

In Stillwater, our goal is to ensure our students experience a well-rounded literacy experience that develops all of the skills needed to become strong readers, writers, and thinkers.

UNITS OF STUDY *for* Teaching Reading

A WORKSHOP CURRICULUM, GRADES K-5

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Grades K-5

The Reading and Writing Project's approach to literacy instruction recognizes that "one size fits all" does not match the realities of the classrooms and schools in which they work. When you walk into a workshop classroom at any given moment, you'll see instruction that is designed to:

Help teachers address each child's individual learning,

Explicitly teach strategies students will use not only the day they are taught, but whenever they need them,

Support small-group work and conferring with multiple opportunities for personalizing instruction,

Tap into the power of a learning community as a way to bring all learners along,

Build choice and assessment-based learning into the very design of the curriculum,

Help students work with engagement so that teachers are able to coach individuals and lead small groups.

The routines and structures of reading and writing workshop are kept simple and predictable so that the teacher can focus on the complex work of teaching in a responsive manner to accelerate achievement for all learners.

To support comprehension and vocabulary development at home

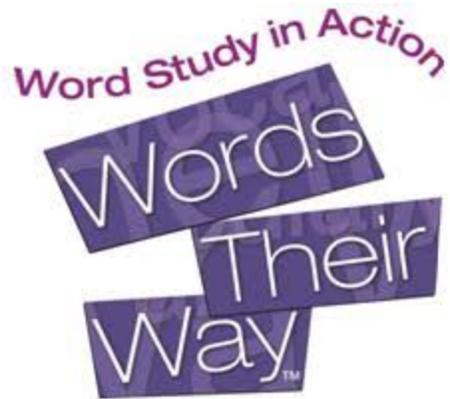
Read to your children as often as you are able, and when they have developed the necessary skills, have them read a wide variety of books that interest them.

Talk about the world around them at every opportunity to help build object and concept vocabulary.

Ask your child to tell you about what they are reading. Model a curiosity about reading and stories.

Use "Tell me more" or "What made you think that?" when discussing their reading. You can also affirm and elaborate by repeating what they say and adding details to the idea.

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Grades 2-5

In the past, we understood that learning meant providing time and opportunity to fill the brain with knowledge. To that end, we would provide students with lists of words to memorize and we would test them on their ability to recall words. This skill and drill allowed us to utilize only a small portion of the brain. For most of us, learning spelling meant cramming for Friday's test and forgetting the words by the next Monday. We know the brain strives to organize information into meaningful chunks. To learn new words, we must connect what we know to what we are trying to learn. The information must be meaningfully organized in order for the brain to make the most sense of it.

When we observe children at different ages, it becomes clear that there are certain recognizable stages they move through on their way to competent spelling. These stages are developmental, meaning students naturally move through them and with appropriate support, can become good spellers. At every stage, students learn to spell using a three pronged approach. In writing, students attend to certain features of words at each stage. These features are increasingly complex, but the brain is able to take what it already knows and connect it to the new features. Through reading, the student is able to recognize features and patterns in new contexts. This builds the ability to connect learning. Through proofreading their writing, students are able to apply in a concrete way what they have learned. All three parts are essential if students are to become competent spellers.

To support spelling and word reading development at home,

Play lots of word games including word searches, hangman, crossword puzzles, Scrabble, etc.

Model curiosity about words and how they often follow patterns. Help your child notice words that follow the pattern of the week as well as words that "break" the rules. Have your child sort their words by the way they sound as well as the way they look.

Help your child focus on words they are close to spelling correctly. If your child spells confident like this (confadint), help them focus on the feature that they are close to understanding. Remember that a step forward may mean a step backward.

Help your child notice their patterns in words they read at home. Making connections between words on their lists and words they are reading will move the patterns into long-term memory. Food boxes, newspapers, mailings, fliers, ads, and magazines can provide lots of opportunities to connect what they are learning in school to real life.

Help your child proofread their writing for words they *know how to spell*. Proofreading is an excellent way to help your child understand the importance of spelling correctly.