

Introduction

Spelling is one of the less interesting and more laborious aspects of writing. It can also be the most noticeable, one that can create a good or bad impression before the reader thinks about what the writer has to say.

- Phenix & Scott-Dunne 1994, p. 28

Spelling is one of the tools that facilitates the effective communication of the writer's message. It is an integral part of the writing process and should take precedence, in the publication stage of children's writing. Beginning writers need to know when spelling matters in the writing process. They need to know that composition, language use and organization are more important than accurate spelling in the early stages of the writing process. However, in the final draft, when the writing is ready for publication, accurate spelling will determine how the writing will be received by the audience. Beginning writers need to understand that accurate spelling in this stage is a courtesy to the reader and something to strive for.

Throughout the past decade there has been a growing misconception that schools no longer value nor teach spelling. There has been a public outcry that graduating students are unable to spell even the simplest words and see no value for accurate spelling. However, misconceptions often result when there are attempts at changing the way we understand or practice educational theory. Such was the case with spelling. As teachers were being encouraged to adopt process writing in their classrooms, they were also receiving the message that the use of basal spellers was not an educationally sound practice, and that the widespread use of invented spelling along with opportunities to read and write widely, would facilitate spelling growth. Much of this theory has a sound basis. However, teachers were not provided adequate opportunities to develop an understanding of the theory and classroom practices that would help them provide the instruction to facilitate growth in spelling development for young learners.

The implementation of changes in language teaching and learning left many teachers with the problem of how to ensure that primary children were taught spelling strategies. Teachers were expected to make decisions about the content of the spelling program, plan suitable activities and assess and evaluate children's knowledge and use of spelling. In many cases all of this was expected without adequate support for the classroom teacher.

Recent research has provided a clearer understanding of the process of learning to spell and how to facilitate progression through this process. It is understood that spelling development is facilitated by:

- involvement in meaningful language experiences in a print-rich environment
- an understanding of the individual nature of the developmental stages of spelling
- an understanding of the problem-solving nature of spelling development
- distinct lessons that promote an understanding of the process of rule generation and hypothesis testing
- the promotion of a spelling consciousness that values and promotes risk-taking

This *Spelling in Context: Directions for Teaching and Learning - A Guide for Primary Teachers* is designed to provide direction and support for teachers in planning for appropriate experiences in spelling, for young learners.

Philosophy

*A **classroom** that is stimulating, rich in resources, supportive, and immerses children in print...*

*A **teacher** who demonstrates language use, encourages children to experiment, and responds positively to children's language attempts...*

***Children** who are encouraged to take responsibility, use resources, experiment with language, and create further learning opportunities, are all part of an exciting world for teaching and learning spelling.*

- Lacey 1994, p. 11

Spelling is an integral part of the total school curriculum. It is taught and learned in the context of daily meaningful reading and writing experiences in a print-rich environment. The primary purpose of developing competence in spelling is to facilitate effective written communication. It must be understood that insistence on correct spelling all the time may limit the written communication of beginning writers.

Early spelling development is facilitated when beginning writers are invited to experiment with print and to invent spellings. The classroom environment should promote a spelling consciousness and value risk-taking. Beginning writers must realize that conventional spelling is the goal but that they have to experiment with words in their efforts to eventually "get it right".

Learning to spell is a developmental process of learning to apply different strategies appropriately. Spelling develops in clearly defined stages from prephonetic to standard spelling. Consideration should be given to these stages of spelling development when planning program content, instructional activities and assessment strategies.

Guiding Principles for Spelling Development

Spelling growth occurs when children are immersed in a variety of language experiences.

It is widely accepted that children grow as spellers when teachers support them as language users. For example, when teachers provide an environment that promotes a wide range of reading and writing experiences, they facilitate growth in skills that are necessary for the development of competent spelling.

Instructional practices which support spelling development include:

- shared and guided reading
- poetry reading
- silent reading
- reading chants
- reading aloud
- shared writing
- journal writing
- writing lists
- writing class news
- letter writing
- writing an invitation

Spelling is developmental.

Spelling develops in clearly defined predictable stages. These stages are as follows:

- prephonetic
- semi-phonetic
- phonetic
- transitional
- standard

Spelling strategies can and should be taught.

Planned instruction in spelling will help children develop skill in recognizing and using spelling patterns, word origins and derivations and solving spelling problems as they move towards competency in spelling. Bolton and Snowball (1985) list the following as strategies that are used by competent spellers. They use:

- knowledge of the **morphological structure** of words and the **consequent relationships between words**. The word unhappy is made up of two morphemes **un + happy**.
- knowledge of **graphophonic relationships**. Children need to know the variety of sound-symbol relationships, the probability of letter sequences, the likely position of letters in a word and possible letter patterns.
- **visual memory** to determine whether a word looks correct.
- **mnemonics** (memory aids).
- **resources** such as other people, word lists and dictionaries.

Program planning must include time for direct instruction in the use of these strategies and opportunities for children to apply these strategies in their daily writing experiences. Teaching practices, in the context of meaningful reading and writing, which facilitate growth in these areas include developing:

- **morphemic knowledge** (working with word families, compound words, contractions, plurals, affixes, abbreviations, comparatives/superlatives, classification, formation of tenses, homophones)
- **graphophonic knowledge** (listening for sounds, matching sounds to letters, experiencing rhyming activities, using different letters to represent the same sound, using syllabication, substituting letters in words, using sound and word patterns)
- **mnemonics** (using memory aids such as the **principal is your pal**)
- **visual memory** (using visual patterns, grouping words with letter patterns such as, **enough, cough, rough**)
- **resource skills** (experiences with alphabetical order, recognizing and reproducing the letters of the alphabet, developing dictionary skills and thesaurus skills, using classroom resources such as lists, word walls, theme words, charts and other students)

Effective adult modelling of spelling strategies facilitates spelling growth.

It is important that teachers model effective spelling strategies for children before expecting them to use these strategies in their writing. For example, children need to see adults using graphophonic and morphemic knowledge to spell unknown words. There are many opportunities in the daily classroom routines for modelling spelling behaviour. It is important for teachers to talk about and have children assist with the spelling of words in activities such as:

- developing experience charts
- writing letters to parents
- writing recipes, poems and stories
- outlining tasks for student completion
- editing teacher writing
- composing morning news

Spelling is a problem-solving activity that involves observing language patterns, formulating hypotheses about the spelling system and testing these hypotheses in written communication.

Children need to be invited to explore and experiment with spelling unknown words. They need to be reassured that “taking risks with getting it right” is an important step towards becoming a competent speller. When children use logical reasoning and their best knowledge to invent spellings, they extend their understanding of how words are constructed. As they “build words” they formulate hypotheses about how the word is spelled, they test that hypothesis in their writing and later refine the word to resemble the standard spelling. Children who view spelling as a problem solving activity, develop skill in looking for spelling patterns. Developing children’s confidence in using invented spelling and writing independently requires a supportive environment which includes:

- using Have-A-Go sheets
- frequent teacher modelling of invented spelling
- consistent encouragement to use alternative words
- praise for all attempts at spelling new words
- Word Construction Games that encourage risk taking

Words to be studied should come from a variety of sources.

There are high frequency words that all writers will need to know how to spell. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to help children identify high frequency words and to determine a method of learning to spell them. Many commercially-produced lists of high-frequency words are available for classroom use. Other words for study by primary-age children may include:

- words children misspell
- words from the Have-A-Go sheets
- words from theme studies
- words children request

Spelling is a tool that can facilitate comprehension of written communication.

