

Always a Forever Speller

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Teacher Inquiry Paper

April 28, 2004

Abstract

How can I provide students with motivating opportunities to engage them in spelling instruction? How can I help students apply their spelling words to everyday reading and writing? This inquiry explores approaches taken to help struggling spellers apply their knowledge and spelling in practical, everyday writing. By creating a spelling lending library and an engaging spelling station, my second grade students grew as "forever" spellers.

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I. Background Information

Teaching Context

I am currently a Professional Development School intern at Ferguson Township Elementary School in State College School District. Through my yearlong internship, I had the opportunity to work in two diverse, self-contained classrooms. August through December, I spent majority of my day in a first grade classroom and assisted daily in a second grade classroom for an hour of reading instruction. For the remainder of the year, January through June, I am full-time in the second grade classroom and visit the first grade daily for an hour of reading instruction. Both classrooms have given me experience of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all my students.

After coming to the second grade classroom permanently in January, I gradually took over responsibilities as a developing teacher. I was already comfortable with many of the students since I had spent the first half of the year with them for reading instruction. I had guided all 21-second graders through two instructional books using a Balanced Literacy approach. By the end of January, my mentor and I decided that spelling instruction should become a book time (instructional reading) station for the reason that many students needed the small group instruction. Before I was in the class full-time, my mentor handled spelling as a large group.

I was very eager to take on a spelling station. I saw it as an opportunity to integrate my creativity into the instruction. I began my spelling station on January 20th using Rebecca Sitton's Spell-to-Write Program, adapted by the State College Area School District in 1999. Every spelling unit would begin with a preview (traditionally known as a pre-test) of five high-frequency core words and three bonus words from the unit. My daily station

consisted of seven to ten minutes of a mini-lesson focused on the core words and then ten minutes of a spelling game. As those first couple weeks past, I became overly excited about my spelling station. I was constantly using other resources to develop more lessons and games. I could tell some students were starting to give me their attention and take a liking for the spelling instruction. I started to wonder how I could motivate all of my students in spelling. I wondered if their motivation in spelling would not only improve their spelling scores, but also carry over to their writing.

Wonderings

After a few weeks at my spelling station, I began to worry about the struggling students. At this point in the year, several students were exited from Title I for reading. Their reading began to soar but they still struggled in spelling and writing. They were not able to make a connection between the words they were reading and the words they were writing. Research shows that “developmentally, reading is a skill that precedes the acquisition of spelling...this is because it is easier to learn to read than it is to learn to spell” (Sitton, 1997, p. 17). I really wanted to focus on these students, therefore I started to ask some questions. After some time and research, I was able to formulate a clear list of wonderings to begin my project.

1. How can I turn students on to spelling in a way that they are motivated to improve their spelling and writing skills?
2. What can I include in my spelling instruction that will be most beneficial to my struggling, remedial students?
3. How can I differentiate my instruction to meet the needs of the excelling students?
4. How can I use learning modalities to teach to the various learners in the class?

5. How could creating a home-school connection help students' motivation and achievement?
6. How can I create a spelling station that will help students apply spelling in everyday writing, build phonemic awareness, promote word analysis strategies while encouraging overall excitement?
7. How can I instruct spelling in a way that the students are able to make practical application of their spelling words?

I started my inquiry with these questions, focusing on my struggling readers and their applied spelling. Because I was teaching the spelling instruction to all of the students, I also had to think about how I could differentiate it for all students to benefit. I was important to me that all my students excelled and learned from my instruction. I knew that it was important that the students performed well on their spelling reviews (tests), but also that they were able to take it on to the next level—writing. As a sub-set of reading and writing, spelling knowledge supports children's reading and writing development (Beckham-Hungler, Williams, Smith, Dudley-Marling, 2003). Therefore, it was most important that the students were able to take the spelling words and use them correctly in their everyday, practical writing. Because I used State College's adapted spelling program, I researched Rebecca Sitton and her program and many other experts before conducting my inquiry.

