Chapter 1

Next Generation Word Study

Time for *Next Generation* Word Study

Since the first edition of *Word Sorts and More* (Ganske, 2006), my thinking about the traits of effective word study instruction has deepened (Ganske & Jocius, 2013) and given rise to ideas to help teachers maximize the potential of the small-group interaction time, including how to mine its opportunities to advance children's vocabulary knowledge. We know that proficient readers can read and spell words almost effortlessly, aided by their knowledge of the sound, pattern, and meaning relationships of our English spelling system (Carlisle, 2010; Ehri, 2000; Graham, 2013; Graham & Hebert, 2010; Moats, 2005/2006; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). We also know that vocabulary knowledge is critical for success in reading, school, and college readiness (e.g., National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; and National Reading Panel, 2000). Academic vocabulary, the sophisticated vocabulary of schools and school tests, is key to this success.

Students need to know this type of vocabulary in order to access the content of disciplinary texts (e.g., Nagy & Townsend, 2012). While academic vocabulary plays a key role in students' success, vocabulary knowledge, in general, is important for students' comprehension and continued growth as readers. The more words students know, the easier it is to comprehend texts, and the stronger students' comprehension, the easier it is to acquire new words (e.g., Nagy, 2005; Stanovich, 1986). And there is an added benefit: Students who are good at comprehending not only learn the meanings of more words, they also learn the words better and they gain understandings about their sounds and spellings (Perfetti, 2007). In turn, their strong phonic, graphic, semantic, and syntactic representations for the words make it easier for them to retrieve the words (Perfetti & Hart, 2002). Unfortunately, not all children experience the kind of success cycle just described. Children from lower socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds and English learners often face a barrier to their learning: limited academic vocabulary knowledge (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Graves, August, & Mancilla-Martinez, 2012).

We can conclude from multiple studies with primary-grade children that at least part of the problem is a lack of vocabulary instruction, along with ineffective instruction and lack of curricular supports. For example, two different studies reported that during the typical language arts block of

2 hours, less than 5% of the time was devoted to vocabulary instruction (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009; Spear-Swerling & Zibulsky, 2014). These results held true for a 3-year longitudinal study with low-income schools, where some 300 observations of K–3 teachers' actual practices of teaching vocabulary revealed minimal time spent on vocabulary instruction (Nelson, Dole, Hosp, & Hosp, 2015). Other recent studies confirm that primary-grade teachers seldom address vocabulary (Wright & Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, when teachers do attend to vocabulary, the instruction is rarely effective, especially for those who most need it—low SES children (Carlisle, Kelcey, & Berebitsky, 2013; Wright & Neuman, 2014). To make matters worse, teachers' core reading curricula are unlikely to include supports for teaching vocabulary (Wright & Neuman, 2013).

Clearly, the status quo of primary-grade vocabulary instruction needs to change. The time has come for *next generation* word study. Vocabulary learning needs to be integrated into instruction throughout the day, including during word study. This approach affords greater opportunities for students to learn words and enables more robust word study instruction. Word study is an ideal time to combine instruction in word reading and word understanding, for though neither instruction in vocabulary nor ability to read words guarantees a child's reading success, a lack of either promises reading failure (Biemiller, 2005, p. 223).

Toward More Robust Word Study Instruction

My reflections about the missed opportunities in word study instruction and the need for greater attention to vocabulary development, cognitive engagement, and student talk led me to develop SAIL—*survey, analyze, interpret, link*—an instructional framework for small-group word study instruction. Teachers are extremely busy, and time can be a precious commodity in the classroom. Considering these factors, an aim of SAIL is to raise teachers' consciousness of opportunities during word study to develop not only students' orthographic knowledge but also their understanding of vocabulary (everyday words and academic vocabulary), and to do so through cognitive engagement, discussion, and motivation, as well as explicit teaching (Ganske, 2016). In other words, the intent behind SAIL is to maximize the potential of small-group interactions. I provide a short introduction to the SAIL framework in the section beginning on page 8.

Improving Word Study with English Learners

In light of the changing demographics of schools and the growing percentages of English learners (ELs), consideration of ELs during word study is critically important. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, there were an estimated 4.5 million ELs in 2013–2014, compared to 4.2 million a decade earlier (*https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=96*). This information, combined with results from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing (*www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#reading/state?grade=4*), begins to paint a troubling picture. NAEP results indicate no significant advances in the average reading scores for fourth and eighth grades from 2013 to 2015 in 31 states. Furthermore, while 31% of fourth graders in general performed below *Basic* level, the percentages for Blacks and Hispanics were considerably greater, 48% and 45%, respectively. Additionally, the overall *Proficient* level percentages ranged from 23% to 50% at grade 4 and from 19% to 47% at grade 8, with the lowest percentages achieved by Blacks and Hispanics. These are dismal findings. Results for the most recent writing assessment (2011, *https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2011/2012470.pdf*) are no better: Just 23% of the students in grade 8 achieved the *Proficient* level (fourth graders did not complete the assessment). The computer-based assessment will be given to students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in 2021. Responding to these challenges, this edition contains expanded content on the language and vocabulary development of ELs, including new perspectives from teachers and researchers.

But first, let's begin at the beginning, with a question: *What is word study?*

The Context: What Is Word Study?

In the first edition of *Word Sorts and More*, I described my view of *word study* through the lens of an acronym, THAT'S Word Study, and summarized its essential traits as follows:

T = Thinking
H = Humor
A = Appropriate instruction
T = Talk
S = Systematic approach and some sorting

These elements continue to be essential to my conceptualization of word study. The relevance of each of the key concepts is explained next.

Thinking

Although memory plays a role in learning to read and write, effective word study instruction does not equal rote memorization. Schoolchildren encounter an estimated 90,000 different words in grades 3–9! To be able to know and use more than a tiny fraction of these words, they will need to generalize their understandings of the sound, pattern, and meaning relationships of the English language across words so that word learning becomes efficient. This type of learning requires students' active involvement and thinking, each of which seems to fuel the other. Children tend to enjoy inquiry, the act of asking questions or seeking information, and even first graders can be "theory builders and hypothesis testers" (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004, p. 1463) of how words work.

Planning activities that require students to carefully consider and conjecture about the ways words are alike and different also promotes student motivation. This planning has to build on reflection about what the task entails, but it should also consider the question: *Is real thinking involved, or is the task one that students can complete with very little thought?* Let's consider two scenarios.

Scenario 1: Teacher A asks students to sort a set of word cards into two categories, short a and long a. Students can complete the task with very little thinking. They merely need to be able to separate visually the words that end in *e* from those that do not. The task does not oblige the students to connect the vowel sounds to their corresponding patterns. This reliance on the visual to the exclusion of sound can lead to transfer problems. For instance, when students must determine the spelling of a word during writing, they have access only to sounds, not visual information. Unfortunately, because the categorization task just described did not encourage the association of the sounds with their patterns, spelling the words may be difficult, or even impossible.

Scenario 2: Teacher B, by contrast, asks students to work with the same set of words, but plans the activity with attention to thinking. To foster cognitive engagement, she does one or more of the following:

- She uses pictures, rather than words, to introduce the distinction between long and short *a*. Then, to support a linking of the patterns and sounds, she asks students to pair words with their pictures.
- She incorporates blind sorting (described later in the section "Practice Sorts") into the practice routine to ensure that students consider sound without the aid of visual cues to think about how the words are spelled.
- She includes an *oddball* or two, namely, words that have the same pattern *or* sound as a category,

but not both. The word *have* is an example of this for the long and short *a* sort discussed. It has a short *a* sound but a long *a* vowel pattern.

Adding words such as *have* as oddballs also reinforces high-frequency words, because many of the most commonly used words sound different from what their patterns suggest (*come, done, was, give, love*, etc.). The reinforcement is especially valuable because 100 high-frequency words make up approximately 50% of all writing. Another reason to include oddballs in a sort is as an information source for teachers: Misplacement of these words alerts teachers to students who are operating on "automatic pilot" and simply placing words by how they look, rather than also by how they sound.

Humor

Word play, word games, and other means for fostering appreciation of language provide teachers with an opportunity to integrate humor with word-learning instruction. Instruction needs to be deliberate and purposeful, but a gamelike quality can make the learning fun and enhance students' performance (Bell, 2009; Coles, 1998; Krashen, 1994). Research on the traits of most effective teachers shows that the use of humor is one of their common characteristics (Block & Mangieri, 2003; McDermott & Rothenberg, 1999). In his work with second-language learners, Stephen Cary (2000) talks about the merits of what he calls the *Ha-Ha factor* for defusing learners' concerns and building their confidence and risk taking. This same view applies to struggling readers and writers (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003). We can easily find analogous situations in our own lives. For example, imagine your principal or supervisor suddenly summons you to a meeting. Your anxiety and sense of distraction mount as you sit down. Then, equally suddenly, your superior opens up the conversation with a joke or a short tale. Tension is released and your concentration is restored.

Appropriate Instruction

Observant teachers know that students differ in their understandings of literacy. Developmental, cultural, and linguistic factors, among others, can contribute to these differences. Because word study is not a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction, teachers must strive to understand their students as learners and provide instruction that matches what students are ready to learn. In other words, instruction must focus on students' *zones of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978). For word learning, observation and informal assessments, such as the Developmental Spelling Analysis (DSA) included in *Word Journeys* (Ganske, 2014) or the No-Nonsense Word Recognition Assessment included in Appendix A of this volume, can be very beneficial. Such tools enable teachers to know which students are at which stage of spelling development and to identify the word features children already understand and are ready to learn, versus those that are, yet, too challenging. These understandings make it possible to design developmentally appropriate instruction for the students. Without this, many children may not acquire the necessary foundation on which to build the kind of increasingly complex understandings that our English spelling system requires. Orthographic knowledge advances from one-to-one correspondences of letter–sound associations to increasingly more abstract pattern–sound relationships to, eventually, very complex interactions that involve sounds, patterns, and meanings. The sorting activities in this second edition primarily target students who are learning to distinguish among units of sound and those who are ready to relate sounds to basic, as well as more complicated, patterns. Categorizations that address meaning-related issues (past-tense endings, plurals, and compound words) are limited in this book. These higher-level concerns are part of *Mindful of Words* (Ganske, 2008), a text that addresses upper-level word study.

Talk

Making a conscious effort to integrate talk into word study through small-group and partner deliberations, collaborative learning opportunities, one-to-one teacher–student "discovery discussions" (Block & Mangieri, 2003, p. 86), and accountable talk (Michaels, O'Connor, & Resnick, 2008) can yield double benefits. First, students are able to interact with others and learn from them, and the interaction can increase motivation for an activity. Second, whether they are listeners or participants, teachers are afforded opportunities to better know students as learners: how they approach word learning tasks, what misunderstandings may be getting in the way of their learning, and which direction instruction needs to take next. The insights gained can be surprising. For example, discussion of a particular word may reveal that students are misconstruing its meaning, perhaps even confusing it with a word that has a similar pronunciation, such as *wait* for *wade, torn* for *thorn*, or one of my favorites—*once upon a time* for *pond*. The oddball category mentioned earlier opens the possibility for talk related to dialect differences, as, for example, the talk that follows a child's placement of *then*, pronounced as *than*, in the oddball category, rather than with the short *e* words. Anecdotal notes are an excellent means for recording the understandings the students acquire through talk.

Systematic Approach and Some Sorting

Systematic is another word we often interpret in various ways. Here, I use the word to mean *preplanned, purposeful*, and that which *builds on what students already know*, and not to "lockstep." For example, **just because I have included a certain number of sorts for teaching a particular feature does not mean that all the sorts must be used when the feature is taught.** Informal assessment data help teachers make decisions as to how many sorts students need. A dictated inventory, coupled with observations of student's classroom performance, can yield much useful information for this process. Furthermore, prior to choosing or rejecting a particular sort, teachers need to ask themselves: *Do the children need this sort? Are they ready for this sort?* Also, note that although the sorts and sequences used in this book correspond to those laid out in the classroom-tested framework charts of *Word Journeys: Assessment-Guided Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary Instruction*, second edition (Ganske, 2014), the sorts can stand alone as a supplement or be used with other resources.

Systematic is one part of the *S* in *THAT'S Word Study*; the other is *sorting*. Let's also think about why sorting forms the basis for so many of the book's activities. Categorizing is one of our most basic cognitive abilities, one that we use to develop concepts. To categorize we have to compare and contrast and make judgments based on the evidence. It is how we think (Bruner, Goodnow & Austin, 1962). We classify plants, animals, rocks, parts of speech, food groups, and so forth. To help us determine category membership we must analyze and synthesize information. This requires us to identify characteristics that distinguish one category from another—*mammals* have hair, give birth, nurse their young, and are warm-blooded. We also note what it means to *not* be a mammal and use the information to draw some conclusions: Birds have feathers rather than hair, so birds are not mammals.

