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PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN

THE TEACHING OF SPELLING

(TITLE)

BY

Priscilla Kay Young

**PLAN B PAPER**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Spelling has just one purpose--to facilitate the reading of what is written."<sup>1</sup> Everyone needs to be able to spell with confidence, so that he can concentrate on his ideas when writing and so that writing will not be an irksome task to him. Personal notes may be written in any sort of code or shorthand in which a person wishes to write them, but material that is to be read and understood by others must be written in a manner that conforms to our group conventions of spelling, punctuation, etc. Misspelled words can lead to a breakdown in communications. Thus, spelling is considered an important qualification for many jobs.

#### Statement of Problem

Poor spelling also has a heavy social stigma, especially in the middle and upper classes. We tend to judge people's education and status by their spelling. We often degrade people who are poor spellers and think them poorly educated.

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<sup>1</sup>Gertrude Hildreth, Teaching Spelling, A Guide to Basic Principles and Practices, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956), p. 2.

Still, despite systematic instruction through eight or more years at school, many of the commonest words such as "afraid," "across," "stayed," "address," "their," "weight," "before," "where," "all right," etc. are often misspelled.

According to Ralph D. Owen, the English Language is the easiest European language to learn to speak, but it is one of the hardest to learn to spell or write. The reason is that English has "an outworn, illogical system of representing words."<sup>2</sup> Our English spelling is so inefficient because it tries to do two things:

- (1) Show the history of the word; and
- (2) show the present pronunciation of the word at the same time as it shows its history.

The word "laugh" is spelled as it is, in order to show that it is a first cousin of the German word "lach" and that 500 years ago it was pronounced as the German word.

But today the word is pronounced "laf." Here, then, the historical interest defeats the practical need.

In Swedish "every letter" has one sound, and every sound is "invariably represented by the same letter or combination of letters."<sup>3</sup>

The German, Swedish, or Turkish method of representing words is almost perfectly scientific. "It is so simple that a child

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Dornfeld Owen, "Those Spelling Deemings," Readings in the Language Arts, Verna Dieckman Anderson, Paul S. Anderson, Francis Ballantine, and Virgil M. Howes, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), (Reprinted by permission of the author and publisher from the Journal of Business Education (May, 1961), copyright by Robert C. Trethaway, p.204.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

in the first grade learns to read and write and spell at the same time. In fact, spelling is not taught as a separate subject."<sup>4</sup>

English spelling is chaotic because of several variables such as the single or double consonants as in "immune," "amuse," "elude," and "allude;" silent letters as "b" in "bomb" and "thumb," "k" in "knife" and "knuckle," "l" in "calf" and "talk;" and duplicate consonants as "ph" for "f."

The confusion concerning the representation of vowel sounds is even more serious. More than 250 combinations of letters are used to represent the 17 vowel sounds we have.

To illustrate: The long sound of "o" as in "open" is represented in our present system of spelling by 19 different letters or combinations of letters:

au	(chauffeur)	oo	(floor)
au-e	(mauve)	os	(appropos)
eau	(beau)	ot	(depot)
eo	(yeoman)	ou	(flour)
ew	(sew)	o-ue	(rogue)
o	(no)	ou-e	(course)
oa	(coal)	ough	(though)
o-e	(toe)	ow	(know)
oh	(oh)	owe	(owe) <sup>5</sup>

**Mr. Owen** is in favor of World English Spelling.

Some other sources of difficulty in spelling English are as follows:

1. Different sounds are given to the same letter combinations, e.g., "break," "cream," "head." There are troublesome consonants such as the hard and soft "c" and "g" as in "get" and "gem" and "city" and "cute."

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

2. The same sound element may be spelled by reversed combinations of letters, e.g., "ei" and "ie;" "el" and "le."
3. Many words contain silent letters that are not sounded in the spoken word, e.g., "debt," "enough," "promise." Of the 600,000 words in Webster's unabridged dictionary, it is estimated that more than 400,000 contain at least one silent letter, and many have more than one.
4. A number of words have alternate spelling both of which are considered correct, e.g., "theatre-theater," "good-by-good-bye," "center-centre," "color-colour," and so on.<sup>6</sup>

The frequent homonyms found in the English language also prove quite confusing. "Another inherent cause of spelling difficulty in English is the tremendous range of words in the language with all their variations and derivatives, many of which are infrequently used in writing."<sup>7</sup> The differences in the two visual graphic forms of writing, manuscript and cursive, that must be learned add to the difficulties.

Either simplified spelling or phonetic spelling has been advocated for a long time. However, it would outdate all the books now in print as much as Chaucer, and the entire population would have to be re-educated to read and write.

In the article, "Spelling Simplification in Scotland," a proposal is made to simplify spelling in a very modest way so that the change will be more readily accepted. That is, there must be comparatively

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<sup>6</sup>Op.cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup>Owen, Op. cit., p. 208.

few changes in the existing orthography and the printed page must in the main preserve its present appearance. In this way the revised form of spelling may not only satisfy the phonetician, but may also be approved by the ordinary reader. Introducing new letters and making extensive use of new combinations, thereby producing the impression of something foreign, as has been attempted in previous schemes, must be avoided. Richard Cartwright also suggests a new form of spelling resembling the old.

There are two guiding principles of this scheme. "The first is that while a sound be represented by one, two or more different letters or letter groups, each letter or letter group always indicates the same sound."<sup>8</sup> For example, the words 'bow' and 'sow' have each two different pronunciations and two different meanings.

To remove the ambiguity the -OW must be kept exclusively for one of the two sounds, either for the long O as in 'show', or the OU diphthong as in 'now.' As it happens, the two are almost equally common in monosyllabic words, but partly because the long O usage is more common in polysyllabic words and partly because there is an extensive group of disyllabic words like 'arrow' and 'fellow' with a distinctive appearance, it is recommended that the OW be reserved for the long O. OW thus becomes one of three symbols for long O (O-E as in 'more', OA as in 'boat', OW as in 'show') all of them for the one sound and only for that sound.

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<sup>8</sup>"Spelling Simplification in Scotland," Readings in the Language Arts, Verna Dieckman Anderson, Paul S. Anderson, Francis Ballantine, and Virgil M. Howes, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1964). (Reprinted by permission of the Scottish Council for Research in Education Studies from Studies in Spelling (London, 1961), p. 232.)



This principle applies to both consonants and vowels, but is of greater importance in the case of vowels and diphthongs than of consonants.<sup>9</sup>

The other guiding principle of the scheme, which has been suggested earlier, is to preserve the general appearance of words as nearly as possible when modifying them so that every symbol will have a unique value. This is to facilitate the ordinary reader, who does not distinguish the several letters in a word, but recognizes the word as a block by its up and down letters, its length and peculiar combinations like OW and QU. "Therefore, 'stomack' and 'monarck' for 'stomach' and 'monarch' are less objectionable than 'thot' and 'tho' for 'thought' and 'though.'<sup>10</sup>

UNIFON is an isomorphic alphabet which provides one symbol for each of the 40 sounds, or phonemes in English. It is being used to teach reading to illiterates by a non-word learning method. It is believed that it helps the initial phases of reading instruction. The question is whether this instruction will transfer to spelling and reading with our regular letters. It is still in the experimental stages.

Some silent letters are needed, as "n" in "condemn" when the form "condemnatory" is used. So perhaps English spelling is not in need of as much change as some of us might think. "Some written

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

languages make no attempt to approximate speech. None of the languages now using the Roman alphabet are spelled phonetically. It is still true, phonetically that English spelling is pretty bad."<sup>11</sup> If spelling is to be reformed to reflect pronunciation, whose pronunciation is to be reflected? Phonetic spelling looks queer. Reformed spelling would obscure etymologies, hence the relation of English to other languages.

Spelling does present a serious problem. Several proposals as to the simplification of spelling and other schemes have been explored, as indicated earlier, but the problem remains as to how to teach spelling effectively. It is the purpose of this paper to explore such aspects as methods, time allotment, evaluative techniques, motivational techniques, practices, etc. in the literature on this topic in order to discover those that might prove successful in the teaching of spelling.

#### Purpose and Procedure

It is the writer's hope that this study will help to develop an understanding of what has been discovered, questioned, or suggested in the spelling field and to facilitate the employment of these fruits of research. Reference is made to such authorities as Horn, Webster,

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<sup>11</sup>William J. Stevens, "Obstacles to Spelling Reform," Education Digest, (XXX, May, 1965), p. 38.

Rinsland, Dolch, Thron-dike, Green, Petty, Owen, and Smith.

There are almost as many approaches to the teaching of spelling as there are authors on the subject. By exploring these various methods or parts of several different methods, it might be possible to discover the more effective approaches and practices in the teaching of spelling. Many teachers are and should be dissatisfied with the results of their teaching in spelling. It is hoped that this paper summarizes to a degree the basic research findings for the convenience of the teachers and other interested people who lack the time required for researching the available data and information on spelling that may be found in the professional literature.

One thing is certain, we must have objectives for spelling just as for anything else we teach. Perhaps we decide that we will teach spelling for present and adult writing needs. We must decide how many and which, if any, dictionary proofreading and other skills to teach. "Decisions should be made, at the time each objective, is adopted, as to what learning experiences, grade by grade, are most efficient in accomplishing the objective and how its achievement is to be evaluated. All these decisions should be made, in so far as permissible, on the basis of evidence."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Chester W. Harris and Marie R. Liba, Encyclopedia of Educational Research, (3rd ed.; New York: The Macmillan company, 1960), p. 1338.

But it will be seen that there is still much controversy about child learning methods, numbers of words, source of words, drill, and other aspects of the spelling program. So it seems that the logical place to begin the study is with the number and source of the spelling vocabulary. A spelling vocabulary is essential before one needs worry about how to teach it.

CHAPTER II  
SPELLING VOCABULARY

Number, Source, and Grade Placement

Numerous studies show that authors do not agree with any degree of reasonableness in either the number of words or which words to use in even basal subjects in any one grade. Probably the simplest subject in which to make such comparisons, because of the simplest use of words, at least the basic word list, is spelling.<sup>13</sup>

Both the methods of determining adults' usage and of determining children's usage have been used in determining vocabulary lists. The Thorndike (1921 and 1931) and Horn (1926) studies of the writing of adults are well known. Their lists were based on literature written hundreds of years ago by literary or business men from upper intellectual levels. Jones, Child, and Gates are others who have studied adult word usage in an attempt to formulate a spelling list. Coleman compiled a list from test lists and research lists plus others found to be used frequently. Many studies of children's writings have been conducted in attempts to secure adequate lists of words that children use, as is indicated by the bibliography of the study

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<sup>13</sup>Henry D. Rinsland, A Basic Vocabulary of Elementary School Children, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 2.

by the National Conference on Research in English (Seegers, Chairman, 1939). However, none of these studies has sampled children's writings as comprehensively as Thorndike or Horn has sampled adult's writing. The supporters of sampling children's writing for a children's vocabulary claim that "Children, especially in the elementary school, do not use words with the same frequency as adults, and that adult usage is therefore a more or less invalid criterion,"

Henry D. Rinsland tried to improve upon the studies conducted up until the 1930's. He broadly sampled the writings of children from all sections of the United States in all grades in large numbers in a manner comparable to the Thorndike and Horn studies of adults' writings. He tried to give continuous data for all eight grades, giving raw frequency, that is, actual number of times a word occurs in each grade. He grouped words in each grade into groups of practical sizes for general use, such as the first hundred, the first five hundred, and so forth, and gave a measure of comparable frequency of occurrence from grade to grade, such as per cent, per mill, or per hundred thousand running words, the unit used in this study.

Rinsland conducted the study through the University of Oklahoma with a grant of funds from the Works Projects Administration. As mentioned before, it was a nation-wide study of the words

written by children who are in grades I to VIII. Mr. Rinsland made it clear that samplings of millions of words will not give all the words needed, nor will it give the correct grade placement for all words, if such a thing is possible. Such a broad sampling will give variations in words and frequencies. He indicated that such a list should not be inhibiting, for it will give more words than one child could learn and many more words not listed could be found.

More studies need to be done on the words that children use in their writing to make spelling lists more valid. There is still wide disagreement among different spelling lists, especially those for the upper elementary grades.

Paul McKee feels that probably 4,000 words are common to both children's and adult's writing, and to both the present and permanent needs, and that these words should constitute the great bulk of the course of study. In fact, in this list alone there are plenty of words to last during eight years of elementary school. The "present needonly" words he suggests comprise a supplementary list to be learned incidentally when the need for them arises. The "future needs only" words might possibly be included in the upper grades spelling lists.

Reading and speaking vocabularies as well as writing vocabularies should be used as sources in determining what words

children should learn to spell. These vocabularies will overlap somewhat.

It is not possible to rely on lists compiled from surveys, which usually form the basis of spelling book lists, but they are safer than guessing, and are a starting point. These lists should be supplemented with words needed in writing, etc. The teacher should keep a list of words missed by many in the class and words that will be needed by the class. The children should keep their own lists of words that they need and misspell. In other words, there should be grade lists, class lists, and individual lists.

The most useful words of our language are those taught in the primary grades. They should receive most attention. The most important words of the English language and those to be taught in the lower grades are pretty well agreed upon, for there is the most agreement of words in primary lists. It would then follow that the most difficult words should be placed in the upper grades. The words in each grade should be neither too difficult nor too easy. The difficulty is determining the learning difficulty of each word at each grade-level. But first the most important words to learn must be selected. In the case of conflict, the child's present use or need for a word should take precedence over the sociological importance of



the word in determining whether a particular word should be taught. Learning difficulty is probably more important than spelling difficulty.

Cook found that the level of difficulty of words even seemed to affect the reliability of spelling tests. He concluded from his experiment that, all other factors being constant, the nearer the words in a spelling test approach one level of difficulty the more reliable the test will be. He did not feel, however, that the validity of a spelling test was affected directly by the distribution of the difficulty of the words on it.<sup>14</sup>

In selecting words to be studied by the children, the teacher should consider whether the word will likely be used in many instances. The commonly used words should be included in a general list for all the class. Certain local words will be required for the entire class too. Special lists for individual pupils consisting of difficult-to-learn words and words that fit particular requirements should also comprise a part of the spelling program.

Primary spelling words ideally come from familiar words which the children have recently misspelled in their daily writing and the new words likely to be needed soon in writing, which should be studied to prevent misspelling. In some schools, teachers are provided with a basic list of words frequently used in writing and are encouraged

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<sup>14</sup>Walter Willman Cook, Insert for University of Iowa Studies in Education; The Measurement of General Spelling Ability Involving Controlled Comparisons Between Techniques, (VI, No. 6, February, 1932), Iowa City: University Publisher.

to build their own weekly word lists to meet individual and class needs. In most schools, however, the books in a graded series provide for the weekly lists.

