



A Name Inquiry (Where Building Community and Word Study Meet)

Term 1 is the perfect time for a Name Inquiry. An essential focus at this time of year is the relationships you're building with and between children and this way you can also begin building the culture of thinking about words too.

Some of the suggestions below are game-based rather than following a learning-through-inquiry process. I've included them in a "Name Inquiry" because they will help create the culture of curiosity about words, sounds and meaning. This is where inquiry begins. From this culture of curiosity (being a "Word Nerd"!) you'll be able to guide the children's inquiries into the spelling, meaning and use of words throughout the year.

This does not represent a complete Word Study/Spelling programme for a year.

It aims to provide some ideas for beginning the school year by sparking curiosity about words and spelling in English. The first few weeks of the year is the time when teachers intentionally create the learning culture in their class. These ideas aim to create this culture of thinking, wondering, researching and seeing connections within the spelling and meaning of written words.

Word Study goals for Term 1 might include:

- Immerse children in the language of learning and thinking about words
- Create curiosity about words (eg: model noticing fascinating words in Read Alouds, the newspaper or from conversations; choosing words from other areas of learning – Maths, Science, Italian, Art - to investigate.) Don't keep the thinking about words to only Word Study/Spelling times.
- Teach word investigation strategies (eg: harvesting words from Just Right texts & environmental print; using a Word Origins Dictionary; looking for patterns in words; grouping words and explaining why.)
- Connect the purpose for spelling accurately with making your writing clear for your reader (ie: connect spelling explicitly to Writing Workshop)
- Introduce children to a **variety** of Spelling Strategies (i.e. avoid an over-reliance on 'sounding out' as the only problem-solving strategy for unknown words). These need to include: visual strategies (ORTHOGRAPHY), meaning strategies (MORPHOLOGY), phonic strategies (PHONOLOGY), word origin strategies (ETYMOLOGY) and proof-reading that is connected to authentic writing experiences.

ALL YEAR LEVELS

- Tell the story of your name. Do you know why your parents chose your name? Does your name originate from another language? (ETYMOLOGY)
- Use a set of name cards to play "Why do they belong together?" - a great game when you have a few minutes before dismissal or while waiting for a few children to return to the Meeting Area. Choose two or three names that have something in common. Place them under each other on easel/chart stand or in middle of circle and children problem solve why they belong together. (ORTHOGRAPHY, PHONICS)
- Use sets of name cards for a small group learning experiences. Children group according to different criteria; eg: same initial letter, same final letter, same number of letters in name, rhyming names... (PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS, PHONICS, CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT, ORTHOGRAPHY)
- Regroup names according to sounds the first/final letter makes. What do we discover about the sounds these letters make? (PHONICS)

- Children make a list of names with 4 letters, 5 letters, end in /n/ etc. from a class chart/name cards. (*ORTHOGRAPHY, CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT*)
- Build and record generalisations about words, letters and sounds from these investigations.

EARLY YEARS

- Make individual name cards or stones for Attendance Chart. Children locate their name and place in Chart or locate name and turn over to indicate they are at school.
- Sign in Board or sheet – laminated board which encourages children to write their name as ‘sign in’ for school. A great morning routine to encourage. Could vary later by putting initial name letter on board and children first locate ‘their’ letter and complete writing their name. (*PHONICS*)
- Use names to chant, clap (good for syllables), make Big Books and Charts for Shared Reading (eg: “Bryan likes bananas, Daisy likes dogs...”) (*PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS, PHONICS*)
- Create an Alphabet Chart using photographs of children and display in class. If some letters are missing, take the camera and do a “wonder walk” of the school and environs and photograph other important people in the school to add to the chart. (*PHONICS, ORTHOGRAPHY*)
- Make Name Jigsaws. Children’s names are written on the front of an envelope or zip lock bag. Inside are cut up letters. You can start with letters just for their own name to put together, later in the year adding other letters to make friends’ names. Could be a Literacy Centre experience. (You can also make similar puzzles of familiar rhymes and sentences from Shared Reading). (*ORTHOGRAPHY, PHONICS*)
- Make a game that matches names and photographs of class/school community members.
- Connect alphabet books to the name study. Children write their name on post-its and place it on the corresponding page of alphabet books (could be Big Books or small books). (*PHONICS*)
- Make a few sets of class names on laminated card. They are invaluable for putting children into pairs or small groups, for playing “dismissal games” or “transition games” by holding a card to indicate that child is reading to go to home/to transition to the next learning experience.

MIDDLE/UPPER YEARS

- Investigate surnames, middle names, nick-names, pet’s names...with many of the ideas above. (*ETYMOLOGY, MORPHOLOGY*)
- Research the origins of first and last names. (eg: Lisa is derived from Elisabeth – what other names are derived from Elisabeth?) (*ETYMOLOGY, MORPHOLOGY*)
- How many spelling variations can you find of your name? Names in the class? (eg: Lisa, Lise, Leesa, Leesah...). What does this tell us about how different letter patterns can make the same sound? (eg: long /ee/ sound is be made by the letters ‘i’ and ‘ee’ in my name examples. Search for other words with the long /ee/ sound. What other letter patterns can make /ee/?) (*PHONICS, ORTHOGRAPHY*)
- What does this mean for us when we spell? How can we make sure we use this knowledge in our writing?
- Have spelling interviews with children. What spelling strategies do you use? What do you do when you don’t know how to spell a word? How many strategies do you have? What if that doesn’t work?

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