Research

Rebecca Sitton's Spell-to-Write Program

Rebecca Sitton is an advocate for spelling literacy. In 1997, she published the *Spelling Sourcebook Series*, a spelling program that developed as a result of teachers'

frustrations and disappointing results with traditional spelling curricula. “It’s your program...I just listened to your calls for help and created resources to allow you to cultivate students’ lifetime spelling literacy...your way,” Sitton said in her 1999 seminar handbook, *Increasing Student Spelling Achievement in Daily Writing Across the Curriculum*.

Sitton’s program focuses on the most frequently words used in writing. For many years, researchers collected data to create a list of the highest-utility words in children’s everyday writing. The culmination list of the 1200 high-frequency writing words (see Appendix A) is based on the American Heritage Word Frequency Study (Carroll, Davies, Richman) and supported by the studies of Gates, Horn, Rinsland, Greene and Loomer, Harris and Jacobson. Milton Jacobson conducted a study in 1985 using 22,000 students in grades 2-12. His work determined the validity of word-frequency studies. It showed that students continuously use the same basic core of high-frequency words in their writing (Sitton, 1999). The words are listed in order of their frequency of use in everyday writing. In second grade, we study and master the first 130 words of the list, 30 of those being introduced in first grade (See Appendix A). The first 100 words make up 50% of all the words used in adult writing. Since students use fewer words in their writing, the first 100 words makes up approximately 68% of the total words used in student writing (Sitton, 1999). I will refer to the first grade words, 1-30, as “no excuse” words and the second grade words, 31-130, as “forever speller” words. These are the terms that the students are familiar with and that we use in the classroom.

The Spelling Sourcebooks provide the foundation and guidelines for customizing a program tailored to the needs of specific teachers and students...A strong curriculum does not just happen. It is shaped through

a conscientious formulation of specific goals and objectives that support the desired learning outcomes (Sitton, 1997, p.9).

After researching Sitton, I was able to use her program as a guide as I developed spelling instruction that was effective, meaningful, and appropriate for my class. Below I have included Sitton's practices supported by her research, which became the foundation of my inquiry.

Practices Supported By Sitton Research from *Spelling Sourcebook 1*, pg. 83

The test-study-test method of instruction

This method is superior to study-test methodology.

The self-corrected test procedure

The single most important factor contributing to spelling success is the administration of a pretest in which the students correct their own tests with teacher guidance.

A comparison of pretest and posttest results

Students should maintain their own performance records, set goals for themselves, and note progress.

An independent word-study procedure

Students who utilize a multi-modality independent word-study procedure become more capable spellers than students who do not.

Focus on high-use writing vocabulary

Spelling is a subskill of writing and should therefore emphasize words needed in everyday writing.

Spelling those words the students already know and understand

Students should have mastered through listening, speaking, and reading those words identified for spelling instruction.

Words presented in list form

Words for study should initially be presented in a list, as opposed to sentence or paragraph form.

Words presented as whole words

Words should be presented as whole words, instead of in syllables.

Words presented in print

When words are presented in print, students can more easily form and retain a correct visual image of the words.

No premarking of hard words or hard parts of words

Predetermining for students the words or parts of words that may be difficult for them causes more difficulty in mastering those words in daily writing.

Rules limited to those of high utility

There are very few spelling rules that provide the students with valid spelling direction. Rules must be carefully selected so that they apply to a large number of words, have few exceptions, and are easy to remember.

Use of brief daily structured-practice sessions

Structured practice should be limited to 10-15 minutes daily.

Practice that provides for multiple writings of the words

In order to internalize their spelling words for transference into daily writing, students need many opportunities to write the words in various kinds of activities.

Ample opportunities to use the words in daily writing

Spelling is for writing, and spelling instruction must include abundant practice within the writing process.

Use of related language skills only as an aid to spelling

Such related language skills as phonics, dictionary practice, structural analysis, handwriting, parts of speech, etc, must never take precedence over spelling as students initially study their words.

Use of in-context writing for spelling assessment

The only valid indicator of spelling success is consistent use of correctly spelled words in a writer's everyday writing. Authentic spelling assessment must mirror the use of spelling in the real world.