While these prepared lists include the words that research indicates are likely to be needed in children's writing, they cannot be expected to include just the right words to cover the immediate spelling needs of any given class week by week. A teacher should see that her pupils make good use of the space provided in most spelling books for an individualized list of misspelled words. Here the pupils should include words misspelled in their daily written work as well as those misspelled in the dictated spelling tests. The teacher must also feel responsible for adding to the weekly list the words related to class studies or other current interests which children will need to use in writing.<sup>15</sup>

The basic list should be supplemented with words missed or needed in the future. This supplementary list should be checked with Fitzgerald's list of the five hundred most frequently used so that they will be learned first.

One way to coordinate word lists based on children's spelling needs and daily or weekly lists given in the speller for the particular grade is to check the lists against each other, and give most practice to the words appearing in both lists. In the primary grades there is a large amount of overlap between the basic spelling

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<sup>15</sup>Mildred A. Dawson and Marian Zollinger, Guiding Language Learning, (New York: World Book Company, 1957), p. 418.

words lists, the vocabulary of reading context, and the child's own writing vocabulary.

Hildreth believes that "typical second-grade pupils can learn from five to eight words during a week, third-grade pupils from eight to twelve."<sup>16</sup> Bohrer recommends building up the number of words in the spelling lists as children progress through the grades, a practice carried out in most spelling programs today. He would suggest teaching only 2,000 words in the elementary grades and then continuing on through the later school years. Someone else has submitted 2,500 to 3,000 and Breed 3,500 as the number of spelling words that should be taught to elementary pupils. Other authorities give the figure 4,000. So there is still disagreement, but most lists contain from 3,000 to 4,000 spelling words. Some lists include words that are not often used by children. Words cannot really be placed accurately because of overlap, need for review, and incidental learning.

James A. Fitzgerald's list of 2,500 - 3,500 words researched from adult's and children's vocabularies is supposed to comprise from 95 - 98% of the words most people will need for writing throughout their lives. They just need to be placed in grades according to use and persistent difficulty. Some spelling books use Fitzgerald's list and others use Wise's study of 1934 or Betts' studies of 1940

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<sup>16</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 104.

and 1949. Some use an average of what other series have **include d** in the past.

The 1963 Charles E. Merrill Spelling for Word Mastery by Patton and Johnson draws on findings of cumulative research. It lists Dolch, Fitzgerald, Gates, Horn, Kyte and Neel, McKee, Rinsland, and other authorities. The 1964 Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Goals in Spelling by Kottmeyer and Ware mentions only Dolch as a source of words. The 1960 World Book Success in Spelling by Madden and Carlson lists many researchers, including Thorndike and Lorge and Moore, as authorities. Other spelling books do not give any research or authorities as basic sources for their word lists.

So there is still disagreement on most words included in spelling books today. Wilbur S. Ames feels that longitudinal studies need to be conducted and available research pulled together. Paul M. Hollingsworth found that Ernest Horn's adult list of 10,000 Words Most Commonly Used in Writing is still usable.<sup>17</sup> Only about eight words of frequent use need to be added because of the existing conditions in our changed world from that of 1926. Lawrence Lobdell warns us to be sure that we do add the few new words necessary to the old pre-World War II lists. He feels that using lists based on

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<sup>17</sup>Paul M. Hollingsworth, "Spelling Lists--Outdated?" Elementary English, (XXXII, February, 1965), p. 188.

children's writings (McKee, Fitzgerald, and Rinsland) may be too limiting. He thinks that they need to be supplemented with words taken from adult lists, but he is still afraid all of these old lists are dated. He proposes the compilation of a word list based upon the speech of children, rather than on the writing of anyone, for speech is the primary basis for word usage. He would have either a person or a team tape or observe and record words used by children over a wide area including all regions, urban and rural. The list could be graded also.<sup>18</sup>

In summary then again, according to Horn, both the data on words written by children and the data on words needed by adults should be used in the selections and gradation of words in spelling books and especially in schools which derive their own lists. Frequency of use of words in reading and difficulty, grade by grade, should also be considered. Words that are often used and needed at particular grade levels should be taught there, whether they are hard to spell or not.

The development of phonic abilities and the ability to build derived forms should not determine what words should be taught in a given grade, although they may influence the sequence and organization within a grade. "There is, of course, the problem of determining when

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<sup>18</sup>Lawrence O. Lobdell, "Let's Update the Word Lists," Elementary English, (XXXII, February, 1965), p. 158.

the development of these abilities should begin and the sequence in which they can best be learned."<sup>19</sup>

The frequency with which words are written by children in a given grade is now usually considered the major criterion for selecting words for that grade. The importance of words in adult writing influences the choice of words for a grade only as a measure of whether the word should be taught at all. Using the words frequently in writing helps the children to learn and retain the correct spelling, while learning these important words in spelling lessons facilitates their use in writing. "There is, however, some difference of opinion as to whether words frequently written by children should be taught even though they have little permanent value and whether words that have great importance in adult writing should be taught at some time even though infrequently written by children."<sup>20</sup>

The spelling lessons in any grade presumably are restricted to words of high importance, as it is impossible to teach all the words which children need in their writing, much less all words needed by adults. There is quite a bit of overlap between those words most often written by children and those most often written by adults.

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<sup>19</sup>Ernest Horn, What Research Says to the Teacher; Teaching Spelling, (1st ed.; Department of Classroom Teachers; American Educational Research Association, January, 1954), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Often there is no special program for Grade I, but, if there is, appropriate words should be chosen from those most frequently written by first-grade children. "In Grade II, choose among the words of high permanent importance, the words most frequently written by children in that grade, regardless of their difficulty."<sup>21</sup> The words for Grades III and IV may be selected among the words of high permanent value that have not been taught in earlier grades. Select the words most frequently written by children in these grades and review in each grade the words taught in preceding grades which still have marked difficulty.

The words for Grades VII and VIII may be chosen according to three criteria: First, words of permanent value not taught in earlier grades and written with considerable frequency in the seventh and eighth grades; second, words taught in earlier grades which are frequently misspelled in Grades VII and VIII; and third, words used by adults because of the penalties attached to misspelling in adult writing even though written infrequently by children in these grades.<sup>22</sup>

This plan is just one way of interpreting the data pertaining to grading the course of study in spelling that Horn suggested after he critically studied all the available evidence.

Schools that compile lists of words almost entirely from various units of work, should be sure that the words chosen are likely to be written frequently this year, either in

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

school or out, after the unit has been completed, and that it is probable that they will continue to be written frequently in subsequent grades and in adult life.

Richard E. Hodges feels that we need a study on how to select words to best help pupils arrive inductively at the generalizations that would help them to translate oral cues into writing. We would then need to change our methods of evaluation too.

#### Allocation of Time

The current practice seems to be to teach a few words well and to build the spelling programs accordingly in modern elementary schools. The amount of time spent seems to have little to do with the efficiency of the spelling program. Tidyman said that the important thing is the way in which the time is spent.<sup>23</sup>

It is important that the school do the best sort of work in spelling in the least amount of time possible. Authorities (Horn and Tidyman) seem to agree that the best results can be obtained in not more than 75 minutes per week or in daily periods of fifteen minutes in length, providing for both study and testing.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>W. F. Tidyman, The Teaching of Spelling, Yonkers, New York: World Book Company, 1922), p. 135. In the Paul McKee, Language in the Elementary School: Composition, Spelling, and Writing, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), p. 331.

<sup>24</sup>Paul McKee, Language in the Elementary School: Composition, Spelling, and Writing, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), p. 331.



Harris says that the week seems to be a natural time unit. It is easy to administer and is adaptable to individual differences.

A more flexible time allotment considered by other authorities to be adequate for most children to carry out their spelling programs, using a basic word list, is 70 - 90 minutes per week, averaging 15 - 20 minutes per day. They concede that a weekly spelling program may be adequately carried out in three days, averaging 25 - 30 minutes each day, or in the upper grades two days averaging 40 - 45 minutes each day.

Horn states that spending more than 75 minutes per week on spelling does not appreciably facilitate spelling learning. Besides, other subjects are important too. Oscar T. Jarvis did a study which indicated that increase in learning in spelling in forty minute daily periods over twenty minute ones was insignificant. Twenty minutes per day is adequate.<sup>25</sup>

Breed is in favor of keeping fifteen minutes per day and expecting varied achievement according to the actual attainment of each child. Slow children cannot learn as many words in 15 minutes and so they should not be expected to do as much as faster ones in

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<sup>25</sup>Oscar T. Jarvis, "Time allotment Relationships to Pupil Achievement; Elementary Reading, English, and Spelling," Elementary English, (XXXXII, February, 1965), p. 210.

the same amount of time. Standards should be varied according to individual differences.<sup>26</sup> The time devoted to spelling depends upon the amount of correlation or fusion of spelling, handwriting, reading, and other language arts.

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<sup>26</sup>Frederick S. Breed, How to Teach Spelling, (Dansville, New York: F. A. Owen Publishing Company, 1930), p. 249.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SPELLING TEXTBOOK

Since most schools use some type of spelling book or workbook, a discussion of them seems appropriate here. Pryor and Pittman describe roughly five different types of spelling books. They call the first type the logical type because logical arrangement determines the placing of the words. The old Webster's 'Blue Back' "Speller" is the oldest and best recognized example of this group. It was not arranged according to the learner's need, probability of use, or the laws of association but according to the number of syllables in each word. All the words with similar sounds or equal numbers of letters were put together, regardless of whether some were already known by the child or were unlikely ~~ever~~ to be used and not necessary to learn in the first place. The logical spelling book was once very popular along with the spelling bee, the one thing that the logical speller is good for. The logical book is not suitable for everyday use in written composition where spelling is really used. It contains mere lists of words picked from the alphabetical lists as they are found in the dictionary. Some of the words presented in the first lesson would be used no sooner than those in the last lesson.

If a teacher must use such a book, he should first get clearly in mind the aims that are to be followed in spelling and not in the mind of the author of a logical spelling book. These aims mean for the child:

- (1) To learn more fully the meaning and use of the words already a part of the child's speaking, hearing, and reading vocabularies.
- (2) To learn how to spell the word so well that the spelling itself gives the writer no cause for thought or concern when he is to use it in written composition.<sup>27</sup>

The teacher must think out some plan of association to use in presenting the words, in using the words, and in reviewing the words. This will be difficult and wasteful of the teacher's time, but it will result in economy in the time of the children and in more efficient work. To put these words into one paragraph so as to show their meanings would be rather difficult and would produce compositions of sublime absurdity. With such a list of words the aim should be merely to teach the meaning of the word as it would occur in a sentence. The child should remember the word for its own sake and not for the story's sake. It will not be hard for the teacher to make sentences for the words. Then numerous devices must be used for the purpose of giving drill upon such a list of words. A child cannot

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<sup>27</sup>Hugh Clark Pryor and Marvin Summers Pittman, A guide to the Teaching of Spelling, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 57.

necessarily spell a word simply because he understands its use or even because he can use it correctly in oral composition. The only proof of his ability to spell is his actual unassisted correct **writing** of the word in his own composition.

The teacher must be prepared to use her own judgment in selecting words that are to constitute the child's lesson. Words that are foreign to the child's experience, conversation, and reading should be omitted. Certain words may be foreign to certain areas of the country or even from town to country. The logical type of spelling book, which has largely disappeared, will demand the most careful selection of words by the teacher, but all spelling books call for it to some degree.

The phonetic type of spelling book is a natural descendant of the logical type of spelling book. Instead of making the requirement a certain letter, at the beginning of each word of the lesson group, or the same number of letters in the words or the same number of syllables--as was the rule with the logical type--the phonetic type of spelling book placed its emphasis upon similar sounds.<sup>28</sup>

Words having a group of letters with the same sound are placed together, even though they are not related in meaning. The phonetic type of spelling book appeals to the eye and especially to the ear. It does not concern itself much with association of ideas but rather

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-59.

with use of sounds .

These words are so arranged as to secure with ease and speed the second of the purpose of teaching spelling; viz. , "Making automatic the spelling of the word studied." It entirely omits the first of these aims; viz. , "The teaching of the meaning and use of the words."<sup>29</sup>

The child may be able to spell a word in such a list correctly , but be unable to spell it when it is disassociated from the list and put in a meaningful context .

The lists in these books are usually made up of words that are already familiar to the child and are a part of his spoken vocabulary . He just needs to learn how to spell the words . The child can usually commit to memory more of these words in a given time than he can of a group of wholly dissimilar words , so that he has some time to devote to such supplementary work as the teacher thinks necessary . The phonetic type of speller does have the advantage of appealing to the child's natural fondness for rhyme and similarities , but even this can become dull if not capitalized upon .

In summary then , make the most of the good points for rapid , happy , rhythmical drill and feel free to add such other teaching as is not provided for by the book when confronted with the phonetic type of spelling book . It is a drill-device book , not a thought-teaching book , and therefore needs to be supplemented .

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. , p. 59 .

Most of the present spelling books are the psychological or language teaching type, which are based on associated ideas. Their main purpose sometimes is to stimulate expression.

A picture of a boy driving home the cows from the pasture at the close of day may be presented, for example. The class discusses the picture, and words like "calves," "fodder," "switch," "patient," "driving," "country," and "timothy" are given for the lesson. The children then write about the good time they think the boy is having. Certain words are taught in a specific connection so that hopefully the children can apply them at once in written composition.

In the psychological or language-teaching type of spelling book, the words may be listed in groups all related to the same thing as:

#### Parts of the Body

ear	hair
eye	skull
nose	cheek
mouth	teeth
brain	tongue <sup>30</sup>

Also, a selection of literature is sometimes used for this type. The selection is studied and certain words are chosen for study as drill in spelling. The fourth variation of the psychological or language-teaching type of speller is the presentation of a heterogeneous group of words to be drilled upon each in a simple sentence to illustrate its meaning.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

The words under this plan are always presented in a meaningful way so that the child readily understands them and will be able to use them in meaningful sentences. Also, the spelling lesson is not simply an automatic performance, but becomes a thought lesson. "The danger of this book is that the pupils' attention will be directed to the thought and not to the 'order of letters in the words,'"<sup>31</sup> which is the major concern of spelling. The work may be interesting as language, art, geography, or whatever, but if the child does not learn to automatically place the letters in the correct order in those words that he needs in written composition, it is not good spelling work. Thought content can be taught in other classes. Whatever else is done in the spelling class may be justified as a part of teaching spelling only if it helps in making the correct order of the letters automatic.

The teacher with such a spelling book has an instrument for having very interesting lessons with happy expression, but he must not forget to provide for sufficient review and drill for making spelling correctly automatic.