Young children need to develop a sense of the importance of accurate spelling in written communication. They need to realize that it is a courtesy to the reader to produce relatively error free writing for publication. Perhaps one of the best opportunities for developing a spelling consciousness is during the writing conference.

Assessment and evaluation of spelling should be an ongoing part of the writing process.

Assessment and evaluation of spelling will provide valuable information for future program planning. It is important that any assessment and evaluation be well planned and time efficient. It must be based on developmentally appropriate practices. Wing Jan (1991) lists several areas that should be assessed when looking at spelling development, including:

- knowledge and use of sound-symbol relationships
- visual memory development
- morphemic knowledge development
- mastery of high-frequency words
- locating and using spelling resources
- attempts at spelling unknown words
- editing skills such as ability to locate and circle errors
- use of invented spelling in preference to known "safe" words
- choosing appropriate strategies for writing unknown words
- attitudes toward spelling

Parents are partners in their children's spelling development and should be knowledgeable about the program practices and their children's progress.

It is the mandate of the school to ensure that parents are knowledgeable about the content of their child's spelling program and appropriate practices to support growth and development. It is important that parents be informed before misconceptions are formed about how spelling is being taught. Most parents want specific suggestions about how they can support their children's learning. Methods for sharing this information include:

- letters and flyers outlining school spelling initiatives

- presentations
- parent-teacher conferences
- theme celebrations
- parent Make-and-Take nights (parents make spelling games to use at home)
- Back-to-School nights (to offer insights into particular issues relating to spelling)
- newsletters

Stages of Spelling Development

The primary role of the teacher is to provide appropriate spelling instruction for **all children**. A comprehensive knowledge of the complex nature of learning to spell and when and how to intervene to facilitate the child's movement to the next developmental stage is essential for effective spelling instruction. Spelling instruction requires that there be a real purpose, a sharing of information, and a time for meaningful practice. The following charts outline the stages of spelling development, the learning expectations and some instructional practices to facilitate growth in each stage.

Prephonetic Stage

During this stage the first attempts at writing are made. The child learns that symbols can be used to represent meaning. Children move from drawing to scribbling to using a mixture of letters, numbers and symbols.

Characteristics of Writing at the Prephonetic Stage

- random use of letters and numbers
- writing unable to be read by others
- repetition of symbols
- little evidence of sound-symbol correspondence
- preference for use of upper case letters

Expectations for learning at the Prephonetic Stage

It is expected that the child will:

- develop an interest in print
- develop the understanding that sounds and letters are connected
- demonstrate that print conveys meaning
- know the terms, letters, sounds, words, and sentences
- know the letter names
- distinguish sounds at the beginning and end of words
- listen for, recognize and suggest rhyming words
- write and read daily

Instructional Practices for the Prephonetic Stage

- model reading and writing daily
- create big books
- create word charts
- develop picture dictionaries
- create sentence labels for displays and objects around the classroom
- use dictations and experience charts to introduce the terms: letters, words, sentences and sounds
- support children in echoing or choral reading familiar chants and stories
- use rhyming chants and stories to introduce rhyming
- use pattern chants, poems, and stories to focus on a word
- develop word banks and word booklets and help children categorize words by common elements
- provide games to reinforce knowledge of letter names and sounds

Semi-Phonetic Stage

During this stage the child begins to make connections between sounds and letters. They often focus on using the name of the letter to help them spell and tend to write the sounds they feel and hear. They have grasped the concept of directionality and are gaining greater control over alphabet knowledge and letter formation. They generally include the first or predominant consonant sounds in words. They often do not have the concept of spacing.

Characteristics of Writing at the Semi-Phonetic Stage

- attempts to match each sound with a letter
- uses one or two letters to represent a word
- uses letter names to represent words (e.g., **r** to represent **are**)
- understands left to right orientation of letters

Expectations for Learning at the Semi-Phonetic Stage

It is expected that the child will:

- use invented spelling
- develop personal word banks
- develop the ability to hear sounds in different positions in words
- develop the ability to write sounds in the order that they are heard in words
- develop lists of high frequency words

- compile lists of words for reference when writing
- read and write many times daily
- use spacing in writing

Instructional Practices for the Semi-Phonetic Stage

- model reading and writing daily
- involve children in alphabet games such as **Alphabet Trails** and **Alphabet Sort**
- provide games such as **Word Stars** and **Sound Bingo**, to reinforce knowledge of sound/symbol relationships
- develop **Word Banks**, **Word Webs**, **Topic Word Booklets** and **Words I Know Booklets**
- model invented spelling
- talk about letters, sounds, words and sentences in shared reading experiences
- encourage children to categorize words by common spelling elements
- use writing or pattern dictations to focus on a word
- create sentence labels for displays and objects in the room

Phonetic Stage

During this stage the child more closely matches letters and sounds and have developed the concept that sound is the key to spelling. They make some generalizations for sound-symbol relationships. Children at this stage include more of the consonant sounds and begin to use vowels, especially long vowels. They use correct spelling for some high-frequency words. Their writing often contains a mixture of upper and lower case letters.

Characteristics of Writing at the Phonetic Stage

- uses knowledge of sounds to write words
- consonants are mostly represented (nasal consonants may be omitted)
- vowels begin to appear
- past tense is represented in a variety of ways
- uses correct spacing between words
- directionality is established
- incorrect pronunciation affects spelling of words

Expectations for Learning at the Phonetic Stage

It is expected that the child will:

- explore sound/symbol relationships
- focus on the visual features of words
- group words by using a variety of criteria
- understand that a letter can represent more than one sound in particular words
- understand that letters have names and not sounds and that letters represent sounds in the context of words
- use editing skills
- use Have-a-Go cards
- spell correctly commonly-used sight words
- understand when to use capital and lower case letters in his/her writing

Instructional Practices for the Phonetic Stage

- assist children in developing word families for basic vowel sound spellings
- provide games such as **Word Sort** to have children group words according to spelling patterns
- provide opportunities to do text searches for word groups
- provide opportunities for activities such as Word Sausages where children produce words linked around a particular sound
- use cloze activities with familiar words to have children match the sound with the letter or letters omitted
- encourage the use of invented spelling for unfamiliar words, using best knowledge of sound/symbol relationships and familiar spelling patterns
- encourage children to write extensively using their best spelling
- facilitate Word Hunts using books, magazines, newspapers

Transitional Stage

The writer is usually at this stage for a prolonged period of time. Children at this stage are moving from a reliance on sound to a reliance on visual representation. They generally include vowels in each syllable and are beginning to apply generalizations.

Characteristics of Writing at the Transitional Stage

- use of morphemic and visual strategies in addition to phonetic strategies
- high-frequency words are often spelled correctly
- use of vowels in every syllable
- vowel diagraphs used
- inflectional endings such as ed, er, and ing used
- frequent use of the e-marker

Expectations for Learning at the Transitional Stage

It is expected that the child will:

- extend vocabulary through a variety of meaningful reading and writing activities
- develop word building skills
- develop generalizations about words
- classify words according to visual patterns
- develop resource skills
- extend knowledge of plural formations
- use mnemonics to spell difficult words
- focus on the meaning relationship between words (e.g., sign, signal, signature)
- develop editing skills

Instructional Practices for the Transitional Stage

- use Word Sorts
- review common consonant and vowel patterns
- have children do word expansion (e.g., happy, unhappy, happier, happily, happiest, happiness. Focus on meaning change.)
- focus on the connection between vowel spelling and spelling changes when ing or ed is added to a word
- have children look for spelling patterns in two- three- and four-syllable words
- assist children with identifying their own troublesome words for study
- provide games and activities to expand homophone knowledge
- encourage children to write extensively using their best spelling

- have children develop a personal dictionary
- have children serve as spelling editors for each other
- have children identify their own troublesome words

Standard Spelling Stage

The writing at this stage demonstrates use of a wide variety of spelling strategies. Children at this stage understand that sound, semantics and syntax influence spelling. Their spelling indicates a growing accuracy with silent and doubled consonants. Children at this stage spell a large body of words correctly.

