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## Word Study Promotes the Application of Spelling Skills within Elementary Students' Independent Writing

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HOW DOES A BALANCED LITERACY PROGRAM THAT INCLUDES WORD  
STUDY PROMOTE APPLICATION OF SPELLING SKILLS WITHIN  
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT WRITING?

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Arts in Literacy Education

Hamline University

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To my husband, who has encouraged me every step of this journey and sacrificed date nights and weekends.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

I have been confused about phonics, spelling, and word work. As an elementary student, growing up we only had spelling. This is because I grew up in the 90s when phonics was being deemed unimportant and whole word and basals were the instructional tools teachers were using. I received little to no instruction on phonics, phonemic awareness, or spelling. During my student teaching experience we focused on phonics. Now that I have my own first grade classroom, the expectation is to teach word work. What do all these terms have in common and what are the differences? Why was it so challenging for students to apply their spelling skills in their writing and for others it came almost naturally? Starting this capstone journey my school district was pushing for a new spelling program to replace *Words Their Way* which involved a responsive systematic spelling program through the context of word study. The district was concerned that students were not applying the patterns taught in *Words Their Way* to their actual writing. There was also a lack of education or learning of high-frequency words within the *Words Their Way* curriculum, which we found essential to the success of student writing. The teachers at my school are constantly questioning the application of spelling skills within independent writing during our Professional Learning Communities also referred to as PLC and grade level conversations about the implications of our



students writing if they are not applying their knowledge of words and how they work in PLC and grade level conversations. To try and change this, our school is having seven teachers pilot a new spelling program and which has stemmed the development of my research question. *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills in elementary students' independent writing?*

Teachers need to be deliberate on how they are teaching spelling so that students can access this knowledge and use it independently. This has been a conversation in every school district I have worked for and with many teachers that I have worked with. In my district we have a push for more independent, creative writing, so students need the tools to be authors such as spelling and basic phonics knowledge so that others can read and enjoy their work.

### My Journey

Reading and writing never came easy for me. It is not like my parents did not try. They read to me at night and they bought me books. They also met and discussed progress, successes and concerns with my teachers. However, literacy skills always challenged me. Looking back I remember sitting in my first grade classroom, with my feet bouncing with excitement, as I waited for my name to be called. "Please pick me, please pick me." I whispered as our "special helper" came to the room with her books. "Sarah, you can go today." YES, I loved leaving the class in a small group to go work on my reading. I thought, "I must be so smart that they are teaching me to read with a couple friends, but the rest of the class can't come." Little did I know that the rest of the class already knew how to read. Later I realized that I was being pulled from the mainstream class by a paraprofessional for Title One support. As I reflect back, I never

noticed that they picked the same students to leave the classroom and I never thought about what my other classmates who stayed in the classroom were doing. While I was sitting at the small table with my other classmates finger pointing at words we had memorized as the teacher would give us flashcards for the words we did not know. I thought we were special. Even though I studied those flash cards there would always be new words. The teacher never gave any strategies to help decipher between words or any connections between words that I knew. Memorization was the only strategy I knew, unfortunately, I had to memorize and somehow remember EVERYTHING. This felt impossible.

The experience I had with reading was similar to the struggles with spelling. Each week a new spelling list would come home. The list would usually have a spelling pattern, but nobody explained it to me. In addition these lists always had a couple words that were “rule” breakers that only confused me more. I would memorize and write those words ten times each, hoping that this type of practice would be enough to finally get a sticker for my perfect spelling test. Our teachers would display charts on the wall and every perfect test you would get you would place a sticker on your chart. Some students would fill theirs up quickly, and then there was my chart. It was the one with the fewest and everyone knew it. I was embarrassed of my few stickers. Each week I would barely pass the spelling test. Unfortunately, I never understood that no matter how much I practiced, there were too many difficult words to memorize. This did not seem fair.

Then I made it to fifth grade struggling with reading, but still enjoying school and was still considered a “good” student. I was well-behaved; I tried hard and put forth the efforts needed and the teachers never seemed too worried about me. However, I did

score low on the Iowa Basics (the standardized test of my era), but my parents were told I must have had a bad test day. Yes, I could read, but it was always difficult. Looking back now I recall, in fifth grade we would have to write up summaries of the chapters we read. This was the only writing we had and it was more just answering questions than actually responding to our reading. When I was writing, I had to think explicitly what words to use since I only had a handful I knew how to spell. Turning in one chapter and being really proud of my work only for my teacher to grab their red pen and “fix up” all my spelling mistakes. I even recall a teacher stopping and saying “Come on Sarah, is this supposed to be “enough”? How should you spell that?” I answered “e-n-u-f”, I had no idea how I was suppose to spell that word. I did not comprehend any patterns. This was extremely frustrating for me.

This frustration of spelling continued through high school; however I did read and write some. In upper elementary I found books at home like Goosebumps to read, even though they were not allowed at school. As I got older I read “chick flicks” and I kept a daily journal. My progress within reading and writing at school did not change much until I took an Advanced Placement writing class. I have no idea why I thought this was a good idea. This experience challenged me; however it was the first time in my life that I was asked to write personal narratives. I loved it! I had a chance to share stories of when I was little, and the first time I said “I love you” to my boyfriend, stories that I was confident and comfortable writing. They were stories I chose and important to me. In addition my teacher was supportive. Our class time would include work time and he would spend time conferencing with us individually to expand our ideas. He would help with the editing in a nonthreatening manner. As I recall, he was the first teacher that told

me to write and not think about my spelling. He pushed me to expand and take chances with my vocabulary. Looking back now, I realize this teacher was very effective. First of all, he allowed choice in our writing. In addition he also focused on ideas instead of conventions during the drafting stage. Ultimately, he supported my writing without crushing my spirits. It was not until I reflected on the type of teacher I wanted to be that I realized how many things he was doing right as a teacher and why.

### Mixed Messages in Education.

As I have explained, starting out my educational career I often received mixed messages on spelling, phonics, and word work. During my student teaching I was placed in a first grade classroom where phonics was used as the primary reading strategy. For the most part the instruction concentrated on the sounds the letters made. We used flashcards with each letter and students had to say the sound. We would go around the class or say it chorally EVERYDAY! The crazy thing was that I had NEVER had this instruction myself so I did not know what sounds the short vowels made. I was learning that for the first time as a college graduate. Along with a strong phonics background there was no independent reading and no writing within this classroom. It was impossible to see if their phonics work was being carried over to their reading and writing skills since that was not practiced. While I believed phonics instruction was important to reading and writing; I also felt like there were components of a balanced literacy program missing within this literacy curriculum.

My first teaching position was in a third grade classroom in rural Minnesota. At that time, we used a basal reader and used several worksheet drills on phonics. This curriculum also included a weekly list of words that followed a specific phonics pattern.

I did not spend any time with explicit direct instruction on phonics or the worksheets that were involved and expected third graders to already know most of it. To make matters worse I really had no idea how to teach it. As I recall, there was not much time within the day to practice spelling words. For the most part this was considered homework. In reflection, I now realize I was doing the same thing to my students that I hated my own teachers doing to me. Here is the test, memorize it! This did not feel right, and I knew it.

It was an easy way to assess students each week, however, it lacked purpose and was always the same. My high spellers would get 100% without looking at the test all week.

My low spellers would struggle no matter what. In order to be more effective, I tried to differentiate the instruction by cutting the list in half for those who struggled. I also added two or three words of their choice for my high students, but this type of teaching did not feel authentic. The words they would choose would be outrageous words that they would rarely use like “alligator” or “meteorologist”. The students would even look for new ones in the dictionary and be clueless on what they meant or how to properly pronounce them. This was not meaningful, authentic word work that supported their writing and vocabulary development. I was on the right track for differentiation of tests, but something still was missing.

My first year at my current school teaching first grade I used *Words Their Way* curriculum as our spelling curriculum. There were many parts of this program I loved and that worked well with my students. The way our district used *Words Their Way* was by assessing and dividing students into groups that were differentiated for each spelling pattern that progressed in a linear fashion. They had one day of direct instruction that mainly involved reading the cards and noticing patterns. Then the rest of the week was

on their own practicing these words through writing the words, creating sentences, and sorting cards. They were only tested at the end of that spelling pattern unit, not on the words they practiced all week. As a teacher, the only progress monitoring was the ability to look in their word work journals. However, I still noticing spelling errors in my students writing when they had already practiced that pattern. Unfortunately, my students were struggling applying their knowledge of patterns independently in their writing.

### The Missing Parts.

I do not feel like spelling, phonics, and word work had become clear until the last year even with training through Leveled Literacy Intervention and Lesley University on Fountas and Pinnell's *Words Matter*(1998). I have received training on Words Their Way sorts, making charts with patterns, using magnetic letters, Making Words, and many other LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention) techniques for word study. Through this training, I am finally seeing my struggling students make connections between words. Most of these new tools and techniques that I have been trained on are reinforced in small group guided reading. I am also attempting word work as a whole group through short mini-lessons that are added to our morning meeting time. These are short lessons that practice skills in the eight areas of word study. They are based on the works of Fountas and Pinnell (2003) which includes early literacy concepts, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, letter-sound relationships, word meanings, high-frequency words, spelling patterns, word structure, and word solving actions.

This year I started using these resources after I was sent to Boston for training on Word Work with seven other teachers from our district. This team of teachers,

kindergarten through second grade, has discussed our need for professional development of word study and word work. In the training we thought we were going to practice many different ideas to add into our whole group and small group instruction. However, a collective we were surprised when they taught us about a responsive spelling program for elementary schools. We started the week by deepening our understanding of word study and what it means. Then we dug into many different resources including *Words Their Way* that we currently use in our school as well as Fountas and Pinnell's *Words Matter* (1998) and *Phonics Lessons* (2003). Fortunately, we found that Fountas and Pinnell's *Word Matters* and *Phonics Lessons* included all of the essential parts we were looking for in a spelling program. This included a systematic approach with explicit direct instruction of how words work through whole group and small group settings. In addition the program involves teaching principles that are flexible, instead of linguistic rules that end up being broken. As a whole class, we name a principle and list words that follow it. Then students choose their words based on the list created with high-frequency words and words from their spelling. Next, we practice them over a couple days with magnetic letters, writing them, making connections, and finally engaging in a study buddy test. There is more to this program that I will be describing in Chapter Three, but this training paired with my classroom experience is where my research question has evolved from. *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills in elementary students' independent writing?*

### Summary

Through all of my professional experiences I am finding out what strategies best support students so they are able to truly understand how words work. In Chapter Two, I

will be discussing resources that support what a comprehensive word study program should look like and what components are necessary for emergent writers to develop an awareness of the way words work. First, I will describe the components of a balanced literacy program including word study and how they are connected. Secondly, I will describe in detail how emergent writers learn, the effectiveness of writer's workshop, and effective writing assessments. Last, I will define word study and its part within whole group, word work, and guided practice through writing conferences and interactive writing.

In Chapters Three and Four, I will discuss the program used in my classroom setting and the group of students I will use in my action research. I will also discuss how I will collect data to determine effective strategies to implement in an elementary classroom for word study application. Finally in Chapter Five, I will summarize my findings and also decide on next steps for the future of my class, the district, and my own learning.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

For me one of the hardest parts of writing was remembering how to spell difficult words. As an emergent writer I had a fear of the “red pen” that would mark up my story or writing. I would struggle to sound out words that did not follow a “rule” and without a grounded foundation in phonics; I struggled to get my ideas down on paper. I would get so caught up in what words I could and could not use since I did not know how to spell them, my writing became simplified and boring. As a teacher, I wanted to help students like me unlock the difficult English language so that they can experience fluent, free flowing writing without the worry of correct spelling.

As a result, my teaching journey had led me through different phonics and word study programs. In my seven years of teaching, I had only become more confused about what works best to help readers and writers as I tried to help them apply phonics and spelling skills independently. In these seven years of teaching I had used many strategies, some successful, some not, such as flash cards that centered on sounds, not meaning. I had also used a basal program that had a weekly spelling list paired with workbook pages with very little, if any direct instruction or modeling. As I moved to a new district I was expected to use a pattern-based spelling program that offered me little instruction on supporting students and did not provide students the opportunity to practice during the application of writing. However, the problem remains the same, I taught skills

and then students only applied them during spelling or word work time. Then often got them all right in a spelling test, but then did not spell the same word right within the context of writing.

I am currently part of a small group of primary grade teachers in my school who are exploring Fountas and Pinnell's phonics program *Word Works* (1998). This program included instructional strategies such as patterns, word lists, sorts, manipulating words with magnet letters, and finding connections between using words you know to make new words. My participation in this study group has caused me to wonder: *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students' independent writing?*

In order to fully answer that question I needed to more fully understand the following concepts. First, the different components of balanced literacy and how they are connected with child development and common language throughout. Second, the components of emergent writers through a writer's workshop, this would connect how students applied spelling independently. Lastly, the components of word study within whole group, word work practice and guided practice through interactive writing and writing conferences. Chapter Two will explore these concepts to support the instructional strategies that will be implemented and the contexts used to teach, reinforce and independently apply.