In the mixed type of spelling books an effort has been made to blend the best qualities of each of the types discussed. "What we have said, therefore, in regard to each type would apply,

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 63



in so far as these qualities are concerned, to the mixed type."<sup>32</sup>

There are three types of books under the heading of miscellaneous types. One type is built upon the theory that the spelling book is to present words that are already familiar to the child and a working part of his spoken and written vocabulary. In this case, the words that occur most often in his vocabulary must be determined and arranged accordingly for class study. In other words, the teacher is to correct errors in and drill upon the correct automatic spelling of old familiar words. Its purpose is not to teach meaning. So the procedure is test, drill. The scope of the spelling class and the material of the recitation need not be so restricted as such a test would imply, even though review, repetition, and drill are its methods for learning to spell. A book which makes drill its one distinguishing feature is somewhat related to the above class of books. It presents a very small number of words for each new lesson, usually two. It provides for a series of reviews coming at intervals of increasing length. This book does employ certain psychological laws which function in memorizing and operate against forgetting.

The teacher should profit from the principles applied in such a text, but should remember that here, as with other texts, the teacher's own ability

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 64

must function in providing devices that give variety in order that the scheme of repetition provided may not make the work monotonous.<sup>33</sup>

A third example of the miscellaneous type of book is an offspring of the old logical type. It depends chiefly upon similarities of vowel sounds and of consonant sounds, and emphasizes diacritical marking. It follows strictly logical principles. It finds some element in a group of words that is alike or something in them that is different and it emphasizes this similarity or difference.

Illustration: "o" like "e," as in "odor," "armor," "harbor," and "humor." "y" like "i," as in "dye," "type," "style," "rhyme," and "lying."

The great weakness of this type of book is that, although it associates ideas, the ideas are very abstract and unimportant and are so varied that they confuse rather than clarify the problem of spelling.

That the first of the miscellaneous types of books could show results should be expected. It undertakes so little that it should succeed in what it undertakes. That number two could boast of good results is only natural. A drop of water dropping constantly on a rock will finally make an impression. That number three should be able to make a good showing would be a miracle indeed.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

CHAPTER IV  
METHODS AND PROCEDURES IN THE  
TEACHING OF SPELLING

Test-Study and Study-Test Methods

Different school systems, teachers, and books employ various methods, approaches, and practices. These recommendations need to be evaluated in terms of their ability to achieve the following objectives.

1. To master the words most frequently used in everyday writing.
2. To acquire the skills needed to learn additional words.
3. To know where to find the correct spelling of certain words.
4. To develop an awareness of the need for correct spelling.<sup>35</sup>

Either the "test-study" method or the "study-test" method of spelling instruction is used by most teachers. The study-test method is often employed in the primary grades. Under this plan, each word is studied carefully in order to develop word-attack skills. The study-test plan is also helpful for slower learning children. The test-study plan, however, is recommended for use with all other children beginning with third grade. It is especially

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<sup>35</sup>Laura M. Bohrer, "The Case for Ungraded Spelling," Grade Teacher, (LXXXII, March, 1965), p. 84.

good for faster learning children because it allows individuals to concentrate on special words of difficulty for them; thus avoiding a waste of time and effort. With either method, all children are taught how to study their words, regardless of their learning ability or proficiency in spelling.

"The test-study plan for instruction is best known by the formula, 'test-teach-test.'" <sup>36</sup> Each week the teacher gives a pre-test on the weekly controlled word assignment in order to determine the level of spelling achievement. Children then place their misspelled words in some type of record, such as a spelling notebook or a file of cards on which separate words are written.

Using the following ten-step process, each child learns to spell his misspelled words.

1. Look at the word.
2. Say the word.
3. Use the word correctly in a sentence.
4. See the word.
5. Say the word by syllables.
6. Hear the word.
7. Say the letters of the word in order.

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<sup>36</sup> Edward W. Smith, Stanley W. Krouse, Jr., and Mark M. Atkinson, The Educator's Encyclopedia, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 336.

8. Close the eyes and spell the word, checking its correctness.
9. Write the word, checking its correctness.
10. Cover the word and write it two or three times, checking the correctness of each writing.

As steps are undertaken, mistakes that occur in steps 8, 9, and 10, indicate a need to repeat previous steps until the correct spelling of the word is achieved. The steps may be reduced in number in different situations but the process ordinarily will remain the same.<sup>37</sup>

During the week, these words are constantly checked throughout the child's written work and specific exercises are provided to help him learn to spell correctly the words that are difficult for him. At the end of the week, a final test in spelling is given, ordinarily including all the words on the controlled list. The pupil records the words he has missed on this test. These words are then studied further, using the ten step study process.

Children keep a spelling progress chart, which is a cumulative record of their achievement. Words that the child continues to misspell from week to week continue to be a part of his testing program; he is still responsible for learning to spell them and use them correctly in all his written work.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 355.

The study-test plan may prove more effective in working with children in the early primary grades and slow children in more advanced grades. However, as soon as children in grades above two gain proficiency in spelling, the teacher will undoubtedly wish to move into the test-study plan.

The following procedure is suggested for guiding pupil learning under the study-test plan:

1. Use the word in a sentence, and explain it to the class. Ask the children to volunteer sentences using the word.
2. Pronounce the word clearly and slowly for the group, and ask the pupils to pronounce the word in unison. As soon as it appears that the group is pronouncing the word correctly, ask for volunteers to pronounce the word.
3. Ask the pupils to write the word at their desks, saying each letter with the teacher as he writes the word on the board.
4. Pupils should check the accuracy of the word written at their desks, making sure the word is corrected if an error has been made.
5. After mistakes have been corrected, pupils should be directed to write the word from memory, again checking the word for correctness. With poor spellers, this process may have to be repeated several times.
6. After all the words for the day have been taught, pupils may be tested on them, along with words taught the previous day. After words of the week have been taught, pupils should be tested on them, along with words of two weeks ago. Mistakes on all tests should be corrected, and misspelled words should be added to the pupils list of "hard words."

7. Every child should use the ten-step formula in learning to spell and in mastering his list of "hard words."<sup>38</sup>

If it is discovered that a child using the study-test plan is beginning to learn several of the words of the week because of an increase in his spelling power, the test-study plan should be used in spelling instruction with this child. "No pupil should ever be forced to spend time studying words he already knows."<sup>39</sup>

Frederick S. Breed discusses the familiar daily-assignment or study-test method and the so-called pretest or test-study method. He gives evidence in favor of the more individualized, economical test-study method. He feels that it is worthwhile, even if the test results for both methods are the same, because children do not have to waste time studying what they already know. He also hastens to assert that the evidence does not indicate that seeing a word misspelled on the pretest inhibits the learning of the correct spelling of it.<sup>40</sup>

#### Methods of Presenting Spelling Words

Once upon a time, pupils were exposed to 20 or 25 new words each day in a ten or fifteen minute lesson. McKee, in the second edition of his book, Language in the Elementary School:

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Breed, Op. cit., p. 336.

Composition, Spelling, and Writing, published in 1939, indicates the following "modern program in spelling," which still seems to be the modern or current spelling program. First the new lesson must be presented to the pupil according to known techniques and a preliminary test given before study begins. "Second, there must be periods in which the pupil's own difficulties are made clear to him and in which he studies his words according to efficient procedure."<sup>41</sup> Testing after study, carefully noting progress is third. Fourth there must be review of words learned. Such lessons provide for the right sort of testing, the location of pupil difficulties, the proper presentation of new words, review exercises, determining pupil achievement, word building, and effective study by the pupil. They usually take about a week, perhaps about fifteen minutes a day.

Pronunciation of a word is conducive to the learning of its spelling and should be the first step in presenting a new word to a child. The teacher pronounces each word slowly, enunciating each syllable distinctly while the pupils look at each word as it is printed in the book. All pupils should pronounce each word in concert after the teacher, enunciating each syllable distinctly and looking at the printed word as they pronounce it.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 377.



Most investigators of the use of syllabication as a factor in learning to spell agree that it has some value. The syllables of words may be emphasized in either oral or written form.

Some spelling books have in the past presented their words in divided syllables in order that the child may see each printed word in terms of syllables. Tidyman suggests during the pronunciation exercise the teacher should write each word on the blackboard in syllables. Probably the best modern practice is to provide for syllabication in pronunciation rather than in the visual presentation of the word.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that syllabication has been shown to be a factor which promotes the learning of a word is one reason why careful enunciation of syllables is required during the pronunciation exercise.

A study by Tireman showed that the marking of hard spots in words (whether done by capitalizing certain letters, underlining them, printing them in boldfaced type, or having the pupils underline the difficult parts themselves) did not increase the learning of the words and in no instance was there any substantial difference in the recall tests between marked and unmarked words. There was not really enough evidence to indicate that such marking was definitely harmful. Hard spots vary for different children and they should mark their own for this device to be most helpful.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

Grouping words for purposes of presentation is a doubtful practice because many words do not possess common forms of misspellings. A "hard spot," referring here to a part of a word in which most of the spelling errors occur rather than to a commonest form of misspelling, occurs most often at the center or immediately at the right of the center of a word. The vowels are particularly difficult.

It is obviously important that children know the meanings of the words they learn to spell, for they learn to spell words in order to use them in their writing and they are not likely to use words for which they do not know the meaning in their writing. Knowing the meaning of a word will not remove spelling errors. "If the grade-placement of the words has been determined according to proper psychological principles, there is little likelihood that the majority of children in any given grade will not know the meaning of the words to be taught in that grade."<sup>43</sup> However, in most classes there will be some pupils who will not know the meaning of all the words in the lesson. Then it is necessary to determine just what words are unfamiliar to the pupils and to proceed in the teaching of their meaning. No best procedure for testing the pupil's knowledge of the meaning of a word has been found, "Children should be encouraged to inquire

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 385.

concerning the meaning of words which they do not understand."<sup>44</sup>  
Homonyms and words with more than one meaning need to be clarified by being used in sentences.

It is questionable whether placing the words to be studied in context rather than column form is of value in the initial presentation of words. The context form might help pupils with the meanings of the words, but this probably will not help their spelling of the words.

A preliminary test on the words in the lesson should be given before the pupil begins his direct study. This is to insure that a student does not waste time in studying words that he already knows how to spell. The preliminary test will also help the student to discover his particular difficulties with those words that he does not spell correctly. He should spell them correctly the first time. He does not know them sufficiently if he has to cross out or erase.

Most modern procedures in teaching spelling make use of several child study periods and re-testings even into review work.

With the teacher's help at times in checking the scoring of the preliminary tests, whether the children did their own or each others', the children should easily locate their misspelled words that they need to study.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

The practice of studying spelling demons is a questionable one. A real "spelling demon" must necessarily be a word of both high social utility and difficulty. Spelling demon lists do not always agree and the same words are not hard for all children. Each child should spend his time working on only his own important difficulties, so the inclusion of demons in the basic spelling list is a questionable practice.

#### Children's Study Methods

Authorities seem to agree that one of the first steps in studying a word should be pronouncing it to oneself, enunciating each syllable distinctly, either in a whisper or aloud. Henry Suzzallo says not to syllabize. Saying letter names is not very helpful. In study the pupil should get a visual impression of the word and should spend some time in recalling this image. He must have the words easily available. He should, with eyes closed, also try to recall the word, syllable by syllable, as he has seen it in the book, referring back to the book to check his accuracy after each attempted recall.

Writing words during study is an aid in learning to spell them. Evidence is not conclusive as to whether writing the words in original sentences is of greater value than writing them in

isolated form. At any rate, the child should write the word and check it as in the visualization step. He will probably learn more in the long run in the column form. He can remember a column of words longer and then apply them to context. Air writing is so vague that it is of little aid in learning to spell. Copying and imaginative writing on paper, however, do tend to establish the correct pattern of motor response and have been found valuable with certain retarded cases.

The method described above in McKee was taken from Horn. Horn and Ashbaugh's detailed method of study is similar to most methods except that it is more detailed.<sup>45</sup>

The practice of having children study words merely by saying over the letters again and again in the beginning stages of word study in the second and third grades should be avoided. Instead, have them look at the "whole" word, say it, and try to fix it in mind. In teaching new words, write the word in large clear letters and pronounce it clearly. After the children have studied it, erase the word and let the children attempt to write it from memory. Erase each word before presenting a new one. Avoid the use of lengthy word lists.

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<sup>45</sup>Ernest Horn and E. J. Ashbaugh, Progress in Spelling, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1935), pp. xv-xvi. In Paul McKee's, Language in the Elementary School: Composition, Spelling, and Writing, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), pp. 400-401.

For group study of spelling words as early as the second grade, one of the pupils can be asked to select a word, which is written on the board, sounded, and located in the story chart as often as it occurs. Its meaning is discussed and acted out if appropriate, previous words similar to it are mentioned, it is used in a sentence, erased, and the children try to write it, some writing at the board. These steps can be varied from time to time.

Most teachers and spelling books suggest a method something like the one given below for pupils to use in studying each word several times during the practice periods:

Look at the word.--See it.  
Pronounce aloud or to yourself.--Say it.  
Close your eyes, or look away, and try  
to remember how it looked.  
Write the word.  
Check the spelling.  
Use the word in writing a sentence.  
Check the spelling in the sentence.<sup>46</sup>

This method is comparable to McKee's. He emphasized pronunciation before visualization in presenting the words. He would expect most children to know the meanings of most words if the words are properly graded. He suggested a preliminary test following presentation and then a study method of pronunciation, visualization, and practice in writing the words. Dawson's method is also very similar to Hildreth's:

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<sup>46</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., pp. 105-106.

(1) Look at the word carefully; (2) listen as someone says it aloud; (3) say it aloud, checking it without looking at the copy; and (4) check it against the correct spelling.<sup>47</sup>

Below are the study methods given in some of the current spelling books. They vary only as to amount of emphasis placed on particular sensory aspects like observing, listening, and saying. Both Skills in Spelling Book<sup>48</sup> and Spelling for Word Mastery<sup>49</sup> give a similar list:

1. Look at the word carefully.
2. Say the word to yourself.
3. Close your eyes and see the word. Say each of the letters. Then look back at the word in the book to see if you were right.
4. Cover the word and write it.
5. Look at the word again and check your spelling. If you were correct, write it again without looking and check your spelling once more. If you were wrong, notice the part that is hard for you, and start over again with Step 1.

Sound and Sense in Spelling<sup>50</sup> lists five steps:

1. Say and See the word as your teacher says it.
2. Hear the sounds and learn the letters that spell them.
3. Write the word and say each letter as you write.

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<sup>48</sup>Nevile A. Bremer and Gwendolyn Long, Skills in Spelling Book, Grades 3 and 6, (Wichita, Kansas: McCormick-Mathers Publishing Company, Inc., 1964).

<sup>49</sup>David H. Patton and Eleanor M. Johnson, Spelling for Word Mastery, Grades 3 and 6, (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books Inc., 1963).

<sup>50</sup>Richard Madden, Thorsten Carlson, and Betty H. Yarborough, Sound and Sense in Spelling, Grades 3 and 6, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1964).

4. Check your spelling.
5. Practice writing the word.

Here is Basic Goals in Spelling's<sup>51</sup> method:

Look at the word carefully  
Say the word slowly  
Write it and check it  
Practice writing it saying it as you write.