Characteristics of Writing at the Standard Spelling Stage

- use of all strategies to spell words
- large numbers of words are spelled accurately
- evidence of a developing sense of word structure
- accurate use of prefixes and suffixes
- accurate use and spelling of contractions and compound words
- ability to use spelling generalizations to spell new words

Expectations for Learning at the Standard Spelling Stage

It is expected that the child will:

- use a variety of strategies to spell words
- choose the most appropriate strategy to spell unknown words
- develop editing skills
- explore the origins and derivations of words
- recognize and use comparative and superlative adjectives
- extend on existing knowledge of use of resources to spell words
- develop an ability to select a variety of appropriate words to use

Instructional Practices for the Standard Spelling Stage

- review basic knowledge of transitional level
- create Word Sorts that connect sound and spelling changes in words
- construct Meaning Maps
- explore common Latin and Greek derivational forms
- have children combine forms to make nouns or adjectives (e.g., microscope-microscopic)
- have children use the thesaurus to select the most appropriate word
- have children use the dictionary to choose appropriate definitions
- model and demonstrate editing skills

Spelling Development in the Primary Classroom

Classroom Organization

A classroom that is rich in resources, supportive of children's attempts to learn language and immerses children in print is essential for facilitating growth in spelling. Creating such an environment requires careful planning on the part of the teacher. Classroom features should enable children to become independent learners and should include:

- a seating arrangement that encourages collaboration and allows all children to be part of the working group
- floor space for individual, small group and large group activities
- a reading corner that facilitates browsing and reading
- a variety of books, magazines and other print material
- a print-rich environment where displayed print can be easily read, such as in
 - high-frequency word charts
 - How-To-Help-Me-Spell charts
 - Words-We-Can-Spell charts
 - theme word charts
 - word family charts
 - spelling pattern charts
 - spelling generalizations charts
 - alphabet charts
 - Sound-Symbol charts
 - proofreading and editing tips charts
 - enlarged copies of familiar poems
- a variety of writing materials and resources located where children can easily access them, including:
 - pencils, crayons, markers, computer and printer
 - paper of various shapes, sizes and colours
- writing folders (including several writing samples at all stages of the writing process)
- children sharing writing with an audience

- teacher conferencing with individuals or small groups
 - booklet binding material such as staplers and tape
 - word cards and word dictionaries
 - Have-A-Go sheets
- a variety of teacher-made and commercially-produced spelling games and puzzles

Role of the Teacher

The primary teacher's role is very critical to spelling development with young children. It is important that through an integrated spelling program they:

- schedule times for purposeful daily writing
- determine the spelling needs of each child through ongoing assessment of children's writing
- select appropriate resources and support material including children's dictionaries, reference books, CD-ROMs, variety of children's books
- involve children in ongoing word study activities (e.g., creating word webs, word family patterns, developing class word lists, words following specific rules)
- involve children in the development of class word lists and personal word lists
- encourage children to evaluate their spelling growth over time through writing samples and spelling lists
- set up routines such as
 - using personal dictionaries
 - selecting problem words for study
 - using editing procedures
 - regular conferencing (individuals and group)
- engage in direct teaching to whole group, focus groups or individuals
- teach strategies that enable children to learn how to spell unknown words
- teach incidental lessons based on student's needs
- integrate spelling in all writing activities across the curriculum

Spelling in the Writing Process

(Note: Refer to the APEF Primary English Language Arts Curriculum Guide for more elaboration on the writing process.)

Daily opportunities to write for real purposes and real audiences are essential for children to develop an understanding and build a greater knowledge of the spelling system.

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Young writers must develop a spelling consciousness; a sense that spelling matters. They need to develop a concern for spelling accuracy. The editing stage of the writing process provides opportunities to develop a spelling consciousness and to focus on children's needs for future instruction.

Insistence on accurate spelling for beginning writers will limit the child's ability to communicate meaning. Children's knowledge of spelling often lags far behind their vocabulary. It is essential that children at the early stages of spelling development be encouraged to use invented or temporary spelling. Invented or temporary spelling is one step on the way to conventional spelling. Children who do not have confidence nor the support to use invented spelling may only write words they can spell rather than the rich array of words available to the child willing to take risks with invented spelling. Nurturing invented spelling is perhaps one of the best ways to enable beginning spellers to think about spelling and to apply their knowledge of the alphabet and awareness of phonemes in meaningful contexts.

Children gain confidence with using invented spelling when their teacher accepts and celebrates their attempts to use words, in their writing, that they do not know how to spell. The teacher's response to a piece of writing will facilitate growth in a child's willingness to take a risk with spelling.

Some possible ways of responding to children's attempts at using invented spelling include:

- accepting and celebrating all attempts to spell. Each time children attempt to spell a word, they increase their understanding of the basic skill of spelling
- making note and celebrating what the child is able to do. For example
"All the letters that you've written are exactly right. There's one left out; do you know where that one will go?"
"It was smart to use "ee" in that word. Have a look at the chart and see if you can find which other letters can be used for that sound."
"Imagine getting that word all right! How did you do it?"
- celebrating the vocabulary that children use. Let children know that it is natural that they cannot spell all the words they want to write.

Editing should be a natural part of the writing process. However, it may be difficult to guide primary-age children through editing strategies that require them to examine each letter of each word that they've written. When children begin writing for audiences other than themselves they should use their revising and editing skills. These include checking to ensure that:

- the text makes sense
- the information is presented logically
- the spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct
- there are no overused words
- there are no better words to use
- there are varying sentence lengths

By the time children reach Grade Three these skills should be an integral part of their writing. The development of these skills can be facilitated through modelling the steps in the process many times. This will help children develop an understanding of the process and how to follow it in revising and editing their own writing. There are several ways that primary teachers can and should model this process, including:

- revising and editing an adapted book or poem using enlarged print
- shared revising and editing of teacher-written text such as a letter to parents
- joint revising and editing of a commercially-produced text such as a children's book or newspaper
- partner revising and editing
- revising and editing using an overhead projector

The following guidelines for revising and editing may be displayed in the writing centre and included in writing folders:

- Look at each word carefully and ask, “Does it look right”?
- Read your writing out loud.
- Circle the words that you think may be spelled incorrectly.
- Ask yourself, “How else could the words be spelled”? Try one or two other ways to spell the words; then check it using any of the following resources:
 - class word charts
 - a friend
 - a computer spell checker
 - a dictionary
 - an adult
- Compare the differences in spelling and note the parts misspelled.
- Ask the teacher to make sure that you’ve circled all the misspelled words.

Teacher modelling will help children learn to use these guidelines effectively in their daily writing.

