

Dear Parent,

As mentioned at Parent Information Night, your child has been learning and practicing word families and spelling rules. Next week we will start our official word study program. We call it “word study”, and it is based on research and materials in Words Their Way.

At the onset, word study may be most confusing to parents. For those of you who, like us had a traditional spelling program at school, with a list of random words to memorize and a test on Fridays, this will be something a little different!

Word study teaches students to look critically at words so they can build deeper understanding of how spelling works to represent sounds and meaning. This is accomplished by sorting words into like categories based on the features they share.

What should you expect to see?

- Students grouped into appropriate level “sorts” depending on their initial spelling assessment.
- Students introduced to a group of words or pictures with a specific feature as the focus each week.
- Students working on hands-on activities to sort words or pictures with common characteristics into defined groups.
- Students thinking hard about whether these features mean they have to HEAR what the words have in common or SEE what they have in common (or both).

The best part of Words Their Way is that the students can be provided with instruction that fits their particular stage of spelling development and be moved sequentially in their instruction. It allows the students to build on what they already know, to learn what they need to do next, and to move forward. The children have been spit into different groups based on their spelling level as determined by a spelling inventory. The sorting homework and in class activities for every child will be the same, but the words and features will be different for each group.

Students will be assessed on how well they have learned the week’s word features by taking a simple test/assessment that combines writing and sorting some of the words from the sort and sorting other words with the same spelling features. Remember, a test may motivate your child to study, but their use of these spelling features in their written work on a regular basis is what matters most.

What does this mean for you at home?

Each week your child will receive a one page word or picture sort. These are not to be memorized or written multiple times for rote practice. Instead, every Monday your child should sort these words with you and explain why they are sorted the way they are. Your child will need them each night during the week in order to do their homework. Each night, your child should practice their sort with you. In addition to sorting, your child will also need to find new words for their sort. Attached are directions for that activity. A reference sheet as well as the recording sheet will be on the back of your child’s monthly reading calendar. It is very important that you supervise each night’s work.

As we go along, please contact us if there are any parts of the word study process that are confusing or need clarification.

Thank you,

The First Grade Team

WTW Homework

Monday-Closed Sort

On Monday, your child will have a baggie of words/pictures in the yellow envelope now attached to the inside of their red folder. This baggie should be kept in the envelope for the week. On Friday, the students will need the baggie at school.

Your child should sort the words into categories like the ones we did in class. This is called a **closed sort**. Start by putting the “header” (usually bold face and highlighted) or guide word at the top. He or she should read each word aloud and place it in the category that fits best. Ask your child to explain their reason why a word goes in a particular category. Ask your child to do it a second time as fast as they can, if you have time. Your child may need to make an “oddball” category (words that don’t fit a category).

Tuesday and Wednesday - Word Hunt

Your child should start by taking their words out and reviewing the categories. Assist your child in doing a **word hunt** by looking for words during reading which have the same sound, pattern or both as their word study words. This helps your child practice indentifying word features in a different content. Try to find 6 words to fit any of the defined categories (no oddball, please). If no words are found after reading, a good family brainstorming session works, too. These 6 words are due on THURSDAY!

Thursday-Written Sort/STUDY

The **written sort** should prepare your child for the test on Friday. As you call out the words in random order, your child should write the words in categories. They need to write it correctly in the category. These categories should follow the same pattern practiced during the week. Call out any words your child misspells a second or even a third time.

Friday-Test (at school)

An assessment will be given in school. This assessment will focus on both the spelling and sorting of the given words. Some students may be working with pictures; their assessment will focus on the ability to distinguish between given sounds using pictures.

A second part to the assessment is the sorting of words or pictures not sent home this week, but following the same pattern.

- On the back of the WTW assessment, you will see the Word Wall Assessment.