

Words Their Way - Word Study Program

Dear Grade 3 Families,

We have started an individual word study program called “Words Their Way.” This program teaches your child necessary spelling skills and engages their interest and motivation to learn about how words work. Students will discover the basic principles of spelling, such as alphabet sounds, patterns, meanings of words, and parts of words. All of these skills are important elements of a balanced literacy program.

Your child has been assessed and placed at their developmental word sort. Students will come home with a word sort list every second Monday. They are expected to sort and study this list so they understand the spelling pattern and know how to spell these words correctly in their everyday writing. Please ensure that they have all the words in a small baggie, envelope, or container and keep it somewhere that they can readily access it at home daily. These words can stay at home, as they have the same word sort words available at school. Please allow your child to sort the words with you and have them explain the word patterns and meanings to you. With this spelling program, the goal is not to just memorize the words, but to understand the sounds, patterns, and parts of the words. The sorting and categorizing of the words helps students gain an understanding that can be applied to other words in their writing with the same or similar pattern. We will focus on each word sort for two weeks in order to be able to participate in a variety of word work activities that will help us strengthen our in-depth knowledge of that particular spelling pattern. Please read through the parent guide attached to this note and feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your support!

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Descriptions of Word Study Patterns/Concepts

Purpose of Word Study

- It teaches students to examine words to discover the regularities, patterns, and conventions of the English language in order to read and spell.
- It increases specific knowledge of words – the spelling and meaning of individual words.

3 Layers of word study

- Alphabet – learning the relationship between letters and sounds
- Pattern – learning specific groupings of letters and their sounds
- Meaning – learning the meaning of groups of letters such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Vocabulary increases at this layer.

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

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

Sound marks / / - Sound marks around a letter or pattern tell the student to focus only on the sound rather than the actual letters. (example: the word *gem* could be grouped into the /j/ category because it sounds like j at the beginning).

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

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

Concepts in Order of Instruction

Initial and final consonants – students are instructed to look at pictures and identify the beginning sound. They then connect the beginning sound to the letter that makes that sound. Students then listen for the ending sound and match the sound to the ending letter.

Word Families – students match pictures to words that contain a word pattern/family. Words are in the same “family” if they have the same vowel and ending letters (example of words in the same family – cat, bat, fat, sat, etc). Short vowel sounds and rhyming are discussed.

Digraphs – letter combinations that represent only one sound (examples: sh, ch, wh, th – although there are two letters, only a single sound can be heard). Students can sort pictures or words that begin with these sounds.

Blends – letter combinations in which each individual sound can be heard (examples below)

Types of blends:

s-blends – sp, sk, sm, etc.

l-blends – pl, bl, gl, etc.

r-blends – dr, pr, br, etc.

Short vowels – students look first at pictures and listen for the middle, or short vowel, sound. They then look at the middle sound of “CVC” words.

- CVC – words that begin with a consonant, followed by a vowel, followed by a consonant (examples: *cat*, *bet*, *bug*)

Words begin with the simple CVC pattern and progress to words with more than one consonant at the beginning or end of the word (examples: *flag* (CCVC), *went* (CVCC), etc.).

Long Vowels – students begin examining words that contain more than one vowel and therefore make a long sound. They must distinguish between words with the short and long sounds (example: *cat* v. *cake*).

Special patterns:

- Students are taught that adding a “silent –e” to the end of the word (CVCe) makes the vowel say a long sound (example – *not* becomes *note*).
- -ck follows a short vowel sound and –ke follows a long vowel sound (examples: *clock* v. *joke*)

After applying the silent –e rule, students then learn additional long vowel patterns in which the two vowels are together between the beginning and ending consonants (CVVC). Examples of these patterns include *ai*, *oa*, *ui*, *ea*, and *ee* (words with these patterns: *rain*, *boat*, *fruit*, *treat*, and *feet*)

Students are then introduced to long vowel patterns in open syllables (syllables that end with the vowel sound – CV or CVV) including *ay*, *ow*, *ew*, *ue*, *y*, *igh*. In most cases, vowels that end the syllable make a long sound (examples: *hay*, *low*, *blue*, *by*, and *high*).

