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Word Study Instruction and its Impact on Students' Writing in Third Grade

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Word Study Instruction and its Impact on
Students' Writing in Third Grade

by

Ashley Nevada

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By Ashley Nevada

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

An important component to education is teaching students how to spell. Teachers find different approaches to teaching spelling that are best practices for their students. Teachers and educational theorists acknowledge, “There is still a nationwide trend of struggling spellers in our schools today” (Shah & Thomas, 2000, p. 12). This is a fact that supports the need to adapt spelling lesson has called for a new approach to instruction.

Research indicates the need for students who struggle with the identification and spelling of words to experience success (Shah & Thomas, 2000; Elliot & Rietschel, 1999; Dahl, Barto, Bonfils, Carasello, Christopher, Davis, Erkkila, Glander, Jacobs, Kendra, Koski, Majeski, McConnell, Petrie, Siegel, Slaby, Waldbauer, & Williams, 2003). As a means to address the “national trend” of students needing help with spelling, spelling instruction has adapted. One particular approach incorporates the use of manipulatives, in an exploratory learning environment, which encourages students to learn how to spell words and to develop an understanding of how words are formed. This learning approach is known as word study. Some may suggest that word study is a somewhat isolated approach; thus a fundamental characteristic of this theory must be addressed. Teachers must not only work with students by

providing them with opportunities and strategies to develop their spelling, they also need to learn how to help students transfer that knowledge in spelling to other content areas (Elliot & Rietschel, 1999; Dahl, et al., 2004).

Learning to spell can be difficult because the English language has many exceptions to spelling rules. Not surprisingly, educational stakeholders demonstrate great concern for the students who demonstrate difficulty in spelling. Teachers must work to motivate and encourage their students with a variety of tools and strategies to cultivate engagement. It is hard for young students to maintain and remember all the rules and irregularities when teachers have few strategies, materials, and methods (Johnson & Marlow, 1996). Some teachers struggle with teaching spelling because of all the different elements that coincide with it. Each student struggles differently than others and has different understandings and interpretations related to spelling. Word study uses an approach that is “based on students’ needs, developmental levels, and interests are the most effective in terms of teaching students to spell” (Routman, 2000, p. 403).

Students who struggle with spelling need to learn how to use their spelling words in their daily writing. In the 1930s through 1950s, learning spelling words was done in the context of isolated instruction that focused on “letter-by letter, syllabication, and rote memory” (Smith, 1997, p. 2). Some students cannot learn words in isolation because they are then not

able to transfer that knowledge since they are never taught the skills to do so. At times students just memorize how to spell the words for their spelling tests, and then forget the words because they do not actually work to understand the patterns of spelling. This is not only discouraging to the student who is not able to transfer the skills into writing, but it is also discouraging for the teacher who is not able to support the student to long term understanding rather than short term memory learning. Students need to start applying these learned words outside of word study. The learning of the students needs to be meaningful so that they make connections needed for learning to take place.

One area in which students can apply their word study knowledge is in independent writing in writer's workshop. Writer's workshop is designed to allow students to write using in part words covered in word study. Looking at students writing will help inform teaching instruction as to what words to specifically focus on. This is a form for assessment for teachers in determining what students know and what they need to know.

I am curious to what extent students transfer their learning from word study to their writing in writer's workshop. Professionals will benefit from understanding the connection between word study instruction and transference into students' writing in writer's workshop. This research study will demonstrate the ways in which students are using word

study instruction and whether there is transference of these words to correct usage in writer' workshop.

Research Question

I am interested in studying the interactions of word study and students transferring that knowledge into writing. My research question is: How does word study impact students' strategies in word construction in writing workshop for third graders identifying words in isolation below grade level?

Rationale

I recently found that I teach word study in isolation and when looking at students' writing I am finding that some of the words we are learning are not being used in their own writing. I realized from there I needed to implement different strategies and tools to help students transfer that learning.

In word study instruction I found many of my students not motivated in their learning. I incorporated these results in my classroom, developing a wider variety of activities that provide the students with more opportunities to manipulate words not only in spelling but also, using the words in writing activities. Providing these opportunities is important because the more ways students have to learn their spelling words, the greater the opportunity for success in students' transference of the knowledge.

Definitions of Terms

Some school districts across the country have time set aside for students to learn spelling with word study approaches. An approach to word study is, “instruction that encompasses the area of word identification (phonics, as well as the foundation-building work of phonological awareness), spelling, and vocabulary instruction” (Ganske, 2006, p. 1). Word study is not just what students are learning but how they are learning. Routman stated that word study, “like all areas of curriculum, is best taught using inquiry approach- investigating, questioning, problem solving, discovering, and forming generalizations about word patterns, concepts and meanings” (2000, p. 409). Being able to spell a word is good, but spelling a word and understanding spelling rules is a step towards allowing students more independence in their learning. Word study is a structured area that has students learning about words and giving students strategies to transfer that learning.

Within this study, the term transferring is defined as “when a learner applies what was learned to new situations” (Mayer, 2004, p. 717). Having students transfer their learning from one content area to another is a goal in education. More specifically for educators, transfer refers to understanding how students use their knowledge and learning of their words in writer’s workshop within their own writing. The impact of word study on students’ writing will be observed by looking at students’ work.

As part of my data collection, I will anecdotally note students' learning during word study with words they are focusing to learn and activities. Along with anecdotal notes I will be looking at student writing samples and having individual conferences on the writing samples.

In the school district I will be observing, each elementary class has writer's workshop. The basis for writer's workshop is described as, "the need to write, the itch to write, begins with a story to tell, a point to make, an argument to put forth, a descriptive picture to paint- ideas that shift and change and grow with the act of writing" (Spandel, 2005, p. 64). Giving students the opportunity to write helps them become not only more aware of the writing process, but of spelling and grammar as well. Within this study, writer's workshop is defined as a structured block of time allowing students' time to write on a pre-assigned topic. The teacher assigns a topic for students to write on and students write using the writing process for the class at their own pace. Writer's workshop is a time for students to work on becoming writers by learning the crafts of grammar, spelling, sentence structure, word choice and different ways of writing.

Study Approach

This qualitative study will document students' progress in word study and whether their writing in writer's workshop has been impacted. The qualitative nature of this study will be most beneficial because it will analyze data from conferences, observations and student work.

These observational studies will take place in a third grade classroom specifically targeting two students. The observations will allow for the collection and interpretations of what students are doing and how they are acting in word study and in writer's workshop. In addition to observations, I will be conducting writing workshop conferences. These conferences will focus on the district-stated third grade expectations in writing. I will also be collect student work to assess their spelling in daily writing. The collection and interpretation of all the pieces are integral in providing more data on my research question.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This section will discuss the implications of current educational research that explores word study instruction and its impact on students' writing during writer's workshop. The areas addressed include: 1) word study, 2) writer's workshop, 3) students' writing. This literature review will provide evidence of the importance of word study and its impact on students' writing in writer's workshop.

Word Study

Defining Word Study

Word study is an alternative method to traditional or rote spelling instruction. The emphasis is on learning word patterns rather than memorizing unconnected words through "drill and practice." To understand this approach to word study, professional development resources continue to provide assistance to teachers and researchers alike to build on knowledge and understanding. Word study replaces the traditional approach of spelling instruction by building on word recognition, phonics and vocabulary. Traditional spelling instruction focuses on drill and practice with pencil and paper. "Word study provides students with opportunities to investigate and understand the patterns in words. Knowledge of these patterns means that students needn't learn to spell one word at a time" (Leipzig, 2000, retrieved from website <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/80>).

Shaw and Berg (2008) describe learners' progression through stages of spelling development with the three tiers of English orthography: alphabet (sound-letter correspondence), pattern (complex grouping of letters), and meaning (derivations of words). The tiers as well as stages were developed to promote learning rules to help classify where students are with understanding spelling and the English Language. Spelling development progresses through the following stages of: emergent, letter-name, within-word, syllables and affixes, and derivational relations to increase spelling abilities. Emergent spellers need to understand letter-sound relationships and develop their understanding of directionality of reading words in a right to left formation. Letter-name spellers begin using their understanding of letter-sound, and identifying the consonants, short vowels, to exploring consonant blends, and digraphs. Shaw and Berg (2008) discussed that students in the within-word spelling stage begin to learn long vowel, vowels with different sounds based on words within it, and consonant clusters in one-syllable words. Next students become syllables-and-affixes learners, in which they work with doubling consonants, suffixes and prefixes, and accented and unaccented syllables. In the last stage for spelling, learners are in the derivational relations, when students begin to spell almost all words correctly and expand their vocabulary to mastering words from Greek and Latin roots.

Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnston (2008) define word study as, "hands-on activities that mimic cognitive learning processes: comparing and contrasting categories of word features and discovering similarities and

differences between categories” (p. 2). Word study is designed to help students with both reading and writing by engaging students in exploring the concepts of words and identifying rules with patterns that exist in the English language. These patterns students learn in word study will help in the areas of reading writing and spelling if successfully transferred to learning.

Word Study Instruction

Learning experiences take place with activities in different literacy opportunities throughout the day. Joseph and Orlins (2005) determined that using word study techniques in varied academic situations help students in different areas of literacy, such as learning their word study words and deepening vocabulary. The article is based on a case study designed to increase the students developing vocabulary and spelling. The activities used incorporated writing to not only allow students opportunities to write but to start building on using their spelling words in their writing.

Joseph and Orlins (2005) discuss that when teachers provide students with opportunities and expose them to different words to manipulate them, the more confident and successful students become with using words. Rasinski and Oswald (2005) support the idea that students manipulating words helps them to be more aware of the spelling and to start to become more comfortable using these words in their daily writing. This study shows that when students practice more with words they become comfortable using and writing these words. The teachers have a structured routine for word study with specific activities including building

and writing words. Students in the study manipulated words and made generalizations about them, as well as utilized them in writing. The teachers in the study discuss the importance of the activity: students could use the task in different areas of studies in school and consistently increase vocabulary development. The overall theme of the study demonstrated that teachers view word study as a way to improve students' vocabulary development if activities prompted them to do so.

Teachers work to support students to be “word solvers” defined by Pinnell and Fountas, as “readers who can take words apart while reading for meaning, and writers who can construct words while writing to communicate” (1998, p. 14). The teacher needs to set up word study in a structured block that allows students to apply experiences into letter and word formations. Instruction should focus on teaching children to use phoneme-grapheme relationships, word patterns, and spelling features. When developing and supporting students spelling, Teachers must also include teaching students how to “solve” words with the use of phonics and visual-analysis skills as they read for meaning.

Theoretical and Research Basis for Word Study

To increase students' spelling strategies, spelling programs are being introduced in schools. Smith (1997) writes that in the 1960s students needed to learn approximately 4,000 words in a school year. These notations, specified by Smith, were words that were most likely to appear in student writing; however, an approximate 80,000 additional words essential in student vocabulary were not

routinely taught. This article further proposes a question all teachers ask when working with word study, “What words do we teach?” Throughout the years, multiple word lists have been developed by teachers; therefore, the question then evolves to incorporate the approach teachers should take in teaching students the words.

Spelling words correctly is a challenge for many students in schools. In the rote method of instruction students maybe more successful in temporarily correctly spelling the words but have difficulty when using the words in writing. Invernizzi, Abouzeid, and Gill (1994) discuss that while there truly is no right or wrong way to teach spelling, their findings suggest that instruction should begin with the most basic words and work up to the most difficult ones. This starts with word families and features, then moves on to vowel patterns and more difficult patterns and silent letters. Based on this progression, teachers need to know and understand how to analyze and interpret what students are working on in their spelling to inform their instruction.

Teachers need to develop strategies and tools appropriate for students in their Zone of Proximal Development. According to a Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (as cited in Smith, A., 1998), this is the “dynamic region of sensitivity to learning in which children develop through participation with experienced members of culture” (p.6). Determining students’ Zone of Proximal Development in word study, a teacher may use a word list assessment to see what students know and what students need to learn. Teachers need to apply the principles of

scaffolding into their teaching, and support the student to learn responsibilities in academic expectations. With the repetition, the student then moves into guided practice, where limited teacher assistance is needed. After guided practice comes independent practice, when the student can complete the task on his or her own without support or prompting. The teacher's ultimate goal always remains to have the student work independently. If a teacher is not working in the zone in which independent or guided practice is comfortable for the student, then the student is at risk of experiencing a level of frustration; thus, the student will shut down and will not be able to take in any new information or understanding. Elliot and Rietschel (1999) remind us of the importance of working with the students and not against them. If students are frustrated, students will not use the words or use them correctly in their own writing.

Knowledge, understanding, memory, and organization, can help students remember word study words and the vocabulary of other content areas. How memory works and how students retain information is explored in Durso and Coggins (1991). Organization and memory play key roles in learning and understanding in any educational setting. The study found that thematic organization, putting learning into themes or categories with an organization system such as lists, helps receptive vocabulary. This was an important part to the study because the activities that are used in the classroom need to coincide with what parts of the memory and organization skills students use to learn.

All students have strengths and weaknesses in how they learn; therefore, teachers must seek approaches that help instruct students with their learning profiles, such as Gardner's multiple intelligences (Retrieved April 26, 2009, Smith, M. K. (2002, 2008) 'Howard Gardner and multiple intelligences', *the encyclopedia of informal education* <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm>) of spatial, kinetic, linguistic, logical, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Understanding how students learn allows teachers to create hands-on activities and instruction to assist students in their learning and understanding based on their needs as learners. Students who learn through music or rhyming could create a poem with their word study words or even locate them in a poem. Having students participate in experiences that support their learning styles creates meaningful learning.

Transferring Learning

Determining whether a student transfers learning is another area to explore. When I consider if a student is transferring learning, I look to see if what has been learned about specific spelling words is being transferred the student's writing.