Mini-Lessons

Mini-lessons are generally short sessions that arise out of a teacher’s observations of children’s needs. They may be designed for the whole class or a small selected group. Mini-lessons involve direct instruction which may include teacher demonstrations as well as opportunities for student participation and practice. While the content of most mini-lessons is drawn from the children’s writing, there may be times when teachers will want to offer a mini-lesson to develop understanding of a particular skill. Suggestions for mini-lessons appropriate for Primary children include:

- working with letters
- working with sound-symbol relationships
- developing spelling rules
- modelling Have-A-Go-sheets
- building print awareness
- developing an understanding of word tense
- developing dictionary skills

- developing revising and editing skills
- using literature as a structural model for shared writing

A well-balanced spelling program for primary children should provide time for mini-lessons focused on broadening the child's knowledge about spelling and specific instruction in the writing conference intended to improve a particular piece of writing. Mini-lessons on spelling need not be limited to a particular time in the schedule for spelling. Rather mini-lessons related to spelling should be an integral part of the whole curriculum. Guidelines for a mini-lesson may include:

- ensuring that instruction time is kept short
- limiting the spelling concepts for focus to just one
- emphasizing the spelling context of words (sound-symbol relationship, spelling pattern, rhyming)
- selecting words and concepts from children's writing
- emphasizing problem solving with words
- providing time for applying concepts and practice

Using a Poem to Teach Spelling Concepts

Poetry can be used to develop spelling concepts. The following summarizes suggestions for using a poem to develop spelling concepts (Wing Jan, 1991):

Concept - *Print Carries a Message*

- Teacher points to each word and line as poem is read.
- Re-read the selection over a period of time to develop understanding that the message does not change.
- Match sentences to illustrations.
- Write pairs of sentences and read the smaller parts to children.

Concept - *Knowledge of Words and Letters*

- Stop at a particular word and talk about its beginning - middle - end, the number of letters, and the sounds made by the letters.
- Point to each word as it is read.
- Point to the words which are repeated.
- Plan word-matching activities.

- Draw children's attention to letters and sounds that are repeated.
- Suggest another word to replace the target word.

Concept - *Develop Sound-Symbol Relationships*

- Select words and ask the children the following questions
 - What letter can you see at the beginning?
 - What sound does it represent?
 - Can you see that letter anywhere else?
 - What sound does it represent?
- Teacher reads the poem and asks the children to
 - Clap each time they hear the **t** sound.
 - Clap when they hear the **k** sound in specified lines.
 - Name the sound heard in the beginning, middle, and end of a word.
 - Name the letter that represents the sound.
- Have children find particular letter patterns such as: words with double letters, words that end with **ug**, words that begin with the letter **p**.
- Change one letter to make a new word (e.g., **can**, **pan**, **fan**, **man**, **ran**).
- Construct a chart using words from the poem that begin with a particular letter.

Concept of Word

When children are surrounded by print and see print used for real purposes, they are more likely to develop a firm understanding of the concept of word.

- Word Sense 1994, p.23

In their early writing, young children do not usually demonstrate a knowledge of the concept of "word". They generally do not leave spaces between words, nor do they represent words by using the beginning or ending sound. In their initial attempts to use written communication, young children tend to string letters together in a line. It is only after they begin to develop the concept of word, that spaces appear between the letters and words. Young children need to learn that while oral language does not necessarily have pauses between words, written language does. To write effectively children have to know where one word ends and another begins.

Children gain awareness of what a word is through their reading and writing experiences. There are many daily opportunities to help children develop the concept of word. These include:

- shared reading of a chant, rhyme, poem or big book
- conferencing with children about their writing
- the teacher spelling out loud periodically as experience charts, and stories are written
- centre activities focusing on word games
- producing tactile words using materials such as plasticine
- using sentence strips from a favourite book or from children's written work. The child is read the complete sentence. Then it is cut into separate words which are mixed up. The child's task is to take each word and rebuild the sentence.
- purposeful dictation. The teacher dictates a list, riddle or message for the children to write.

As children develop confidence and competence in writing and refine their knowledge of the concept of a word, they sometimes use the period to indicate spaces between words.

Yesterday. My. Mom..bot. Me. A. Noy. Sowming. Pool.

There are many instructional strategies that can be employed to facilitate the child's development of the concept of a word and how words are constructed. These include Word Lists, Word Sorts, Words, Webs, Word Banks and Word Links.

Following are descriptions of some activities which can be used to support and reinforce the child's understanding of the concept of a word.

Word Lists

Word lists is one part of a well-balanced spelling program in the primary classroom. Words included in spelling lists should have an obvious connection to the language of the speaking, reading, and writing of the child. When spelling difficulties emerge in children's writing or when the classroom teacher sees a need to introduce a new spelling pattern to help children enlarge their spelling repertoire, word lists are useful to focus the study.

Word Lists for young children should be connected to meaningful reading and writing activities and drawn from a variety of sources including:

- words children frequently misspell in their writing
- words children have an interest in knowing how to spell
- words related to the topic or theme being studied
- words the teacher knows that children need (e.g., "Most Frequently Used Words" as shown in Appendix D).

Word lists can be effectively integrated with reading and writing activities such as relating to poetry. After discussing the content of a poem children can examine the use of certain words or parts of words (e.g., when teaching the suffix "able" use Shel Silverstein's poem, "Twistable, Turnable Man" in Appendix B).

Word Sorts

Word sorts enable children to see similarities and differences in words and to form their own generalizations about spelling. Word sorts can facilitate growth in working with patterns relating to sound, structure and meaning. Using the word lists, children can sort the words according to the following criteria:

- words with the same sound
- words with double letters or a blend
- words with a prefix
- words with a suffix
- alphabetical order
- vowels and vowel combinations
- particular spelling patterns
- words with two syllables
- compound words
- names of towns and cities in Newfoundland and Labrador

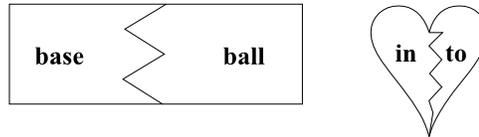
Wordo

Wordo is a game which can be used to help children develop the concept of word and learn to recognize and spell high-frequency words. Wordo cards have different words in each of the squares. All the words used on the Wordo cards are also on separate cards. A caller picks a word from these cards and the players place a marker on a square which contains that word. The first child to fill the Wordo card is the winner and becomes the caller for the next game.

W	O	R	D	O
cat shoe pencil	little school play	bus door car	over home ran	house blue it

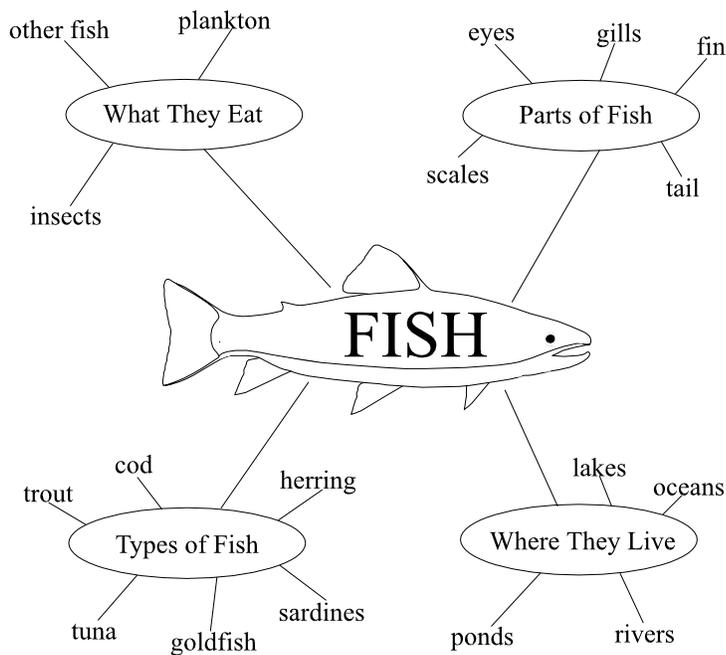
Compound Word Match-ups

Compound words from the word study lists can be printed on various shapes such as ice cream cones and scoops of ice cream, dogs and doghouses, and broken hearts. The task for the child is to put the pieces together to make compound words.



