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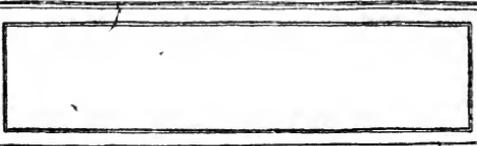
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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
TRENTON



The Teaching of Spelling

June 1912





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Foreword

The statutes of the state require, and the public demands, that spelling be taught in the public schools.

Intelligent persons realize that the faultless spelling of English words is an art difficult to attain, much more so for some persons than for others. Nevertheless, failure to spell correctly is commonly regarded as a sign of illiteracy.

The purpose of this monograph is to offer constructive suggestions to teachers concerning the teaching of a subject in which there is so much popular interest. It is believed that good *teaching*—not merely hearing lessons—will bring about good results in this, as well as in the other activities of the school.

Good teaching is dependent upon the size of classes, upon the number of words taught, upon the judicious selection of words, upon the manner of presentation to the class, or the plan of study with the teacher, upon the pupils' independent methods of study, and upon the method of testing or conducting a recitation; but above all, it is dependent upon the interest which is aroused.

Good teaching also involves the ability of the pupils to recognize symbols. Many pupils are poor spellers because they do not clearly see the forms of the words. Defective eye-sight, may be the cause of this.

Spelling is sometimes taught in a perfunctory, mechanical way, with little variety or life in the instruction. Often the lesson is aimless and tediously monotonous. Such teaching is partly responsible for poor spelling. To arouse interest in spelling, to create a desire to excel, to relieve it of monotony, to make the instruction a real *teaching* process, and to bring variety into the exercises, should be the aim of the teacher.

This pamphlet is not a course of study, neither is it a plan for a teacher to follow closely in her daily work. It is a statement of general method in the field of spelling for the elementary grades.

Spelling is treated as one of the factors in word study. The way or method of teaching spelling is considered of greater importance than the number of words spelled, for good methods of teaching will assist the learner in the formation of good habits of thinking, with the result that what is learned will be the more intelligently and permanently possessed.

In the preparation of this monograph, grateful acknowledgment is made to Drs. Suzzallo and Pearson, of Teachers College, Columbia University, for permission to use the extracts from the Teachers College Record; to David B. Corson, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Newark; to Miss Rachel Van Syckel, also of the Newark Schools, and to Miss Myra Billings, Supervisor of Kindergarten and Primary Schools, Atlantic City, for the articles which appear over their respective signatures. Valuable suggestions have also been made by members of the faculties of the two Normal Schools, and by various city and county superintendents.

CALVIN N. KENDALL,
Commissioner of Education.

The Teaching of Spelling.

The following concerning two types of spelling lessons is from Dr. Henry Suzzallo's report in the Teachers College Record for November, 1911:

Testing Type of Spelling Lessons. "A quarter of a century ago the spelling period was given over to the mere hearing of spelling lessons. The teacher heard the children spell the words that had been assigned for mastery, and made the corrections as the errors occurred. More often the children wrote the words in lists as the teacher pronounced them. An oral spelling by the teachers afforded the basis for marking misspelled words. A new list of words was then assigned for the next day's lesson without much anticipation or preparation for special difficulties. Correction on the part of the erring child consisted in writing the misspelled words a specified number of times under scant supervision after school or during a study period. The so-called class lesson in spelling was really a daily examination in spelling. Under such a system the learning of spelling was a matter for home assignment and individual study. The class exercise was purely for the purpose of testing the child's knowledge."

Instruction Type of Spelling Lessons. "Today, the use of the class exercises in spelling is vastly different in most places. The teacher spends his time carefully presenting a few words, rather than in examining on the child's ability in many. New work is a matter of class study, where words are presented with unusual artfulness in order to suggest their meaning naturally through circumstances or context. Every effort is made to safeguard the child against a wrong first impression and an incorrect learning of the word. If a home lesson is assigned it is not a mere mapping out of the number of words to be learned; the assignment is an exercise in which the teacher uses all his foresight in anticipating the various kinds of troubles the child will meet, focusing the attention on special difficulties and sug-

gesting modes of self-instruction. The modern spelling exercise may test the child's knowledge, but its primary function is to instruct rather than to examine."

Of these two types of spelling lessons so clearly described by Dr. Suzzallo, the second only, has a place in the school of today, whether it be the "ungraded school" of the rural district or the highly differentiated school of the city.

Word Study. Spelling is one of the four elements of word study. A word is not known until its pronunciation, meaning, use and spelling are known.

Teaching is necessary in each of these fields. Children do not know instinctively how to study in any field. They need the teacher not only to assign them definite lessons, and to test the results of their study, but much more to teach them *how* to study and to supplement their limited knowledge by her own fuller knowledge.

Pronunciation. Correct pronunciation is the first step in the process that leads to correct spelling. Inasmuch, however, as the pronunciation is only *suggestive* of correct spelling, and often is not even suggestive (as in the words "thorough," "freight," etc.,) the word should be seen, as well as heard and pronounced. It is unquestionably the best plan for the teacher to write the words on the board singly and in the presence of the class, even if they are already in the spelling book.

While making proper use of the pupils' knowledge of phonics, and while developing their proper courage and initiative in attacking words, teachers should not hesitate to assist by giving the correct pronunciation when pupils cannot easily discover it. Children have learned language from the beginning, largely by imitation, and teachers should make use in the spelling lesson of this most important means of instruction. In the case of words pronounced differently by different authorities, any pronunciation which has the sanction of one of these authorities should be accepted by the teacher.

Syllabication. Emphasize in oral spelling the form of a word by syllabication. (a) It helps in fixing the word in the mind; (b) it is a great aid in "making out" new words in reading; (c) it assists in properly dividing the word

at the end of a line; (d) it promotes clear enunciation; (e) it may assist in revealing the meaning of a word.

