

Elements of Effective Instruction: Spelling and Writing

Grouping for Instruction

Use whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one instruction for writing and spelling instruction. Group children based on their interests, knowledge, or needs.

Explicit and Systematic Instruction

Spelling

- Some children learn to spell with little effort, but all children benefit from systematic spelling instruction and practice.
- Review words children have learned to spell. Expect children to correctly spell words previously learned.
- Consider children's knowledge and skills and teach the spelling of words they can read.
- Introduce frequently used and regular word spelling patterns before less frequently used and less regular patterns.

Example:

The phonogram *-am* is more commonly used than *-ax*.

- Limit the number of new spelling words or spelling patterns in one lesson.

Writing

- Use collaborative writing to help children learn how to write and spell. Collaborative writing provides a concrete demonstration of print concepts, letter-sound correspondences, the conventions of written language, and writing processes.
- Incorporate a variety of collaborative writing procedures to help children understand that spoken words can be transformed into print. Model writing of both narrative and expository texts.

Examples:

Collaborative writing involves children narrating a story or message as you record their words. Children do not write the message themselves. You can write children's names beside their contributions.

Interactive writing is a form of collaborative writing that scaffolds writing by having children "share" the pen as the words are written. You write less and less of the text as the year progresses. The goal is for the children to write independently.

Writing aloud is similar to a "think aloud." Teachers vocalize what they are thinking as they write and ask children to assist at various times. Teachers lead the discussion, encouraging children to contribute, expand, and sequence ideas. Writing aloud provides opportunities for children to learn how to select topics, organize ideas, and compose text.

Scaffolded Practice**Spelling**

- Provide extended practice for newly learned words or spelling patterns before introducing new patterns.

Example:

Dictate words and/or sentences and have children use plastic letters to spell words or write them on dry-erase boards.

- Expect that children may need to read words many times before they are able to spell them.
- Provide immediate feedback to reinforce correct spelling of newly learned spelling patterns.
- Encourage children to record words in notebooks or on word-bank cards. Children can use word banks to review previously taught words and to serve as a resource as they write.
- Introduce mnemonics to help children recall words, such as "there's an *ear* in *hear*."
- Provide multiple opportunities for children to make connections between words, their spellings, sounds, and meanings.

Examples:

Analyze and sort words into categories to focus children's attention on sounds and spelling patterns in words.

Have children hunt for words in their reading and writing that fit the spelling patterns they have studied.

- Use segmenting activities that encourage children to focus on the phonemic elements of words.

Examples:

Have children repeat a word and then say the sounds as they write the corresponding letters.

Encourage children to decode unfamiliar words during word sorts and other writing activities.

Writing

- Provide daily opportunities for children to write.
- Include writing materials and activities in centers/stations.
- Incorporate writing activities across the curriculum.

Progress Monitoring

- Expect children to correctly spell previously learned words.
- Encourage children to check and monitor their spelling. Ask children to read words after they have spelled them.
- Collect written work to help you, the children, and their parents see growth and development throughout the school year.
- Use children's spellings to monitor their phonemic awareness and their understanding of letter sounds and spelling patterns.
- Target specific spelling concepts as you plan instruction.

Adapted from the KTRA *Highlight—Spelling and Writing* presenter notes that are based on: Adams, 1990, 2001; Bear & Templeton, 1998; Carreker, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990; Fresch, 2001; Graham, 2000; Hall & Cunningham, 1999; IRA & NAEYC, 1998; Juel & Minden-Cupp, 2000; LFA, 2000; Moats, 1995; NRP, 2000; O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, & Vadasy, 1998; Poindexter & Oliver, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Templeton & Morris, 2000; Treiman, 1998; Wiley, 1999. (Complete citations are included in the *Spelling and Writing* reference pages.)