That we take the matter of categorization seriously can be seen in the way we also classify types of drivers' licenses, varieties of milk, difficulty levels of texts and ski slopes, types of laundry, fasteners such as nails and screws, dishes and utensils (even to the point of separating one type of knife or spoon from another), and the list goes on. So what else accounts for our fixation with sorting? Through categorization we not only develop concepts, but we also organize the world around us. By arranging aspects of our everyday lives, we make retrieval of information and materials easier and, thus, more efficient. In a similar way, by categorizing words, students are able to be more effective in their word learning. English is a complex language, with borrowings from many other languages. When students compare and contrast word features, they notice similarities and differences within and across

categories that help them, with teacher guidance, to form generalizations about how the words work. These generalizations lend efficiency to word learning by enabling children to apply what they have discovered to the reading and writing of many other words.

SAIL

The following section includes a brief discussion of why vocabulary development is so critical and a lengthier description of how to integrate the teaching of academic vocabulary while also deepening students' knowledge of everyday words used in the sorts. As previously mentioned, I developed the SAIL (*survey, analyze, interpret, link*) framework to help maximize the potential of small-group word study instruction. Note that the use of SAIL presumes that teachers have assessed children's orthographic knowledge with a dictated word inventory, such as the DSA (Ganske, 1999, 2014) or similar measure, in order to identify how well students can spell correctly entire words and specific orthographic features. Children's spellings are the windows through which we look to gain an understanding of their orthographic knowledge, but the knowledge we gain has relevance for their reading as well as their writing of words. Once teachers have this information about their students, they use it to group them for weekly, focused small-group instruction.

To evaluate students' ability to both decode and encode words and features, teachers occasionally may want to use the No-Nonsense Word Recognition Assessment (see Appendix A), an informal measure I devised. It uses non-words to ensure that children must decode the words. However, unlike other non-word assessments that are often criticized because children seek to make meaning with the words, each of the non-words is a real syllable or letter sequence from a longer word, such as *cam* (*camera*), and these address the same features as those on the DSA. Once teachers understand the strengths and lmitations of children's orthographic knowledge, instruction can begin.

As noted earlier, SAIL promotes development of both academic vocabulary and everyday words. Teachers usually conduct instruction of academic vocabulary in a whole-class setting prior to the small-group interactions, but use, and encourage students to use, the vocabulary during the small-group time, as well as during other parts of the day. They teach everyday vocabulary specific to the sorts during the small-group instruction. SAIL extends the notion of a *guided word walk* approach, which is included in the first edition and disussed later in the section on teaching activities, by providing a structure that guides teachers to use time more effectively during the small-group word introduction and to be intentional in the lesson about teaching sort vocabulary and applying academic vocabulary.

Academic Vocabulary Instruction

Typically, teachers choose one to two academic vocabulary words to teach each week. These are general academic vocabulary words, such as *survey, analyze, interpret, link, insights, categories, features, appropriate, accurate, evidence*, and *justify*. They are not domain-specific vocabulary words, such as *rectangle, habitat*, and *noun* (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). When selecting general academic vocabulary words, choose words that have high utility during the word study talk, as well as for other content areas and at other times of the day. This ensures many opportunities for teachers and students to use the words. Two useful sources for identifying words are Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List, which is easily found online (search for "Coxhead Academic Word List") and Elfrieda Hiebert's word list, available at *textproject.org.* Once words are introduced, teachers use and encourage students to use the words. Let's take a look at a first-grade teacher, Ms. Phasio, as she introduces academic vocabulary words across a span of time. About 50% of her class are ELs. The three words she introduces in different lessons are *accurate, appropriate*, and *confer.* As you read the transcripts that follow, see whether

you can identify other words that she has taught and is integrating into the lesson. Also, consider the type of talk, thinking, and vocabulary that students are using.

Introduction of *Accurate*

MS. PHASIO: When something is *accurate*, it is free of errors, mistakes. What do you think I mean by that? *Accurate*. Turn and talk with your buddies around you.

STUDENTS TALK: [Some of their conversation is inaudible.] That means it's right . . . If it's right it's accurate . . . I think *accurate* means that you accidentally make a mistake . . . If somebody says it's not accurate, that means it's not right . . . You make a mistake with a phone, and you can't erase it . . .

MS. P: Okay. Let's come back to the center. So, what are our ideas about the word *accurate*? I heard making mistakes, something about friends and being kind to friends. I heard all these great ideas about what we think *accurate* means, what we think being free of errors means. So let's talk it out a little bit. Kelsey, what are you thinking?

KELSEY: I think *accurate* means like free to make a mistake.

MS. P: Free to make a mistake? Say a little more about that.

KELSEY: I did something and accidentally made a mistake. Like, if it's a marker and I accidentally called it a pen.

MS. P: So it's okay to make that little mistake. Using your example, if I said, "You know what, Kelsey, be more accurate. What is this? Is it a marker or a pen?"

KELSEY: A marker.

MS. P: Okay, thinking about that, Class, what do we think that *accurate* means? Okay, Kelsey, be more *accurate*. It's not a pen; it's a marker. Tell us more about that, Justin.

JUSTIN: I think what *accurate* means is if someone makes a mistake, it's not right. Like if you don't get it right, you would say that it's not accurate.

MS. P: Kind of like what Kelsey was saying. If you don't get it right, it's not accurate. Okay. (*To the class*) Say more. We're on the right track.

REID: If the answer is right. If someone said, "How do you spell *because*?" And I said, "B-e-c-a-u-s-e," that would be accurate.

MS. P: We're getting it. That was really good. Who can repeat what Reid was saying to us? Go for it, Izzy.

IZZY: If he's trying to spell, and he says, "b-e-c-a-u-s-e," that was accurate.

MS. P: What if I said, "The accurate way to spell *cat* is c-o-t."

STUDENTS: (*Rejecting the answer*) Not c-o-t! Cat!

MS. P: Why do you disagree? Evie?

EVIE: Because *cat* should be c-a-t.

MS. P: So was I accurate? Justin, say more.

JUSTIN: You're not accurate because c-o-t would be *cot*.

MS. P: I was *not* accurate. Say that again.

TOGETHER: I was not accurate.

JUSTIN: It's *cat*, not *cot*.

MS. P: What is the accurate spelling of *cat*?

JUSTIN: C-a-t.

MS. P: What is the accurate way of spelling *cat*, Ariana?

ARIANA: C-a-t.

MS. P: What is the accurate way of spelling *bat*, Evie.

EVIE: B-a-t.

MS. P: What if I said to you: 2 + 3 = 6?

GRAYSON: That is not accurate.

MS. P: Say more, Grayson.

GRAYSON: That is not accurate because I think *accurate* means right, and you were not right, because 2 + 3 = 5, because the hundreds chart shows it.

MS. P: You want to go prove it on the hundreds chart? Let's look for evidence? He's going to go show us some evidence. (*Grayson goes to hundreds chart*)

GRAYSON: (*Pointing to numbers on the chart*) 1, 2, 3.

MS. P: Could you justify your answer a little bit more? So explain your idea. Justify it a little bit more.

GRAYSON: So I'm at 2 and I jump 3 more and I landed on 5.

MS. P: So what should the equation be, Grayson?

GRAYSON: 2 + 3 = 5.

MS. P: (*To the class*) Is Grayson accurate?

STUDENTS: Yes. [One student qualifies.] Not all the time.

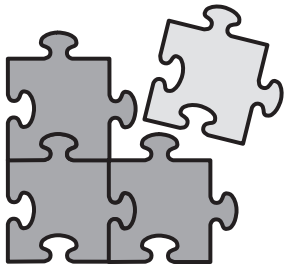
MS. P: No, just now. We're never accurate all the time, any of us. We all make mistakes. But was Grayson accurate right now?

STUDENTS: Yes.

MS. P: I noticed that Grayson didn't just say 2 + 3 = 5. He actually proved it. He found evidence, and he justified his answer. So today and every day when you're doing word study I'm going to ask you to be accurate. I'm going to ask you to find evidence about which word should be in which category. I'm going to ask you to justify your answers. [Lesson ends.]

Introduction of *Appropriate*

Did you notice Ms. Phasio's reinforcement of the general academic vocabulary words *evidence* and *justify*, and the domain-specific word *equation* in the preceding academic word introduction? Here is another example, in Ms. Phasio's class, with *appropriate*, a word taught the following week and designated by this graphic:



MS. P: So what are we noticing here, friends, on the board? Go for it, Reid.

REID: I see that there is a puzzle piece right there (*points to the graphic projected on the smartboard*), and I guess it's trying to find its place.

MS. P: It's trying to find its place on the board. What else are you all noticing?

ABBY: You have to look really close, but there are black lines that have other puzzle pieces.

MS. P: Say more about that, Abby.

ABBY: Next to the light gray puzzle piece that we can see, there are other puzzle pieces.

MS. P: That sounds a little bit like what Reid was saying. (*Children talk.*) What did you want to say, Evie?

EVIE: I think this [the green piece] is going to fit there (*points to location*) because it's matching its spot.

MS. P: We're on to something now. What do you mean by "it's matching its spot?"

STEVEN: (*Interjects*) I think that that piece will fit right . . . there (*points to place*).

MS. P: Fit right there. If we could move this piece [the green piece], it would just . . .

STEVEN: Fit right there.

MS. P: Would it fit right there? Would it be appropriate there?

STEVEN: Yes.

GRAYSON: Yes, because they are all the same puzzle pieces; they all look the same.

JUSTIN: I disagree. I disagree.

MS. P: Why do you disagree, Justin?

JUSTIN: I disagree with Grayson because (*points out differences*).

GRAYSON: Oooh! Now I see.

MS. P: It kind of looks like there are four puzzle pieces of the same shape, doesn't it? Is that how puzzles usually are?

STUDENTS: Noooooo!

MS. P: What are puzzles usually like? I need new hands.

IZZIE: Puzzles usually have different-shaped pieces.

MS. P: Nice complete sentence. They have different shapes. (*Pauses.*) So what if I said the word *appropriate*? What do we think we know about that word *appropriate*? Turn and talk about it.

STUDENTS: (*A busy hum ensues; many of the speaker identities are indistinguishable; these are marked as "student" in the exchanges that follow.*)

REID: If you go to the bathroom and you flush the toilet, that is appropriate.

MS. P: That is appropriate. Yeah.

STUDENT 1: If you're outside and you scream sooo loud a bad word, that is kind of inappropriate.

MS. P: What are you guys, saying?

STUDENT 2: It's doing the right thing in the right place. Like if you're in a restaurant, it's not appropriate to yell.

MS. P: Mmm, so the right thing in the right place. We have some great ideas about *appropriate*. Let's turn around. (*Talk subsides.*) I heard some great ideas about the word *ap-pro-pri-ate, appropriate.* (*Stretches out the word as she writes it on the board.*) Let's share our ideas. Let's face into our circle, because there are so many great ideas. Steven, what were you thinking?

STEVEN: You do the right thing at the right place.

MS. P: Give us the example. You gave us a really cool example about the restaurant; you and Alex were talking about it.

STEVEN: It's appropriate to talk but not appropriate to yell.

MS. P: In a restaurant? OK. What do we think about that? Do we agree? What do we think? Ah, Kelsey is agreeing. (*Kelsey taps her head, a class signal for agreement*.)

KELSEY: I think it means that it's okay to do something. Like it's okay to go outside or to use the bathroom, as long as you ask the teacher.

MS. P: Ohhh . . . so that would be appropriate as long as you ask the teacher. Is that what we're saying here? As long as you ask the teacher?

STUDENTS: (*Talk among themselves*)

MS. P: I think she's got an idea there. Justin, why don't you say more about what you think the word *appropriate* means?

JUSTIN: Like if you scream so loud in a restaurant, it's inappropriate, but if you just like talk or whisper it's appropriate.

MS. P: So what if I said to you, Kelsey, as your teacher, I think it's appropriate for you to go running down the halls of [school name] screaming. I told you it's okay.

KELSEY: It's not okay.

MS. P: It's not okay? So it would be . . .

MS. P AND KELSEY: *In*appropriate, *not* appropriate.

MS. P: Even if I told you it's okay?

KELSEY: It's *not* okay. Because there would be other classes that are learning.

MS. P: So it's not just me saying it's okay, it has to be appropriate. So what if I said, in the summer, when it's really, really hot and I go to the beach, I like to wear no shoes when I'm walking through the sand?

STUDENTS: (*Chiming in*) That's okay; that's appropriate. But watch out for shells. And crabs! And crabs!

MS. P: So it's right; it's suited for the purpose. What if I was barefoot and I went to New York during the winter . . . (*Children chime in* "inappropriate!!!") I know it was really, really cold in New York during the winter. Let's all shiver.

MS. P AND STUDENTS: Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr (*children shiver*).