### Balanced Literacy Program for Elementary Students

Introduction. Teachers know the importance of delivering a balanced literacy program in an elementary setting. This type of program allows for multiple aspects of literacy to be applied in many different contexts. A balanced literacy program usually

includes interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, shared writing, interactive writing, independent writing, and word study. These components combined, work together to help students become successful readers and writers.

Equally important, a balanced literacy program can be incorporated into a variety of instructional group sizes including whole group, small group or individual conferences. The contexts of each component of a balanced literacy program are consistent and integrated throughout the day. The success of a balanced literacy program involved a use of consistent language to teach each of the strategies. The prompting cues for decoding are used in guided reading were the same cues that were used in word study and then applied during independent writing. Teachers' use of consistent language is the key for a balanced literacy program to be successful. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2000) solving words involved taking apart words while reading, and spelling words while writing because both used similar strategies to recognize, decode and understand meaning of words. This is how students became word solvers. All of these components must use the same language to teach skills that are applicable in many situations.

This section will describe each of the balanced literacy components. First, the research will describe components that are connected to reading development which include interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading. Then it will describe the components connected to writing, such as interactive writing, shared writing, and independent writing. Finally, it will briefly describe word study. All of the components of balanced literacy are important and crucial for reading and writing development. After discussing each component, the literature review will support the

history of phonics. Finally, putting all of this together the literature review will connect balance literacy components to child development.

Interactive Read Aloud. One component to a balanced literacy program is the interactive read aloud. This allows students to interact and engage with the book as the teacher reads and facilitates discussion. As described by Fountas and Pinnell (2006) interactive read-aloud is a time when “the teacher reads aloud to students, but both the teacher and the students think about, talk about, and respond to the text” (p.216). This causes both teacher and students to be active listeners and participants. This type of read aloud is different than the class engaging in novels which were read after lunch to help relax and calm down students. Interactive read aloud instruction is very intentional. Teachers listen to student responses to see what students notice and what the students needs to be taught. Then students are listening and building on each other’s ideas. Through this the teacher can identify a teaching point that is applicable when students read many other books independently. The work students are doing does not only apply to the single book being read. To summarize, this is how students start to become strategic thinkers as they read with the support of the teacher, and then apply these strategies independently.

In the meantime, an interactive read aloud is the core of whole group teaching of reading. Concepts being taught are comprehension, vocabulary, and a model to become a fluent reader. Before reading an interactive read aloud, the lesson should contain an introduction of the text. Then during the reading the teacher facilitates questions that provoke discussion. After reading, the teacher extends students’ thinking beyond and about the text. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) believe that it is not a luxury to read aloud, but

a necessity for students to be read to everyday and expected to discuss and think about this text. Texts become anchor texts for reading, writing, and word study. Overall, these texts can be used for multiple reasons since students become extremely familiar with them.

Shared Reading. Another part of a balanced literacy program in the primary grades is shared reading. This is similar to an interactive read aloud but has a different purpose and the students share the responsibility for the reading. Fountas & Pinnell (2006) describe that “shared reading refers to young children reading from a common enlarged text, a large-print book, a chart, or a projected text” (p.309). This type of reading practice shows students what it looks like to be a reader. Shared reading teaches print word matching, directionality, and many other important early print concepts.

Along with these early print concepts there are also many elements of comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and fluency. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006) the idea is to replicate the feeling of a bedtime story when you share a book with a parent at home. Sharing a “lapbook” or bedtime story with a parent is something some students are missing when they enter kindergarten.

Unfortunately, there are many readers who lack this guidance and experience with text as young students, and they begin to miss important early print concepts needed to become a successful reader.

Compared to interactive read aloud the structure for shared reading is a little different. This type of reading starts with an introduction to the text, similar to the interactive read aloud. Then the difference is that the teacher models the reading, after which the students join in and reads it together or parts of it. At the end of the reading

the class discusses the meaning and the teacher uses time to teach students about reading a text. This can happen in one day if it is a short text or over a couple days to practice rereading for fluency and accuracy. However, shared reading may not be used everyday like interactive read aloud, but continues to be an important component of a balanced literacy program. Shared reading needs to be intentional and used when students need modeling of a strategy by sharing a text.

Guided Reading. Another aspect of a balanced literacy program is guided reading. Guided reading offers a time when instruction is differentiated and specific to what a small group of students need. Guided reading as described by Fountas & Pinnell (2006) as an “instructional approach in which teachers bring together a small group of students who are similar enough in their reading development that they can be taught together for a period of time” (p.373). These guided reading groups contain students who are alike in their need for certain skills and strategies and also in their reading ability. This means that these students are ready for a similar level of text with their decoding strategies and comprehension. They also may be similar in which strategies they are familiar with and what strategies they need to focus on next. These groups of students are flexible and change when students’ needs change. Students may need to change a group because of speed of growth if they are making faster or slower progress faster than their peers. As described by Fountas and Pinnell (2006) that within these groups, it is important that all the students read the same text at an instructional level, but do so independently in a whisper voice with the teacher prompting when needed. This type of reading is not round robin or choral, allowing for students to work independently on their text. As a teacher plans for this instruction they need to be aware of what the student can

do and what each student needs to become a fluent, critical reader. Teachers can take observation notes where a teacher jots errors and self-corrections informally or running records which allows for teachers to track progress and next steps. As a result this type of instruction becomes very intentional for what individuals need.

The balanced literacy components of guided reading, interactive read aloud, and shared reading all support each other and have similar structures so students can take what they learn in one and apply it in the other structures. Guided reading starts with an introduction of text, specifically thinking about what the readers may struggle with and giving them strategies to use when they get to a word they are unsure of. Then all students whisper read the text to themselves at different speeds so they are all interacting with the text independently. The teacher then gives support when needed and uses their errors as teaching points and prompts for engaging strategies for decoding, fluency, or comprehension. After reading the group has a discussion about the meaning of the text. The lesson ends with a short word work lesson at the group's level which could support word solving strategies that students need. Therefore, allowing for their word work to support their decoding strategies, writing, and word study.

Overall, these components use similar strategies that can be applied in both reading and writing contexts. Fountas and Pinnell (2000) describe strategies that support both reading and writing are many decoding strategies such as saying a word slowly, finding a part you know, using syllables or word structures, and cross checking on what looks right. These are strategies taught to guide students in taking apart a word, as well as putting it back together. Students need to notice these parts and building words to become successful readers and writers. It is through this that reading and writing are

connected allowing teacher's instruction to be connected and similar in teaching and language.

Independent Reading. The next component of a balanced literacy program is independent reading. Independent reading is time for students to apply what they have learned in interactive read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading. According to Gambrell and Morrow (2015) independent reading is different from the “drop everything and read” that was popular in the 90s. Independent reading is supported with mini-lessons on what independent reading looks like for students as young as kindergarten. To begin with it involves students choosing books that are “just right” or in their zone of proximal development to read to themselves or to a partner.

Additional key components to make this time successful include the pre-teaching of routines such as time, student choice, and how to use a library that is full of motivating texts. Boushey and Moser (2014) believe that students need to know what it looks like to be an independent reader and how that should sound like for a successful reader's workshop. After that students should have access to multiple books so that when they finish one, they can start another right away. This can be done through book bins that are filled by students so they always have something new to read. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) think that these book bins should be filled from a library that has some leveled books for easy choices, but also books that are sorted by theme, author, or genre to motivate students to read engaging books that they are interested in. Most importantly students need a consistent time to experience this independent practice of what they are learning about in interactive and shared reading.



Interactive Writing. An important component of writing is interactive writing. Fountas and Pinnell (2000) state that “interactive writing is an instructional context in which a teacher shares a pen-literally and figuratively-with a group of children as they collaboratively compose and construct a written message” (p.4). Interactive writing is important for emergent writers to practice the writing process under the supervision of the teacher. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2000) interactive writing can be done in many different aspects during the day, not just writing time. For instance, students can make a list during calendar time, write a thank you letter, fill out a graph in math, as well as many more ways that can be integrated into other subject times. Interactive writing supports many skills in writing, reading, and word study. Teachers can focus on ideas or content of the writing, the structure and rereading it, and also focus on words or principles that are being taught in word study.

Interactive writing is also engaging for students as they participate and interact with the collaborative writing the class is creating. These writing examples should be hung around the room as reminders of expectations and skills practiced. After the teacher completed a written message the class is asked to reread the message to make sure it sounds right, looks right, and makes sense. This is a vital skill in emergent writers.

Using interactive writing also gives a teacher the opportunity to show the value of writing and its multiple uses. These are an example of the many important aspects on interactive writing and the reason that they should be taught within a balanced literacy program.

Shared Writing. In addition to interactive writing, shared writing is another context in which to teach writing skills and strategies. Unlike interactive writing where

the students and teacher share the pen, shared writing is when the teacher does the writing and the students generate the ideas. To make shared writing successful teachers make sure to use the students' words and not fix them up and make them their own. In other words the teacher becomes the scribe for the students.

Also, like interactive writing, shared writing can be used in multiple parts of a students' day, however Fountas and Pinnell (2000) recommend the use of shared writing during writing when the goal is content and the modeling of new skills. In addition students need to see how the teacher models a new concept in order to attempt it on their own.

Independent Writing. Another aspect of balanced literacy is independent writing, where students work independently on a chosen topic to write about. Calkins (2003) describes this as a time when students build stamina to be able to write for an extended amount of time. This independent writing is part of a writer's workshop where there is a mini-lesson, followed by independent writing along with individual conferences, and then ended with a share so students can make connections between the teaching in the mini-lesson and the application during independent writing.

A mini-lesson is what guides a student's independent writing time. A mini-lesson is a short 5-10 minute lesson with a connection that builds from the former day. The teacher refers to mentor texts, students writing, guided writing, or independent writing to model strategies used in writing. During independent writing time students are given ample time to practice these skills independently. Ray (2001) confirms that "writing is something you do, not something you know. Students' need time to just write so they can gain experiences as writers" (p.25). It is through Ray's (2001) belief that students

should be motivated by the freedom to choose what to write about. It is during this independent writing time that students begin to identify themselves with authors and the process of writing.

Ray (2001) also states that we can do our best teaching when students are engaged in their writing. As students work independently the teacher is conferring with individual students on the story they are working on. It is during conferring that allows for quick formative assessments to see what an individual student is doing and then decide what next steps they need to be successful. The teacher should also compliment the student on skills that they are applying from the mini-lessons that you want them to continue to use. In fact this time with the teacher is also very motivating for students to feel good about their writing, as well as allowing for the opportunity for them to try new writings and techniques with the support for the teacher, giving them confidence in their efforts as an emerging writer.

Finally this time for independent writing should be consistent and contain an extended amount of time. According to Calkins (2003) independent writing should happen every day for an extended amount of time 20-40 minutes depending on grade level and stamina. Students need time to write in order to learn. Again Ray (2001) says “writing is something you do.” In brief, students need time to do this writing.

Word Study. Word study has not always been included when teachers are talking about a balanced literacy program, but research from Heilman (2006) says it is important to include phonics or word study within a balanced literacy program because of its connection to reading and writing success. It is a natural bridge between reading and writing. Williams, Phillips-Birdsong, Hufnagel, Hungler, and Lundstrom (2009) state

that a balanced literacy program must include word study to promote effective reading and writing skills. Phonics or word study has swayed in importance under a balanced literacy program. Literacy programs have progressed past an emphasis on sight words, and basal readers, even “letter of the week” structures and have begun to find a balance which includes word study, hands-on word work activities, and student led discussions on how words work. To sum up, the resources agreed that a balanced literacy program must an effective form of phonics or word study.

Meanwhile how much word study instruction is dependent on what your students’ need and should be integrated within the application of reading and writing. Strickland (2011) supports this by stating “today’s teachers do teach phonics. First, children need to learn that reading is supposed to make sense. Phonics should be taught, as needed within the context of learning to read and write” (p.3). Through this integration of phonics in reading and writing students see the application of word study. Fountas and Pinnell (1999) describe successful direct, systematic phonics instruction which needs to be applied in a variety of literacy components. Some of these literacy components include interactive read aloud, shared reading, shared writing, interactive writing, guided reading, and whole group word study instruction. Furthermore, a balanced literacy program needs to teach students the skills they are developmentally ready for.