Words should not be divided into syllables in written spelling, except as a special exercise. It is doubtless best to indicate the syllables of words in some way that does not destroy the word form, i. e., as |so|ci|a|tion or association. An extreme separation of a word into syllables while it is being studied often gives an appearance to the word quite different from what it has in connected composition. This may lend an added difficulty in using and recognizing the word.

Children will gradually learn that there are significant prefix and suffix syllables and a few root syllables that may be recognized, but apart from the fact that a syllable must contain a vowel, there is no need of insisting on absolute uniformity in syllabication—dictionaries themselves are not uniform.

Phonograms. The phonogram is a different sound unit from the syllable. In the words, *face*, *pace*, *lace*, etc., "ace" is a phonogram. When two words are brought together as one, i. e., *playfully*, *membership*, etc., each word may be thought of as a sound unit or phonogram. There is a large class of words whose pronunciation and spelling are more easily and more permanently learned by the phonogram division than by the syllabic or individual letter division.

Accent. An essential part of correct pronunciation is accent. Special drills, class and individual, should be given where needed in all grades, to the end that each pupil may be able to put stress on whatever syllable is to be accented. Some long words have two accents, one of which is heavier than the other.

Diacritical Marks. It is not advisable to spend a large part of a spelling lesson with the marking of the letters of the words studied, but it is desirable to have pupils in all grades familiar with the half-dozen diacritical marks that indicate the most common vowel and consonant sounds, i. e., the long and short sounds of the vowels, the hard and soft sounds of c and g.

The Meaning of Words.

A word may have several meanings. Its use determines the meaning. Pronunciation, use and meaning are three closely related elements of word study, and it is hardly possible to separate them in the teaching process.

Synonyms.

The meaning may be developed by the use of synonyms. This is a very common and economical method, but should always be supplemented by the use of illustrative sentences or by the study of a text selection in which the word is used. Such a study should precede the study of the word for its spelling.

Dictation.

The dictation of a selection in which spelling words are used is properly a test of the pupils' command of the word and naturally *follows* the study of the words for their spelling, unless the exercise is used to disclose to the pupils the words that they cannot spell. In this case the exercise should of course precede the study. The selection should not be too long, and its meaning should be understood before it is dictated.

Use in Sentences.

Children should not be asked to learn the spelling of words the meaning of which is not clear to them. This can only be tested by asking the children to use the word in sentences that will clearly exhibit its meaning. These sentences should be short and interesting, and the thought expressed *worth while*. Geography, history, literature, current events, useful information, will furnish material. For instance: Columbus made a triumphal *entrance* into Barcelona. A hint to the wise is *sufficient*. Snowbirds lack *sufficient* food for winter. Russian peasants earn barely enough for their *subsistence*. The glacial ice that once covered North America is not now in *existence*. The *interiors* of English cathedrals are beautiful.

Time may be wasted, however, in asking children to put common words in sentences when the meaning of such words is well known. The words, *plate*, *apple* and *doctor* are sufficiently well known to children without taking valuable time to compose sentences containing them.

Teaching of Spelling.

The psychology and the pedagogy of spelling have been given considerable attention during recent years. The results of these studies, although they may be largely suggestive, should be known to the teacher and she should be guided by them.

It has been found that all people do not learn equally well in the same way. In the field of spelling, in which the mind fixes for itself the word form, i. e., the proper letter sequences, children are

1. Sense organ learners (a) eye learners
(b) ear learners
2. Muscle learners (c) vocal organ learners
(d) hand learners.

It is doubtless true that each normal person belongs to all four classes, but it also appears to be true that each one belongs more decidedly to one class than to another.

Tests seem to show that a combination of *seeing* words and of *hearing* words, of *spelling* them aloud and of *writing* them, produces the best results in spelling.

Before spelling, a succession of letters in a list of meaningless words as "gemalask," "hetlingil," etc., was read to a class (auditory), then the list was written plainly on cardboard and shown to the class (visual), and finally the children both saw and pronounced the words (combination of auditory, motor and visual). In the last named exercise the pupils gained the highest per cent in correct spelling. The three percentages were forty-five, sixty-six and seventy-four, respectively. It appears that the more sense organs brought into use the more lasting will be the impression.

In another school some twenty nonsense words were shown to children and the request made that the lips be kept closed or fixed while looking at the combinations. Most of the children, however, soon lapsed into the use of their lips. At another time, while keeping the lips closed, it was noticed that the fingers and hands were unconsciously moved as if to tell off the letters silently. So strong does this tendency appear to be that the motor accompaniment seems of use in learning to spell. The motor apparatus used in speech should be used to a large extent in teaching spelling.

Dr. J. W. Baird of Clark University states in his study of *The Psychology of Spelling*—"It has been found that the more sense-departments the teacher appeals to in his presentations, and the more sorts of imagery the pupil employs in his learning, the more effective is the memorization. In a series of experiments with upwards of seven hundred children, between the ages of six and twelve years, various modes of presenting words resulted in the following relative numbers of erroneous reproductions (misspelled words):

<i>Mode of Presentation</i>	<i>Per Ct. of Error</i>
Words heard	6.48
Words heard and spelled aloud by pupil.....	4.66
Words seen	2.60
Words seen and spelled aloud by pupil.....	2.27
Words seen, spelled aloud, and written by pupil....	1.00

The study of psychology has revealed two other facts most significant for the teacher of spelling, namely, first, that the mind does not interest itself in and does not retain easily unrelated impressions; second, that the mind retains most easily and permanently those impressions in which it is most interested.

If therefore the teacher has in mind the fixing in the mind of her pupil the correct spelling of a list of words, she will study to

- (a) arouse an interest in each word,
- (b) relate each word to pronunciation, meaning and experience,
- (c) devise methods of study and drill that call into play the eye, the ear, the vocal organs and the hand muscles.

