



Expanding Educational Horizons

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH

LITERACY MINIGUIDE

Topic: Spelling

This project is a joint initiative between the Governments of Jamaica and the United States of America through their monitoring agencies the Ministry of Education and Youth and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Dear Teacher,

This unit is developed for teachers at Grades 1-4 in the Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH) schools. It is developed in response to teachers' request for support material in the development of literacy skills, particularly in the area of the teaching of spelling. There is the need for spelling instruction to begin in Grade One or even before. The unit, therefore, focuses on strategies and suggestions that will promote fluency in spelling. When students become fluent spellers their comprehension, writing and reading fluency skills are enhanced. As you practice some of the ideas, you will get the opportunity to share your experiences using the strategy and be able to observe the growth of your students.

Objectives:

By the end of the unit you should be able to:

- Identify some of the areas where students experience difficulty in spelling
- Use some of the strategies to improve spelling in your class
- Modify the activities and strategies to suit your classroom context

We hope that you will find this unit helpful in planning and executing your spelling programme.

Yours truly,

Maureen Byfield (Literacy Specialist -EEH)

Paulette Roberts (Literacy Specialist –EEH)

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1. Introduction

The first four sections of this mini-guide define spelling, explain its importance in the classroom, outline the developmental stages of learning how to spell and lay out helpful spelling principles for teachers to remember when planning spelling lessons. This is followed by examples of successful teaching strategies, techniques, and activities for teaching and reinforcing what has been taught. The following two sections focus on the students. Finally, a sample lesson plan is presented.

2. What is spelling?

Spelling requires learners to use letters to form words. Spelling involves a cognitive, visual and auditory process.

3. Why teach spelling?

Spelling is an important literacy skill because it:

1. Helps students discover the patterns and structure of English orthography.
2. Encourages children to reflect on their own learning and provides them with strategies that they can apply in the spelling process.
3. Improves children's reading and writing fluency.
4. Boosts students' confidence as learners. Good spellers feel good about themselves.
5. Elicits diagnostic information from students so that the teacher can plan interventions, monitor students' progress and then evaluate teaching methods
6. Helps to improve students' memory. The more opportunities students get to practice spelling, the better able they will be able to commit their spelling to memory
7. Helps to monitor students' dictation
8. Helps students to identify and decode words swiftly.

4. Spelling principles for the teacher

1. We learn to spell by engaging in spelling activities regularly.

The teacher is encouraged to:

- Provide numerous opportunities for the students to engage in writing activities that will require them to write for various purposes and audiences. Writing activities may include letters, post cards, advertisements, recipes, etc.
- Reward students for their attempts and approximations. Where students make errors, point out these errors and use them to plan lessons to overcome the deficits.
- Ensure that students proofread their writing. By doing this they will identify possible spelling errors.
- Have a classroom that is print rich. A print-rich classroom has charts, mobiles, dictionaries, and books that will provide support to spelling. Include spelling strategies and rules, as well as words that students find difficult to spell.
- Model how to spell. When the teacher models, students will have a practical idea of the process involved in spelling a word.
- Provide instructive comments to students' writing, including how they may improve their spelling

Teach spelling strategies explicitly and systemically and create opportunities for students to use the strategies regularly. Some of these strategies may be found on page 8 of this mini-guide.

2. Spelling is part of the developmental process of learning to write.

- Keep records of the strategies that students use while they spell. Information may be gathered from listening to students as they spell orally or by examining their writing. Remember that students invent spelling and this a natural part of the spelling process, so credit them for their attempts

3. Spelling errors can provide diagnostic information and inform the teacher how students are progressing.

Analyze the students' errors so that you get an understanding of the words they can or cannot spell, strategies they are using and the gaps they experience so that you can intervene

4. We learn to spell by exploring words and vocabulary

- Help students to analyze new words by looking at their structures to note the length of words, number of letters in the words, word parts known, and the shape of the words. This activity is referred to as **Visual Scrutiny** or **Word Study**.

5. Learning to spell independently and self-evaluation are important in the spelling process.

- Teach students how to proofread their work. Students may underline words that they think might not look right so they can revisit them
- Help students to set spelling goals and monitor their progress. For example, ask students what words they want to spell and set the specified time within which to spell the words. They should also be assisted to identify areas that need additional attention
- Encourage students to become aware of the process for spelling new words. Teach them how to use strategies for learning new words and how to check the spelling of words.

6. Good spellers use multiple spelling strategies to help them spell correctly.

- Teach students to become strategic spellers by equipping them with many strategies that they can use to spell correctly. The three main categories of strategies are (a) visual in which the students look at the word to note its configuration (b) sound/symbol in which students sound the word out and represent each sound with a letter and (c) morpheme. The morphemic category requires learners to take note of word parts such as prefix, suffix, plurals, and inflectional endings. Strategic spellers know many strategies and are able to apply them appropriately in varied contexts.

