



# Lake Orion Community Schools

## Word Study Program



### **Words Their Way: Word Study Program for Phonics, Vocabulary, & Spelling Instruction**

Words Their Way (WTW) is a developmental word study program, developed by Invernizzi, Johnston, Bear, and Templeton. WTW is an approach to spelling and word knowledge that is based on extensive research on how kids learn to spell and read. Students benefit from differentiated instruction in phonics, spelling and vocabulary.

To accomplish this goal, students are taught how to examine words to learn the regularities that exist in the English Language. They are also taught some irregularities (a.k.a. oddballs). The process of sorting words into categories is the basis of the Words Their Way. When students sort words, they are engaged in the active process of searching, comparing, contrasting, and analyzing. Word sorts help students organize what they know about words and to form generalizations that they can then apply to new words they encounter in their reading. As they demonstrate mastery, they move through developmental stages. It is not unusual for students to spend a year or longer in a developmental stage especially in lower elementary. We often refer to a student being early, mid or late in a stage to help differentiate how they have progressed on the developmental continuum.

### **Developmental Stages**

**Emergent Spellers:** Students spell their words with random marks, representational drawing, mock linear or letter-like writing, random letters and numbers (ages 1-7, pre k-mid first).

**Letter Name Spellers:** Students generally spell their words with initial and final consonants and some vowels (ages 4-9, kdg thru early third).

**Within Word Spellers:** Students spell their words with initial and final consonants, and with some blends and digraphs. In addition, they use some long- and short- vowel letter combinations (ages 6-12, grades 1 thru 4).

**Syllables & Affixes Spellers:** Students are able to spell some words that include consonant doubling, common suffixes, and past tense endings (ages 8-18, grades 3-8).

**Derivational Relations Spellers:** Students begin making connections between spelling and meaning. They begin learning internal morphology in syllables (bases and roots) as well as prefixes (ages 10+, grades 5-12).

At the outset, WTW may surprise parents. For those who had a traditional spelling program in school, with a list of random words to memorize and a test on Fridays, this will be different. Research clearly indicates that many students were getting 100% on Friday spelling tests but were not necessarily good spellers. These scores suggest that they were good at memorizing words for weekly tests. Conversely, WTW teaches students to look critically at words so they can build a deeper understanding of how spelling works to represent sounds and meaning. This is accomplished by sorting words into like categories based on the features words share.

In a nutshell, you will see...

- Students who are grouped into appropriate developmental levels based on word study inventories. Not all kids in the classroom will have the same words.
- Students introduced to a new group of words with a specific feature as its focus weekly or bi-weekly.
- Students working with hands-on activities to sort words with common characteristics into defined groups. They may also complete word hunts, create a word wall, keep a word study notebook, or play games to apply their word knowledge.
- Students assessed using various measures not just weekly spelling tests.

Students will be assessed frequently. Assessment structures vary based on developmental levels of children. Some teachers will choose to send words home to be studied in addition to the practice at school, while other teachers may choose to only practice the words at school. Both decisions are supported by the school district. Students may be assessed in multiple ways: correct identification or use of the Word Study feature (pattern/rule), correct spelling of words on classroom assessment and/or correct spelling in their daily work. Often assessments include words that may or may not have been shared with families to see if the child can apply the word pattern to a new word(s) that was not studied. Researchers agree, a child's use of their word knowledge in their written work in class on a regular basis is what matters most! Lake Orion has identified year-end expectations to monitor the growth and development of our students. Please note that these expectations are for students who have been immersed in Words Their Way instruction for several years. At the onset of the program, we expect that many of our upper elementary students may fall short of these targets with the number of students meeting the expectation increasing each year that the program is in place for that child.

### End of the Year Expectations

Grade Level	Word Study Developmental Stage
<b>K</b>	Middle Letter Name-Alphabetic
<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	Early Within Word Pattern
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	Late Within Word Patterns
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	Early Syllables & Affixes
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	Middle Syllables & Affixes
<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	Late Syllables & Affixes

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## Supporting Your Child's Word Study Development



### Home Support Activities

- Do a “sort” with your child. Remind your child to sort words into categories like the ones at school, having him/her read each word aloud as he/she places the words. Ask your child to explain how he/she has sorted the words.
- Have your child complete a “blind sort.” Lay one word from each category in a separate column and have your child decide in which category the remaining words belong.
- Do a “buddy sort” with your child. Lay the pattern/column headers in front of your child. Have your child listen to the word, visualize it in his/her head and determine the category without seeing the word.
- Assist your child in doing a “word hunt” by looking for words in books or magazines with the same pattern. Try to find 2-3 words for each category.
- Help your child focus on words they are close to spelling correctly. If your child spells confident (confadint), help them focus on the feature he/she is close to understanding.
- Help your child notice their patterns in words they are reading at home. Making connections between words they are sorting at school or home and words they are reading will move them into their long-term memory.
- 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.

### Glossary

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

**Oddballs**-words that can't be grouped into the categories of the sort.

**Sound marks //**-sounds marks around a letter or pattern tell the student to only focus on the sound rather than the actual letters.

**Vowel (represented by V)**-one of the six letters causing the mouth to open when vocalized (a,e,i,o,u, sometimes y). There is a single vowel sound in every syllable of a word.

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

### Additional Information

[Words their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction](#) by Donald R. Bear, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, Francine Johnston

[Words Their Way Spelling Inventories: Reliability and Validity Analyses](#) Center for Research in Educational Policy

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