Teacher's need to determine students' knowledge through a form of assessment, to see what they know and next steps for the students. Mayer (2004) explored transfer learning as it occurs in three different views: general transfer, specific transfer and specific transfer of general knowledge. General transfer begins with the mentality that a person needs to continue to work to build new

knowledge. At this stage, teachers must continue to work with students in reviewing spelling to help students build knowledge. In specific transfer, the student connects the learning to prior knowledge. At this time, the teacher needs to address the learner's prior knowledge and carry on with instruction, or the teacher must seek to establish prior knowledge if the learner lacks the ability to do so. Comparatively, specific transfer of general knowledge builds on the previously mentioned phases in that students apply general knowledge to a new topic that uses a similar concept. The last approach incorporates cognitive strategies along with teaching of materials.

The practices of the teacher are an important aspect to consider when determining the transferred learning among students. Teachers need to be conscious of how students learn; additionally, we must consider the best practices available that provide more opportunities to encounter and enrich learning experiences (Mayer, 2004). These criteria are especially important when working with the English language. Students' learning experiences in spelling and the English language, as in all content areas, need to be meaningful to the students for successful learning to occur.

Research on the Impact of Word Study on Students' Writing

Four studies have been conducted exploring the impact word study has on students' writing. Similar in content, in these studies researchers found word study instruction enabled students to engage in learning while transferring knowledge across the curriculum. The studies differed in the level of success of

that knowledge being transferred. One study involved word study and language experiences among three first graders, who participated in both small group and whole group activities (Anderson, O’Fahavan, Guthrie, 1996). Anderson, et al. (1996) observed how word study encouraged the students’ word knowledge, word recognition, and writing. At the beginning of the study, the study’s participants scored among the lowest levels of the class in reading and writing, aside from students’ who receive extra services. Observational data were collected and analyses demonstrated exceptional growth that surpassed the other students’ spelling. Additionally, these students had increased reading levels along with increasing gains in writing.

Elliot and Rietschel (1999) took the results of Anderson, et al. (1996) and explored the effectiveness of word study instruction in a small group setting with second graders with their independent writing. Researchers generated four small groups that met for 45 minutes a week for seven months. The instruction included word study activities that encouraged students to use their words in a variety of ways and in different areas of academics. The researchers used a pre-test and post-test in spelling to document students’ performance on standardized tests and collected samples of students’ writing. The findings showed that these students in the study made progress with phonemic spelling, and their ability to spell words correctly on the test.

Building on Elliot and Rietschel study, Dahl, et al. (2004) explored elementary students’ use of strategies in spelling whose teachers taught word

study in a whole group. Students were asked to locate the words they needed to actively think about while trying to spell in their writing, and then they were to describe what strategy they utilized. In addition to the previously described meta cognition technique, Dahl, et al. interviewed the students while they were writing. They found students used many different strategies taught throughout the developmental writing stages. The findings showed teachers were encouraged by students to teach different strategies and then discuss with students what approaches they use in writing.

Williams and Lundstrom (2007) investigated the effectiveness of teacher strategies taught in supporting students' development in writing. The participants for the study were six first graders who struggled with reading and writing. Students met daily for 30 minutes in which time was set aside for explicit word study instruction, then four days of the week incorporated guided reading. The researchers examined the teachers' lesson plans with the post lesson notes that discussed spelling strategies taught, then analyzed the teachers' field notes on the amount of prompting and scaffolding needed for each student. The third set of data analyzed the teachers' field notes on the students' journal writing along with whether the students used the strategies taught. The study concluded that the effectiveness of word study and interactive writing instruction supported students' growth in spelling and early writing development; furthermore, this study probed teachers' views on their students and whether vocabulary is increased because of word study. Williams and Lundstrom (2007), like their colleagues, confirmed

that students were using their word study skills in different areas of the curriculum.

All of these studies showed success in that students were using their word study skills in different areas of the curriculum. These studies looked closely at the teachers views on their students and if vocabulary was increased because of word study.

Writer's Workshop

When looking at writing, writer's workshop provides "the need to write, the itch to write, begins with a story to tell, a point to make, an argument to put forth, a descriptive picture to paint — ideas that shift and change and grow with the act of writing" (Spandel, 2005, p. 64). When teachers set up their classrooms, they need to look at the components of literacy, and decide how to make students the most successful in writing. Teachers need to use a variety of tools and strategies across the entire curriculum to encourage students to write. Writer's workshop is a vital component of literacy instruction. "Word study complemented writer's workshop because it promoted writing fluency which in turn allowed them to express themselves with greater ease" (Elliot & Rietschel, 1999).

Writer's workshop can be set up in different ways based on teacher preference of best practices for their students. Some of the most popular approaches include: "Writing Four Blocks," (Cunningham, Cunningham, Hall, & Moore, 2005) "6+1 Traits," (Spandel, 2005) and "Lucy Calkins" (Calkins, 2003)

approach. How writer's workshops are set up remains crucial to students' writing because this is the opportunity for students to write their own pieces.

The Four Blocks (Cunningham, Cunningham, Hall, & Moore, 2005) approach puts writing back-to-back with reading. Students participate daily in different blocks for 30 minutes. The four blocks include guided reading, self-selected reading, working with words and writing. In guided reading students work on comprehension and oral reading fluency. Students then transfer the learning from comprehension into their own writing to make sure others understand the writing. In the self-selection, the teacher reads aloud a variety of literature to introduce students to different types of literature, widening vocabulary and further developing students' interests. Working with words allows students to work with letter-sounds, a relationship that works with decoding and spelling words. This could be considered a shortened version of word study. Writing then allows students to choose their topic and focus on their writing.

The 6 + 1 Traits model (Spandel, 2005) examines independent growth as a writer across the primary subjects. The process focuses on voice, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. This model has teacher and students assess the writing piece in terms of each of these processes. Encouraging students to work at their own pace, 6+1 Traits structures the writing experience in a way that allows independence for students. For example, one student may be working in developing word choice, whereas another may still be developing

ideas in the area of brainstorming. 6+1 Traits approaches writer's workshop with the intent to examine each individual area and assess the students based on a rubric; teachers may then decide where to go next with their students.

Lucy Calkins' approach to writer's workshops is designed to have instruction that coincides with the students' writing and needs. Calkins (2003) described that to set up students for success teachers must establish a routine and structure for student success in writing.

Writing workshops are structured in predictable, consistent ways that the infrastructure of any workshop remains almost the same throughout the year and throughout a child's elementary school experience. This means that when we visit a writing workshop, we peek on not only today's but also tomorrow's teaching. (p. 30)

The workshop starts with a mini-lesson that focuses attention for the class on writing or teaching a new concept. After the mini-lesson, the students' share their progress of their writing pieces, similar to the 6+ 1 Traits writing. After the sharing, the block of time remaining would be used for students' to write. As students write, the teacher conferences with each student to see where each need to go and determine instruction for whole group or with a small group. After writing, students' who feel ready for sharing some or all of their writing, have the opportunity. This allows students to see and reflect on the process and time involved in writing a piece.

“It is a vision- a way of looking at writing that takes teachers and students (all writers) right inside the process to where the action is” (Spandel, 2005, p. 1). It is important to set up a program and routine for the students to help them grow as writers. Writer’s workshop should be set up first with a mini-lesson to bring in a rationale and focus for the day. This could be a lesson on the topic of writing, grammar, or incorporating different elements in their writing. Students then work at their own pace with brainstorming ideas, organizing their writing, selecting word choice in their writing, checking sentence fluency, and editing their piece for conventions then complete a final piece. With the final piece completed the process begins all over to start a new piece. Throughout the students’ writing process the teacher and student will sit and conference. Conferences focus on the students and their writing. The teacher should then address how the student is writing with areas of strengths and areas for improvement. This gives direction to the student in their writing and growth as a writer.

Spelling must be thought of as a tool for students in writing. Johnson and Marlow (1996) cited Angeletti & Peterson (1993), that one of the main goals would have students spelling the words correctly in word study and effectively in writer’s workshop. Students need to be given opportunities to write and practice spelling to learn to spell words correctly (as cited in Angeletti & Peterson, 1993).

Students' Spelling in Writing

When looking at students' writing teachers could find all variations of spelling. Students who are beginning to write or struggle with sounds are identified as part of the invented spelling stage. Rountman (2000) describes invented spelling as "students working out rules of phonics through invented spelling; at the same time their teachers, based on observation and past experience, teach students what they will need to know to be successful" (p. 25). Teachers should use and rely on students' invented spelling to inform instruction of word study.

Students' writing often concentrates on the idea rather than the mechanics. The focus should be on how students communicate through writing but as teachers we must begin to look at the students' mechanics in writing to make sure they are correctly communicating thoughts. Shah and Thomas explain, "Students do not make the conscious effort in correctly spelling high frequency words in their daily writing. There are many times students commit words to short-term memory only to forget them after weekly spelling test" (2008, p. 29). Focus should remain on the students' invented spelling using that spelling to help in understanding how to spell the word for the students'. Invented spelling provides teachers with an insight to sounds students are hearing in words. Instruction could be provided for those who needed it with letter sounds and spelling to help communicate thoughts and ideas through writing.

Students' spelling, invented or not, is a form for students to express their learning in school. Students' oral language is higher than their written language because students start hearing and using the words orally before writing them (Elliot, Rietschel, 1999). Students need to work on building their spelling words in isolation and in writing to help them learn spelling development of the words they know and do not.

Students need to start by slowing down the writing process and breaking it up into steps. "The quality of student writing increases when teachers show students how to divide writing tasks into steps—planning, revising, editing—and how to accomplish each step" (McClure, 2008, p. 1). This allows the student time to go back and find mistakes and correct them along with reworking the writing to make sure of the writing and word choice. This idea coincides with Lucy Calkins approach as well as with 6+1 Traits of writing.

Students' writing provides insight into students' thought processes and understanding of the writing process. Creating or using rubrics assists teachers with observation of students' spelling and documenting these changes can help in determining the change in student thinking. Using rubrics is "what defines quality in professional writing also defines quality in students writing" (Spandel, 2005, p. 41). Giving clear guidelines and expectations help students to know what is expected

Summary

The primary goal for students is to successfully transfer their knowledge from word study into their daily writing. I define success as using the strategies taught in word study to spell words students' use in writing. Before students can transfer their knowledge to another area, additional factors must be considered. First, students must be given a variety of opportunities to spell and practice the words to have them understand the spelling rather than just memorize each solitary word. Students must master the word and apply generalizations to more challenging words in their daily writing. To encourage and support student growth in spelling, "educators must focus on students' developmental needs in identifying words and tailor their instruction to the students' level" (Shah & Thomas, 2002, p. 13)

Creating opportunities for students to work with words is important for a teacher to support the student in learning spelling and using that learning in writing. There is overwhelming evidence that supports the idea that word study should transfer into students' writing, but this is not always so. Providing instruction to students to encourage developing understanding in sounds and patterns helps them to be not only more efficient but has students active in their learning and thinking (Ganske, 2006). More emphasis needs to be placed on working with students to transfer the learning rather than just expecting transfer to happen. Teachers need to teach and model the expectations to students.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore word study and student learning of word generalizations, specifically examining whether or not student learning in spelling is transferred to student writing during writing workshop. Using as the basis of my study Pinnell and Fountas' belief that "Children need to see words, use them, think about them, play with them, figure them out in reading, spell them in writing, and hear them in many contexts over and over again" (1998, p. 13), I conducted a series of observations to determine whether the students' study of words resulted in the transfer of those strategies and skills into student writing during writing workshop time. Data were collected through classroom observations, student work, and conferences with the students.

Question

To what extent does word study impact students' strategies in word construction during writing workshop for third graders?

Participants

This study took place in a suburban school district in Western New York. The district has six school buildings for kindergarten through third grade, with approximately 180 students per building. During the 2006-2007 school year the district educated 728 students in first through third grade according to the school and community data on nySTART (nySTART, Retrieved November 11, 2008, from New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool

<https://www.nystart.gov/nystart/u/index.do>). The schools mandate daily reading support for those students who would benefit from a one-on-one setting, with each student receiving approximately fifteen minutes of individualized support.

Data from nySTART for the 2006-2007 school year indicates that approximately nine percent of the district students qualify for free lunch and five percent that are eligible for reduced price lunch (nySTART, Retrieved November 11, 2008, from New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool <https://www.nystart.gov/nystart/u/index.do>). According to the demographics, 85 percent of the students are white, followed by eight percent African Americans and five percent Latino or Hispanic. Only one percent of the students in the district were classified with limited English Proficient (nySTART, Retrieved November 11, 2008, from New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool <https://www.nystart.gov/nystart/u/index.do>).

The participants of this study included two students from my blended third grade class of twenty-five. The two students I had participate struggled with encoding words in their writing. Their invented spelling provided insight into their thoughts and informed the instruction in word study. Observing these students and their work provided me the opportunity to see the impact of word study on students' writing during writing workshop.

Students had 10-15 minute time slots for word study each day. During this time students worked with their new words for the week using interactive activities that allowed students to use movement in spelling words. Students used

magnets, white boards, stringing up words using individual letters, and rainbow writing, using three crayons or markers to write the word once in each color. To incorporate movement, students used the motion “head shoulders knees and toes” to sound out and spell, along with a Twister-like activity in which students spin, located the word on the mat, put a hand on the word and then said and spelled it. Students also had another kinesthetic activity in which they hopped and spelled the word, similar to hopscotch. Word study was modified for students who are not reading at a third grade level. Modifications were made to decrease the number of words studied per week and well as for how long word study was to incorporate movement breaks and levels of frustration.