Look, check, meaning (with dictionary if necessary),

Say, write, and practice are the methods of the New Stanford Speller.<sup>52</sup>

For Morton Bartel Spelling and Writing Patterns: A Multi-level Program<sup>53</sup> the steps are:

Trace and say the syllables.  
Write and check by syllables, not letters.  
Copy again saying by syllables.  
Check; if wrong start over.

The learning method in A Phonetic Approach to Spelling<sup>54</sup> is similar except for the steps of thinking and checking the word and then

<sup>51</sup>William Kottmeyer and Kay Ware, Basic Goals in Spelling, Grades 3 and 6, (St. Louis: Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964).

<sup>52</sup>John D. Almack, Elmer H. Staffelback, and Wayman J. Williams, The New Stanford Speller, Grades 3 and 6, (River Forest Illinois: Loidlaw Brothers, 1954).

<sup>53</sup>Cora L. Holsclaw, Gloria C. Cammarota, and Aileen Brothers, Morton Bartell Spelling and Writing Patterns, A Multi-level Program, Grades A and C, (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1964).

<sup>54</sup>Charles C. Mason and Jess S. Hudson, A Phonetic Approach to Spelling Growth, Grades 3 and 6 (Oklahoma City: The Economy Company, 1964).



writing and checking it. The steps for studying a word misspelled in Spelling Today<sup>55</sup> are:

1. Look at the word in the book especially at the place where you made the mistake. Say it.
2. Say each letter. Close your eyes and say the letters.
3. Look again. Write the word not looking.
4. Check it.
5. Cover the word and write it again. When you miss a word, repeat the steps until you can spell it.

All students should use a systematic method of study. The poorer spellers should always use all of the steps and the best spellers should use them for those words which are most difficult for them. These words that are actually being encountered by the children can be used to teach them how to study words.

#### Variations from the Basic Spelling Methods

Individual differences should be considered in spelling in all areas. Different children spell in different ways. Some write by syllables, and some by letters. Writing by syllables is probably best, but children should be allowed to use varying methods if they are learning through them. These practice exercises supposedly involve the usage of words and reinforce their spellings and meanings and

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<sup>55</sup>J. Murray Lee, May Dorris, and Virgil Stinebaugh, Spelling Today, Grades 3 and 6, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954).

stimulate experiences in addition to those encountered by learning to spell the words. The value of such exercises depends upon whether the words supplied are copied or recalled and upon the frequency and number of such exercises assigned. That is, an excess of such types of practice materials can become automatic, rote busywork or even drudgery.

Discovering similarities in words, discovering smaller words embodied in a given word, filling in completion exercises with the words in the lesson, placing diacritical marks in words, and dictionary activities are examples of such activities listed by McKee. Other types of exercises, most of which can be either oral or written, are identifying the first word or letter in a list every time it appears again, identifying words that begin or end alike or have the same middle letter or syllable, and rhyming words.

Children love spelling contests and they may be used occasionally as a means of stimulating interest, provided the words used are really important words. The real need for spelling lies in the writing that one does. The best type of competition is that in which the pupil competes with his own record rather than with the performance of other children; for the poor speller is the one who needs the most practice, and he does not get it in a spelling contest.

The words to be studied may be placed in a setting that appeals to the child's interests, such as a story or paragraph at the particular grade-level. Games, puzzles, and other activities can also be used. While these devices are not proved to insure greater mastery of the spelling of the words in question, they are worthy of consideration if they succeed in actually arousing and maintaining the child's interest in the desire to learn to spell words that should be mastered.

As has been stated before, the child needs plenty of opportunities to use his spelling words and see a need for them. He should have plenty of real opportunities to write letters and themes in which he will use the words he has learned in spelling, especially if the grade-placement of the spelling words has been properly determined.

"The more the occasion for writing in school resembles the occasion in which writing is done out of school, the more likely it is that the learning of the most important words will be facilitated."<sup>56</sup> The words in the spelling list for the grade are not always the ones needed by children in their written work. The number of words in the spelling list is restricted and the words needed in writing vary with different children. Basic or supplementary lists sometimes come

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<sup>56</sup>Horn, Op. cit., p. 12.

from words misspelled in writing. These words, however, should be important in present and future writing. Spelling should be individualized for it seems undesirable to take the time of the entire class to study words which have been misspelled by only a few.

Too much emphasis must not be placed on spelling in the primary grades because of the danger of discouraging the children from writing. But spelling is important in composition so there needs to be increasing emphasis on it in the intermediate grades and beyond. This implies that a definite plan for correcting spelling errors is needed. Merely checking spelling errors does little good unless accompanied by an effective plan for learning the words which have been misspelled. The pupils should accept more and more responsibility for detecting spelling errors and learn the misspelled words. They are not ordinarily very good at proofreading, but the habit can be established and the ability improved through practice.

It is also possible to lend interest to the program in spelling by insuring that it is closely correlated with other school work. A few spellers have attempted to relate the words of a given lesson to a topic suggested by contemporary work in other fields of school activity. This topic or theme, presented in the form of a story paragraph, is used to give meaning to the words to be learned and to integrate the spelling program with other work of the school. However, it is doubtful

that this procedure really arouses much interest or aids the spelling performance .

Spelling has almost always been taught as a formal school subject separate from the other skills and content areas in the curriculum. Noah Webster's 'Blue Back' "Speller" consisted almost entirely of long lists of difficult words to be pronounced as preparation for reading. The popular American "spelling bees" and "contests" stemmed from the pronunciation exercises of Webster's book.

Horace Mann appears to have been among the first authorities to suggest that memorizing long lists of hard words for "exhibition" spelling had little transfer to written work. Also, the unusual words used and studied bore no relation to children's actual needs in writing.

For a time it was felt that learning long lists of difficult words would discipline the mind and transfer to other rigorous types of study as well as to the learning of the more useful spelling words. In the early 1900's the theory of formal discipline was explored. Then it was thought that "drill on difficult words of adult usage prepared elementary-grade children for their eventual needs as adult writers. Only after some years of drill was the pupil assumed to be ready to use spelling as a tool for writing."<sup>57</sup> Then research workers began asserting that insufficient transfer of learning from spelling to writing

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<sup>57</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 9.

was taking place for the amount of time and effort spent on formal spelling. Pupils were found to be unable to spell words correctly in their compositions that they had spelled correctly in their spelling lessons. Ernest Horn showed in his studies that schools spending a lot of time on spelling were accomplishing no more than those spending little time on formal spelling. The trend now is to integrate spelling with other subject matter when possible so that it is more interesting and has more meaning. Children should learn to spell words when they have a need for them.

The conventional list methods of teaching spelling leave much to be desired for at least three reasons: first, the standardized nature of the word lists and the rigid way in which the lists tend to be used; second, the disparity between practicing the spelling of words in isolated lists and the way in which words are used in writing; third, the assumptions that "every" word to be spelled needs separate memory drill and precisely the same amount of drill or type of practice as every other word, that all the pupils require practice on identical word lists, and that a week's drill on twenty words will insure permanent learning.<sup>58</sup>

The words a child has in spelling must be familiar to him in ordinary conversation or in reading or he must need them in writing or he will very likely not remember them after even thorough drill. A definition of a word at the time it is presented as a spelling word does not stick in the minds of most children.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 10 - 11.

The assignment of a uniform word-list to an entire ungrouped class opposes our current philosophy of providing for individual differences. No child should have to waste time studying words that he already knows and some children will know at least some of the words on almost any spelling list. Slower children may be unable to ever master all the words on every spelling list assigned. They need more repetition of simpler words.

As many words as the pupil can successfully learn to spell should be taught. The teacher can help the poor spellers by conducting a thorough oral discussion of the words to be learned. He should make genuine use of the words the poor speller learns to spell. He could try letting the poor spellers study aloud. This helps him to check the poor speller's study methods too. The children may have to keep it down to a whisper. The method used in presenting the spelling words as well as the method used by the child in studying the words can be experimented with. These can be varied and perhaps a better procedure for the particular child will result. Changed procedure should show progress, however.<sup>59</sup>

Tracing seems to help slow-learners to concentrate their attention on the elements of the word visually at the same time they pronounce the word carefully. They are duplicating the movements they

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<sup>59</sup>Walter T. Petty, Improving Your Spelling Program, (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, Inc., 1959), p. 523.

will make in writing the word from memory. Since tracing is an easy accomplishment it gives slow children a feeling of success. The words to be traced must be printed or written in large enough letters to be traced with the finger. Writing words with fingers on desk tops or in the air is wasteful because the words cannot be checked for correctness as they can when written.

Children nowadays are often encouraged at an early age to write. They use the words from their listening, speaking, and reading vocabularies, asking the teacher for help as they write, looking up the words that they do not know how to spell in some source, or spelling them in the best way that they can and correcting them later.

Hildreth and McKee agree that, although incidental learning does take place because the same vocabulary occurs in reading, spelling, and language, direct drill, and practice are still needed. Incidental learning probably does not insure that as many words are learned as well as are in a formal spelling program. Horn too states that there is clear evidence that considerable learning does take place outside the spelling period at all levels of difficulty. But, although easy "unstudied" words are spelled about as well as easy studied words, as the difficulty of the words increases, the "studied" words are spelled with much higher accuracy. McKee feels that one of the problems is



that neither children nor teachers is very efficient in detecting spelling errors in written work. According to Hildreth, children still need direct instruction in checking their written work, learning how to study words, learning about word structure, word analysis, and word building, and learning to take pains with spelling. Children's attention must be directed at spelling in particular in a spelling program taught as a separate subject with definite methods. McKee suggests that children be taught to consider correct spelling important in all writing and that a specific composition course also be in operation in order for a desirable type of incidental learning to take place.<sup>60</sup>

Systematic practice is needed to fix the troublesome words in mind. Drill should be related to a real need for the practiced items.

A modern goal in spelling as well as in other skills is to make the pupils independent of the teacher's assistance in learning and mastering basic skills as soon as possible. This principle is especially relevant to spelling because it is a skill involving such a large number of items to learn and check.

Modern teaching begins where the pupils are and emphasizes continuous growth of each individual according to his capacities, rather than requiring a fixed-grade achievement standard for all.

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<sup>60</sup>McKee, Op. cit., p. 369.

Diagnostic studies are made to determine basic capacities for learning, the range of achievement in the class, readiness for next steps in achievement, and the difficulties individual pupils experience in learning, so that teachers can work more intelligently with pupils in terms of their special requirements as learners.<sup>61</sup>

Studies show that spelling can be learned quite effectively through integrated or unit study and that much incidental spelling takes place. Children often spell those words that they use voluntarily in their own writing best.

Spelling is dependent upon mental and linguistic learning, and is best learned in the larger area of language usage of which it is a part. Pupils learn best when they have an understanding of the nature of the skill and the purpose for which they are learning it. Those who at all times make strong, active responses in their efforts to learn and give sustained attention to the task, make the most progress. The pupils' interest in learning and in improvement plays a large role in mastery of spelling and other writing techniques.

Learning to spell involves the development of increasing refinement in visual, auditory, and motor perception, and memory of the material perceived. Learning results in part from imitation--from observing writing being done.

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<sup>61</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 16.

Some trial and error is involved in all learning of spelling and other mechanical details of writing. The development of generalizing abilities so far as these can be applied in English is an important aspect of learning to spell. The pupil's attitudes, his feelings and emotional reactions to words, to school study, even toward the teacher, play a large role in learning spelling as in learning all other skills. Outcomes from the pupil's attempts to spell have an important bearing on interests and attitudes toward further study.

The teacher's management of the learning situation will largely determine the pupil's ultimate achievements. The teacher's methods of correction and criticism effect the pupil's attitudes toward the learning task.

There is a high relationship between spelling and vocabulary knowledge, an even higher one than between spelling success and intelligence, according to Spache. The child who knows which word will best convey his meaning and which grammatical form to use can spell better because of it. If a child says "hurted hisself," he is also likely to write it.

Oral word usage, pronunciation, and articulation are also closely related to learning to spell. The child who has trouble hearing and pronouncing "snip" and "snap" will have trouble writing them.

A child who says "wif" for "with" may spell the word with "f."

"Accurate pronunciation is such an asset in learning to spell that children with speech articulation difficulties may be slow learners for this cause alone." Improvement in oral vocabulary has a bearing on spelling because it results in improvement of diction and word pronunciation.

There is an intimate relationship between learning to read and learning to spell. In fact, much of the spelling children learn is a by-product of reading, as is proven by the data compiled on incidental learning. Children who advance rapidly in reading usually make good progress in spelling. "Teachers report that those who cannot read do not write much and cannot spell. Correlation studies show that reading vocabulary, comprehension, and rate are all positively correlated with spelling and that the correlations are relatively high." Horn, Kottmeyer, Townsend, Standing, Keyser, and Russell have conducted studies giving evidence to support these correlations.<sup>62</sup>

Although most schools use spelling texts or workbooks, the work of the spelling period must be effectively coordinated with what is done in other curriculum areas to develop spelling ability.

The largest contributions from curriculum areas other than spelling are made by reading and written composition, but speech and hand-

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-28.

writing are also influential as indeed are all activities in which language is employed. Correlations which have been reported between spelling and reading are nearly as high as those which have been reported between intelligence and reading.<sup>63</sup>

Most good readers are good spellers and most poor readers are poor spellers. This is not always the case, however. Some students in the middle ranges of ability in reading are excellent spellers while others are very poor ones. It has been proven that pupils learn to spell many words through reading them. Yet among the words repeatedly met in reading are many spelling demons. It is thought that perhaps these words are so familiar that little or no attention is called to their spelling in the process of reading, while when new words are met in reading, the pupils take time to learn to spell them. Many of the words that could be learned in this way would be words not likely to be used by children in their present and future writing. "Most of the spelling errors in writing are made on familiar rather than on strange words."<sup>64</sup> Also, in this case, the pupil would likely be developing poor reading habits if he stopped to notice the spelling of all the familiar words while reading.

The use of the dictionary, the improvement of pronunciation through oral reading, and the ability to associate letters with sounds

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<sup>63</sup>Horn, Op. cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

are auxiliary abilities developed through reading. Some evidence indicates that phonics instruction even though given in connection with the reading program is more beneficial to spelling than to reading. The emphasis is upon letter-to-sound relationships in reading and the identification of words is further assisted by configuration and context.

In contrast, spelling requires the pupil to decide what letters to use to spell sounds and, except in the case of purely phonetic words, this is a difficult decision to make.

The potential contributions of reading to spelling are substantial. As reading abilities are developed, spelling is improved. On the other hand, deficiencies in reading are serious handicaps in learning to spell.<sup>65</sup>

Oral reading with closer attention to the sounds in the entire word must contribute more to spelling than silent reading.