Words Their Way

Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary and Spelling is a collection of research conducted by Donald Bear, Shane Templeton, Marcia Invernizzi, and Francine Johnston that provides a practical way to study words. The research focuses on invented and developmental spelling and orthographic development. They believe their instruction supports the fact that, "students' learning of spelling and vocabulary is based on their

developmental level (and) based on the way that they are naturally inclined to learn, on their natural course of conceptual learning” (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnston, 1996, p.11). The researchers believe that students developmentally begin with invented spelling because it shows the child how written words and language work. The spelling stages defined by this research are: Preliterate, Early Letter Name, Middle and Late Letter Name, Within Word Pattern, Syllable Juncture, and Derivational Constancy. To compare these stages with the State College Area School District’s curriculum and benchmarks, children instructed in the Emergent Stage and into the Developing Stage would be considered in the Preliterate Stage. The Developing Stage is the end of the year benchmark for first grade. However, several of my below average students are still working on the requirements to meet this benchmark. Children instructed in the Developing Stage and into the Beginning Stage would be in the Letter Name Stage. The Beginning Stage is the end of the year benchmark for second grade. As of March 2004, most of the average students in my class were still working on the requirements for the benchmark. The advanced students, being instructed in the Beginning Stage and into the Expanding Stage, would fit into the researcher’s Within Word Pattern Stage. The Expanding Stage is the end of the year benchmark for third grade however, many high-achieving students have completed all of the requirements for the second grade benchmark and moved on to the next level. Based on the number of words spelled correctly in a piece of writing, a teacher could get a good sense of what stage of development that child is in. Word study is based on the developmental stages of spelling therefore, the activities presented by the researchers follow that manner.

Leigh Van Horn wrote the article, *Spelling Our Way*, based on the research of *Words Their Way*. Van Horn noted how important spelling knowledge is in the

development of writing. A lack of spelling knowledge can prevent children from writing opening and freely. This then inhibits their writing ability and limits it to only words they can spell correctly (Van Horn, 2002).

Chandler & Mapleton Teacher-Research Group

Chandler & Mapleton Teacher-Research Group, a school wide collective of K-5 teachers, conducted a two-year inquiry into the teaching and learning of spelling. They collected students' writing, interviewed them about strategy use, and observed their spelling during writer's workshop. The research group also thought it was important to include parents in their study. Therefore, they surveyed parents about their beliefs related to spelling. Not only did the teachers want to improve spelling in their own classroom, the inquiry was designed to include the whole school. A school-wide writing prompt was given for spelling analysis for the teachers to understand the development of spelling across the grade levels. In order to analysis the data, the teachers designed a school wide rubric, giving students grades for spelling four times a year. Before the group's inquiry project, spelling grades were solely based on test scores. Now the teachers were able to focus on practical spelling in context. The teacher-researchers focused on such questions as,

- How does the percentage of correctly spelled words compare from grade to grade?
- At what grade level does correct spelling become common for words that children use most often in their writing?
- How do students at various levels spell the same word triggered by the topic?
- Where, across the set of papers, do most writers at a grade level begin to use conventions such as contractions, inflectional endings, and doubled consonants?
- What kinds of words do older writers invent? Does their risk-taking in first-draft spelling keep pace with the risk-taking evident in the younger writer's work?

-What kinds of editing do you notice? Do students self-correct common words? Do they make more than one attempt at words about which they're unsure?

-When students misspell words, what evidence of spelling logics do you see? Are they relying only on sound as a spelling strategy, or do their errors indicate attention to visual information and/or meanings? (Chandler-Olcott, Gibson, 2004, p.5)

As I analyzed my own data, I was able to refer to the questions developed by the Chandler & Mapleton Teacher-Researcher Group.

II. Inquiry Plan

After collecting research and developing wonderings, I was able to begin my inquiry plan. Since I was currently instructing a spelling station, I had to decide what else I could do to carry out my inquiry plan.

