

# Qualitative Spelling Inventory Teacher Guide

Effective teaching cannot begin until you understand what students already know about words and what they're ready to learn. Likewise, instructional adjustments cannot be made until you evaluate the results of your teaching. An informal qualitative spelling inventory will give you a rich collection of information to understand students' knowledge of orthography. *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling* provides detailed information about spelling inventories and how to observe reading and writing behaviors to determine where children are developmentally. Here is a brief example of how to administer and analyze a spelling inventory.

## 1. Administer a Spelling Inventory

To place students in a word study notebook and develop word study groups, administer one of the three spelling inventories. These inventories have been studied in a validation study (Sterbinsky, 2007) to show that students' scores are highly related to other standardized reading and spelling measures. Spelling inventories are made up of words specially chosen to represent a variety of spelling features or patterns at increasing levels of difficulty. (See right for an example.) Students take an inventory as they would a spelling test, but they do not study the words in advance. The results of a spelling inventory lead to the next step, which is the most important.

## 2. Analyze Students' Spelling

Use a feature guide, like the one on p. 2, to analyze students' spelling.

## Example Spelling Inventory

Word	Student Spelling	Word Correct
1 bed	bed	✓
2 ship	ship	✓
3 when	when	✓
4 lump	lump	✓
5 float	float	✓
6 train	train	✓
7 place	place	✓
8 drive	drive	✓
9 bright	brite	
10 shopping	shoping	
11 spoil	spoyle	
12 serving	servng	✓
13 chewed	chooed	
14 carries	caryes	
15 marched	martched	
16 shower	showers	
17 bottle	bottel	
18 favor	faver	
19 ripen	rippin	
20 cellar	selar	
21 pleasure	pleascher	
22 fortunate	forchunate	
23 confident	confdant	
24 civilize	sivulise	
25 opposition	opozishun	

This analysis will help you identify what orthographic features students know and what they are ready to study as well as their approximate stage; a feature guide can help you determine a starting place for appropriate instruction. Look at the sample feature guide. This student demonstrated mastery of consonants, short vowels, digraphs, and blends. He only missed

Sample Feature Guide

Student's Name Jake Fisher Teacher T. Atkinson Grade 5 Date September  
 Words Spelled Correctly: 9/25 Feature Points: 43/62 Total: 52/87 Spelling Stage: Late Within Word Pattern

SPELLING STAGES →	EMERGENT		LETTER NAME-ALPHABETIC			WITHIN WORD PATTERN			SYLLABLES AND AFFIXES			DERIVATIONAL RELATIONS		
	Initial	Consonants Final	Short Vowels	Digraphs	Blends	Common Long Vowels	Other Vowels	Inflected Endings	Syllable Junctures	Unaccented Final Syllables	Advanced Suffixes	Bases or Roots	Feature Points	Words Spelled Correctly
1. bed	b ✓	d ✓	e ✓										3	1
2. ship		p ✓	i ✓	sh ✓									3	1
3. when			e ✓	wh ✓									2	1
4. lump	l ✓		u ✓		mp ✓								3	1
5. float		t ✓			fl ✓	oa ✓							3	1
6. train		n ✓			tr ✓	ai ✓							3	1
7. place					pl ✓	a-e ✓							2	1
8. drive		v ✓			dr ✓	i-e ✓							3	1
9. bright					br ✓	igh i-e							1	
10. shopping			o ✓	sh ✓				pping					2	
11. spoil					sp ✓		oi oy						1	
12. serving							er ✓	ving ✓					2	1
13. chewed							ew oo	ed ✓					2	
14. carries							ar ✓	ies	rr				1	
15. marched				ch ✓			ar ✓	ed ✓					3	
16. shower				sh ✓			ow ✓			er ✓			3	
17. bottle									tt ✓	le			1	
18. favor									v ✓	or			1	
19. ripen									p	en				
20. cellar									ll	ar ✓			1	
21. pleasure											ure	pleas ✓	1	
22. fortunate							or ✓				ate ✓	fortun	2	
23. confident											ent	confid		
24. civilize											ize	civil		
25. opposition											tion	pos		
<b>Totals</b>		7/7	5/5	6/6	7/7	4/5	5/7	3/5	2/5	2/5	1/5	1/5	43	9

one under Common Long Vowels. However, this student missed two features under Other Vowels, so this is the place to begin instruction for him. Looking above the line of features, *Middle to Late Within Word Pattern* has been circled to indicate the approximate stage.

with students who are ready to benefit from the same word study. Use the assessment information you gathered in steps 1 and 2 to form your groups. Use the feature points or words spelled correctly to group the students in your class. You can organize your groups by using a classroom composite form and/or a spelling-by-stage classroom organization chart as shown below. See *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* for more information about using feature guides and forming groups.

### 3. Form Groups

Experience has shown that when students study a particular orthographic feature, it is best if they are in groups

#### Spelling-by-Stage Organization Chart

EMERGENT			LETTER NAME			WITHIN WORD PATTERN			SYLLABLES AND AFFIXES			DERIVATIONAL RELATIONS		
EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE
Gerald	Brick	Katrina	Manuel	Sophia										
Andre	Felicia	Lindsey	Katie	Caleb										
Dani	Justin	Alex	Leona	5										
5 Jon	Sean	Bobby												
Maya	Luis	7												
Jana														
Adam														
Caritha	6													
Rayshawm														