Each week ten words for word study and eight words for classroom vocabulary were reviewed. Except for the first day when the words were introduced, students had two choices each day—one movement activity and one non-movement activity. On the day the words were introduced, students sorted the words based on their first impressions. Each day, students continued to explore the words and build on the generalization, the rule for the set of words given, focusing on different areas of spelling the words: beginning sounds, ending sounds, vowels, putting the words together and building understanding of the word. The last day students were given an assessment during which each word was stated, and then used in a sentence, and then the word was repeated; the student’s task was to write the word. Students’ assessments were recorded and

used to determine if the student understood the spelling generalization and next steps for instruction based on if they could use the strategy taught in the week.

Data Collection

This observational study took place in a third-grade blended classroom. I recorded observations on what the students were working on daily relative to word study. I then observed my students when they were writing and examined their written work to see if they were applying what they learned through word study to their daily writing.

To conduct my research, I received permission first from my building principal. I provided my principal with a written abstract of the study including the research question, the methods of researching and confidentiality. Once I obtained permission of the administration, I then sent a consent form home to parents.

Observations occurred daily for the fifteen minutes of word study and the forty minutes for writing workshop. The observations spanned over a course of five weeks. I received written permission from the parents to observe the students and notified the students that I would be observing them and looking at their writing. This was to reassure the students by letting them know why I was observing their work.

Instruments

The observational study was used to describe to what extent the instructional method of word study impacted students' writing during writing

workshop with third grade students. The study was performed for fifteen minutes in word study and forty minutes during writing workshop, five days a week for five weeks. The data were collected in an unstructured manner for the students. It included a data matrix, which I created for each student, which included the words studied, pattern or generalization for the words, activities used and words that are difficult (Appendix A). I took field notes as the students worked to demonstrate their learning. I analyzed the notes to describe the impact of word study with writing workshop.

The students' behaviors were also documented on another anecdotal record matrix, which included verbal communications and strategies being used (Appendix B). I collected observations through the use of anecdotal records, which I analyzed to describe how word study impacted on students writing during writing workshop.

Conferences with the students took place during writing workshop. During this time I conducted an unscripted interview with each of the students individually. The conference questions included topics addressing their writing process and strategies they were using while writing. This included but was not limited to, writing topic, the spelling of words, what words are used and the structure of the writing. During the conferences the student and I addressed the writing rubric used at the third grade level within the district. It was a district created rubric that must be used when grading student work (Appendix C). Upon leaving the conference students were given three stars (three great things in their

writing) and a wish (one thing to work on) (Appendix D). All this information was plotted on a data matrix and analyzed. The conferences provide different perspectives on the topic of word study impacting students' writing during writing workshop.

Once I had the students' work I was able to then use the form (Appendix E) to explore the spelling patterns used by the student. The form, Spelling Knowledge is from Owocki and Goodman (2002). The form looks at behavior that include, using a letter to represent a syllable, medial consonant, short vowels, phonics spelling, past tense, double consonants, and uses invented spelling for low frequency words.

Following the conferences, I obtained the students' work. This was to monitor the students' invented spelling and strategies used in their writing. Students' work demonstrated the evidence of what they were learning in word study. After collecting the students' work I then blocked out the students' name. Once the name was blocked out I made a photocopy the writing and used the child's pseudonyms.

Limitations

Limitations exist in this study because it relied on two students with a range of disabilities, which, in turn, affect their abilities in writing and spelling. The school district already has a system of word study instruction, which had to be followed. Changes have been made in some areas but the structure of it is something that I could not change.

Data Analysis

I used constant comparison methodology to code the data and uncover themes. I began by analyzing each child's spelling weekly. In word study I was documenting how the students were behaving, words they were working on and activities they used. I took notes mainly on what words they worked on and the activities. I then went through the writing for that piece and looked at my field notes, and observations. By looking at the writing, I was comparing what was discussed in word study and if they were using it in their writing. Then I reviewed previous weeks' data and coded sight words and spelling patterns within writing. I reviewed the color codes from week to week to see how the students were spelling across the weeks.

Throughout my analysis, I categorized data for each student based on their activities, words chosen, and spelling in writing during each school week. I triangulated my data from observations, field notes, students' interview and student work.

As I collected the data and begin analysis, I began to see overlapping themes. I used the constant comparison method to uncover the themes. Patterns emerged throughout the data. The data were first looked at based on the individual student and then compared to the other student. With the new analysis, I knew questions could develop as the research was being conducted All of the data collected were analyzed and linked back to the research question: to what

extent does word study impact students' strategies in word construction in writing workshop for third graders identifying words in isolation below grade level.

I looked at the spelling knowledge form from the week and put the information into a chart to graph out where the student was based on knowledge of sounds, vowels and other spelling patterns. From there I looked at the students' writing from the week and generated a list of invented spelling and patterns based on the student work in word study. I wanted to see what the students were actually writing and how they were spelling the words and what they were working on in word study.

In making the study trustworthy, I continued discussions with the other classroom teacher. With some assistance from my research partner we looked at the data to determine if any themes were not uncovered. This person also looked at the data and how it was coded. From there new questions could arise to help the students and make the study and decrease biases.

Chapter 4: Findings

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to observe if students transferred their learning from word study to writer's workshop and posed the question: Does word study impact students' strategies in word construction in writing workshop for third graders by helping them to be able to identify words in isolation if they read below grade level? I wanted to observe two students to see if they would take the words they were learning in their word study groups and begin to spell them correctly when they were writing in writer's workshop. Spelling is very important to the foundation of writing to ensure effective communication.

This study involved individual case studies of two different students in my third grade class. This was a blended class of twenty-six students, with a mixture of general education students and students classified with learning disabilities. Also present in the classroom were the general education teacher, the special education teacher (me), a behavior skills coach and four teacher assistants.

Case Study One

Steven

Steven is a nine-year-old boy classified with autism. I chose Steven because his assessments showed he was able to read Dolch sight words in isolation but was not always able to identify or spell them correctly. When given the assessment at the beginning of the school year, he did not reach grade level. Steven's inconsistency was cause for alarm because it was unknown if he was

truly learning the sight words or if he needed additional time with the words. His main point of difficulty was with multiple syllable words using digraphs and long vowels. In his writing, many of the words at grade level Steven uses were spelled incorrectly. His stories were very imaginative and creative, but many adults could not decipher what he wrote unless it was read aloud to them.

In school Steven did not appear motivated to do work of any sort. He needed to be pushed to complete assignments or else he would just sit at his desk or in the classroom library and not complete anything. Word study was Steven's least favorite time of the day. He would scream, cry and complain about going to word study. However, once we incorporated more hands on activities for him he was more willing to come and participate. Every morning, Steven would ask if he had to come to word study and initially was very upset when he found out he was to attend. During instruction, Steven always had a checklist with him so that he knew and understood what he had to complete before free time to read scary stories. Preferred tasks for Steven always followed unpreferred tasks as a way to motivate him to work through the lesson and activity.

In every writer's workshop writing assignment, Steven incorporated something spooky and scary. Writer's workshop was a time Steven thoroughly enjoyed and looked forward to each day because he was able to connect his ideas with the type of writing, spooky and scary to express himself.

Reading was a passion for Steven, even though he hated word study and reader's workshop. He expressed his dream job for the future was to become a

published author. Since he was interested in scary things, such as vampires, ghost, goblins, and bats, he created his own graphic novel, a book called Spookville, which consisted of different scary illustrations. No words were on the page, but he knew what each drawing on each page was about and had corresponding stories. All of his pictures were inspired by the series Goosebumps (Stine, 1992-1998).

Steven was a very kind hearted boy who wanted to please everyone, which was why he usually did complete all task demands. Throughout the day, Steven had frequent breaks to help manage large spans of time of sitting and concentrating on one thing. Breaks included walks, stretching, jumping, and completing a teacher assigned job that spanned from a few minutes to five minutes. At first, coming back to the task after break was difficult. Steven, when pushed, had a good work ethic and came from a family that supported his learning. Steven needed to be motivated to learn the spelling rules from word study. Then he needed to be shown strategies to help him adapt that learning to his independent writing.

Steven

Week 1

The first week of the study focused on Steven's decoding skills, with an emphasis on how he decoded words. I observed him breaking words apart by individual letters. The next day, I taught him how to break a word apart. One of the words was "that"; "th" is a blended sound. To tap out the word you would

have three sounds, /th/ /a/ /t/. Within the first week, Steven had little to no difficulties with decoding short vowel three phoneme words. Steven's difficulty was not so much spelling certain words correctly as understanding the rule being taught. This was evident with multiple exposures to different words following that rule. I started incorporating long vowel sounds into his instruction. The way I taught Steven long vowels was different from the method for short vowels. When teaching short vowels, I correlated a word that went with the sound, a apple /a/, e Ed /e/, I itch /i/, o octopus /o/, and u up /u/. For long vowels I told Steven the vowel says its name. I used specific welded long vowels to help teach him this: old, ind, olt, and ild.

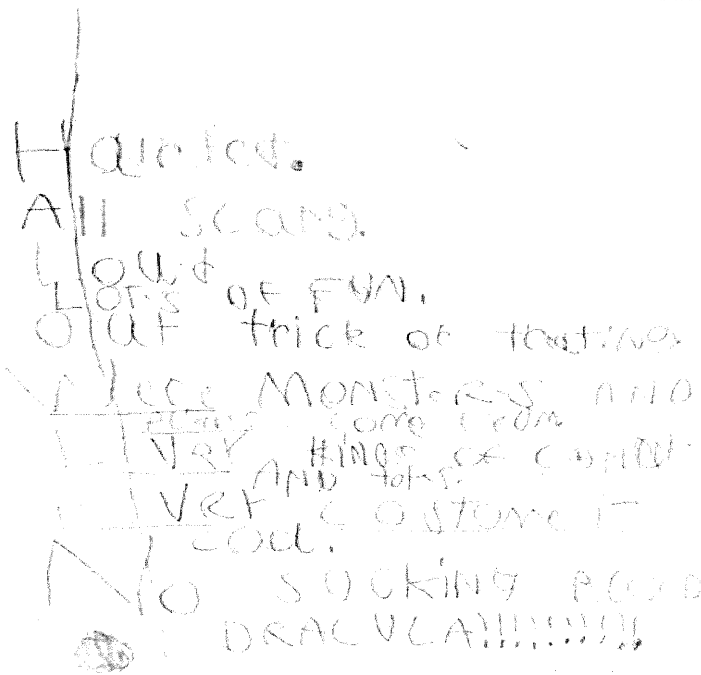
Steven really struggled with differentiating between long and short vowel sounds. This was demonstrated in word study when he was given a word such as "mold". Rather than looking at the word first to see if he could recognize the patterns, he immediately sounded out the word, and then said the word all together. It was very difficult for him to look at the word and see the welded sound. He thought words such as mild and kind, words he used all the time, had short vowels. He was inconsistent with vowel patterns; at times it appeared he was guessing. I found when he had down time from working he would pull his feet up and sit in a little ball on the chair. He would refuse to do work and become very frustrated when continuously asked questions about the generalization. He felt singled out saying, "Why are you not asking everyone else this, just me? Stop asking me."

Since Steven struggled with distinguishing between long and short vowel /i/, I wanted to see how he differentiated between the two in spelling. I found that he had almost no difficulties with short vowel words. In word study, we first had a review of short vowel sounds and incorporated sign language to have some hand movement engage students. I made the mistake in not teaching the long vowel sound with it because as a result, Steven was decoding based on short vowel sounds for all words unless it was a word he knew or heard another say just before him.

In his writing, I found that he was writing some letters with capital letters, specifically “r”, “t”, “h”, “e”, and “a” throughout the word not just in the beginning of the word but Steven was incorrectly using the sight words “because”, “with”, “they” and “where” in his own writing and in isolation. When I used the spelling analysis form from Spelling Knowledge, it seemed he was spelling many times using prominent sounds to spell words. Shaw and Berg (2008) describe learners’ progression through stages of spelling development with the three tiers of English orthography: alphabet (sound-letter correspondence), pattern (complex grouping of letters), and meaning (derivations of words). I believed Steven was in the letter-sound correspondence tier of spelling development because he was writing phonologically a majority of the time for unknown words. He was starting to use some patterns but needed clarification on when to use specific ones. For example, the word “they” was based on what he was hearing: “thay”. I knew I needed to focus instruction more in patterns. This is

evidence of Steven using the pattern of “ay” in his independent writing, it just was not correct for this word. He would benefit from instruction to focus in on choosing correct patterns when writing. “Where” was spelled “were”, minus the “h” in the “wh” chunk of the word. Steven’s dialect the words “were” and “where” may not have a difference and this is when his learning based on meaning would support him in spelling words correctly.

Writer’s workshop for the week was based on choice, and students could use any type of writing and any topic. Steven chose to write poems. The week before we had created a book with different types of poems we had learned and some new ones. Steven decided to write an acrostic poem about Halloween (figure 4.1).



Halloween
All scary.
Lots of fun.
Out trick or treating
Vampire monsters and
Witches some from
Halloween and some from
Halloween and some from
No sucking blood
Dracula!!!!!!

He used vivid language and great describing words. He needed to continue working on his lower case writing, a goal for him throughout the year. Although the poem did not use many words, I could still analyze his spelling. As discussed previously, Steven wrote the word “where” as “were”. At the time of writing I do not know if he meant to use “where” or “were” but when sounding out he missed the /h/ sound. When he said the word “where” he said it with the /h/ sound. When we conferenced about this word he said that “were” is a place and missed the connection of the difference between the two words and a possible different spelling. This had me thinking that Steven was using the spelling strategies within these stages he may start relying less on spelling based on sound-letter correspondence.