Interest. Interest in the spelling lessons may be aroused and maintained in an almost numberless variety of ways. A person is always most interested in carrying out plans which he has helped to make. It will be found that children, if given the opportunity, will make valuable suggestions by which this school study may become more vital.

The class may help to determine the words that need most attention.

The class may help determine the kind of special attention each word needs—spelling, meaning, syllable analysis, phonogram analysis.

The class may have charge through appointed agents of the making of special lists, and of drilling devices and exercises. Those lists may be built up around the pupils' interests, home lists, kitchen, dining-room, barn, field, ball-field, etc., etc., sign boards, bill boards, etc. There is danger that unusual words may be included in these special lists. This danger should be watched for and avoided.

The class may write a paragraph in which a number of words is to be used. The paragraph best in thought, expression and punctuation, may be used as a dictation exercise. (The paragraph to be used may be selected by a small committee of the class. One member of this committee may be one of the poorer spellers).

Attention has already been called to the fact that the spelling of a word whose pronunciation, meaning and use are not understood has little value, and that the spelling is not likely to be retained in the mind.

Selection of Material. Words should be selected from the vocabulary of the ordinary affairs of life rather than from the school-room vocabulary. It is not necessary that a pupil should know how to spell a word which he may seldom have occasion to use in writing. It is sufficient that he should recognize it readily in reading. The spelling of unimportant geographical names, many names in fiction, in history and in mythology, should be omitted. When it is necessary to use these words in written or in regular composition work they may be written on the board or looked up in the dictionary.

Teach only the common words. Few people have occasion to spell except when they write. The words *believe, receive, pictures, knives, cousin, lead-pencil, libraries, villain, village, absence, nuisance, portion, calendar, diphtheria, hydrant, column, color, cities, planning, collar, ought, aunt, echo, neighbor*,—are common words. Such words as *celestial, abhorrence, syllogism, decalogue, convalescence, apportion* and *hypocrisy*—are not common words.

The teacher will usually find her material in (a) the words misspelled by the pupils in their written work; (b) the spelling book.

The teacher and pupils may at times with profit be consciously increasing their vocabulary by the use in speech and writing of common words which have been selected for study.

Spelling Books. Makers of spelling books have of late years been more discriminating in the selection of words, but it should not be forgotten that spelling books are made for general use, while the profitable spelling lesson is for particular children. One school may profitably study the entire grade assignment of words in a spelling book, although such a school would be rare, while another school in the same town might not be able to study profitably more than half such assignment.

A spelling book should be used with judgment, and it should not take the place of the individual and class lists drawn from the oral and written vocabulary of the children.

Reliable authorities state that the common vocabulary of well educated persons does not extend beyond four thousand words. It is this vocabulary of everyday use that it is important to master.

Methods of Study. There should be three distinct features in spelling exercises:

- (a) The period of assignment or study with the teacher.
- (b) The period of independent study, which may be done at home.

These periods, while distinct, may at times be combined.

- (c) The period of testing.

Assignment or Study with the Teacher. In assigning lists of words to be studied, call attention to the difficult words and more particularly to difficult points in certain words. The teacher should use the blackboard in this lesson assignment. She could also use with profit colored crayon to emphasize the *a* in *separate*, the *a* in *Delaware*, the *or* in *forty*, etc. Each child needs his attention called in a special manner to the words he cannot spell. There is an enormous waste going on because the children study mechanically and monotonously the words they already know. Imagine an adult doing this! Have the pupils decide which word demands the greatest effort in its mastery; which point in the word is difficult, etc. "What is hard about this word?" Here is a chance for the ingenuity of the teacher.

For example, take the word *describe*; the special difficulty is the vowel of the first syllable. The pupils should discover this if possible. If the pupils do not easily discover the difficulty the teacher may write the word on the board. After writing the first letter she says, "Notice that the next letter is e." The teacher and pupils then complete the word. Pupils may "think" of the form of the first syllable, all remaining silent and not looking at the board. The teacher might hold up one hand with outstretched fingers and pupils follow her signs by oral spelling. Interest the pupil in the facts of the word. Attention follows interest and knowledge follows attention.

Quick visualizing of words is a valuable aid in the study of spelling. Care should be taken to find out whether or not the pupil's eyesight is good. After a word is written on the board and erased, the teacher may ask for the third letter, next to the last letter, the second syllable, etc. No pupil can answer unless he has formed a distinct mental image of the arrangement of the letters in the word. The teacher may ask a pupil to turn to page seventy-eight of his reader (or geography) and look at the last word on the page, or the last three words, and then spell or write.

Two Lesson Plans. Two plans are here given which were followed at Teachers College, Columbia University, and reported by Principal Henry Carr Pearson in the Teachers College Record, January, 1912.

Plan I—Class Study.

Time limit—twenty minutes.

1. Write one of the words on the blackboard and teach it in accordance with the following plan. Then write the next word, teaching it in the same way, and so on, with the rest of the words.
 - (a) While writing the word, *pronounce* it distinctly.
 - (b) Develop the meaning orally, either by calling for a sentence using the word or by giving its definition.
 - (c) Indicate the syllables. Call on pupils to spell orally, by syllables. Have them indicate what part of the word presents difficulties, or whether the word contains parts they already know.

- (d) Have pupils write the word, pronouncing it softly as they write. It would be well to have a new sentence given, using the word, before they do this. This is to emphasize strongly the meaning of the word again just before the child writes it.
- (e) Allow the class a moment in which to look at the word again and then have them close eyes and try to visualize it, or use any other device of a similar nature. Have considerable repetition, both oral and written.

2. After the various words of the day's lesson have been studied in this way, allow a few moments for studying again the whole list, suggesting that each pupil emphasize the words he thinks he doesn't know. This time should be limited so that every pupil will attend vigorously and intensively. Call upon pupils individually and in concert to spell the whole list without looking at the board. Refer them to the board again if they hesitate.