Because of habitual neglect of end parts of words and the pre-eminence of foreparts, less transfer from 'silent' reading to spelling can be expected. Children also gain the meanings of many words through reading and thereby become more interested in them. It is through repeated reading that the child learns the difference between similar looking words like "then" and "than" and their correct use in sentences. Part of the ability to spell is to recognize whether or not a given word is correctly written or printed. . .<sup>66</sup>

Plessas and Ladley say that poor spelling is not necessarily caused by deficiencies in reading vocabulary. Word recognition

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>66</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 30.

and vocabulary abilities seem to be more closely related to spelling ability than to level of comprehension in reading. Children should know the meanings of most of their spelling words and they should be taught those that they do not know. They point out that the Russell investigation indicates that systematic instruction in phonics, word analysis, auditory, and visual perception, word families, etc. beginning in the first grade helps spelling.

Often the children who read well are the ones who are interested in writing and write more than the poor readers. They have command of a good reading vocabulary which they employ in writing. There are, of course, some good readers who are poor spellers.

This may be due to the child's greater reliance on context clues for word meanings than on complete enunciation of the words met in reading. Sometimes a child is able to spell well but still unable to read. In this case his "list" spelling runs ahead of his reading achievement, but not his spelling in everyday writing.

No one knows precisely how much spelling is learned from reading. However, since much of learning to spell is unquestionably a by-product of reading, one way to improve spelling is through word study in reading.<sup>67</sup>

Children should not be expected to learn to spell words they cannot recognize. Plessas and Petty suggest delaying or lightening

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<sup>67</sup> Gus P. Plessas and Dorothea Macie Ladley, "Some Implication of Spelling Behavior," Elementary English, (XXXXII, February, 1965), p. 144.

the load of spelling instruction and promoting growth in reading for poor readers. Usually poor readers are poor spellers, but not necessarily.

As has been stated, it takes less time and energy to learn something that is meaningful or that the learner can identify with his interests and purposes than to learn through rote drill. "A word formerly difficult for a child may become easy to spell at a later stage in his linguistic development, even apart from direct drill, because he has come to know and use the word."<sup>68</sup>

Neither recency of word encounter in reading nor improved word recognition skills contributes significantly to growth in spelling for seriously retarded readers. They sometimes help the spelling of good readers at the secondary level. "Teaching spelling through reading should be avoided since such a practice may influence adversely perceptual patterns in word recognition of certain children as well as their comprehension abilities during the reading act."<sup>69</sup>

No spelling method seems to work for some people. Allen and Hullfish say that a good speller is taught, learns by accident, or somehow acquires the habit of pausing very slightly before difficult

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<sup>68</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>69</sup>Plessas and Ladley, Op. cit., p. 200.



words in reading. He continues to pause momentarily each time he encounters the word until he knows its spelling and meaning. Then he begins on a new word. This practice is an extra, incidental aid to spelling. He still uses good spelling methods in a regular spelling program with many short, spaced practice periods. It is often helpful to primary children for the teacher to list on the board words that will likely be needed for a particular letter or story. The children can also keep lists or files or picture dictionaries of troublesome words. Retention of manuscript writing at least throughout the primary grades helps to preserve the link between reading and written language established in the first grade. It also is easier to proofread and helps to insure that confidence built is not lost in the "changing over."

Another method advocated by some experts for facilitating learning to spell is the use of the typewriter. "Although there is no conclusive evidence from research, it is obvious that the use of the typewriter frees the child from having to think of the letter forms while writing, and also the direction to the writing."<sup>70</sup> Experimental evidence indicates that children below the age of seven tend merely to fiddle with the typewriter but children above that age can learn to type easily.

The intimate relation between growth in language and progress in spelling continues throughout the upper primary grades. "Because English etymology is illogical, learning to spell requires patience,

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<sup>70</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 97.

dilligence, and sustained attention." Children tend to observe and to question everything around them, especially the new and striking. "They learn words by trying to write, by observing their own errors, and by asking others whether or not they have spelled the words correctly."<sup>71</sup>

Thompson concluded from his study of spelling achievement that children learn many words before they are ever studied. They learn them incidentally through reading or some particular need for or interest in them.

Most words are not learned by typical children after a single trial, nor even after several successive days of practice. Only through added experience, often a long succession of experimental trials, both in and out of school can the pupil be expected to remember how to write a word correctly when he is expressing his thoughts on paper. Only through successive trials will the pupil recognize his mistakes and practice to eliminate them. "Success comes not with mechanical repetition, but with trials that produce steady improvement."<sup>72</sup>

Perception and imagery are the two chief mental processes that operate in spelling. Through practice one can store up mental images of words just as he does faces, house or telephone numbers,

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

and many other items. Children should be taught to check spelling visually, because of inconsistencies in English and because for many persons visual images are readily remembered. A major cause of misspelling is inadequate acquaintance with the visual forms of the words.

The safe rule is: emphasize visual imagery as well as sound if you want pupils to spell accurately and to learn readily. detailed scrutiny of the entire word is essential for visual retention of word forms. . . .<sup>73</sup>

One advantage of writing the practiced words is that the pupil immediately "sees" the result, thereby strengthening the visual impression.

Children also learn through imitation. They tend to copy everything they admire. They seem to be able to spell words to which they have been repeatedly exposed, on television, for example.

There are both phonetic words and sight words in the spelling vocabulary. Sight words have silent letters and irregularly sounded elements. "Sight" and "enough" are sight words and "garden," "dog," "triangle," "branches," and "stove" are to a large degree phonetic. Spelling is aided by facility in sounding and syllabifying words correctly.

Methods of teaching handwriting have considerable bearing on learning to spell. If handwriting practice employs the words children are most apt to need in their written work, the learning of spelling is reinforced.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

Of course, the "left to right" habit must be cultivated in studying the order of the letters as they occur within words, in writing the words, and in proofreading written work.

Generalizing in spelling, so far as this is possible, saves time and effort compared with learning all words as isolated items. However, generalizing from known words to new words containing similar sounds and letters is not always safe. "Peach" transfers to "reach," but not to "beseech." Children should be able to generalize to a high degree from basic phonetic knowledge to spelling.

In summary, all the basic principles of dynamic learning have application to the learning and teaching of spelling. There is an advantage in learning and practicing the language arts with emphasis on understanding and actual use of spelling in writing. Visual and auditory perception and kinaesthetic imagery play an important part in learning; ability to generalize also plays a large role, according to a number of research studies. Individual differences are apparent in learning to spell, just as in any other skill.

Spelling readiness needs to be present for learning in spelling just as it must be present for learning in reading or any other skill. It is usually acquired in the first grade with the knowledge of some letters and words and the experience of copying and dictating, observing others, story writing and telling, and many other experiences

both at home and at school. Pronouncing and recognizing words in reading and purposeful language expression provide the basis for learning to spell.

Bohrer lists the following aspects of spelling readiness:

1. Knowing what the word means
2. Perception of word forms
3. Verbal intelligence
4. Knowledge of phonics
5. A "desire" to learn how to spell.<sup>75</sup>

Reading, writing, and spelling instruction are interrelated in many ways for beginners in particular.

Spelling for the second and third graders entails doing the things that require the use of correct spelling for the most part. If the second grade has a continuation of the first grade program of using spelling in writing stories, news and weather reports, etc., a separate spelling program will not be necessary. Grouping of pupils within the class for spelling practice is recommended for the upper primary grades.

Claire T. Zyve drew these conclusions after experimenting with spelling methods:

1. Teacher-directed study proved more efficient than individual study.
2. The use of sentences as an element in method when combined with the use of lists gave better results than the use of lists alone.

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<sup>75</sup>Bohrer, Op. cit., p. 85.

3. Additional home study was of little value in the learning of words when the teacher-directed, list-context method was used. It helped to equalize results, however, when used with the less efficient methods.
4. The use of a lantern for the presentation of words gave better results than the use of the blackboard when a method which was the same in other respects was used.
5. The use of teacher-directed review gave better results than no review.
6. Increased emphasis on form of the word before study by identification among similar forms, when combined with the child's close observance of the word in his own writing, as used in this experiment, did not give a measurable difference in results.
7. Four fifteen-minute periods a week for study on the new words with the remaining fifteen-minute period for systematic review gave the same gain as did five fifteen-minute periods for study when two reviews of the words missed on the Friday's test were included.
8. Each of the factors, the list-context method, teacher-directed study, lantern presentation of words, and teacher-directed review, seemed about equally significant in increasing the mean number of words gained.
9. A method which combined these favorable elements was significantly better than a method which did not include them.<sup>76</sup>

Hale C. Reid did a study on the following methods for spelling in 1966:

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<sup>76</sup>Claire Turner Zyve, An Experimental Study of Spelling Methods, Contributions to Education, (No. 446, New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931), pp. 71-72.

1. Test-Study-Test Method
2. Word Perception with Test Method
3. Word Perception without Test Method
4. Proofreading and Correcting Method
5. The Workbook Method.<sup>77</sup>

He found that none was "consistently" superior, so the teacher can feel encouraged to develop the method that he feels he can best use. Often a combination of the best of several methods is good.

Hildreth lists the following outcomes that may be anticipated by the end of the primary period following a program of instruction such as the one outlined in part above.

1. The pupils show continuous improvement in spelling independently in writing. They can use the words needed most frequently in written work. They have memorized a spelling vocabulary of some 400 - 500 words and can spell from dictation one-syllable phonetic words.
2. The pupils take pride in correct spelling. They are conscious of the need for correct spelling; they show greater self-reliance in spelling.
3. The pupils know how to locate common words needed in writing; they can refer to words needed in unit studies.
4. They have learned to study words by themselves and have mastered systematic spelling procedures.
5. They can use simple word-analysis techniques as an aid in spelling. They recognize simple phonetic clues--all initial consonants, long and short vowel sounds--and know a simple vowel rule, e.g., "ride."

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<sup>77</sup>Hale C. Reid, "Evaluating Five Methods of Teaching Spelling--Second and Third Grades," The Instructor, (LXXV, March, 1966), p. 77.

6. They have made some progress in learning to detect and correct the spelling errors they make in written work.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Hildreth, Op. cit., p. 124.



## CHAPTER V

### PHONICS AND RULES IN SPELLING

Gates found from his study that organizing words and the methods of treating them gave pupils an advantage, in the tests employed, over those taught by a method which treated words specifically and which made no provision for attracting attention to similar word elements or for associating new words with familiar key or type words. He also found that less intelligent classes did very well on this test. Thus he felt that his data implied the fact which other evidence seems to confirm, namely, that this association of words with key words (or families, types, or categories) and solving them by analogy is a device which may be used profitably by all levels of intelligence.<sup>79</sup>

Elmer Cavins in the early 1900's published a book to serve as a basic guide in the teaching of dictionary usage, particularly where suffixes, prefixes, and Greek or Latin roots were involved. Such work is still taught today, but to a much lesser degree, and often in conjunction with spelling, and sometimes with language or with both language and spelling. Cavins admitted that there were words whose

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<sup>79</sup> Arthur I. Gates, Generalizations and Transfer in Spelling, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1935).

meanings were not based on their basic parts, but he felt that enough words' meanings went along with the meanings of their roots, suffixes, and prefixes to make it profitable to study them. Children should build words from a single base word such as "port." They could form "transport," "export," etc. By knowing the meaning of "port," they would have part of the meaning of the new words. Then they would just need to get the meaning of the prefixes. The prefixes in this case also have meanings and recur in other words often enough to make it worth while to learn their meanings too. Today it is not felt that such learning transfers to the proper cases enough or facilitates spelling enough to make very much of it worth while. The belief is that children often gain such knowledge more indirectly, and inductively on their own.<sup>80</sup>

Paul R. Hanna and James T. Moore, Jr. with their study, "Spelling-From Spoken Word to Written Symbol," present the idea supported by Bonney. That is that most words are spelled regularly, that is, their spellings represent their speech sounds or phonemes, and that children should learn these words first and then the irregular ones in groups "according to their deviation from the alphabetic principles of the English language. In this way the child should

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<sup>80</sup>Elmer W. Cavins, Orthography and Word Analysis Including a Course in Spelling, Phonics, and Pronunciation, (1st ed. revised, Taylorville, Illinois: C. M. Parker Publishing Co., 1914).

eventually develop a sense of the probable letter or letters to be used to represent the speech sounds as they occur in words belonging to such 'group patterns,'<sup>81</sup> and will not have to study each word as an individual problem. This approach recognizes our language structure and gives the child both a multi-sensory and a multi-cognitive attack upon words.

Some experts are concerned about the exceptions misleading children. That chance must be taken when using this approach of letting children discover for themselves. It is slow and dangerous, but children remember their own discoveries best.

There are sound-to-letter representation exceptions. Children need to know what guesses are best but that they are only best guesses and should be checked when there is a doubt.

Margaret Bonney also supports the idea of teaching the regular words first and grouping by sound families to memorize. Then children will know the most common way of spelling a sound and can make a pretty good guess if they are not sure of how to spell a sound in a word. For example, "er" is more often the spelling for that sound than "or." She also emphasizes checking the dictionary when unsure.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Plessas and Ladley, Op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>82</sup>Margaret K. Bonney, "Sound and Sense in Spelling," Elementary English, (XXXXII, February, 1965), p. 246.

Richard Hodges believes in employing aural-oral abilities in learning to spell and in over memorizing words that must be memorized.

If a rule is taught, there should be enough words among those taught to which the rule can be applied in order to make the teaching of the rule worth while. If there are many exceptions, the rule probably should not be taught for it may do more harm than good. Rules sometimes prove confusing rather than helpful to children, especially when they encounter their exceptions. Even if a rule suitable to a word is taught, it may not remove certain children's difficulties in spelling that particular word. It depends upon their particular types of misspellings. It is debatable whether children can apply rules once they learn them. Perhaps children's time would be spent more wisely in attacking each word as an individual problem. Word analysis and phonics skills can result in confusion too, if not taught carefully, making sure that there are ample cases to support them too. Phonics is especially difficult because there are so many ways of spelling the same sound.

Phonics is in vogue, more again, but many words do not lend themselves to phonetic spelling. Mary B. Lanbader and William Kottmeyer, Spelling Goals, St. Louis: Webster Publishing Company, 1955, and Don C. Rogers, My Word Book, Chicago: Lyons and Carnahan, 1962, appear to be the most phonically oriented of the group of spelling

books examined by O'Reilly, and each in a slightly different way. Gerald Yoakan and Seward Daw, Learning to Spell, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1956, is probably the least phonics oriented of the five studied. All of the textbooks he studied were found to use phonics for the teaching of spelling, but with considerable variation in degree.<sup>83</sup>

Children should learn a few basic rules that are more common, such as "an 'e' at the end of a word is often silent and indicates that the other vowel says its name or is long." Children should learn one rule at a time through many different types of experiences with it in various situations. The inductive method of teaching rules and most things seems to be preferred today. Such instruction should begin in the lower grades. Many opportunities for application and review must be provided. Children should not become too dependent upon such rules because there are so many exceptions to them.