MS. P: Would it be appropriate for me to wear no shoes?

STUDENTS: No! . . . Inappropriate . . . No, your feet would freeze to ice . . . Unless you wanted your feet to freeze to ice.

MS. P: So lets' go back to what Steven was saying. What were you saying about the restaurant? . . . It was doing the right thing in the right . . .

STEVEN: Time and the right place.

MS. P: Let's say more about that. Reid, say more about that.

REID: Like if you go to the bathroom and when you just finished, you're not going to leave the toilet like it is; you're supposed to flush it.

MS. P: Ohhh; that would be the appropriate thing to do; you're supposed to flush it. Let's give

ourselves snaps [fingersnapping is a quiet way of applauding]. We're having a really fun time talking about the word *appropriate*. 1-2-3 . . .

STUDENTS: Oh yea!

IZZIE: When it was snowing, my uncle went outside in the snow naked.

MS. P: Is that appropriate? That would be *not* appropriate. That would be *in*appropriate, right? That's the opposite of what we're talking about. That's a great example.

KELSEY: That's definitely *not* appropriate.

MS. P: Yea, that's a great example. That's not what appropriate is. That's the opposite of appropriate. What if I said, "At the beginning of sentences, when we write sentences together on the board, it is appropriate for the first letter of the sentence to be a capital." Would that be appropriate?

STUDENTS: Yes.

MS. P: Would that be right and suited for the purpose of writing?

STUDENTS: Yes . . . Very accurate.

MS. P: What if I said that when we write Luis's name in our sentences, the first letter should be lowercase, small.

STUDENTS: Noooooooo!

MS. P: Why do you disagree, Izzie?

IZZIE: I disagree with you, Ms. P., because every name starts with an uppercase letter, because it's a name, and that's what's un-appropriate, I mean inappropriate, means.

MS. P: Is it inappropriate? Say more Reid.

REID: It's not accurate. It's not inappropriate (*mumbling by several students*).

MS. P: There is some confusion in the room—*inappropriate* or *appropriate*?

JUSTIN: I think it's kind of inappropriate because already it's not accurate, and it's appropriate because I think some people forget to do their first letter of their name capital.

KELSEY: So it's probably not inappropriate because . . .

ABBY: You're not really doing something bad because everyone makes mistakes. It's not like yelling down the hall; *that's* inappropriate.

MS. P: That's super inappropriate. Oh, I see. You're saying if we accidentally put a lowercase letter for Luis, it would just be inaccurate; it would not be accurate. And it would be a little bit inappropriate?

STUDENTS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. P: What if after school I took my dog for a walk on a leash, in the park. Would that be appropriate? Or would that be *in*appropriate?

STUDENTS: (*Chiming in*) Appropriate! . . . Appropriate. . . Appropriate! . . . Appropriate. . .

MS. P: So it would be appropriate. It wouldn't be *in*appropriate? (*Students discuss their dog and leash experiences*) Say more, Abby.

ABBY: You have to do it without the leash if it doesn't need to have a leash. If it stays with you the whole time, you don't need a leash for it.

MS. P: That would be appropriate. What if there's a sign that says DOGS MUST BE ON LEASH AT ALL TIMES, would it be appropriate for me to take my dog off the leash?

STUDENTS: No. Inappropriate.

MS. P: It would be inappropriate. Okay. Today when we're doing our word study lessons, I want you to start thinking about the word *appropriate* when we're categorizing our words. Is the word appropriate; does it fit in that category? Is it right in that category? Just like the puzzle piece. Does it fit? Is it right? Does it suit the purpose of that category? That's what I want us to start thinking about (*continues with directions regarding stations and tasks*).

As in the introduction of the word *accurate*, not only does Ms. Phasio teach the new academic vocabulary word and get children to think about it and use it in multiple contexts, she also brings in prior academic vocabulary. In the preceding scenario, *category* is used multiple times, as is *accurate*, the latter by both teacher and students. Through this type of repeated opportunity to use sophisticated words in meaningful ways, across the year, students begin to own them.

Introduction of *Confer*

Because academic vocabulary learning is so important, we are going to look at one more first-grade conversation. This one introduces *confer* and was introduced sequentially a few weeks after the previous two academic vocabulary words.

MS. P: Let's get into our learning here. My turn, your turn. *Confer.*

STUDENTS: *Confer.*

MS. P: What are our ideas about what the word *confer* could mean? Turn and talk about it.

STUDENTS: (*Most of the talk is indecipherable.*) I think . . . I think it means coffee . . . I think it means you're comfortable—com fer . . .

MS. P: Ok, let's come back and talk about it. *Confer* (*shows the word on a small white board*). I'm hearing all sorts of cool ideas. Kori and Izzie, what were you talking about?

IZZIE: We're saying that *confer* is a short name for *comfortable*.

MS. P: What do you mean by that? Explain your idea.

IZZIE: (*Points to parts of confer.*) Because this is *confer.* Just put an *m*; that's *comfortable*.

MS. P: Like the *con* part . . . Let me write out *comfortable.* So it sounds kind of similar in the beginning. Like *comfortable* with an *m* but *confer* with *n.*

GRAYSON: You just add *table* to it.

MS. P: Cool idea. So you're saying there's a similarity there. It kind of reminds you of the word *comfortable.* I'm noticing that you're thinking about word parts. What were you saying about that *con*?

IZZIE: This is *confer*, and this is *comfortable*.

MS. P: You're trying to say something positive, something good. Is that what you're trying to say? Okay. Great idea. Let's try to add on to that. What else do you have? Evie and Justin, what were you thinking?

EVIE: We think it kind of means *convince.*

JUSTIN: Yes, because the *con* is in both of the words. It's kind of like *convince.*

MS. P: So that's similar to what Izzy was talking about. *Confer, convince*. So you're trying to convince someone. Hmm. Looking at the word parts again. Abby, what were you thinking?

ABBY: Me and Ana were talking. We think it means like copy. Some kind of copy.

MS. P: Oh! There are a lot of "me-toos" in this room. Copy. Okay. Hmm. Let me confer with Ximena. (*Ms. P confers with another student*)

STUDENTS: Ohhh.

MS. P: Yes, Grayson.

GRAYSON: I think it means ask questions.

MS. P: Hmm. Why would I need to ask questions?

GRAYSON: You said you were going to confer with Ximena, and you were asking her questions.

STUDENTS: Wait! Wait! (*Several raise hands.*)

MS. P: Oooh! I'm starting to feel some heat in here. I feel like we're starting to understand this word. Ximena and I were talking, and we were discussing something really important. We were trying to figure out what *confer* means, and we were probably asking each other questions. Did you want to add on to that? Reid, what were you thinking?

REID: Me and Abby didn't think it was asking questions. We were thinking it was *not* being positive.

MS. P: Okay. Let me confer with Grayson. (*Turns and confers in whispers with Grayson*) Ariana, what did you see Grayson and me just doing? What were we doing? (*Pause*)

ARIANA: Discussing something important.

MS. P: What? What were we doing?

ARIANA: Discussing.

MS. P: Say it again.

ARIANA: Discussing.

MS. P: Discussing what?

ARIANA: Something important.

MS. P AND STUDENTS: (*Snapping*) Oh, yeah!

MS. P: We were 3-2-1 . . . conferring.

STUDENTS: Conferring!

MS. P: Could you please confer with the person next to you about what you think *confer* means.

MS. P: Do you ask questions when you confer?

STUDENTS: Yes!

MS. P: Do you give your opinion about something when you confer?

STUDENTS: Yes!

MS. P: Do you maybe need to make a decision about something when you confer?

STUDENTS: Yes!

MS. P: We are conferring . . . So, let's think about a time in our day when we confer about something in our learning. I know we were just conferring about the word *confer*. Let's think about a time in our day when we confer about our lessons. Turn and talk with each other.

STUDENTS: (*Excitedly talking with each other; much is inaudible.*) We confer about word study . . . We confer about books . . . We confer about math . . . We confer about our word jar . . . We confer about our vocabulary words . . .

MS. P: Kelsey, what were you talking about?

KELSEY: We were talking about how we can confer about our writing and our math and word study and reading.

MS. P: Why would we need to confer about our writing?

KELLY: So we can share our pictures.

MS. P: Just our pictures?

KELLY: And our words.

MS. P: Hmm. Is our writing important to us?

STUDENTS: Yes.

MS. P: What's another time that we confer in our day? Steven, what were you and Grayson talking about with Ana and me? When do we confer at the end of the day?

STEVEN: Math talk.

MS. P: Oooh! (*Several students chiming in "Me, too!"*) Ohh! Let's give ourselves snaps. We're really having a good time!

STUDENTS: (*Snapping*) Oh yeah!

MS. P: Why do we talk about . . . Let's use our big word . . . Why do we confer during math talk? Let's say that all together.

ALL: Why do we confer during math talk? Why, Grayson?

GRAYSON: Because we discuss math.

MS. P: Why? Why, Abby?

ABBY: So we can figure out what the number sentences equal.

MS. P: Yes, So we can figure it out.

ABBY: Yes, and prove it and give information about why we think it's that.

MS. P: And give evidence, right? Give evidence. But why would we need to do that? Why is it important to confer about math talk? Why? Why is that important? Justin?

JUSTIN: Because we want to learn math and what the number sentences equal.

MS. P: And math is important, right? (*Several students chime in, "Yeah."*) Think of a sentence with the word *confer* and whisper it in the ear of the person next to you. (*Students begin talking with each other and generating sentences*)

MS. P: 3-2-1. What's the sentence that *you* planned, Gabriella?

GABRIELLA: Me and Addison planned that "We confer about our word study at the back table with Ms. Phasio."

OTHERS: (*Chiming in*) We confer about our word study at the back table with Ms. Phasio.

A FEW OTHERS: And we confer about our word study on the carpet with our group.

MS. P: Yeah! And your group confers on the carpet. Nice! (*Ms. P provides directions for moving into small-group work, and the interaction ends*)

Besides the type of in-depth talk we find Ms. Phasio using in the preceding snapshots to teach academic vocabulary, teachers can also use gestures and drawing to reinforce the words and their meanings (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). They encourage and notice students' application of the words during the school day, including during Morning Message time (see Figure 1.3). One of our featured teachers relies on a "Word Door" to remind her to weave these words into the classroom talk. Some

FIGURE 1.1. A first-grade teacher uses a gesture to reinforce the meaning of *survey*. From Ganske (2016). Reprinted by permission of the International Literacy Association.

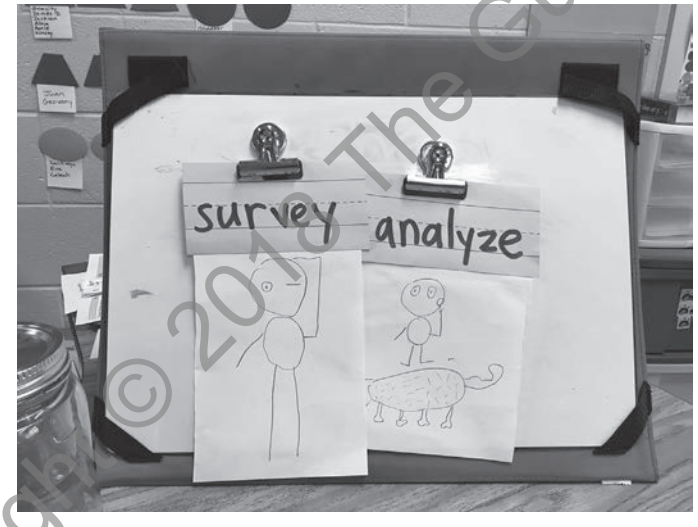


FIGURE 1.2. Student drawings of *survey* and *analyze*.

teachers also recognize children's use of academic vocabulary words by giving them a sticker to place on a classroom Word Wizard chart or by sending the word home with them in a lanyard, so they can share their accomplishment and continue to use the word at home.

SAIL Small-Group Instruction

As noted previously, SAIL (*survey, analyze, interpret, sort*) is a framework for the small-group word introduction intended to support teachers in maximizing students' learning. It is applicable for any grade level using categorization-based, small-group word study instruction. Besides developing students' orthographic and sort-word vocabulary knowledge, SAIL provides a space for teachers and students to apply the academic vocabulary and regular basis.

