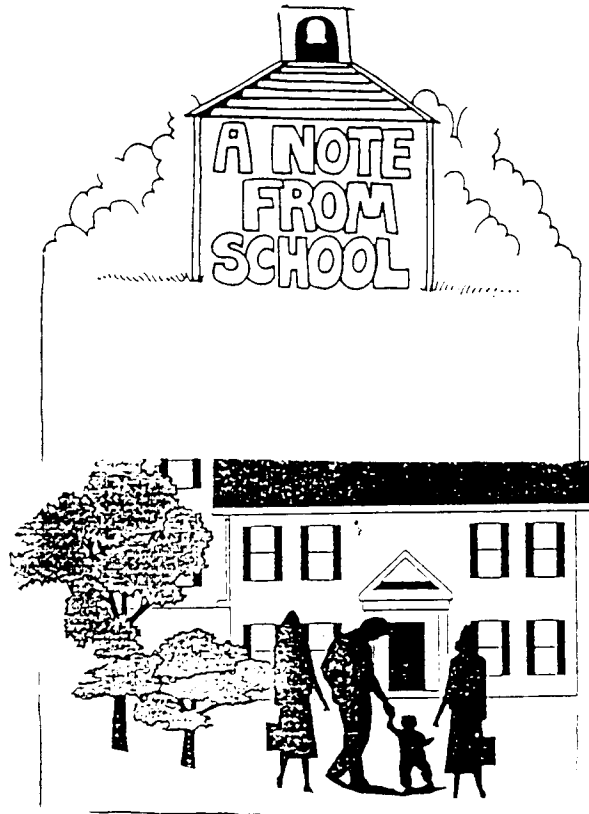
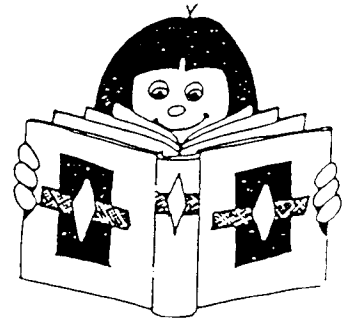




Parent Communication



Parent Communication



Practical Suggestions for Parents

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

1. Be a role model for reading.

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



2. Read to your children every day.

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

3. Provide opportunities for reading.

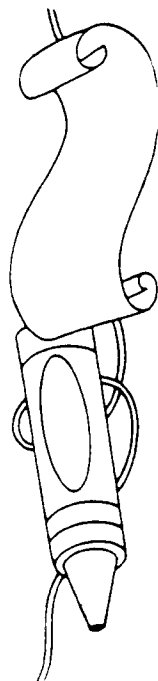
- Collect simple recipes and allow your child to cook with you.
- Leave lots of notes for your children. Place them on the fridge door or in their lunch boxes. An example might be "Don't forget to clean up your room when you get home from school. There's a snack in the fridge. Be home shortly."
Love, Dad.
- 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 children to share what they've written.
- Provide an incentive for your children to write by typing out some of their writings. If possible, allow them to use a typewriter or word processor themselves.
- Encourage your children to keep a special diary for private writing where they can freely express feelings and opinions. 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 children assist you in writing out grocery lists. If your children come with you when you go shopping, have them 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 and give to another family member. Their own dictionary can also come in handy at this time.



5. Encourage the Writing of Letters.

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



6. Encourage Creativity.

- Encourage your children to rewrite TV commercials - or make up new ones.
- Encourage your children to illustrate their writing - start a file of pictures, photos, illustrations and cartoons for your children to use in illustrating their writing. (Such a file can be a great tool in helping to motivate the reluctant writer.)

7. Spelling at the Computer.

- If you have a personal computer, purchase a program that involves children spelling for a real purpose (for example, making up a crossword, rather than simply drilling their spelling).
- Spell check can also be a valuable tool when writing.

Above all, let your children know that reading and writing are meaningful activities.



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 added on. You can ask older children to circle words they think they've misspelled. Don't expect children to check long lists all at once. Decide on the number to be fixed and talk about how to find the standard spellings.

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.

1. Explain your school policy on spelling through back-to-school nights, district and school newsletters, letters to parents, home school meetings, and theme celebrations.
2. At parent conferences discuss spelling growth noted in writing samples.
3. Outline with parents your expectations for spelling in your classroom.
4. 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.
 - 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.



Dear Parent or Guardian:

I would like to outline some of the language learning experiences that your child will have this year.

Speaking

There will be daily opportunities for your child to express questions, ideas and opinions, in large group discussions, with a partner, and with adults. These opportunities are designed to encourage communication skills.

Listening

Listening carefully is an important part of our language program. Children must learn to listen carefully in order to learn new facts and ideas and to understand instructions and directions. Development of listening skills will be emphasized in large and small group discussions, and also at our audio-visual centre.

