

Tips for Teaching *Words Their Way*

- *Words Their Way* is a visual and auditory approach to teaching word study. Students need to be reminded to read the words aloud each and every time they work with the word sorts. Note: It is critical that students hear the sounds as well as look for visual patterns which is why encouraging them to read the words aloud is very important.
- *Words Their Way* includes the four strands related to word study: phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling and vocabulary. Note: It is important that students understand the meaning of the words in each sort as well as be able to read them. Therefore, explicit vocabulary instruction needs to occur. "Vocabulary knowledge is correlated strongly with reading and oral comprehension." (Beck, I, Hart, B., Hirsch, E. & Risley, T. "The Fourth-Grade Plunge." *American Educator*. Washington, D. C.: American Federation of Teachers. (Spring 2003): 14-46.)
- When previewing the teacher resource guide it is helpful to read "The Teacher Tip" section included for each sort. The tips often offer suggestions for remediation as well as supplementation.
- A dictation is an effective way to assess students' understanding. Most teachers include a dictation at the end of each sort as a way to determine if students have grasped the skills taught and are ready to move to the next sort. Several teachers have also found it helpful to administer a dictation after a few days of teaching a sort as a way to identify and target instruction on any misconceptions students may have. Dictations typically include 5-10 words from the sort but most importantly also include 5+ words that were not in the sort but demand that the students transfer their learning to new words. Many teachers find it helpful to dictate one or more sentences as part of the dictation (rather than simply a list of words) so that students can practice the conventions (e.g., punctuation, capitalization, high frequency words).
- Another valuable assessment tool teachers use to monitor progress are the *Words Their Way Spell Checks*. After approximately every five to seven sorts a Spell Check is administered. Details about the Spell Checks can be found in the teacher resource guide (e.g., Level B pgs. 21-22, Level C pgs. 21-22, Level D pgs. 20-22, and Level E pgs. 20-22.)
- When reviewing the attached documents please note that the letters contained with two backslashes (e.g., /sh/) indicate the sound those letters make. For example, /sh/ would be read as "sh" as in **ship**.
- Embedded in the guide for each word study level there are links and professional texts referenced to support the various teaching points. A comprehensive word study bibliography is also attached.
- For additional copies of the attached documents including revised versions please visit www.mamkschools.org/wordstudy.