In the writing piece, he used the word “haunted” which is difficult to spell because of the two vowels next to each other. He was using a spelling pattern in assisting him in writing based on his work with vowel teams. Another word was “monster”. He was able to encode the /er/ sound as well as the /o/ sound. This spelling shows understanding of some patterns of words studied during word study for students. Another word he used was every, spelled “evry”. Every was a sight word that needed support when writing. Steven appeared to spell the word the way he pronounced it. In the writing piece he also wrote the word, costume as “costome”. When looking at the spelling of that word he understands that a vowel sound is there and with the /o/ next to the “c”. He then appeared to approach the word by hearing a /o/ vowel after the dominant /t/ and between the

/m/. NO!! A dialect can't hear anything—a person can hear something. And, there is no 'short' /u/ in costume! Need to fix this. He continued to build on his vowel sound understanding but appeared to have difficulty determining the sound in the middle of the word.

Week 2

I knew I wanted to incorporate more work with long and short vowels to help Steven differentiate, decode, and spell words correctly. Starting off the week, we focused instruction on spelling closed syllables, up to three syllable words. We continued instruction of long vowels and short vowels to help Steven understand the difference between the two. We used the spelling development stage of using patterns in long vowel words.

At the beginning of the week during word study, Steven struggled greatly with differentiation of vowels. In the previous week's writing example Steven demonstrated areas of improvement with vowel teams and areas where he needed instruction on determining the correct patterns for spelling some vowel teams. In spelling, sight word instruction was also included to build sight word knowledge. This week's sight words were "with", "they", "because" and "where," which were words Steven had had difficulty with the previous week.

Directions for spelling words were very similar to instructions for decoding practices. First, I said the word. Then Steven and I said the word together, and then we tapped out the word to see how the word was made up. The sight word section was taught differently. For the sight word section, I based

instruction on the development of meaning, using the meaning of the word and the context to help Steven learn how to spell the words.

In word study, we did work on his inconsistencies with long versus short vowel sounds. I demonstrated the process, and then he would repeat. For example, I would use the word “kind” and perform a teacher think aloud for “ind”. I would say, “I know that this pattern makes the long /i/ sound, so I will chunk the word by saying /k/ /ind/ and end by putting the word all together”. Then, Steven would repeat the progression with the same word, followed by similar progressions of different words, as an informal assessment of using the strategy. As Steven grew more confident, I would model a word, and then he would decode a different word.

When I observed him, Steven was noncompliant and easily distracted. He curled up in his chair at the table or wandered around the room when the adult working with him was not looking. He appeared upset at the thought of doing word study and constantly said he “hated word study and wished for its blood to be sucked so it could die.” I took this time to explain to Steven why we have word study at school. After our conversation, I wrote Steven a post-it note to remind him that once his work was done and he could demonstrate his learning with his written work or verbally, he would have an opportunity for a preferred task. This incentive motivated Steven for the rest of the week. He still grumbled about having to go to word study, but I observed less distracted behavior and more compliance.

SCARE DAY.

One day, a bully was piking on me so I asked my dad to help me build an alien robot. The robot had batteries with robot claws and red eyes. He can roll on wheels. The robot will scare the bully to death. So when I snuck up behind a tree and put the alien robot behind him and controled the robot to pinch him. And then the robot pinched him and when he turned around he screamed and ran away and no one saw him again since he got scared by the robot.

Writer's workshop focused instruction on writing prompts. Students were given a picture prompt and instructed to write a story based on the picture. The picture was of a child hiding behind a tree, a robot and another child looking frightened. Steven's writing on this picture was one he had trouble starting but once he was focused he was able to complete the assignment (figure 4.2).

Steven's work was impressive, especially given his ability to stay on task with support from the picture. He wrote about his fears of bullies, and described the robot the child built. Steven, due to fine motor delays, always had an option to type his work on an alpha smart, a keyboard with no spell check that can have students type and then transfer the document to a computer to be printed. Steven was very motivated to type; he felt it made his writing look more professional. To help Steven stay on task with writing he was given a checklist to complete his work, which stated this week that he needed to write a rough draft of three sentences or more, have a teacher read it and begin editing his writing.

Steven only worked on his prompt for one day and was very distracted when writing, due to his excitement. He was so excited about the thought of his story that he was unable to sit down and concentrate long enough to type. When told that he needed to have two sentences done by the end of the session, he quickly got to work and finished his piece. Given Steven's haste in finishing this piece, I was surprised that he selected it to take to our writing conference. He stated that he chose it because it helped him explain, "Why I don't want to go to that scary, monster building next year." Steven is changing buildings to a fourth through sixth school; his number one fear was what to do in case of a bully.

Steven's final draft did not reveal whether or not he was successful in accomplishing goals from the previous week's conference because he typed the final draft ("writing in lower case letters when needed."). However, I did collect his rough

draft and found that he did use lower case letters correctly as well as capitals. The sight words we worked on during the week were also spelled correctly.

Steven was using spelling patterns that are usually very difficult for students, such as the double “e” in wheels and the “a_e” pattern in scare. He was able to understand that pattern “ck” the /k/ sound has a “c” and “k” in the word “picking” as well as the word “snuck”. When looking at his use of vowels, I found that he was spelling words by hearing the correct vowels and applying what he was hearing. Other examples of correctly spelled vowel teams include “alien” with the /ie/ sound, as well as “screamed” and “turned”. Encoding the /er/ sound in words had been inconsistent in previous weeks; in this week he encoded the /er/ sound in the word “batteries”.

In word study, I needed to support him by providing him with more strategies to use when decoding, especially with words that have multiple syllables and affixes. Steven was using words such as “controlled” and “picking”, which incorporated the spelling development of doubling consonants, suffixes and prefixes, along with accented and unaccented syllables.

Week 3

From the first week to the third, I found that Steven was effectively using some of the instruction from word study in writer’s workshop, but inconsistently. In the third week, I wanted to continue the practices from the previous two weeks with differentiating between short and long vowels, along with doubling consonants, suffixes and prefixes, and accented and unaccented syllables to help

build up Steven's confidence in word study. Since Steven appeared to have little motivation I wanted to further engage him by helping him create connections to his interest. We used scary and spooky words or connecting words and used them in "scary sentences". Focusing instruction on words Steven was interested engaged him more in word study.

Steven was much more compliant by the third week, and I saw behaviors changing. I heard him telling students that he needed to go to word study and he liked his group time because it was "helping him learn new words he could use." He also asked, "How many days are left of school? I don't want school to end because then we will not have word study." He willingly came on his own and arrived before many of his other group members.

Since Steven was starting to engage actively in word study, I wanted to continue encouraging him as we progressed with instruction. When I observed Steven, I found that he had great difficulty with long vowel spelling. For example he was working on words "dough" and "though". These are words he was working on in word study and not writing in writer's workshop but if asked to spell the word in word study he spelled "dough" as "dogh". I worked to continue incorporating long vowel patterns to help him become more confident through repetition of the words and use them in isolation and in context.

In writer's workshop, we worked on author's craft, using details and describing a vivid picture for the reader. This was a week of free writing choice,

but students had to make sure their writing included detail and descriptive language. This was something that Steven thoroughly enjoyed.

This week, we allowed Steven to take one of his “Spookville” pictures and add words to it. For a day and a half, he drew the new pictures he was going to write about. He used very vivid language to describe each of the creatures he drew, what was occurring on the page and what was to come. I did not scan his work but did write down his writing during our conference. He wrote,

“The tall and mean vampire had sharp teeth with blood dripping down from his mauth. He just bite a monster. The monster was short and fat with deep blue eyes. Many pepole were scared of the monster and happy the monster there was no more monster. Now the vampire had food and was able to sleep for the night.”

His writing demonstrated a few minor spelling mistakes with short and long vowels. For example, the word “mouth” was spelled “mauth”. Mouth does follow a spelling pattern “ou”, but Steven demonstrated his knowledge of vowel sounds knowing that two vowels were in the words and correctly identified one. Based on spelling development stages, he spelled using double vowel words “blood”, “deep”, “sleep” and “food”. This demonstrated he was starting to understand the patterns in words he was familiar with and apply them. Some words we worked with in word study were deep and sleep because I knew that he

would need to know the patterns and he was able to use that learning independently in his writing.

He also spelled using a double consonant in “happy”, though this piece showed that he needed continued work in the spelling strategy of doubling consonants, suffixes and prefixes, and accented and unaccented syllables. He spelled “dripping” “driping”, using the suffix but missing the double consonant. Double consonants, that represent one phoneme may have been difficult for Steven to spell. Some examples of those words include, dripping, controlled, and gobbling. He was introduced to strategies in word study to help spell double consonant words but I needed to continue working on those strategies in guided practice before expecting him to use them independently, since many are difficult when relying on sound to spell.

Week 4

Steven’s attention increased during word study now that he understood the routine and what was expected of him. When Steven practiced sight words in isolation, he spelled the sight words from the previous week correctly. Steven was fully participating in word study and was able to generalize what all the words had in common, that they were closed and open syllable words as well as recognizing them, something he was not able to do the first week. His confidence was growing, and he was willing to work on “harder” words, so that he could use some in his writing.

I selected sight words that would grab Steven's interest and provide utility for everyday use. Much of the word study work was repetitive. For example, Steven was correctly spelling the word "because" successfully in guided work and independent work in word study and writer's workshop. I continued to remind Steven that what we learn here was transferable to other areas.

Writer's workshop instruction focused on friendly letters in preparation for writing a letter to his fourth grade teacher for next year. This week's letter would focus on convincing an audience to travel to Toronto. The audience was either a parent or newspaper readers. In social studies the previous week, we gathered information and put it in a graphic organizer. Steven was told he could use the organizer to discuss what people could do in Toronto and why it was diverse to travelers. Writing this letter took a great deal of time. He toiled with the content of his letter because he appeared to lack knowledge and understanding of the content. The first part of his letter showed some growth from the first week. I could see that he was spelling phonemically as well as using his prior knowledge from word study work the past few weeks. For example, he spelled "whole" "holl." Another stage of spelling is taking parts of another word and taking "hole" and adding the "w" could have demonstrated understand of using prior knowledge to write.

This letter that Steven wrote demonstrates some growth in Steven's spelling over the past few weeks with vowel teams as well as double consonants (figure 4.3).

8-5-04

DEAR MOM AND DAD,
I THINK ALL
HOLL FAMILY SHOULD
VISIT TORONTO, THE FOOD
COMES FROM DIFFERENT
CULTURES LIKE CHINESE
FOOD AND GEEK FOOD,
AND AFTER GUBLING
DOWN THE FOOD,
WE CAN GO SEE
PHANTOM OF THE ---

Looking at Steven's writing work, I saw words such as "should" and "cultures" spelled incorrectly. Although the word, "should" is spelled incorrectly,

Steven was able to determine the /sh/ sound and determine both letters. He was also able to write the ending of the word with the letters “ld” which is difficult because the “l” does not have a dominant sound in the word “should”. With the word “cultures”, Steven was able to determine the “ch” sound although it was a /t/. He was successful in determining the /re/ decoding. In writing both of these words, it appears that Steven is internalizing and trying to use the patterns he is learning in his own writing. He did correctly identify every phoneme in the word “cultures” which could mean that he was developing a deeper understanding of sounds. This could be especially in difficult with spelling rules such as the /er/ which was /re/ in the word and he was able to identify those two letters for the sound. Although these are difficult words, “culture” was written in front of him on his “directions paper”. This reveals he was not using strategies such as looking around the room for help or looking up words to construct the words he was writing. A strategy that may be helpful to instruct with Steven is using the room with word walls and looking back at directions to assist in spelling words. This could be beneficial to Steven since he has difficulty spelling word at or above third grade.

Other spelling patterns Steven used were blends and digraphs. In previous weeks and this week Steven’s word study instruction had some digraphs and blends to assist him in spelling patterns of some consonants together. Patterns included “wh”, “ck”, “bl”, “sh”, “ch”, “th” and “st”. A word Steven did spell with a similar pattern was “phantom” which has the “ph”. Steven was able to

identify that the “ph” makes the /f/ sound and used prior knowledge of word study lessons or reading that word in contents of his independent reading books.

Steven used suffixes in the words “calcher’s” and “gobling”. In word study instruction, it continued to focus on doubling consonants in all areas, not just in isolation of word study. If given more guided practice of this strategy to continue working on doubling consonants could assist Steven in his writing. This writing piece, combined with others that heavily utilized suffixes demonstrated Steven’s understanding of word endings using, -es, -s,-ing,-ed.

When we sat for our conference, Steven said that he “hated writing this letter because it isn’t interesting” but he did like parts of his letter. The parts he liked to write about were “the phantom of the opera because there is a scary looking dude in a mask because his face is all crazy. I would love to see that show.” Steven needed to work on completing tasks whether or not they interested him. As an educator for Steven it helped me in knowing that assigning topics of writing was not an effective way to support his learning.

Week 5

During the final week of the study word study instruction revolved around spelling digraphs, bonus letters (double consonants), welded sounds and using strategies. All the words had short vowels. Differentiating between the two vowels, long and short, was difficult for Steven in the beginning but after working for almost five weeks and receiving continuous instruction, his confidence and knowledge base was increasing. He still struggled at times with reading the

words in isolation. This was not uncommon to see in many or all readers at times during learning how to read and write. I realized Steven was a student who drew on his schema and context clues to help him decode text. This observation is important because when working with words in isolation, instruction can focus his strengths in reading to support his learning. It reinforced the importance to continue work on word meaning to help Steven make a connection to the word and its spelling pattern. When working in isolation with the words I wanted him to focus on strategies he could use if he was stuck.

Spelling sight words such as 'there' and 'their' were introduced in addition to continuing with the word 'because.' I saw him using 'their' in his writing even when the word should be written 'there.' I think the small mini-lessons discussing the difference during the week and transferring into writer's workshop helped his understanding.

