

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



PLANT THE SEEDS TO GROW SPELLING AND WORD-SKILL LITERACY.

Ask Rebecca

Rebecca,

How does the Sourcebook methodology work with students out of the mainstream—the very capable speller and students who struggle with spelling? Our school has a huge range of abilities.

Maris Faulkner
Principal, Lincoln Elementary

Dear Maris,

Thank you for your interest in exploring my Sourcebook Series for Teaching Spelling and Word Skills.

The Sourcebook methodology has two attributes that contribute to the success of students who have a wide range of abilities.

First, the Sourcebook methodology does not teach spelling through memorization of letter sequences. Instead, it teaches students how words work, not only for spelling, but for all the communication skills. For this reason, it serves regular educa-

tion students, in addition to students at both ends of the spelling performance curve, exceptionally well. Let me explain.

Memorization of even hard-to-spell words comes easily to capable spellers, yet this technique falls short for stretching students who need challenge. Harder words rarely challenge them. They need a program that does not limit their word study to a single weekly list, but intrigues them to discover how our language is organized and how it works to serve all their communication needs.

Students in the Sourcebook Series are constantly challenged to collect words, analyze them, discover generalizations that apply to the words, and write explanations for their spelling and use. They observe and interpret word regularities and idiosyncrasies for phonics, structure, usage, etymology, and meaning. The program is used extensively in private schools with immensely competitive students whose parents want their children challenged. These parents commend the Series for serving their students well. If you wish, I can put you in touch with these schools and the educators who work with these competent learners.

For students for whom spelling is a challenge, memorization of letter sequences fails them completely. The learning does not “stick.” These students need a carefully sequenced foundation of skills that offers them consistent strategies for spelling so that they can develop confidence. In a customary learn-the-list program, they quickly learn they cannot spell. Their lack of confidence turns them away from spelling and writing. In contrast, the Sourcebook system provides instruction and practice for learning

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Ask Rebecca (continued)

how to spell and proofread. It gives students spelling and word-skill strategies and teaches them how to apply them. These skills are carefully recycled so that these learners have recurring opportunities to master them.

Students for whom spelling is a challenge also need a program with the provision for extended practice with words as well as skills—they do not learn them the first time. Through the systematic recycling of words which occurs in the testing, students encounter far more practice than a customary program in which the end of a unit signals the end of the word study. Further, students' word practice extends to their everyday writing, so that the practice is parallel with real-world use of spelling.

It has been immensely gratifying to me to visit with veteran teachers who delight in telling me about the progress their students have made, particularly their students who were previously struggling with spelling. I can provide contacts for you to visit with teachers who have watched their reluctant spellers and writers bloom with their experiences in the Sourcebooks.

The second attribute of the Series that accommodates the higher and lower achievers in spelling is its opportunity for differentiation. Word-skill activities, tests, and practice are all differentiated to student needs. This is briefly explained in the first *Ask Rebecca* response. The point I need to make is that one size does not fit all. So, all activities and words in the program meet a range of student abilities.

For further clarification, you may wish to print sample Sourcebook units from my website (www.sittonspelling.com) so your teachers can try them. Keep in mind, the wealth of Teaching Notes do not print out with these units, but nonetheless I think they are fully usable. Further, note the training seminar schedule on the website to determine dates and cities visited this year. Each seminar fully demonstrates how the program works to make every child a speller, regardless of their ability.

Rebecca



Do you have a question? Call me at home or toll free at the office, send me an e-mail, or set up a complimentary conference call through the office for a group of colleagues who have questions.

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