3. Then erase all words from blackboard and dictate the words to the class, using each word in a sentence first.

Plan II.—Class Study.

Time limit—fifteen minutes, including the dictation.

1. The first word was written on the board in the presence of the class, and then studied as follows:

- (a) Its meaning was given, and used in a sentence.
- (b) It was spelled aloud in concert, and individually by the poor spellers.
- (c) Its peculiarities, such as silent letter, *oi* and *ie* combinations, etc., were pointed out.
- (d) The word was written once, twice or three times by the pupils who spelled silently as they wrote.

2. Each word in turn was written on the board and studied in the same way.

3. Next the whole column was reviewed orally, the children first spelling each word from the board and then turning from the board, spelling again (either silently or aloud) and verifying results by consulting the board.

4. The words were then erased from the board, papers out of sight, and the work dictated.

**Independent Study
by Pupils.**

The teacher ought to train pupils to discriminate between the easy and the difficult words, and to concentrate effort on the latter. The pupil should put the "emphasis of his mind" upon the weak points which he has been taught to discover. Suppose the names of the days of the week are the lesson. The pupils should be taught to select Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday as the difficult words, and they should recognize that Wednesday probably needs more attention than the other six words together. Pupils should, therefore, be taught how to study the lessons. This study should imitate both the method and the spirit of the preceding study with the teacher. The endeavor should be to give the child the power to do by himself what he does when the teacher studies with him. The children may test each other at the close of a study period. It is a mistake to ask pupils to write the lessons a number of times, simply copying the words. One method is to teach them after they have carefully looked over the words and sentences in the book or on the board, to write as many of them as they can from memory. They can then compare what they have written with the book or blackboard list in order to find which words they have failed to spell correctly. Pupils should not, however, be taught to commit lists of unrelated words to memory.

Home Study.

Spelling is one of the subjects in which the parent can render efficient aid. The children who take home lists of words to spell can first be tested by the parent, both orally and in writing, to see how many they know, the others being noted for further study. After the latter have been thoroughly studied the test can be given again until all are recited correctly. Word games, anagrams, etc., may be brought to the attention of the pupils by having them tried in the schoolroom. Many children will secure the necessary material and play the games at home, while all poor spellers should be urged to do so. The words assigned for home study should be first studied with the teacher in school.

Testing.

Tests in spelling should be tests in word study, in the method of learning and the mental habits formed. A teacher's work should be judged

even more by the spirit and quality of her spelling lessons than by the success or failure of her pupils in a chance test on a list of miscellaneous words—unless those words are selected from the lists on which the class has been working.

Generally the testing should be a written test, and in the higher grades it should be *on the day following the assignment or study*. By this delay, time is allowed for the fixing of the words in mind and the exercise becomes a review as well as a test. In the higher grades the children should usually exchange papers and mark the spelling on their neighbor's paper. While this saves the teacher much labor, it serves a far more valuable purpose in cultivating in each child the habit of looking critically at words.

The marking of papers by pupils needs careful supervision. The teacher herself may profitably mark a few papers every day and should examine the work of each pupil often enough to be familiar with his strength and weakness.

Occasionally oral tests or recitations should be introduced, for the sake of variety.

Carelessness. A large part of poor spelling comes from carelessness. If all teachers insist that every paper or note-book be correct as regards spelling, much of this carelessness would be avoided and the pupil trained in habits of carefulness and accuracy. Let us create, if possible, the spelling conscience.

Number of Words in a Lesson. For such study as is here outlined doubtless not more than four or five words could be considered at one time in the primary grades, one or two words more than this in the intermediate grades, and in the grammar grades not more than ten. If such a lesson were given but three times per week, in the course of six years the working vocabulary of a well-educated adult would be studied and ample time would be left for reviews.

Reviews. There should be frequent reviews. Repetition and drill and practice are necessary. Few spelling books provide enough review lessons of *difficult common words*. The wise teacher will keep a list of words which the children have misspelled, both in written work and in the ordinary spelling lessons. The words which are very com-

monly misspelled should be kept before the schools in all grades constantly and these should receive special drill. Examples of these words are: *to, too; there, their; hear, here; any, which, many, such, much, those, does, until.*

Differing Authorities. In the case of words which are spelled differently by different writers, any spelling which has the sanction of authority should be accepted by the teacher as correct. But it is desirable that the pupil should adopt one form of spelling for such words and use it exclusively.

The dictionary is the universal "tool" for the study of words, and before pupils leave the grammar grades they should have some skill in its use as an authority in spelling, and also for definition, derivation, syllabication, accent and diacritical marking. Care should be taken not to ask the pupil to consult the dictionary for a word not known to be there explained in a manner intelligible to the child.

This use may begin as early as the fourth grade, and probably ought not to be delayed beyond the fifth grade. Again, it cannot be over-emphasized that the proper use of the dictionary must be *taught*. Not until pupils have been using the dictionary for two or three years under the guidance of the teacher should much be expected in the way of absolutely independent use.

In view of the fact mentioned before, that the ordinary vocabulary of a well-educated person consists of probably not more than 4,000 words, it would appear that a dictionary containing between 20,000 and 25,000 well-selected words would be sufficient for the general use of a pupil in the elementary grades. A dictionary containing 30,000 to 40,000 words should meet the needs of elementary school children for general consultation purposes. Two or three such dictionaries in each upper grade room would doubtless be much more useful than one unabridged dictionary, but an unabridged dictionary in a building for occasional reference is desirable.

