

Overview

Words *Their Way: Letter and Picture Sorts for Emergent Spellers* is intended to complement the text *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction*. That core text provides a practical, research-based, and classroom-proven way to study words with students. This companion text expands and enriches that word study, specifically for emergent spellers.

In this text we present materials, sorts, and activities for emergent word study. It is important that teachers have the core text available for reference as it provides the theory and research for the practical, classroom-proven activities in this book. Chapter 4 of *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* describes word study for emergent learners in detail and suggests additional activities.

Emergent spellers are just beginning to “write” on their own, using random marks, representational drawings, mock linear or letter-like writing, and random letters and numbers. To address the needs of emergent spellers, this text focuses on vocabulary development through concept sorts, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, initial letter-sound correspondences and concept of word.

Words Their Way: Letter and Picture Sorts for Emergent Spellers provides teachers with prepared reproducible sorts and step-by-step directions to guide students through the sorting lessons. There are organizational tips as well as follow-up activities to extend the lesson through weekly routines. The materials provided in this text will complement the use of any existing phonics, spelling, and reading curricula.

Emergent learners are found mostly in preschool, kindergarten, and the beginning of first grade. They may not write at all or they might write with scribbles, letter-like forms, or random letters. If students are using letters to represent the initial sounds of words (spelling *cat* as K or *baby* as BB) they are moving into the early letter name-alphabetic stage, but will still benefit from many of the activities in this book. Emergent learners cannot read in the conventional sense, but can follow along in simple predictable text with the support of memory and pictures, and it is from such pretend reading that they begin to develop a concept of word.

SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

The first chapter in this supplement provides a variety of assessments for children in the emergent stage. These assessments help you determine what students know and don't know and what instruction to plan for them. The following chapters cover concept sorts, phonological awareness, alphabet, beginning consonant sounds and concept of word.,

Concept sorts are a good place to begin because students can learn the process of sorting using familiar objects and ideas while they extend their thinking and vocabulary. Phonemic awareness, rhyming, syllabication, and sound play are described in chapter three and complement the study of alphabet knowledge and letter recognition described in chapter four. The fifth chapter introduces the systematic study of beginning consonants through explicit instruction using sound sorts. The sixth chapter focuses on

concept of word in print: although attention is paid to this throughout the other sorts as well. Poems, jingles, and other short text selections are included in all chapters to read with students and to use in word study activities.

THE INTEGRATED LITERACY DIET FOR EMERGENT LEARNERS

While this book is organized by chapters, the chapters are not meant to be sequential as they are in the other supplemental texts. Concept sorts are appropriate for students at all ages because they introduce and reinforce vocabulary and conceptual knowledge. Reading selections are provided with the concept sorts and alphabet and phonological awareness activities so that emergent learners are interacting with print right from the start. Kindergarten students can begin to sort by sounds at the same time they are learning to identify letters and track a line of print. Once students have a concept of word, they begin to collect sight words they have learned to read in familiar texts. Such is the integrated literacy diet for the emergent learner.

Chapters 2–6 start off with units designed to show you how all these elements can be integrated and revisited throughout the emergent stage. We hope these models will help you create your own integrated literacy experiences using the materials in this book as well as favorite materials from your classroom. The sequence of instruction can be modified by teachers to fit the sequence in their own core reading program and should be differentiated to meet the needs of their students.

Word study activities are integrated into five essential literacy activities: Read To, Read With, Write With, Word Study, and Talk With, or RRWWT. The table below describes these essential activities.

Essential Literacy Activities	Procedures and Activities
Read To Concept, Vocabulary and Language Learning	<i>Read To</i> students from literature that offers rich oral language and that involves students in discussions as in Directed Listening-Thinking Activities (DL-TAs). Vocabulary instruction has greater meaning when supported by what we read to students.
Read With Concept of Word in Print and Word Recognition	<i>Read With</i> students using the support of familiar, predictable, and rhyming texts. Students fingerpoint read to track brief and familiar texts on charts and in Personal Readers. Students match and arrange word cards and sentence strips.
Write With Phonological Awareness, Letter Sound Correspondences, Verbal Expression, Concepts of Print and Language Development	<i>Write With</i> activities encourage students to analyze the speech stream. Students learn to segment words for individual letter-sound correspondences as the teacher models through think alouds and shares the pen.
Word Study Phonological Awareness, Word and Letter Recognition, Initial Sound Correspondences, Concept and Language Development, Word Learning	<i>Word Study</i> includes picture sorts to teach beginning sounds; letter sorts and cards to teach the alphabet and letter recognition; concept sorts for thinking and vocabulary instruction; rhyming and syllabication activities; and language play with rhymes and songs.
Talk With Language and Vocabulary Learning	<i>Talk With</i> students to help their oral language grow. Creative dramatics, storytelling, and talking about meaningful things make it possible for vocabulary, language structures, and thinking to mature

PACING

Instruction in this supplement is set at an introductory and an average pace. There is a year of activities, though most students will progress through these sorts in less than a year. Make adjustments in the pacing to assure that students master the sorts: If students catch on quickly, move to a faster pace, perhaps by spending fewer days on a series of activities or by skipping some altogether. On the other hand, pacing can be slowed by using additional activities when students need more practice. *Words Their Way* provides background information, more sorts and activities, organizational tips, games, and resources that are essential to organize your word study program for emergent readers and spellers.

RESOURCES

For each chapter there are *Notes for the Teacher* and routines to develop the different parts of the literary diet. We provide a variety of blackline reproducible sorts to cut apart to use over several days. There are also blacklines of reading selections that students can use for fingerpoint reading. Make your own copy of the reproducibles for teacher modeling in small groups or make transparencies to use when demonstrating on an overhead projector. The pages can also be enlarged to use in pocket chart sorts.