Procedure

The first ideas I had for my inquiry plan involved only in-school instruction. I used many resources to create engaging and fun spelling games for my 20-minute spelling station. I used Rebecca Sitton's *Spelling Sourcebook* as a guide to develop mini-lessons. The mini-lessons included a variety of activities: literature, writing, vocabulary building, synonyms, antonyms, homophones, prefixes, suffixes, roots, multiple meanings, syllabication, pronunciations, alphabetical order, compounds, contractions, double letters, palindromes, analogies, visual activities, word origins, dictionary skills, phonics, structural analysis, thinking skills, and many more. As my inquiry evolved, I tended to only use Sitton's Sourcebook as a guide for mini-lessons. I focused more directly on the needs of my students. If one group needed extra help with prefixes, we would focus on that. If another group struggled with word endings, that is what we worked on. I would begin the day with the same idea for each group, however, I saw it more important to make the lessons developmentally appropriate for the diverse groups.

Not only did I change and adapt the mini-lessons, I did the same for the instructional games. To engage students in spelling, it is important to examine words from a variety of perspectives. This better enables students to understand and remember the spelling of a word (Templeton, 2003). I made sure to include games that focused on a variety of

learning modalities. Some games were visual, like Magic Hat. Some were kinesthetic, like Spelling Basketball. I created many games that would benefit all of the students. I used mainly games from Karen Kellaher's *Spelling Secrets* and Nancy Jolson Leber's *25 Super-Fun Spelling Games*. Using these games, I constructed a general lesson plan (see Appendix C), which I could use as a guide for each spelling unit. However, the more I got to know my students as spellers, I adapted those games to better suit them individually.

The spelling station was going well, but now I wanted to create a home-school connection. I wanted the students to be thinking about spelling in and out of school. According to the Chandler & Mapleton Teacher-Research Group, parents were using traditional methods of spelling instruction, like drill and practice, at home. I wanted to create a way to send home more authentic ways to practice spelling. I finally decided that I would create a spelling lending library.

The spelling lending library consisted of 13 games to play with spelling. The games included some I found in resource books and some that I created. The list included: Magic Hat, Dot-to-Dot, Archaeological Dig, Spelling Space Race, Bingo, Letter to Miss Shagren, Concentration, Word Search, Spelling Soccer, Tic-tac-toe, Word Roller Coaster, Go Fish, and Rock Climb (see Appendix B). I put each game in a plastic bag with: all of the materials needed to play the game, a list of forever speller words, and an information card. The information card was to be filled out by the parents after they played a game with their child. It asked how long they played the game and any comments they had. Examples of the cards are in Appendix B. The students would be able to check out a game for the night to take home. They would then be required to return it the next day. After creating the games, I sent home a letter to parents (see Appendix B), informing them about the recent

spelling excitement in the classroom. I explained the nature of the spelling lending library and the importance of extra practice at home. The letter also discussed why spelling is so important.

“Spelling games are fun and beneficial for extra practice, however, it is most important that your child is applying the words in his/her everyday writing. Encourage writing at home—about anything! In order to internalize spelling words to apply to daily writing, children need ample opportunities to practice using a variety of activities.”

Throughout my inquiry, I continued to teach the spelling station and run the spelling lending library. The students began to show excitement at a new level. Every game was going home every night with a child. The students checked in and out the games first thing in the morning. I found that the library was becoming a big chore for me every morning. When a game came back I would have to replenish the supplies and replace the information card. It was a lot of work for me because I had other tasks to complete as I took over more responsibilities in the classroom. Therefore, in the second week of the spelling lending library, I hired a student as the secretary. I chose a student that finishes her work on time, therefore she had free time in the morning. She successfully ran the library from that day on. She kept a record sheet (see Appendix B) of students who took out games and when they returned them, kept the games updated with materials, and collected the information cards. When the lending library became too much for me to handle, I was frightened that its success would dwindle. However, the student secretary kept the motivation and enthusiasm levels high.