Writer's workshop continued to focus on friendly letters. This week Steven and the class were required to write a letter to their teacher for next year. We first reviewed the components of a friendly letter. All students started with a graphic organizer. This took Steven a day and a half to complete, moving on to the rough draft.

To help motivate Steven on task, he was told that he could word process his final draft. My concern with using the computer was the spell check and automatic correct options. Steven typed on an alpha smart, a normal size keyboard and a small screen on which students can see what they are typing. This

has no spell check. I transferred Steven's writing to the computer so that his original spelling would remain intact. Steven's writing was not copied, but I took notes on his writing from our conference.

Dear _,

I hate fourth grade. I don't want to come next year. I don't want to leve here. I like Mr. S and am scard of bulllys.

Who will help me with the bulllys? The building is to big.

I'm scared no one will be my friend. I like scary stories.

Do you have scary books. I want to go to your class if you have scary books.

Analyzing Steven's writing, I found that like the previous week he was writing with appropriate endings, with the exception of "bulllys." We had not worked in great detail with endings where the "y" needed to be changed into an "ies". In all of his writing he used apostrophes with words such as "don't" and "won't" appropriately.

He spelled fourth correctly; it was spelled in the directions so he was starting to look back at the directions to find the words he needed to use. He used words that are commonly used for him but where needed such as "scard" it appears he went back to spelling based on what he hears when he says the word to himself. This observation of Steven spelling phonemically has been ongoing since the beginning of the study and he continues to be encouraged to use other strategies.

At our conference, Steven was very emotional. He feared going to a new building and new classroom next year, so completing this task was very difficult for him. For example he wrote, “ I don’t want to leave here. I like Mr. S and am scared of bullies.”

He struggled when writing words at or above third grade reading level according to the Dolch sight word grade level words as well as Houghton Mifflin grade level words in the context of writer’s workshop. He had difficulty spelling CVC, consonant vowel consonant words such as the, cat, mat, ran, sit and can. One strategy he used was to check resources provided in the room and did so without teacher prompting, but not consistently. This showed me that it is not automatic for him to employ resources and that he needed reteaching on spelling sight words and other short vowel CVC (consonant, vowel, constant, cat) words.

Common Themes Steven

The first theme for Steven was that he needed many opportunities to work with words before expecting him to use them correctly. For example, he worked to correctly spell the word “because” for over a week before successfully using it in writer’s workshop. Multiple opportunities to work on different long vowel words, in isolation and in context helped Steven to become more comfortable locating and understanding the rule. The third week we recycled words to see if Steven was confident enough to continue with larger syllable words and working on long vowels. Long vowels continue being a struggle for Steven but with

practice and repetition his confidence will grow as well as his understanding of vowel patterns and long vowels.

Development of Steven 's spelling occurred in multiple stages: he demonstrated understanding of letter-sound relationships, demonstrated knowledge in within word construction and multiple syllable words. During observations it appeared Steven relied on the strategy of sounding out words, which does not always help in spelling words, such as "gobbling." Allowing time during the writer's workshop to edit writing could also be another way to reinforce and transfer word study strategies into word construction in writing. Another strategy worked on was incorporating and using the classroom word walls or even looking back at the directions and task to spell words correctly already provided.

Steven's writing grew during the course of the study. In the beginning, the focus was to work on using lower case letters in his writing. The second week he focused on adding details, while the third week he needed to focus on taking his time and using his time more effectively. When observing Steven's writing, I discovered that he took his goals into consideration and listened. It really helped Steven to have one goal at a time so that he was not overwhelmed. Once pressure lessened and Steven took his time writing, he was spelling words correctly. It usually took two weeks after word study lessons to show consistency in correct spelling. It was difficult to determine what words Steven would be able to use in writer's workshop because the task changed each week. In the future, more

structured goals for Steven would need to be developed in areas of word construction, specifically within certain stages of vowel work and spelling patterns, could bring success into his writing.

Case Study Two

Thomas

Thomas is a nine-year-old boy who was initially classified with other health impairments in preschool but during the study additional testing was completed and the diagnosis of autism was added at the end of the study. I chose Thomas because throughout his assessments, it exhibited inconsistencies in his writing capabilities, spelling and word identification. He was at times able to sound out a word but when he put it all together he would say a different vowel sound and ending. For example if the word was wig, he would sound out /w/ /i/ /g/ then said wet. His initial assessments showed that he was at an early first grade reading level. If given the same assessment two days in a row, Thomas usually missed the words he had correct the previous day.

Thomas appeared to have little to no motivation to participate in reading or word study, commenting he “couldn’t read” or “didn’t know how to read.” Before the study started, a goal for Thomas was to become engaged in reading. His writing did not fare much better. He wrote with a mixture of upper and lower case letters and used no vowels in his words. Usually only the first letter of the word was correct.

High interest topics for Thomas were action heroes and activities where upper body strength was needed, such as climbing monkey bars or trees. Many times I watched Thomas think and talk as though he really knew Indiana Jones or Spiderman, and that they would help him if he ever needed assistance. Much of the beginning of the school year was spent on helping Thomas determine what was real and what was pretend. Like Steven, Thomas needed frequent and constant breaks. Every thirty minutes Thomas had choice time for five minutes. Choice time consisted of Thomas playing a game or building with blocks. Thomas earned choice time by receiving tokens for sitting in his chair, listening to the teacher and working hard.

Thomas was adopted from another country as an infant. His family is very motivated and supportive of Thomas and his learning, especially in reading and writing. I was concerned that he was moving on to fourth grade and needed additional skills such as decoding, encoding, identifying all of his letters and sounds consistently and concepts of print in reading and writing to successfully be with his peers academically. Many times because of Thomas's inconsistencies he was working one on one with an adult, or when working with peers needed an adult support at all times to reduce frustration. Thomas also had some vision impairments, which consisted of a slight blindness in his right eye and weak vision in his left. He wore glasses to help him see distance and close range, as well as he was reported to suffering from seizures.

I would describe Thomas as a sweet and kindhearted boy. If he was asked to complete a task of interest to him he would without hesitation. When the task had anything involving reading and writing, Thomas appeared to exhibit low self-esteem, such as crying, saying he could not complete a task and saying he was stupid or a bucket head. When a teacher praised him or encouraged him he would attempt but appeared to be self-conscious of how he was reading compared to his peers. This resulted in his needing praise and encouragement to complete these tasks. Creative and interesting activities were thought provoking to Thomas and engaged him enough to attempt the activity.

Thomas

Week 1

The first week of word study focused on tapping and blending out words. For example many of the words were “cat”, “mat”, “bat”, “man” and “can.” The objective for the week was for him to identify the beginning, middle and ending sounds of the words and write them.

The first week was incredibly difficult for Thomas. A lesson that would take twenty minutes for his peers at his academic level of early first grade took him forty minutes to complete. The lessons included starting with reviewing 3-5 letters and what sounds they make. Two of the letters were ones he was familiar with while the others were ones he struggled with identifying and remembering. Following the letter identification, the lesson moved on to building words and identifying them in isolation, then reading with words in context. The lessons

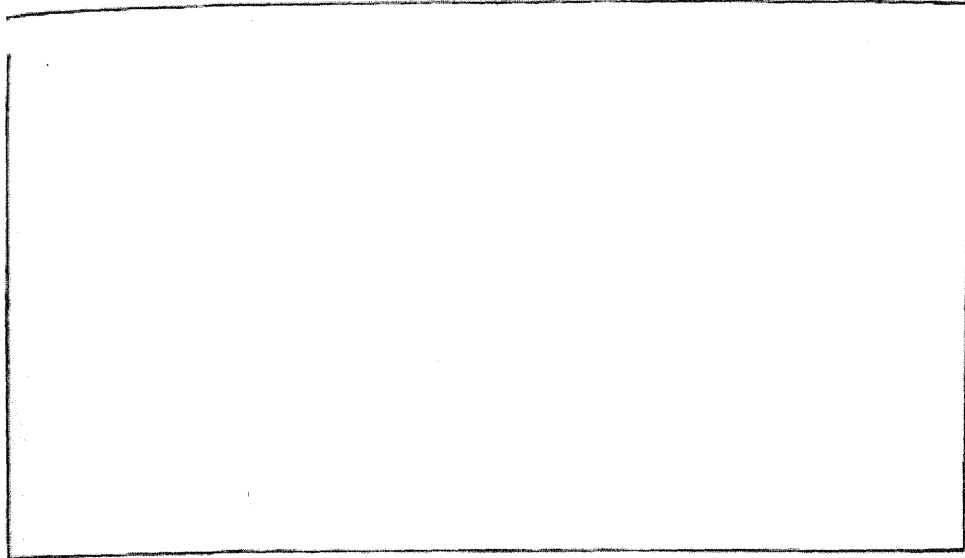
were direct and focused on what Thomas needed to work on in word study and I feel were developmentally appropriate for him. Thomas was noncompliant and physically aggressive towards instruction due to frustration. When I observed Thomas, he repeatedly told adults he was “not doing this, it is stupid and Spiderman is going to come and kick you and save me from doing this work.” Once I observed this I decreased demands so that Thomas was working with fewer words each week; eight words instead of twelve or more. The new focus started with attempting to engage and motivate Thomas in word study.

Writer’s workshop was a free writing week. This meant that students were able to write about any topic of choice and in any expressive way. Engaging Thomas to write was very difficult. He refused to write and needed a scribe for many writing tasks he did throughout the week. On days he was more interested in writing, for example the day he started his train book, he took turns writing with an adult (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4

Name: _____

Date: _____



Duncan does T L K L L.
He can't do T L A H
He's a tank engine he
can pull a small
load. T world like
S L Duncan.

Thomas wrote sight words or words we were working on in word study. I observed in his initial writing previous to this that he used few to no vowels and many times one letter represented an entire word. In this example the words he

was writing were provided for him to use if needed. Looking at the spelling development stages I knew that Thomas was in the letter-sound correspondence stage and needed continuous work on CVC words and one-syllable words. Thomas needed work to review letter sounds and formation of letters. He was not able to identify many sounds on his own, or to identify sight words with more than two letters. When Thomas was writing an adult was always present assisting in encoding for him. The adult would slowly break the word apart, sounding out and using the word wall to help him see two strategies he could use when reading and writing. Thomas preferred when the letters were told to him or he could copy the word because it appeared easier for him to just write the given letter. This way he was not responsible in determining what letter was produced or the sound he was hearing.

During our conference, I praised Thomas to engage him in more areas of literacy. On each page of his book he had two sentences and each sentence correctly corresponded to the picture he had drawn on for the page. The example provided includes one of the pages he wrote with my assistance during writing workshop. When we conferenced on his train book, I commented on his own writing. A new wish for Thomas, and something we worked on in word study for the next week was middle sounds, especially the short /u/ and /o/ sounds, as well as developing a deeper understanding of letter sound correspondence. This would be done with using the letter and producing the sound or sounds it can make.

When writing slowly we would take away the support in words he is working on in word study and not tell him the letters or word to copy

Week 2

The second week of word study was devoted to working on Thomas' working memory and letter sound correspondence. It seemed a difficult task for him to put together three letter sounds; he was able to determine each sound but then would forget pieces or say a completely different word.

Most of Thomas' noncompliant behaviors occurred at the start of word study because the routine was new, taking approximately ten to fifteen minutes for Thomas to get started. I would prepare Thomas and alert him that word study was first on the schedule for the day. At the start of word study Thomas had a choice of two locations to work, across from other students at the desks or on the reading magic carpet. Once his location for word study was determined he was given his visual checklist of what he needed to accomplish that day. Each component was created to last three to five minutes but could last longer. Word study had five components. It started with reviewing three to five letter sounds, then building three to five words with reviewing the sounds and the sounds from the previous day. After building words, Thomas would read five word cards, with the words were in isolation. Then Thomas would read a sentence that had one or more of the isolated words. Many times these tasks took longer because when given a direction Thomas would lay his head down, crawl under tables, throw chairs or cry to try and get out of working. As a result, three to five words were

used and modifications were made, including using pictures to help decode words.

When writing, Thomas was allowed to use markers. Thomas always included an illustration with the story or sentence he wrote. I felt, illustrating would help Thomas build meaning and create a connection to help remember the word and use it correctly in other areas. This week also focused on middle sounds and working on building Thomas' working memory with three letter sounds. He was never asked to read at this time words that were over three letters because it appeared he was not ready to go further.

In writer's workshop the plan was to scaffold Thomas' writing by having him begin to write words based on patterns he was learning, and some sight words. This was done while Thomas worked on writing a poem. Previously I had worked with Thomas on a pre-writing task of writing about trains. Thomas used the pre-writing activity and decided that he wanted to do all the writing and completed it on his own (figure 4.5). He was given the paper and markers and went to a quiet corner to write. When he was finished, he asked to conference. I asked him to read his poem to me.

Figure 4.5

TRAIN
DOUGLAS
DONALD
SHOES
TINY CRAS
N TOO
O THULDA

The train poem says,

“Train

Douglas

Donald 10

Sheds

They crash into each

Other loud”

Thomas was able to spell “train”, “they” and “Douglas”, common words for him to have exposure to in his reading and on environmental print of toys.. The words were not in front of him or sounded out for him. These are words however, he saw on a daily basis and used in his oral language.

He missed some sounds with the words “crash”, “other”, and “loud”. He wrote at times only consonant or the dominant sound in a word, such as “cras”. He needed repeated exposure and opportunities to look at words with three letter sounds to demonstrate sound patterns. Reviewing the letter sounds relationships was also found to be important because when writing, Thomas appeared to not know all of the letter sounds.

