

Understanding the Spelling-Meaning Connection: Structured Word Inquiry

Presenter: Pete Bowers

7th - 9th October 2011, Sofia Bulgaria

"Understanding is not mere knowledge of facts but inference about why and how, with specific evidence and logic - insightful connections and illustrations." p. 86
Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)

Applying the Principle of Backwards Design from UBD to Structured Word Inquiry: Enduring understandings of how the written word works

"This article by Pete Bowers makes some interesting connections between UbD, Real Spelling and the development of critical thinking skills in students."

Bill and Ochan Powell

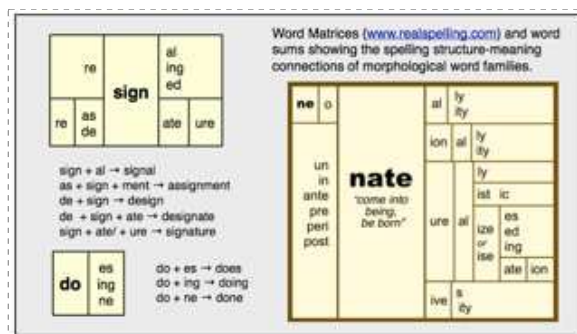
"Inquiry involves the synthesis, analysis and manipulation of knowledge." p. 4
Primary Years Programme Monograph (2001)

Overview:

Bringing the UBD & PYP principles of inquiry to spelling instruction

It may be surprising to find quotes about *inquiry*, *analysis*, *understanding* and *logic* in reference to spelling instruction. The assumption that English spelling is unreliable forces teachers to resort to rote memory instruction and treat spelling as an isolated topic. We exempt spelling instruction from the inquiry principles central to the UBD and PYP that we work so hard to establish in the rest of our curriculum.

This workshop employs the *21 Century Skills* of inquiry, critical thinking and problem solving to investigate the spellings of words like <sign>, <does>, and <know> in order to understand the underlying conventions that make sense of our meaning-based spelling system. That word knowledge can then be applied in any content area to reveal what Shane Templeton (*Words Their Way*) calls the "spelling-vocabulary" connections that link words like <natural>, <innate>, <nation> and <neonatal>! Investigating spelling with tools like the matrix and word sums (see below) show why, in direct contrast to our common assumptions, linguists (e.g., Chomsky, 1970, Venezky, 1970, 1999) describe English spelling as a highly coherent, reliable system. Noam Chomsky described it as near optimal!



This workshop teach participants

- how English spelling works, and
- practical strategies to teach spelling not as an isolated subject, but as a tool for developing spelling, vocabulary, reading, and critical thinking skills.

Objectives:

By the end of this three-day workshop participants will gain the foundational knowledge about how spelling works and

By the end of this three-day workshop participants will gain the foundational knowledge about how spelling works and effective instructional strategies for all grade levels. Participants will not only learn how to work with the teacher resources included in the course but also how to design their own structured word inquiry lessons and assessments so that they can integrate structured word inquiry into their everyday classroom. The ultimate goal of the teacher is obsolescence!

Potential Audience:

Because the focus of this workshop is making sense of how the written word works, it is appropriate for any educators who work with children from K-12. Generally reading specialists, lower and upper elementary teachers and middle school teachers are attracted to this workshop, but high school teachers also gain a great deal by learning how to teach children find meaning in written words to deepen students understanding of the terms and concepts in their subject area.

Agenda:

Drawing on the spiral curriculum model the key concepts (outlined below) are introduced through classroom-based activities and then revisited again and again in different contexts throughout the workshop. The interrelation of morphology and phonology is emphasized on day 1. The role of etymology receives more emphasis on day 2. Little new content is introduced on day 3 so that this time can emphasize practical application of the content introduced on the previous days.

Summary of spelling content

- The meaning structure of words: Using morphological analysis with word sums and the matrix to investigate how bases and affixes build word families.
- The sound structure of words: Understanding how graphemes and phonemes, work, including how they interrelate with morphology.
- Etymology: Understanding the role of word origin in spelling.

Summary of teaching content

- Practicing the steps and principles of structured word inquiry.
- Working with the linguistic tools of structured word inquiry. E.g., word sums, matrices, grapheme-phoneme charts, dictionaries, the word searcher, etymological references.
- Setting up the structured word inquiry classroom. E.g., building and using dynamic classroom reference charts, integration of structured word inquiry in to any subject area, planning lessons and assessments.
- Working and learning with Real Spelling and WordWorks resources.

Links to videos of classroom structured word inquiry lessons, resources and related research

- See this [link](#) for a model of a structured word inquiry lesson investigating the spelling of <know> including a video in a Gr. 1/2 classroom and other resources.
- See a video of working with word sums in a Grade 1 class at this [link](#) and this [link](#) for a video introducing word sums and matrices to a kindergarten class.
- See this [link](#) for an outline of structured word inquiry.
- Research on this instructional approach can be found [here](#).

Trainer's Profile

Peter Bowers is the founder of the WordWorks Literacy Centre www.wordworkskingston.com, a PhD student at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. He is a teacher with 10 years of experience in elementary classrooms mostly in international schools. Peter has conducted workshops at international schools in over 10 countries spanning the globe from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, to Europe, the Caribbean and North America. (See list of contacts [here](#).) He has also run workshops for organizations including the International Dyslexia Association and Learning Disabilities Associations in the US and Canada. His work as an educational researcher has been presented at scientific conferences in North America and Europe, and published in leading journals such as The Review of Educational Research and Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal

Investment:

Includes Teacher Resource book by Pete Bowers, Lunch, 2 coffee breaks and Certificate of participation.

Euro 550/- Closing date 15th September 2011

Early Bird offer Euro 490/- 1st August 2011

Venue:

Anglo American School of Sofia

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