History of literacy programs. Gambrell and Morrow (2015) describe the changes in literacy programs and how they have changed in the last 150 years. In those years it seems that the pendulum swings back and forth regarding what educators find essential and important in student learning. This ever changing idea of how best to teach students makes it difficult to stay ahead of the game, but educators are trying to do what is best for

students and most effective. Balanced literacy programs may have changed forms throughout history, although their values stay the same. Provided that this capstone is focused on word study I will also focus on how that has changed within a balanced literacy program.

Strickland (2011) describes the progression of literacy in the United States, first during the beginning of America in late 1700s reading was taught for a single purpose and that was to read a limited amount of religious books and this was limited to only a few people. Then Horace Mann introduced the whole-word method of reading that focused on memorizing the letters, word parts, and whole words. This method was created in hope of supporting student comprehension. During the late 19th century this method was replaced with methodology that emphasized individual sound-letter relationships and how to blend them, with little attention given to comprehension. Unfortunately this balance worried many educators. However, during all of this time teachers continued a focused on a love and understanding of literature.

Then the basal series were developed in the 1930s beginning with “Dick and Jane” series. Strickland (2011) believes that many thought this was a way of “dumbing” down our instruction to prepare students for standardized testing. In addition, Fountas and Pinnell (2013) agree that there is no study that supports the use of workbooks and their effectiveness within basal series. Again Strickland (2011) discusses the changes in literacy as we entered World War I and II the US army was displeased at how many soldiers could not read the instructions. That then brought forth the publication of *Why Johnny Can't Read* which focused again on the importance of phonics and the connection between other reading and writing skills. Teachers decided that these basal programs

lacked the phonics instruction that was needed to support beginning readers. Thus in the 1960s specialized phonics programs were introduced to support the basal.

More recently we have relied on research-based curriculum that endorses plans and teaching methods through influential studies. These research-based programs highlighted the use of best practices which include many of the components listed above in a balanced literacy program such as interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, interactive writing, shared writing, and independent reading and writing. In the 1990s Basal Readers were continued to be published and bought, but more currently educators transitioned to the need for authentic literature, literature which is also culturally responsive. Presently the use of phonics is integrated within the reading and writing curriculum while spelling is taught alongside decoding strategies. There continue to be discussions about whether this is most effective and how students are still struggling with spelling and grammar.

Child development. Child development has become an important issue not only for the fact that when we should start teaching skills, but also how students should learn those spelling skills. In some schools, they are starting as early as preschool children are exposed to literacy experiences which include read aloud, writing, letter formation, and many other beginning literacy skills. The first experience as stated by Fountas and Pinnell (2011) believe that children will engage in reading and writing through play at an early age. In a preschool or kindergarten class students are engaged in activities that feel like play to practice their beginning literacy skills such as phonological awareness, oral language, print concepts, and letter knowledge. Some activities would include using songs and rhyming poems, books to teach phonological awareness, playing or exploring

magnet letters. All learning activities at this early literacy level should feel like play and exploration. While students play they are practicing their language skills through oral language. Fountas and Pinnell (2011) understand that children have a natural tendency to learn language even without direct teaching. They give the example of children learning to talk through experiences and exposure. Yet children do this without any direct teaching, but instead through exploring and listening to their surroundings.

Glazer (1998) believes as students continue through the early elementary grades teachers should seize the moment when students are ready to notice and talk about language and start the discussion of word study. Since students are still young and learn through experiences and hands on activities word study lessons should accommodate that. Teachers use magnet letters, literacy centers, student developed word lists, in order to create curiosity an interest in sounds of language. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2011) describe our goal is to teach more than just content, we want to teach a “learning how to learn.” They believe this “learning how to learn” should be a goal in every part of our day, and in literacy and word study it should be creating students that notice. When students notice commonalities within words and how they work. They notice patterns and principles that explain how words work. For instance by creating noticing students, we are creating independent thinkers, not memorizers.

As a result there are many theories that describe early child development, but there are two theories that describe how students learn and how they remember it.

Accordingly these theories are the Schema theory and the Psycholinguistic Theory. Morrow and Tracey states that it was Bartlett (1963) that was credited the term for the Schema Theory. This theory states that it is when people organize information into

common structures. An important aspect of Schema is that everyone's Schema is individualized depending on how much prior knowledge they contain and that these schemas are expandable. This suggests that students learn by making connections to what they already know. Finally teachers are starting to realize the importance of activating prior knowledge that they are incorporating before asking students to apply reading strategies through turn and talks, webbing, mapping, anticipation guides and making connections between patterns in words.

Another theory explained by Morrow and Tracey (2012) that supports child development is the Psycholinguistic Theory. Morrow and Tracey state Psycholinguistic Theory is when readers use their knowledge about words and language in order to read through a system on cues. The most cited cueing system involves Syntactic cues related to grammar, Semantic cues related to the meaning of words, and Graphophonic cues are related to the visual patterns of the word. This supports the idea of creating strategic readers and problem solvers. Readers use all of the cues to decode unknown words. To sum up, through this process of breaking apart a word, students can problem solve a word instead of memorizing it.

In summary, balanced literacy contains many aspects to support child development. These aspects include interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, interactive writing, shared writing, independent writing, and word study. Even though word study has changed throughout history it has remained a valuable part of balanced literacy in order for students to be successful in reading and writing. Especially, keeping in mind child development and how child learn, store information, and make connections.



### Emergent Writers

Ray (2011) describes the beginning stages of writing as emergent writers. Their writing may not look like words, but teachers are able to see past what a child cannot do and notice what they are attempting through their beginning markings. As teachers we observe what a student can do and teach next steps within their ability. Our goal is for young students to see themselves as writers and authors. Ray (2001) states that we need to create writers for the purpose of doing powerful things to improve our world. This is a big task for five and six year olds to master. Consequently with the support of their teacher children are capable of beginning writing at an early age.

In this section I will begin by describing early writing child development and what is appropriate for spelling at this stage. Next I will describe the writer's workshop model and how whole group instruction, guided practice, and independent application fit into the strategies that need to be taught in order to be a successful writer. Finally, I will end the section with the discussion of assessment and its role in teaching writing.

Early development. One of the first stages of elementary writing contains inventive spelling. This is when a child uses their knowledge of letter-sound relationship to attempt writing. Craig (2006) believes writing instruction that includes invented spelling will help develop phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge in early readers. Inventive spelling shows teachers a lot about what our students are capable of such as, the ability to use the sounds and patterns they are familiar with in their writing and then determine what next steps should be. An example is that student may only write a few letters, but after looking closely a teacher realizes that they are recording the beginning sounds to the words they want to say. The teacher's next step might guide

them in adding the ending sound to those words. In like manner students can be guided to the next step of their writing by their teachers.

It is within a writer's workshop as defined by Ray (2001) that students are able to engage in differentiated writing instruction. It is through conferring that these emergent writers can establish a routine such as writer's workshop that allows them to engage in authentic writing and the writing process. Lucy Calkins (2003) agrees "we want to teach all children that the writing workshop is an opportunity to make and convey meaning" (p. 1). This is important that students understand that their message will be read by others and it is meaningful and important, not just a prompt or job to check off their list of things to do.

Now as students continue to gain stamina and are engaged in the routines of writers' workshop, students continue to have barriers that make it hard for them to write successfully. Strickland (2011) believes that young writers find that correct spelling is one of the most challenging parts of writing. Too many students spend too much of their time stuck on a word they are unsure of how to spell. Joshi, Treiman, Carreker, and Moats (2008) agree with Strickland by stating "good spelling is critical for literacy, and it makes writing much easier-allowing the writer to focus on the ideas to be conveyed, not the letters needed to put those ideas on paper" (p. 6). It may seem easier to give students the correct spelling so they can just move on, but by doing so we are not creating independence within their writing. As teachers we need to model strategies students can use to attempt spelling of new words. Furthermore these strategies should be taught in word study.

Strategies and guided practice. Writer's workshop contains a couple parts which include whole group mini-lessons where direct instruction is taught, independent writing time where these strategies are applied and a group share at the end where students can see their success and others to celebrate their growth in writing. Calkins (2003) believes that the writer's workshop should start out at the beginning of the year even in kindergarten. Children are capable of writing independently even if they can't read what they write yet. Craig (2006) agrees with research which suggests that word strategies emerge in writing before reading. This is one reason why independent writing is so important. Students are applying their knowledge of words, letters, and stories at their own pace. In fact, as teachers we observe their writing habits and this form of assessment shows us developmentally what a child is capable of.

In comparison to independent writing, students need time to practice these strategies with the support of a teacher. This can be done during a mini-lesson, conferences, or a guided writing group. Williams and Lundstrom (2007) believe students need time for guided practice with the skills taught in word study and writing. This can also be done through interactive writing. This allows for a student to attempt to apply a strategy with the support of the teacher. This collaborative writing allows for teachers to fill in the information, and writing strategies that a student may not know yet. It is important for children to have guided practice either whole group, small group, or individually so they realize what the application looks and feels like. Craig (2006) states "interactive writing provided a meaningful context for letter-sound instruction not only during writing but also after it" (p. 719). Also this connection that students can make in interactive writing supports their independent writing, reading, and spelling. Finally this

“shared pen” model needs to be incorporated within a primary classroom for students to become independent writers.

Equally important to independent writing and guided practice through interactive writing, another important aspect of the writer’s workshop is the mini-lesson where teachers provide students with direct instruction of strategies. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) state beginning readers need explicit instruction and practice on word parts, letter sounds, high-frequency words within their independent reading and writing. It is important for students to hear consistent language and witness the modeling of these strategies. By modeling these strategies students see and understand what is expected of them to do as writers and readers. In short, along with modeling students need time to discuss their thinking and verbally practice these strategies safely within a whole group.

Assessment. Within writer’s workshop there are many components to assess and plan for next steps. Using a student’s independent writing you can assess most writing and spelling skills, such as ideas, craft, development, and spelling. Using a student’s writing you will find an authentic attempt at spelling. This shows their development within application of their independent writing and will give the teacher information on next steps. Strickland (2011) believes children’s spelling should not be evaluated as right or wrong, but looked at to determine where they are in the spelling continuum. As students learn more about words they apply more within their spelling. Finally this becomes apparent in their independent writing.

Assessment and planning is not as easy as just moving through lessons in order and teaching the same thing every year and then giving the assessment at the end of a unit. Clay (2010) describes that assessments need to be viewed as an intentional way to

gather information about each student and what that student needs to move to the next level. In order to observe in this manner, teachers need to be alerted as what to look for.

Clay (2010) further states “to become observers of the early stages of literacy learning teachers will have to give up looking for a single, short assessment test for the acquisition stages of reading and writing” (p.10). We need to think about assessment differently and it might seem a little messy, but will pay off in the end. Fortunately as a result of this careful observation students will be getting what they need directly which is not possible through a short yes or no quiz.

At the same time assessments like this cannot be just giving students a “test” that does not match what they are doing independently within the classroom. According to Gambrell and Morrow (2015) assessments should be authentic literacy opportunities within the classroom, not just made up tasks specifically created for assessment. So the best type of assessment for writing would be to use student’s independent writing that they are working on in writer’s workshop. By looking through multiple pieces of work you can assess ideas, content, voice, conventions, and anything else you may find on a writing rubric. This is looking at work that is meaningful and teachers are truly able to see what students are applying. These writings should also be used for assessing spelling and phonics because it will show us what students are applying from a spelling test and word study.

In summary, a writer’s workshop model support child development at any stage. A writer’s workshop contains whole group instruction followed by guided practice and modeling of strategies that are flexible and cohesive in both reading and writing. Then students are given application time with independent writing which includes support from

the teacher through one-on-one writing conferences. Finally, I discussed the connection between authentic assessments that guide instruction.

### Word Study Overview

Word study is more than just spelling, phonics or vocabulary, it is teaching strategies to students that will make them notice words and how they work. Word study provides essential strategies for students to apply when writing independently so that others can read and understand the message they are conveying. Glazer (1998) states “word study combines spelling and meaning” (p.61). This is important for students so that they can rely on thinking through how a word works than having to memorize the spelling for many English words that do not follow a “rule”. According to Griffith and Mesmer (2005) there are three key factors to an effective phonics instruction which includes teacher-student interaction, students need to be actively engaged at an individual level, and the use of strategies which involve accountability and involvement by the students. These key components of word study fit into whole group lessons by involving student-teacher interactions, word work that is at an individual level, and making connections of accountability and application during their independent writing.