Rules for Spelling. Rules for spelling English words are of little direct value. Yet a few may be of value in that they call the attention of pupils to the very parts of words which they would be likely to misspell. The pupils should be led to formulate these rules *inductively* by having them observe

the pronunciation or spelling of a number of words entirely familiar to them. Before the rules are taught, the difference between vowels and consonants should be made clear to the pupils, and they should be required to memorize the vowels. As much drill as possible should be given in spelling words illustrating the rule before any exceptions are given. In giving exceptions to a rule, only such words should be given as pupils will have occasion to use in practical life; and of those only such as they would be likely to misspell because of the rule.

**Suggested Rules
to be Taught
Inductively.**

1. Final *y*, when preceded by a consonant, is generally changed to *ie* when a letter or syllable is added. Ex. Lady, ladies; berry, berries; fly, flies; dry, dries; bury, buries; mercy, mercies; hurry, hurries. Final *y* is retained before a syllable beginning with *i*, to prevent the doubling of the *i*. Ex. Dying, trying, flying.

2. Final *y*, preceded by a vowel, generally remains unchanged when a letter or syllable is added. Ex.: Day, days; lay, lays; key, keys; chimney, chimneys; valley, valleys; essay, essays.

3. Words of one syllable, ending in a consonant preceded by a single vowel, double the consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel. Ex.: Big, bigger; wit, witty; rob, robber; clan, clannish.

4. Words of more than one syllable, accented on the last, and ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, double the final consonant when a syllable is added. Ex.: Permit, permitting; begin, beginning; infer, inferring, defer, deferring.

The special teaching of these rules may best be distributed throughout the grades.

Spelling in Grammar Grades.

The method of procedure in teaching spelling in the lower grammar grades should differ from that of the upper grammar grades. The aim, of course, is the same in both—the acquisition of skill in recalling the correct sequence of letters in words. The ability of normal pupils as they rise in the grades is better developed, and this fact makes the suggested difference advisable. The children who are less able must be helped more, so that the associations may be stronger. The habit of observation should be formed in the lower grades, and this cannot be done merely by assigning a spelling lesson that will later be heard. The lesson should be taught, after which it may be studied. The higher grade children may be allowed to study by themselves often without previous class preparation, for less instruction is necessary. The demand for correct and highly meritorious results is a large factor in achieving success.

I have found the following a good method:—Write in solid form the word, as “description,” upon the board. The advantage in this, instead of having the children look in the book, is that the teacher thus insures attention to the given word only. She requests the children to look at the word, thus photographing it, as it were, upon the retina. The teacher, after a short interval, pronounces the word correctly, with distinct enunciation and careful articulation. She then asks individuals to pronounce, syllabicate, and spell. A number of children in succession say: de-scrip-tion, d-e-de-s-c-r-i-p-scrip-t-i-o-n-tion, description. All write the word in solid form on practice paper; again, a few spell it orally as before; all write it again on another part of the paper. All spell it orally together quietly, with correct syllabication and clear enunciation. The teacher then calls attention to the peculiarities of the word, as “tion” is “shun” and “c” follows “s,” the first syllable is “de” and not “des.” The meaning of the word is then developed or explained, and several children use the word, each in a sentence. All the

words of the lesson are thus taught, the oral preparation receiving the more emphasis. After this study, the words are dictated either by the teacher or by the different pupils, each suggesting a word. The writing is done on a different piece of paper from the practice sheet. Papers are exchanged, examined and results announced. The aim is one hundred per cent correct. Commendation and appreciation should be given when it is achieved. It should be the expected result.

In grammar grades ten words are enough for a lesson, and the recitation should not be longer than twenty minutes. As the class becomes accustomed to the work, fifteen minutes will be found ample time, with the exception of the use of words in sentences. This may form a separate exercise at any opportune time during the day. At the end of the week all the words are studied by the pupils, without help, for a review. Before beginning the dictation, or the spelling match, the teacher should call attention again by way of reminder to particular difficulties in the spelling of specific words. At the end of two weeks the more difficult words of the first week may be included in the week's review. Some words, such as "separate" and "business," may be dictated every week until the habit of spelling them correctly is formed by every member of the class; other words of like kind may be substituted as rapidly as advisable.

These words should be taken from the spelling book and from the supplementary list which every teacher should make for her own class. This latter includes words from the various subjects and the words which the teacher discovers it is well to insist shall be spelled correctly. The same method may be used with the dictation of prose or poetical selections as with a column of words.

Some excellencies of this method are:

1. The ear, the motor apparatus which operates in speech, and the eye contribute each its share in making the associations which are necessary. This may be called the auto-motor-visual preparation, the important parts of which are the auditory and the motor.
2. The children learn to enunciate and to articulate clearly.
3. The children are taught to notice words.
4. A spelling sense is developed. No harm, but much good in the development of this sense, will result from spelling some

words that may not become a part of the speaking vocabulary of the child.

5. A spelling conscience is developed. The constant demand for a high degree of attainment is the largest factor in the development of the spelling conscience.

When a high per cent. is not achieved, the method should be adapted to meet the condition in the room which prevents it. This will be due to the fact that individuals differ in the ability to remember. The class may be composed largely of eye-minded children, or of ear-minded children, or of motor-minded children. The emphasis may be changed, but the general principle of the method remains the same. The adjustment needed will become apparent by a study of the results, and experiments to discover which phase to emphasize. The teacher must remember, however, that no method of presentation, however excellent, can be a substitute for the efforts of the pupil to learn. He must exert himself; that is, use his powers of observation and memory. A good method insures the right appeal, strong associations, and the full use of the student's powers.

