

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



PLANT THE SEEDS TO GROW SPELLING AND WORD SKILL LITERACY.

What's current?

A new addition to the Sourcebook family of materials— Practice Books for grades 1–6. Why Practice Books?

Surprise! I finally figured out how to create a workbook that is cost-effective and productive! As with the Sourcebooks, I won't take the credit for their inception. It was teachers across the country who gave me the idea to create Practice Books and advised me how to make them a meaningful component to strengthen the Sourcebook methodology. To them, I say, "Thank you!" I am always in awe of the talented, dedicated teachers who know how children learn and are forever examining the current curriculum to make it more effective to reach every child.

You see, initially, I felt very uncomfortable about the creation of workbooks to complement my program. All the workbooks with which I was familiar served no useful purpose, and they were expensive. But these teachers saw a potential in workbooks that I'd overlooked. And, in collaboration with these outstanding teachers, I began to understand their point of view. Following was their vision of a proper and purposeful workbook to strengthen the Sourcebook methodology.

Their assignment for me was this: Write Practice Books to parallel or extend existing Sourcebook activities. They clearly stated that they did not want fill-in-the-blanks books. They asked for exciting ways for students to work with words—collect and analyze them, then record their discoveries that applied to how all words work. They requested that by the end of the year each student's consumable Practice Book would have become a bound handbook of essential skills at their grade, a road map to follow for navigating our language system and spelling hundreds of words.

Teachers strongly preferred a bound book, not single pages. They explained that as word collections are initiated on a page in a Practice Book, they wanted their students to have the option of adding to the lists over time and revisiting the "rules" they were discovering. They were eager for their students to have available to them pages of past work and the knowledge they gained from them. The loose pages that result from a blackline master format could not accomplish this, nor would a perforated-page workbook format.

There was more. Teachers said their students would benefit from a complete list of all their Core Words, Priority Words, and a running record of their Spelling Words. So, they are in each Practice Book. It would be "nice," they added, if students had a practical, grade-appropriate Rules for Reference page to guide them for spelling many more words over time. Yes, there was space on the inside back cover!

And a last, but not inconsequential, request. Teachers wanted good value for their investment. The result is a durable workbook of 100+ pages, each with an extension activity at the bottom of the page for completion on another paper. And, they added, if the books cost too much, they'd not be able to afford them. What school ever has enough money? The warning was heeded—the books are \$34.75 for a package of five, less than \$7.00 per book. This is well below the publishing industry average.

Donna Bernard was my Practice Book artist, the same artist and friend whose clever pictures are throughout the Sourcebooks. It was her idea to have a “pictorial animal topic” at each grade level. For example, Level 3 is The Zoo. Another friend and colleague, Holly Chapman, took Donna's art and combined it with my activities to create pages that were pleasing to the eye. Motivation plays a role in learning, so she and Donna toiled to ensure the books would make teachers and students feel good when they opened them. And they do.

For those of you using the Practice Books, I want your feedback. Tell me how you're using the books and your experiences with them. E-mail me at rsitton@sittonspelling.com, call me toll free at 888-937-7355, or write to me at Egger Publishing, P.O. Box 12248, Scottsdale, AZ 85267. Invite your students to write to me, too—I value their opinions. Isn't it for them that all of us do what we do?

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