5. What teachers need to know about spelling?

When planning spelling lessons, it is important to remember these basic principles:

1. *An effective spelling programme should include a combination of reading, writing and spelling instruction.* Therefore, spelling instruction should take place within the context of authentic and meaningful reading and writing activities. These two activities provide opportunities for students to experiment with spelling until

correct spelling is learned. Organized spelling instruction helps students to focus on words, strategies, conventions and the principles of English spelling.

2. *Children should be taught reliable spelling rules that can be generalized and applied across new words.* One of the classic spelling rules, for example, is “i” comes after “e” except after “c,” as in the case of ‘receive’ and ‘believe.’ They should also be taught exceptions and given strategies to deal with these “rule breakers.” It is important, however, not to over-emphasize rules. Get students to think.
3. *Spelling lessons should be consistent and systematic.* At the start, teach single phonetic concepts and then continue to build on them. Formal instruction may begin when the children have acquired some fluency in reading and continue until they have acquired a substantial spelling vocabulary. It is recommended that you start with a core of words, such as sight words, for example, mother, girl, boy, and everyday words that you want your students to learn.
4. *Teach what children need to know in order to spell well.* This includes strategies for learning and remembering how words are spelled, conventions of spelling, etc.
5. *Have continuous review of words taught.* Use different methods and techniques, such as flash cards, spelling exercises, word wall, spelling competition and incentives for moving on.
6. *Get students to practice through dictation.* The teacher may read passages with words previously taught and get children to practice spelling the words by writing the passage.
7. *Use a multisensory teaching approach, that is, auditory, visual and kinesthetic.* For example, have students say the word and represent each sound with a magnetic letter on a magnetic board. Get the students to use their fingers to trace each letter, making sure to name each letter as they touch it. This approach caters to the various learning styles that exist within the class and should promote integration of spelling strategies and foster the development of comprehension skills.

6. What students need to know about spelling?

It is important that the students themselves understand why spelling is important.

Teachers should emphasize that:

1. The ability to spell enhances their reading and writing.
2. Reading assists them to become good spellers because it provides the opportunity for them to see how words are spelled.
3. Writing gives them the opportunity to test and practice their spelling ability.
4. Good spellers practice spelling often.
5. Good spellers need to learn many words.

7. Stages of Spelling

Learners pass through several stages of spelling. Various authors categorize them under different names. Below are four stages outlined by one author.

They are the semi-phonetic, phonetic, syllable juncture, and meaning derivation stage. Each stage is explained below, with examples. It is important to keep these stages in mind when setting up your spelling programme.

1. Stage One- Semi-phonetic

At this stage, children use letters to represent dominant sounds in words. For example, the word “learn” may be represented as “lɪrn.”

Children usually represent whole words with one, two or three letters, e.g. ‘rpt’ for “repeat.”

Because children tend to spell by sound, it is recommended that the spelling programme focus on phonetic strategies in which children listen for each sound in a word and represent the sound with a letter or combination of letters.

Stage Two- Phonetic

Here words are spelt on the basis of their substantial sound rather than their visual patterns.

- Short vowels are often incorrect, e. g. “ bad” for “bed,” “ap’ for “up.”
- “M” and “n” (nasal sounds) are often omitted, e. g. “bopy” for “bumpy,” “plat” for “plant.”

- “Ed” endings are often represented in three different ways (ed, d, t).
- Vowels are often omitted when the syllable has a consonant that carries the vowel sound, e. g. “sd” for “sound,” “bg” for “bug,” “ct” for “cut.”
- Children usually write one letter or letter cluster for every sound in a word, e. g. “bak” for “back,” “et” for “eat.”

3. Stage Three- Syllable Juncture

Children have a basic spelling vocabulary and command of long- and short- vowel patterns where syllables meet.

- Letters are often dropped, e.g. “taps” for “tapes.”
- Letters are often doubled, e.g. “borring” for “boring,” “ceilling” for “ceiling.”
- Letters are sometimes changed, e.g. “partys” for “parties.”
- Errors occur where inflected endings or suffixes are joined to words, e.g. “dareing” for “daring,” “careing” for “caring.”
- Errors occur in the internal structure of the word e.g. “ruble” for “rubble,” “litle” for “little.”

4. Stage Four- Meaning Derivation Stage

Students recognize that words related in meaning are often related in spelling and they use the base words to help them spell. For example, the word “sign” aids the spelling of “signal” and “policy” aids “political.”

- Homophone errors occur, e.g. “tale” for “tail,” “your” for “you’re.”
- Errors appear where letters are doubled, e.g. “supposition” for “supposition.”
- Errors occur where connection is made with base words, e.g. “composeition” for “composition,” “resination” for “resignation.”

8. Teaching strategies, techniques, and activities

Here are some strategies, techniques and activities that you can use to help your students to spell.

Meaning Helpers:

Assist students to use the meaning of a word to help them to spell. For example, if the child knows that “hair” is a part of the body, then he might not confuse it with “hare,” which means an animal.

