

4th Grade Spelling



October 5, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Formal Spelling Instruction Begins

This week, the fourth grade is beginning formal spelling instruction. In fourth grade we 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 learning 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.

Poetry and Grammar Integration

Studies indicate that children learn best when content is connected to an authentic context and integrated across subject areas. To this end, we will be integrating poetry and grammar studies into each spelling study. Each spelling study will cover approximately 2 weeks, and will *focus* on a particular *spelling pattern* or *word component*. Each spelling study will be introduced using a “focus poem.” The focus poem will be recited and studied through the duration of the spelling cycle. There will also be a grammar or word study focus anchored to the focus poem and integrated with each spelling cycle.

Personalized Spelling Lists, the “Personal Word List” and the *QuickWords Dictionary*

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 from Our Poem of the Week.** (These will include focus words and words taken from a list of high frequency words that 4th graders should know how to spell.)
- **Focus Words from My Spelling Group** (Spelling groups are determined by each student’s developmental spelling stage; assigned words will correlate with developmental spelling patterns that students at their stage need to master.)
- **Personal Words** taken from each student’s own spelling mistakes.
- **Challenge Words*** taken from content areas, reading vocabulary, or other challenging words chosen by the student.

*Students with less than 4 words on their personal word list will be required to choose challenge words. Personal and Challenge Words may or may not be aligned with the current spelling focus. Personal Words that students continue to struggle with will be added to their *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 spelling 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, but 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. Work with the “focus poem” reinforces the roots of each spelling study and encourages students to learn to spell more

common words by sight, or memory. For practice on group and personal words, 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!)

Spelling Cycle and Spelling Homework

This year, each spelling focus will be studied for approximately two weeks. Spelling cycles will generally start on Monday and a spelling test will generally be given on the second Wednesday. The chart below lists. **Specific daily homework assignments should be recorded in the daily assignment book.**

DAY	CLASSWORK	HOMEWORK
1	<i>Introduce poem and spelling focus; Identify unknown words</i>	Recite Poem (<i>out loud</i>) Word Hunt <i>find other words in focus</i>
2	<i>Read poem together; post word hunt; vocabulary study</i>	Recite Poem (<i>out loud</i>) Word Sort or other activity (<i>glue or tape into journal</i>)
3	<i>Read/recite poem; review word sort Spelling lists given out; Introduce grammar focus</i>	Focus Poem assignment Spelling Activity or Assignment
4	<i>Read/recite poem; Homework check; Spelling extension activity (by group)</i>	Focus Poem assignment Spelling Activity or Assignment
5	<i>Read/recite poem; Homework check; Spelling extension activity</i>	
6	<i>Read/recite poem; poetry meaning or grammar focus</i>	Spelling Activity or Assignment
7	<i>Read/recite poem; poetry meaning or grammar focus</i>	Pre-test plus an extra activity on misspelled words.
8	<i>Spelling test; Grammar activity</i>	Grammar Assignment
9	<i>Grammar and/or poetry meaning focus</i>	Grammar Assignment
10	<i>Grammar and/or Poetry meaning quiz</i>	

The Spelling Journal

From now on, your child's *spelling journal* and their current *personal spelling list* should be kept in the **Spelling** section of their accordion folder. **All spelling homework should be done in the spelling journal.*** Any word sorts or other handouts should be completed and glued or taped into 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 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