaning, to learn, and to clarify thinking.

- Writes using characters, setting, problem, and solution.
- Explains in writing the main idea, lesson, or moral of a selection when appropriate.
- Writes a variety of poetry and prose including fairy tales and personal narratives.
- Writes practical texts such as news articles, recipes, directions and interviews.
- Writes to support ideas with reference to evidence presented in text.
- Expresses meaning inferred from text.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Reading

Grade 4

Fourth graders continue to read many types of text–literary, informational, and practical pieces. Through reading they can make connections with situations beyond their own experience. In narrative writing they recognize organizational patterns in text and motives of characters. They can make inferences, draw conclusions, and are learning to support their opinions about what they read. Fourth graders are becoming more skillful at following written directions and in reading for information in content area texts, reference materials, and periodicals.

Characteristics of the Reader: Exhibits the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a reader.

- Recognizes reading as a major source of information.
- Describes personal reactions to narratives, biographies, and autobiographies.
- Offers reasons for the feelings provoked by a text.

Reading Strategies: Uses one or more of the following strategies as appropriate to construct meaning from text.

- Interprets new words by reference to suffixes, prefixes, and meaning of word parts.
- Uses strategies of sampling, predicting, confirming, and self-correcting quickly, confidently, and independently.
- Adjusts reading pace to accommodate purpose, style, and difficulty of material.
- Formulates questions and finds relevant information from reading materials.
- Summarizes information from literary and informational materials.
- Checks for accuracy of information by using a variety of sources.
- Uses print and electronic directories such as a table of contents, index, or telephone directories to locate information.
- Selects books and other materials that best suit purpose.
- Questions to assess point of view.
- Organizes and summarizes information by using a technique such as a graphic organizer.

Reading Comprehension: Constructs meaning from literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Reads literary, informational, and practical text.
- Reads materials on a variety of topics beyond personal experiences.
- Recognizes the characteristics of narrative text.
- Recognizes coherence, logic, and organization in narrative text.
- Recognizes relatedness and sufficiency of details in narrative text.
- Discusses motives of characters as evidenced in the text.
- Recognizes simple themes related to personal experience.
- Make inferences and draw conclusions from informational texts and stories beyond personal experiences.
- Follows written instructions.
- Recognizes that authors and illustrators have individual voices and styles.
- Compares oral and written directions.
- Analyzes the structure of an informational selection.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Writing

Grade 4

Fourth graders write narratives, information articles, and practical "how to pieces." They are learning to use more detail, sequence, and description in their narratives. As members of "reading /writing groups" they can give suggestions for revision to each other. They edit their written work for basic sentence formation, usage, mechanics, and spelling.

Characteristics of the Writer: Possesses the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a writer.

- Writes for extended periods of time.
- Selects best pieces of writing and explains reasons for selection.
- Evaluates writing against external criteria.
- Shares own written work with peers.
- Offers reasons for feelings evoked by the writing of others.
- Creates characters, settings, problems, and events from outside personal environment.
- Uses a personal handwriting style that meets most handwriting needs.

Composing Process: Uses one or more of the following strategies to write literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Understands and uses stages in the process of writing with direct teacher support.
- Recognizes errors in own and others' writing.
- Makes comments about and gives suggestions for adding to another's writing.
- Revises by sequencing events and ideas in logical order.
- Experiments to combine sentences.
- *Edits written work for errors in sentence formation, usage, mechanics, and spelling.

Composing Products: Writes literary, informational, and practical texts to convey meaning, to learn, and to clarify thinking.

