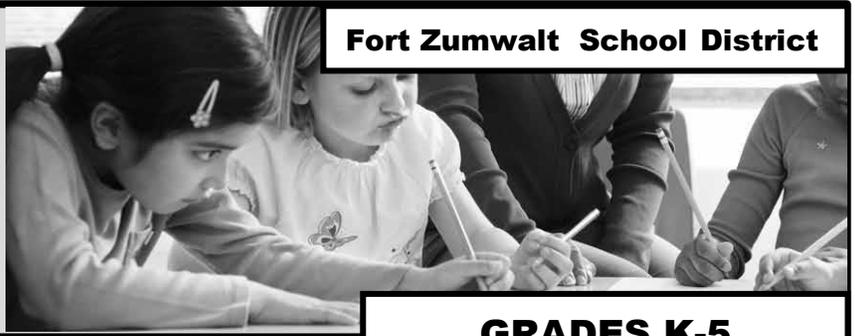


PARENTS' GUIDE TO Word Study



GRADES K-5

Dear Parents,

This guide provides an overview of the Word Study Component to the K-5 ELA (English Language Arts) Curriculum, approved by the Board of Education in May of 2013. As we strive to ensure that all Fort Zumwalt students are capable, inquisitive, and confident learners, we continually seek the most current research-supported approaches to instruction. As a result, our curriculum continually evolves in order to meet the needs of students. The purpose of this letter is to provide information to parents about Fort Zumwalt's K-5 Word Study Curriculum.

Looking Back at Spelling Instruction

Spelling has previously been taught through the memorization of a weekly word list. On Monday, students took a pretest followed by a test on Friday with little or no instruction throughout the week. While many students successfully memorized the list of words each week, others were not yet ready for the challenge presented by the words on the list. Still others already knew the words and therefore, no new learning occurred. There was little or no transfer from the memorized words to the students' daily writing. Research shows that memorizing words and rules, without a sense of why they should be learned, is not effective.

By memorizing a list of spelling words each week, students may learn a finite number of words in their school career. However, by learning patterns, such as the -ake pattern, students will be able to build many new words such as shake, taken, remake, and earthquake. This way of learning how words work supports students in transferring their knowledge when reading complex texts and writing unfamiliar words in all subject areas. This is the foundation of "word study."

What is Word Study?

Word study is an alternative to traditional spelling instruction. It is based on learning word patterns rather than memorizing unconnected words. Word study provides students with opportunities to investigate and understand the patterns in words, while also using many strategies to make sense of unknown words. There is a progression of development, including instruction in the relationship of letters and sounds, patterns found in words, and the origin of words. Word study instruction occurs in the context of reading and writing workshop. The desired result is for students to become proficient readers and writers, using their knowledge of how words work to help them in all areas of communication both in and out of school.

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What Can I Expect?

The biggest question on parents' minds will be, "How will this look compared to what I have seen in the past?" Below you will find some of the biggest changes listed.

Kindergarten

- During 1st and 2nd quarter teachers are working with students on phonemic awareness, letter identification, concepts about print, and word recognition.
- Beginning in 3rd quarter, teachers will assign 3 words that demonstrate the weekly pattern.

First – Fifth Grade

- Fewer words will be assigned to students.
- Teachers will assign 5-6 words that demonstrate the weekly spelling pattern or word part beginning in 1st quarter.
- It may be that your child is already familiar with the words being assigned. The focus for instruction is the pattern or word part. Teachers will be extending the learning in the classroom based on the pattern. It is important to begin with words that students can read in order to teach the pattern and extend the learning. It's like riding a bike, if you take off the training wheels too early the rider will fall.
- Teachers have the option to include words from student writing and content areas (e.g. math, science, social studies) in the weekly lists.
- Application Words = During the weekly assessment, teachers will give the students between 2-5 application words for them to spell on the assessment. The application words will have the same pattern or word part studied in class during that week. Teachers are assessing the students' ability to transfer the pattern and apply their word knowledge. Students will not know which application words the teacher will select to be on the weekly assessment.

Greek/Latin Root Words

- In second grade students will begin working with common prefixes and suffixes every fifth week. Their weekly assessment will focus on their knowledge of the prefixes and suffixes taught for that week.
- Beginning in third grade and continuing through fifth grade, students will be working with two Greek and/or Latin root words every fifth week. Their weekly assessment will be an assessment that focuses on the meaning of the root words and how prefixes and suffixes can change the meaning of a word.

How Can I Support My Child at Home?

- Encourage your child to write at home for a variety of purposes: lists, letters, stories, messages, notes, etc.
- Encourage your child to read a variety of texts that will introduce him/her to new words.
- For younger children, play with language through word games, songs, rhymes, and poetry.
- Reinforce the strategic work done at school. When a child asks, "How do I spell the word ____?" parents may reply:
 - What chunks do you hear?
 - What sounds do you hear?
 - Say it slowly.
 - Try writing it two ways and pick the way that looks right.
 - Do you know another word that sounds like that word?
 - Do you know another word that looks like that word?
- Explore words with your child through the following activities:
 - Can you add a letter to make a new word?
 - Can you delete a letter to make a new word?
 - Can you change a letter to make a new word?
 - Can you make a chain of words by changing one letter at a time?
 - Can you make a compound word with any of your words?
 - Can you change any words to plurals?
- Play a family game!
 - Scrabble
 - Upwords
 - Boggle
 - Wheel of Fortune
 - Bananagrams
 - Mad Libs
 - Seek and Finds
 - Crossword Puzzles

Word Study Websites for Students:

www.puzzlemaker.com

kidspell.com

wordtwist.com

spellingcity.com