

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



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

Ask Rebecca

Dear Maureen,

Rebecca,

How is recordkeeping handled for the Spelling Words? My teachers need help!

Maureen Sanchez
Literacy Coach K-5

Recordkeeping for students' Spelling Words is done *by the students*. After the Cloze Story Word Test is corrected, *students record* their Spelling Words on their take-home Words to Learn sheet. As you know, the words they miss are their Spelling Words. Then *students record* their words in their at-school Spelling Notebook—a running record of words missed. To ensure accuracy recording the Spelling Words, students check their words against their copy of the Core Words list, perhaps working with a partner. The Core Words list is on a blackline master in each Sourcebook that lists every high-frequency word introduced so far in the program in alphabetical order for students' reference.

Teachers do not keep a separate copy of students' Spelling Words. When teachers want to know which words students are missing, each student's Spelling Notebook is their source.

On occasion, teachers are reluctant to leave this ongoing data entry in the Spelling Notebook to students. They feel personally responsible to keep track of the words missed. Why? Did they keep track of the words each student missed when their assessment was a Friday word-list test? No, they tell me they didn't keep a running record of that information because the words were already "covered," never to be assessed again. However, in the Sourcebooks, the words are routinely reassessed, so—they say—they must keep track of the words students miss.

I don't think so. Instead, there should be an increased level of comfort among these teachers to know that the words are all automatically recycled. From my point of view, the time to have kept records of the words missed was when they used a program that provided no recycling! Otherwise, there was no provision for learning the words. So, please relieve your teachers of the conscientious obligation they feel to keep records that are unnecessary. Yet, please commend their conscientiousness.

It's more important for *students* to know which words they're missing, and to know when they finally spell them correctly. I hear teachers ask their class after a Cloze Story Word Test, "Who had a word correct on this test that you missed on previous tests?" Students take turns responding, explaining their "new system" to ensure that their "tricky word" is not too tricky for them! Their smiles of success are heartwarming!

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Ask Rebecca (continued)

Your teachers—and their students—take a giant step forward when the students learn that words must be learned “forever,” not just for one test. And it is each student’s responsibility to learn the words, and each student’s gratification when they do! The teacher structures the students’ environment so that learning and success are ensured.

Students learn the words through repeated encounters with the words on their tests, as well as by accessing the skills they’re learning in the first part of each unit, Build Skills and Word Experiences. Knowledge of these general word skills taught in this part of each unit brings spelling “insights” to the study of their personal list of Spelling Words. They make informed observations regarding silent or double letters, vowel sounds, homophone meanings, suffixes and prefixes—all the skills that form the foundation for spelling methodology being more than a short-term memorization exercise. These skills are introduced in small increments over time through the first several units of each grade-level Sourcebook. Once students have this skill-based foundation, they have the skills that afford them “strategies” for learning to spell—a far more secure underpinning than total reliance on one’s memory.

Share this information with your teachers, Maureen. Remember to compliment them on their meticulousness, but invite them to “let go.” The program holds onto the words for them. They’ll soon see this. Let me know how it goes—let’s work together to make every child a speller!

Rebecca

Do you have a question? Call me at home or toll free at the office, send me an email, or set up a complimentary conference call for a group of colleagues who have questions. • email: rsitton@sittonspelling.com
• home phone: 480-473-7277 • office phone: toll free at 888-WE-SPELL (937-7355) or 480-596-5100