



**A SCOPE & SEQUENCE FOR INTERVENTION, GRADES 3-12,
ELL, TITLE, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Word Foundations

Filling in the missing pieces: phonics, grammar, vocabulary, and meaning

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Introduction

The Need

She sat down in a way that advised me she was not one to be messed with. The look in her eyes said this workshop had **not** been a choice and she resented every second I took of her time better spent on other things. I was the target and she was the self-appointed bomb. How would I reach this teacher? Could she be reached? Was she living permanently as the reigning expert in phonics? Was she the one who had all the answers and exhausted the human potential of learning on this subject? As I timorously walked to the screen I made a conscious decision to meet the issue head on.

Opening statement: “Anyone still continuing to debate if we should teach phonics is not considering the research! It must be taught!” She smiled and nodded affirmatively. A breakthrough! Oh my goodness. Could it be? Had I begun to build a bridge? With renewed confidence I pushed ahead: “However, most of us do not teach phonics or spelling, we assign it.” She gave a glance of ponder; a look of debate as if she was wondering if she should come over to my side.

As the moments continued: “In the upper grades, phonics should be taught in the context of explicit instruction on spelling patterns. We should not do away with spelling lists.” She was smiling and leaning forward.

“Spelling tests are also important.” Did she just blow me a kiss?

“Explicit phonics and spelling instruction should happen daily.” Lights out! Eyes narrowed. A scowl preceded the hoisting of her angry hand.

“I can not, and I repeat, **can not** plan for yet another subject! We are being overwhelmed with too much to do. How will I find time?” There it was, THE TRUTH. I knew I couldn’t debate her honesty. I know of many teachers who feel this way. The fact is, there are just not enough hours in the day to teach, assess, reflect, refine, plan, or rework another lesson.

This teacher is expressing the thoughts of so many educators around the country. You read books by “spelling gurus” who talk as though spelling is the only curriculum that should be taught. They spend every waking hour sitting by the fire, studying words! The suggestions given by these well-meaning experts are unrealistic due to real time constraints from an overburdened schedule. Just to assemble the resources and the “stuff” takes hours and hours of preparation, not to mention managing all the materials to teach “the lesson.”

Word Foundations is an attempt to answer that dilemma. How do we provide daily word study without further stressing teachers? Is there a “format” we can follow weekly that assists in developing good spellers? How can we ensure that students are mastering concepts and strategies and not merely memorizing lists?

The Beginnings of English

When teaching word study and spelling, English appears to be a ‘hot mess.’ But a closer look at the beginnings of this language helps us better understand how these patterns and seemingly lack of patterns can be explained.

“The history of the English language started with the arrival of three Germanic tribes who invaded Britain during the 5th century AD. These tribes, the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, crossed the North Sea from what today is Denmark and northern Germany. At that time the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most of the Celtic speakers were pushed west and north by the invaders - mainly into what is now Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Angles came from “Englaland” [sic] and their language was called “Englisc” - from which the words “England” and “English” are derived.” (<https://www.englishclub.com/history-of-english/>)

The language developed in three phases. Phase one was *Old English* - a language that today’s speaker would have trouble understanding. Today’s English has many commonly used words from this time period (450 - 1100 AD). At the end of the 6th century, monks came to Britain bringing both religion and the Roman alphabet. The Roman alphabet had 26 letters which made up 44 phonemes. Here is where the problem developed. There were too few letters to represent all the sounds. New letters could have been added or diacritical markings to indicate pronunciation. Instead of this option, combining letters became the solution to this problem (oy

or ow, for example). The silent /e/ was also added during this period as well as on letter having multiple sounds (the 'o' in doll, for, and hot, for example).

Middle English (1100 - 1500 AD) developed when William the conqueror (the Duke of Normandy) invaded and conquered England. The ruling class spoke a language that had its roots in French. Because of this, many French words were added into the English language as well as some patterns (qu, ou, and ch, for example).

Modern English (1500 - 1800 AD) began towards the end of Middle English. Noteworthy was the impact on the vowel sounds. They began being pronounced shorter and shorter. In addition, as the British Empire expanded around the globe, many new words and phrases entered the language. As people learned to read, printing of books brought a standardization to English language. In the mid-17th century, scholars borrowed words from Latin and Greek in an effort to raise the stature of the English language. During this time, they also changed the spelling of some English words to be in alignment with Latin. In addition, a shift in pronunciation occurred during this time. For example the 'k' in knight, the 'g' in gnat, and the 'l' in chalk were not pronounced but the spelling remained the same.

References

Bryson, Bill. *The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way*. New York, New York: William Morrow & Company, 1990.

Burnley, David. *The History of the English Language: A Sourcebook*. New York, New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2000.

The Research

Phonics research reports that reading and writing are reciprocal processes (Pinnell, 1994). Readers decode (put together sounds to form words in text) and writers encode ("spell...a word [by mapping] a spelling onto each sound heard in the word.") (Blevins 2001). Furthermore, "knowledge of common syllable patterns and structural analysis improves the ability to read, spell, and learn the meanings of multisyllabic words (Blevins, 2001)." To accomplish this, "the most effective type of instruction...is *explicit (direct) instruction*" that controls the amount of information being taught to the learner (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1996; Evans and Carr, 1985).

Studies clearly indicate that all children can benefit from studying words. This includes children that are good spellers and have a good visual memory (Moats, 1995). As children reach the upper grades, "spelling by analogy becomes increasingly important ..." (Moats, 1995)

“In short, knowledge about patterns within single syllables, and syllable patterns within words, will be of considerable value to students in both their reading and their spelling.” (Bear, 1996).

Further research suggests that a word study curriculum should accomplish how to look at words, high-frequency words, letter-sound relationships, patterns, and the ability to use multiple strategies (Pinnell, 1994). Spelling should emphasize the most reliable and most useful patterns, not patterns that occur infrequently. Patterns should never be taught as absolutes, but rather as generalizations that can have exceptions (Blevins, 2001).

Word Foundations



When teaching spelling, research suggests that teachers (Moats, 1995; Blevins, 2001):

- use a logical order in the teaching of patterns and words
- provide daily lessons for approximately 15 minutes
- keep the lessons focused and fast-paced using spelling patterns and frequency of use
- create an environment in which students become actively engaged in observing words and patterns
- provide review and build upon what students know
- adjust pace or scope according to students' assessed needs
- time to apply and practice the pattern

Word Foundations is a program designed to meet the above-mentioned criteria. Explicit instruction guides students in studying and analyzing words and patterns. It is a plan based upon the latest research. Beginning with closed vowels, *Word Foundation* builds students' knowledge of orthography in a logical sequence including

- Dividing multisyllabic words
- Spelling Inventory
- Syllabication Inventory
- Closed Vowel
- Open Vowel
- Silent 'e'
- Cross-checking
- Controlled 'r'
- Consonant 'le'
- Vowel Teams
- Deviant Vowel Teams
- 5 reliable ways to spell
- Affixes
- Greek & Latin Derivatives