The first important aspect of word study is whole group instruction. Whole group instruction involves teaching, exploring and modeling strategies so that the whole class can experience these strategies even if developmentally they are working at a different level of word work. Williams, Phillips-Birdsong, Hufnagel, Hungler, and Lundstrom (2009) describe these whole group lessons on word study as lessons on how words work so that students can apply these skills independently. These lessons should be targeted at skills that most of the students need and can be stretched to other levels of word study in

the classroom. During whole group discussions students are thinking about everything they know about words and applying it as they build word list and participate in whole group practice and discovery. The strategies students use in word study, should relate to strategies students use in their reading, such as finding a part they know in a word, say the beginning sound of that word, or saying a word slowly. These prompts are used in reading to decode a word as well as in spelling when students are attempting to write an unknown word. Fountas and Pinnell (2009) believe that keeping these prompts consistent allows the students to make connections between words. In summary, connections are how the brain stores information. As students are exposed to new strategies whole group, it is through scaffold practice that they are expected to apply new learning more independently. It is through word work that students have a chance to utilize their new strategies and concepts to demonstrate independence.

Another important aspect to word study is word work. Word work is the application and practice of skills used independently in word study. Strickland (2011) believes successful word work involves differentiation as well as, hands-on, and engaging activities. Strickland (2011) states “active learning is a key to achieving competence in reading and writing” (p.17). Active learning in word study includes an inquiry based study of the way words work, active engaging independent work that can include hands on manipulation of words and word parts, and also social interactions with classmates when thinking and discovering words. These types of strategies, honing in on student engagement, manipulation to understand and learn words, and interactive learning with peers can be done through individualized word work.

Finally, there is a connection students make between the skills learned in whole group word study lessons, then practiced in individualized word work, and now applied in their independent writing. One way for students to learn to apply word study skills in their writing is by using consistent language when prompting or cueing students during their phonics instruction, word study and writing. Fountas and Pinnell (1998) support that students need to make the connection that how they decode a word during reading can be used to spell a word during their independent writing. This explains how consistent language can reinforce skills during guided reading and writing conferences which will bridge the connection between reading and writing further in the next section. Fountas and Pinnell (1998) believe the instructional strategy needed to practice application is interactive writing. This is the guided practice that students need to apply their word solving strategies with the support of the teacher.

In conclusion, in order to have a successful word study program teachers need to have explicit whole group instruction, hands on, differentiated word work, guided application through conferencing and interactive writing, and a thoughtful program that displays all of these components.

Whole group strategies. Griffith and Mesmer (2005) agree the three key factors to an effective phonics instruction include teacher-student interaction, students need to be actively engaged at an individual level, and the strategies involve accountability and involvement. Whole group word study as described by Fountas and Pinnell (1998) involves all students at a designated meeting place for a short 5-10 minute lesson on the study of words. Students gather close so that they can be involved in the conversation and learning, which is focused around the principle they are practicing. They turn and



talk with a partner so they can discuss their thinking. Through the whole group lesson the teacher guides a discussion around the discovery of a principle within word study.

Williams, Phillips-Birdsong, Hufnagel, Hungler, and Lundstrom (2009) describe word study as lessons on how words work so that students can apply these skills independently.

Some activities used within this research include first students generate word lists that are differentiated with words they are working on, then progress through inquiry word sorts, and finally solidifying their learning with making connections between known and unknown words.

Fountas and Pinnell (1998) describe student generated word lists as the core to whole group word study instruction. These word lists consist of a principle that students are learning about. For example, “Sometimes words have two letters that make one sound, like -sh”. Then a teacher models a couple words by making connections to words they are familiar with which use this principle, like “she”. The students engage with each other, as partners or whole group, to come up with many other words which contain that pattern. The teacher acts as a scribe, writing all answers given onto an anchor chart. This chart will be displayed in the classroom for the teacher and students to refer while promoting independence. Dahl (2001) agrees with this concept by stating “children’s inquiry about words may be inspired by their classroom surroundings as they create, add to, refer to, and study the words on display throughout the room” (p.65). Glazer (1998) then adds to the charts by allowing students to state a word that does not contain the pattern like “chef”, but sounds like it should. The teacher will then utilize a separate box in the corner to put the words that “break the rule” so students can still see them and practice them. With students varying in levels, words will become differentiated by

nature. Some students will use short words like “ship” while others will think about patterns being in longer more difficult words like “shouted” which contains a vowel combination and ending. Tracey and Morrow (2012) agree that students should use these varying levels in words so that all students are able to participate and there are words within their zone of development to concentrate on. In conclusion, by making student developed, pattern-based anchor charts students are using what they know about words and through some inquiry begin making connections with new words.

Another whole group strategy is word sorts. Now that there are student generated lists, students can participate in inquiry to sort these words into common groups. Morrow (1999) states inquiry learning is a problem-based approach which can be motivating to students. Examples of different sorts could include number of syllables, vowels, or where the pattern is located (beginning of the word, middle, or end), as well as many other ways of sorting discovered by the students. Fountas and Pinnell (2009) state that “sorting is an engaging activity that helps students look closely at features of letters or words and make connection between them” (p.243). These sorts will help students develop connections between words. Along with sorts the resource *Words Matter* by Fountas and Pinnell (1998) give many other whole group games and activities to practice word patterns. These activities follow Williams and Lundstrom (2007) belief for students to not only remember how to spell words but to understand the way English words work.

Another whole group strategy is having students participate in making connections between these new words and words they already know. Teachers can use the resource found in Appendix C to help students record their individual connections or as a class. This resource is based on Fountas and Pinnell (1998) which incorporates

strategies like finding connections which involve students looking for similar parts and sounds that words may have in common. It could involve practices of phonemic awareness by changing a beginning or ending sound to make a new word. These connections also help the brain store new information as suggested by the schema theory mentioned earlier in this chapter. This is important for students to transfer new learning from short term to their long term memory so it can be easily used when working independently.

As stated before it is important to teach whole group word study so that students have access and experiences “at grade level” material and then differentiate their learning to make it meaningful for individual learning. These whole group lessons teach strategies, not just skills that can only be applied once in awhile. Balanced literacy, as stated before, consists of whole group lessons, which contain student generated word lists, inquiry based word sorts, and making connections between known and unknown words. These whole group activities should be hands-on, student led, and inquiry based to provide students with the best learning environment. Whole group lessons are the core and backbone to a successful word study program. These lessons are needed for differentiating, word work, and guided application. Now that whole group lessons give the teaching point and strategy students need to practice I will discuss ways in which they can practice these strategies using independent word work.

Independent word work. Word work is an independent time for students to practice the strategies out of context of reading or writing. Word work should be hands-on, engaging, differentiated, and student led. Fountas and Pinnell (1998) state that some

ideas discussed for word work are setting up differentiated word lists, activities such as magnet letters, writing, or sorting.

The beginning of successful word work is creating student lists of words that students should be practicing. This can first be done by the teacher and then as students become more independent students can choose their own words based on word charts, high-frequency words, and words from their writing. These can be created by word walls or taken from the whole group lessons. In the curriculum *Word Matters* by Fountas and Pinnell (1998), students choose their own list of words to practice throughout the week with some guidance from their teacher. These words include high-frequency words that students need to practice, words that follow the weekly principle, and words students are consistently misspelling in their writing. Once students choose words to practice for the week they need to keep them in an easy access spot like a group pocket chart or phonics notebook. These individualized lists which allow for students' word work to be differentiated from their classmates.

Next are hands-on activities chosen to practice their individual word lists. Some activities suggested by Fountas and Pinnell (1998) are using magnet letters to create words, manipulate and change words. Williams, Phillips-Birdsong, Hufnagel, Hungler, and Lundstrom (2009) support the use of magnet letters and word study notebooks as useful tools to practice word work. Students do this with their word card and practice making and breaking apart words. Another activity used is "Look, Say, Write" found within Appendix C and a folder to help students practice writing without looking at the word. Last activity indicated from Fountas and Pinnell (1998) is assisting students in making connections between their new words and words they already know, recording

other words that look and sound like the word they are practicing, this can also be found in Appendix C. Besides activities as suggested from Fountas and Pinnell *Word Matters* where students can practice manipulating their words and others on the charts around the classroom using markers or crayons, stamps, beads or other multimodal activities.

As students engage in these hands-on activities, it is not forgotten that all word work activities should consist of activities that connect to the whole group lessons. These lessons may support the weekly principle or may be review of other phonics lessons.

They should be practiced as a whole group and then allowed to explore independently during word work. Strickland (2011) evaluates the use of multilevel activities which are open-ended activities that provide differentiation within lessons allowing students the flexibility to go above and beyond a particular lesson. A resource that supports these whole group lessons are *Phonics Lessons: Letters, Words and how they work* by Fountas and Pinnell (1998). Within this resource are lessons which contain consistent language in their teaching points for guided reading, writing conferences, and word study principles.

To conclude word work has been determined as important for students to practice strategies that are taught whole group. These activities are independent, hands on, and multimodal. They support the work of a teacher in teaching whole group lessons and will help build a bridge from skills practiced in word work to guided practice in interactive writing and conferring during independent writing.

Guided practice of word study strategies. Now that each student has experienced whole group lessons which teach a mini-lesson and offer opportunities to practice strategies during independent word work. Students need a safe place to attempt these strategies with the teacher's support, which is called guided practice. Williams and

Lundstrom (2007) state “when students recognize the relationship between instructional activities, they are more likely to apply the knowledge and skills they learned in one context to the other” (p.210). Even though there are many different guided practice techniques I will discuss three different areas where teachers can use guided reading, writing conferences, and interactive writing to gradually release the demands of spelling in their independent writing. First, teachers can use a small amount of time during guided reading to support skills at a specific developmental level. This time would be spent making the connection between word study and reading while using consistent language and structures. Then teachers can also use guided practice when conferring with students on their individual writing. Noticing when a writer uses a strategy and supporting writing when there is a misunderstanding, by modeling the strategy in their writing. Last a teacher can support guided practice during a structure of balanced literacy called interactive writing. Fountas and Pinnell (2000) recommend that a teacher should be strategic when planning for this writing by having students that need practice being the chosen to participate in the use of that skill for practice. These three structures for guided practice connect word study to authentic reading and writing. Allington (2013) believes that during this guided practice time teachers need to teach several approaches because no single approach works for every child, all the time. Therefore I will describe in more detail how these strategies work and how effective they are for student learning.

To begin with teachers can use guided reading time to support individuals as they decode words being explored during word study and word work. Clay (2010) states “reading seems to help writing and writing seems to help reading, especially in the first year of literacy instruction“(p.102). During this time teacher and student can have a

conversation about how words work and practice this within word work. An example during word study might include a lesson on the principle of digraph sound “-sh” which can be integrated into their guided reading using a prompt “Find a part you know” or “You know this part -sh”. Prompting is supported by Fountas and Pinnell (2006) which is being consistent with language used during the whole group lessons of word study.

Then if needed the group could use interactive writing to make a list of “sh” words found in the books or use independent writing to practice a dictated sentence containing words with that pattern. Ultimately these skills are practiced and prompted while students are reading.

Next teachers can use individual writing conferences during independent writing time to concentrate on word patterns they should know. A classroom with individual writing conferences in place would happen within writer’s workshop model to support this individualized time. A writer’s workshop as described by Calkins (2003) contains three parts, a mini-lesson, individual writing time where the teacher is free to work with groups of students or individual conference, and then a share at the end of the workshop to bring closure and reinforce the mini-lesson. A teacher could use the mini-lesson to review the use of word study strategies and remind students to refer to anchor charts. It is during individual conferences that instruction and reinforcement of word study will be most beneficial. Using individual conferring would benefit students because it is very individualized and students can practice using strategies with guidance and support from their teacher. According to Calkins (2003) in order to make this time effective have a student read a part of their story and decide what would benefit their writing the most, most of the time it will not be spelling, but keep an eye open for concepts that may

connect. Then give the student a specific compliment on their writing, for example if you notice them using a pattern consistently you can point that out. Then look for something to teach the student, this is where a teacher would look for writing or word study content that the individual child is missing that could help their writing. For example, if they are misusing a part of a word that we have practiced point it out and then model how the student could refer to an anchor chart to help. Then prompt students to use these charts as they write so they make the connection that this is not a onetime skill, but a strategy that can be used in multiple contexts. This time can be so valuable to the student. Use it effectively will benefit your students' independence and learning.

The last strategy discussed is interactive writing which promotes the gradual release of responsibility related to word study skills. Interactive writing can be used in many different parts of the day such as morning meeting, word study, writing mini-lessons, guided reading, making charts in math or science, and more; the ideas for integration are endless. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2000) students need the time to apply these word study strategies during authentic writing experiences such as interactive writing. They further state that these experiences should fit into your classroom, instead of setting aside extra time called "interactive writing". Interactive writing should be a short lesson concentrating only on things students need to learn. At the beginning of first grade you may have students practice letter formation or high-frequency words, but as the year progresses so do their skills. In the middle of the year the teacher will look for patterns or convention skills that students need to practice and then concentrate on that. This time should be concentrated on the needs of the class as a whole, but also be flexible for individual students who are still struggling with a word



study concept to practice. An example might be a student who is still struggling with the “th” blend, this could be highlighted as we write, and when the word “things” comes up within our writing. A teacher would call on a student to come up to the board and have the student refer to the anchor chart to find the word “things” and then write it down.