R-Controlled Vowels – when a vowel is followed by the letter *r* the letter *r* changes the sound of the vowel (*r* “takes control”). The vowel is no longer short or long, it is r-controlled. Examples of words with r-controlled vowels include *car*, *girl*, *fern*, *torn*, and *spur*.

Diphthongs – these are vowels that slide from one sound to another. They include *oi*, *oy*, and *ow* (examples: *boil*, *boy*, *cow*).

Hard and Soft Sounds for C and G –

C – the hard sound for the letter C sounds like a K (example: *cat*). A soft C sounds like an S (example: *cent*).

G – the soft sound for the letter G sounds like a J (example: *gem*), and its more frequent sound is hard (example: *go*).

The letters C and G generally make a soft sound when followed by the vowels *e*, *i*, and *y*. C and G generally make a hard sound when followed by the vowels *a*, *o*, and *u*.

Descriptions of Word Study Concepts Relating to Syllables, Affixes, and Derivations

Syllable – A group of sounds made with one impulse of the voice. A syllable always contains one vowel sound. There are 6 types of syllables. See descriptions below:

Syllable Type	Examples	Description
closed	cat, pond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has one or more consonants after a single vowel vowel makes a short sound
open	she, go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a single vowel in the final position vowel makes a long sound
vowel -consonant - e	ape, fine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a single vowel, followed by a consonant, and then final e the first vowel makes a long sound, the e remains silent
r-controlled vowel	her, star	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a single vowel followed by the letter r vowel sound changes to a combination sound
double vowel	team, sail, out, boy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has two vowels next to each other no consonant can affect their sound
final stable syllable	tumble, action, confusion, musician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> are usually the last syllable of a word generally unaccented final -le examples: ble, cle, dle, fle, gle, kle, ple, tle, sle, zle other examples: tion, sion, cian, etc.

Base word – the simplest form of any English word. A base is always a complete word with meaning when it stands alone. (example: *subtract* in *subtraction*)

Root – parts of a word, of Greek or Latin origin, that are attached to affixes but generally cannot stand alone (example: *opt* = “eye” in the word *optometrist*; *bio* = “life” in the word *biology*).

Compound word – a word made up of two or more small words (example: *rainbow*)

Affix – a letter or group of letters added to the beginning (prefix) or end (suffix) of a base word to change its meaning or its use in the sentence.

- Prefix – a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a base word which changes the word’s meaning (example: *un* in *unhappy*)
- Suffix - a letter or group of letters added to the end of a base word to change the word’s form or its use in a sentence (example: *ing* in *planting*)

Derived word – a word made from another by the addition of a suffix or prefix.

Accented syllable – a syllable that is spoken louder or in a higher tone than the other parts (example: in *comedy* the *com* syllable is accented; in *female* the *fe* is accented). One-syllable words are considered accented.

Syllable Junctures – students will learn where syllables are divided in order to read and write new words. The following are syllable division patterns:

- VC / CV – an accent could be on the first or second syllable. The syllable is divided between the two consonants (examples: *plastic* is divided between the *s* and *t*; *tonsil* is divided between the *n* and *s*).
- VCV – There are two ways to divide this type of syllable. If the first vowel has a long sound, the syllables are generally divided after the vowel V/CV (examples: *silent* is divided after the *i* ; *basic* is divided after the *a*). If the first vowel has a short sound the syllables are divided before the second vowel (examples: *credit* is divided after the *d*; *banish* is divided after the *n*).
- VCCCV – When there are three consonants between the vowels, the syllable is usually divided after the first consonant (examples: *pilgrim* is divided after the *l*). If the word is a compound word, the syllables are divided between the two words (example: *handbook* is divided between *hand* and *book*). If the word contains a digraph, the digraph stays together (example: in *panther*, the *th* stays together).
- V / V – if a syllable has two vowels that do not make one combined sound, the syllable is divided between the two vowels (examples: *poem* is divided between the *o* and *e*; *dial* is divided between the *i* and *a*).
- Final Stable Syllables – the cluster of letters that make up the final syllable remain together and the syllable is divided immediately before this cluster (examples: *simple* is divided before the *-ple*; *station* is divided before the *-tion*).