In the higher grammar grades fifteen to twenty words may be assigned for independent study. These words may be found in the spelling book or taken from the class list. In dwelling upon the specific difficulties and peculiarities of words, I have always found the rules for spelling very helpful. It is my opinion that they should be taught. "Surprise tests" may be given of words selected from newspapers or from the various branches of study, no preparation having been made. This plan will give the teacher a clue as to important words to be taught. A teacher who possesses the ability to arouse the spelling conscience and to develop the spelling sense will ordinarily succeed in teaching all children to spell, except the constitutionally bad spellers, and to use the dictionary. The teacher in dictating must be particular about enunciation and articulation, as well as pronunciation. After the words are written, papers are exchanged and examined as the teacher spells, syllabating each word, commenting upon its specific difficulties. Papers are returned to the owners, and the incorrect words are studied. Lists of misspelled words are kept, and these words constitute the review for Friday. The words each day are discussed, used in sentences, incorrect words spelled orally—always in syllables.

Particularly difficult words may be taught and written upon the blackboard, to remain there for a time. Care should be used to make a judicious combination of written and oral spelling and of columns of words and of the dictation of selections. Some scheme, differing with different teachers, must be devised to make pupils feel responsibility for correct spelling. They must realize that incorrect spelling will not be allowed. Such a course, followed by a determined teacher, helps greatly. She must know, too, that interest and desire to excel on the part of pupils are pre-requisites for the successful teaching of English spelling.

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Spelling in the Eighth Grade

Many children leaving the grammar school go to work. No one will thereafter teach them spelling. They must rely upon themselves and the dictionary. The others, who go to high school, must be independent in their study. Hence the eighth grade is the time when the teaching of spelling should have for its aim, awakening and cultivating a spelling conscience. Up to this time spelling has been *taught*. Now the pupils should be trained, each one to know his peculiar errors and to watch out for them, to stop guessing—bad spelling is merely bad guessing—to consult the dictionary for words he does not know, and to observe the new words he meets with in reading.

Much wrong spelling is due to bad habits, to carelessness, and to a wrong concept of the form of the word. In the lower grades, where much written work is done, the multiplicity of papers makes it impossible to prevent some bad spelling habits.

In every eighth grade class that has come to me I have found some pupils writing “an” for “and,” “the” for “they,” omitting “ed” in regular verb forms, omitting the apostrophe in possessive nouns and often giving it to the pronoun “its,” confusing common homonyms, and confusing words that resemble each other in form; as, *quite* and *quiet*, *respectfully* and *respectively*. Such errors are not peculiar to one school, but common to all classes that I have ever known. Few pupils are guilty of all, but nearly all are sometimes guilty of one or more. Call the child’s attention to his error, and he will generally say, “I meant it so-and-so.” He will immediately correct it, telling why; and the next hour he will make the same error. Somewhere the habit was formed, and Habit is master.

Words are phonograms as well as ideo-grams. Careless enunciation at home and abroad gave the child a wrong concept of syllables and words. Hence, “would have” is sometimes “would of,” and “modifier” becomes “moderfier,” etc. Careless enunciation and pronunciation have a baleful influence on the best taught spelling.

I have found no easy way to break up bad spelling habits. It requires constant vigilance on the part of the teacher. Every written word and sentence must be examined by the teacher till a lively spelling conscience has been developed, and the ability and desire to *find* and *correct* one's own errors have been acquired. I have found publicity and a tangible reward in the form of per cents helpful in awakening a lively spelling interest. On a blackboard in my classroom is an alphabetical list of my pupils' names. Every written word or sentence on blackboard or on paper is a Spelling Test; and for every error, whether due to ignorance, to carelessness, or bad spelling habits, a mark is placed after the pupil's name, each mark taking one from the desired one hundred per cent. The first month the lines are long, and the number of pupils attaining above ninety per cent perfect is small. But children take pride in a clean score and delight in seeing their names listed with those attaining ninety per cent, so as the marks decrease the per cents increase. The list serves as a bulletin board to remind each child that he is in the game, and it is watched with no little interest.

Children forget much that they are taught, so do grown-ups forget much; therefore, there is need of reviewing as well as of learning new words. Here a good spelling-book is indispensable. From its long lists of words each pupil must learn to discover the words he does not know and to study them. In the advanced lists there are words that the child should make his own. They should be selected by the teacher for special study. The book's lists also contain words for which the pupils have no immediate use, and whose meaning, if learned to-day, would be forgotten to-morrow. Time is not wasted in spelling such words. Their arrangement of letters and syllables lodge in the sub-conscious memory, and when the words are needed their letters fall in right order. The homonyms to be mastered should be used in sentences, sometimes dictated by the teacher and at other times in sentences constructed by the pupil.

Dictation is an important factor. The words that *might* be misspelled are placed upon the board for visualization, and any new words among them are taught, all being erased before dictating.

Every lesson is to some extent a spelling lesson. In grammar we review nouns and teach verbs. Here we emphasize the

rules for words ending in *y*, *f*, and *fe*, and for doubling a final consonant. In history, in reading—indeed, in every subject, new words must be interpreted. The spelling of the new word is most easily learned then, and the habit of noticing the form of a new word is acquired. When feasible, other words having the same prefix, stem, or suffix, should be taught simultaneously—e. g., transposition, transpire, translate, transatlantic, etc.

I find much written work on the board helpful. Children are keen at finding on the board such errors as they themselves make. Here, too, is a chance to enlarge the vocabulary and teach synonyms; e. g., one pupil wrote, "Benedict Arnold was wounded and sent to Philadelphia to live." A few questions soon brought from the class "get well," "recover," "recuperate," "convalesce."

To secure the correction of all errors, each pupil fastens in his spelling book blank pages, on which he writes correctly every word he misspells, studies it, and recites it orally at any convenient time. Not many words will appear twice on the same page.

As a result of emphasizing spelling at all times, of constant vigilance, of publicity, and of keeping lists of corrected errors, I have found in all my classes the little dictionary—each pupil has one—more and more in use as the weeks go by, and careless errors much less frequent, evidences of an aroused spelling-conscience, which, when once wide-awake, will keep its owner in the right ways of spelling.

