THINKING ABOUT
WHAT WE TEACH...

TEACHING FOR
TRANSFER:
STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES

- Are we teaching spelling strategies?
- Are we teaching students about what a successful speller does?
- Are we teaching the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to be a successful speller?
- Are we teaching for transfer?
- Or is the primary focus on spelling lists and tests?
- Are we TEACHING spelling?

Why Teach Strategies?

- Good spellers have good memories AND good problem solving.
- Students need to develop a range of strategies for spelling and can ask themselves, "What can I do to help me spell this word?"
- Having a repertoire of strategies and knowing when to apply them, is key to successful spelling.
- Strategies give students skills and actions for HOW to spell unfamiliar or unseen words.
- Transferable to all words - students not limited by the words they know, have seen or used.
SPELLING LISTS

If we’re giving students lists of words to learn we need to think about:

- Are students learning words or learning about words?
- What have students been taught about the words on their list?
- What have students been taught about how to spell the words on their list?
- Are students learning words on their own? i.e. spelling activities and homework?
- Are students doing set activities with the word list or are the tasks specific to a spelling focus or strategy?

Another word on lists ...

- Word lists are useful to guide us in the types of words to be taught and that are important to learn.
- It doesn’t mean students have to be given word lists to learn independently as the primary way of learning these words.
- Any word list should either be derived from teaching or be accompanied by teaching of the words and how to spell and remember them.

How are we using them?
To guide word study, explicit teaching and investigations?

OR
Lists to be learnt by the student and tested each week?

Word lists are OK, but...
It’s what WE DO with the lists that makes the difference.

Given that the average person can spell 48,000 words, then to memorise these s/he would have to learn 10 words per day for 13 years approximately. If no learning was done at the weekends it would take 18 years assuming that none are forgotten and there is no need to relearn. Even if words are grouped in “families” the task is considerable. (Bouller, 1984)

Children and students do not become proficient spellers by the single strategy of memorising the spelling of individual words and teachers cannot teach students how to spell every word they will need to spell. However children and students can be armed with the knowledge and strategies to help them to develop as spellers. (Dee S.A. 2011)
Child: I'll never learn to spell.

Mother: Why not?

Child: The teacher keeps changing the words.

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**TEACHING STRATEGIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonological strategies</th>
<th>How words SOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual strategies</td>
<td>How words LOOK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphemic strategies</td>
<td>The MEANING of words and how words can be CHANGED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etymology based strategies</td>
<td>The ORIGINS of words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We need to teach these explicitly.

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**PHONOLoGICAL STRATEGiES**
PHONOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

KEY LEARNING

- words are made up of letters and these letters represent sounds in speech.
- we can identify the sounds in words and use our alphabet to show these sounds.
- some sounds can be shown with single letters (h-a-d) or groups of letters (wh-ere).
- some sounds can be represented by different letters (me, free, eat, chic, receive...).
- some letters or groups of letters can represent more than one sound (hat, was, apron).
- we can identify sounds as single units or we can blend or chunk them (i.e. blends/ syllables and identifying vowel sound).

PHONOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

IPA

We can use the International Phonetic Alphabet to help identify sounds and syllables in words if we aren't sure.

paper
noun (material) UK /ˈpeər/ US /ˈpiər/ /ˈper.pər/
# Spelling:
More Than Lists of Words