Word Webs

Word webs are created with the teacher and the children brainstorming and grouping words. They are graphically displayed so that words can be added as the theme or topic evolves.



Word Banks

When children have a consistent understanding of what a word is, they can start collecting and writing all the words they know or would like to know how to read and write for their personal word bank. The cards for the personal word bank should be stored in a container. Young children should be directed to write their initials on the back of each of their cards so that misplaced cards can be returned to their owners.

Word bank cards can be used in a variety of ways to develop word study strategies. These include:

- grouping words according to various criteria
- learning to spell using the Look-Say-Cover-Check method
- learning alphabetical order

The word cards in a word bank should be removed weekly and placed in the child's personal dictionary or the "Words-I-Know Book." The teacher might want to use the words from the word bank to help children refine their understanding of how to use the words and how to spell them.

Word Links

Word chains is an example of a way to illustrate word links. In word links children have to figure out what the common characteristic is in all the words. In the following word chain, the common characteristic is the long a sound.

Lake	Say	Made	Play
------	-----	------	------

Appropriate common characteristics for early primary children might include beginning and ending sounds. Early primary children might also enjoy working with word links in the form of word worms or word caterpillars.

Alternate Word

Younger writers tend to overuse some words such as "like". Alternate words can be recorded in booklets or on classroom charts to encourage children to use more expressive words and to expand their vocabularies. The alternate words

can be generated through word searches or brainstorming sessions. The whole class may collaborate on making an “Alternate Words Booklet”.

Text Searches

During Text Searches children are given a time limit to search a familiar text (e.g., stories, poems) to find and write all the words that fit particular criteria. For example, after several readings of Bill Martin’s *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*, children might be asked to find and write all the colour words in the book.

Word Task Cards

Word task cards can be adapted for any developmental level. The teacher (or peer) selects one of the spelling task cards and reads it to the children. The children are asked to write the word. The teacher (or peer) then selects another card and repeats the procedure.

Examples:

Write a compound word.	Write a word that starts with b .	Write a word that rhymes with me .	Write the letter at the beginning and end of ran .
------------------------	--	---	---

Note: The content and difficulty of these task cards can be adapted to the needs of the children and the concept being studied.

Word Detective

As children develop expertise with being word detectives, the teacher might want to have them explore different categories. The Hidden Word Task sheets might ask the children to find hidden words, list other words with the same first or last letter and write rhyming words or words that could be used instead of the list word. The level of difficulty would depend on the children.

Examples:

Word Scene	Hidden Words
shopping	hop, pin, shop, in
airport	air, port

Word Scene	Hidden Clue Words	Same First Letter Words	Rhyming Words
head	he	heel, hit, hem	bed, led, fed, wed
will	ill	went, wool, wed	fill, pill, will, sill

Letter Clue	Name of a Person We Know	An Animal
B	Bradley	Bear
D	Danielle	Dog

Spelling activities such as these are best used for cooperative learning groups.

Developing Graphophonemic Strategies

Spelling is a skill of constructing words. Children begin with letter knowledge and phoneme and grapheme relationships and later shift to reliance on visual-orthographic strategies.

- Tarasoff 1994, p.37

Spelling involves problem solving using letters, sounds and patterns. Solving spelling problems might be relatively simple if there were a direct correlation between the letters of the alphabet and the sounds spoken in the English language. Instead we have twenty-six letters to represent more than forty sounds. This is further complicated by our tendency to spell and pronounce the same sound in different ways (e.g., “**F**” and “**gh**” sound in **far**, **laugh**, **cough**, **bough**, **phone**). However, in many cases, the sounds in words do correspond to letters. They are generally predictable and follow familiar patterns. Beginning writers should be assisted in recognizing and using these patterns in their attempts to spell. Phenix and Scott-Dunne (1991) list the following patterns that might guide attempts to spell.

1. Most consonants are represented by the letter you expect.
If it sounds like a “t”, it is probably a “t”.
2. The sound/symbol relationship in most words is highly predictable
dad, remember, prehistoric
3. There are clusters of words which share the same sound-symbol pattern.
*gate, state, rate, hate
seat, meat, neat, heat,*
4. There are patterns related to the sequence of letters in words.
*We always use “qu” for the
“kw” sound at the beginning
of words.*
5. Some sounds are represented by two letters.
*Shape, shop, smash, snow
chin, check, church, charge*

Young children need to know which letter or combination of letters are possible, reasonable and probable, and which are impossible, and improbable when attempting spellings of words. This knowledge will enable children to use their sound/symbol strategies to solve many spelling problems.

The *Department of Education Spelling Handbook For (Elementary) Teachers* (1995) lists strategies based on sound-symbol relationships that children should be encouraged to use in their attempts to spell. They are:

- say and write each sound
cat - c/a/t
- say and write each smaller unit
transportation - trans/por/ta/tion
- enunciate each word clearly
pumpkin
- say and write the sound of the word families
ai - pain, gain, mail, rail

In many instances, young children can learn to use sound-symbol correspondences and spelling patterns without much direct instruction. Many teachers draw children's attention to letters, sounds and spelling patterns within the context of reading and writing activities. Involving young children in activities such as repeated readings, finger pointing, framing of spelling patterns, finding rhyming words, finding words that start with the same letter or letter cluster support growth in graphophonic knowledge and spelling development. For most primary children this incidental instruction is sufficient. However, some children's use of invented spelling might indicate a need for more direct intervention. This calls for the teacher to demonstrate the strategies and to create teaching situations and activities to direct children's attention to strategy development and practice using the strategy in real life situations. In such situations emphasis should be on the application of spelling generalizations to spell new words rather than on committing the generalization to memory.

There are many activities that can help reinforce this knowledge, including Sound Ball, I Spy, Word Wheels, Word and Letter Ladders, Family Words and Word Families, Syllable Posts.

If you decide some direct teaching is needed, teach using some words, practice using different words and assess using still different words.

- Tarasoff 1994, p. 48

Sound Ball

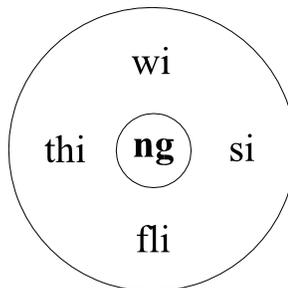
The teacher provides the first word and throws the ball to a child. The child must provide a rhyming word for the first word. He/she throws the ball to another child who must do the same.

I Spy

The first child names an object visible in the room and says, “**I spy with my little eye something that begins with a “t”**”. The first child to correctly name the object gets to name the next object.

Word Wheels

To make a word wheel two circles, one smaller than the other, are fastened together at the center. An initial consonant word wheel would have consonants written on the larger circle and word parts on the smaller circle. When the larger circle is turned new words are made by combining different consonants and word parts. To make a word wheel for final consonants, the consonants would be written on the smaller circle and the word parts would be written on the larger circle.



