

4th Grade Spelling



September 25, 2008

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Formal Spelling Instruction Begins

This week, the fourth grade is beginning formal spelling instruction. This year, we will focus on teaching the children a variety of strategies to figure out how various words are spelled. These strategies include listening for sounds in words, using common spelling patterns, using knowledge of the relationship between words, and how to apply common spelling rules, or generalizations, about how to construct words. We believe that children must learn to develop good spelling habits, such as trying unknown words and using many resources to check their spelling.

Personalized Spelling Lists and the “Personal Word List”

Spelling is used most in writing. Therefore, it is best for children to focus on learning words that will be useful for them in their personal writing. While it is important for children to learn how to spell specific words, not all children need to learn how to spell the same words. This is why children will be given differentiated spelling lists. The children will be learning how to proofread their writing and choose words they need help spelling. Words students misspell in their own writing will be added to the “Personal Word List” at the back of their spelling journal. The personal word list is where students keep track of “*words I’d like to know how to spell.*”

Each individualized spelling list will consist of:

- **Focus Words** assigned from the *spelling focus* we are working on as a class. (During each 2-week spelling cycle we will *focus* on a particular *spelling pattern* or *word component*.)
- **Everybody Words** taken from a high frequency list of words 4th graders should know how to spell.
- **Personal Words** taken from each student’s own spelling mistakes.
- **Challenge Words** taken from content area vocabulary or other challenging words chosen by the student. *Not all students will be assigned or choose challenge words.*

Misspelled words will be added to the student’s *QuickWords Dictionary* for further practice and reference. This dictionary will be kept in your child’s accordion folder to use for spelling support at school and at home.

Spelling Activities

An important piece of our program is the type of word work activities done in class and assigned for homework. Research has shown that traditional activities such as “ABC order” teach kids how to use a dictionary, not how to spell. Our word work in school and at home will focus on activities that teach students the meanings of the words and give them practice to learn to spell them. Your child will be taught various strategies so that s/he can learn to use strategies that work best for them. Your child has a list of approved activities glued into the front cover of their spelling journal. Each student can choose any activity from this list that they know how to do. These activities are being modeled and practiced at school. If students want to use other activities to learn their words, they need to be cleared by the teacher first. (We’d be happy to expand the list of approved activities!)

Two-Week Spelling Cycle Schedule

This year, each spelling focus will be studied for two weeks. The chart below lists the activities that will generally be done for homework during each 2-week rotation. Please note that there are different assignments to be completed during week one and week two. Spelling homework should be done in the spelling journal. Spelling journals will be checked regularly for completion of homework. *Your child's current **personal spelling list** should be kept in the Spelling section of their accordion folder along with the spelling journal.*

WEEK ONE	HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT	DUE ON
THURSDAY	Word Hunt (Students use various print/text to find words that fit our spelling focus for the week.)	Fri
FRIDAY/MONDAY	Word Sort or other assigned activity. (Students sort spelling focus words into categories based on the pattern(s) given.)	Tue
MONDAY/TUESDAY	Personal spelling lists are assigned/created in class.	----
TUESDAY	Draw and Label half of the words on your list. (Students illustrate words with simple drawings. Note: use a dictionary to check meanings and illustrate multiple meanings of words.)	Wed
WEDNESDAY	Draw and Label the rest of the words on your list.	Thu
WEEK TWO	HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT	DUE ON
THURSDAY	One activity of your choice for each word on list. (Check "Activity List" in journal for choices.)	Fri
FRIDAY	None. (Students may work ahead if desired.)	---
MONDAY	One activity of your choice for each word on your list.	Tue
TUESDAY	One activity of your choice for each word on your list.	Wed
WEDNESDAY	Pre-test plus an extra activity on misspelled words .	Thu

The Spelling Journal

From now on, your child's spelling journal should be kept in the *Spelling* section of their accordion folder. **Your child's spelling journal should come home in the accordion folder every day.** The assigned homework is to be completed in the spelling journal.* **The spelling journal must be put back in the accordion folder and returned to school each day.** Spelling journals need to be at school each day so that students can:

- complete in-class spelling activities
- have spelling homework checked for completion, and
- add words to their word list when written work is checked and returned.

*Note: If your child forgets their spelling journal at school, they can complete their homework on a piece of loose-leaf paper and glue this into their spelling journal at school the next day.

We'd like to thank you in advance for your support of our spelling program. You can also support your child by encouraging him/her to read and write at home. As children become more experienced readers and writers, they will start to see more words spelled conventionally. This is another great way to help your child become a better speller.

Thank you,

Ashley DiMercurio
4th Grade Language Arts
Ritchie Park Elementary School

Karen Gramzinski
4th /5th Grade Language Arts
Ritchie Park Elementary School