

How can I engage with my
child as they develop
strategies to become an
effective speller?

St Bernard's Catholic Primary School
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Spelling is developmental

- ▣ Most children pass through the stages of spelling...in their own time
- ▣ The teacher's role is to identify the stage and assist the learner to the next stage

5 developmental stages of spelling

Stage	characteristics
Pre communicative	Writing cannot be read by others Random strings of symbols No indication of letter-sound correspondence
Semi- phonetic	First attempts at letter-sound correspondence Initial consonants, one letter representing one word Sometimes one or two sounds in the word represented A letter name sometimes used /Some sounds evident
Phonetic	Paying attention to all sounds Writing can usually be read by others There may be a match between all essential sounds Letters used to represent dominant sounds heard Nasal consonants may be omitted (wet for went) Past tense represented in various ways (d,t,id)
Transitional	Visual and morphemic strategies become more important More aware of common patterns. Can be correct letters but in wrong sequence. Vowels are heard in every syllable
Conventional	Not everyone reaches this stage

Recent Brain research shows...

- ▣ Brains detect patterns in learning
- ▣ Therefore it is more effective to teach spelling.....

..pattern by pattern NOT word by word

Why can't we teach spelling according to sounds only?

- ▣ English spelling is tied to meaning NOT sound
- ▣ E.g. *sign* comes from *signal*. Therefore the 'g' stays when we write *sign* even though we don't say it. To take the *g* out would change the derivation of the word meaning.
- ▣ This is the strength in English spelling- it helps us to spell.

5 Strategies for Solving words

By Sound (phonemic strategies)	Words we can sound out- using sound to letter knowledge
By Look (visual strategies)	Words we remember by seeing them and using them a lot
By Meaning (morphemic strategies)	Words where I know the units of meaning and can combine them
By connections (linking strategies)	Using existing knowledge about a word to figure out a new word
By Inquiry (research strategies)	Using reference materials to learn more about words (dictionaries, lists etc)

Example: to, too, two

- ▣ **To**- high frequency word, use visual memory
- ▣ **Too**- sound pattern (zoo, moo)
- ▣ **Two**- morphemic knowledge linked to the meaning of 2. (twin, twice, twenty, between)

Teaching Spelling

- **Spelling is a tool for writing-** taught explicitly as part of the writing component in English.
- Spelling is part of the English syllabus.
- Teachers follow the syllabus as it was written developmentally.
- Teachers are teachers of spelling all day every day
- They help students to be word watchers in all KLA's
- All 5 strategies taught K-6.
- Begin with authentic texts- reading and writing

Assessing Spelling

- ▣ Not looking for scores!
- ▣ Test scores don't reveal the developmental stage of the student
- ▣ Assessed through writing samples to identify developmental stage and next teaching point

Testing Spelling

Testing does not improve learning.

Teaching improves learning.

‘The only people who do well in spelling tests are those who do well in them – the benefit is to their self –esteem rather than their spelling ability. They were already good spellers’.

‘The people who don’t benefit from spelling tests are those who are poor at spelling. They struggle with spelling before the test, and they struggle after the test. Testing is not teaching.’ (Adoniou, 2013)

If I don't test, how do I know what
a child can spell?

A child's independent writing is the
best indication of their spelling.

[illegible]

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Spelling Strategies



Sound – focusing on sound



Visual – focusing on the way words look



Meaning – thinking about word meaning



Connecting – making connections with other words



Checking – using live, print or electronic resources





Sound strategy

thinking about the sounds you can hear
in the word

Prompts

- Say the word slowly, listen carefully; write the sounds in order.
- Clap the syllables, listen and write the word syllable by syllable. Make sure you have represented each sound with a letter or letters.
- Say the word in parts, write down each part.



Visual strategy

focusing on the look of words

Prompts

- Think about how the word looks; try several different patterns.
- What do you often see at the end of words?
- What other letters could you use to write that sound?



Meaning strategy

thinking about word structure and
meaning

Prompts

- Think about the meaning. Does it give any clues to the spelling pattern?
- Begin with the base word.
- Think about adding endings to words.



Connecting strategy

thinking about what you know about one word to work out a new word

Prompts

- Does this word remind you of any other words you know? Why or How?
- Is there any other word that looks or sounds the same? Can you use this information to help you spell this word?
- Do you know a memory trick to help you with this word?
- Does this word have an oral or visual twin? (homophone, homograph)

Checking strategy



making use of other resources: live,
print and electronic

Prompts

- Is there a chart or word wall that can help you with the spelling of the word?
- Is there someone in the room that can help you with that word?
- Try to locate the word in a dictionary.
- Type the word on the computer and select an option from the spell check suggestions.

- Here are two examples of charts prepared after several discussions with primary students:

Effective spellers



Have a go at spelling words when writing.



Use the word wall to help them to spell words.



Say the word slowly and listen to the sounds.



Think about other words that have similar letter patterns.












Break words into parts (chunking).



Re-read their writing to check the spelling.

Effective spellers

-  Say the word out loud to help them to write the word.
-  Break words into parts (chunking).
-  Think about letter patterns they know, to help them spell other words.
-  Think about the base word and then the parts that are added to it.
-  Use some spelling generalisations.
-  Use a range of strategies when trying to spell an unknown word.
-  Listen to the sounds and then check the look or meaning of the word.
-  Use memory tricks to help them remember words.
-  Use charts such as *Different ways to write the same sound* to help them have a go at spelling words.

Strategy ladder



Sound out all the parts of the word.



Clap out the syllables and make sure you put in letters to show each syllable.



Try writing the word until it looks right.



Think of different letter patterns.



Think of words which may sound the same or look the same.



Think of what the word means; does it help?



Look in a dictionary.



Look for the word on the word wall.



Ask a friend.



Use a prompt, such as the *Different ways to write the same sound* chart (available at www.curriculumpress.edu.au/effectivespelling).

Resources

- ▣ Topfer and Arendt (2010) *'Guided Thinking for Effective Spelling'* Curriculum Press
- ▣ Hornsby and Wilson (2011) *'Teaching Phonics in Context'* Pearson Education
- ▣ Gentry and Gillet (1993) *'Teaching kids to Spell'*
- ▣ Peter Westwood (1999) *'Spelling: Approaches to teaching and assessment'* ACER press
- ▣ Pinnell and Fountas *Word Matters*
- ▣ *Teaching Spelling K-6* NSW Dept of Ed Curriculum Support Directorate 1998(download from Smart Data)
- ▣ Rowe and Lomas (1996) *'Systematic Spelling'*
- ▣ Adoniou, M. (2013) *Why some kids can't spell and why spelling tests won't help.* University of Canberra