

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



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

What's Current?

Visualizing—a research-based strategy for learning to spell and learning to read.

Visual skills count in teaching kids to be better spellers.

I've demonstrated no less than a thousand times the research-based visual skill-building strategy I call the Word Preview. If you've been to one of my seminars, you've participated in this essential strategy. I never do a seminar without modeling the procedure. It is the single most productive activity for teaching students how to do two things that able spellers can do better than spellers who struggle:

1. see the sequential letters of a word in their mind's eye, or *visualize* a word.
2. see the sequential letters of a word they've written.

To put it another way, able spellers *see words differently for spelling and proofreading than they do for reading*, in which they *do not* look at each sequential letter.

These skills can be taught and learned. Spelling and proofreading are learned skills. For students to learn to spell for writing, it is essential that these skills be practiced using the words students need for writing. Research tells us which words these are—high-frequency writing words. And the Word Preview teaches students how to “see” them.

Visual skills count in teaching students to be better readers.

Spelling and reading skills overlap. Visualizing is one example. According to Keene and Zimmermann in their book, *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* (1997, Heinemann), visualizing is a strategy that enables students to make the words on a page real—the ability to “see” what's happening in a story as it unfolds. I particularly like the way Robert MacNeil describes this skill in his book, *Wordstruck: A Memoir* (1990, Penguin). He relates his reading to “painting a

picture of the story in his mind.” Visualizing has been documented as a critical part of students' reading comprehension instruction.

Teachers, as you concurrently develop the ability to visualize in spelling and visualize in reading, help students understand it as the same skill—the connection cannot be taken for granted.

The old adage, “seeing is believing,” makes sense. As you guide students to master the skill of visualizing, you're helping them learn to make sense of words!