

References

Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction. Donald R. Bear (Author), Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, Francine Johnston

Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom. Gay Su Pinnell, Irene C. Fountas, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, Arene C. Fountas



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Words Their Way

Parent Information

“More Than Just a Spelling Program”

Words Their Way is a developmental approach to spelling, phonics, and vocabulary instruction for grades K– 5 . Students examine words by comparing and contrasting and discussing words.

Why "WORD STUDY" instead of a "TRADITIONAL" spelling program?

Research clearly indicates that memorization of lists of "spelling words" does not promote the development of spelling skills.

Principles of Word Sorting

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English spelling is based on patterns, not rules.

Gaining word knowledge is developmental and conceptual, based on detecting similarities and differences in words.

Instruction that takes advantage of the brain's pattern-seeking ability is most likely to support the development of word knowledge.

Because word knowledge is gained developmentally, Vygotsky's theories about the social construction of learning indicate collaborative activities will be beneficial.

Learning is best achieved when it is interesting and engaging.

Word sorting requires students to focus on the specifics of words and to learn how to examine words.

The purpose is to gain word knowledge, not to memorize specific words.

Based on the strong correlations between reading and spelling, word study should facilitate both areas of learning.

The goal is the transfer of knowledge to facilitate becoming a more proficient reader.

Teaching Strategies

In word study, teachers encourage students to compare and contrast features in words. One common method for doing so is by having students sort words. When sorting, students use their word knowledge to separate examples that go together from those that don't. This allows students to make generalizations about words and transfer this knowledge to new words.

Teachers then assess students' pattern knowledge rather than their ability to memorize single words.



3 Layers of Word Study

Alphabet – learning the relationship between letters and sounds

Pattern – learning specific groupings of letters and their sounds

Meaning – learning the meaning of groups of letters such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Vocabulary increases at this layer.

What Can You Do to Help?

- Have your child sort his/her word quickly and tell you the principle
- Hunt for words with the same pattern in their reading, writing and environment
- Practice various sorts your child has learned in class such as blind sort, speed sort, or writing sorts
- Praise your child for successful sorting, stating the spelling principle and applying the patterns in his /her writing and reading.

Words Their Way Language

Sorting – organizing words into groups based on similarities in their patterns or meaning.

Oddballs – words that cannot be grouped into any of the identified categories of a sort. Students should be taught that there are always words that “break the rules” and do not follow the general pattern.

Vowel (represented by V) – one of 6 letters causing the mouth to open when vocalized (a, e, i, o, u, and usually y). A single vowel sound is heard in every syllable of a word.

Consonants (represented by C) – all letters other than the vowels. Consonant sounds are blocked by the lips, tongue, or teeth during articulation.