When looking at the word “cras” he is able to determine the dominant sound of /c/, /r/, and the vowel “a”. The ‘sh’ digraph makes a sound he does not have a lot of exposure to but he was able to encode one of the letters. With the word, “loud” he spelled “ludr”. He was able to determine the dominant sounds of “l” and “d” but the vowels, “o” and “u” are vowels he struggled with reading and putting them together is a difficult spelling pattern to hear and know when working on three letter words. Thomas struggles with determining the vowel, “o” and in the word “loud” he was unable to encode the “o”, instead using the “u”. In

the word “other” he was able to encode the first three letters demonstrating that he could be beginning to understand and encode more vowel sounds. There have been times that he does encode the “o” such as in the word “other”. The first three letters of “Other” were spelled correctly, which is surprising because some struggling writers and readers have difficulties determining the /th/ sound.

On the back of his paper, Thomas drew a picture of a train crashing off a hill. This picture and poem made sense and his handwriting, while not as legible compared to writing samples with adult support, was an improvement from even the week before. Through observations and this sample, Thomas demonstrated that he had some sound-letter correspondence when writing full words. As well, it appeared at times he was using dominant sounds and his prior knowledge to assist him in spelling. It appeared to me that Thomas was making meaning with the words he was using in his writing by providing a picture to support his word choice.

When we conferenced on his piece “Train,” we discussed his use of color when writing the words. I had him point out how he did a nice job of using spaces in between his words and sounding out words. Since this was a poem, it was hard to discuss adding details and sentences to his work. I noticed many capital letters in the middle of his words and knew this was something I could address in a mini-lesson for writer’s workshop as an example of what not to do. Thomas also needed to become more aware that the middle of words did not use capital letters.

Week 3

Thomas was still exhibiting some behavioral problems in starting word study. He did not want to come to his area to work or comply with the task. On the five days we had word study, three of the days he hid under his desk and one of the days he put himself in his locker (data table 1.1). Once he knew the schedule and routine, however, it was approximately five minutes rather than fifteen minutes to start word study compared to other students who would start word study immediately. When Thomas knew the routine of word study and started doing the work his negative, non-compliant behaviors decreased. It also took less prompting for Thomas to begin his work as the weeks progressed because he was starting to understand the outline of what needed to be accomplished.

Data Table 1.1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Prompts needed to begin	9	8	7	6	5
Behaviors	in locker to start	Under table at start	Under table to begin	Under table after first part	Covered his face throughout

I wanted to continue working with short vowel sounds and also to start looking more closely at sight words. I thought doing this would build Thomas' confidence because knowing some of the words in the sentence is better than knowing none of the words. It also started to provide Thomas with strategies for sounding out or finding parts of words to identify for unknown words. While working on beginning, middle and ends of a word, I used Elkonin boxes. I had three pieces of paper, three different colors, green, yellow and red. This was to show the progression in decoding the sounds in a word, as well as a visual of start reading at green, slow at the vowel then stop at the end sound. When writing and reading he was having difficulty with some sight words such as "they" "the" "was" "and". I provided him with additional practice, which could be beneficial to building his working memory. Some of the sight words were ones that he knew well, so I used them to help build up his confidence.

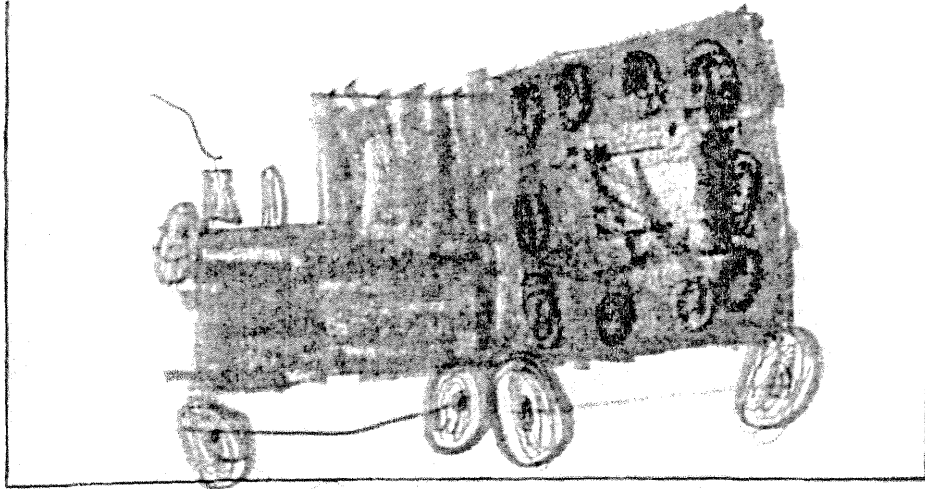
Writer's workshop focused on author's craft with adding details to writing. Students were able to pick the topic and style of writing as long as details and descriptive language were used. In Thomas's writing we were looking to get him to expand his ideas. An example of expanding from my point of view could be, "The red train is Thomas the train. He is fast as lightning", instead of what Thomas wrote "The Thomas the train." Thomas liked the fact that we were writing based on topics of his choice. He chose to add on to his book, this time using stickers as pictures. I scaffolded Thomas' writing; we sounded out words together before Thomas started writing them. Then for the words he wrote, we

started by putting them on post-it's for him to visualize and to ensure lower case letters when needed (figure 4.6). This process worked well. He had three to four sentences to a page and was adding details about how fast the trains were and their personalities. He described one train in his book as “a bolt of lightning.” He did this on three other pages in his writing pages, not just one.

Figure 4.6

Name: _____

Date: _____



James I.S. red. Sir Top
Hat told James to stay
at the shed ALL
DAY.

He worked in a quiet location away from the rest of the classes' instruction during writing workshop. I had an adult scribe for Thomas, this way Thomas said what he wanted to write and the adult writes. The only writing Thomas completed on his own was sight words. I also wanted to take note of if

he was able to write sight words in his writing. When writing this piece he struggled with one word, “in”. To start he wrote the “n” because it was the last thing he heard and was forgetting the vowel sound. Thomas needs to stop and think of what he wants to write before writing so that his work is legible. The next strategy for him to continue working on was the “stop, think, go”. “Stop, think, go” is a strategy that reminds students to stop and think about what they want to write. First students think about what they want to write and how they want it to write it. Then the student starts writing or “go”. When Thomas was writing his stop, think, go consisted of thinking of his word to write and writing the dominant sound heard. It appears to me that Thomas was in the developmental stage of spelling letter-sound correspondence for identifying sounds with letter symbols. Providing strategies of slowing down can help Thomas in the future for his writing.

I wanted for the rest of word study, to have Thomas explore less dominant sounds and use them in writing. He was in the spelling stage of letter-sound correspondence but mainly because his working memory was so limited that when he wrote, he wrote the last thing he remembered, the last sound of the word. When he was writing he would need to say the word, and segment it based on each sound heard and identify a letter to correlate with the sound. For example in the writing assignment for the week he spelled the word “to” and needed to say /tttt/ “t”, /ooo/, “o”.

With limited support he was able to write the words, “the”, “all” “day” and “to”. “All” could be a difficult word to spell because of double consonant, you cannot hear the additional /l/ in the word; prior knowledge of the word and pattern recognition that it needed for the double /l/. The word “day” also follows a pattern with “ay”. The long /a/ sound combined with the /y/ sound could be difficult to spell. Thomas appeared to have made some growth from word study because the sight word work was evident in his sight word writing.

When we conferenced, we looked back at his book and one thing we read the first few pages from the first week and then looked at what he wrote the third week to show him how much more of an author he was becoming with practice. He was happy with his book and could not wait to take it home and also show the class his writing. This child engaged very little with his peers and now he was going to them and showing his work. This was an amazing step for him. Before Thomas left to show his peers, his wish was to work on writing more words on his own. Now that he was building up his word bank and from observing and working with him I knew he could be writing more sight words and three letter words and wanted him to become more engaged in the writing process.

Week 4

In word study we continued to review short vowel sounds along with beginning, middle and ending sounds recognizing the sounds in the middle of the word. I also continued to explore how Thomas was doing transferring learning from all three areas of work, word study, reading and writing. He was becoming

much more automatic in his decoding and quicker with continued practice on building and strengthening his working memory. He was starting to identify phonemes of /a/, /e/, /l/, /g/, /u/ and identify the letter that represented the phoneme. He was making fewer miscues and if he made miscues was self-correcting. This was evident in observation notes taken and a running record from word study in reading his one sentence with words we worked on in word study. The running record sentence for Wednesday was, "The cat is fat". Thomas began to read the sentence as, "The /can/cat/ is /f/a/t/ fat.

A constant teacher prompt was "look at the word not me". Other strategies we worked on were to tap out a word, to break the word apart by the sounds the letters make and put it all back together. We also used highlight strips over the words, highlighting a sentence as he read and using a pointer or his finger to track his reading. Having manipulatives many times supported Thomas in his reading and helped him to stay focused. After a few weeks he realized the adult working with him was not going to give him the word, he needed to read it himself. I observed that Thomas many times was putting the word back together and wasn't looking at the appropriate word but the floor or the adult. Once the responsibility was there and he understood the strategies to decode and spell he could begin transferring his learning. Although he was improving I wanted to remain with short vowels, one-syllable words and not build anything else into his word study program. This was because he was still struggling and I didn't want to push him too far with the progress he had made in reading.

In writer's workshop we worked on writing friendly letters. The topic was to write a letter to someone discussing why one should travel to Toronto. Thomas was very disengaged the entire week in writing. This was not something uncommon; at the start of every writing workshop Thomas was disengaged or unmotivated to work because writing was such a struggle with the fine motor demands. So for writing we told Thomas he only had to write a few words but he had to tell us what his letter would say. He worked on this letter for a few days that followed into the next week. The first day of writing consisted of drafting what he was going to write about, a chance to review all the information and star what he wanted to include, for example the sumo wrestlers, the zoo, school days and what the kids learned, eating with chop sticks. The next two days consisted of verbalizing what would be said in the letter and an adult writing in the graphic organizer what information would be included. The next two days consisted of writing the letter. Thomas's entire letter that could be read follows.

“DeAR Mrs.,

Toronto has ONTARIO PlAce.

If you visit Toronto you could see the biggest ZOO.”

I told Thomas, to pick what words he wanted to write. Thomas chose to write words in his letter that were very difficult such as “dear”, “Ontario” and “place”. A word we had been working on, “zoo” was a difficult word for him because he started writing double “l” then wrote a “z” over it. I do not know if he misheard the word he was writing or was thinking of another word. I was not the

adult working with him and I would have had him write the “be” “fun” “is” “it” because even “is” and “it” can be difficult for him to spell since he usually starts with the consonant. He had much more adult support on this writing piece. On the last day of writing he said he would write dragon. We sounded it out together on a post it and then it was given to him to write. He then scribbled over the last page, which made the additional two sentences he wrote illegible. He was able at the end to write his own name instead of having an adult write it for him. He was frustrated and upset and at one point did become aggressive towards adults because he wanted to stop. He should have been writing words he was confident and comfortable writing.

Thomas’ developmental spelling stages were mainly in letter-sound and pattern spelling, as he used the strategy of sounding out. In isolation he was able to identify different letter sounds but seeing a word and putting all the sounds together was difficult so we added in using patterns. For example we used words like cat, can, car, hat, fat, rat so that he was reading through the word and not just segments. Thomas wrote the words that had similar beginnings and endings of the example words.

Once we sounded out the word, if it was a sight word we used our word wall to check if the word construction was accurate. The addition to word study with writing the words was helpful for Thomas because fine motor writing was a weakness for Thomas and it provided him with additional support in both areas

and connecting what he visually wanted to write with the act of physically writing the word.

I brought his letter about Ontario to our conference that week. I gave him a star for his sounding out, his details, and creativity in sentence context. His wish to work on was to work on all assignments and try his best because this letter is not his best work. It can be difficult writing about something we don't like, but I explained to Thomas that writing about things we don't like sometimes happens but he could end up liking the topic if he tried. Thomas told me he was upset because he didn't want to write a letter about Toronto and that he didn't want to write, he wanted others to write for him. So we compromised that on the next writing assignment that if he did not want to write someone would scribe for him but he would help us sound out the letters. This was done because I didn't want to disengage Thomas from the writing process but writing this much could be frustrating to him and overwhelming. Thomas needs to have some engagement with writing, such as writing some of the words instead of being expected to write it all, while still spelling out the words just not always writing it himself.

Week 5

In the last week I wanted to continue building on short vowel sounds but also incorporate digraphs of ck, and sh (to help bring in more patterns to spell and en decode words when reading). This was because I wanted Thomas to see that sometimes one sound can go with two letters. He was doing well with the short vowels so I didn't want to overwhelm him so one or two digraph words were

introduced to him. This excited him and engaged him more because it was what he called his mystery word of the day.

Thomas is starting fourth grade in September and he had tours of fourth grade classroom days before and he proclaimed that he was going to “work harder to learn to read” so that he could read the cool new books next year. He was very focused and worked hard during word study, reading workshop and writing workshop so that he could become a better reader and writer . He was more conscious of the words and was even making self-corrections in isolation and in reading passages. Thomas was more conscious of words he was tracking his reading, using his finger at the bottom of the words and moving consistently with what word he was reading. On his own he was going back and reading three sentences instead of one. One of the sentences in word study on Thursday was, “I ran to the big, brown door”. Thomas began reading it as; “I ran the bog”. He then went back to the beginning of the sentence and read it correctly. Whenever this occurred Thomas received large amounts of praise from adults and peers to encourage him to keep up this work and he appeared to be proud of himself and the praise because he continued working hard. In writer’s workshop Thomas did not finish his letter to the fourth grade teacher, only writing five sentences. This was a topic Thomas was engaged in and into which he put a lot of thought and effort into his work. He discussed his fears, concerns and excitement over his new classroom and school and was able to address that in his letter. He was very engaged in working on pre-writing activities such as brainstorming and using

graphic organizers. Like Steven, Thomas typed his letter on the alpha smart. This took a long period of time because Thomas did have very much information he wanted to write about. It took several days and he worked on it for long periods of time.