Data collection

After implementing the spelling lending library, I was able to start collecting my data. I used student work, test scores, parent communication, field notes, and reflections to collect my data. Before I began to actually collect my data, I had to decide which students I would use to be my sample. I chose 12 students, referred to as Students A-L, that would represent the whole class. Student A and B are the only two students that comprise the lowest reading ability group in the class and they receive Title I reading support. Student D, E and G make up the bottom half of the average group of students. Both Student D and Student G were recently exited from Title I reading. Student E is still currently in Title I reading, but in a higher group than Student A and B. Student C, F, and H are in the average ability reading group. Student I, J, K, L are in the advanced reading group.

I began to collect samples of my students' work in order to assess the use of no excuse and forever speller words in their everyday writing. I collected writing samples that were teacher controlled (reading response journals) and student controlled (writer's workshop stories). I also recorded the students' review (test) scores over a period of time (see Appendix D). I included scores from December 19, 2003 until April 20, 2004. I instructed the spelling station from January 20 until April 6, however, the span of my inquiry covers test scores on March 5, March 26, and April 6. I collected parent communication data through information cards returned from the parents. I used it as a way to evaluate the effectiveness of the lending library. The cards were able to tell me questions the parents had, comments about the game, and suggestions to improve it.

Daily, I made observations of my students at my spelling station. Most of my observations were informal as I observed how they responded to my mini-lessons and instructional games. I was able to take the information I gained from my informal observations to adapt my future lessons. Weekly, I reflected about my inquiry process in my journal to my Professional Development Associate. I used the journal as a way to reflect on my progress, wonderings, and implications. I also used literature as a way to collect data. By knowing what experts researched about the topic led me to new insights that I was able to apply in my inquiry process.

Data analysis

Before I analyzed my data, I already knew my inquiry project made a difference in the classroom. My students were motivated in my spelling station and were eager to take home a game every night. Review scores (see Appendix D) reflected their practice and hard work. Student A and B, the struggling readers, soared in spelling instruction. They both scored 100% on every review during my inquiry. Student J, K, and L all scored 100% on the reviews, however, they have been consistent on every review since December 19, 2003. The rest of the students fluctuated in their scores. However, I can state that overall the students improved in their spelling scores through my inquiry. Student G, a struggling writer and speller, improved from 50% on March 5, 2004 to 100% on April 20, 2004. Student E received 50% on February 25, 2004 and improved his scores to 84% and 92% over the next four reviews. After just a week of my spelling lending library, everyone in the class scored 100% on the review except for Student E (92%) and Student G (76%). This data was incredible support to my inquiry but are the students able to apply the

spelling in their everyday writing? Research shows that students who do well on weekly tests transfer little of the word knowledge to their writing (Beckham-Hungler, Williams, Smith, Dudley-Marling, 2003). Therefore, I knew my collection of writing samples were crucial to support my inquiry.

In order to analyze the writing samples, I divided the work into two categories—teacher-controlled and student-controlled. Reading response journals are completed after a group finishes an instructional book at book time. This is teacher-controlled because it is a specific assignment given by the teacher and the students are limited as to what they can write about. I collect reading response journals from all 12 students. I did not focus on the entire list of no excuse and forever speller words. I not only on the total list of no excuse and forever speller words, but also on the 30 forever speller words I introduced throughout my inquiry. I coded the journals using highlighters. A yellow mark means the word is a correctly spelled no excuse or forever speller word. If the word is boxed in yellow, that means the no excuse or forever words was spelled incorrectly. I word that is highlighted in yellow and boxed in purple means the word was one I focused on during my inquiry. If the word is only boxed in purple that means the word was one I introduced during my inquiry and was spelled incorrectly. I also highlighted words that come from the core words we focused on. For example, “go” is a forever speller word in the list of 30 I introduced to the class. Since we also studied tenses, “goes” would be highlighted in their writing as well. Also, if we focused on synonyms or antonyms in a mini-lesson for a word, I would highlight those words as they occurred in the writing samples. In addition to forever speller words, I highlighted bonus words from each week’s spelling list as students used them correctly in their writing.

I chose current writer's workshop stories to be my student-controlled data. In writer's workshop, the students are free to write about a topic of their choice. Sometimes students are not thinking about spelling during this time because they are more concerned about getting their thoughts and content on the paper. Therefore, writer's workshop stories were very important to my inquiry. I coded the stories in the same manner as described for the reading response journals.