This opportunity where students can see how all of these strategies fit into our independent writing cohesively.

To conclude, it is essential for students to have time to practice skills with the support of the teacher. Bromley (2007) states “word learning is a complicated process. It requires giving students a variety of opportunities to connect new words to related words, analyze word structure, understand multiple meanings, and use words actively in authentic ways” (p.536). It is making the connection between practice and applying. The three strategies discussed to do this included guided reading, individual writing conferences, and interactive writing. These three structures give support to students who attempt skills, reinforcement, and participate in the application.

### Conclusion

As a result of this research, I have found that a balanced literacy program must include word study, emergent writers need support practicing skills independently, and also word study has many important components. First, a balanced literacy program must include word study along with other components that include interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, interactive writing, shared writing, and independent writing. The history of these programs has changed throughout the years including word study; its importance has become more relevant and necessary in helping young learners to feel success. Second, emergent writers need time, consistency,

and multiple contexts to practice, such as, shared, interactive, and independent writing.

One of the biggest issues holding emergent writers back is that they spend too much time thinking about spelling and conventions. We want to ease that burden to free up their thinking and stamina. The components of word study must include whole group direct instruction that models many different strategies to create strategic thinkers and not memorizers. Word study must also include guided practice within guided reading, writing conferences or interactive writing. Finally, word study must include time for application that is differentiated and hands-on through word work.

To conclude, it has been discovered that these important concepts of a balanced literacy program, emergent writers, and word study are connected to promote independent readers and writers in support of my question, *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students' independent writing?*

In the Chapter three, I will discuss word study strategies more extensively. I will also describe my methods on teaching, collecting, and analysis data through assessments and informal notes. In chapter four, I will discuss the results of this data. Ending with chapter five where I state next steps which include professional development for our staff next year and also individual plans.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### Introduction

In chapter one, I shared my teaching journey through memorization, flashcards, basal series, a pattern-based curriculum, and most currently the implementation of word study based on Fountas and Pinnell's *Words Matter* (2001). It was during my personal journey as a student and later as a teacher that it was unclear what was most effective for word study to promote spelling in emergent writers. It has only made phonics and spelling instruction more confusing when identifying what were the best practices in teaching these skills within application of independent writing. Chapter two discussed the articles and resources collected on components of a balanced literacy program and word study's importance, in the development of emergent writers and readers and the components of a successful word study instruction.

Upon reflection, I have incorporated all of the aspects of a successful balanced literacy plan to the action research project. To be sure students were receiving individual instruction tailored to students' specific needs. I had incorporated a workshop model. It was through this model that emergent writers felt successful and had built their stamina for writing. In my implementation and research I further explored why this workshop model had been successful for the students.

Further as I reflected there still remained one area within my balanced literacy approach in which I was still not fully satisfied with, word study. In the past, I had been

able to teach one component of word study which was word work through guided reading, but have found it difficult to use our district's current resources for whole group instruction effectively. Through this research I attempted to form a better understanding of word study and the instructional strategies that were most effective when applying these word patterns to emergent writers. My plan for my action research was guided by this question, *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students independent writing?*

This question was investigated by the implementation of a well-researched word study program *Word Matters*. After receiving training for word study in Boston by Fountas and Pinnell during this past summer. I participated in a team of like-minded teachers who were driven to help emergent writers succeed, and who also received training in Boston. This group of fellow teachers also implemented this program and collected data on whether it was appropriate for our students. For this reason, the program was implemented while data was collected and participated in monthly meetings with our group to discuss issues, successes, and next steps for our school and district.

This program matched the instruction within our reading and writing which was also guided by principles of Fountas and Pinnell. At the same time this program used assessment to guide instruction and was not a preplanned, day to day, lesson plan.

Teachers understood that they needed to look at data to decide what the students needed and taught students strategies, making instruction more meaningful for the students as individual learners, but also required more discipline for educators to track and monitor diligently their progress.

The methods that were used to decide success were assessments for data collection, implementation of curriculum, and notes from our team meetings.

Assessments used for data collection that were gathered by a small group of students that vary in ability and interest. There were two types of assessments which included student writing samples where spelling errors were analyzed and an assessment called Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet, both of these will be explained further in this chapter.

Implementation of curriculum included daily whole group mini-lessons, word work for independent practice using a multitude of hands-on activities, and integrating skills within independent writing. Finally, the notes from our meetings gave a perspective of other grade levels, ideas for next steps, and collaborative time for teachers to look at data together to decide if students were applying skills within the lessons. During this chapter, the setting, the participants and these methods will be described in more detail.

### Research Paradigm

The research paradigm chosen to answer this capstone question was a model of action research. This was the best option considering the resource *Words Matter* (2001) guided the methods, assessments, and included effective word study strategies. Evidence was gathered through assessments, student writing, and discussion with peers to decide if these strategies within this program successfully assisted students in their spelling mastery and what parts our district should continue to study and support our staff as we move to the next year.

### Setting

My school serves the very western suburbs of Minneapolis. The district covers six main cities, but also receives students' that open-enroll from other surrounding

communities. The district population was approximately 2, 700 students and 140 teachers. It contains a preschool, elementary school, intermediate school, middle school and high school where most are located in a campus type setting. This school was considered a suburb of the Twin Cities, which hosted a variety of family lifestyles and social-economic backgrounds. The majority of families were professional, with high achieving educational backgrounds.

Our demographics were primarily Caucasian with 92%, Hispanic 4%, Asian 2%, and Black 2%, and other 1%. There were very few free and reduced lunch students, which only consists of 7.4% of our student population. There was also a small English Language Learner community, with only about 1.5% of our population. Special Education students made up 11.4% of our population. The majority of our population that we served was white, above middle class families.

School and classroom. In the elementary school in which I taught there were approximately 520 students which consisted of kindergarten through second grade.

Within the first grade, that I researched and taught, the grade level consisted of eight sections. We offered many after school programs for students which included both educational and recreational options. Our school also offered specialist classes within the students' day such as Gym, Art, Music, and World Language.

My classroom reflected the whole district statistics and make-up. The class contained 23 students, thirteen boys and ten girls. This first grade class consisted of 23 students, three Asian students, one African American student, while the rest of the class was Caucasian. This class also had one student with ASD Autistic spectrum disorder, who was very high functioning, but needed adaptations to be successful within the

classroom. Within this classroom there were also two students with language processing issues and were pulled out for speech therapy. Amongst all of these students there were also two students who worked with our reading specialist, one in Reading Recovery and the other in Leveled Literacy Intervention. Finally there were four additional students who had behavior plans who were supported by the school social worker to help with successful classroom behaviors.

### Participants

As part of my action research, the participants were six and seven year olds within my first grade class. Six students were chosen to represent the variety of academic levels within my class to monitor and record their progress within my observations and assessments. These students were strategically chosen to represent both genders equally which included three girls and three boys. These students were selected based on a variety of academic abilities, two students were selected as high academic writers and spellers, two students were selected to represent the average first grade writer and speller, and finally two students were selected to represent the struggling writer and speller.

Utilizing these varying levels will give me an idea of whether this program can meet the needs of a multitude of diverse students.

During the action research process the class was concentrating on skills that we have previously practiced earlier in the first grade year, such as, high-frequency words, CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words, blends, and diagraphs. Then as research begun students were introduced to long-vowel patterns. Growth will be measured by student success while independently using long-vowel pattern in student's independent

writing. Data collected looked at how many of student's writing attempts with long-vowels were successful and then in chapter four looked at whether this has improved.

Participant	Beginning of Action Research March 1, 2016
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can spell all high-frequency words</li> <li>• Can use beginning, middle, and ending sounds along with blends and diagraphs successfully</li> <li>• Has some long-vowel patterns, but misusing many</li> <li>• Long-vowel patterns are 3 out of 5 attempts successful</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing a couple high-frequency words</li> <li>• Can use beginning, middle, and ending sounds along with blends and diagraphs successfully</li> <li>• Using some long-vowel patterns, but misusing many</li> <li>• Long-vowel patterns are 2 out of 3 attempts successful</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing many high-frequency words, including kindergarten level words</li> <li>• Spelling is so inconsistent it makes it hard to read</li> <li>• Can use some beginning, middle, and ending sounds along with some blends and diagraphs</li> <li>• Not using long-vowel patterns 0 out of 2 attempts successful</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can spell all high-frequency words at grade level</li> <li>• Can use beginning, middle, and ending sounds</li> <li>• Inconsistent with diagraphs and blends</li> <li>• Not using long-vowel patterns</li> <li>• Long-vowel patterns are 1 out of 4 attempts successful</li> </ul>
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent with high-frequency words</li> <li>• Can use beginning, middle, and ending sounds along with blends and diagraphs successfully</li> <li>• Not using long-vowel patterns</li> <li>• Long-vowel patterns are 1 out of 3 attempts successful</li> </ul>
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing many high-frequency words, including kindergarten level words</li> <li>• Can use beginning and ending sounds along with blends successfully</li> <li>• Missing some diagraphs and short-vowel</li> <li>• Not using long-vowel patterns</li> <li>• Long-vowel patterns are 0 out of 4 attempts successful</li> </ul>



### Action Research Process

*Word Matters (2001)* was used as a primary phonics instructional resource which includes many instructional strategies described in chapter two. Word study was taught everyday in a whole class setting. All students received the same mini-lesson and then applied their skills independently with individualized word lists as explained in chapter two word study section. Assessments that were used included Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet (Appendix D) along with Error Analysis recording sheet (Appendix D) to analyze writing to help make word lists for each student. Students' independent word work came from the resource *Word Matters* by Fountas & Pinnell (2001).

The timeline for this project was four weeks where students experienced four different principles and finished mastering their 150 high-frequency words. A pre-assessment of their Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet and Error Analysis assessment was given to every student in the class before starting. Then assessments were also given at the end of the four weeks to compare their word mastery, especially looking for skills practiced in class.

The following sections will describe the process and methods used to collect data. First, the implementation of *Word Matters* by Fountas and Pinnell (2001) components, which includes whole group word study, independent practice, and guided practice with interactive writing. Students received all other components of a balanced literacy program mentioned in chapter two such as interactive read aloud, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, interactive writing, shared writing, independent writing, and word study which are important contexts to point out these skills and integrate these principles.

One assessment used was the Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet given at the beginning of the four weeks and at the end to document student progress. Another assessment that was the most important assessment was student writing samples, these indicated students' independence and how they implemented skills within their writing. These writing samples were collected every two weeks to monitor progress and make adaptations to word study lessons and their individual word lists as needed.

### Methods

The methods discussed in this part were taken from the resource *Word Matters* and important aspects discussed in chapter two instructional strategies within the literature review. *Word Matters* has a daily lesson plan structure to follow and routines that promote independent practice and individualized word lists. The three important components that were discussed are whole group lesson plans, individualized word work, and how these skills are integrated into reading and writing workshops.

Word study overview. The word study framework described in this section is based off of the findings of Fountas and Pinnell in their *Word Matters* resource. This framework that Fountas and Pinnell described is the main method of instruction that was used in the research in this capstone. There are two parts to this framework, whole class strategy lessons and daily activities studying a list that was student selected words.

Materials needed. During word study there were certain materials that were referred to for daily practice. Some of these routines or materials are

- Spelling Buddies- Students are paired with similar spelling partners. They give each other Buddy Check (Appendix C) practice and also the weekly spelling test. They need to be able to read each other's words that were chosen. Teachers

should look at pre assessments and class work to decide on strategic partners.

These should only change once every few months so that students are used to working together.

- Weekly Principle Charts- These anchor charts are made during a whole group mini-lesson on the first day of the week. This focused lessons the rest of the week on word patterns and the strategy stated. Principle Charts stated the strategy focus at the top and then listed words that followed that pattern made by the discussion of the class. If students suggested a word that did not follow the pattern, write it to the side in a separate box so that they notice why it does not belong or how it “breaks the rule”. (Appendix C)
- Personal Word Lists-Students chose words from the weekly principle chart to study for the week. They also chose words from their writing that needed to be worked on. In the primary level this was mostly high-frequency words, but as students mastered those words, they could add words from their independent writing. Students needed to reflect on words they were misspelled in their independent writing to add to their word lists. (Appendix C)
- Word Study Notebooks-These notebooks were a place for students to record their word study practice. Students used them to practice the mini-lesson for that day and also their daily word work application.
- Word Work Materials- magnet letters, white boards, chart paper with markers, look, say, cover, write, check study sheet (Appendix C), study flap (Appendix C), buddy check (Appendix C), and make connections sheets (Appendix C).