Within Thomas's letter was one section,

“my name is Thomas. I am 9 years old. I
like Trains. I like monstr Jam. My best
frend is Romeo.”

In the rough draft letter he wrote “I” and “like” and attempted to write every word in the letter. He had the short vowel sound in the sight words and smaller words. For example he used the sight words “my”, “is” “like” and “am” correctly in his letter. He did rely on the sentence starter “I like” for two of the sentences but he was able to write them on his own. The word “years” and “old” were highlighted in the graphic organizer and he identified the two words and correctly copied them from the organizer to his own draft.

When spelling words with multiple vowels, Thomas identified one vowel. Now that Thomas was writing CVC words with a vowel, teachers started to encourage him to write words with additional letters and sounds. For example “name” and “like”. Although these words were highlighted within his graphic organizer he was able to copy and rewrite the words to his letter. Introducing CVCV words in writing for Thomas would be next.

He was able to break some of the word apart and identify a vowel phoneme was present in the word but had difficulties determining that a second vowel was in the word. In many CVC words that Thomas was working on reading, he struggled with the “o”, “u” and “e” vowels.. The fact that Thomas writes a vowel in the word “frend” demonstrates learning since the first week, especially since it comes from a word that is more complex than CVC words. Evidence from previous observations that Thomas many times spelling words by sounding out the word. With “frend” he was able to identify a vowel, “e” a vowel he does struggle with identifying within a word. He chose an “e” to represent the short “e” sound in the word, which demonstrates growth in his learning because in week 1 he was writing words without vowels without being prompted.

Thomas also wrote the word “monster” and missed the /er/ which remains consistent with week two writing where he did not use the /er/ with the word “louder”. The word ‘monster’ was written “monstr”; he was able to identify one of the sounds in “er” with the letter “r”. He knows that both of these words ends with the letter r as well and encoding the beginning parts of the words which in week one was very difficult for him to segment and blend three letter words.

Thomas needs additional work with vowels and patterns with some consonants and vowels together and the sound these patterns represent. He was able to identify one vowel sound in words. Thomas was also on his own able to produce sentences, although short sentences could be a start for continued work in writer’s workshop to adding more details to his sentences.

Common Themes Thomas

Once the routine was in place for Thomas and he understood his job during word study, learning was taking place. He was much more confident and set himself up to be successful. He had a goal after our visit to the fourth grade classroom, which was to read a Star Wars chapter book for next year. I had a picture of the book for him to remind him that with practice and work he could read that book and understand it. Interrupting behaviors soon decreased and he was able to focus on the instruction and work.

When the words or writing tasks were interesting to Thomas, he was much more engaged in the task. When he was interested in the writing was when he was conscious of his spelling. He took his time spelling out words and he was writing more on his own instead of relying on adults to assist him. Being more engaged and interested in the words and activity prompted more effective long term learning to occur. At the beginning of the school year Thomas was writing without vowels in approximately 98 percent of his words. Concluding this study Thomas was identifying vowels and using them in his writing. Thomas still struggled with short vowels and initially remembered the dominant sound in the word but with prompting was able to identify two other sounds in the word. He has had great success in building his working memory and holding more information concerning how to identify the beginning, middle and end sounds.

Themes

Letter Formation

At the start of the study I quickly observed both students writing using lower and capital letters inappropriately. Some words had random letters capitalized. As I looked at each of their writing over the first week I found that it was the same letters being written in capital letters. Thomas was not using lower case letters at all initially and with limited prompting began to use them. Steven still used some but not as often as in previous weeks. It appeared as though both were more comfortable writing certain letters in capital letters because they were able to write down what they were hearing faster. In word study I did do some work each day and really reminded the students that they needed lower case letters and we worked on remembering how the lower case letters look and how they are written. It was as though they needed a reminder and reteaching of lower case letter formation.

Spelling Strategies

Spelling patterns for both students were not too different because they both struggled with vowel sounds. The main strategy both students used when spelling was based on what they heard. The focus changed to spelling a few words in isolation to learn the spelling patterns. The students' then looked at additional words with the same patterns to the ones being taught in isolation to build understanding. The goal was to have the students understand that word

study and spelling contribute to the making of words and take that learning into all of their academic settings.

At the start of the study, Steven was using vowels but not always correctly. He would substitute one vowel for another or leave out vowels. I needed to go back and teach some of the vowel patterns and connect the patterns to a meaningful way to explain that some letters sound were different when placed near one another. The reason I needed to incorporate more meaning was because Steven needed to make connections with his new learning to his prior learning. This was also done with explaining long vowels and double consonants. The trouble with teaching some of these patterns was that you needed different patterns to coincide; otherwise students applied the one pattern to every word they came in contact with. At this point it was difficult to assess learning because it was unknown if students were differentiating between different patterns. For example following a double consonant but adding words that do not double the consonant helps students truly understand that not all words have this pattern they follow another.

Thomas, much like Steven, had difficulties with vowels, mainly with identifying vowels. In his own writing at the beginning of the study, Thomas used no vowels in the words. He would write the dominant sounds he was hearing when he or someone else said the word. He truly used the strategy sounding out but was unable to completely decode the word using a letter to represent a word. We worked with Elkonin boxes to show that the words have

different sounds and letters. I found that we couldn't force Thomas or any other students to learn a specific number of words each week. Students can only learn as many words as their working memory would allow. For Thomas his working memory was at two or three words because he was not able to read or spell many words with more than those letters. Once he had an understanding of these words I could add in more words to the previous two or three.

Sight words

Identifying, and incorporating sight words can be difficult for students in early elementary grades. The two participants were unable to identify all the necessary sight words at grade level. Identifying sight words is difficult because many of the words are "the" "that" "is" "it" which have little to no meaning for the students to make connections. The first aspect of this study was to have the two students first identify sight words they know and begin to spelling them. Once they were able to spell them, I needed to hold the students accountable for spelling those words correctly from that point on in all academic areas. Holding students to expectations of specific spelling words and patterns can help them become more conscious of what they are spelling. Using the words repeatedly in isolation and in context helped students to continue working and manipulating the word from working memory to long-term memory.

Steven had difficulties with sight words closer to grade level and mainly because they had difficult spelling patterns and multiple vowels. Sight words he had difficulty with were "because" "they" "there" "their" "where" "were" and

“should”. He was only using one strategy, sound out the word and writing what he heard himself say. He was working so hard to get his ideas down on paper, afraid he would lose his thought that spelling was not a concern for him. Word study can be a time to work on identifying and applying sight words most commonly used to become more automatic. This would help when he was writing so he is able to quickly write down the words with little to no thinking. Once Steven works on understanding the difference between short and long vowels he will have a deeper understanding of words and how letters sounds become different next to other letters and constantly reviewing them.

When it came to sight words, Thomas had a very large foundation of sight words when communicating. He was just not able to recognize them or write them. He would say “cat” for “can” or “tan” or even a word with a completely different vowel. When I first started working with Thomas I realized that when decoding a word he was looking at it but when he put it all together he wasn’t looking at the word he was looking everywhere else. By the end of the study Thomas was being held accountable for reading and spelling words he was learning in word study in his own writing, something that was not always done during the school year. He was afraid to lose his thoughts so he quickly got everything down and would yell out “I’m done” and would not want to go back and fix misspellings because it was done in his opinion. Thomas needed work on looking at the word he was reading then becoming more automatic in decoding what the word was. Once Thomas was able to identify the word we would then

work on spelling it out. To me the first goal for Thomas was to be able to identify the word before applying it in his writing.

Classroom Routines

These two students need classroom routines and structure, as well as to understand what they will be held responsible for with each task to help them focus on what needs to get done to ensure more focused teaching and direct learning. It took time to set up the structure but once it was in place I saw noncompliance behaviors greatly decrease as well as negative feelings towards word study. At the beginning both boys strongly disliked word study and participated very little during that time. The first week it took twice as long to complete a lesson because they were noncompliant. The first and second week Thomas was physically aggressive towards adults teaching him word study, but by the fifth week he came willing and ready to work. Once they got comfortable with expectations they were more willing to participate and work. A schedule and routine helped the boys to be comfortable to know what they were responsible for doing, reading, manipulating words, and answering questions along with asking for help.

Engagement

An increase in engagement towards word study resulted in more participation. Including in word study more hands on activities and time to manipulate the words supported the students' learning and their learning styles. With that the students were more consistent in decoding and identifying words in

word study as well as writing them in writer's workshop. Both boys learned with hands on instruction, using magnetic boards to build words and were able to read and write words with limited prompting.

During word study Steven worked in a small group with three other boys. The other boys were approximately at the same level as Steven, but Steven struggled more than the other boys grasping ideas and concepts. The first week Steven asked why we were picking on him and asking him all the questions. I still wanted to check his understanding so I would do it quietly while everyone worked, as well as having the boys ask one another the questions instead of myself asking the questions. If Steven needed time one to one I would pull him aside later in the day and work with him instead of in front of his peers. Being with his peers and treated as an equal really supported Steven in his learning as well as teaching new approaches to the group to support one another.

Thomas worked one on one with an adult and really did well being with one person because it eliminated distractions. He fully had the attention of the adult and his program for word study was directed mainly towards him and setting him up for success. I wanted both boys to be successful, especially Thomas since he did appear to have a very low self-esteem. I would always try to provide him with review words that I knew he could decode and spell to help him know he can read and write as well as smart. Once he and Steven started to believe they were smart the harder they worked.

Conclusion

Key findings in this study were spelling strategies, sight word recognition, letter formation, classroom routines, and engagement. The next chapter will further discuss the implications of each of the key findings. During this qualitative study I discovered that all children are different. Learning to spell is very challenging and daunting to many students. As teachers we must try to find ways to help make this experience of learning to spell one that students can be proud of their success. It is during the elementary school years that students need more word study instruction so that students do not have low confidence or low spelling abilities later in life.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research study I conducted focused on how word study impacted students' strategies in word construction in writing workshop for third graders identifying words in isolation below grade level. What I was hoping to find was that the two participants would take the words they were learning, as well as the spelling patterns and incorporate it into their own writing independently. I found from this study that students were not just incorporating their spelling patterns but I needed to value the attempts and growth in the students' spelling development in writer's workshop. I found that the students needed the structure and routine of word study exploration along with prompting to use their strategies in word study and writers workshop. Students first needed to identify the patterns of words in isolation, recognize and use the words in context, and then apply them in other areas. I worked and focused on the idea that "educators must focus on students' developmental needs in identifying words and tailor their instruction to the students' level" (Shah & Thomas, 2002, p. 13) instructing my students in word study and then transferring that instruction into their own writing.

Implications

Spelling Patterns

When I worked with students during this study I used word study time to really observe and discover how the students were spelling. Word study should provide "students with opportunities to investigate and understand the patterns in words. Knowledge of these patterns means that students needn't learn to spell one

word at a time” (Leipzig, 2000, retrieved from website <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/80>). It was important to provide the students with time to manipulate and understand the patterns they were learning. The overall goal was to look to see if students were using the words studied in word study in their own writing and make them more aware of letter-sound relationships and patterns in words. It was during the time that students were manipulating words that I could observe how they were spelling and what strategies they were using. I observed that students’ growth as well in knowledge of spelling. Rasinski and Oswald (2005) support the idea that students manipulating words help them to be more aware of the spelling and to start to become more comfortable using these words in their daily writing.

In my own teaching I will continue to provide students with many different opportunities to manipulate words. I think the more time the students in the study got to manipulate words the more comfortable they became with the words and appeared to feel really successful. With the students feeling successful, I found that they were more willing to try spelling other words with the same features and began to grow in their knowledge of spelling. Even with some of their unconventional spelling, I observed students transferring spelling patterns into their own writing as weeks progressed.

During the study I observed that the two students needed different opportunities to work and manipulate the words with the spelling pattern for the week to help learn and understand the pattern being taught.. The students’ work

samples gave me a lot of valuable information, but watching the students truly showed me what strategies they were using. Making observations and looking at students work can be used as a tool for teachers to help guide instruction and teachign preactices. Within chapter four I discussed that both participants were auditory learners and relied on what they were hearing to spell. I taught the students a number of strategies to help them spell because they had other strenghts to use different strategies. Dahl, et al. (2004) found in their study that using multiple strategies helped their students and found that students were actually using different strategies to help them in their writing. One strategy I used was to help the students focus on the meaning of words they were learning to build their understanding as well as help them remember how to spell the word. This was important for the two students because they needed to make connections to what they knew to help them learn new strategies. In continuing my own teaching I will support my students by teaching them a number of strategies to help them decode, make meaning, spell, and write in writer's workshop to encourage learning and growth.

Sight Words

What I have learned about teaching sight words was to be creative and repetitive. Students struggling to read and spell sight words need continued practice to be successful. Joseph and Orlins (2005) discuss that when teachers provide students with opportunities and expose them to different words to manipulate, the more confident and successful students become with using words. To me the largest differences between sight words and other words students use is the high

frequency of sight words and how difficult it is to connect meaning to the word. Both Steven and Thomas had difficulty starting out spelling and reading sight words. I concentrated first on having the boys identify the word in isolation, in context and then being able to spell the word. Reading and learning words in isolation can be more difficult because it prevents readers from using multiple cuing systems but I wanted both students to make meaning with the words before using it in context. Many times the two students were overwhelmed by reading text with large amounts of words on a page. I found myself needing to be more creative in my teaching and have the students apply their learning to spell sight words so that they would be engaged in writing and spelling. With these two students the learning needed to be engaging at least in the beginning to get them to participate in the activity. In word study I would have students try different approaches to spell sight words. I had students use different hands on approaches with engaging manipulatives to encourage students to participate. I think what changed was that the students' confidence was building and they had so much practice with these words it was becoming more automatic.