Word and Letter Ladders

Word and letter ladders provide opportunities for children to explore spelling patterns and create new words using these patterns. A reproducible copy of a letter ladder is available in *Word Games Level A*. To make a word ladder, one letter in the word on the previous rung must be changed. The letter ladder allows the child to make new words by changing the first or last letter.

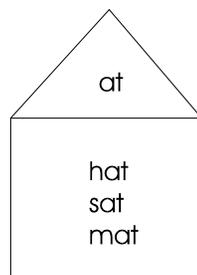
Family Words

Early in the school year it would be beneficial for children to brainstorm a list of family words such as **mother, father, grandmother, and cousin**. This chart of family words can be displayed. Many children will find it helpful to be able to refer to the chart when they proofread their writing. These words might also be added to their Word Bank and their Personal Dictionaries.

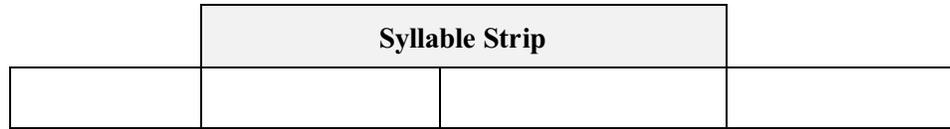
Word Families

Developing word family charts with young children is one way of focusing on how new words are made by changing just one consonant. Many teachers use graphics (e.g., shapes of houses) to record word families. The common part of the word is written on one part of the shape and the words including the common part are written on the other part of the shape.

Example:



Syllable Strips



Each rectangle represents a syllable. The children are provided with counters and the syllable strip. As the teacher pronounces a word the children are required to place a counter in a rectangle to represent each syllable heard in the word.

Developing Visual Strategies

Expert spellers generally use a visualization strategy, that is they use visual imagery to encode the spelling and visualization to retrieve it from memory.

- Tarasoff 1994, p. 29

Children need help to learn how to use visual strategies to spell words. They need to be shown how to use visual imagery through activities such as the following:

- Print a word on paper, a chalkboard or a computer screen. Tell them that you are going to erase it but that they will still be able to see it. Most children will understand that they can “pretend” that the letters are still there. Then ask them to read the letters after they are erased.
- Print a short word on paper, a chalkboard or a computer screen. Tell the children that you will pick up the word between your thumb and forefinger and that they will be able to see the word between your fingers. Have them then read the letters that they visualize.
- Ask children to imagine they are watching their favourite television show or playing a computer game. Ask them to watch the screen in their heads to see what is there. Then have them clear the screen and put the letters for a word on their screen. Have them tell you what letters are there. (Tarasoff 1992, p.111).

There are many activities that will help children develop visual strategies. These include:

- **Word Frames**
Children draw frames around each letter of the word to show the body, tail and head of the letter.
- **Word Shapes**
Words are outlined and children print the letters outlined to produce the word.

- **Word Blanks**

The teacher provides a series of letters and blanks. The correct letters are written down and blanks are included for the letters missed. The children work as a team to create as many words as they can using the letters and the blanks.

- **What's My Message**

The teacher gives the children a message with the vowels missing. The children decode the message by providing the vowels.

Example:

This mrnng w wll d mssng vwls mssgs.

- **Five-Step Method**

Peters (1985) suggests another model for developing visual strategies. He suggests the following five step method of spelling words.

Look at the word carefully and in such a way that you will remember what you have seen.

Cover the word so that you can not see it,

Write the word from memory, saying it softly to yourself as you are writing

Check what you have written. If you have not written the word correctly, do not alter it, instead go back and repeat the steps again.

- **Have-A-Go Sheets**

Have-A-Go Sheets may be used to record children's attempts to visualize the correct spelling of a misspelled word drawn from the writing. See **Appendix A** for a sample Have-A-Go Sheet.

The words for the Have-A-Go Sheet are chosen during the proofreading or conference stage of the writing. It is important to limit the number of words for spelling attempts. Children who are asked to work on large numbers of misspelled words may become discouraged by the process. In the initial stages of using Have-A-Go Sheets it is suggested that children

not be asked to work on more than five misspelled words. This may be increased to ten as children progress in their writing and gain expertise in using the sheets. As children try to spell the words correctly on the Have-A-Go Sheets there are some things that teachers could do to help children learn the correct spelling, including:

- underlining words in the writing that the child is expected to work on
- praising the child's first attempt
- rewriting the words spelled correctly in the standard spelling column
- writing the letters (of an incorrectly spelled word) that are correct with blanks for missing or incorrect letters in the second try column. Ask the child to try again. (selver, s__lver)
- if the word is again spelled incorrectly, writing it in the standard spelling column explaining the changes.

Developing Strategies Based on Meaning

In addition to sound/symbol relationships, spelling patterns are related to meaning and word origins.

- Tarasoff 1992, p.77)

There are many spelling patterns based on meaning. It is not as important that children know all the rules that govern these spelling patterns as it is that they use such things as prefixes, suffixes, contractions, compounds, possessives, homonyms, and inflectional endings accurately in their writing. Some of these patterns may be introduced during Mini-lessons, but many of them would be more appropriately dealt with in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities across the curriculum. As children move through the primary grades and through the stages of spelling development their understanding of various spelling patterns and generalizations should evolve including the following:

- **contractions** are two words put together and shortened by omitting a vowel or a consonant + a vowel. (they are = they're)
- **compound** words are formed by joining two words together. In compound words the spelling and meaning relationship remains the same. (Snow+ball = snowball)
- **possessive** form ('s and s') indicates ownership. (Mom's, sisters')
- **homonyms** have the same sound but have different spellings and meanings (there - their, made - maid, to-too-two)
- **inflectional endings** usually have consistency in spelling and meaning, as in
 - ▶ **ing** endings - happening now, **ed** endings - already happened, **es** endings - meaning more than one, **er** endings - meaning more, **est** endings - meaning most
- **prefixes** added to the beginning of a root word change the meaning of the words. The spelling of the prefix remains constant, (e.g., happy - **un**happy)
- **suffixes** added to root words, change the meaning of the root words, (e.g., wash - **able**)

However, there may be minor changes in the root word when an inflectional ending is added. These include:

- ▶ doubling the final consonant in words with the **consonant-vowel-consonant** pattern
- ▶ dropping the final **e** before adding **ing**
- ▶ changing **Y** to **I** and adding **ed, er, es, and est**

Developing Resource Strategies

There are many resources in the child's environment that may be used to help the child spell accurately. Primary teachers must make children aware of these resources and how to use them effectively.

Environmental Print

Primary Children need to be taught how ... to use external resources such as environmental print.

- Phenix & Scott Dunne 1994, p. 45

Children should routinely be taken on print walks around the room to read the chants, rhymes, charts and songs on display. Another quick way to draw children's attention to environmental print is to send them on print hunts using clues drawn from print displays. This is a good cooperative learning activity which can involve teams of children working to find the word or words.

Children could be asked to find:

- the words that have ear in them
- the words beginning with ch
- the words with two syllables
- the words that indicate something happened before
- a book that would have words about pets in it

Using a Dictionary

Children need to be taught how to use a dictionary to find spellings. Using the dictionary requires knowledge of phonic patterns to generate possible patterns.