Mini-lesson. First, the whole class focus strategy was a lesson on a principle or a pattern found in words that are grade level appropriate. For first grade this includes high-frequency words, CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant), words that contain patterns with blends and digraphs, and also some beginning long-vowel patterns. These patterns accompanied a principle such as “finding a part you know” like -an, -at, sh-, pl, and so on. These strategies were taught using a workshop model which includes a mini-lesson, application time, and sharing activities.

A mini-lesson included different skills that a teacher noticed the class needed work on from observations from their independent writing. Some examples include

- Constructing word lists on chart paper. Students are invited to interact and add words to a list that followed the pattern.
- Manipulate words with magnet letters to make new or similar words.
- Sort words based on what students noticed about their features and word structures.
- Lesson plans based on the Resource *Phonics Lessons: Letters, Words, and How They Work* (1998).

These mini-lessons were usually taught whole group and could be differentiated by the words being used. Students then took what they practiced as a whole group and used the same strategy to practice with their own words individually.

Application and practice . After the mini-lesson, students participated in independent application and practice. This was a combination of word study extensions from their mini-lesson and also daily practice using the buddy system. Word study extensions correlate back to the lesson usually from *Phonics Lesson: letters, words, and*

*how they work* (1998) where students can use multimodal, hands on experiences to practice phonics skills. Some examples were word sorts, adding to a chart or making their own, playing a game, or continued practice of a skill like rhyming, making initials, or spelling patterns.

The daily practice used the buddy system that involved a 5 day cycle.

1. Choose, Write, Build, Mix, Fix, Mix- First, students filled their word card with words that they were practicing, about six to eight words. Second, student used magnetic letters to make each word, mix it up and make it again. While this reinforced to students that these words need to be built from left to right, just like they are written.
2. Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check- This was teaching students “how” to study words. They use a Study Flap to be able to quickly cover up words to practice writing them without looking. Students write the word in the first column, say it, cover it, and write it again, then check. This was repeated for all the words.  
(Appendix C)
3. Buddy Check- Partners gave each other practice tests and then checked and attempted the words that they missed again. (Appendix C)
4. Make Connections- This was similar to a word ladder where students changed one part of the word to make a new word. It helped students make connections between words that look alike and sound alike. (Appendix C)
5. Buddy Test- Students were with their partner again to take a final test. This was then assessed by the teacher to check if they understood the principle or their high-frequency words.

After each of these days of practice the workshop ended with students being encouraged to share their thinking with the class or with a partner to reinforce the weekly lesson. The chart made with the core words for the week was hung up for all to refer to as the week of practice continued.

Other word work activities. In addition to a word study workshop like explained above, students also needed support applying these skills within a balanced literacy program. Support still needed to be given within their independent writing and reading. This same weekly principle was also practiced with interactive writing, writing conferences, and guided reading. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1998) the consistent language provides a bridge between these activities and skills to their application within their reading and writing creating a comprehensive word study program. In conclusion, for this to work strategies need to be reinforced through many contexts within the balance literacy day, such as, reader's workshop, writer's workshop, and morning meeting to name a few.

### Data Collected

Now that students were immersed in word study and a workshop model, in order to see if these strategies were beneficial the collection of data was performed. There were three types of data collected. First, the Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet was given at the beginning of the action research project and again at the end. Second, the analysis of student work using an Error Analysis sheet to see if what they were learning as strategies were being applied within their independent writing. Finally, the use of meeting notes was also beneficial when deciding next steps for chapter five and receiving

insight from other teachers' kindergarten through second grade on what strategies worked.

Individual assessment using Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet. In Clay's (1993) Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet, students were asked to write as many words as they knew how to write. First the teacher prompted students to think about all the words they use in their writing or words that were displayed on our word wall. Students then had ten minutes to write as many words as they could. Teachers were able to evaluate their spelling based on words that were developmentally at their level, whether they were seeing connections between words like similar patterns, the fluency in which they wrote their words, and their use of endings and root words. After a student finished the teacher counted up correct words and evaluated what skills were noticed such as "th" or word families like "at". Now that this information was gathered a teacher can see what a student needs next to produce more words with more difficult patterns.

This assessment was administered at the beginning of the action research project and at the end. The whole class participated. They had done this before at the beginning of the year and end of first trimester so they were familiar with directions and expectations.

Individual student writing using Error Analysis sheet. In order to use the Error Analysis sheet the teacher needed to collect samples of students' current writing to be analyzed. This allows teachers to look at spelling as not just right and wrong, but identifying words students were noticing and strategies students were using within their independent writing. When analyzing at a student sample the first column is for the words that are misspelled and then analyzed on why they made that error based on the

eight principles of Fountas and Pinnell (2001) *Phonics Lessons: letters, words, and how they work*. A teacher should notice strengths and weaknesses where developmentally a student needs more work. This information then was used in whole group for spelling patterns, individual writing conferences, or small group guided reading word work. It is all about getting to know each individual child and catering to their needs in the classroom.

This assessment was performed at the beginning of the study to see what needed to be taught and then at the end of the study to see if students were applying the skills shown. In addition to the Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet where assessment was more of a standardized task, the Error Analysis was using their authentic independent writing to see if they were able to apply it within the context of independent writing.

Meeting notes from phonics team. Now that data was collected on the students involved through the two different assessments stated, data collection was discussed with our Phonics PLC to decide how teachers felt these strategies were being integrated into other classrooms in our district. Our school had seven teachers who attempted to find effective strategies for word study and we met monthly to discuss what was working and what was not. The team notes were beneficial to help decide whether findings from this research correlated with other grade levels and classrooms. This informed our decision making as a district for chapter five.

This data was important to collect because it connected our group of teachers so that we were being consistent with our training and our classroom instruction. We were able to rely on each other as experts and kept us motivated to stay true to the program. Collection of these notes was valuable to see common threads in effective strategies and



also implications of the program. After analyzing these notes we had a better understanding of the “big picture” of this resource and the progression from kindergarten through second grade and beyond.

### Data Analysis

The data collected provided an understanding of a child’s development within word study. This data supports where students were on the spelling continuum and how much growth they had made in one month. Through analysis of this data it was evident that the strategies that were taught in the whole group lessons were applied in their independent writing. To achieve this goal, students needed to be successful use strategies at a first grade level. These strategies were short vowel, CVC words, high-frequency words, and successful with digraphs and blends as stated by our schools requirements, based on the rubric used for first grade trimester two.

Chapter four will include the pre-assessments and analysis of writing samples, along with the same post examples to be able to compare.

### Conclusion:

This chapter described the current setting of this study by describing the school and classroom in which the research was performed. The students participating and in the class were identified with a purpose. Next the methods of research included were assessments, curriculum implementation, and notes from Phonic PLC team’s monthly meetings. The assessments included a collection of two forms of data which included the Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet and independent writing samples using the Error Analysis sheet. Then the instructional strategies that were integrated within the whole first grade classroom were explained in detail. Lastly, the notes from our Phonics PLC

were analyzed to gain aspects of other grade levels with implications, what works, and next steps. All of these methods were used in hope of investigating my question *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students independent writing?*

In the next chapter the results of this data will be collected. After collecting the results they will be analyzed. Finally, chapter five will discuss next steps for my class, professional endeavors, and for our district.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, my journey through the spelling continuum and phonics has always been a struggle for me as a student and as a teacher. As a student, I struggled with the English language and the “rules” that were always broken. After numerous failed spelling tests, I decided to label myself as a terrible speller. As I transitioned from student to teacher, I wanted to make sure none of my students felt this way. It motivated me to find a way to break through to struggling spellers. This is where my research question was born. *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students’ independent writing?*

Through the literature review in chapter two, found that not one strategy was labeled as the “best” or “only way” to teach phonics. To teach phonics successfully it involves many opportunities for modeling strategic thinking and word solving through common language, followed by meaningful hands on, multimodal practice, and finally time within writing to make connections between practice and application.

Through the literature review led the research to integrate some of these strategies into the instruction based on the resource *Word Matters* (1998). Fountas and Pinnell (1998) include many strategies, such as, student made charts of word patterns, strategic whole group lessons, practice which involved magnet letters, sorts, and making

connections between words, then supporting these lessons through guided practice in writing conferences, interactive writing, and guided reading. In this chapter, I will review methods that I have researched and incorporated into the classroom. Then I will discuss the results of these strategies based on the data received from student writing, a Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet assessment, and discussions with other teachers that attempted the same strategies in their classroom. Finally, I will detail how this information will be used in the future within my classroom and our district.

### Review of Classroom Methods Used

The classroom methods used involved whole group phonics lessons, independent word work, and guided practice through interactive writing, guided reading, and writing conferences. Listed below are the strategies used during research.

- Whole group classroom methods used where student created word charts based on word families such as “ake”, “ate”, “ike”, “ea”, “ay” “ai” “ee”
- Word sorts of word families in guided reading and whole group phonics lessons
- Making word ladders to make connections
- Word work that involved magnetic letters, using flip folders, white boards, markers, stamps, and letter beads
- Interactive writing with the purpose of practicing these word families during whole group instruction and guided reading
- Prompting for word parts that are studied during word work during guided reading
- Prompting for word parts that are studied during word work during writing conferences

### Data Analysis

For my action research project data was collected using three different forms of assessment and observations. First, the pre and post assessment using the Error Analysis sheet which used student writing will be explained. Then, the Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet was given to the whole class as a pre and post assessment. This will be examined and analyzed. Finally, observational notes from our Phonic PLC team will be discussed to further the understanding of the process of these strategies in other grade levels.

During action research the participants included six students, three boys and three girls varying in ability. Included in the research were two of high ability writers, two average, and two struggling writers and spellers. Students were chosen in hopes of seeing a variety of abilities and how these strategies affect all levels of students, not just a targeted intervention.

Pre-assessment Error Analysis sheet using student writing examples. First step of this research was looking at the six students' final writing from the previous writing unit. In this writing students were prompted to edit and revise in hope of getting few errors and to really be able to see what students can do. By choosing a published writing that has gone through the writing process as a finished piece, data could show what students were able to do when prompted to take their time, reflect, and fix-up. Looking at three parts on the Error Analysis sheet which were developmental appropriate for first graders, this included their use of high-frequency words, ability to use consonants in beginning and ending of words which include blends and digraphs, as well as their use of short and long-vowel patterns. I approached this pre-assessment with an understanding that

students have been exposed to many whole group lessons and practice so that they should be close to mastery of high-frequency words, using consonants in beginning and endings of words along with blends and diagraphs. During the four week application for this project we began to concentrate on long-vowel patterns. Keeping this in mind here is what students could do successfully as a result of pre-assessment.

- High-frequency words: 3 out of 6 students were close to mastery of first grade appropriate high-frequency words.
- Using consonants in beginning and ending of words: 6 out of 6 students were successful
- Using blends: 6 out of 6 were successful
- Using diagraphs: 4 out of 6 were successful
- Using long-vowel patterns: 0 out of 6 were successful
  - Student A- 3 out 5 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student B- 2 out of 3 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student C- 0 out of 2 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student D- 1 out of 4 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student E- 1 out of 3 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student F- 0 out of 4 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns

Looking at this data it was clear that these six students needed support in high-frequency words and long-vowel patterns. Long-vowel patters and reinforcing high-frequency words during guided reading, writing conferences, and added them to individual word lists was the focus of this research, based on where students needed the

most growth to be at an end of first grade writing. This was decided by our district writing rubric and state standards on conventions.

Pre-assessment of Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet. This assessment was given to the whole class at the end of February. The assessment was given as a whole class where students have ten minutes to write all the words they know. In order to make the environment a neutral one charts, posters, and the word wall were covered up or taken down. Students were promoted to think about the resources when they were stuck and needed more words to write. The goal of the Writing Vocabulary Observation assessment was to notice student mastery on words and patterns that we had practiced. We had been working on high-frequency words, short-vowel word families such as “at”, “an”, “ig”, “in” and so on.

During the pre-assessment I counted total words and long-vowel patterns that they used. This provided me a baseline to see if students expanded their word count and also used more long-vowel patterns from whole group lesson.

- Student A- Produced 48 words and 9 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student B- Produced 30 words and 1 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student C- Produced 26 words and 2 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student D- Produced 48 words and 3 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student E- Produced 31 words and 4 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student F- Produced 28 words and 1 of those words had long-vowel patterns

When I reflected on this data, most students had expanded their fluency or number of words written in ten minutes since the beginning of the year. They included high-

frequency words, blends, diagraphs, and a couple long-vowel patterns, most of which were sight words that included these patterns.

Post-assessment Error Analysis using student writing examples. Multiple writing samples were collected from students' writing folders considering they were currently in the middle of their writing unit. A "published" piece could not be used as previously in the pre-assessment because of timing of the classroom units. This did affect my results when students made errors by not taking their time to reread and correct, which they had time for in their first sample. But this was an authentic process and their unfinished work was all that was available to see if there had been a change in high-frequency words and long-vowel patterns.