Engagement

Each participant had strengths and areas of need. Elliot and Rietschel (1999) remind us of the importance of working with the students and not against them with their areas of strength and need, meaning teachers should teach students based on their learning style along with their strengths to help engage them in the lesson and new teaching. Thomas and Steven struggled in school and found

reading, writing and word study to be very difficult. Steven discussed this in the beginning of the school year, saying he “hated” word study. Changing Thomas and Stevens’ opinions and connecting the learning to their areas of interest needed to be done. I think their opinions changed once they realized how important word study was to reading and writing the more they were interested in participating and learning. Steven became engaged in learning when he saw the different manipulatives and tools he could use to help him learn words. He needed a new approach to learning with word study because learning words and understanding the patterns was difficult. I also provided him with a daily checklist so that he knew each day what was expected of him and that helped him to focus on what he needed to accomplish. Thomas became more confident in word study instruction because he started to see that he was reading new words and the strategies were helping him read. Using manipulatives was fun for him but it was when he didn’t think he was as “stupid” as everyone else and that he could learn.

In the future I will begin by trying to decrease negativity students have in specific areas of study to help them enjoy being learners. I will have interactive activities and one to one support when needed as well as small group instruction. Teachers have to discover what works best for students to learn and help them understand the material to be meaningful.

Student Self Esteem

At the start of the study, I found both students had low self esteem related to reading and writing. Both were bright boys who enjoyed school but truly felt they

could not learn to read or write like their peers. We first worked on reading and identifying the features in words they already knew. From there I would only add a few new words to the list. This was because their confidence level was so low that they needed encouragement and a feeling that they can read on their own. Once their confidence level went up I saw they were more willing to try reading unknown words and try to apply spelling features to words in their writing. I found in this study that if students felt successful they were more likely to try more in their learning.

If one of the boys felt or thought they could not read the words or decode a word I knew we first had to work on the mindset of the student before moving on to reading in a book. Some students start to build awareness of their peers, what they are working on and how fast they work through tasks. I found in this study, I had to address that all students learn differently and at different paces. This needed to be repeated during the study but once students started realizing they could read and write like their peers and engaged in the activity the more successful they may be in the task.

Transferring Learning

Many opportunities for continued practice with specific patterns and words helped both Steven and Thomas identify and apply the words being manipulated in word study to writer's workshop. Data collected from writing samples throughout the study demonstrated learning in that students were using or attempting to use spelling patterns taught in word study in their own writing in writer's workshop. I

noted learning from week to week based on the pattern the student was learning that week and previous weeks then looked to their writing to see if the pattern was applied. Steven worked really hard on vowel team and long vowels, and towards the end of the study from his writing readers could see evidence in his spelling of different features he was learning. Thomas worked on vowels sounds and one syllable words, which he started writing more and even spelling multiple syllable words with vowel teams. For learning to transfer into other areas teachers need to be conscious of how students learn; additionally, we must consider the best practices available that provide more opportunities to encounter and enrich learning experiences (Mayer, 2004). Continued practice and high levels of interest helped the students to transfer their learning, in my opinion.

I learned though this study that we as teachers need to remind students of strategies and resources they have instead of doing the work for them. Encouraging the students to be more independent and providing small prompts to not single them out appeared to make them feel more successful and able to work on their own. Many opportunities over time in different approaches help students to learn new words and begin to use them independently in their own writing.

In the future, I will be very specific and clear about my expectations for students so that they understand what they should be doing. I observed that once Thomas and Steven understood expectations for spelling certain patterns and being conscious of their spelling resulted in them focusing on spelling the words using the pattern or attempting to use the pattern for different spelling patterns. When

teaching, teachers provide many elementary students with step by step directions to complete a task independently. Before going through the steps teachers must have a baseline for the expectations for the task, having your name on the paper, using complete sentences and other expectations. I found that providing the students with the expectation first, before starting any task was helpful because then during the directions or instruction they were more focused on what I was saying and less on thinking what do I have to do next.

Difficulties during the Study

Difficulties I found students to have wasn't learning the material but applying it their writing on their own. Teachers must work with students by providing them with opportunities and strategies to develop their spelling in isolation. As well, teachers need to learn how to help students transfer that knowledge in spelling to other content areas (Elliot & Rietschel, 1999; Dahl, et al., 2004). I wanted the students to be clear that what was accomplished in word study with their understandings of spelling patterns should be used in writer's workshop. The struggle with Thomas and Steven was working on not rushing to write down ideas so that the writing was legible and to take notice to evidence of learning in their attempts to spell using patterns learned in word study.

Another obstacle that was hard for the students was to maintain and remember all the rules and irregularities of various spelling patterns. It can be difficult as a teacher to teach new word study features, especially when the student does not understand the way it is being taught with only few strategies, materials,

and methods (Johnson & Marlow, 1996). As teachers we need to remind students during conferences in word study, reading and writing to use strategies taught in all areas and continue to prompt the use of the strategies so that students become more independent. I found myself spending a longer amount of time on patterns in word study and prompting in both word study and writer's workshop so that students were able to transfer their learning. It is important for students to learn approaches and strategies to learn how to spell using different spelling patterns. I used visuals of the patterns, pictures with the words to build meaning, bold letters to highlight the pattern, sound cards, and a picture of a student making the sound to help students learn how their mouth should be formed when saying a sound. When working on a spelling pattern we continued with the pattern until the students were comfortable identifying the pattern in isolation, using it in context and starting to write it in word study. There is no reason to move on to another pattern if the students do not understand the current one being taught.

When prompting spelling patterns in students writing, I found students were more aware of their spelling when it was a topic choice of interest. Routmann (2000) stated that "based on students' needs, developmental levels, and interests are the most effective in terms of teaching students to spell" (p. 403). I believe after this study that student learning needs to be interesting and engaging so students are more accepting toward participating. When it was not of interest the students negated or completed the work as fast as possible without trying or worked very slowly to get out of the assignment. I personally will work to make writing more

open ended so that the student can direct the topic of the writing to help demonstrate he or she learning or understanding.

Personal Observations

Within the study I discovered many positive components to teaching and learning. I first noticed the theme of structure and routines. Many students need structure in school to help them focus and attend to the task or instruction to generate the most positive learning experience. After reminding the students of the directions, they were more aware of how to spell words using the strategies taught in word study and to use resources to assist them. The next school year I will work to ensure students know the routine of the day as well as expectations within each area of study. Many students need that familiar structure to be comfortable in learning.

The students I chose were very different academically and personally. They were at different stages in their learning and had different interests. Steven was at a higher level of reading and spelling, of multi-syllable words while Thomas had difficulty reading and using vowels and identifying them. Even though the two were different in the beginning, I found similarities that both had difficulties spelling vowel sounds. Steven had a difficult time separating long and short vowel sound patterns. I found Steven was an auditory learner, so I used a lot of oral language along with visuals to provide him with other approaches to remember how to spell words. Thomas used no vowels in his writing at the start of the study. He was an auditory learner, as well, sounding out words aloud when spelling and

decoding in reading. This has me asking myself the question, is it more difficult for an auditory learner to spell the English Language? When I listen to words and begin to write them how they sound is not always how they look, so if a student is an auditory learner he or she use their strength in listening to spell words. This could be difficult for a student to work through because as noted not all words sound how they appear. In the future when working with students whose learning style is more auditory, I will observe and work with that student to provide them with other strategies when spelling. By building in different style approaches to learning spelling patterns, auditory, visual and meaning, it could assist the students not only in learning to spell but their overall writing.

I discovered I learned a great deal from conducting this study. I did not initially think that student interest in writing would affect their word study and spelling as much as I observed in the study. I will continue to use an interactive word study approach for many of my students struggling to build up their confidence in reading, spelling and writing. It also reinforced the idea that students need multiple opportunities to manipulate words of the same pattern for an extended period of time. I have changed my opinion and understanding that student self esteem greatly impacts student learning. I knew that statement was true but not to the extent of what my study results from each week demonstrated.

Recommendations

Recommendations on conducting this study again would be first to select more participants to provide more information on if students are transferring their

learning. I found that the two students were transferring their learning but it would be interesting to see how more students and at different reading levels are transferring their learning.

I would also adjust the criteria for selecting the participants. In this study, students were selected based on that they were approaching grade level from the collected assessments. It would be interesting to see how all students would fair using a more interactive approach to word study. In selecting students I would use another form of assessment such as writing benchmarks and spelling assessments. I would do this because I found that the assessments I used were not as informative as I originally thought. With spelling, I would use writing benchmarks and spelling assessments to inform how students are writing on their own.

I would make the study longer. I completed the study for five weeks, but having half a school year or the entire school year could enrich a teacher's knowledge and by assessing student growth over the course year. Unfortunately I had a few weeks and found my students would have gained much more knowledge if the study were longer. For myself, I felt I was just beginning to understand how my students were learning and spelling when the study ended. I would continue to use visuals and discuss with the students the importance of transferring their learning from one subject to the next. Then when conferencing with the students, I would always have a writing conference form that included discussing their spelling and incorporating past spelling patterns if words were misspelled.

In terms of writer's workshop I would set up two blocks of time, time for free writing and time for writing genres we are studying (letters, persuasive pieces, short stories, fables, etc.). Throughout the study, I found my students disliked certain types of writing and would refuse to complete the assignments. I found I lost time with my struggling writers during this time because I would be working on redirecting them back to task and persuading them to write when in all actuality they were writing less. When writing went back to a topic or genre the students were interested in, they struggled with the writing because it had been so long since they had been writing and they were not familiar or using the strategies to help them spell. Having free writing allows students to continue writing and using the strategies.

Conclusion

I started this study with the research question: How does word study impact students' strategies in word construction in writing workshop for third graders identifying words in isolation below grade level? I completed case studies on two students, Steven and Thomas, to explore if the teaching approaches used with them when learning word study was transferred into their writing. I found that these two students over the course of five weeks were able to learn word features in word study and begin to transfer that learning into their writing. I found that this study brought new ideas and findings to my own teaching to support students in word study instruction and spelling development in writing.

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Appendix A

	Child A	Child B		
Words Studied				
Generalization				
Activity Behaviors during activity				
Difficult words Behaviors (frustration, how was it spelled)				

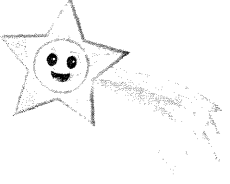
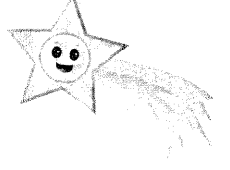
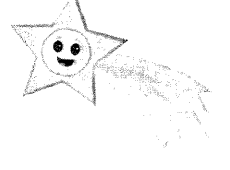
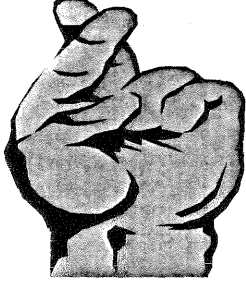
Appendix B

Child A	Date:
Observations	Notes

Appendix C

Quality	4	3	2	1
Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understood what to do and you did <u>all</u> of it. You made relevant connections to the task or text (self, text, or world) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understood what to do and did <u>most</u> of it. You made some connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You did not understand everything, but I see that you tried. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It seems you had trouble understanding the task.
Development	<p>You used <u>many</u> details and examples to explain your thinking. You did a great job in using details from the text.</p>	<p>You used <u>some</u> details and examples to explain your thinking. You were brief, but I see that you have used details to answer the task.</p>	<p>You used a detail or an example to explain your thinking. There may be some incorrect information here.</p>	<p>I see you tried, but you did not answer the question. There may be some incorrect information here.</p>
Organization	<p>You have...</p> <p>An introduction that grabs the reader's attention (beginning). A middle that maintains a clear focus. A conclusion that leaves the reader thinking (end).</p>	<p>You have a...</p> <p>beginning middle end I see you tried to establish and maintain a focused piece.</p>	<p>You tried to write a beginning, middle, and end. I see you tried to organize your thoughts and write a conclusion. Your focus may not be clear to the reader.</p>	<p>I see you tried, but I'm unclear around the organization of your piece. You may have spent too much time on one detail.</p>
Language	<p>You used <u>many</u> juicy words & vivid language. You used elements of author's craft (simile, onomatopoeia, alliteration, etc.)</p>	<p>You used <u>some</u> juicy words and vivid language.</p> <p>You tried to use elements of author's craft.</p>	<p>You tried to use a juicy or exciting word. I can read most of your piece.</p>	<p>I see that you have repeated some of your thoughts.</p>

Appendix D

Child	
	
	
	
	

Appendix E

Spelling Knowledge

_____ Represents meaning using random strings of letters

_____ Uses prominent sounds to spell words (often, these are consonants in English, vowels in Spanish)

_____ Uses one letter to represent each word or syllable (S for Star)

_____ Uses initial and final consonants to represent syllables or words (SR for star)

_____ Incorporates medial consonants and vowel letters (STAR)

_____ Spells short vowels conventionally

_____ Uses vowel markers (more than one vowel) to spell long vowels conventionally

_____ Uses phonics to spell past-tense endings (WAKT for walked)

_____ Uses visual features (-ed) to spell past-tense endings
conventionally

_____ Uses double consonants consistently (better, ladder)

_____ Demonstrates knowledge of spelling patterns such as -ing, -ate,
-ain, -er, and -es

_____ Continues to increase visual memory/ repertoire of words
usually spelled conventionally

_____ Recognizes when words are misspelled

_____ Continues to invent spelling for low frequency words (words
not frequently used in the child's writing)

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