

Farmington Literacy Instruction

Word Study

How does word study differ from the traditional teaching of spelling and language?

Traditional spelling and language lessons are based on whole group instruction of a single list of spelling words or a single language skill determined by conceptual theme, spelling feature, grade level, or spelling/grammar rule without consideration of a student's preexisting knowledge base. Students work to memorize words/rules through rote activities or exercises that are isolated and divorced from their individual reading and writing.

Word study acknowledges the predictable continuum of development and is student-centered. The lessons involve hands-on learning activities as students actively engage in a variety of tasks to learn about the English language. Students work with spelling and language in conjunction with their daily reading and writing.

What is word study?

Word Study in our balanced literacy framework is defined to include the study of the relationships between letters and sounds, learning about spelling patterns, generalizing spelling patterns, memorizing high frequency words used in reading and writing, language and vocabulary lessons, and dictionary and thesaurus lessons. Current research shows that learning about language and words by discovering the relationships between letters and sounds, by learning how these relationships impact spelling, and by directly tying this instruction to students' daily reading and writing helps students become more effective readers and writers.

What does a word study lesson look like?

- **Teacher Modeling:** The teacher introduces the concept explicitly modeling his/her thinking by sharing a model from literature, a student, or his/her own writing.
- **Shared Practice:** The teacher and students work together to apply the concept taught.
- **Guided Practice:** Students practice and apply independently or in small groups while the teacher offers feedback and support as needed.
- **Independent Application:** Students apply the concept in their daily reading and writing, as the teacher watches for continued evidence of understanding.

How do teachers make word study work in the classroom?

- **Establish a routine**
Here is a possible example:
Monday = introduce spelling to groups
Tuesday = practice sorts
Wednesday = introduce language lesson
Thursday = practice and apply spelling/language focus
Friday = spelling assessment
- **Use word study notebooks**
 - Sort and copy
 - Word Hunts
 - Sentences
 - Word Pictures
 - Draw and Label
 - Cut and Paste
 - Word Families, Roots, and Affixes
 - Picture Hunt
 - Root Webbing
 - Create-A-Word
 - Venn Diagram
 - Dictionary/Thesaurus
 - Collected example sentences exemplifying language lessons
- **Use mentor texts**