## Let's Think About...
How Spelling Skills Develop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Stage</th>
<th>Spelling Stage</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>&quot;Typically&quot; Seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Play</strong></td>
<td>Preliminary Spelling</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Example Image" /></td>
<td>Kindergarten and early childhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>The writer experiments with marks on paper with the intention of communicating a message and imitating adult writing. A blend of known letters and approximations of letters may be used.</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Example Image" /></td>
<td>Use symbols in play to represent and make meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The writer experiments with writing-like symbols and knows that print carries a message. No understanding yet of the sound-symbol relationship and writing will not be able to read by others.</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Example Image" /></td>
<td>Begin to be aware of the relationship between oral, written and visual representations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Example Image" /></td>
<td>Encourage children to develop their own symbol systems and provide them with opportunities to explore culturally constructed symbol systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITING STAGE</td>
<td>SPELLING STAGE</td>
<td>EXAMPLE</td>
<td>&quot;TYPICALLY&quot; SEEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPERIMENTAL WRITING</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEMI-PHONETIC SPELLING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation: Their writing shows evidence of sound and letter knowledge, beginning writing behaviours...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer experiments with writing letters and words, often representing words with 1, 2 or 3 letters (e.g., PRT for &quot;party&quot;). The writer may begin to write familiar words and represent some known sounds.</td>
<td>The writer shows a developing understanding of sound-symbol relationships and their spelling attempts show some evidence of sound-symbol correspondence. The writer may represent a whole word with one, two or three letters.</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EARLY WRITING</strong></td>
<td><strong>PHONETIC SPELLING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>From Year 1 -&gt;:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer is beginning to consider purpose and audience and writes simple sentences with correct punctuation. The writer correctly spells some frequently used words and when writing unknown words, uses letters on the basis of sound (e.g., &quot;becos&quot;)</td>
<td>The writer shows a near-perfect match for letters and sounds. Letters are chosen on the basis of sound rather than conventional letter patterns. Spelling attempts are meaningful and are becoming more like standard spelling.</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
<td></td>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSITIONAL WRITING</strong></td>
<td><strong>TRANSITIONAL SPELLING</strong></td>
<td>From Year 2 -&gt;:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer has increasing control over writing conventions such as punctuation, spacing and text organization. The writer considers purpose and audience when choosing ideas and information and writing shows a bank of known words that are spelled correctly. The writer is less reliant on sounding words and is using other strategies such as visual and meaning based strategies to spell unknown words.</td>
<td>The writer relies less on phonetic strategies and begins to develop a wider repertoire of strategies including visual and meaning based strategies. The writer may still have some difficulty recognizing a word &quot;looks right&quot; but is able to use a bank of known words and proof these words.</td>
<td>![Example Image]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once upon a time there lived a young prince his mother was sick and he had to find some fruit to cure her. In the kingdom there...
I WONDER...

What does a learner need in order to successfully move through this continuum?

What does a successful speller do? What does a learner at the end of this continuum think and do?

Why might someone become "stuck" in a stage of the continuum?

What can WE DO to progress learners through this continuum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does it take to spell accurately?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word knowledge (extensive vocabulary)</td>
<td>The more words I know, have heard or have used, the more likely I am to make a correct or near correct spelling attempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of word meanings and origins</td>
<td>When I know what a word means I can use correct spelling for the context, such as correct homophones. &quot;I have cancelled the flights and the fare has been refunded.&quot; If I know the origins of words, spelling makes more sense and I don't see our language as being so weird and hard to spell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A high level of automatically and visual memory for known words.</td>
<td>When I remember common words or words I see or use often, I can spell them without consciously &quot;encoding&quot; and my writing is more fluent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A repertoire of strategies: *phonological *visual *orthographic *syntagmatic *semantic *etymological *knowledge of generalisations</td>
<td>When I know a range of strategies I can apply these to all words I am trying to spell and I can choose the best strategy for the word I am writing. I don't have to rely on memory or whether or not I've used the word before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of sound/letter links.</td>
<td>When I understand sounds and letters I can understand the connection between spoken and written words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of analogy and links to known words</td>
<td>When I recognise patterns and similarities in words, I can use the words I know to help me spell many more words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### So what does this mean for teaching and learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can we do?</th>
<th>Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Include explicit word study into the classroom literacy program.</td>
<td>• Effective spelling is taught not “caught”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Word study is the explicit teaching of skills, strategies, patterns and the principles of word construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach spelling in context.</td>
<td>• As well as explicitly teaching spelling principles through word study, students need the opportunity to see and use these in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate a daily/regular focus on spelling, spelling strategies and word knowledge.</td>
<td>• Short, engaging and regular spelling lessons are more effective than occasional skill sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use investigative, problem solving and inquiry approaches for teaching and learning to promote thinking about words and spelling.</td>
<td>• Learning spelling should be learning about words, not just learning lists of words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Using investigations, questions and problem solving teaches students to think and transfer their learning and take an interest in words and their use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly teach strategies.</td>
<td>• When we have a repertoire of strategies we can approach unfamiliar words more effectively by choosing the most appropriate strategy for the word we are attempting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategies are transferable. We are not limited to whether or not we have had the word on a spelling list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A SPELLING FOCUS...