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Spelling in Primary Grades

Formal spelling in the first grade usually begins after the Christmas holidays. As the child's available material for spelling is in his reading lessons, the time to enter upon the study of spelling words depends on the mental maturity of the class. When the class is ready for it, spelling lessons should begin.

To receive impressions the child must listen; must visualize. To make the impressions permanent he must pronounce, articulate, enunciate, record over and over, until each motor apparatus for hearing, seeing, speaking and writing operates accurately, and the correct memorized form of words is fixed.

Simple breathing exercises, whispering rhymes, singing of the alphabet—old-fashioned, but effective—impart freedom and strength to the speaking apparatus; help mould the thought into words; open the channel for the voice.

Beginning with the first rhymes or sentences of the early reading books, the pupils study aloud with the teacher each word, looking at it carefully, pronouncing it distinctly, listening to the sound, and spelling it orally.

Each pupil chooses any word he pleases on his card or from a selected part of his reader and studies it by himself. Pupils may stand in groups or separately, but each individual pronounces and spells aloud the word he has studied. If a child fails, he studies until the others have spelled, then he may try again.

From the card or a selected portion of the reader words are dictated to be spelled orally. A child missing a word finds it and studies it until he is sure he can spell it.

When the children are able to write, the same material is used for written spelling. The preparation for this takes from two to three days by a plan similar to the following: oral work with teacher; selecting, studying, testing orally by pupils; pupils test themselves by writing at board from memory, etc. This preparation needs to be accurate and thorough, standardized by

perfection before writing, that the child may be shot through with the understanding that he is responsible for retaining that which he is taught. Perfection is the standard for beginners in spelling; the teacher must not be too eager "for early yield" on paper. Spell orally! orally!! orally!!!

Let the perfect paper express its own excellence without the red or blue pencil mark or gilt star to mar it. Simplicity is the keynote of correct work. If incorrect work is recorded, correct it at once, impressively but simply.

To intensify the correct notion of words before the children are advanced to writing, supply them with scissors and paper, on which has been written in bold type the word or words to be cut out. Teach them how to do this before permitting them to work alone.

Spelling by series requires each child to image distinctly the family motif,—*ee*, *ow*, then he has only to think of the initial part of the word, as *s*, in *see*; *sn*, in *snow*. Work with phonics begins early in the year, correlating with the reading. This is very essential in these early years; later it may become something of a hindrance if used without explanation and too frequently.

The words *an*, *be*, *should*, *seen*, etc., are treated as accessory words calling for drill in phrase form, such as *could see*, *have seen*, *has done*.

Habited by success in studying and spelling under the supervision of the teacher, the children ask to spell the names of objects at home, such as *lilac*, *sponge*; verbs such as *improve*, *select*. Work with very simple synonyms begins now that the intelligent thought back of the idea may be properly interpreted.

Spelling for the first grade naturally evolves from the reading experience; spelling in the second grade expands into spelling words from daily experience as well as words selected from school subjects, synonyms and easy homonyms.

That the child may increase the habit of testing his power of spelling whatever he finds to spell, a little child stands in front of the class while each pupil spells the name of the things he sees on or about the child,—hair-ribbon, apron, shoes, nose, lips,

blouse, navy, stockings, sweater, etc. Recently, in fifteen minutes, a second grade spelled orally, without studying, forty-two words, names of things selected from two little girls placed before the class.

Seasonal spelling, such as Easter bunny, Easter handkerchief, Easter hat, was a lesson furnished by the children.

Each child having a picture, or drawing one, makes a list of things he sees in the picture. After playing a game, perhaps "Going to Grandfather's at Thanksgiving," orally spell the words, the phrases, or sentences the game suggests,—wagon, pump, sleigh, galloping horses, mince pie; a jolly ride; Grandmother roasted the turkey,—explaining why *Grandmother* begins with a capital and why the sentence closes with a period.

The third grade advances to spelling books, but they do not "live, move and have their being" in them. The child's experiences continue to be the principal source of supply for words for spelling study. Responsibility for what he has learned in former classes permeates silently and relentlessly the demands for correct, applied, spelling in dictation and written work.

In this class he learns that words are pronounced with one or two or more pushes of the voice; that a part of a word may be pushed more forcibly than another part. He is called on to think of a list of five grocery articles, then to spell them without further study. In this way *vinegar*, *soap*, etc., are brought under subjection to memory; names of things in the room and facts relating to the room,—*radiator*, *teacher's desk*, *electric light*, *cheerful room*, *narrow aisle*. A poster furnishes words, phrases, sentences.

Dictionary work begins in the fourth grade. Each child is supplied with one. At times it seems overworked, but an established dictionary habit does not interfere with the habit of success. As the child is learning to spell, so is he storing up an enriched vocabulary.

Not more than two new words are assigned for a lesson, but these become close friends, and subordinate words vary in number from three to twenty.

An additional step in this grade leads to the study of easy prefixes and suffixes. The vocabulary of school interests, such as Field Day exercises, abound with concrete experience spelling. Spelling by elimination helps to retain the evasive letters

and the right order of them. Ask as follows: "What are the last two letters of *column*?" "Think of two more words with the same ending." "Give second syllable of *valentine*; eighth letter of same word; the third letter; the fifth."

The successful teaching of spelling banishes fear of test and prepares the pupil to be always ready. For instance, if a child spells *Lincoln's*, he is asked to spell *apostrophe*; *sixty-three*, he is asked to spell *hyphen*. Should he mention indentation, he is asked to spell it or to spell parts of it.

In these classes, as in the first grade, written spelling is not required every day; however, every day finds pupils working, developing, studying, testing, consulting with their teacher in this subject, thereby economizing time and thought by creating perfect models "to keep and to hold."

Concentrate effort to make vivid the mental picture of the word or phrase being studied. This involves both the auditory and visual notions of the word, for in proportion as the child gains the true image through the first vividness, his capacity for spelling is enlarged.

