

Dear families,

We are excited to share with you improvements in our spelling instruction. Traditionally, a spelling list would come home at the start of the week and then those same words would be assessed at the end of the week. This approach works well for students with strong visual memory skills, but words that are frequently spelled correctly on a spelling test, are often spelled incorrectly in students' everyday writing. In examining the current research of best practices in spelling instruction, this is what we learned:

Students learn to spell by:

- Reading a lot,
- Writing a lot,
- Learning explicitly taught strategies and patterns.

Less effective spelling instruction methods include:

- Memorizing long lists of words,
- Studying rules that often aren't true,
- Spending time doing worksheets.

As a result of our learning, we are looking forward to using some new strategies to teach spelling. We will continue to provide classrooms that encourage students to spend a significant amount of time each day reading and writing.

What will this look like?

- At least twice a year, each class of students in grades 1-4 will be administered a spelling inventory (*Words Their Way*) to help teachers determine the spelling strategy and pattern instruction they need and to monitor their individual spelling development.
- While students may continue to have regular spelling assessments, the words won't be from a provided list. Instead, they will be related to the current pattern or strategy.
- By learning spelling strategies and patterns, students will begin to apply what they have learned to the correct spelling of new words in their writing that were not explicitly taught.

How can you support your child's spelling development?

- Encourage reading and lots of it! Students who read a lot become great spellers. Seeing new words in print, as often as possible, makes it more likely those words will be spelled correctly in writing.
- Support your child as a writer - suggest that your child keep a journal, make grocery lists, write stories. Writing provides practice opportunities to apply what is being learned and to approximate the spelling of new words.
- Talk with your child about the problem solving and strategies used when spelling. Being able to articulate why a word was spelled as it was is more valuable than simply memorizing it.

Sincerely,

Sue Wilson

Director of Curriculum and Instruction