

Word Study at Ocean Avenue

Our teachers understand and believe in the power of the written word. They have learned best practices in the teaching of literacy through our training with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University and our work with Fountas and Pinnell. Our teachers worked side by side with Project staff developers over the course of the years, attended professional development workshops and participated in weeklong summer institutes. They know that enhanced literacy skills are dependent on fast, accurate recognition of words and their meaning, as well as fast, accurate production of words in writing.

In conjunction with our Reading and Writing Workshops, Ocean Avenue students are using a Word Study Program called Foundations in grades K, 1 and 2. 3rd grade will use Word Study Lessons (Fountas & Pinnell); and our 4th and 5th grade students will use the Study Buddy System (Fountas & Pinnell). These programs are developmentally appropriate instructional approaches which provide an integrated way to teach phonics, vocabulary and spelling. The goal is to improve general literacy skills. Students examine, manipulate and categorize words in a practical, hands-on way as they study sound, pattern and meaning.

During Word Study, words and pictures are sorted in routines that require children to examine, discriminate, and make critical judgments about speech sounds, spelling patterns and meanings. Students will use hands-on opportunities to manipulate word features as we help them to generalize concepts to large groups of words. This systematic program of Word Study, guided by an informed interpretation of spelling errors and other literacy behaviors, is a teacher-directed, child-centered approach to vocabulary growth and spelling development. Students will study letter-sound correspondences, phonics, spelling patterns, high frequency words, decoding, meaning, and other attributes which are the basis of written word knowledge.

If you walk into any classroom in our school, you will see children working in pairs or small groups under the direction of the teacher. Students will work at their own instructional level to "sort" words into categories. Some common "sorts" you might hear your child mention are closed and open sorts, writing sorts, word hunts and word study games. You will notice that your younger students are using a workbook which allows them to cut out and use the manipulatives for that week.

Older students will be using a word study notebook where they will practice the concept of the week. The physical manipulation of words builds body memory and serves as a kinesthetic and tactual reinforcement which addresses individual student learning styles.

Our teachers understand and believe that reading and writing are skills which require practice. As parents, you play an essential role in helping your children lead a literacy enriched life. As part of our program, you might be asked to help your child cut out the words for sorting, practice simple sorts with your child, and talk to them about what they are learning. Consider playing a word game with your child. Delight in their progress as they begin to understand the concepts of our language! We appreciate your help and support in helping to make Ocean Avenue a vibrant literacy community.