Singulars and plurals, tenses, suffixes, prefixes, and other word derivatives must also be considered in the spelling program. Other rules that apply to a large number of words and probably should be taught are those for dropping the silent "e," changing "y" to "i," doubling the final consonant, "qu," capitalization of proper nouns and adjectives,

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<sup>83</sup>Wilbur S. Ames, "A Comparison of Spelling Textbooks," Elementary English, (XXXII, February, 1965), p. 214.

use of period after abbreviations , and use of apostrophe in possessives and contractions .

There is a list of generalizations based on observation with suggested grade levels for each in Guiding Language Arts by Dawson and Zollinger . The list includes such skills as dictionary , suffixes , auditory discrimination , capitalization , etc .

When studying rules , all the related areas , should be studied also , especially if brought up by children . For example , "while studying possessive nouns , we found it necessary to teach possessive pronouns and adjectives , since they do "not" have apostrophes ("its" pay and "whose" hat.)"<sup>84</sup>

Children do seem to transfer learning and generalize rules in spelling such as forming "indicated," "indicating," and "indication," from the base word "indicate." However , there is also some "negative transfer," as C. P. Archer calls it.<sup>85</sup> For example , if a pupil practices with the forms "prefer" and "preferring," he is likely to double the "t" in benefited .

Richard E. Hodges recommends the use of phoneme-grapheme correspondences first . At the same time , he warns us that spelling is

<sup>84</sup>Eleanor Weeks , "A Program for Improving Daily Spelling," Grade Teacher , (LXXXII, May/June, 1965), p. 55.

<sup>85</sup>C. P. Archer , Transfer of Training in Spelling , (Vol. V, No. 5, University of Iowa Studies in Education, 1930. In Arthur I. Gates , Generalizations and Transfer in Spelling , (New York: Bureau of Publications , Teacher's College , Columbia University , 1935) .

more involved than letter to sound relationships, but this is a starting place. There are no answers as to the best procedure yet.

Basic root words and their variants should be taught together, not in different grades. Children should learn "teacher" and "teachers" at the same time.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the many irregularities in our language and the disagreement as to which rules if any should be taught in spelling, the following rules properly developed with children under the guidance of the teacher are generally valuable in developing the habits of correct spelling.

1. Proper nouns and adjectives formed from proper nouns should always begin in capital letters.
2. Doubling the Final-Consonant-Monosyllables: Words of one syllable ending in one consonant after the vowel double the final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel, but do not double it when the suffix begins with a consonant.
3. Doubling the Final-Consonant--Dyssyllables and Polysyllables: Words of more than one syllable ending in one consonant after one vowel double the final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel, if the accent is on the last syllable.
4. Silent e: Words ending in silent "e" drop the "e" before a suffix beginning with a vowel, but do not drop the "e" before a suffix beginning with a consonant.
5. Plurals of Nouns ending in Y:
6. Possessives:
7. Final Y Before a Suffix:<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Richard E. Hodges, "The Case for Teaching Sound-to-Letter Correspondences in Spelling," The Elementary School Journal, (LXVI, March, 1966), pp. 327-36.

<sup>87</sup>Smith, Drouse, and Atkinson, Op. cit., pp. 357-358.

Other spelling rules follow:

1. Words Ending in ff, ll, ss:
2. Regular Plurals:
3. Plurals of Nouns Ending in S, x, z, ch, or sh:
4. Plurals of Nouns Ending in o:
5. Plurals of Nouns Ending in f or fe:
6. Plurals of Letters, Figures, and Signs:
7. Rule for ie and ei:
8. The Prefixes dis and mis:

Phonics is used in the teaching of spelling to help children to write symbols correctly from the sounds of the symbols and the pronounced word. The great difficulty in spelling words carefully in our language stems from the large percentage of nonphonetic words among those that appear most commonly and frequently in the running writing of individuals.

To make the task of spelling even more complex, some identical sounds are spelled by different letters and combinations such as the long "a" sound and the long "e" sound which are each spelled in many different ways.

Because of these variations a study of phonics must be accompanied by a study of the many other aids to spelling. Nevertheless, a knowledge of phonics can be extremely useful to pupils learning to spell.<sup>88</sup>

Phonics exercises can be utilized to help children attack words through their pronunciation and spelling. For example pupils can practice writing:

1. Words that begin with the same consonant sounds (do, dog, doll).
2. Words that end with the same consonant sounds (ball, call, fall).
3. Words that contain short vowel sounds and long vowel sounds.
4. Words with beginning consonant blends (sn, bl, th, cr).

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 358



5. Words with silent final letters (done, gone, give).
6. Words with sounds that are often confused (affect, effect).<sup>89</sup>

Mnemonic devices are good for creating interest in attacking the hard to spell words not governed by rules, but they should not be substituted for the well established rules of spelling. The trouble spots should be identified and exaggerated and the appropriate mnemonic device applied to help students to remember its spelling.

To help children not to substitute an E for the second A in grammar, point out to them the exaggerated part of the word, which spells the word "MAR." After discussing the definition of "mar," write this sentence on the chalkboard: "Poor gramMAR is one way to MAR an otherwise excellent composition.

To help pupils remember the two S's in the word "dessert" tell them to think of the two S's as representing "Sweet Stuff" or "Something Sweet." If this is properly done, the two S's will almost automatically come to the minds of the pupils when they hear the word "dessert."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>90</sup>Norman evans, "A Mnemonic Attack on Spelling," The Instructor, (LXXVI, February, 1965). p. 131.

CHAPTER VI  
TESTING AND EVALUATING SPELLING  
PROGRESS

Under any type of curriculum, with long-range or short-range goals, daily or annual goals, for learning to spell the most useful words, learning to proofread, or whatever--achievement must be measured. Both the classroom teacher and the pupils must know the degree to which their goals have been reached.

There are several types of evaluation, each serving a somewhat different purpose: the spelling section of a battery of standardized achievement tests, tests which guide and measure achievement in daily or weekly lessons, tests which measure progress for the term or year, and observational techniques. However, the primary purpose of all of them should be to guide and improve learning.<sup>91</sup>

In interpreting the scores made on a standardized test, it should be kept in mind that they reflect only in part the effectiveness of what is done in the spelling class. Other curriculum areas contribute to the development of spelling ability. Low achievement in spelling is usually associated with low achievement in other language abilities. Also the abilities measured by a standardized

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<sup>91</sup>Horn, Op. cit., p. 28.

test may not be closely related to the specific goals set up to guide instruction. They are not necessarily a measure of the teacher's ability and we should expect a wide range of scores just as when the scores from which the standards were established were widely distributed above and below average.

Specific goals in tests are closer, and better and easier understood by teacher and pupils when discussed before testing. The teacher must be sure his goals cover what he wants to teach or they will not cover what should have been accomplished. He should observe to find causes of failures seen on pencil and paper tests and whether children use the dictionary, although they demonstrate that they can on pencil and paper tests. Any test is better if the children understand its purposes.

Pupil accomplishment should be measured by comparing spelling ability both before and after study and teaching. Such measurements expose the efficiency with which the school is carrying out its program in spelling. They can also show to the teacher and pupil the improvement which the pupil makes as a result of their combined efforts.

It is difficult to use standard spelling scales and tests because they often are outdated, do not contain the most important words or do not contain the words that the children concerned learn from their speller.

Pupil improvement on each lesson can be measured by comparing the preliminary test and each of the following tests, even review tests, for that lesson. Likewise, pupil progress over a semester or year may be tested by giving a test over some of the words to be learned during that time before study and on the same number of those same words at the end of the study period. If it is found through the preliminary or diagnostic test for the term that the list to be used in a particular class contains a number of words that many of the children do not know, the teacher will retest with a less difficult list until he is able to locate the appropriate instructional level for the pupils. As a result, he is likely to have to provide various groups for spelling in the same manner in which he would set up reading groups for pupils of varying achievement.

As previously pointed out, modern practice in the teaching of spelling provides several daily periods for the learning of the words in any one lesson. These periods are composed of study and testing periods. The practice of several testings has been adopted partially because the available evidence shows that a single correct spelling cannot be taken as an index of real spelling ability and because all the pupil's difficulties cannot be located by a single testing.

Some of the ways of testing pupil effectiveness in spelling are:

- Dictation of words in a list
- Proofreading for errors in context
- The completion sentence device
- Detection of spelling errors in written composition and correcting the misspelled words
- Letter-writing test
- Recognition of errors printed in word lists
- Copying test
- Timed writing test
- Tests in the use of the dictionary.<sup>92</sup>

Spelling tests may be given in various forms varying in difficulty and usefulness. Written tests are usually preferred to oral tests because they make possible the record of each child on each word so that the results can be more readily utilized for instructional purposes. Recall tests are more difficult than recognition tests and so are superior to them.

Even though children will be required to spell their spelling words correctly in context in actual usage, the column form of testing seems to get the best results and to be the most efficient in time and energy for both child and teacher.

The teacher should pronounce the words for the spelling test very carefully, enunciating each syllable clearly. The words, at least the homonyms, should be used in clear sentences to show

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<sup>92</sup>McKee, Op. cit., p. 289.

their meaning. A word should probably be pronounced only once unless unavoidable disturbance has interfered with the pupil's understanding. Many authorities recommend pronouncing the word, using it in a sentence, and pronouncing it again.

Occasional context tests, preferably with paragraphs, which better cloak the words, than with sentences, may be used as a means of showing the child the utility of the ability to spell. The primary purpose of all tests and appraisals is to facilitate the development of the spelling ability of individual students. Results of appraisals must be used. The better the teacher and children understand the purpose of a test, the greater the benefits to be derived from it.

Being able to write quickly and legibly is a great aid to spelling success, especially on tests. Being able to spell well also helps writing. If the child knows how to spell most of the words he writes, he can write them quickly and accurately without having to hesitate or erase.

Tests show children the words that they need to study and they show the teacher which children most need help and encouragement. Also, children learn many words through the process of correction. The teacher can give the correct spelling while the children check their own tests. Seeing the word spelled wrong does not seem to hinder the

children in learning to spell it correctly. They are hearing it spelled correctly while they are checking it. They study the words they miss. The teacher should try to help those who have made many errors immediately. The children can compare the results of their pre-tests and final tests.

The testing and checking can be done as a group but each individual is concerned only with his own special needs. This should not be a routine performance but a vigorous, aggressive attack by each pupil in learning the words he has misspelled.

Great care should be exercised in the scoring of all tests. The following points, some of which already have been indicated or implied, should be kept in mind:

(1) pupils who score tests must have proper work attitudes; (2) the criteria for marking a word wrong must be clearly understood by the pupil; (3) faulty handwriting should be distinguished from incorrect spelling; and (4) the teacher may find it necessary to check the pupil's work in scoring.<sup>93</sup>

The teacher should help the children with scoring preliminary tests, especially at first, but most important of all he should study his children's spelling tests to determine the types of errors they are making and try to help alleviate them as best he can. He should help locate particular individual pupil difficulties and teach an effective method of study. This will take several weeks. He must help those

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 408.

individuals who have difficulty in understanding and applying the methods of study.

The teacher should not assign marks on papers the children themselves correct or they will feel inclined to slide over errors. "The goal is to prepare a correct paper, not to get 100 on a spelling test."<sup>94</sup>

Pupils should be commended highly for locating their own or each other's errors. The best policy is to rate pupils on their ability to spell correctly in all written work.

Review periods must be provided in teaching spelling because of forgetfulness. When reviews are a definite part of the teaching program, they are systematic. When they are provided for only by the various types of school writing which the pupil may do, they are of an incidental type. Most modern spellers provide for systematic reviews in one way or another. Obviously, the amount of review to be expended upon a given word will depend upon the effectiveness of the initial learning period, the learning difficulty of the word, and the ability of the learner.

One type of review, and the only one provided in some spelling books and teaching methods, is the review test study periods spent on each lesson, usually over a week's time. Other textbooks and teaching

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 286.



methods provide for further review.

Words known to be of very great difficulty are sometimes placed in subsequent lessons. Words of outstanding difficulty among those of a given grade list are sometimes presented as review lessons in the first few weeks' work of the immediately following grade. Also, words known to have special difficulty are again presented for testing and study several years after their initial appearance.<sup>95</sup>

Harris says that review probably should be provided within a few days after the original learning period with the intervals between them increasing progressively, and that words known to be persistently difficult should be given special emphasis in these delayed review exercises.

Each child should be encouraged by his teacher to keep a list of words frequently misspelled by him and to review them in some of his spare time in an attempt to learn them adequately. Writing activities should be provided for incidental review too. As has already been said, this will work best when the spelling list has been properly graded and the activities are real and purposeful.

Further, the value of such review will be very little unless a high standard of accuracy in spelling is maintained throughout all writing. Consequently, particular attention must be paid to correct spelling work in all important writing activities.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 418.

Dictation exercises for review, as in the regular testing do not seem particularly helpful, but are not proven harmful. They are all right for variety.

## CHAPTER VII

### MOTIVATING PUPILS TO SPELL CORRECTLY

#### Developing Attitudes in Spelling

McKee gives some procedures for obtaining and maintaining the child's interests in spelling, which he says are largely the result of opinion and experience, but some of which seem to have value. Most people agree that, and experiments in various fields, principles of psychology, and several investigations in spelling show that interest is an important factor in learning to spell.

The pupil should understand that the words taught are those which are the most important for him to learn to spell. His understanding of the value of the words which he is to study may aid in developing his interest in learning them. The teacher should explain clearly and sensibly how the words have been discovered and why they are important. He might analyze an actual child's letter as a means of explaining the discovery of words to be learned.

Proper grade-placement of the words will aid in developing interest. "A recognition by the child of this close relationship

existing between his spelling words and the words he needs in writing can be a worthy and effective source of motivation."<sup>97</sup>

The use of a preliminary test may arouse interest. Pupils also enjoy keeping records and diagnosing their own types of errors. Through these techniques the child sees exactly what is to be done. He eliminates those words he already knows and concentrates on removing his own difficulties. The child must know exactly what it is that he is expected to learn before his interest can be stimulated.

Horn lists some awareness of social pressure and need for correct spelling, an efficient study method, awareness of progress, responsibility for learning to spell, use of spelling words in meaningful writing, high morale and mutual helpfulness rather than competition in the classroom, and pride in correct spelling (proofreading) as ingredients for interest and success in spelling. Also the teacher should use an efficient method and be enthusiastic and sympathetic. He should see a need too and gain satisfaction from helping individual pupils grow in spelling, especially pupils who are having marked difficulties in learning to spell.

The teacher must create the right attitudes toward spelling. Every effort should be made to teach the pupil to appreciate a high

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 420.

grade of work. The teacher must strive to enable each child to see the importance of careful, exacting, and honest work. If he allows slipshod, inaccurate work, there is no hope for the pupil to gain stimulation by doing a thorough job. If, on the other hand, his teaching proceeds in a manner which requires and rewards the right sort of accomplishment, the pupil learns quickly to get the thrill that comes from having done a thing well.