III. What I Learned

Claim 1: Practical Application

My data analysis proves that most students were able to apply new words introduced through both the spelling instruction and games in writer's workshop and their reading response journals.

Claim 1a: The students were able to use words correctly in writer's workshop.

Evidence to Support Claim 1a: After coding a sample of current writer's workshop stories, my data shows that the students used 97 words correctly out of 110 words attempted. This calculates to 88.2% accuracy in their writing. This data comes from eight samples of work from six students. I only used samples from six students because I had set prior standards. The paper had to be in-progress, started during or after my spelling instruction, and more than five pages in length. Several students had stories in-progress, however, they started them before my spelling instruction. Some students had less than five pages and it was difficult to tell the direction of the paper. Overall, I think the eight papers I used gave me conclusive results. The students were using the words correctly most of the time in their student-controlled writing. This shows that the students were thinking about spelling beyond the spelling station. My data proves that students who do well on weekly tests are able to transfer their words knowledge to their writing. I can account the misspelled 11.8% to the research of Beckham-Hungler, Williams, Smith, and Dudley-Marling. It says that "misspelled words in writing are simply due to carelessness or because they were focusing more on the meaning and function of their message than its form" (Beckham-Hungler, Williams, Smith, Dudley-Marling, 2003, p. 302).

Claim 1b: The students were able to use the introduced words correctly in their reading response journal entries.

Evidence to Support Claim 1b: Focusing only on the 30 forever speller words I introduced during my inquiry, the students attempted 13 out of the 30 words correctly. That calculates to 43% of the words used correctly. This evidence does not say that the students misspelled the remaining 57%, it says that the students only attempted 13 of the 30 words in their writing. This is amazing data to support because it proves the students learned from my spelling instruction and games. The students were just introduced to these words and then were able to apply them correctly in less than a month's time. According to Sitton, these words are needed in everyday writing. They are words the students already know and understand because they should have mastered them through listening, speaking and reading (Sitton, 1997). This proves that the words introduced were very important to the students' development as writers.

Claim 2: Motivation

The students became motivated to spell “forever speller” and “no excuse” words correctly.

Claim 2a: The students were very excited to play games each night with their families.

Evidence to Support Claim 2a: By observing the students every morning as they checked in and checked out spelling games, I was able to note their excitement. The lending library record sheet (Appendix B) proves that the students were motivated to take home games every night. It was impressive to note that those students who struggled in spelling were always the ones to take home a game. They were motivated by the games to practice at

home. Student A said, “I’m really good at that (referring to a spelling mini-lesson taught by my mentor). Those games helped me a lot!” This shows the student was able to connect what he was doing in a lesson to what he had practiced in his game at home. Several information cards support the students’ enthusiasm for the spelling lending library games (see Appendix D). The evidence says it best!

- “Student F liked this game a lot. It kept his interest while helping his spelling”
- “It was fun.”
- “She loved it! Good practice with words too!”
- “She really liked it.”
- “I liked it.”
- “fun!”
- “Student L liked the game. He is excited to get his next game.”
- “ “I liked it”, said Student G, who won.”
- “Student C liked this game- it was fun- she won twice!”
- “Creative and clever.”

Claim 2b: The spelling review scores increased as student motivation levels increased.

Evidence to Support Claim 2b: As mentioned in the data analysis, I was able to conclude that the student review scores (see Appendix D) increased among the class as a whole throughout my inquiry. Because my inquiry focused on student motivation and how I taught my spelling instruction, I can say that the review scores increased as a result. The students became more responsible for their spelling as their motivation increased. They were excited about spelling, therefore, wanted to apply it in their review scores. The review is not set up like a traditional spelling test. The review is a paragraph in which the students must insert the spelling words. This puts the spelling words in context for the students to learn, unlike spelling lists which are in isolation (Schlagal, 2002).

Claim 3: Parent Feedback

Using parent feedback from the information cards sent home in the games enabled me to gauge the effectiveness of the spelling games and the home-school connection.