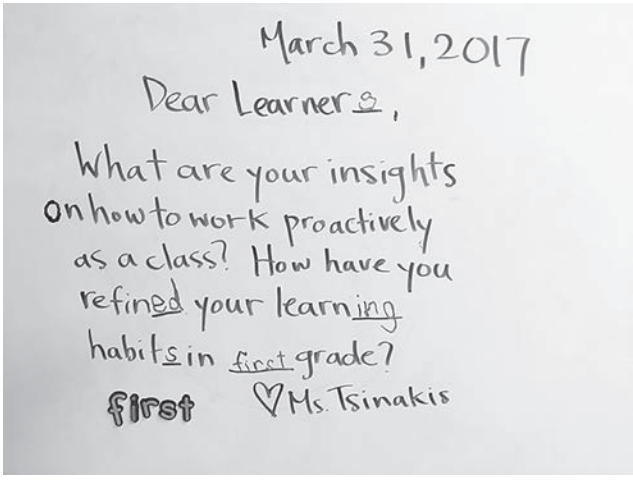


FIGURE 1.3. Reinforcing academic vocabulary in the Morning Message.

Categorization is not new to SAIL-oriented word study, nor is the spiral curriculum (one that builds on what students already know through the incorporation of learned features as contrasts), which provides the basis for potentially deep learning (Bruner, 1960). What is new with SAIL is the full and intentional integration of reading, writing, speaking, listening (and sometimes even movement), increased attention to developing vocabulary knowledge, and a strong emphasis on cognitive processing and engagement. Thinking and talk, with careful scaffolding by the teacher, play key roles in SAIL learning. Thinking happens when there is a problem to solve, for example: How are the categories alike or different? Do all the words fit there? Telling students everything (what the categories are, how the words are sorted) at the start of the lesson discourages students' inquiry and often their engagement. With some practice teachers will gain a sense of how much explanation students need, and how much is too much. We want students to be excited and stimulated but not overwhelmed.

To encourage meaningful talk, consider how you expect children to explain word meanings, and how you plan to teach them to interact with each other during discussions. Often students' explanations of meanings consist of providing examples. With a few prompts as scaffolds, young children can learn to discuss word meanings with language that is more specific. I, typically, "outlaw" two default words—*thing* and the word I have asked them to define. Inviting children to start their explanation by naming the overall category to which the word belongs helps—food, tool, plant, furniture, action, person, for example. I also gradually teach them to consider these possibilities when talking about what a word, such as *horn*, means:

- Category (to what big category does this word belong)—instrument
- A trait (what does it look like)—made of metal, gold-colored
- Function (what does it do)—makes music; you play it
- Example—a trumpet, a French horn
- Synonym—[not really one for this word]
- Antonym—[not really one for this word]
- Gesture or enactment (show me)—showing how to blow a horn
- Drawing or illustration (show me)—sketching a horn

I follow up by asking the children if they know any other meanings of horn (such as a part of certain animals like a unicorn, bighorn sheep, and rhinoceros).

We also need to teach children to engage in discussion and meaningful talk. A helpful starting point is to consider: How much do your students talk, and how much do you. A study that looked at small-group word study instruction in grades 3–4 found that teachers did nearly all of the talking, and 87% of questions they asked could be answered with a single word or sound identification (Ganske & Jocius, 2013). Standards are encouraging change in this area. I find that many teachers are turning to the practice of accountable talk (Michaels et al., 2008). Regardless of the approach for getting more meaningful talk into word study, as students learn to discuss, they should:

- Ask and answer questions
- Comment to or ask questions of each other
- Engage in multiple conversation turns or exchanges
- Respond to and ask open-ended questions more often; these encourage discussion, whereas closed questions discourage it.

It is also beneficial to encourage students to answer in complete sentences and to expect them to learn to build on each other's comments. For example, a child might respond: *I (dis)agree with* [student] *because*, or *Contrary to what* [student] *said, I think . . .*

It takes time to generate discussions, but it is well worth it. Discussions open up the possibility of greater learning for students about words and for teachers about students' skills. Charts with prompts can be helpful. Teachers reinforce academic word meanings through the talk of small-group word study interactions—"*Remember: Now we're going to survey our words. Show me what* survey *means*"—as well as at other times of the day. In this way, such words can become part of children's working vocabulary.

The sample lesson included in Appendix A shows how specific academic vocabulary words can be applied to the talk of small-group word introductions during SAIL. What follows is a discussion of the components of SAIL. To read about a classroom enactment of SAIL, see Ganske (2016).

Survey

During *survey*, teachers ensure that students can identify the 20 or so words and/or pictures they will be working with in the session so they can focus on learning word features, rather than on decoding words. Teachers also deepen and/or extend students' understanding of the meanings of two or more of the sort words (*everyday words*) through discussion, explanation and example, and images and movement. The chosen words are those about which learners may have misconceptions (such as confusing *pond* with *ocean* or *puddle*, or even with "You know: Once a pond a time," as one kindergartner explained). In understanding the nuances of *pond*, rather than perceiving it merely as "water," students are learning vocabulary. Learning can also take the form of understanding the additional meanings of the word. For example, most students understand *trunk* as a part of an elephant's anatomy, but may not know it as a storage item, the back part of a car where items are carried, or the name for men's swimwear. Young readers and writers often assume that if they know one meaning, they know all there is to know. Talk geared toward understanding word nuances and multiple meanings is an important step towards "knowing" a word. To know a word, you need to be able to not only define the word but to also understand its multiple meanings and nuances, so that ultimately you can use the word appropriately in different contexts (Cronbach, 1942). Multiple meaning knowledge can simply involve understanding a noun meaning and a corresponding verb meaning for a word: *There was a ring at the door*; *Did you hear the doorbell ring?* Or it can involve understanding numerous meanings, which may encompass several parts of speech, as is the case with *right:* location—"my right arm" (adjective), legal authority—"we have the right to vote" (noun), immediately—"I'll be right there" (adverb), and to position—"please right the overturned chair" (verb). It is not necessary to teach all of the meanings of

a word. Be selective and choose what seems best. The aim should be to build students' awareness that words have multiple meanings, while also expanding their knowledge of at least one of the meanings. As students learn the multiple meanings and nuances of words, they begin to approach words with greater flexibility and curiosity, which are assets for reading and writing.

At times, students may be completely unfamiliar with a word, such as *tusk*, *skid*, or *gruff.* For EL students, in particular, the unfamiliarity can apply to many words, so it is important to be alert to the potential for cognitive overload for these students. Images and acting out or hand gestures can make the vocabulary accessible to these and other learners. Talking with children about words is a great way for teachers to discover how learners, and which learners, receive words used in the classroom. Consider the earlier *pond* example, and imagine using the word during classroom talk. Through carefully listening to students, you realize that some already have a deep understanding of the word. They visualize a body of water, smaller than a lake but bigger than a puddle, a place where we find frogs and lily pads but not whales and dolphins. Others perceive *pond* as merely water, without the nuanced understandings of size and lifeforms. Another student, who comments, "Once a pond a time . . ., " is envisioning a story about to begin. Realizations of what students are "hearing" during talk in the classroom enable teachers to better support their learning through teaching and paraphrasing vocabulary meanings.

When teaching the meanings of sort vocabulary, it is beneficial to show students downloaded images on a tablet or other device. The image of a drooping French fry in Figure 1.4 makes the meaning of *limp* more concrete for students. The image of a die in Figure 1.5 prompted a young EL to make a personal classroom connection—she immediately went to get a die from the activity center. Visual images and sketches provide springboards to talk and bridges to meaning for everyone, but especially for those with limited vocabulary knowledge.

Enactments and gestures by students and teachers also help to foster understanding. The active involvement makes word meanings more memorable (see Figures 1.6 and 1.7), and let's face it: Everyone has fun learning!

Once students have identified the words and/or pictures and vocabulary words have been discussed, teachers guide students through a categorization of the words and/or pictures, according to targeted word features. These may be contrasting vowels, consonants, blends, and many other orthographic

FIGURE 1.4. A tablet aids understanding of *limp* (French fry).

FIGURE 1.5. English learner makes a connection.

features. Teachers use an inquiry-based approach to categorizing. They begin with teacher modeling that includes a gradual release to greater student involvement, as learners recognize similarities and differences among the phonemes and structures targeted within the words (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2015; Ganske, 2014; Morris, 2005; Schlagal, 1996). Through the thinking involved in categorizing, students make connections, which in turn strengthen representations of the words in memory and facilitates students' recall of the features and words (Goldstein, 2011; Perfetti & Hart, 2002). Thinking and problem solving promote cognitive engagement and, with teacher guidance, lead to greater learning. Cognitive engagement is an essential element that can be missing from word study categorizations. Without it, instruction can sometimes become routinized and humdrum.

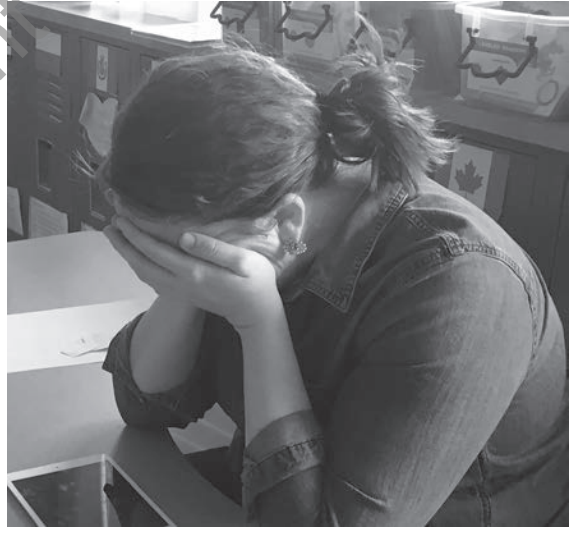


FIGURE 1.6. Let's all *sob*.

FIGURE 1.7. *Long* is this big.

Sometimes teachers model the sorting, invite students to place or sort one or two more words, and then distribute the remaining word/picture cards to the learners, so they can collaboratively place the words. This saves time and can be an opportunity for students to learn from each other. Both small and large groups of children can complete a sort in this way (see Figures 1.8 and 1.9).

Analyze

Once sorting is complete, teachers guide students to *analyze* their categories to determine whether each word matches the sound and/or pattern of the category into which they have placed it and to ensure that categories are mutually exclusive, namely, that a word cannot fit two categories. If it can, they need to categorize it as an oddball. Asking learners to read aloud the list helps them check to be sure that the words have a common sound. Similarly, checking that all the patterns fit the category is also important (see Figure 1.10). This Listen and Look strategy, as one teachers calls it, helps students internalize the process of analyzing. Some teachers guide students through the analyzing process each time; others teach students to do so more independently via a Turn and Talk approach, and then discuss their conclusions. When the latter approach is used, it is important that teachers listen in to the student talk to gain insights about their thinking.

Interpret

After students have analyzed the categories, they collaborate as a group, or with a partner, to synthesize their learning by *interpreting* the categories. How are the words alike in a category? How do they differ from words in the other categories? What understanding can we take from this that will help

FIGURE 1.8. A small group collaboratively completes a sort.

FIGURE 1.9. Room for everyone: A larger group collaboratively sorts.

FIGURE 1.10. Students analyze their sort.

us to be better readers and writers in the future? What do we still not understand? They share their insights with the group, drawing on teacher support as needed. An insight might be something like: "A vowel that says its name often has an *e* on the end of the word, such as *make* and *gave.* So if I hear a long *a* sound when I am writing, I may need to add *e* at the end of the word. If I am reading and see a final *e*, the vowel before it probably has a long vowel sound." Making explicit how the learning is beneficial sends a clear message about the importance of the work students are doing and aids synthesizing. Teachers also learn how well students understand the feature or concept at this point.

Link

During this final *link* portion of the lesson, teachers forge connections between the students' new understandings about word features and vocabulary and their reading and/or writing. Students might read a teacher-generated sentence or phrase that includes words with one or more of the targeted features or vocabulary. Alternatively, they might collaborate to complete cloze portions of a sentence, as in Figure 1.11. They might generate and collaboratively write a phrase or sentence that contains categorization and/or transfer words, as in the student-generated sentence shown in Figure 1.12. Or they might write independently on white boards or even on the table (see Figure 1.13), which they find very exciting!

Link is also the space during which teachers bring meaningful closure to the lesson by eliciting from students, or summarizing with them, what they learned and how the learning fits into the bigger vision of becoming better readers and writers. Meaningful closure, as opposed to just ending a lesson, helps ensure that students leave the session with a clear idea of what they learned and why (Ganske, 2017). Although teachers typically consider how to hook students when launching their lessons, it is also neceassary to consider how to "stick the landing" (Reese, 2014) so that children can internalize their learning and apply their understandings beyond the lesson.