- **A phoneme/grapheme focus**: common spellings and variations for spelling different phonemes.
- **Teaching and using strategies**: introducing the language and application of spelling strategies then ongoing teaching and application.
- **Homophones**: the connection between spelling and meaning, meaning and visual strategies to identify correct use of homophones.
- **Generalisations**: spelling “rules” that apply to how words are spelled or when adding a suffix.
- **A prefix or suffix focus**: adding a prefix or suffix to change meaning or tense, the meanings and origins of affixes.
- **Strategies for “spelling nasties”**: strategies for overcoming persistent spelling errors.
- **A need arising from students’ spelling**: strategies for spelling these words, or as a vehicle for spelling development.
VISUAL STRATEGIES

KEY LEARNING
• Identifying incorrect spelling.
• Recognising possible and impossible letter sequences.
• Identifying visual patterns in words.
• Developing a visual memory for words.
• Spelling by analogy - We can use what we remember from words we've seen, to help us spell words. "If I know how to spell this word, how will it help me spell ...."

• How to self-monitor:
  • Does it look right?
  • Which part of the word doesn't look right?
  • What else could it be?
  • What other letter /sound can represent that sound?
  • Does any part of the word look like another word we know?

MORPHEMIC STRATEGIES

KEY LEARNING
• the important link between spelling and meaning
• some words can be spelled the same but have different meanings (homonyms, homographs)
• words can sound the same but have different spelling and meaning (homophones)
• words can be changed by adding or removing parts and this can change meaning (e.g. prefixes, suffixes, plurals, word building and tense)
• words can be combined to make new words with new meaning (compound words):
There are approximately 9000 homonyms (bear, bear) homophones (to, too, two), and homographs (dove, dove) in the English language.

Can we teach them all with lists?
MEANING is intrinsically linked to spelling.
Do we give it the same attention as phonics?

ETYMOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

KEY LEARNING
- English has borrowed words or parts of words from other languages and this can explain how words are spelled.
- Sometimes long words are shortened or abbreviated.
- The English language is always changing as new words are created.
  - brunch, google, scuba, frenemy
GENERALISATIONS

KEY LEARNING

- There are “rules” or generalisations that can be applied when spelling words.
- Generalisations are transferable and can be applied to many words.
- There might be exceptions to a generalisation.
- Spelling isn’t random, there are predictable patterns and rules that can help us spell unknown words.

REFLECT...

- Are we explicitly teaching spelling strategies?
- What strategies are being taught?
- Are any “weighted” more heavily than others?
- Are students assessed and given feedback about their use of spelling strategies?
- Do we look at writing diagnostically to determine the strategies students are applying or not applying?
- Or is spelling simply marked?
- Do students have a metalanguage for discussing spelling strategies? Have we taught them this?
**SOME KEY MESSAGES FOR TEACHING MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL**

- We can’t take students’ knowledge of the alphabetic principle for granted.
- Spelling proficiency doesn’t happen simply through immersion in spoken language.
- Phonological and morphological weaknesses can often explain older students’ difficulties with spelling.
- Older students require a focus on word derivations and spelling conventions.
  * generalisations
  * spelling by analogy
  * word families

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**What about spell-checkers?**

Research has found that spell check was only able to identify the target word for 53% of misspellings. (Fresch, 2008).

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**Student Surveys**

"What strategies do you use when you write and want to use a word that you don’t know how to spell?"

Make a list and we’ll share
TEACHING AND LEARNING

☐ Teach for transfer.
☐ Teach about words and how to spell words.
☐ Teach students to think about words and think about how to spell words.
☐ Be interested and curious ourselves about words and our language and model this to students.

REFERENCES