



teaching tips

Creating a Spelling Classroom

Spelling is an integral part of reading and writing and so spelling activities work most effectively when they occur as a natural consequence of reading and writing.

It's important for teachers to provide opportunities to focus on words in context throughout the day in reading, writing, listening and talking activities. Literature and the students' own writing provide opportunities for learning about spelling. When spelling is taught in this integrated way, the emphasis is always on meaning and effective communication, not on spelling for spelling's sake.

This approach still allows times for the explicit teaching of spelling, but based on ongoing classroom assessment that provides accurate information on the needs of the students. Depending on the teacher's assessment of their students' needs, explicit teaching of spelling can be whole-class, small-group or individual.

Context

If children are to become good writers, and that includes good spellers, they must have reasons for doing so. Provide realistic and purposeful contexts for writing, with audiences that demand standard spelling, so that students take greater care and are more concerned with standard forms.

Responsibility

Students need to be encouraged to become responsible for their own spelling. There will be times when it is appropriate for the teacher to act as proofreader but proofreading is part of the writing process and, therefore, essentially the responsibility of the writer. In some circumstances, such as publishing, others are employed to check spelling, so with this in mind it can be useful to encourage students to help each other.

Teaching Strategies

There are three broad categories of spelling strategies that need to be planned to assist writers to become effective spellers.

1. Strategies directed towards encouraging children to write and to experiment with spelling, such as daily writing for a purpose and audience involving a range of text

types. Daily teacher-modelling is also an important strategy. Children will not become spellers unless they are, first and foremost, writers.

2. Strategies focused on words in context such as Guided Reading, Reciprocal Reading, Literature Circles and Readers' Circles. These reading-related strategies are ideal because it is written text that provides demonstrations of spelling. When taking opportunities to focus on words during these reading strategies it's important not to distract from the teaching of reading. A small whiteboard is a handy teaching aid because it allows the teacher to focus on a word quickly and naturally during the teaching process.

3. Strategies aimed at developing proofreading abilities are also important but they will be more directly related to writing activities and the explicit teaching of proofreading skills. Students need some fluency as readers and writers before they can learn to proofread.

Spelling like all language is developmental, so the choice of teaching strategies will depend on the student's development as a reader and writer.

? Like to know more?

PEN 124 Bean, Wendy (2000) *Ways to Teach Spelling*. PETA, Sydney.

This PEN provides more information on teaching proofreading and describes a range of approaches to spelling assessment.

PEN 131 Lowe, Kaye (2001) *More than a Sound a Week*. PETA, Sydney.

The authors provide compelling arguments and examples of the need to meet the needs of students in the first year of school in relation to the teaching of sounds.

Bean, Wendy (1998) 'Spelling Across the Grades' in *Getting Started: Ideas for the Literacy Teacher*. PETA, Sydney.

This chapter provides more ideas for teaching spelling K-6 and for developing a whole-school approach to teaching spelling.