

ELA Routines

Spelling and Word Nerd Vocabulary

Spelling

Helping children to develop a positive attitude towards spelling in the early years has a long-term impact on their lives. Poor spelling skills can result in underestimating a student's true potential. In addition, spelling errors can distract readers from the intended message which can translate into missed opportunities.

The major goal of writing this year in room 264 will be the expression and communication of ideas. This year during ELA, **students will experiment with memorizing high frequency spelling words for a weekly test on Thursday of each week. Word lists will be distributed on the Friday before and will contain ten words from the high frequency list along with two bonus words that each child will individually detect and choose from their own personal spelling errors.** As a result, our shared goal will be to instill a desire to spell words correctly while perfecting your child's ability to detect and correct spelling errors as they craft their own pieces of writing. **When writing a draft , I will be asking students to underline the words that they are unsure of how to spelling adding a tiny question mark while composing so that their fluency is not interrupted.** Writers who must think too hard about how to spell, use up valuable brain power needed for higher level composition. Writing is a mental juggling act that depends on using basic skills with automaticity (ex. handwriting, spelling, grammar, and punctuation) so that the writer can focus on topic, organization, word choice, voice and audience needs. Poor spellers may restrict what they write to only using the words they can spell, with inevitable loss of verbal power, or they may lose track of their thoughts when they get stuck trying to spell a word.

Students will not benefit from practicing their spelling words in isolation (only memorized for the test on Thursday). It is just as important for them to use and read the words regularly in context. There will be multiple opportunities for students to do this throughout the year in the classroom during instruction and when crafting friendly letters to their classmates when they are the "Student of the Week" . **Each week for homework, I will expect that the children will create one high level sentence for each word on their weekly list using correct grammar and punctuation-to be turned in on Wednesday before the the Thursday test.** In addition , students are encouraged to use a variety of sentence structures and types (exclamatory, interrogative , declarative and imperative). Students who welcome a more rigorous challenge are invited to create paragraphs or a composition that contains all twelve words used appropriately together in context.

Attached to this handout is the first spelling word list. (The first tests in September will be days of the week and months of the year.) We will begin our high frequency words starting in October. Students will be using cursive paper for the test. They will print the word first and then write it in cursive to maintain the cursive skills they were taught in 3rd grade. I will grade the spelling test based upon the proper spelling of the printed word. I do not require students to use cursive on a day to day basis. They may choose to write in cursive if they wish.

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Word Nerd

The goal this year is to **Pump Up Our Word Power** and become a Word Nerd!

1. **Read, read, read.** Reading is the most effective — and enjoyable — way to build vocabulary.
2. **Expand your horizons.** To build a strong vocabulary, you need to read widely. Venture beyond the familiar and the easy. Try something new and challenging. Take risks.
3. **Make it fun.** You won't learn anything when you're frustrated or bored. Don't force yourself to read something you don't like. Read what interests you. Let your curiosity be your guide. Talk about what you're reading with others.
4. **Always look for words you don't know.** This is extremely important. People tend to skip over or read around unfamiliar words. As a vocabulary builder, your job is to be on the lookout for unfamiliar words. Challenge yourself to find at least one new word every time you read.
5. **Use a dictionary.** Whenever you see an unfamiliar word, it's essential that you look it up. Keep a dictionary handy while you read so you can look up words right away. Or you can jot them down on a piece of paper (with the page number so you can find them again) and look them up later.

Remember, words are the key to knowledge, and knowledge is the key to success. Every word you add to your vocabulary broadens your understanding of the world, improves your comprehension of what you hear and read, and sharpens your ability to express your ideas with greater confidence and style. Students will develop a genuine curiosity for and interest in new and unique words by expanding their vocabulary on a daily basis. By playing with words, word patterns, word families, prefixes, suffixes, and so on, students hone their knowledge of words and increase their speaking and writing skills.

The WORD NERD routine

Each day the students are introduced to a new vocabulary word. I model the definition, synonyms and I use it in an original sentence in a small strip of paper. Students then paste it into their own notebook and craft their own original sentence(s). Eventually as the year moves forward, we progress from sentences to paragraphs. Embedded into our Word Nerd Expert daily journal writing, we use students' own writing as models for discussion and practice of basic grammar, usage and mechanics. Students are much more interested in learning from one another than from isolated practice worksheets. They also LOVE to show off their expressive, fluent voices when using the microphone! The mini lessons transfer into students' speaking, thinking, reading, and writing. I believe this approach allows students to implement and master the lessons on punctuation, usage, and sentence structure in an authentic context. I invite students to make grammatical choices and stretch their sentences to include vivid imagery when they write in their Word Nerd Expert Journal. Throughout the year, I will ask the students to share their Word Nerd Expert Journal with you and invite you to add positive encouraging comments to them!