Structure of the word:

Encourage students to look critically at a word to see how it is configured. Help them to note the various parts such as suffixes, prefixes, root words, inflectional endings, and problem parts. Also, help children to look at details in words to see if there are other words they know with similar patterns. You may also direct them to note where there are double letters in the word and where they are positioned, the number of letters in a word, and where these letters are positioned in a word.

Examining the visual configuration:

Help students to visualize the words and commit them to memory. Have them look at the word, say it aloud, think about it, picture it in their minds, look at and write it, cover it and then write and check it to see if it was correctly spelled. You may also ask the students to look at the spelling of the word, commit it to memory, close their eyes and spell it. When particular parts of a word are difficult, help the students identify the problem part and encourage them to study the word extra hard.

Mnemonics:

Students like to devise something catchy that will help them remember how to spell a word. Such a device is called a memory aid or mnemonic. For example, in order to remember how to spell the word “sea” students may create the sentence, “Sonia eats apples”

Sound:

The pronunciation of some words will help the students to spell those words. As students identify each sound in words pronounced, they write those letters that represent the sounds they hear. Sometimes you may help the students break up the words in syllables.

Use of a dictionary or thesaurus:

Students must be taught how to use the dictionary and thesaurus to spell. In using these resources, students must be able to distinguish between homophones, multiple meanings, and alphabetic arrangements of words.

Talking Out Loud:

Students say the word out loud, over and over to aid recall and to memorize the order of the letters. This talk helps the students to process the word as they spell it.

Drills:

You may provide frequent opportunities for students to repeat a word that they were taught. The word may be placed on a word wall and each morning or afternoon the students spell the word and use it in sentences.

Daily Reading:

Read to the students frequently, and encourage students to read daily at school and at home. When students read and are read to, they meet upon many words. Reading gives students the opportunity to see how words are spelled and hear how they are pronounced.

Other Suggestions:

- Have students say the word slowly and write it syllable by syllable. Make sure the student represents each sound with a letter or letters, e.g. com-pe-ti-tion, al-pha-bet.
- Guide the student to note if the pattern looks right.
- Help the student to try different patterns that look right.
- Help students to identify other words which look similar, e.g. rake, bake, sake.
- Guide students to begin with the base word, e.g. big-ger, nice-ly.

9. Reinforcing Activities

Here are some ideas for activities that serve to reinforce your students' learning in varied and fun ways:

- Have students record word patterns in word journals or word dictionaries
- Play rhyming games and read rhyming poetry, for example, Mother Goose rhymes. Ring games provide fun for children as they hear and see patterns in words that are repeated.
- Play games such as scrabble and word bingo, hang man, word wheel, alphabet soup, matching, word in word and word hunt, using newspapers and magazines.
- Unscramble words, and do word search, completion/cloze exercises, spelling bee competitions, and class quizzes.
- Start a word bank from Language Experience stories and have the students alphabetize the words in the bank.
- Sort known words by features, such as beginning, ending and medial sounds, e.g. big, bag, bit; hall, fall, ball; mop, hop, top.

10. Self-monitoring strategies for students

Teach students to ask the following questions to help them monitor their spelling:

- Does the word look right?
- Which part looks right?
- Can I find this word elsewhere?
- What are my options? E.g. Which of these -- “tion”, “sion,” or ‘cian” -- should I use in the following words (which teacher reads): *composition, comprehension, physician?*

11. Sample lesson

Here is an example of how you may help students to spell the word “bathroom.”

Introductory and Developmental activities

1. Have students identify the parts of the word that they know. For example, ba,,oom, bath, room
2. Have students scrutinize the word to see how many letters make up the word and the position of the letters in the word. Point out that one letter (the “o”) is doubled and where the doubled letter is positioned in the word.
3. Get students to say the word slowly and listen for the beginning, middle, and ending sounds and to write the letters that represent the sounds as they hear it.
4. Have students find the two words that make up the target word i.e. bath/room
5. Have students scrutinize the details of the two words i.e. the letters and their order in the word. Get students to close their eyes, say the details as they write them in the air, on the desk or on the back of their friends. They then check to see how correct they were and use the word in sentences and share.
6. Have students talk about the meaning of each word and say how the meaning of each contributes to the spelling.

Reinforcing Activities

1. Make up a jingle or song in which the word “bathroom is used repeatedly
2. Play a game, for example, Snake and Ladder, in which students will move up the ladder only if they can spell the target word, ‘bathroom.’”

2. Place the word “bathroom” on a word wall or in word dictionary for future reference.
3. Do a word search to find the word elsewhere.

TASK:

Now, here’s a task for you to try:

Think of a word which your students have difficulty spelling. Write down some ways you would help your students to learn to spell that word

Target Word: _____

Activities: 1. _____

We have given you some ideas that will help to inform your teaching of spelling. We hope that you will practice them with your students and also share them with your colleagues. There are several other ideas on the teaching of spelling. We encourage you to read about them in books or on the internet, share them with other teachers and use them with your students.

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