- High-frequency words: 2 out of 6 students were secure with first grade appropriate high-frequency words.
- Using consonants in beginning and ending of words: 6 out of 6 students were successful
- Using blends: 6 out of 6 were successful
- Using diagraphs: 6 out of 6 were successful
- Using long vowel-patterns: 3 out of 6 were successful
  - Student A- 6 out 7 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student B- 6 out of 7 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student C- 3 out of 6 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student D- 4 out of 5 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student E- 4 out of 6 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns
  - Student F- 2 out of 2 attempts were successful using long-vowel patterns



After reflecting on these results, it was surprising that students struggled more with high-frequency words and actually went down in proficiency. This was probably because the first writing was a final, published piece where students went back to fix errors and this post assessment was just taken at random from their writing folders. It does show that many students still are not showing proficiency in spelling these easy words in their independent writing. Also I reflected that the whole group lessons did not support high-frequency words as much as long-vowel patterns. However, they were given more rigorous high-frequency words to practice during word work, but lacked the direct instruction that the long-vowel patterns were receiving.

After looking at long-vowel patterns, which were the main focus of our whole group practice, demonstrated that all students had made some growth in their long-vowel knowledge. Even my high spellers A and B had made some growth and became more proficient in their long-vowel use. The other students within my focus group who were not using any long-vowel patterns were now applying them with at least 50% accuracy. This demonstrated tremendous growth within all levels being able to make improvements. Therefore, looking at this data it had shown growth in all levels of the students involved within the application of their use of long-vowel patterns within their writing.

Post-assessment of Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet. This assessment was given again at the end of the research. Students had practiced long vowel patterns such as “ake”, “ate”, “ike”, “ai”, “ay”, “ee” and “ea”. In this post-assessment, data was analyzed specifically for long-vowel patterns and also whether they expanded their word count.

- Student A- Produced 78 words and 16 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student B- Produced 31 words and 6 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student C- Produced 31 words and 9 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student D- Produced 49 words and 4 of those words had long-vowel pattern
- Student E- Produced 17 words and 3 of those words had long-vowel patterns
- Student F- Produced 37 words and 5 of those words had long-vowel patterns

Looking at the results, it can be said that students' had varying degrees of success when producing words. Three students increased their word count by at least ten words, student A, a high speller and students F and C lower spellers. There were two students that maintained the same number in their word counts. Finally, one student decreased their word count by a significant amount. There are many factors that could have contributed to this student's change in score, since she felt like an outlier. This student was a perfectionist and can work extremely slow, so when prompted to think of words on our charts, she could have blanked and then got discouraged, instead of just writing as many words as she could. Test anxiety could also have been another reason for her score; she also might have had a bad day. When giving formal assessments many factors can disrupt showing what a student is capable of. Thinking of challenging words takes more time and more effort to write.

Since each student produced different amounts of words I also looked at the type of patterns they were used. Since some long-vowel patterns were our whole group focus this is what data was recorded. Four of the students doubled the words they used with long-vowel patterns. Two of the students stayed about the same with the patterns they were using.

Overall, this assessment showed that four of the students made growth in either long-vowel patterns, number of words produced, or both. However, when examining the other two students, one stayed the same in both areas and the other actually decreased number of words produced.

Meeting notes. Our PLC, personal learning community, which consisted of seven teachers, kindergarten through second grade, along with our literacy coach and principal met monthly to discuss what we were trying in our classrooms. Some of our key discussions involved strategies that were working, implications, and a plan for next year. When we originally started meeting the plan was to possibly implement a new phonics program *Word Matters* instead of our current program *Words Their Way*. What we found was that changing a program would involve a lot of professional development and time for teachers to experience and learn about new resources. After many conversations we decided even though we were feeling successful with the program there was too much change within our district next year to be able to concentrate on word study. So we changed our thought process and discussed which strategies were going to be most beneficial for our school to incorporate for the application of spelling skills within writing. The concepts that we thought could be used successfully alongside *Words Their Way* or any phonics curriculum will be discussed next.

I found positive and successful results by incorporating word study into other aspects of the day. These areas include whole group, small group, guided practice, and independent practice were all supporting the same strategies and language. During our PLC, we had found success with the whole group lessons especially through making word charts during whole group instruction. We had also found success with

implementation of word work choices of magnet letters, Look, Say, Write, making connections, word sorts and building word ladders. The other aspect that was needed for success was the reinforcement during guided practice of interactive writing, writing conferences and during guided reading. Collectively, we agreed that the student made word list would be too much to manage at the beginning of the year considering that students needed to be taught routines and procedure first. Instead students would either practice their *Words Their Way* list or practice the whole group lists made as a class.

A benefit of this phonics PLC was the different perspectives from the different grade levels which consisted of three kindergarten, two first grade, and two second grade teachers. We found that the resource *Word Matters* did not fit well with kindergarten and what they were able to do independently. First grade reflected that it would be best to start after first trimester and concentrate more on direct teaching of high-frequency words instead of word patterns. As for second grade, their students could handle the independence and were demonstrating enjoyment and success with *Word Matters* right away in the year. Their biggest struggle was differentiation amongst their lowest and highest students. As students move up grades there became bigger outliers that did not fit well with whole group lessons. It had been a struggle for these teachers to feel they were fully meeting the needs of both the low end and high end of their learners.

In conclusion, our group planed on continuing to explore strategies within our classrooms that help support the application of spelling within students writing through this year and next. We will continue to have discussions on when and how to share our learning with our peers without overwhelming our staff.

### Reflection of Word Study Strategies

After reflecting on the growth of the students involved made with the long-vowel patterns, but not with high-frequency words, I wonder what parts are most effective within these strategies that were incorporated. Looking back at the methods that were used it can be said which ones supported growth and which ones did not.

What worked. Thinking about the results of the data and how long-vowel patterns improved, but high-frequency words did not, the research will attempt to differentiate between strategies that focus on one direct skill like long-vowel patterns and practiced each. Anchor charts made by students were beneficial because students led the discussion and inquiry in how words work. Turn and talks and whole group discussions to come up with a list of words showed student engagement and interaction with peers. Students debated whether a word fit into the pattern and which ones did not. All students could participate, no matter what their reading and writing level because many words ranging in difficulty fit into each principle. This was how these lists ended up being differentiated. By hanging these charts around the room so students could refer back to them promoted independence of the skill and created an environment that valued words.

During independent practice students knew that they were practicing the strategy we were focused on and understood that these words had parts that they were familiar with. Students were then successful when practicing words during word work. Examples of word work practice that were successful included making and breaking apart words with magnet letters, sorting words based on common features, writing words, and making connections with words through application of word trains. These were word work choices that were independent and motivating for independent student practice.

Another aspect of writing application that was successful was during guided practice. The instructional strategies used were interactive writing, guided reading, and writing conferences. The research found that writing conferences were the most beneficial for students to notice when they were independently using a strategy successfully and also guided to correct or attempt a strategy they are less secure with. This one-on-one meeting, which only needs to take a couple minutes, supported students within their application time. In my opinion, this was the most beneficial way to use guided practice.

In thinking about what areas concentrated on the long-vowel pattern more than high-frequency words these strategies can be listed as successful. All of the strategies were successful such as word charts, word ladders, word sorts, word work, and prompting for strategies in guided reading, interactive writing, and writing conferences were all important in the success for writers. Talking with the team of teachers we all agreed that having a focus that can be referred to at any given time in the day kept us integrating strategies for all of our students.

Implications of these strategies. There are some implications to these instructional strategies such as the lack of growth in high-frequency words. The main reason for this was the focus lesson was always on long-vowel patterns and high-frequency words were just practiced without much teaching and guided practice. In order to have had the same success with high-frequency words, these words needed to be part of a focused lesson. Then they needed to be sorted. Even though these words were irregular they could be sorted by beginning sound, syllables, number of letters, vowels and so on. They may not have a pattern, but students needed to manipulate and find their

own connections to make their own understanding of these words. High-frequency words also needed to be practiced in guided reading and word work. The direct instruction was a missing component for these words, but while it was supported within the long-vowel lessons. Through this reflection, direct instruction of these skills through the instructional strategies allowed for the growth and application of these spelling skills, unlike the word work practiced. In order for a word study program to be successful students needed direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. If instruction was missing within any of these parts, students were not able to apply strategies independently to their writing.

### Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed classroom instructional strategies used to prompt the growth of spelling in the application of the students' writing. I listed many whole group, small group, and individual strategies that promoted an effective word study instruction. I then analyzed the data from the Error Analysis sheet which used student writing as a guide for students who were able to apply strategies independently during application of writing and the Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet. I found the whole group lessons on long-vowels showed growth in all of my students. But the lack of direct instruction for high-frequency words and only relying on students practicing high-frequency words during independent word work did not demonstrate growth within the use of high-frequency words. Therefore, I decided that an effective word study program needed to have all the components of whole group, small group, guided practice and independent application working cohesively on the same skills. Word study cannot be successful with the implementation of just one part. Then I analyzed the notes from our

monthly meetings to see trends on parts which were successful with other classrooms too. All of this data supported the idea that word study needed to be a cohesive comprehensive program and not just a single part of balanced literacy.

After further synthesizing of this information I felt like I had answered part of my question. *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students' independent writing?* Through the research, I discovered that in order to have a successful word study where students were applying skills into their independent writing we needed to have all parts working cohesively. I found that teaching strategies and using spelling patterns through anchor charts as direct whole group instruction was most successful in application within student writing. Along with direct whole group lesson with a focused principle also needs to be supported by small group instruction within the context of reading and writing, also time for independent practice. Finally successful word study also incorporated guided practice in interactive writing or writing conferences, creating a comprehensive word study which contained many parts, but is needed in order for students to make the connection between what they practiced and how they applied it.

In chapter five, I will discuss further the research and findings, and what that means for our district moving forward and what professional development is needed in order to support this idea of a comprehensive word study program.



## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

Through my professional journey to earn my Master's in Literacy at Hamline University I felt that I had not only grown, but evolved into the teacher that I am now. Thinking about the classes, experiences, peer relationships that were formed and now finishing my capstone and research project, I am a different teacher than when I started. I expected to gain knowledge through this experience from the classes, but what I had gained from this project and performing action research turned me into a more reflective teacher. This experience had made me reflect and take an independent path in my own personal learning, and not just following a syllabus.

Along with the research experience and knowledge about word study, I am able to see literacy instruction as a “big picture” filled with many cohesive parts, all working together for the same outcome. As I watched my students grow in their ability to read, write, and see the connection between these skills, reminded me of my question that I started with *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students' independent writing?* Through the research my students were more successful in their writing because of their knowledge of how words work.

Now in Chapter five, I will discuss my key findings from the literature review I performed in chapter two such as the important components of word study, how these

components need to be cohesive and instructional strategies that I will continue to use in my future classroom. Keeping these key findings in mind I will also talk about the implications of finding enough time and future plans for our district. Along with future plans, this will contain future research and limitations within this action research project.

### Key Findings From Research

Word study components. During the research found that in order for word study to be successful it needed to have direct instruction of skills or strategies that could be reinforced and practiced through many aspects of balanced literacy. Fountas and Pinnell (1999) agreed that successful direct, systematic phonics instruction needs to be applied in a variety of literacy components. They encouraged teachers to incorporate phonics instruction into multiple parts of their balanced literacy program, which included interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, shared writing, interactive writing, independent writing, and word study.

In addition to direct instruction students also needed guidance to practice these strategies with the support of the teacher and then also independently. Guided practice mentioned in chapter two included interactive writing, shared writing, guided reading, and during individual conferences. These were aspects where the teacher could support students as they were still trying a strategy. Finally, independent work included independent reading, writing, and word work, keeping in mind that Strickland (2011) believed that successful word work involved differentiation, hands-on, and engaging activities. This included word sorts, making words with magnet letters, making word charts or interactive writing.

Cohesiveness between balanced literacy components. One thing our team found consistently successful in all grade levels was the whole group focus. When we made a whole group chart with a principle, we were able to refer to it in all areas of balanced literacy. This allowed for students to see and use words both in reading, writing, and word study to find connections between them. Fountas and Pinnell (2009) believe that keeping prompts consistent allowed the students to make connections between words. When saying a prompt like “Find a part you know” was used in decoding during reading, spelling during writing, and then also applied in word study it made that strategy more flexible for students to use independently.

Instructional strategies. Some instructional strategies that were supported in chapter two and also integrated through the resource *Words Matter* were;

- Student made word charts stating similar word families or parts
- Differentiated word lists
- Word sorts
- Word Work that included magnet letters, writing words, making connections between words
- Word Work connection in guided reading
- Guided practice of language skills in writing conferences and interactive writing

All of these strategies were shown effective in the literature review in chapter two and also during the research in chapter four.