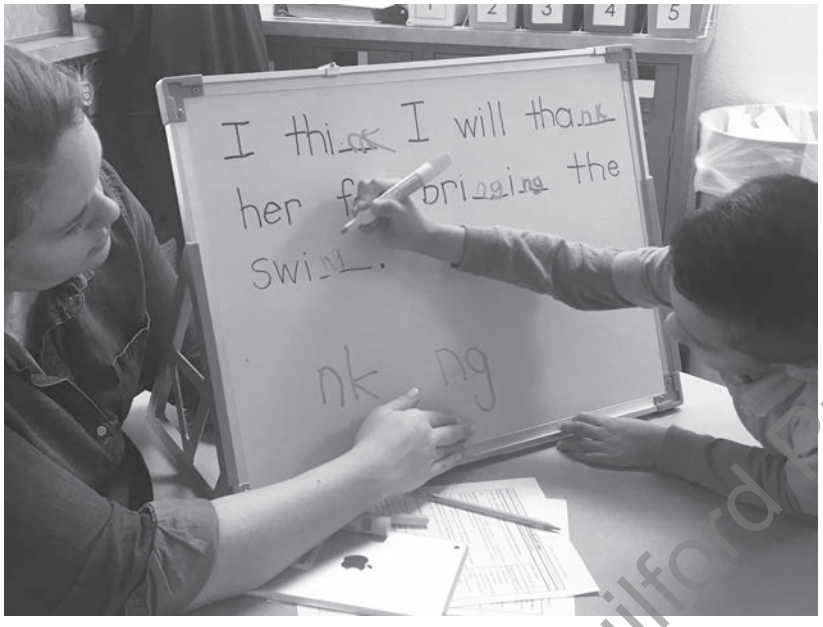


FIGURE 1.11. A learner completes a Link sentence.

FIGURE 1.12. Link interactive writing of *I saw a stump by the pond.* From Ganske (2016). Reprinted by permission of the International Literacy Association.

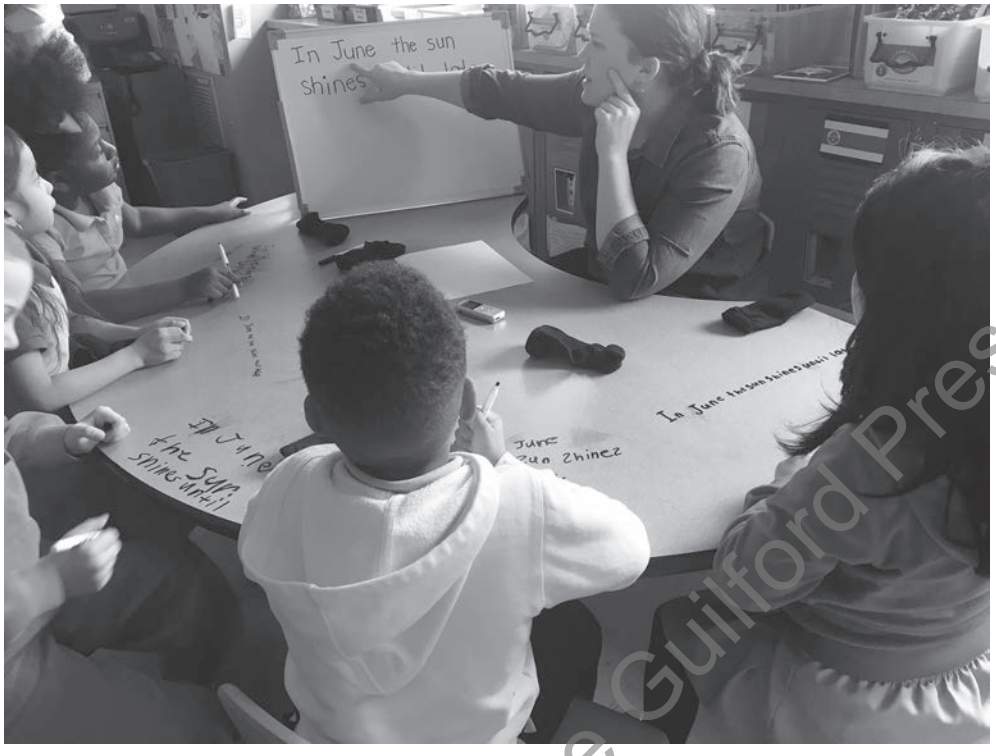


FIGURE 1.13. Table writing during Link.

A Basic Repertoire of Teaching Activities for Word Study

What follows are descriptions of several activities that can be used with many of the materials in this book to teach students about words. When these descriptions do not apply, other directions are provided. Additional activities and an expanded description of some of those in the basic repertoire are included in *Word Journeys* (Ganske, 2014).

Sorts for Small-Group Word Introductions

There are many types of word sorts; typically, during small-group instruction students complete a *closed sort*. This means that category key words or pictures provide a blueprint for the sort; the key words offer students clues as to how to group the words and what the chief characteristic of each category might be, but students still must figure out what those categories are. In other words, no labels are used to reveal what the categories are, and you do not specifically tell students before they begin, except in special situations where learners need extensive support. Using labels detracts from the inquiry, or problem-solving, aspect of sorting that engages students. Although teachers sometimes ask learners to try their hand at sorting the words with just the key words as their guide, they usually model at first with some thinking aloud, using a *guided word walk* (Ganske, 2014) approach, similar to that briefly touched on in the SAIL discussion. Through both modeling and some explicit instruction, students become aware of how the categories work, and teachers gradually release responsibility to them. After several weeks of completing word or picture sorts, children often can formulate quick and accurate hypotheses about the characteristics of each category. They love the sense of accomplishment at having "figured it out." Sorting the remaining cards allows these children to confirm their hypotheses while providing less

astute wordsmiths with further examples that clarify their understandings. Teachers carry out guided word walks with more or less support, depending on the group of students (see the examples of high, medium, and low levels of support that follow). Bear in mind, as previously mentioned, that too much guidance might take away the challenges of exploring and thinking that add to motivation, and too little guidance can leave students confused and frustrated with the task. Observe students' reactions and their contributions to the talk during the initial sorting process. If they respond correctly but with little enthusiasm, you probably are offering more than is needed. If they seem unclear about the task, you may need to be more explicit.

Once students are familiar with the sorting process, you can add some excitement from time to time by asking them to decide how to sort the words before you provide any key words or modeling. This type of *open sorting* is informative for you and engaging for the students, but due to its open nature, it can lead to unanticipated results and problems if you have particular categories in mind for the sort. When you use open sorting, emphasize to students the importance of being able to articulate how the categories are alike and different. Also, as exceptions are introduced over time, help students develop the idea that words (or pictures) that fit the characteristics of multiple categories (or no category) should be set aside under the "?" label. We often call these *Oddballs* but other labels, such as *What's Up with That?*, work equally well. (See "Oddball Category Labels" in Appendix F for other possibilities.)

Although each of the following guided word walks relies on words or pictures from a different stage of spelling knowledge, all three levels of teacher involvement can be applied to any of the sorts and thus to words at any spelling stage.

Guided Word Walk with a High Level of Support—Emergent Stage

A high level of support is evident when the teacher identifies each category at the start of the lesson and, again, in the very explicit modeling and thinking aloud process.

Focus: Alphabetic principle: Matching pictures with like beginning sounds to key pictures and their corresponding letter, *M* or *S*.

What is known: At least some understanding of the letter–sound relationship for one or both of the consonants targeted.

What is new: Contrasting the two consonants.

A guided word walk introduction to the sort shown in Figure 1.14, with much teacher support, would proceed something like this.

> TEACHER: (*Places the* m *and* s *letter cards on the table in front of the children. Holds up the man picture.*) This is a picture of a man. *Mmman* begins with the /mmm/ sound made by the letter *M*, so I am going to put the *M* card next to man. (*Holds up the sock picture.*) And this is a picture of a sock. *Sssock* begins with the /sss/ sound made by the letter *S*, so I am going to put the *S* card next to the sock picture. Now I am going to take the other pictures that I have today, and I am going to put all of those that start with the /mmm/ sound like *man* under the picture of the man and the *M* card (*points to the cards*). I am going to put the ones that begin with the /sss/ sound like *sock* under that picture and the *S* (*points to the cards*). Keep your eyes right here, because I may need your help. (*Taking a picture, such as* milk.) Here is a picture of milk. Let me see, *milk* begins with /mmm/, *mmmilk*, so I am going to put this picture under *mmman*, because *milk* also starts with M. (*Taking another picture card.*) This is a picture of the

sun. *Sssun* begins with the same sound as *sssock*, so I am going to put this picture under sock. *Sock . . . sun*. Both of these words begin with the letter *S*.

The process continues with the other picture cards. It is beneficial, at times, to present two or three pictures that belong in the same category one after another. That way the children do not conclude incorrectly that first, you place a word in one category, and then you place the next word in the other. After the teacher models several words, if students seem to be catching on, she may ask them to name the next picture, and then invite a volunteer to place it under its category, reminding the child, if necessary, to name the picture and the key picture/letter. Errors are corrected immediately, by saying something like "No, actually, *mmmask* goes under man because it begins with the /mmm/ sound that the letter M makes, just like *mmman* does."

After the modeling and sorting, the teacher reviews each category by asking students to join in naming the key picture and its beginning letter and then each picture in the M category. Review of the S category is similar. With both categories, the teacher releases responsibility to the students to the greatest extent possible by fading her voice away.

If time allows, teachers sometimes engage students in a quick practice with "Guess What Letter." They place key pictures with their corresponding letters in front of the children, and gather and shuffle the remaining cards. Showing the first card, the teacher asks, "Does this word start with M or S; does (*name the picture*) begin with the sound of M, like *mmman*, or S, like *sssock*?" Students respond by naming the letter or saying "M like *man*." Depending on the children's skills, the teacher may be able to distribute the cards among them and have them take turns placing a card and identifying its letter.

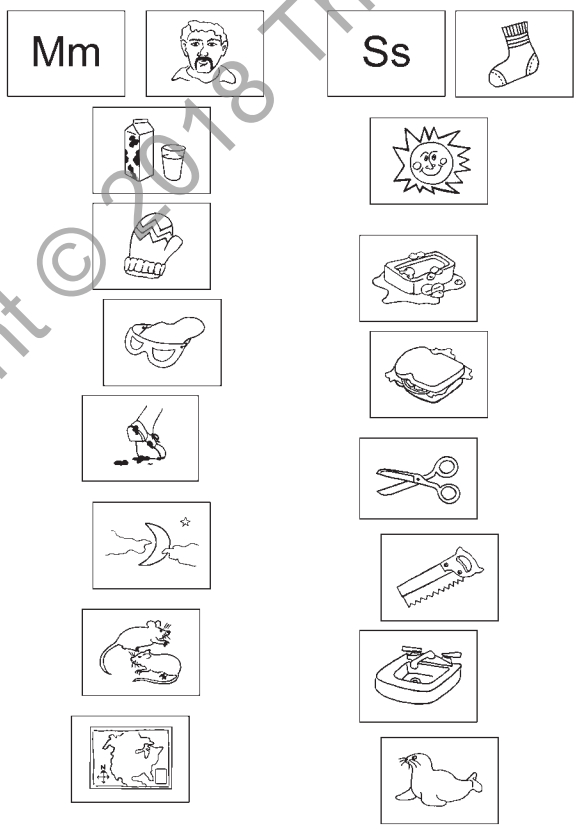


FIGURE 1.14. Guided word walk at the emergent stage with a high level of support.

Guided Word Walk with a Moderate Level of Support—Letter Name Stage

In the following example, to provide a moderate level of support, the teacher models and demonstrates but does less explicit telling. Although students are asked to match their words to one of the key words, the teacher does not specifically point out that the words rhyme or that the rhyming part is spelled the same (*at, et*, or *ot*). The word identification/vocabulary component described is important for any guided word walk, whether or not it has the added structure of the SAIL framework. It ensures that students recognize and understand the meanings of the words they are using so that they can focus their attention on the target feature(s), rather than on deciphering words. It can also strengthen students' vocabulary knowledge *and* inform your teaching. Omit any words or pictures that prove to be troublesome.

Focus: Differentiating words of different vowel word families: *at, et*, and *ot*.

What is known: Each of the word families has previously been studied, but only in contrast with other word families containing the same vowel.

What is new: Examining families of words across vowels. The rime (vowel and what follows) is consistent within a category but shifts across the categories, so that students begin to consider differences in vowel sounds. An introduction to the sort shown in Figure 1.15, with a moderate level of teacher support, would proceed something like this.