The pupil should also learn to have pride in his spelling. "The proper use of the spelling notebook and careful attention paid to the spelling in all written work may help to develop a spelling conscience."<sup>98</sup>

Each child should definitely see his progress. Working without knowing what one is expected to do and without being able to see what happens as a result of the work does not stimulate interest very rapidly. But if a child can know exactly and specifically what his job is and can see the outcome of his work, he will probably be enthusiastic.

Some type of records must be kept. The pupils should keep samples of their work in notebooks or folders to be examined periodically for improvement and/or persistent errors. The teacher

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

should keep records of pupil progress on index cards or in a notebook or a record book. He should also record the achievement of each pupil on beginning and end-of-the term tests on a test record sheet. He should compile lists of words missed by fifty per cent or more of the class and relate them to writing, reading, and listening abilities. He can also keep an alphabetized list of the words he has taught.

The class's work during a week can be charted or the improvement of the class as a whole in terms of the final test on each lesson can be charted. Improvement made by each pupil in the work of each lesson can be kept on a chart. A bar graph may be used as both an individual and a class progress chart. There are all kinds of graphs and charts that can easily be kept for the class as a whole or for individuals by both the teacher and the children. Most of the class progress charts can be made on the board or on heavy paper or cardboard and placed where the pupils can easily examine them. Of course, the pupils must be taught how to interpret them accurately. "While many of these class charts show the progress made by each pupil, they also show the lack of progress made by some. Individual records kept by each child are probably better."<sup>99</sup>

McKee writes that it is perhaps beneficial to call attention to the importance of accurate spelling in the ordinary affairs of life,

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

if this can be done skillfully so that the matter does not become trite. The pupil ought to know that correct spelling is a mark of responsibility, that it is considered of value in both social and business writing, and that vocational opportunities have been lost because of inability to spell.

However, Dolch points out that many of our adult techniques for bribing children to learn to spell correctly are rather ineffective with children. He says that teachers are always asking how they can motivate children to spell correctly, but they mean how can they get them to care about spelling. Teachers and spelling books often argue that misspelling may produce misunderstanding on the part of the one who reads the message written. The trouble with this, says Dolch, is that children cannot imagine themselves as sending important messages. They have no great desire to write to anyone. Their friends live near them. If one of them moves away he is soon forgotten. Thus they cannot realize the importance of accurate correspondence. In the second place, children constantly see misspelling in their own work and that of other children but they do not see that it causes any misunderstanding. The adult is thinking of the one case in a thousand in which a misspelling may cause trouble. The children cannot realize any such remote chance. They just do not have the "fear of being misunderstood."

The fact that a misspelling may bring down ridicule upon the writer is the real reason why adults feel keenly about correct spelling. A few generations ago, spelling was not so formalized. But it seems that during the elementary years most children consider misspelling more of a joke than a social fault. One reason for this may be that most children have not yet become very familiar with the right spellings of words. Consequently the wrong spelling does not look so "wrong" to them as it does to adults. It may just look a little "different," but this difference does not bring up in their minds the strong feelings of repugnance that "wrong" spelling suggests to educated adults.

Another reason may be that the children who themselves misspell do not condemn those about them who misspell. In their state of language immaturity, they are struggling a good part of the time with unaccustomed words, and they are likely to misspell a good many of them.

The motivation by fear of ridicule will not work with children, therefore, until they begin to take the adult point of view that there is something rather inexcusable about misspelling. Some children do this earlier than others. A skillful teacher can cultivate quite early the group disapproval of misspelling, that is, class condemnation of spelling errors made by individual children. Of course,



this should be kept on a polite and friendly basis .

Misspelling is distracting to adult readers , but again not as much so to children , who are not as accustomed to conventional spellings . However , having children write for real purposes and for real people , helps to build the adult fear of being misunderstood , fear of ridicule , and fear of distracting the reader's attention .

Punishments in the form of penalties inflicted for misspellings in the spelling lesson , and grades on papers on all school subjects have been lowered because there were misspelled words . This has only made children care about the "spelling that the teacher might see ." If they are not writing for the teacher they do not care if they make spelling errors because no one is going to "punish you" for them . "This is not caring about spelling but caring about 'being caught!'" Punishment fails to lead to a life attitude of wanting to spell correctly . It often leads to the very common hatred of the subject . "This hatred causes these children to neglect all opportunities to learn spelling outside the regular period , or to learn to spell after spelling periods are no longer imposed upon them ."

There is still a place for punishment but it should not be for merely spelling a word wrong . If the child thinks he knows the word and "knows it" wrong , we seize the opportunity to help him . But if he does not know it and "takes a chance , " or attempts a bluff , he deserves punishment . The punishment

should be for failing to carry out our instructions as to what to do when he comes to a word he does not know how to spell.

Rewards are always more effective than punishment, first, because they stimulate activity instead of tending to suppress it, and second, because they help maintain the happy atmosphere which should prevail throughout the school.<sup>100</sup>

But the poorest spellers who needed encouragement most never earned the once popular medals and stars. The better method, now in vogue, is to reward good progress.

Most spelling books now include individual progress charts so that each child competes against his past record. No one is pushed ahead or held back. The reward should be keeping up one's own record.

Such reward is the best possible one because it is effective at all times in school or out. Rewards do not in themselves give children the attitude of caring about spelling at all times. They may, like punishments, cause pupils to care only about spelling which the teacher sees.<sup>101</sup>

It is the pleasure connected with rewards, which are connected with spelling, that helps produce a caring attitude about spelling. If spelling is a pleasant experience, the children are more apt to try

<sup>100</sup>Edward William Dolch, Better Spelling, (Champaign, Illinois: The Garrard Press, 1942), pp. 57-59.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

harder to spell correctly .

### Adding Interest to Spelling

Playing games is something children always enjoy and spelling games can help to provide a pleasant atmosphere for spelling. It is easy to see whether a word is spelled correctly or not and spelling games move rapidly with few disputes . However , they compare individuals with the class rather than with their own performance . Also , many games do not aid spelling , but merely provide activity and excitement .

Many well-liked teachers secure motivation for spelling through sheer imitation . If they feel that spelling is important , many children think it must be important too . Unfortunately , if teachers are not liked , and show enthusiasm for a particular subject such as spelling children may feel antagonism to spelling . Teachers realize this danger and try to keep the best possible relations with all pupils . Many teachers are reported not to like teaching spelling . These teachers will have to be careful about passing on to children their distaste .

Caring about spelling , as we have discussed it , means a desire to spell correctly but it does not always carry with it the desire to go through the various steps necessary for the learning of spelling .

After the desire for correct spelling is attained, the desire to do the things that result in correct spelling must be developed. Each step must be shown to be necessary through explanation and teacher enthusiasm.

Only important, useful words, whose need can be shown, should be taught. Our learning methods need to be proven to children. Children can be allowed to skip steps or try different methods and see which works best for them. They can be pre-tested on one half of a spelling list and not on the other half and see on which half of the list they do better on the final test.

Programmed learning in spelling is probably appropriate for a variation in practice procedure. The use of the SRA Spelling Laboratory with an increase in instructional time in a seventh grade resulted in some improvement in achievement on the individual level and was equal to conventional instruction achievement for the group. All of the pupils involved were above average.<sup>102</sup>

If the teacher tapes spelling tests, he can evaluate his presentation for clearness, speed, etc. and perfect it. He can even spell the words on the tape recorder for the children to check theirs by.

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<sup>102</sup>Owen Scott, "An Assessment of the Use of the SRA Spelling Laboratory in a Seventh-Grade Class," The Journal of Educational Research, (LIX, September, 1965), pp. 35-36.

It is a listening lesson for them, and might be a new and interesting approach for them. A taped spelling test would be most useful in grouping for spelling. Various groups or individuals could take the test while the teacher worked with others on something else.<sup>103</sup>

Here are some exercises that are fun:

Add an o anywhere in a word to form a new one keeping all the letters in their original order. (The answers are also given here.)

slid	solid	buy	buoy	flat	float
by	boy	but	bout	lot	loot
hard	hoard	ran	roan	cat	coat
hot	hoot	bat	boat	bred	bored
dry	dory	rot	root	bard	board

Make up a bird beginning with each letter in a word, perhaps for a holiday, such as TINSEL, a city, etc.

birds--Thickern  
 cities--Toustaben  
 animals  
 first names  
 ships<sup>104</sup>

Jane Ham likes to pair her sixth grade according to ability and drive. The pairs work on developing sentences or phrases for the words for interest. This activity also involves punctuation and capitalization. The slower children work with the Dolch list of words.

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<sup>103</sup>Dean Pacholl, "Teaching Spelling by Tape," The Instructor, (LXXV, September, 1965), pp. 145 + 171.

<sup>104</sup>Patrick Groff, (ed.), "Visual and Auditory Perception Training and Spelling Achievement," Elementary English, (XXXXII, February, 1965), p. 168.

Records are kept for the month showing success, which is what all children must have under any method. Jane, of course, keeps her pairing off flexible.<sup>105</sup>

Exercises in finding or listing synonyms and antonyms are fun and helpful in the upper grades. "What does tote mean? Could a rocket tote a satellite? Is there more than one meaning for planet?"<sup>106</sup>

Neville Bremer tells us to (1) meet pupil's needs, (2) provide variety, (3) offer challenge. He gives many good suggestions for fun, variety, challenge, and motivation:

1. Have children draw cartoons or illustrations of the origins of interesting words. Exhibit them, perhaps inviting another class to visit the exhibit.
2. Make a list of spelling words that may be spelled correctly in more than one way, such as "center," "centre;" "theater," "theatre." This may be an all-class activity, or it may be done by having individuals or small groups working to devise separate lists, which will later be combined into a master list.
3. Draw up a list of words whose meanings have changed from their original ones. (This activity will necessitate the availability of a dictionary that indicates obsolete meanings.) Words from these lists will be used from time to time for an "Our Changing Language" bulletin board.

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<sup>105</sup>Jane Finley Ham, "Success Story: Individualized Spelling," The Instructor, (LXXV, September, 1965), pp. 145 + 171.

<sup>106</sup>Petty, Op. cit., p. 34.

4. Have children proofread and correct an interesting story written with spelling errors.
5. Focus attention on the possible various spellings of phonemes. Examples:  
 What would cheighqu spell if the ch came from ache, eigh from neighbor, qu from liquor. For fun make up your own phony spelling. Spell correctly the words below in which letters spelling long o are replaced by blanks.  
 The plans for our cookout set in m\_ tion a number of activities. Whi le Mother made the d\_ ugh for the cookies, I used the h\_ \_ to cut the gr\_ th of weeds on the volleyball c\_ rt. . .
6. Write or finish stories from pictures or using certain words.
7. Write riddles about spelling words and code answers in numbers or other letters. Send messages to friends in code.
8. Vary the manner in which attention is focused on the sounds of letters, and forms and meanings of words:  
 See if you can change a scowl to a smile
  - a. Write scowl.
  - b. Drop two letters to make a creature that flies.
  - c. Write the word that tells what kind of animal this flying creature is.
  - d. Drop a letter to make a word of which the past tense is bade.
  - e. Change one letter to make a word that means a small piece.
  - f. Add a letter to make a word that means to cut with the teeth.
  - g. Change one letter to make a word that means a tiny animal sometimes found on plants.
  - h. Change one letter to make a word meaning 5,280 feet.

- i. Add one letter and you have changed scowl to smile.<sup>107</sup>

McKee feels that each pupil should develop a "spelling consciousness." Teaching a pupil how to spell a word correctly seems to be the best way of teaching him to be aware of a misspelling of it. Tidyman suggests developing in pupils the habit of looking up doubtful words and requiring them to score their own papers and grading judgments of spelling as well as the actual spelling. However, being able to recognize a word spelled correctly does not insure ability to recognize that word spelled incorrectly.

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<sup>107</sup>Neville Bremer, "Helping Pupils Toward Self-Motivation in Learning to Spell," Elementary English, (XXXXII, February, 1965), pp. 128--130, 158.



CHAPTER VIII  
SOME COMMON SPELLING ERRORS  
AND THEIR  
PREVENTION AND CORRECTION

Research shows that many elementary school children are retarded in spelling for many reasons--the differences in them and their needs, interests, backgrounds, and learning abilities. "Diagnosis and remedial instruction in spelling are highly important because nearly everyone has difficulty with the spelling of some words."<sup>108</sup> Some pupils need help in appraising the correctness of words written in either social or business correspondence. Remedial instruction based on adequate diagnosis should be of value to each individual even for writing activities in high school and later life. Fitzgerald states the following principles for helping children who have spelling difficulty.

"Diagnosis" concerns the identification of difficulties and the causes of the difficulties that a child encounters in spelling. It precedes

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<sup>108</sup>James A. Fitzgerald, "Spelling. . .Diagnosis and Remediation," \*Readings in the Language Arts, Verna Dieckman Anderson, Paul S. Anderson, Francis Ballantine, and Virgil M. Howes, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), \*Reprinted by permission of author and publisher from The National Elementary Principal, 38, (No. 7, May 1959), Washington, D. C., p. 209.

remedial instruction and continues throughout the remedial program.

"Remediation" entails instruction based upon diagnosis, planned to assist children to overcome their difficulties.<sup>109</sup>

"Prevention" of difficulties is an important concept and should be put into effect as soon as possible by every pupil who has trouble.

Of course the ideal situation would be to have a preventive program which would obviate diagnosis and remediation. However, even if a child requires diagnosis and remedial instruction, the prevention of difficulties should not be neglected. As he learns effective preventive techniques through remedial work, he should put them into practice and make them a permanent part of his spelling procedure.

Motivation and interest are vital to the success of a spelling program, for in order to learn to spell correctly the child must understand the value of spelling in writing and the need for correct spelling in written work. In summary, most causes for poor spelling are as follows: (a) not studying the words needed in writing; (b) studying spelling with an ineffective method of learning; (c) not appraising written work to determine spelling errors; and (d) not correcting spelling and writing mistakes.

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<sup>109</sup>From James A. Fitzgerald, "The Teaching of Spelling" (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 191-192. in James A. Fitzgerald, "Spelling...Diagnosis and Remediation," \*Readings in the Language Arts, Verna Dieckman Anderson, Paul S. Anderson, Francis Ballantine, and Virgil M. Howes, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), \*Reprinted by permission of author and publisher from The National Elementary Principal, 38 (No. 7, May 1959), Washington, D. C., p. 210.

Davis listed the most frequent causes of spelling difficulty as follows: (1) lack of a systematic method in learning to spell, (2) poor writing, (3) faulty pronunciation (4) poor attitude toward spelling, (5) failure to associate the sounds of letters with the spelling of words, (6) not enough time for study, (7) discouragement concerning poor records in tests, (8) speech defects, (9) faulty checking of papers, (10) transposition of letters, (11) copying words incorrectly when studying, (12) poor memory, (13) poor hearing, (14) excessive slowness in writing (15) irregular attendance, and (16) poor vision. 110

If the cause or causes for poor work can be determined, they can usually be eliminated by careful remedial work. For instance, games, interest, motivation, impressions of the importance of self discipline in studying and learning correct spelling will not help the naturally poor speller, who over the years may have come to regard spelling simply as an overwhelming, irksome task. He still does not know any way of learning unfamiliar words.