For independent or small group work, make copies of the handouts for each student, enlarging the original to eliminate the border and to increase the size of the words and pictures. Children should be taught how to cut out their own set of sorts (developing fine motor skills in the process), but volunteers, parents, and cross-age tutors can help to prepare materials in advance to save instructional time. Sorting pieces are stored in envelopes or plastic bags that have been labeled with children's names to sort again several times on other days or to take home.

Sorting and game templates and additional sorts are found in the appendix of *Words Their Way* and on the *Words Their Way* CD-ROM. Chapter 3 in *Words Their Way* includes additional ideas for managing picture sorts.

Many teachers have students from diverse language backgrounds who are learning to read in English. Throughout this book, suggestions are provided for English Learners (ELs). But you will find additional information in *Words Their Way with English Learners* and the supplement *Words Their Way: Emergent Sorts for Spanish-Speaking Emergent Learners*.

THE WORD STUDY LESSON

The four steps in a teacher-directed lesson are discussed in Chapter 3 of *Words Their Way*. Take your time to introduce each of these four steps: *Demonstrate*, *Sort and Check*, *Reflect*, and *Extend*.

1. **Demonstrate** the sorts and activities in small groups at a table, on the floor, on an overhead, or with a pocket chart. Name the pictures with students, and have students say the names of the pictures with you aloud. Listen for the pictures that students know. The pictures can be used to extend children's vocabulary by talking briefly about new terms. However, do not make naming the pictures into a guessing game. Give the words as needed or eliminate unknown items from the sort.

Use the two or three key pictures at the top of each column to demonstrate the sort. Name the picture on a card and then check it with the key pictures. (Does *baby* go with *ball* or *monkey*? Listen, *baby-ball* or *baby-monkey*? I am going to put the pic-

ture of the baby underneath the picture of the ball because these two words sound alike at the beginning.)

Sort each picture in this way and place them underneath the key pictures. Go slowly as you demonstrate, and explain how pictures are alike or different. This explanation helps students learn specialized vocabulary that describes the categories; for example, *capital letters, sounds, rhyming*, and so on. Students sort by naming the pictures *aloud*. Saying the words together enhances student involvement, and the articulation provides essential information needed to sort by sound.

2. **Sort and Check** Students repeat the sort with you in small group time, in centers, or independently. Students can sort individually or with a partner, or they can contribute to a whole group sort. Pairing English-speaking children with English language learners will provide assistance with new vocabulary. Pull the key pictures out as headers for the sort. Have students set up their own key pictures in this way. Show students how to mix up the pictures and turn them face down in a deck. With a partner or in the group, students can take turns drawing a card and sorting pictures in the correct column. You can also pass out the pictures and have students take turns sorting their pictures for the group.

Demonstrate how students are to check their sorts when they sort a picture incorrectly. Simply say, "Let's check to see if there are any pictures we might need to move." Show students how to recognize an error by naming the pictures in each column and moving the picture to the correct column.

3. **Reflect** Bring the group together to have students reflect on why they sorted the way they did, or talk to individuals as you move around to check their work. Common phrases you can use in reflection are: "*These pictures are alike because ...*" or "*I sorted these pictures in this column under the _____ because....*" Because there are only so many ways to sort an easy sort, assure students that it is all right to say the same things that you or someone else did as long as it makes sense. Reflections can be made with partners, and they can be written down by the teacher and collected on a bulletin board or chart. As in most learning, children will need to see the reflection process modeled by the teacher. A reflection, for example, might be: "*I sorted these pictures underneath the picture of the cake because they all have the same sound at the end.*" Emphasize the beginning sound by elongating it (*mmman*) or pausing briefly between the onset and rime (*c-ake*).
4. **Extend.** Students extend their experience with the sort in many ways. At the outset, students repeat the sort and then extend the sort by finding more examples, hunting for similar pictures, and playing games. Over several days, students repeat these sorts in a group, for seatwork, with a partner, at centers, or for homework. Routines are described in each chapter of this book that will extend the sorts and involve students in related literacy activities.

WEEKLY SCHEDULES IN EMERGENT WORD STUDY

Daily literacy instruction blends brief lessons that occur throughout the day and are repeated over time. We suggest a week-long routine that has students practice these essential activities to mastery. Within a lesson, there is a mix of activities in a number of essential areas: concept and vocabulary development, concept of word in print, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and beginning consonant sounds. The teacher-directed lessons incorporate different components of this basic word study diet for the emergent learner.

Five days of word study can be divided into three segments: Day 1, Day 2, and Days 3–5. The first two days provide crucial and explicit instruction through teacher modeling

and discussion. On Days 3–5, students work more independently, with repeated practice of the sorts. Given the integration discussed above, the Read With activities are introduced on Day 1 or Day 2, and this makes it possible to do word hunts and other word and letter recognition activities on Days 3–5.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3–5
Read To: Literature Links	Read With: Reread selections	Read To: Literature Links
Read With: Easy Selections	Word Study: Repeat Sort, Check and Reflect	Read With: Reread familiar selections
Word Study: Demonstrate, Sort, Check and Reflect	Extend at Seats or Centers	Word Study: Repeated Practice with Sort, Word hunts, Games Talk With and Write With

Most Read To and Read With activities can be presented in a larger group setting. Differentiation then follows based on students’ needs. If you work with instructional groups, Day 1 can be staggered. In addition, Days 3–5 can be reduced and expanded.