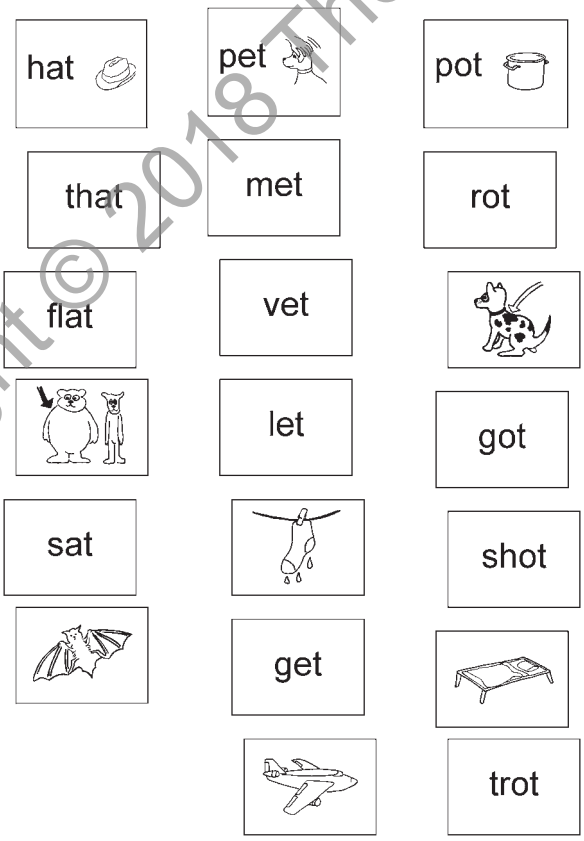


FIGURE 1.15. Guided word walk at the letter name stage with moderate support.

TEACHER: Today we are going to revisit some of the rhyming words we have worked with before. But, first, let's be sure you know all of the words and pictures we will be using. (*Shows each card to the students by panning it across the group and saying . . .*) Tell me all together: What is this word? [Or picture. Discuss word meanings that may be unfamiliar to students or that could be confused with another word.] Who can tell us what the word *trot* means?

STUDENT VOLUNTEER: A horse can trot.

TEACHER: Yes, a horse can trot. It is a way horses move when they are going quickly. People sometimes trot, too. For example, if you jogged around the playground, we could also say you *trotted* around the playground. Can someone show us what that would be like? (*Student demonstrates*) Here is another word I want to be sure you understand. (*Holds up* vet) This word is a short way of saying *veterinarian*. Who knows what a *vet* or *veterinarian* is?

STUDENT VOLUNTEER: It's kind of like a doctor, but it's for animals.

TEACHER: Good explanation! That is just what a vet is, and I like the way you told us without using the word *vet*. That helps me better understand what that word means. (*A brief discussion of the children's experiences with vets follows*) This next picture may be confusing. (*Holds up the jet*) Can anyone tell us what this picture is? Be careful, and look closely.

STUDENT VOLUNTEER: It's an airplane.

TEACHER: That is true; it is an airplane, but it is a special kind of airplane.

ANOTHER STUDENT VOLUNTEER: It's a jet. See this? (*Points to under the wing*) That's how I know.

TEACHER: Yes, it is a jet. Can everyone say *jet*? [If you anticipate confusion with this picture, compare it with a plane picture.]

STUDENTS: Jet.

Identification of the words and pictures continues, with discussions of word meanings as necessary. Then the teacher introduces the sort.

TEACHER: (*Places the three key word/picture cards in front of the students. Pointing*) Our key words and their pictures today are: *hat, at, at*; *pet, et, et*; and *pot, ot, ot*. As we try to decide where to put each word, I want you to say the new word and listen carefully for a key word that matches its sound. Watch me first. (*Takes a card.*) *Rot . . . Rot/hat . . . rot/pet . . . rot/pot*. I am going to put *rot* under *pot*. (*Taking another card*) *That . . . That/hat . . . that/pet . . . that/pot*. I am going to put *that* with *hat*.

Modeling continues with *met* and as many additional words and/or pictures as needed before students begin to understand how the sort works. As this happens, they start placing the words under their appropriate category, remembering to say the name of the key words as they try to find the best category match. Teachers correct inaccurate matches by saying something like "No, remember, this word is *wet*, so it goes under *pet*." Before asking students to describe their thoughts about the categories, the teacher engages them in Listen and Look. First, they read each sorted column of words so they can hear the repeated rime; then they look at each word to be sure it has the same pattern as other words in that category.

TEACHER: How are all of the words and pictures alike that we placed under *hat*?

STUDENT: They rhyme with *hat*.

TEACHER: That's an excellent observation. Do you notice anything else?

STUDENT: All of the words end in *a-t*. See: *a-t, a-t, a-t*.

TEACHER: That's another excellent observation. Now let me ask you: If all the words end in *a-t*, what about the pictures? For example, *fat:* How would we spell *fat*?

STUDENT: (*Excitedly*) That's *a-t*, too, *f-a-t*.

STUDENT: And *bat* is *b-a-t*.

TEACHER: That's right. (*Summarizing*) So, all of the words under *hat* rhyme with *hat*, and they all end with *a-t*. Let's look at the "pet" category. What can you tell me about these words?

The talk continues about this category and the final one. If time allows, students might play a game of Hold-It (see Ganske, 2014, Chapter 4) to allow the teacher to check their understanding of the sort, or students might spell another word with one of the same rimes used in the lesson, for example, *brat* or *bet*.

Guided Word Walk with a Low Level of Support—Within Word Pattern Stage

Less support is evident in this sort, as the teacher models with some of the word cards and tells the children that they are categorizing by sound and pattern, but does not explicitly explain anything about how the words are alike and different. As with the previous example, she incorporates development of vocabulary knowledge.

Focus: Understanding pattern–sound differences among the following vowels: short *a*, long *a* spelled VC*e*, and *r*-controlled vowels with the *ar* pattern.

What is known: Short *a* and long *a* with VC*e*.

What is new: *r*-Controlled vowels and the *ar* pattern.

The guided word walk introduction to this sort, shown in Figure 1.16, with low-level teacher support would proceed something like this.

TEACHER: Let's start by making sure you all know the words we're going to be working with this week.

The teacher shows students the cards, one at a time, by panning them across the group. Once everyone has seen a word, she asks the students to identify it chorally, listening for the off-key note of someone who does not recognize it. When this occurs, she asks another student to identify the word and tucks the card back in the stack so it will come up again. She stops to engage the students in talk about the meanings of two or three of the words, choosing those that are likely unfamiliar or that have multiple meanings or nuances. Except for, possibly, *tame*, none of the words seems likely to cause confusion, so after verifying students' understanding of the word, she decides to expand their vocabulary knowledge by focusing the talk on words that have multiple meanings.

TEACHER: What can you tell me about *tame*? What does it mean?

STUDENT: Not wild.

TEACHER: That's right. *Tame* and *wild* are opposites, and they're words that are often used to describe animals. Can you think of a wild animal?

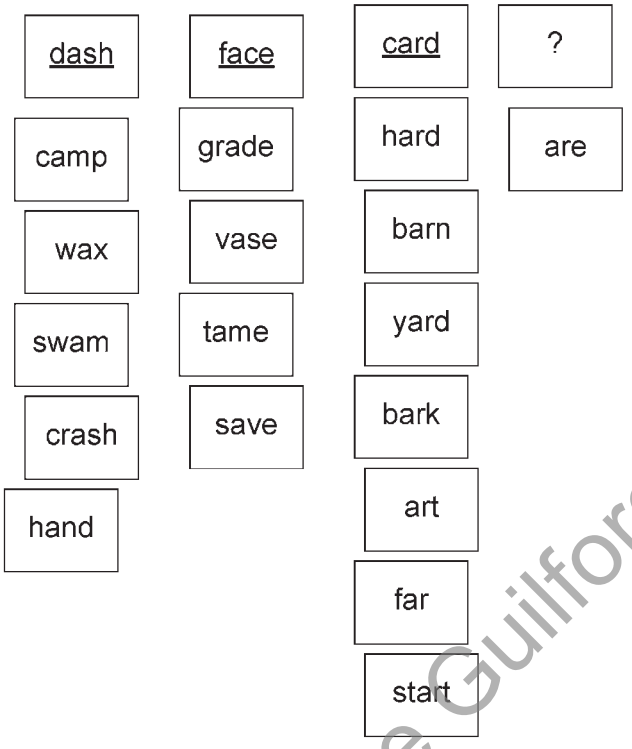


FIGURE 1.16. Guided word walk at the within word pattern stage with limited support.

STUDENT: Lions are wild, and so are bears.

TEACHER: Yes, and what would be an example of a tame animal?

STUDENT: Cats and dogs are tame . . .

STUDENT: (*Interrupting*) But sometimes they act wild. My cat runs around our house sometimes, and my mom says she's being wild and crazy.

TEACHER: When your cat or another animal acts tame, what is that like?

STUDENT: She's really gentle, and sits on my lap or rubs on my leg.

TEACHER: So tame means gentle and not wild. What about this word? (*Holds up* dash.)

STUDENTS: Dash.

TEACHER: Yes, tell me what it means.

STUDENT: The 100-yard dash.

TEACHER: Now can you tell me what that is without using the word *dash*? What is the 100-yard *dash*?

STUDENT: (*Thinking*) It's a race that you run really fast.

TEACHER: So if I dash off to the grocery store, I'm going really fast. Does anyone know any other meanings for *dash*?

STUDENT: When my grandmother eats scrambled eggs at our house, she always says, "I'll have a dash of hot pepper to go with them."

TEACHER: What do you think she means by that?

STUDENT: That stuff's really hot, so she means just a little.

TEACHER: That's right. When you eat French fries, do you want a dash of ketchup, or a lot?

STUDENT: A lot, because that ketchup's good, not hot.

TEACHER: You know a lot about *dash*. It can mean to run really fast, and it can mean a very small amount of something. Do you know any other meanings? (*Picks up the class read-aloud and points to a dash in the text.*) This is another meaning for *dash*. We call this punctuation mark a *dash*. Sometimes writers use it in books to show a break, like here. Someone interrupts the character, so the author put a dash to let the reader know that. *Dash* is a word I may want to put on *my* word wall,* as a reminder to look for ways to help you use that word. (*Continues asking students to identify the words, stopping to ask about the meanings of two more words:* bark *and* yard. *Then she begins the word walk.*)

Today we are going to be sorting by *sound* and *pattern*. So, remember, if a card belongs in a category, it will have the same sound and the same pattern as the key word. I have included a question mark in case any of our words do not fit in a category or in case any fit in more than one category. I underlined the key words, so we can use the same key words in our work all week. They are *dash, face*, and *card*. Let's see . . . (*taking a card*) *grade* goes with *face*, so I'll put it here, and *camp* goes with . . . hmmm . . . *camp/dash* . . . *camp/grade* . . . no, that one is not right . . . *Camp/card* . . . that is not right either . . . *camp/dash*. *Camp* goes with *dash*, so I am going to put it under that word.

As several children have raised their hands to try the next word, the modeling stops, and the teacher hands over a card to one of the volunteers. Students continue placing the cards. As the student with *are* begins to place the word under *card*, another student protests.

STUDENT: I disagree. *Are* sounds like *car*, but it has a different pattern. All the other words have *ar*, and *are* has an *e* on the end, just like *face*, but it doesn't sound like /ā/, so I think it's an Oddball.

ANOTHER STUDENT: Me, too. It's an Oddball.

STUDENT: Yeah, I think so, too; it's an Oddball.

The teacher continues to present words for the children to sort. After students place the last card, she engages them in the Think-Pair-Share strategy. First, she asks them to think about the categories and the ways they are alike and different. Then, after a minute or two, she tells them to pair up with a partner and to tell the partner what they think and then listen while the partner does likewise. The teacher allows about a minute for each partner to talk and then draws the group together by saying, "Now let's share your ideas with the group. How about the category headed with *dash*?" A discussion follows in which the students comment on each column of words. When necessary, the teacher adds to the conversation or clarifies students' thinking.

The session wraps up with students being asked to spell an alien word, such as *sar, vade, har*, and *fam*. As with these examples, the alien words usually are either real words with which the children are not yet familiar or are syllables of longer real words, like *sarcasm, invade, harbor*, and *family*. To bring closure to the lesson, she asks the group how the day's lesson will help them to be better readers and writers.

*Word walls are discussed later in this chapter.

Practice Sorts

Blind or No-Peek Sorting

With this approach to categorizing, students make decisions about the placement of words without actually seeing the words. They are presented with the key words and asked to point to the appropriate category (or write their response under the key word on a piece of paper, if the sort is also a writing sort), as a partner reads each word aloud. After the categorizing is complete, students check the accuracy of the placement (and spelling of the word in the case of a written sort). Then partners reverse roles and begin again.

Speed Sorts

The purpose of this type of sort is to develop automaticity so children can devote their mental energy to meaningful writing and reading, rather than to encoding and decoding words. The process is easy: Teachers provide students with repeated opportunities to practice sorting the week's words in order to acquire speed and accuracy. Challenges to "Beat the Teacher" or to improve a previous attempt keep learners motivated.

Word, Object, or Letter Hunts

To apply their understandings about words, teachers sometimes ask students to search for other words or pictures with the same, targeted features. This type of activity can be carried out in small-group, collaborative-group, partner, or even whole-class formats. Emergent learners can search for examples of particular letters from cut-up magazines and newspapers. Emergent or letter name spellers may scavenge the classroom for objects whose names begin with particular consonants. Learners at the letter name and within word pattern phases of development can search through previously read or written texts for other examples of words with the targeted features. Using a tablet to photograph artifacts in the school that include a targeted feature is another possibility.