(Tarasoff 1994, p.57)

Primary classrooms should have copies of children's dictionaries. To look up a word in a dictionary children must know:

- alphabetical order
- the first few letters of the word

- consonant sounds and the possible alternatives such as:
 - ▶ if it sounds like **f**, it could be **ph**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **j**, it could be **g**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **k**, it could be **c, ch, qu**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **n**, it could be **kn, gn, pn, mn**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **r**, it could be **wr, rh**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **s**, it could be **ps**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **t**, it could be **pt**
 - ▶ if it sounds like **o**, it could be **ho**
 - ▶ **q** is always followed by **u**
 - ▶ **w** is often followed by **h**

Search skills are important for children to use the dictionary effectively. There are many activities that will help children develop good search skills, including:

Alphabetical Order

Relays are useful games to help children develop alphabetical order skills. Getting into order is another useful game where children are instructed to arrange themselves into alphabetical order.

Letter Challenge

Teacher or another student says a letter and challenges the other students to open the dictionary at that letter.

Name Challenge

Challenge the children to open the dictionary at the place where their name would appear. This is a good baseline to search either forwards or backwards.

Guide Words

Children should be taught how to use guide words in their search for a particular word. The teacher and/or peers can name particular words and the other children can search for the guide words which would aid them in finding the particular words.

Answer Search

Children are asked to use the dictionary to find answers to questions such as:

- Would you eat a klieg?
- Do you have a hogget at home?
- Where would I find a patella?

Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices should not be the first strategy for learning spelling. However for some words they are useful. Some examples of useful mnemonic devices are:

- The **p**ri**n**ci**p**al is your **p**al.
- A **s**e**c**re**t**ary can keep a **s**e**c**ret

Computers

Computers can be a tool to assist children with their spelling. The use of word processing within a writing program can be useful. Spell check is a valuable aid but cannot replace the editing process.

There are commercial programs that can help students with their spelling. However, teachers need to be cautious when reviewing and selecting programs to ensure that the needs of students are being met.

Parents As Partners

Most parents want their children to be effective readers and writers. Because they equate reading and writing with phonics and spelling, they need, and have a right to feel adequately informed about their children's skill and progression in these areas.

- Powell & Hornsby 1993, p.134

There is growing evidence that the more parents and teachers work together, the more successful schools are in educating their children. The child's best educational opportunities and future growth depend on the combined effort of parent and teacher. If parents and teachers are to work together to ensure that children receive the best educational opportunities, then teachers have to ensure that parents are informed about:

- the spelling program being offered in the classroom
- the progress of their child
- how they can help their child at home

Parents should be informed about the spelling practices in their child's classroom before misconceptions are formed. The following are examples of ways that this could be accomplished

Make-and-Take Nights

Parents are invited to come to the classroom to make spelling games to use with their children at home. The teacher has the materials and instructions ready for the parents to produce the games. It may be advisable to demonstrate how to use the games before the parents take them home.

Program Presentations

There should be a time set aside for explaining the spelling program specifics to parents. At this time the teacher can outline the expectations for spelling. This will help dispel any misconceptions that the parents may have about spelling before they become major issues. It would be preferable to hold this early in the school year.

Teacher-Parent Conferences

Information about the spelling program and the child's spelling progress could be shared with parents at this time.

Newsletters and Letters

Newsletters and letters are useful for keeping open communication between the home and the school. They can include information on upcoming themes, tell about home activities that could reinforce what is happening at school and explain new strategies that the children are learning. An explanation such as the following can help parents understand the rationale for accepting invented spelling at the early stages of writing.

- Learning to spell is a developmental process like learning to talk. We do not expect a two-year old to be able to use mature speech patterns, nor do we expect a beginning writer to be able to use conventional spelling.
- Spelling is a complex process. Children need time to think and develop as spellers just as they need time to think and develop as readers and writers.
- Using invented spelling in the beginning stages frees the beginners to take risks when writing. However, published writing requires standard spelling.
- Stress the importance of writing.
- Advise parents not to be critical.
- Persuade parents to make time for writing.
- Encourage parents to have fun with spelling.

See **Appendix B** for samples of newsletters.

Practical Suggestions for Parents*

Parents often wonder "How can I help my child to become a better speller?" Here are a few suggestions:

Be a role model for reading.

- Let the child see you reading.
- Visit the library on a regular basis.
- Give the child books, magazines, newspapers, etc.
- Provide opportunities for the child to send and receive mail.

Read to your child every day.

- Choose interesting materials.
- Encourage the child to read to you, and to other members of the family.

Provide opportunities for reading.

- Collect simple recipes and allow the child to cook with you.
- Leave lots of notes. Place them on the fridge door or in the child's lunch box.
- Play board games that encourage reading or word play such as Scrabble, Wheel of Fortune, and Spill and Spell.

Be a role model for writing.

- Set up a writing corner. Have a good selection of materials available. Vary the paper (lined and unlined) by size, colour, texture, and shape.
- Purchase blank books or make your own by stapling pages together. Wallpaper scraps make good covers.
- Encourage your child to share his/her writing.
- Provide an incentive for your child to write by typing out some of the writing. If possible, they may use a typewriter or word processor.
- Encourage your child to keep a special diary for private writing where feelings and opinions can be freely expressed. Promise them you will respect their privacy.
- Keep a journal when travelling as a family so all the members can write about what they see and discover.
- Have your child assist you in writing out grocery lists. If your child comes with you when you go shopping, have him/her check off items as they are picked up.
- Crosswords and Find-A-Word are fun games that focus attention on spelling. Have children design their own to give to another family member. A personal dictionary can also come in handy at this time.

Encourage the Writing of Letters.

- Encourage your child to write thank-you notes for presents received.
- Write to grandparents and other relatives and friends.
- Write postcards when on holiday.
- Write to penpals.

Encourage Creativity.

- Encourage your child to rewrite television commercials or make up new ones.

- Encourage your child to illustrate his/her writing - start a file of pictures, photos, illustrations and cartoons to use in illustrating writing. (Such a file can be a great tool in helping to motivate the reluctant writer.)

Spelling at the Computer.

- If you have a personal computer, purchase a program that involves children spelling for a real purpose (e.g., making up a crossword, rather than simply drilling their spelling).
- Spell check can also be a valuable tool when writing.
- Talk frequently with your child about what s/he is interested in, where s/he is going, etc. Children learn new words by hearing others use them.
- Support your child's attempts, encourage best-guesses. Point out when words are spelled like other familiar words or when they have beginnings or endings. Older children may circle words they think they've misspelled. Decide on the number to be fixed and talk about how to find the standard spellings.

*Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, (1995). *Spelling Handbook for (Elementary) Teachers*.

Information for Parents*

A common question asked by most teachers is how do I explain invented spelling to parents. It is natural for parents to express some concern about their child's spelling. The following are some examples of ways that this could be accomplished.

- Explain your school policy on spelling through back-to-school nights, district and school newsletters, letters to parents, home school meetings, and theme celebrations.
- At parent conferences discuss spelling growth noted in writing samples.
- Outline with parents your expectations for spelling in your classroom.
- An explanation of the following, along with concrete examples, will help parents understand the rationale for accepting invented spelling at the early stages of writing.

What is the best way for me to help my child with an unknown word?

First, pause and provide time for the child to figure it out. If the child is not confident with decoding, supply the word rather than asking him/her to “sound it out”. As the child gains confidence, pose questions such as, “What word would make sense there?” or “What would happen if you skipped the word and kept reading? Do you think you could figure it out then?” When you interrupt the meaning that is being formed between reader and author by asking the child to focus on letter/sounds, you are teaching him/her inadvertently that reading is saying the words correctly. The message that should be conveyed is that reading is for meaning.

What should I say when my child asks me how to spell a word?

