

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



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

What is a Core Word? What is a Priority Word?

The Sourcebook Series for Teaching Spelling and Word Skills has as its base a cross-referenced list of 1200 high-frequency writing words. They are divided by grades 1-8 and are introduced in order of frequency of use so that developing writers have the advantage of learning early on the words they'll need most often when they write. This bank of words equates to 90% of all words used by adult writers. I call this bank of words **Core Words**. They are the core of the Sourcebook program. (For more information on the Research Base, visit our website, www.sittonspelling.com. Click on the [Philosophy & Research](#) tab.)

All essential skills, concepts, and strategies springboard from the Core Words. For example, when the Core Word *keep* is introduced in Level 3, it is used as a springboard to teach students the most frequent spelling patterns for long e. Students collect long e words and sort them by their spelling to discover the spellings that occur most often.

This is an *ongoing* chart for the collection of long e words. It grows as students encounter more long e words. This word collection activity develops students' auditory awareness for long e, their phonetic awareness as they associate letters to spell this sound, and their word awareness as they assemble an abundance of long e words from wherever they can find them.

Frequent Spelling Patterns for Long e

e at the end of a syllable	ea	ee	y	other
me	each	keep	only	people
be	read	queen	happy	key
reuse	eat	week	any	piece
below	meat	sleep	city	ski

Further, do you see the possibilities for reading? Now when students encounter new words in their reading with a long e spelling pattern, they have a decoding strategy to help them unlock the words. This is one way that decoding and encoding support each other.

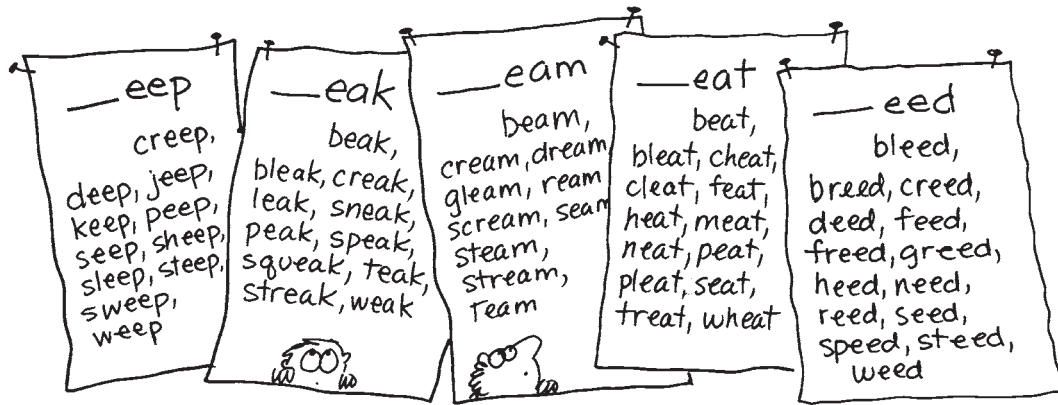
So, one Core Word—*keep*—was the catalyst for the development of new skills and many more words. There's more! Read on...

The next lesson option springboards from the ee spelling pattern, or rime, to the addition of onsets, or new beginning letters. Students make more words. Then the rime/onset activity extends to eak, eam, eat, and eed words. Look! More words for spelling, reading, writing, and thinking!

continued . . .



What is a Core Word? What is a Priority Word? (continued)



So what is a Core Word? It is the *core* of the program—the skills and words that every Core Word grows become the Sourcebook program, one of hundreds of word experiences, skills, and concepts.

Each unit's Cloze Story Word Test assesses the Core Words—*without*

students having studied the test words just for the test. The bank of words from which the test words come is every Core Word introduced so far in the program. The Spelling Words are the Core Words students miss on the test. All Core Words are extensively recycled through the Sourcebook testing system so that retesting takes place automatically, and practice is maximized to ensure mastery.

So, then, what is a Priority Word?

It is not enough to be certain students have mastered the highest-use Core Words on their unit tests. Transfer of these words to writing is the goal. So, as students develop as writers, they become accountable for an increasing number of Core Words in their everyday writing. The Core Words students are responsible for in their writing are called **Priority Words**. They are introduced for accountability in order of frequency of use so that writers have the advantage of learning to proofread for the words that occur most often in writing. They cannot write without using these words!

A Priority Word is a Core Word students have probably already learned to spell on their unit tests. Yet, there is no assurance that students will carefully proofread for these words in their writing—unless there is a stated expectation to do so. Once a Core Word has earned the status of Priority Word, it is expected to be spelled correctly in all everyday writing for every subject, for every teacher—no excuses! Sometimes these words are called “No Excuses” words, for good reason.

Students are taught essential proofreading skills in their Sourcebook word work. The Priority Words provide an opportunity for students to apply these skills daily in their writing. Teachers gradually relinquish their role for proofreading these words—students step into the role, and a transfer of responsibility takes place. The transition is comfortable, successful, and expected.

The expectation for spelling the Priority Words is rigorous—100% accuracy. A Priority Word list starts with only a few words and grows over time to include the top 100 words or more. It is not a long list of words—the rigor is not the *number* of Priority Words, but the *standard* for spelling them. The skills students develop as they rigorously proofread for their Priority Words is the practice they need to learn to proofread *all words*. Soon, students are proofreaders—and their writing shows it!

And the goal of all spelling instruction and practice is to learn words for writing. Mission accomplished.