Claim 3a: I was able to use feedback from parents to alter the games to differentiate the instruction for varying student needs. This also helped support my instruction.

Evidence to Support Claim 3a: I created the spelling lending library for all of the students in the class, not just the struggling spellers. I intended that the struggling spellers would take advantage of the extra practice—which they did. However, the advanced students were just as interested and excited about the games. Many of the words are not challenging for the advanced students, however they still took home games to practice. I received information cards back from parents that read, “Student K liked playing but the words weren’t a challenge.” “Words were easy for Student K but she still liked it.” This made me question how I could differentiate the instruction for the varying needs of students. I decided to return to the games and update them. I added to the instructions, “If your child needs a challenge, use bonus words, add endings to forever speller words, make compound words, etc.” The game went home the next night with the same student and the card returned read, “good spelling exercise.” I was able to use feedback from the parents to alter the games to better suit the needs of the students. According to Shane Templeton’s inquiry, “parents see spelling as extremely important in their children’s literacy education” (Templeton, 2003, p. 48). The parent feedback was very important and helpful to my instruction.

Claim 3b: The games provided a home-school connection where students were spending educational time at home each night with a parent or family member.

Evidence to Support Claim 3b: I believe that a strong home-school connection is important for a child's education. Therefore, I created the spelling lending library as a way to create that home-school connection between the parents, students and myself.

Unfortunately in today's society, parents and children are sometimes too busy for each other. Parents have work. Children have baseball practice or dance rehearsals. With the rise of technology, many students place themselves in front of a video game for the entire night. By sending home my spelling games, I knew there was a chance to bring a family together for as little as 20 minutes. Many students have older and younger siblings that they practiced their spelling words with. The information cards again prove that families spent beneficial educational time together.

- "Enjoyed playing with her sister"
- "We had a lot of fun and it was a great way to learn."
- "Very fun game. She played with Mom and then Dad. This really is a good wa to learn new words."
- "We had fun playing this game."
- "We had fun."
- "She enjoyed making a game for mom."

IV. Conclusions and Future Directions

Implications for Teacher Practice

I have learned a great deal from my inquiry project. I learned about effective spelling instruction, how to motivate my students, and how to create a home-school spelling connection. I will take my inquiry and discoveries with me as I travel about in my educational career. Not only did I learn about spelling, I learned a lot about myself as an educator, which is just as valuable. I was excited about what I was doing and what I was teaching my students about spelling. I made everything I did student-centered. My inquiry shows that my excitement directly related to the students' motivation and excitement. It is very important for a teacher to be passionate about what he/she teaches because that is how the information is portrayed to the students. This inquiry proves that teacher excitement is vital to produce student equal excitement. As a teacher I am passionate about everything I teach, making it the best learning experience for my students.

This inquiry project has also taught me what it is to be a teacher-researcher. It is important for teachers to keep current in the field of education. By being a researcher, teachers can improve upon current practices and implement the newest ideas. There is no doubt that I will use this inquiry in my future classroom to guide my spelling instruction. After seeing the benefits of my spelling lending library, I will implement it in my future classroom. As a teacher, I am always witnessing opportunities for new wonderings and inquiry projects. I believe I will use inquiry as I continue to grow throughout my educational career as a life-long learner.

New Wonderings

New wonderings constantly arose throughout my inquiry process. Even though my inquiry paper is complete, that does not mean my process is. My spelling lending library continues to prosper as usual because the students are still motivated. I will continue to assess their writing for applied spelling. I wonder: Will the students continue to spell the forever speller words correctly that I instructed months after they were taught? Will they apply their current forever speller words in the same manner? How long will the students be motivated in playing these games? If I could start my inquiry earlier in the year and continue it throughout the year, what kind progress would I see? If I started this earlier in the year, would those struggling spellers have less of a gap between their reading and writing? What progress could those students make in their writing if they had the spelling motivation at the beginning of the year? The students showed such an interest in the spelling lending library. Would I be able to create a math lending library and receive the same excitement and motivation? These are all wonderings I plan to investigate, not only this year, but in my future practices.

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