The whole group should not work on what only a few need. This will cause boredom and will be a waste of effort. Each child will have his own difficulties to work on. Slow children learn few words incidentally and forget many that they have studied. They need direct instruction, Children need a good method of attack.

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<sup>110</sup>From Georgia Davis, "Remedial Work in Spelling," Elementary school Journal, 27: 615-26 (April, 1957), in J. A. Fitzgerald, "Spelling. . .Diagnosis and Remediation," \*Readings in the Language Arts, Verna Dieckman Anderson, Paul S. Anderson, Francis Ballantine, and Virgil M. Howes, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), \*Reprinted by permission of author and publisher from The National Elementary Principal, 38, (No. 7, May 1959), Washington, D. C.

The teacher can ask individuals with spelling difficulties their method of study and help them to improve it, if it is ineffective. He should help children to visualize words as wholes, not letter by letter. Some children need special help with sound to letter relationships. Phonics, syllabification, and any other reading skills that may help should be used. The teacher should try to help children to face their difficulties, finish their jobs, pay attention to details, have good attitudes about school and spelling and see progress. Also, success in spelling through sympathetic teacher assistance may help to remove these unfavorable influences. Children with low IQ's are usually poor spellers, but those of average and above intelligence can be poor spellers too. The teacher should help slow children to become aware of and to understand all those skills which the superior spellers are using implicitly. He should not discourage children by expecting more than their disabilities will permit but at the same time he should work patiently to remove disabilities that handicap spelling progress. It is a slow process to remove some disabilities such as those in reading.

If some of the better students know most of the words on the list, they may be given a supplementary list of words for

study. Vocabulary work can be provided for those who master the supplementary list quickly too.

The superior students require less attention no matter what activities they are involved in. Then the teacher can give most of his attention to his slower pupils, trying to develop in them the understandings and skills necessary for the attainment of spelling competence.

The whole child should be considered in diagnosing spelling difficulties: physical qualities, mental abilities, educational progress, home background, attitudes, etc. Mental tests, achievement tests, and teacher-made tests all have their place in diagnosis of difficulties.

A teacher should appraise the teaching-learning situation. To determine the causes of spelling difficulty, the teacher may check the answers to the following questions.

1. Are you enthusiastic about teaching spelling?
2. Have you evaluated the materials you use for spelling? Are they satisfactory?
3. Do the children understand the importance of learning to spell?
4. Do your procedures invite and motivate learning?
5. Can children see and hear the words they study?
6. Are the words pronounced correctly by teacher and children?
7. Do the children write legibly?

8. Do the children correctly associate sounds with symbols and symbols with sounds?
9. Is sufficient time allotted for the study of spelling?
10. Is the study time properly used? Does each child study the words he needs to learn?
11. Are tests properly administered? Are children attentive? Do they have time to write the words of the tests?
12. Are the pre-tests, final tests, and review tests properly corrected?
13. Does each child understand that he should study the words misspelled in each test?
14. Does each child use an effective method of learning to spell words he missed in the tests?
15. Do children understand the meaning of the words they study?
16. Do children use in writing the words they learn to spell?
17. Do the children misspell words in written work that they spell correctly on the spelling tests?
18. Does each child correct the spelling mistakes in his own work?
19. Is each child improving in spelling and in writing?
20. Does each child keep a record of achievement and improvement, perhaps on a progress chart?
21. Does each child keep a list of hard words?
22. Does each child keep a record of new and interesting words?<sup>111</sup>

An analysis of each child's written work, pre-tests, final tests, and review tests will aid in determining the types of mistakes made. Some children may transpose letters, some may spell all

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<sup>111</sup>Fitzgerald, *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

words phonetically, some may just spell words in a careless fashion, and some may misspell words in many ways. It is very important in remedial work to understand the types of misspellings. The child's behavior while he is taking the spelling test or doing other writing can also be observed. "A child with a good attitude who makes mistakes in spite of that attitude has problems quite different from those of the child with a 'don't care' attitude."<sup>112</sup>

The interview, the case study, and the cumulative record folder are valuable techniques to be employed in severe cases of retardation. A simple cumulative record of assignments, work, success and failure, progress, achievement, and changes in attitudes and interests is extremely useful in making advanced assignments and in guiding the child to improved achievement in any case.

Of course, remedial instruction must be geared to each individual. The principal objective of spelling for the child with difficulties, whether he is a slow-learner or one with other types of difficulties, is to learn how to spell correctly the words he needs when he needs them in expressing his thoughts in writing.

Each should learn to use correctly the words he needs, to understand various meanings of words, to build a strong desire to spell without

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

error, and to achieve also a consciousness of the correctness or incorrectness of the spellings of words he has used. Finally, a child should develop a method for studying spelling under his own guidance and momentum. <sup>113</sup>

A combination of a scientifically selected spelling vocabulary and a list of words especially necessary for each child's own work should be used. Dull children, who will probably master only 500 words, should be taught those words they will use as children and as adults also. "These words will be found principally in a well-selected spelling list."

The words which a child uses in his everyday spontaneous writing are words which he should study if he is misspelling them. It should be emphasized that a child should study the words that he needs and cannot spell. He should not waste time either on words he already knows how to spell or on words he cannot spell and will never use. <sup>114</sup>

Although children learn to spell in different ways, there are principles of learning to spell which should be followed by every child in his own way. These are:

1. Guide each child to approach the spelling of a word through use and understanding.
2. Guide the child to follow necessary active steps in learning to spell a word. Each should: a) develop a clear image of the word; b) recall the spelling of the word;

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.



c) write the word, if possible, from memory; d) check the correctness of each spelling; e) master the spelling of each word. (This method is like other methods except that there are no hearing, listening, or pronouncing steps.)

3. Each child should use the word in writing and check its correctness.

Some children write words correctly in spelling tests but misspell them in their written work. These children should be guided to proofread their work and to correct their spelling mistakes. The spelling of a word is mastered only when it has been used meaningfully and written correctly in various situations which call for its writing.<sup>115</sup>

Some children master the spelling of a word in one writing, while others require two or more. They should write each time from memory and check for correctness of spelling. Copying words is likely to be done automatically with no learning taking place. Children should never have to write words as punishment for misspelling them.

Valid testing must be a part of the spelling program for efficiency in learning. The most valuable phase of testing is the test correction for and by each individual followed by individual study of the words he misspelled.

Dictionary use is very important for later life. Children should be taught how to find a word in the dictionary quickly, and

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

how to find a word when only a few or no letters are known. They should be taught to appraise the meanings of synonyms, to determine the preferred spelling, to determine the correct pronunciation, and to differentiate among the various uses of words.

Spelling, along with listening, speaking, reading, and writing helps to comprise the language arts. In learning to spell a word, the child will listen to the pronunciation of the word, pronounce it, read it, use it in written work, and use handwriting in forming the word on paper.

A knowledge of the types of errors children are most likely to make when spelling a word is useful in helping to prevent such mistakes. According to recent research, spelling errors can be classified as to type at each level. Daily diagnosis is essential in correcting these errors.

"The rank order of the five major types of errors which occur at 'all' levels is:"

1. Substitution of letters.
2. Omission of letters.
3. Additional or insertion of letters
4. Transposition of letters in words
5. Spelling the wrong word.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>David H. Patton, "How to Correct Spelling Errors," \*Readings in the Language Arts, Verna Dieckman Anderson, Paul S. Anderson, Francis Ballantine, and Virgil M. Howes, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), \*Reprinted by permission of the publisher from Education Today, Bulletin No. 54, (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc.), p. 216.

Other types of spelling errors are: doubling or non-doubling of letters, homonyms, lack of phonetic sensitivity, poor writing, and carelessness. Patton says that most spelling errors occur in "vowels in mid-syllables of words. Two-thirds of the errors are in 'substitution or omission of letters.' Approximately 20% more of the errors are in 'addition, insertion, or transposition of letters.'"<sup>117</sup>

Errors that occur most commonly in beginning spelling levels are:

1. Use of wrong letters for vowel sounds
2. Mispronunciations
3. Lack of knowledge of phonetic elements that make a particular sound
4. Confusion of words similar in sound
5. Inaccurate formation of derivatives
6. Omitting or inserting silent letters
7. Homonyms
8. Transposition of letters.<sup>118</sup>

David H. Patton's article, "How to Correct Spelling Errors," which may be found in Education Today, or Readings in the Language Arts, contains a table of typical errors, causes, and suggested corrective procedures. The table should help teachers to overcome persistent types of spelling errors. Examples eleven and sixteen taken from Patton's table are given below:

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

11. Confusion of words That Are Similar in Sound	"An" for "And" "were" for "where" "merry" for "marry" "effect" for "affect" "cents" for "sense" "further" for "farther"	1. This error is due often to faulty auditory acuity. Care should be given to enunciation of these words. 2. Pronounce the words in pairs and give the meaning of each.
16. Careless- ness	Errors due to poor concentration and careless habits of word study.	1. Stimulate pride in work well done. 2. Praise all improvement. <sup>119</sup>

Other types of spelling errors are:

1. Being careless or uninformed about homonyms, as "its" for "it's"
2. Not using the apostrophe correctly, as "the Browns dog" for "the Brown's dog"
3. Not forming plurals correctly, as "citys" for "cities"
4. Not using "i" and "e" in the right combination, as "recieve" for "receive"
5. Not remembering the spelling of words with especially difficult letter combinations, as "nabors" for "neighbors"

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., pp. 218-219.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Spelling could occupy more of the school day in the days of memorizing long lists of spelling words. The modern school has much broader educational goals and more complex problems. Spelling bees are no longer the frequent reason for community get-togethers, but good spelling is still considered one of the social graces.

"The aim of spelling instruction today is to prepare boys and girls to spell correctly the words that they need in the course of their daily writing."<sup>119</sup> Pupils who can progress normally should learn to spell the most commonly used words automatically and to apply to other words the common rules that usually hold true in spelling. They should learn to use the dictionary for spelling, definitions of homonyms, syllabication, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. They need to develop a pattern for learning to spell difficult words. Seemingly, the direct attention given a word in looking it up improves spelling. They should become responsible for looking up words they are unsure of and for proofreading their written work carefully.

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<sup>119</sup>Dawson and Zollinger, Op. Cit., p. 418.

Dolch says that children should check their guesses for words they are not sure how to spell so that they do not write them wrong and see them spelled wrong and possibly learn them wrong. Also, if they will take the time to get the correct spelling when the need arises, they will know it for the next time. He believes that most spelling errors are due to wrong knowledge, guessing, and carelessness.

Spelling becomes important to children when they need it to write something they feel is important to write. In order to have important things to write about, they need rich firsthand learning experiences in the curriculum, reading, and listening.

Reading and spelling often advance together, although there are exceptions.

The help in phonics and structural analysis presented in modern reading programs seems to assist children in spelling; for, though a large percentage of English words are not wholly phonetic, many are completely phonetic or have parts, at least, that are phonetic.<sup>120</sup>

A broad reading program also introduces children to a large vocabulary and extends word meanings for them; "and spelling accuracy increases with the understanding of the meaning of words."<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., pp. 409-410.

Spelling is helped incidentally in classes where oral communication stimulates care in pronunciation, discriminative listening to sounds, and precision in enunciation. Improvement in handwriting can benefit spelling, and syllabication of words, use of the apostrophe, etc., in writing relate to spelling.

But the most important factor in spelling is that children feel that their writing is worthwhile and that someone besides the teacher is going to read at least some of it. If letters are written, they should be written for a real purpose and mailed to real people. If stories are written, they should be read by someone either in the class or outside. The child must be allowed to express his thoughts in his own creative way. Then something is written which he feels is worth caring about and checking for correct spelling.

Spelling is rather informal in first and possibly second grade. It is taught through other subjects too, especially reading. If interest is high, learning will transfer somewhat. Children need readiness for spelling just as for anything else. This includes vocabulary, reading, letter discrimination (visual and auditory), alphabetizing, etc. Good health, hearing, muscular control to write, and other physical, social, emotional, and mental traits are also needed.

In summary then, there is no one correct practice to be used in the teaching of spelling. No one method has been found to teach everyone to spell correctly. But this wide disagreement as to the proper technique for teaching spelling, even as to what words to teach, makes it possible for every teacher to be free to choose and to suit a method to himself and to each of his pupils.

In general though, the use of the basic lists of Dolch, Thorndike, Betts, and others, perhaps drawing from several together, is accepted today. Most schools use spelling workbooks and some use spelling books. A few compile their own spelling vocabularies. But they almost all base their lists on the studies of these men. Research still needs to be done on grading these lists.

The teacher should teach those words that the children in his class use and need or will use and need. He should also supplement these lists with words that are needed but are not included in the lists. He may want to add special words needed by his class in its particular locality and special subject area words. Each child should definitely keep a list of the words that he needs to learn to spell correctly. Most experts recommend teaching 3,000 or 4,000 words in the elementary school.

Seventy-five minutes per week seems to be the most popular time allotment for the teaching of spelling. Prolonged study at a



sitting does not facilitate learning in any area, spelling included.

The test-study method of teaching spelling seems to be advocated by most recent research and college textbooks for teachers. With this method, each child can study only the words that he does not know how to spell. Most recommended children's methods of study are something like this:

1. Look at the word.
2. Say the word.
3. Visualize the word and check it.
4. Write the word and check it.
5. Repeat these steps until you know the word.

Phonics and structural analysis aid spelling somewhat, especially as learned incidentally from reading, as long as the children realize their limitations and learn to make educated guesses and to use the dictionary for words of which they are unsure. Letter by letter spelling is reprovved nowadays. Syllabication is helpful to spelling if used within reason. That is, if it is used with only those words to which it is readily applicable.

Games and other devices can be used to add interest to spelling. Carefully formulated objectives and frequent evaluation are essential to a successful spelling program. Children will respond much better if they understand the purposes for assignments and tests and if these are put to use and come to have real value and meaning for them.

The teacher must constantly strive to develop in children a caring attitude about correct spelling; for, surely no one will deny the importance of spelling. It is essential to writing, one of our major means of communication. One must be able to spell in order to write and in order for his writing to be understood when it is read. A high premium is placed on correct spelling in our society. But these reasons for accurate spelling are distant to a child. Seemingly the best way the teacher can help the child to want to spell correctly is by providing him with as many real spelling situations as possible. Examples of such opportunities have been mentioned before.

There is much room for further study. Continual studies of available research on spelling practices and experiments in classrooms must be carried on by teachers and writers of spelling books in an effort to develop better methods for teaching the difficult spelling of the words in our English language. Perhaps some completely new methods can be discovered that will out-date all of our old spelling principles and practices.

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