Practice and Applying Activities

Additional practice can be provided through a variety of notebook activities, such as those described in Chapter 4 of *Word Journeys* (Ganske, 2014). For example, students might draw and label pictures with the features under study, write sentences for a few of the words and draw pictures and write labels for some of the others, or use letter tiles to make words and then record them. They might also carry out *word operations* to create new words by adding to the original, subtracting from it, or substituting one part for another. Students also can generate new words through analogy: "I know that *fit* is *f-i-t*, so *slit* must be *s-l-i-t*." Folder games and card games are further possibilities. Whatever the activities offered to students as options, once they begin to work with a new set of words and the targeted features, they need many opportunities to practice and to exercise their understandings through meaningful reading and writing experiences.

Teacher Word Walls: A New Perspective on a Common Technique

Word walls are a common sight in today's elementary classroom, especially in primary grades, and they are easy to spot, with their brightly colored alphabet letters and the myriad words that typically accompany them spread across a wall or bulletin board. The comment of a curriculum coordinator epitomizes their popularity: She shared with me that even a physical education instructor in her district had found

a way to incorporate the use of a word wall. As a reference tool they serve students well in their writing, especially if words are not difficult to locate on the wall. They can provide a space for connecting to literature (see Figure 1.17). In a similar vein, they also can provide teachers with an excellent reference tool, not for writing but for reinforcing vocabulary words.

We must not underestimate the importance of developing children's general vocabulary knowledge. We teach readers to decode unfamiliar words encountered in text so that the resulting word can map onto the learner's oral vocabulary, and be "recognized." However, if the word is not in the learner's oral vocabulary, the child's decoding effort and the teacher's efforts in teaching the decoding strategy are all-but-wasted. Oral vocabulary not only plays a key role in children's transition from oral to written forms, but is also critical to a skilled reader's comprehension of text (e.g., National Reading Panel & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Thus, learning words is very important, and doing so requires multiple meaningful exposures to the words in various contexts.

We must find and create opportunities for students to visit and revisit in meaningful contexts those words that we want them to "own." This is especially important for those words that arise through reading, word studies, or talk that are unfamiliar at present but are likely to be encountered frequently in the future (the Tier 2 words of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2013, and the academic vocabulary previously described). The word *dash* discussed in the prior guided word walk, for example, might be such a word, as perhaps might *exhausted* or *fatigued* as synonyms for *tired*. A Teacher's Word Wall might consist of 10 to 15 such words printed on large cards or sentence strips and posted on a wall (or a door; see Figure 2.2 on p. 48) that is visible to the teacher most of the day. Posting of the words provides busy teachers with a quick and constant reminder that these words need to be used and called to children's attention on a frequent basis.

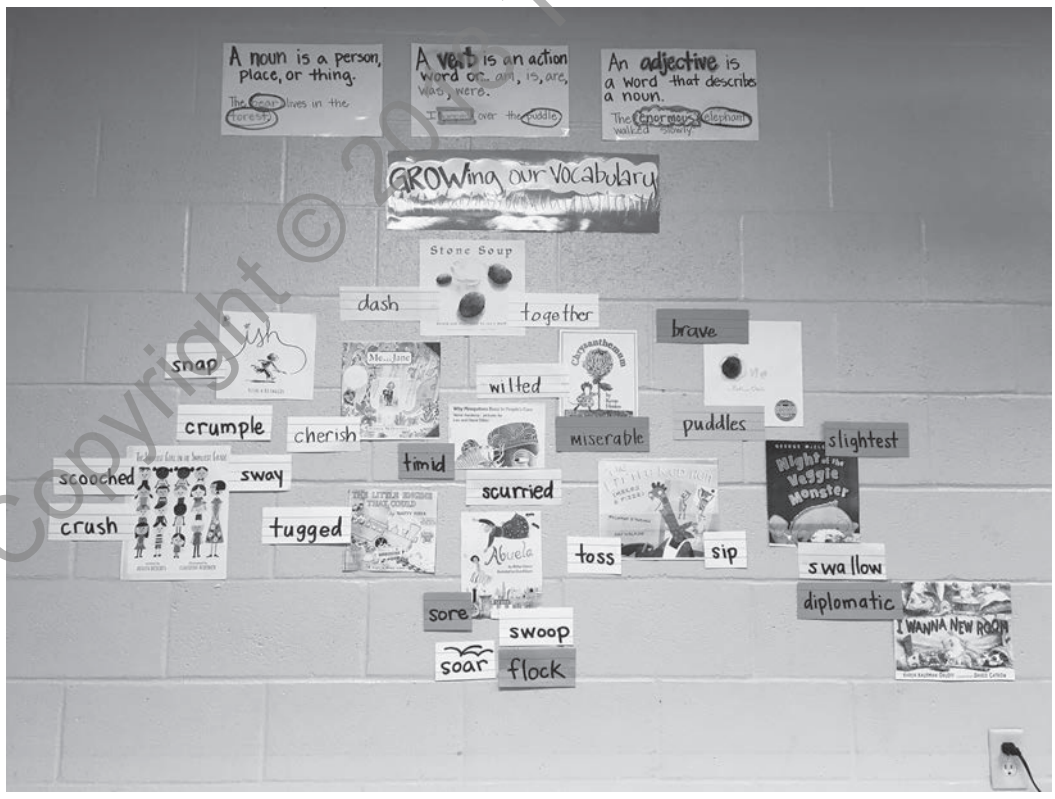


FIGURE 1.17. Growing Our Vocabulary word wall with literature connections.

Once a word starts to be assimilated into classroom use, its word card can be replaced with a different one. As with the word walls teachers create for students' use, a teacher wall with too many words will decrease its utility. Although primarily intended as a teacher reminder, I have sometimes discovered children glancing at the wall and calling their teacher's attention to a prime opportunity for using the word! Whether for first grade or seventh grade, Teacher Word Walls have much to offer.

Using Syllabication and Morphology to Solve Word Problems

We often tell students to break words into syllables, to look for meaningful chunks, and to use context clues with the available letter–sound clues to figure out unfamiliar words. I suspect that all too often children are asked to do so without the benefit of having been taught just how to go about it. We need to *teach* strategies such as these and provide lots of opportunities for students to put them into practice under our guidance.

Syllabication

Teaching readers a few useful tips, such as those that follow for dividing two-syllable words, can be useful, because knowing how to separate longer words into syllables enables readers to work with more manageable chunks when decoding an unfamiliar word. If care is taken in the kinds of words chosen for practice or as examples many students will learn quite early on to apply the strategy to their reading of words.

Tip 1. Common compound words, such as the following, provide an effective starting point, because children can be taught to look for known words: *doghouse, sidewalk, weekend, bathroom, classroom, fireman, football, mailbox, playground, hallway, afternoon*.

Tip 2. Teach students to keep a watchful lookout for double consonants. There are many such twins in the middle of words, and the syllable division occurs between them. Although students are likely to read vowels in unstressed syllables as long or short vowels rather than with the schwa sound (pronounced /uh/), they will still likely recognize many of these words, provided the words are in their oral vocabulary, for example: *puppet, traffic, passage, muffin, village*, and *sudden*.

Tip 3. Even when two consonants in the middle of the word are not twins, it is usually a good idea to try dividing the word between them, for example: *cactus, insect, contest, pretzel, publish*.

Tip 4. Sometimes three consonants cluster in the middle of a word. In such cases, two of the consonants will be a blend or digraph (such as *th, ch, gr, dr, pl, st*, etc.). Just as elsewhere in words, these teams usually stick together, so the division is not likely to be made between them, as in *athlete, merchant, pilgrim, hundred, complete, instant*, and so forth.

Tip 5. Where only one consonant appears between two vowels in the middle of a word, break the word before the consonant; then give the vowel before it a long sound and check to see whether this results in a recognizable word. An effective way to help children think about such open syllables is to use the following analogy: Vowels can be rather shy guys. When left alone at the end of a syllable, they often cry out their name in fright, similar to the way a person might cry out if left alone in a room with the door open, as in the words *hotel, bacon, fever, humid, detour*, and *event*.

Tip 6. If the use of Tip 5 does not lead to a recognizable word, students should divide the word after the consonant and give the vowel a short sound. Again, the door analogy may be applied: The shy vowel feels safe and quiets its voice down when a consonant closes the opening, as in the words *comet, credit, talent, vanish*, and *manage*.

Introduce the preceding tips one at a time, with lots of opportunity for practice, so students can gain control over the use of a particular strategy before you present them with a new one. Practice can be engaging and challenging. Invite students, as a whole class or during small-group instruction, to decode a word-of-the-day.* (See "Word-of-the-Day Decoding Practice with Syllabication" on p. 38.)

Morphology

Recognition of *morphemes*, or meaningful word parts, such as common prefixes, suffixes, and base words also can help students to decode unfamiliar words composed of two or more syllables. Consider the following example:

TEACHER: (*Writes* mistreating *on the board and thinks aloud.*) This is a pretty long word. Sometimes we can break words like this into smaller chunks that are easier to handle by looking to see if we recognize any meaningful chunks, just like we did with compound words. But this time, the chunk might not be a whole word. For example, I see *ing* on the end of this word. I know that it is found at the end of a lot of words, like *looking, reading, flying, showing*, and so forth, and it is pronounced /ĭng/, so I am going to just cover that part up, because I know how to say that. (*Covers up the letters with a sticky note*) Now, let's see, what about the rest? I see a word I know—*t-r-e-a-t*, /trēt/. (*Peels the sticky note off again.*) So the last part of the word is *treating*, and that leaves only the beginning. (*Drawing her finger under the letters as she names them*) I think *m-i-s* is also in quite a few words, like *misspell* . . . and *misuse* . . . and *misplace* . . . and *misread*— (*Writes each word on the board as she thinks aloud.*)

STUDENT: —And *misbehave*. My mom always says it's bad to misbehave at school.

TEACHER: Good example. . . . So *m-i-s* seems to be another meaningful chunk, and we pronounce it /mĭs/. Now we have all the chunks and we can put them together, *mistreating*. Does anyone know what *mistreating* means? Our story reads: *The man was mistreating the horse*.

STUDENT: I think he wasn't treating the horse right, because when I misspell a word, I'm not spelling it right.

TEACHER: Good thinking. So if we misuse a tool, we don't use it right. And if we misplace a book, we don't put it in the right place; we put it in the wrong place. What about *misread*?

STUDENT: You read the word wrong.

TEACHER: *M-i-s* seems like a chunk we may come across again in our reading.

Bear in mind as you teach children about prefixes that the following 10 prefixes are the most common: I recommend that you teach one at a time thoroughly.

- *un*—not, opposite of
- *re*—back, again
- *in*—in/into
- *dis*—opposite of
- *in*—into
- *pre*—before
- *mis*—badly, wrongly
- *over*—too much
- *enem*—put into
- *non*—not

*As a final note, it can be helpful in both reading and writing of words for students to bear in mind that every syllable in English has at least one vowel (as m<u>a</u>t, f<u>ee</u>t, b<u>a</u>/c<u>o</u>n, cy/cl<u>e</u>, ty/r<u>a</u>n/n<u>o</u>/s<u>au</u>/r<u>u</u>s).

Word-of-the-Day Decoding Practice with Syllabication

The following lists of words, grouped by decoding tip and vowel pattern so teachers can control the complexity of the words they choose, may be used to model decoding strategies, as well as to engage students in solving words using the strategies. Students might also enjoy decoding names of well-known people and characters from children's books or decoding and then locating the names of cities in various parts of the United States. Morphology can be incorporated into the activity, and longer words can be created by adding a suffix and/or prefix to some of the words in the list, for example: *bordering*, *harvesting*, *incomplete*, *profitable*, *punishment*, *remodel*, and *sincerely*.

Tip 1: Compounds

SV: *bedbug*, *blacksmith*, *blacktop*, *catnip*, *catnap*, *eggshell*, *handspring*, *windmill*, *upset*
SLV: *bedtime*, *classmate*, *goldfish*, *handshake*, *landslide*, *seasick*, *weekend*, *windshield*
SLRAV: *birthstone*, *downpour*, *courtyard*, *earthquake*, *fireproof*, *nightmare*, *proofread*, *raindrop*, *throughout*, *warehouse*, *windstorm*

Tip 2: Words with Double Consonants (words may contain a schwa vowel)

SV: *attic*, *blossom*, *classic*, *comment*, *gallon*, *hammock*, *inning*, *muffin*, *stopping*, *tennis*, *traffic*
SLV: *cabbage*, *caddy*, *dizzy*, *follow*, *hollow*, *message*, *shallow*, *suffice*, *trolley*, *valley*, *willow*
SLRAV: *blizzard*, *blubber*, *cheddar*, *effort*, *guffaw*, *pattern*, *raccoon*, *slipper*, *suffer*
Note: Some students may need to have pointed out to them that final *y* and *ey* sound like long e.