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Spelling in Ungraded Schools

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE UNION OF CLASSES IN SCHOOLS OF TWO OR MORE GRADES FOR THE STUDY OF SPELLING.

In schools of two grades, assuming that the grades are sequential, the entire school may be taken together in spelling.

In schools of three and four grades the school should be divided into two classes for the study of spelling. This division should be made on the basis of spelling ability, rather than on the basis of grades. The division made up of the better spellers may be larger than the other division, and it should be given more work and more opportunity for independent study. It might be made a special honor to be passed from the lower to the higher division. The divisions might be remade each month.

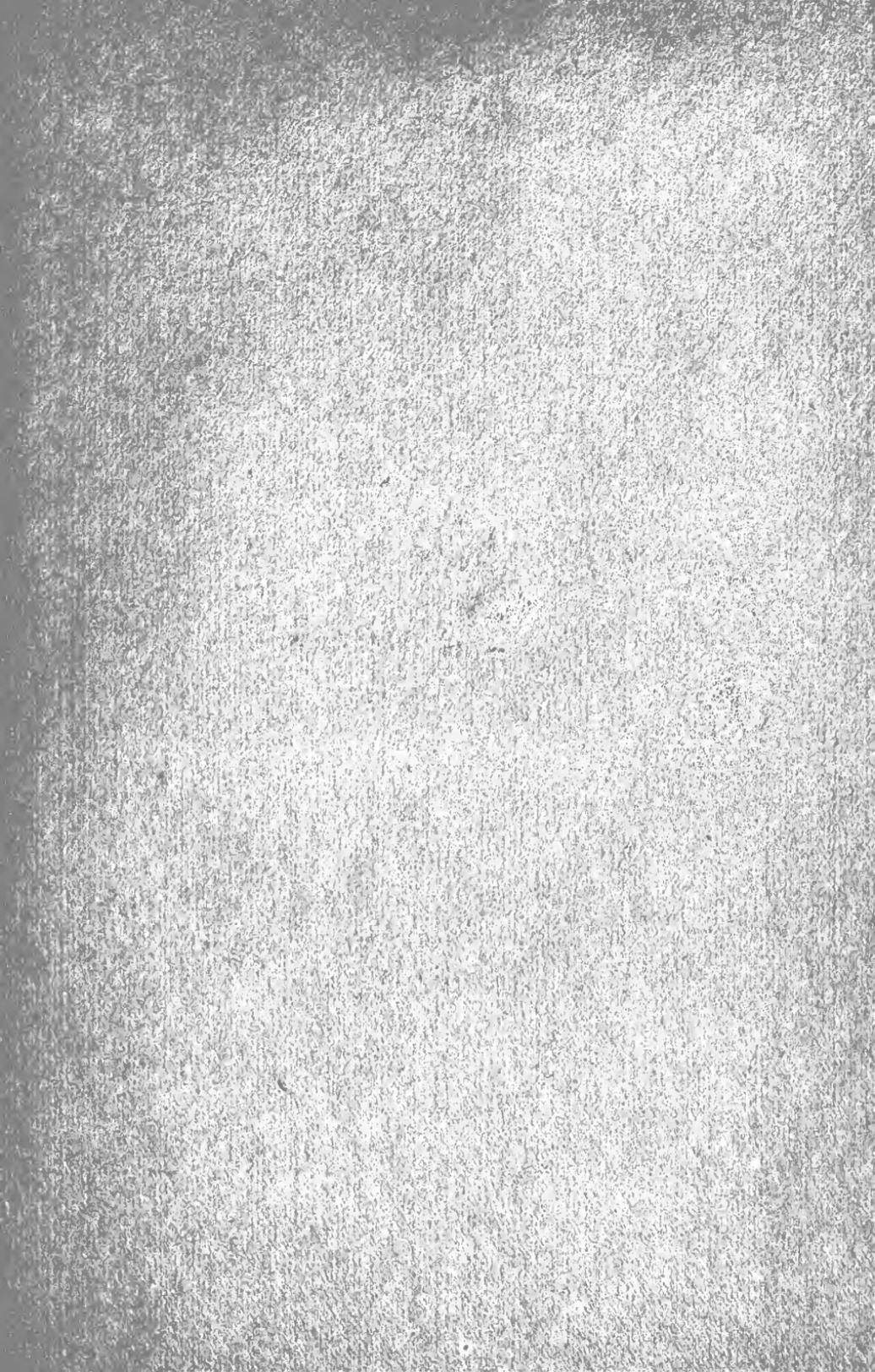
In schools where there are two classes in spelling there may be planned a study lesson, with the teacher for each class on alternate days. The written lesson, which is really a review, may be given to both classes at once, the teacher or a pupil pronouncing a word for one division, and then for the other while the first division is writing.

In schools where there are six or eight grades, the spelling of grades I-III should be a definite part of the reading and language lessons, both the study of words with the teacher and the independent study. Pupils of grades IV-VIII may be assigned to two spelling classes, as before suggested. A teacher will find no difficulty in conducting written exercises with two or three different classes at the same time. The teacher may pronounce a word to the first division, then to the second and to the third, returning to the first division by the time the pupils are ready for the next word. The pupils may pronounce the words instead of the teacher.

The divisions that are made should have the approval of the superintendent, supervisor or principal, and the spelling book assignment should be determined by the need of each division.

In schools having four to eight grades each pupil has more time for individual effort than is assigned in the school of one

or two grades. This may not be a disadvantage in the grammar grades, *provided* the pupil has *learned how to study*. It is therefore particularly necessary that the teacher in such a school put the pupils in command of *proper methods of study*. An attempt has been made to indicate some of these methods in the body of this pamphlet. The results of the independent study should show clearly that the pupil has been really putting *discriminating* thought into his work.



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