Reading

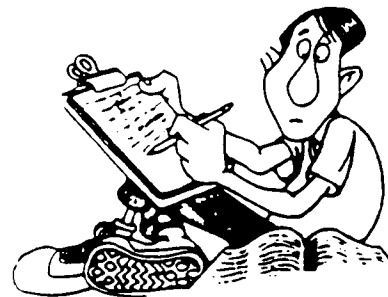
Research has proven that children **learn to read by reading**. The more they read and discuss what they read, the better readers they will become. Our focus is to encourage children to read for meaning, to understand what they are reading and to read more fluently. To reach this goal, the children will take part in **many** reading activities throughout the day.

I hope that you will encourage your child to read at home and that you or another adult will read to her/him daily.

Writing

The writing program this year emphasizes daily writing and a sense of authorship. The children will be involved in much the same activities as real authors. They will

- discuss their ideas
- talk out their stories
- write draft copies
- share their stories
- change and revise/rework selected stories
- edit and publish selected stories



When the children first write their stories, I encourage them to write all the letters they hear and not to worry about correct spelling at first. In this way, their thoughts will flow freely onto paper. The students will be revising or changing selected pieces of their writing. When they prepare to share their work with others, they see the need for correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. When they publish their writing, they gain confidence and pride in their accomplishments.

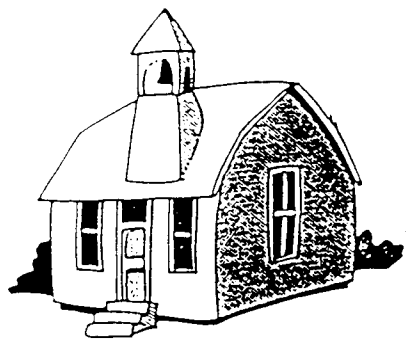
I hope that you will encourage your child to write often at home. I would welcome sharing any home writing at school.

Spelling

The children's spelling skills will improve as they read, write and experiment with words. Research has shown that children must feel free to try different spellings before they become competent spellers. They will be working with words from their own writing and from their theme studies.

I hope to communicate with you frequently. Please get in touch with me if you have any questions or concerns. Call the school at _____.

Sincerely,



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Answering Questions Parents Commonly Ask

Whenever parents ask questions, you can be assured that they are interested and concerned about their children's education, and interest is the first step toward help and cooperation. First, however, you must give them satisfying answers to questions - such as the following - that are frequently asked about the teaching of phonics and spelling in a whole language classroom.

1. Do you teach phonics and spelling in a whole language classroom?

Yes! Phonics and spelling are based on the graphophonics cues in the English language. Everyone communicates by using these graphophonic cues simultaneously with meaning and grammar cues, but in a whole language classroom, teachers don't teach letter/sound correspondences according to the traditional "sound of the week" schedule. They also don't teach a list of spelling words in a workbook that are unrelated to anything else their students are working on. Instead, their phonics and spelling instruction is driven by the texts the children are reading and by what the children's writing reveals about their knowledge of spelling patterns.

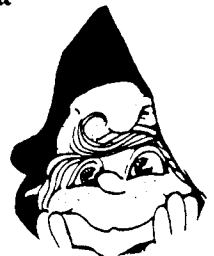


2. How do you teach phonics and spelling without workbooks?

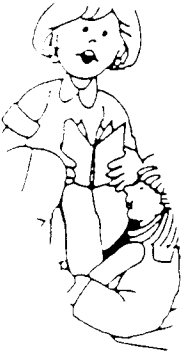
Teachers teach phonics and spelling both through inquiry and through direct instruction, according to their students' needs. As children read quality literature, they need to know particular phonic connections, and as they write for real purposes and for real audiences, they also need to know particular spelling patterns. Therefore, phonics and spelling are taught within the context of reading and writing authentic texts. (You may want to refer your parents to the *Possum Magic* example in Chapter 3 on pages 44-48.)

3. What's the best way for me to help my child when he comes to an unknown word?

First, pause and provide time for him to figure it out for himself. If your child is not confident with decoding, supply the word rather than asking him to "sound it out". As your 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 your child to focus on letter/sounds, you are teaching him inadvertently that reading is saying the words correctly. This is not the message you want to convey. Instead, the message should be that reading is for meaning.



4. 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 connection s/he makes. If there doesn't seem to be any connections, don't worry - 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.