- Writes using multiple characters and episodes with teacher support.
- Writes literary, information and practical compositions with teacher support.
- Writes on a variety of topics.
- Assesses own growth in reading by writing in learning log/response journal.
- Writes imaginative and personal narratives to develop a logical sequence of events within an overall action.
- Writes imaginative and personal narratives that have a coherent, logical, and organized structure.
- Writes imaginative narratives with sufficient, related detail that revolve around an event and have a resolution.
- Writes personal narratives with sufficient, related detail that recount events experienced, read, or heard about.
- Expresses main idea and supporting detail in descriptive writing.
- Summarizes new information and ideas and discovers points not understood by writing in learning log.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Reading

Grade 5

Fifth graders enjoy literary pieces that are rich in descriptive detail as well as informational and practical texts. They begin to pay more attention to the relatedness and sufficiency of detail, the organization and logic of what they read, and the ways authors support ideas with evidence. They compare pieces they have read and defend their reading preferences. They detect the implied motives of characters as revealed in dialogue and action. They detect literary archetypes such as "heroes" and "villains". They recognize and use appropriate reading strategies according to purpose and type of text.

Characteristics of the Reader: Exhibits the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a reader.

- Reads literary, informational, and practical materials beyond personal experience.
- Reads widely for pleasure, for interest, or for learning.
- Makes comments and expresses feelings about characters beyond own experiences.

Reading Strategies: Uses one or more of the following strategies as appropriate to construct meaning from text.

- Uses print and electronic resource materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and atlases.
- Varies reading strategies according to purposes for reading and the nature of the text.
- Selects relevant passages or phrases to answer questions without necessarily reading the whole text.
- Scans, skims, or reads carefully as appropriate.
- Visualizes rich descriptions in written text.

Reading Comprehension: Constructs meaning from literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Reads literary, informational, and practical text.
- Recognizes the characteristics of descriptive text.
- Recognizes coherence, logic, and organization in descriptive text.
- Recognizes relatedness and sufficiency of details in descriptive text.
- Recognizes the similarities and differences between selections.
- Recognizes the organizational patterns in informational and practical text.
- Discusses implied motives of characters as evidenced in the text.
- Describes the function of dialogue in revealing character traits.
- Recognizes the presence of archetypal characters such as hero, heroine, or villain.
- Recognizes evidence presented in text that supports a recommendation, opinion, or argument.
- Supports recommendation, opinion, or argument by reference to evidence presented in text.
- Compares information from different sources.
- Compares different versions of the same stories from different cultures.
- Discusses author's purpose in a selection.
- Describes links between personal experiences and arguments and ideas in text.

Communication Skills Proficiencies
Grade Level Benchmarks for Writing

Grade 5

Fifth graders learn to include descriptions in their writing that provide sufficient, related detail to provide a reader with an overall impression. They include concrete images in poetry and in prose. They can complete routine forms they encounter as students and consumers and write social correspondence such as informal letters and invitations. They revise their writing for meaning and clarity and pay particular attention to organization and coherence among the paragraphs of the longer pieces they produce. In addition to revising their own written work, they give their peers revision advice as well.

Characteristics of the Writer: Possesses the attitudes, habits, and dispositions of a writer.

- Compares personal experiences with those expressed in a peer's writing.
- Makes comments and expresses ideas about the unique topics and experiences expressed in a peer's writing.

Composing Process: Uses one or more of the following strategies to write literary, informational, and practical texts.

- Selects vocabulary from reading and discussion to use in own writing.
- Consults available sources to improve or enhance writing.
- Revises by refining beginning and ending paragraphs.
- Uses variations of letters, print styles or fonts appropriate to task.
- Uses concrete images and vivid descriptions in writing poetry and prose.

Composing Products: Writes literary, informational, and practical texts to convey meaning, to learn, and to clarify thinking.

- Writes using multiple characters and episodes with teacher support and independently.
- Writes literary, information and practical compositions with teacher support and independently.
- Assesses individual performance on a task by writing in learning log.
- Expresses main idea and uses details in expository (clarification) writing.
- Writes descriptions that provide sufficient, related information to provide an overall impression or view.
- Writes descriptions that have a coherent, logical, and organized structure.
- Completes standard forms requiring personal information.
- Writes formal letters, social letters, and invitations and distinguishes between the purposes for each.
- Questions the significance, application, or relevance of new information or ideas by writing in reading log.
- Reflects about, between, and beyond what is read by writing in reading log.

Notes