

## How to Help Your Child at Home

- Have your child sort his words the way they sound, as well as the way they look. Ask your child to explain why the words are sorted in a particular way.
- Do a *speed sort* in which your child sorts the words as fast as possible.
- Have your child do a *word hunt*, looking in books, magazines, newspaper, on food boxes, etc... for words that have the same sound, pattern, or both. Try to find two or three for each category.
- Help your child notice his patterns in words read at bedtime. Making connections between them will move the patterns into long-term memory.
- Help your child notice words that follow the patterns, as well as ones that “break” the rules.
- 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. Your child must show you where the word goes without seeing it. Lay it down and let your child move it if he or she is wrong. This can be done as a written sort as well.

### Reference

*Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* by Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnston

## Words Their Way Vocabulary

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

**Headers**–Words, pictures, or other labels used to designate categories for sorting.

**Oddballs**–Words that do not fit the targeted feature in a sort.

**Vowel** (represented by V)-One of six letters causing the mouth to open when vocalized (a,e,i,o,u, and sometimes y).

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

**Word families**–Words that have the same vowel and ending letters (example: cat, bat, fat, sat, etc...).

**Digraph**–Letter combinations that have only one sound (examples: sh, ch, wh).

**Blend**–Letter combinations in which each sound can be heard (examples: bl, gr, sp).

**Base word**–A word to which prefixes and/or suffixes are added.

**Prefix**–Letters added to the beginning of a base word which change the word’s meaning (examples: un-,pre-, re-).

**Suffix**–A letter or letters added to the end of a base word to change the word’s form (examples: -ly, -es, -ing).

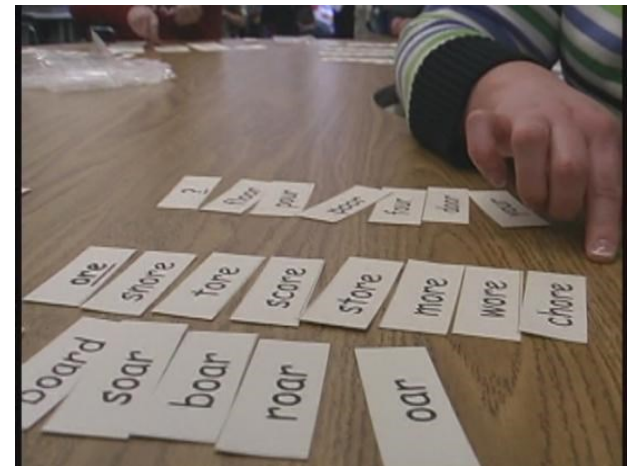
**Affix**–A prefix or suffix added to a base word.

# Words Their Way

## *The Word Study Approach to Teaching Spelling*



McLean County Unit District 5  
Normal, Illinois



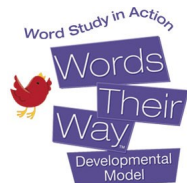
*Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember.  
Let me do and I understand.*

–Confucius

**UNIT 5**  
**LITERACY**  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## What is *Words Their Way*?

*Words Their Way* is a developmental spelling, phonics, and vocabulary program. It was developed by Bear, Invernizzi, Johnston, and Templeton. This word study approach allows students to examine, manipulate, compare and categorize words in order to make their own discoveries about words. Based on information about a child's spelling errors and developmental stage, teachers guide students in their study of sounds, patterns and meanings of words.



## Word Study vs. Traditional Spelling Program

Word study teaches students to closely examine words to discover the regularities, patterns, and conventions of the English language in order to read, write, and spell. It increases a student's knowledge of words, both the spelling AND meaning of the words. Word study meets the students at their developmental level, therefore students will be studying different lists, and not simply memorizing a list for a Friday test. It provides students with the "why" behind the spelling of words.

## How do children learn to spell?

Research has shown that children move through recognizable, developmental stages when learning how to become a competent speller. They attend to certain features and patterns in words when they read and write. This knowledge increases as students take what they know and connect it to new features.

Stage	Grade Range
Emergent	K-1st grade
Letter Name	K-2nd grade
Within Word	1st-4th grade
Syllables & Affixes	3rd-8th grade
Derivational	5th-12th grade

## Daily Word Study

Students will be "hands on" as they sort approximately 20 words into groups by comparing and contrasting word features (i.e. sh, ch, wh and th OR the prefixes re-, ex-, in- and de-). They will make generalizations about words and transfer this knowledge to new words. Depending on your child's stage of development, your student may:

- hunt for words in his reading or writing that fit the pattern
- keep a word study notebook to record new understandings about words
- play games that apply word knowledge

## How will my child be assessed?

Although traditional tests were an easy way of assessing short-term spelling learning, the goal of word study is for students to learn smaller words that can help build larger words, and then to apply what they have learned in their daily writing. Your child's progress will be monitored through teacher observations, blind sorts and unit progress checks.

## Why do the words seem easier than when I was in school?

When we were in school, the theory behind our study of words was rote memorization. The theory behind word study today is feature analysis. The brain organizes information into meaningful chunks. To learn new words we must connect what we are trying to learn to what we already know. In order to help the brain make these connections, word study uses familiar words. This enables students to transfer the features of a word into their writing.