STUDENT PREPARATION
CHECK SHEET

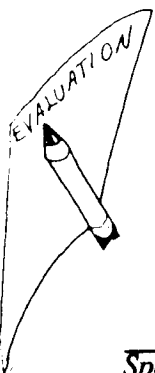
When you read to your child, you also may want to occasionally point out connections between letters and sounds. You could play with magnetic letters on the refrigerator door or even write words and point out beginning sounds. You also could take dictation for your child. Then as s/he starts to hear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

5. What's wrong with spelling lists?

Believe it or not, most of the words you learned how to spell in school were not learned from lists! (Not even 20 words a week could account for all of the words you know.) Effective spelling program, however, often use spelling lists that are generated through the reading-writing program as *one* component. Spelling programs of whole language teachers go far beyond word lists.

6. Don't invented spellings teach children to spell incorrectly?

Learning to spell is much like learning to talk. 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.



7. 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.

Because spelling is a developmental process, not every child is capable of giving the same amount of attention to spelling. The more children write for real purposes and real audiences, however, the more motivated they will be to attend to their spelling and the easier it will become for them. When teachers overburden their student writers with spelling, the children often turn off to writing and have no motivation at all.

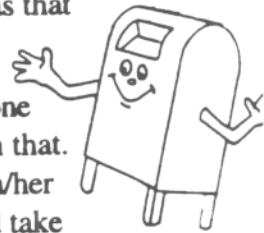
When your child brings home papers with misspelled words, first discuss the purpose of his/her piece of writing. Ask him/her if s/he can find a word that they would like to work on, and be sure to praise him/her for finding a misspelled word! If the word has a missing letter, ask where the letter would go and what s/he thinks the letter is. Again offer praise for knowing where the letter is missing - even if s/he doesn't know the missing letter. Chances are that the missing letter is a vowel and that your child will likely even be able to supply a vowel (though it may not be the correct one). Strategies like this are a big step toward learning to spell.



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

Read as much as you can to your child - every day! 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 she might know, stop and wait with expectation - because children love to join in if they can. Celebrate when she 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. As s/he works, encourage him/her to figure out the spellings before you provide them, and then congratulate him/her for the parts of the words s/he gets right.



Dear Family,

You and your child can work together to make and play some card games. Here are some games that are easy to make and lots of fun to play. Family members can be involved in this activity.

Making Games



You will need:

- index cards (or small pieces of paper cut to card size)
- scissors
- crayons or markers
- old magazines (optional)



Word Concentration

1. Use 30 cards. Write 15 words on 2 cards each.
2. Place the cards facedown on a table in rows.
3. Take turns turning over 2 cards at a time and read aloud each card. If the words on the cards are the same, the player keeps the cards. If the words don't match, the player turns the cards facedown again.
4. The game continues until all the cards are matched. The winner is the player with the most matched pairs.
5. Variation: Play the concentration game using words that can be illustrated. Draw or cut out 15 pictures from magazines. Paste each picture on a separate card. For each picture, write the matching word on another card.

Funny Face Game

1. Use 31 cards. Write 15 words, (2 cards each). Draw a funny face on the remaining card. This is the "Funny Face" card.
2. Deal out the cards to the players. Before play begins, players should look at their cards and match up any pairs that they hold. Then, one at a time, players should read the words on the pairs aloud and put the cards faceup on the table.
3. Players then take turns picking a card from the player to the left. If a matching pair is made, the words are read aloud and the cards are put on the table. The game continues until only the "Funny Face" card remains.
4. Depending on how you want to play, the player holding the Funny Face either wins or loses the game!

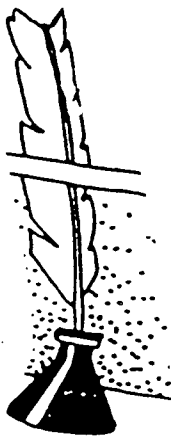


Word Bingo

1. Use 24 cards and write a different word on each card. You will also need 24 small markers such as beans for each player.
2. Then make bingo boards for each player by dividing a piece of paper into 25 squares. There should be 5 squares across and 5 squares down. In the middle square, write **FREE**. In the other squares, write the words from the word cards. Each bingo board will have the same 24 words, but the words should be written in different squares on the board.
3. Mix up the word cards. Then have the players take turns drawing a card and reading it aloud. All players find this word on their boards and cover it with a marker.
4. The game continues until one player has 5 covered squares in a row - across, down, or on the diagonal.

Another helpful strategy is to help your child become word watchers by playing word games. You also could play commercially available word games with her, such as:

- Spellbound™
- Boggle!™
- Scrabble™
- Junior Trivial Pursuit™.



*We learn to spell by hypothesizing
about words, testing our letter
memory, confirming and modifying
our initial attempts.*

(from *Spelling Links*, by Booth, D., Pembroke, 1991)

Adapted from: Hansen, M. and Armstrong G. *Right At Home*. Addison-Wesley. 1993.