



# Words Their Way

Dear First and Second Grade Parents/Guardians,

District 833 will begin to implement a new Spelling Curriculum during the 2017-2018 school year called Words Their Way in our First and Second Grade classrooms. You may notice that it looks quite a bit different than what we have previously used. We have created this brochure to help you understand the program and why we have chosen it, and to hopefully answer any questions that might arise as we begin this year. We know that new curriculum can be confusing, so please do not hesitate to contact your student’s teacher, principal, reading specialist or curriculum leaders at the district level for further clarification. We look forward to a great year of learning and growing together as we explore Words Their Way!

Sincerely,

Matthew Dorschner, Director of Teaching and Learning Services

## WHAT IS WORDS THEIR WAY?

Words Their Way (WTW) is A developmental spelling, phonics, and vocabulary program. It was developed by Invernizzi, Johnston, Bear and Templeton. WTW is an approach to spelling and word study that is based on extensive research and includes stages of development and instructional levels that are critical to the way students learn to read. A word study program allows teachers to provide differentiated efficient, effective instruction in phonics, spelling and vocabulary.

Word study teaches students to examine words and to discover the regularities, patterns, and conventions of the English language in order to read, write, and spell. It increases specific knowledge of words including the spelling and meaning of individual words. Literacy is like a braid of interwoven threads: reading, oral language, and writing. Words Their Way demonstrates how exploration of orthographic knowledge can lead to the lengthening and strengthening of the literacy braid.

Why “WORD STUDY” instead of a “TRADITIONAL” spelling program? Research clearly indicates that memorization of lists of “spelling words” does not promote the development of spelling skills. In the past the traditional approach of “everyone gets the same weekly list and test on Friday”, many students who passed the spelling test were not able to transfer the knowledge to their writing! Memorizing a list of words and getting 100% on weekly tests does not necessarily mean your child is a good speller. It may just mean they are good at memorizing words for a test.



## Teaching Process

In word study, teachers encourage students to compare and contrast features in words. One common method for doing so is to have your student sort words. When sorting, students use their word knowledge to separate examples that go together from those that don't. This allows students to make generalizations about words and transfer this knowledge to new words. In addition to sorting, students may:

- hunt for words in their reading and writing that fit the pattern being studied
- construct a word wall illustrating examples of the different patterns they have studied
- keep a word study notebook to record the known patterns and reflect on their new understandings about words
- play games and activities to apply their word knowledge (Bear et al., 2000).

## Brain Research

Brain research suggests that students gain greater long-term memory when they are...

- actively engaged, manipulating ideas and objects
- using language to clarify and solidify learning
- interacting with peers in directed academic conversations
- investigating, testing hypothesis/making predictions
- recording and constructing their own learning



## How can you help at home?

Remind your child to sort the words into categories like the ones they are using in school. Your child should read each word aloud during this activity.

Ask your child to explain to you why the words are sorted in a particular way - what does the sort tell about spelling in general?

- Do a "blind sort" with your child. Lay down a word from each category as a header and then read the rest of the words aloud -one at a time. Encourage your child to spell the word and decide in which category it belongs. The student cannot rely on the visual cues to sort.
- Do a "buddy sort" with your child. Lay down the pattern headers and read the rest of the words aloud. The child must indicate where the word goes without seeing it and point to the pattern where the word

belongs. Add the word to the category the student selected.

- Assist your child in doing a "word hunt" by looking for words in a familiar book or magazine that have the same sound, pattern, or both. Try to find two or three words for each category.
- Encourage your child to write complete sentences that incorporate the words from each category and their meaning.
- Do a "speed sort" with your child. Sort the words into the correct category as fast as you can.
- Do a "writing sort". As you call out the words in a random order, your child should write them into the sorted categories. Add some words that fit the patterns but are not in the original sort.

## Words Their Way Language

**Sorting** – organizing words into groups based on similarities in their patterns or meaning.

**Oddballs** – words that cannot be grouped into any of the identified categories of a sort. Students should be taught that there are always words that "break the rules" and do not follow the general pattern.

**Vowel (represented by V)** – one of 6 letters causing the mouth to open when said(a, e, i, o, u, and usually y). A single vowel sound is heard in every syllable of a word.

**Consonants (represented by C)** – all letters other than the vowels. Consonant sounds are blocked by the lips, tongue, or teeth during articulation.



## References

Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction

Donald R. Bear (Author), Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, Francine Johnston

Word Journeys Kathy Ganske

Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom

Gay Su Pinnell, Irene C. Fountas, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, Arene C. Fountas

Words Their Way Spelling Inventories: Reliability and Validity Analyses Center for Research in Educational Policy

Word Study: A New Approach to Teaching Spelling [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org)

<http://www.coppellisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01000550/Centricity/domain/975/shared/wordstheirway.pdf>