Tip 3: Words with Two Consonants (words may contain a schwa vowel)

SV: *absent*, *album*, *cactus*, *contact*, *husband*, *napkin*, *picnic*, *plastic*, *pretzel*, *trumpet*, *victim*
SLV: *chimney*, *compose*, *confuse*, *costume*, *invite*, *reptile*, *rescue*, *texture*, *umpire*
SLRAV: *absorb*, *admire*, *border*, *cartoon*, *disturb*, *furnish*, *harvest*, *injure*, *lantern*, *mustard*, *observe*, *orbit*, *pardon*, *percent*, *perfume*, *scarlet*, *shelter*, *sincere*, *urgent*, *whimper*

Tip 4: Words with Three Consonants (words may contain a schwa vowel)

SV: *district*, *dolphin*, *express*, *hundred*, *inspect*, *nostril*, *pilgrim*, *pumpkin*. Also, double consonants plus *le*: If needed, point out to students the /l/ sound of *le*; the final syllable is *consonant-le*: *baffle*, *cattle*, *cuddle*, *drizzle*, *fiddle*, *huddle*, *pebble*, *scribble*, *sniffle*, *snuggle*, *truffle*, *wiggle*
SLV: *athlete*, *complete*, *conclude*, *control*, *exchange*, *explain*, *include*
SLRAV: *although*, *farther*, *marshal*, *merchant*, *monster*, *orchard*, *panther*, *portrait*, *surprise*

Tip 5: Words with VCV Open Syllables (words may contain a schwa vowel)

SLV: *agent*, *bacon*, *basic*, *bison*, *crisis*, *frequent*, *human*, *legal*, *pupil*, *rodent*, *sequel*, *siren*, *virus*
SLRAV: *acorn*, *crater*, *detour*, *female*, *flavor*, *major*, *navy*, *profile*, *radar*, *rotate*, *secure*, *vapor*
Note: Words with two consonants are sometimes also open: *April*, *migrate*, *program*.

Tip 6: Words with VCV Closed Syllables (words may contain a schwa vowel)

SV: *balance*, *cabin*, *camel*, *civil*, *credit*, *digit*, *finish*, *frigid*, *honest*, *legend*, *limit*, *mimic*, *model*, *novel*, *profit*, *rapid*, *satin*, *talon*, *timid*, *topic*, *punish*, *visit*, *vomit*
SLV: *figure*, *manage*, *refuge*, *volume*
SLRAV: *cavern*, *clever*, *forest*, *govern*, *jury*, *lizard*, *plural*, *rural*

Key

SV = Short vowels; **SLV** = Short and long vowels; **SLRAV** = Short, long, *r*-controlled, and abstract vowels.

Using Context and Letter–Sound Clues: A Balancing Act

An effective way to teach children to take advantage of both the available letters and sounds *and* the surrounding text to figure out an unfamiliar word is to teach them how to use context clues, not just suggest that they use them. All you need is some sticky notes, a passage of text or a summary of a passage, and a whiteboard or chalkboard (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002). The following text summary is based on a delightful picture book by A. U'Ren (2003) titled simply *Mary Smith*. The "knocker-up" custom described in the book has a historical basis, and the book has a surprise ending.

TEACHER: (*Records a short passage of text, covers up a few key words with sticky notes, keeping the covered lengths of similar size, and numbers the sticky notes* [as shown in Figure 1.18].) Good readers are good word solvers. Just like a good detective uses all available clues to solve a mystery, good readers use available clues to help them figure out unfamiliar words. They use letter–sound clues [you might also mention syllable divisions and meaningful word parts, if you have studied these] and the rest of the words in the sentence to help them figure out unfamiliar words. I have written a paragraph on the board that is about a story I'm going to read aloud later today. The title is *Mary Smith*. So that you will really concentrate on *context clues*, which are the clues we get from the other words in the sentence, I have covered up a few of the words to see whether you can discover them, just by using the context. You do not have the letters and sounds to give you any hints, but do not worry; I will let you use those clues, too, just not yet. Let's read to the end of the sentence that has the first covered-up word in it and decide what word makes sense where the sticky note is. [Reading may be choral, by individual volunteers, or silent, depending on the group of students.] Who has a guess for word #1?

The students offer *day, morning*, and *night*. The last idea spurs comments of disagreement, as students note that you "don't get up early at night." The student withdraws the suggestion, and the teacher asks students to continue reading to the end of the sentence with the second covered-up word. The process of speculating and discussing continues with the remaining masked words.

TEACHER: Now that you have been careful to think of words that make good sense in the story for the places I have covered up, I am going to remove some of the sticky notes, so that you can see the beginning letters for each word. If some of the guesses do not match the letters shown, I am going to cross them off, because those words cannot be correct.

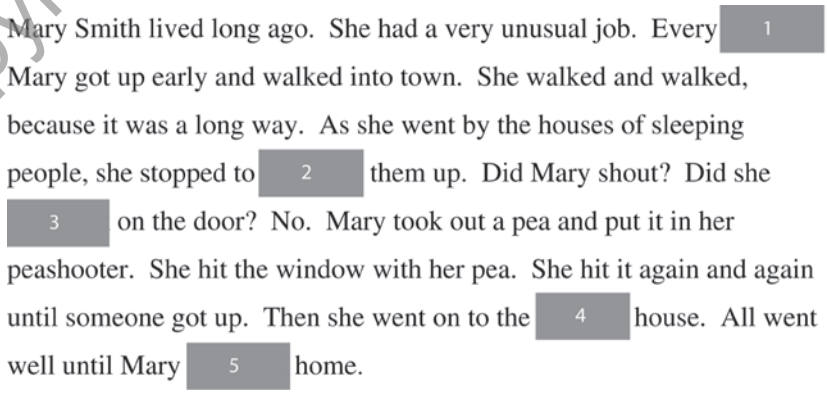


FIGURE 1.18. Balancing word recognition clues (using context clues).

One by one, the teacher reveals the onset of each word (see Figure 1.19), and the students compare the results with their guesses. If no guesses remain for a word after this process, then the group must generate new possibilities. Students also will need to review any words that have multiple guesses remaining to determine the best option. After all covered words have been discussed, the teacher reveals the correct words by removing the remaining sticky notes, as shown in Figure 1.20, and the group discusses any remaining issues. The lesson closes with a reiteration of the importance of using both context clues and letter–sound clues when solving words and a comment that the children will have more opportunities to discover the identities of hidden words. Teachers may cover up just one or two words in the text being used to lessen the challenge. Also, words covered should already be in children's speaking and/or listening vocabularies.

* * *

Helping students to become competent in a full repertoire of strategies that can assist them in their reading and writing is what good teaching is all about. Word learning is an area in which students sometimes encounter difficulties, particularly as novice readers and writers, whatever their age. Word studies to develop the strategies and understandings of emergent, letter name, and within word pattern spellers follow in the next parts.

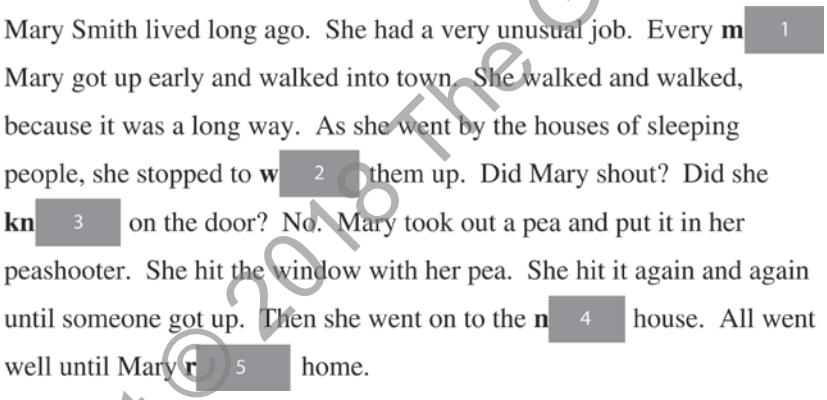


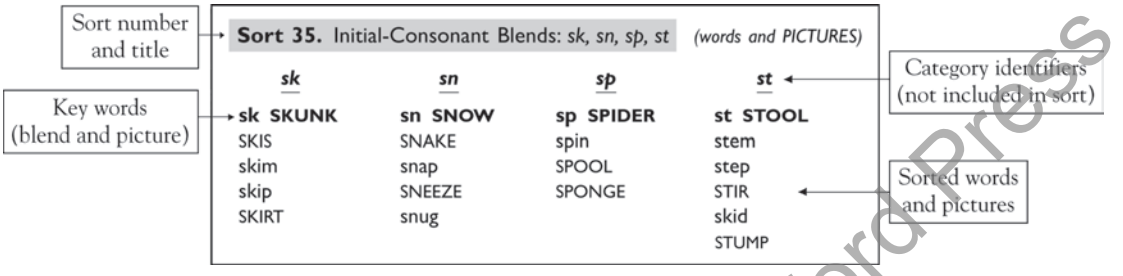
FIGURE 1.19. Balancing word recognition clues (version with beginning letters revealed).

Mary Smith lived long ago. She had a very unusual job. Every **morning**
Mary got up early and walked into town. She walked and walked,
because it was a long way. As she went by the houses of sleeping
people, she stopped to **wake** them up. Did Mary shout? Did she
knock on the door? No. Mary took out a pea and put it in her
peashooter. She hit the window with her pea. She hit it again and again
until someone got up. Then she went on to the **next** house. All went well
until Mary **returned** home.

FIGURE 1.20. Balancing word recognition clues (version with words revealed).

To guide and maximize your use of the activities in this book, bear the following in mind:

• Answer keys, such as the one below, are included in the text for each of the sorts. Answer keys include the title and sort number, category identifiers, key words or pictures from the sort, and an alphabetical listing of the words to be sorted in each category. It should be noted that words are listed in alphabetical order merely for ease of reference. At times teachers may wish for students to alphabetize words in each category, but this should only be done *after* they have sorted them.



• Capital letters (SKUNK) are used in the sort answer keys to indicate that the word is represented by a picture in the actual sort.

• Slashes around letters (/m/) in category identifiers indicate that the sound rather than the letter is being referred to.

• Key words serve as exemplars of the category features and appear in boldfaced type. These may also be letters or a combination of letters, words, and pictures. Key words are included in the set of word cards and appear as the top cards of each template. If desired, they may be underlined before photocopying so that students will use the same key words each time they sort. They have not been set off in any way on the template, so as to allow flexible use of the sort. For example, teachers may wish students to complete an open sort in which they determine their own categories, or they may wish to use a different sort word as a key word.

• Numerous sorts, especially in Part IV, include a sort card marked with a question mark. This card is used as a key word for the "Oddball" category. Exceptions to the other categories are placed here.

• The templates of word cards appear with the sort number and title at the top. It is recommended that this information be removed before providing templates to students. To eliminate the sort number and title, as well as the extraneous white space surrounding the template (which frequently ends up on the floor after the cards are cut out), first photocopy the page out of the book, then trim that page down to the edge of the template, and then recopy it for students at the enlargement specified at the bottom of the sort page, at 135% to fill letter-sized paper, 160% for 11″ × 17″ paper.

• Before beginning work with a feature, skim through the sorts in the text (or the list of reproducible pages) to understand the progression and to determine which of the sorts are best suited to a given group of students. Often you will not need to use all of them.

• Students need lots of opportunities to discuss how words are used and what they mean as well as how their features work. This does not mean having students write out dictionary definitions and coming up with their own sentences, which all too commonly results in the following:

regurgitate: to flow back. The tide regurgitates to the ocean.
procrastinate: to put off. Mom said to procrastinate the lights.

It means engaging students in talk to kindle interest in and appreciation for words while developing vocabulary knowledge. And it means providing opportunities for meaningful use of the words.

- Teachers should further keep in mind that each sort may be used with more or less structure as the needs of the students require. Student engagement, the accuracy of their responses, and the insights they share as they talk about a sort provide information to guide teachers in their scaffolding of understandings and release of responsibility.

- Finally, to aid pronunciation of letter sounds, a reproducible Alphabet Sound Board is included in Appendix F. Teachers may wish to make copies for students or post in learning centers/stations and where small-group instruction is conducted.

* * *

The following two chapters broaden the focus on how and why to advance children's word knowledge, especially the development of children's vocabulary knowledge, by presenting the perspectives and suggestions of teachers, speech–language pathologists, and researchers. In Chapter 2, nine educators describe their insights about learning and instruction in word studies. Chapter 3 describes the views of researchers, especially as they relate to EL.

Guilford Publications
370 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1200
New York, NY 10001
212-431-9800
800-365-7006
www.guilford.com