Respond first by saying, “How do you think you spell it?” or “How would you spell it if you didn’t have anyone to help you?” When very young children begin showing an interest in writing, they usually ask their parents to write for him/her. As they learn what the letters are and how to form them, they usually ask how words are spelled. At that point, you should spell the word for him/her. However, once children have made phonetic connections, they can make fairly accurate attempts at spelling themselves, even if at this point they are only representing words with a single letter or just consonants.

As a parent, you need to praise these early attempts and encourage more writing. If your child insists you spell words for her, ask her to help you, but keep trying to shift the spelling attempts back to her. For example, instead of telling your child that you can’t read his/her writing, ask her to read it to you. Then praise any letter/sound connections s/he makes. Some children need a little extra time to make these connections. You may, however, want to have your child’s hearing checked - just to make sure there is not a problem in that area that you just haven’t detected.

When you read to your child, you also may want to occasionally point out connections between letters and sounds. You could play with magnetic letters on the refrigerator door or even write words and point out beginning sounds. You also could take dictation for your child. Then as s/he starts to hear beginning sounds, play games that help him/her listen for the middle and ending sounds in words.

Does invented spelling teach children to spell incorrectly?

When children learn to talk, parents celebrate all their babblings that sound like mama and dada. Invented, or temporary, spelling is very similar to those

first “words”. In the same way, you need to celebrate children’s first attempts at writing words. Initially, very young children are not able to write entire words. In fact when they begin attending to letter/sound connections, they often begin writing words using only the initial consonant or the predominant sound of the word. Because spelling is a developmental process, children need praise for what they can do. With lots of modelling and encouragement, children will learn more phonics and spelling patterns that will help them move toward more conventional spellings.

Why aren’t all the words on my child’s papers spelled correctly?

When children are composing rough drafts, they may use dashes in place of letters they don’t know, or they may underline words they’re not sure they’ve spelled correctly. Many teachers don’t encourage them to go back and correct all the words they don’t know - particularly if they are only writing drafts that won’t be published. When writing is to “go public”, however, teachers usually expect their students to attend to spelling and they may even ask students to correct a certain number of words, depending on their abilities. Some teachers also ask parent helpers or a rotating editorial committee of children to help in correcting all remaining misspelled words before a piece is published.

What can I do at home to help my child with phonics and spelling?

Read as much as you can to your child. When s/he wants to read along with you, encourage him/her and give her just the words she doesn’t know. When you come to a section of the text that you think the child might know, stop and wait with expectation - because children love to join in if they can. Celebrate when the child reads with some success. You might ask such questions as “How did you know it was that word?” or “How did you figure that out?”

Also, let your child see you write for many purposes - such as grocery lists, phone messages, and letters. When you come to words you’re unsure of, comment on that. Let him/her know it’s normal to be unsure of spelling sometimes. Then ask him/her to add to your shopping list, write letters to family and friends, make cards, and take phone messages.

*Debbie Powell and David Hornsly. (1993). *Learning Phonics and Spelling in a Whole Language Classroom*. Scholastics Inc., Ontario. (Used with permission.)

Assessment and Evaluation

Spelling assessment should be related to the writing context and to the goals for learning spelling.

- Tarasoff 1994, p. 77

Spelling is taught and learned in the context of meaningful language experiences so that children may develop as effective writers. If children are not provided many opportunities to communicate their thoughts and ideas through writing then there is no tangible reason for learning to spell. Assessment and evaluation of spelling must also be done in the context of meaningful language experiences.

Assessment involves the gathering of data - through a variety of measures such as observation, writing conferences, work samples, and tests.
Evaluation involves analyzing and placing a value on that data and making judgements and decisions based on the analysis and the strengths and needs of the students.

The purposes for assessing and evaluating spelling are to determine:

- what the child knows about spelling strategies and patterns (Spelling Knowledge)
- what needs to be taught to become an effective writer (Instructional Implications)
- growth over a period of time (Growth)

Assessment and evaluation are integral to the teaching-learning process. The assessment data must provide information about children's progress and data to evaluate the program's effectiveness. Authentic spelling assessment must be carried out in the context of meaningful reading and writing experiences. It must have implications for instruction and program planning. The data collected should provide insight into what children already know and what they need to know to become competent writers. Observation of children as they write and careful analysis of their writing will provide information to inform the teaching.

Since spelling is a developmental process, there is a need to analyze children's spelling growth over an extended period of time and in relationship to what is developmentally appropriate. Analysis of one writing sample will not be sufficient to construct a complete image of the child's spelling ability. It is necessary to collect dated samples of children's writing for different purposes and at different stages of the writing process to get a more complete view of where the child is developmentally. While journal entries and initial draft writing may provide evidence of those spelling strategies that are part of a child's repertoire, writing samples that have been proofread may provide a more complete picture of all the strategies that the child understands and uses for spelling.

The classroom teacher must be knowledgeable about the developmental nature of learning to spell, the appropriate spelling strategies and how to find evidence of them in children's writing. Spelling behaviours which teachers look for in assessing spelling include:

- sound-symbol knowledge
- visual memory development
- developing morphemic knowledge
- mastery of high frequency words
- location and use of spelling resources
- attempts to spell unknown words
- proofreading skills (i.e., ability to locate, circle error and underline the part which the child is unsure about)
- the use of invented spelling in preference to safe spellings
- resource skills
- appropriate choice of strategies for writing unknown words
- attitudes towards spelling
- interest in words

(Wing Jan 1991, p. 90)

Process and Product*

Any assessment and evaluation of achievement in spelling must be done by assessing and evaluating the process and the product.

Process

Children's use of spelling strategies

- Discovering the rule
- Noting exceptions to the rule
- Applying the known to the unknown
- Proofreading
- Using the dictionary (personal and/or commercial)
- Ask 3 Before Me (check 3 sources before asking the teacher)
- Wall charts
- "Give It A Try" sheets
- Teachers can observe the use of these strategies while children are writing.

Growth Over Time

- Samples of writing dated to analyze the movement towards standard spelling.

Proofreading Tips

- What strategies are children using to edit their work?
- Peer Conferences

Self Evaluation

- Spelling inventories/interviews given periodically throughout the year (beginning, middle, and end).

Analysis of Type of Errors in First Draft Copies

- sound-symbol
- base words

Product

Personal Spelling Record

- "Words I Can Spell" Booklet
- Personal Dictionaries

Date	Ratio and % of Invented Spelling	Ratio and % of Conventional Spelling	Invented Spelling	Conventional Spelling

*Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, (1995).
Spelling Handbook for (Elementary) Teachers.

Sources of Data for Assessment and Evaluation

There are many sources that the classroom teacher may use to gather data for assessing and evaluating children’s spelling ability. They include:

- dated writing samples (e.g., journals, stories, content writing, letters, poetry)
- observations of children when they are engaged in writing (e.g., anecdotal records, rating scales)
- conferences (spelling and writing)
- spelling interviews
- dated Spelling Tries sheet
- dated cloze sheets
- proofreading activities
- checklists
- tests and activities designed by the teacher to gather particular information
- self-evaluation checklists
- record of the amount and kind of writing that the child engages in
- analysis of writing samples to determine patterns of errors and types of words spelled correctly.
- anecdotal records
- writing portfolios
- personal spelling records (e.g., personal dictionaries, “Words I Can Spell” booklets, file boxes of “Words I Can Spell”)

Samples of checklists which may be used for assessing and evaluating children’s spelling can be found in **Appendix C**.

