

What is Word Study?

Word study is a systematic instruction in phonics spelling and vocabulary at a learner's instructional level. Word study teaches learners to examine words and study patterns of the English language.

Why is Word Study Important?

Becoming fully literate is absolutely dependent on fast, accurate recognition of words in texts, and fast, accurate production of words in writing so that readers and writers can focus their attention on making meaning. Letter-sound correspondences, phonics, spelling patterns, high frequency word recognition, decoding, word meanings, and other word attributes are the basis of written word knowledge. Designing a program that explicitly teaches learners necessary skills and engages their interest and motivation to learn about how words work is a vital aspect of any K-12 literacy program.

Many times learners have been asked to repeatedly practice a skill and the repeated practice consists of rote drill. In this method of teaching, learners have little opportunity to manipulate word concepts or apply critical thinking skills.

Learners need hands on opportunities to manipulate word features in a way that allows them to generalize beyond isolated, individual examples to entire groups of words that are spelled the same way. Excelling at word recognition, spelling, and vocabulary is more than memorizing isolated rules and definitions. The best way to develop fast and accurate perception of word features is to engage in meaningful reading and writing, and to have multiple opportunities to examine those same words out of context. The most effective instruction in phonics, spelling, and vocabulary links word study to the texts being read, provides a systematic scope and sequence of word level skills, and provides hands on practice and application. In a sense, word study teaches learners how to look at words so that they can construct an understanding of how written words work. This work will encompass 20-25 minutes each day during the Language Arts block.

What is the Purpose of Word Study?

The purpose of word study is two-fold. First, through active exploration, word study teaches learners to examine words to discover the regularities, patterns, and conventions. Second, word study helps learners facilitate reading fluency and vocabulary development.

WHAT WORD STUDY IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

Word Study Is...	Word Study Is Not...
Development assessment	A one size fits all program
Understanding patterns	Memorizing spelling words
Systematic instruction in phonics & spelling	A random selection of words
Embedded in the Language Arts book	An isolated program
Groups working on planned and purposeful word analysis	Group activity to keep learners busy

COMING SOON - For an actual example of what a word study lesson looks like in an elementary classroom, we'll soon have video loaded that you can view.

(Please note you must have QuickTime player loaded on your computer)

Word Study is Developmental

Word study instruction must match the instructional level of the learner based upon assessments. Therefore, the study of words must coincide with the level of word knowledge of the learner. Word study is not a one-size-fits-all program but one that will require the teacher to differentiate his/her instruction. Continual assessment both formal and informal will provide teachers with the data required to document progression along the developmental continuum.

Sample Sort – Word Study Words for Unaccented Initial Syllables

Take a look at the following word list, and then click on the photo of the book below to see a PowerPoint slide as to how those words are actually sorted by the students.

List:

Again Debate Beyond Degree Another Believe
Divide Depend Among Between Desire Develop
Aboard Upon Against Beneath



The TVSD Philosophy Concerning Word Study

The TVSD uses word study as the phonics, spelling, and vocabulary part of our reading continuum and is connected to both reading and writing. High frequency words have been embedded into the sorts. Because these high frequency words have been embedded into the sorts, word study will be our instructional program for spelling.

What about Homework?

Teachers will talk to members of their grade level team to determine what activities will be done by students at home.

Teachers may:

- Give each student an extra copy of their sort for home.
- Create a chart that matches a home activity with the activity done in school each day
- Provide students with a home study notebook; a place to write their sorts, complete word hunts, etc.
- Post word study homework on your website, so that parents have a place to go to find out what activity is appropriate each night.