### Implications

Time to implement. Unfortunately there is never enough time in the day to fit in everything that a teacher wants to. The resources *Word Matters* painted a picture of word

study functioning like a spelling workshop, everyday there was a mini-lesson, then 15-20 minutes application time, and ending with a share. This workshop would take at least 25-30 minutes a day for this structure to be successful. Our school did not give that much time for phonics and word study which left parts to be integrated. This was done through word work during guided reading, whole group mini-lessons for writing, and during our literacy choices for our Reader's Workshop.

Future plans. Our Phonics PLC felt that these strategies and the resource *Words Matter* had been very successful for our classroom, however reflecting on the time and training we had received we were unable to support our staff with the same experiences currently. In order to be truly successful we would need a week of Professional Development along with monthly Professional Development to support teachers as they attempted a word study program that had many different parts and was integrated into many parts of our day.

After further discussion we had decided to use PLC and interested teachers in attempting to add parts of this program to their classroom. We felt the whole group, direct instruction would be the most beneficial. Then as the group progressed from whole group to individual work we would concentrate on word work activities where students could practice these words and strategies. Finally, teachers would receive support by adding more to our guided practice during interactive writing, writing conferences, and guided reading as addition support to these lessons. Teachers will not be expected to try these components next year, but offered the opportunity to explore them if they choose to. There were too many other initiatives starting next year in our district to make this learning mandatory. We had also discussed that as a group we

needed to keep exploring and hopefully by 2017-2018 would be a year to roll out this new learning.

### Future Research

Interactive writing. As I researched about word study I came across a lot of research on interactive writing. This is something used in my classroom, but I felt like it could be more meaningful and in different parts of our day besides just writing. I would like to explore how to integrate interactive writing into our science and math content. I think keeping an observational journal through interactive writing would be meaningful and also incorporating “math talks” with writing about math. Using writing in the content area provided an authentic, real world use of the skills.

Word wall support for struggling writers. After reflecting on the results and the support the students needed with high-frequency words I would like to explore more authentic uses for our word wall. When students were prompted they remembered to use the word wall to check, but unprompted like in student writing using the post Error Analysis sheet showed that many students were misspelling high-frequency words even when they had spelled them correctly previously. This would be a great future research project.

### Limitations

Collecting student’s best work. One limitation found when using the assessments was making sure to use a students’ best work. This affected both of my assessments. During my post writing samples using the Error Analysis sheet I could not use a “published” piece that had been written through the whole writing process. That made it difficult to see if students made simple errors or if they were not secure in those skills.

Along with the Writing Vocabulary Observation assessment, a student could have had a “bad” testing day which would have affected the results. Whenever assessing a teacher needs to be aware of their students and their needs, if the results do not match up then more data needs to be collected.

Lesson regrets. I have attempted these word study strategies since the beginning of the year. It was a lot of trial and error, but I have figured out how to incorporate these instructional strategies and independent work within the structures of my classroom. I felt like I did not spend enough time on high-frequency words during direct instruction since this was one of the skills that students were practicing independently, but did not show much growth. Another regret was not being able to dedicate as much time as a “workshop” model would allow. If I could have spent 30 minutes every day on these skills I think students would be more successful and we would have been able to cover more skills. Overall, I felt like what I did do in the classroom was what was best for my students and what they needed. I will keep this in mind as I plan for each year of students.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I summarized the key findings from my research which include successful word study components, cohesive language between all aspects of balanced literacy, and successful instructional strategies. After discussing the successes I also described implications of the assessments used and future plans based on our district needs. Finally, I discussed limitations to keep in mind for next year and the years to come. Thinking about all of the successes and limitations within these strategies I am

better prepared to extend my own understand of word study and also extend this knowledge to my peers in a productive way.

Through the journey of writing and researching this capstone I understand the significance of having a balanced literacy program that includes word study with all of its components whole group direct instruction, guided practice using small group or individual conferences, and independent practice with word work and independent writing. This has brought a greater understanding to my question. *How does a balanced literacy program that includes word study promote application of spelling skills within elementary students' independent writing?* As a result of this question and research study I found that using a balanced literacy program including word study impacts student spelling skills in the following ways. First, I saw students making connections between the principle and unknown words by applying spelling patterns in their independent writing. Second, by using guided practice during interactive writing and writing conferences students were able to apply and practice skills with support, therefore becoming more independent. Finally, using word work that supported manipulating words with hands-on, multimodal activities, students were engaged in practice of these strategies. Therefore, I found that students applied their spelling skills in their writing through making connections of patterns in words, using guided practice to support independence, and also using authentic word work for independent practice.

## APPENDIX A

### Parent Consent Form



February 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a first grade teacher and a graduate student working on an advanced degree at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As a part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research in my first grade classroom from March 1-March 18. This research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and that it may be published or used in other ways.

Your child has been chosen to collect writing samples from. The purpose of this study is to see the effects that word study strategies such as student created word lists, interactive writing and other activities involving magnet letters and making connections between words and patterns. I will incorporate all of these strategies for all students in the class. To measure their growth I will give the class a pre- and post- assessment of words that they should spell. I will also measure their growth in their independent writing. I would like your consent for using participant work in my capstone research.

There is minimal risk your child to participate. There is a small risk that I will not see improvement or change within students spelling patterns. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual students, such as their name nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that information about your child will not be included in the capstone.

I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from the principal. My results might be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a professional conference. In all cases, your child's identity and participation in this study will be confidential. If you agree that your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me by mail or copy the form in an email no later than February 25, 2016.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Rabideau  
First Grade Teacher  
Schumann Elementary

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be observing students' behavior in groups. I understand there is minimal risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Teacher Consent Form

February 2016

Dear Elementary Teacher,

As a first grade teacher, I am currently also a graduate student working on an advanced degree at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As a part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research in my first grade classroom from March 1-March 18. This research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and that it may be published or used in other ways.

I would like to collect and review monthly meeting notes from our phonics team. The purpose of this study is to see the effects that word study strategies such as student created word lists, interactive writing and other activities involving magnet letters and making connections between words and patterns. I may use generalizations from these notes or specific quotes that support my findings in the classroom. I would like your consent to use our discussions in my capstone research.

There is minimal risk to you to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual teachers, such as their name nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that information about your classroom will not be included in the capstone.

I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from the principal at Schumann Elementary. My results might be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a professional conference. In all cases, your identity and participation in this study will be confidential. If you agree to participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me by mail or copy the form in an email no later than February 25, 2016.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Rabideau  
First Grade Teacher  
Schumann Elementary  
srabideau@orono.k12.mn.us

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be observing our monthly meetings. I understand there is minimal risk involved, that confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## APPENDIX C

### Supplemental Material

### Phonics Meeting

**Date:**    **Location:**                      **Meeting start/ending times:**

**Meeting Purpose:**

**Protocol:**

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Purpose/outcome (information, discussion, decision or product)</b>
Check in	15		
Grade level looks at assessments	15		
Group Share next steps	10		
<b>Next Meeting Date:</b>			

**Expectation(s) prior to next meeting:**

## Make Connections

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Write Your Words

<u>Sounds Like</u> <small>(have some of the same sounds)</small>	<u>Write Your Words</u>	<u>Looks Like</u> <small>(other words are spelled the same way)</small>



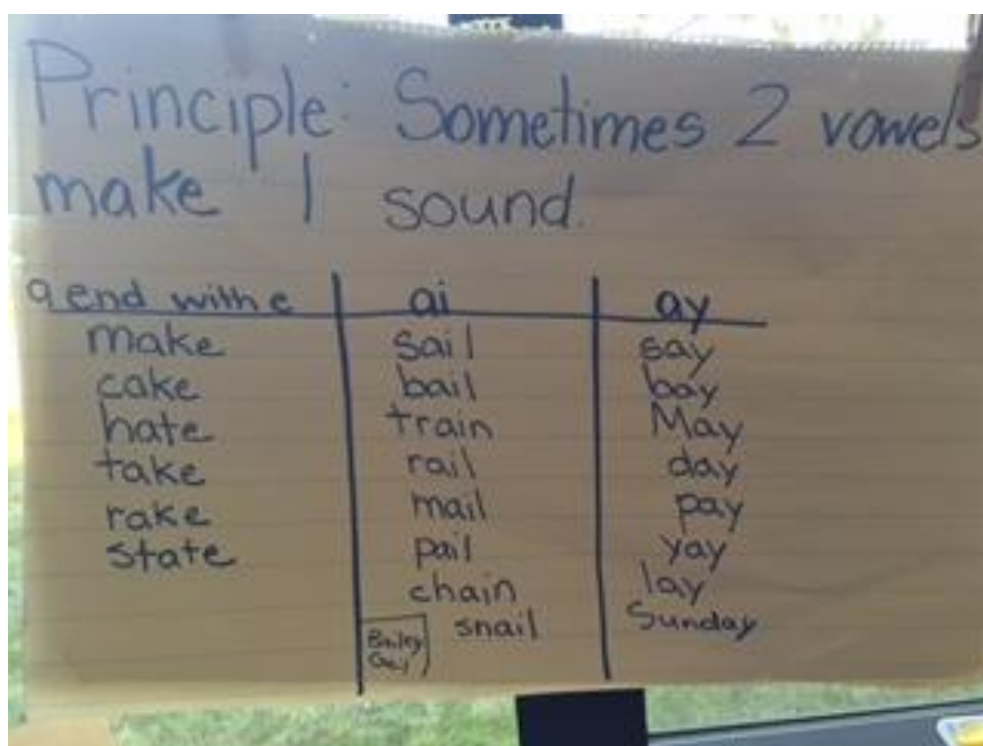
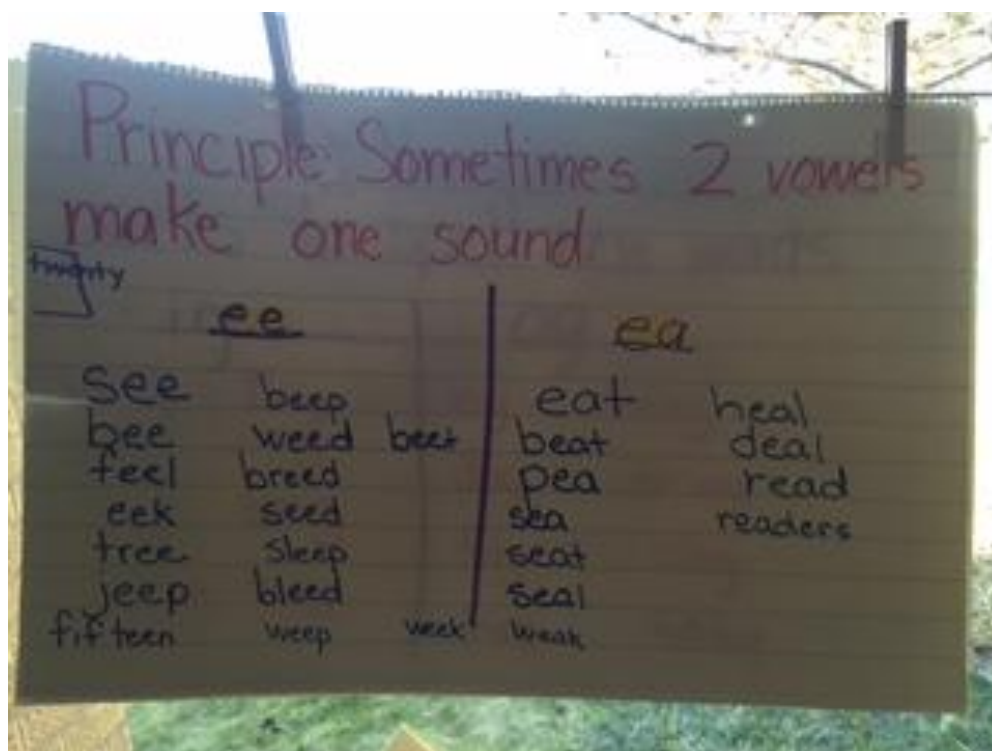






were  
ride  
their  
You  
too  
Cute  
GSP

Example of a student made list.



Example of whole group pattern based work list.



Example of word work magnet letters.

## APPENDIX D

### Assessments





**Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet Instructions**

1. Have children write their names.
2. Prompt children to think of words that they know how to write.
3. Tell students to write these words in the open space on the page.
4. If children get stuck, prompt: "Can you make new words using words you already know?"

Information to gather from assessment:

- Children's knowledge of their own inventory since they are thinking of words they know.
- The way one word leads children to think of another, revealing connections made between words.
- Children's use of phonograms and spelling patterns.
- The ease and fluency with which children write words.
- Children's use of endings to make several words from a root word.

\*Kindergarten may choose to do in small/guided reading groups.



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