

February 8, 2014

Spelling Strategies

I currently have a student who tries ridiculously hard on everything she writes. She is motivated and dedicated to practicing her spelling works and to using her best spelling when she writes. Her message is always clear by her use of phonetic spelling. Yet, she is constantly spelling things wrong. We use the Words their Way program, which is very helpful but she stills needs additional spelling intervention. I decided to look into strategies to teach spelling.

When I was elementary school, I remember rewriting my spelling words ten times each or fifteen times when I got one wrong. This seemed to work decently for me but I know I did not consistently receive 100%. I am glad to see this strategy used less frequently than I remember. "Spelling requires much more than rote visual memory" (Troia, 2010, p.270). Students need to have engaging opportunities with their words in order to help solidify understanding. There is a strong correlation between overall language abilities and spelling, but creating meaningful experiences can benefit both.

Students who spell poorly in the intermediate grades tend to struggle with the orthographic conventions and spelling rules (letter sequencing, some letters are never doubled, words do not end in j or v, etc.). These students can benefit from a variety of activities and lessons, which includes:

- Systematic and explicit instruction
 - Emphasize letter patterns
 - Limit the use of words that do not follow the pattern
 - Provide immediate and specific feedback with non-pattern words
- Practice Experiences
 - Multisensory techniques
 - Tactile (words in sand or with clay)
 - Kinesthetic (movements to help form associations)
 - Visual representations
 - Need to promote confidence
 - Not marking down for spelling
 - Provide a word wall or cheat sheet with content words for reference
 - Provide proofreading checklist containing specific words and patterns
 - Speech-to-text technology assistance
 - Be available for spelling support
 - Hold pre-writing meetings, where you discuss the upcoming activity with the learner, write down words that you or the student think might be helpful for the upcoming activity. This way he or she will be ready with the lesson or writing time begins.

I found the last practice experience idea to be very helpful and inspiring. I have tried this scaffolding technique with my student who spells below grade level and although it does not seem to

help her memorize the correct spelling, it is allowing her to spell more correctly in her work, which is boosting her confidence when sharing her work with peers.

When researching spelling strategies, I found all of them to be logical and something that I believe I could have reasoned through on my own. However, I felt like it was a wonderful review of how I can better support my students. I hope you find it to be a beneficial reminder too.

Source:

Troia, G.A. (2010). *Instruction and assessment for struggling writers: evidence-based practices*. New York: Guilford Press.