Orthography Program with Seeing Stars
A Reading and Spelling Improvement Program

Orthography is the system of rules that govern how words are pronounced and spelled. The English orthography is relatively complex due to the varied roots of the language in history, and simply being able to recite the rules is not enough to lead to adequate reading skills.

Symbol imagery is the sensory-cognitive ability to visualize the identity, sequence and number of sounds and letters in words. It is a form of sensory input that underlies both phonological and orthographic processing, which support reading and spelling. The Seeing Stars program develops symbol imagery with exercises that help the individual create and maintain an accurate mental image of letters in a syllable or a word. These exercises require individuals to be able to create the symbol imagery in the mind's eye and manipulate it. By combining orthographic rule instruction with symbol imagery reinforcement (Seeing Stars), significant improvements in spelling and reading can be seen.

At the most basic level, our written language consists of the association of sounds to individual letters. So at the start of the program we make sure that this association is in place and understood. Multi-sensory instruction, including symbol imagery techniques, is used to reinforce the connection between sounds and symbols as well as to improve orthographic recognition (visual recognition of the correct spelling pattern).

Once the basic sound / symbol correspondence has been established, we introduce the rules that govern single syllable words. With each rule, students must understand the rule, express the rule using their own words, demonstrate the application of the rule when reading, and demonstrate the application of the rule when spelling. Worksheets are used at the initial stage of rule introduction. This is followed by reading controlled texts out loud, to allow for errors to be identified and the student to be cued into using phonological analysis skills to correct the errors. Concurrently the rule is being reinforced with spelling and symbol imagery tasks using the Seeing Stars program.

The student progresses through this highly structured, sequential program beginning with single syllables and moving through multisyllable words. The student learns multisyllable skills beginning with the rules that control how words are broken into syllables and accented. As the student gains confidence and their skills stabilize, they receive instruction in the common prefixes and suffixes to strengthen word identification. Depending upon the age of the student, additional instruction may include word roots.

Students always move forward at their own pace, and skill mastery must be demonstrated at each step before new skills are introduced. Students begin reading controlled texts as soon as practicable, and are monitored for errors and cued to use the skills being developed.

Anticipated outcomes include improvements in word attack (sounding out unfamiliar words), word identification (words quickly recognized), reading accuracy (words misread, skipped or guessed at), reading rate (how quickly a student reads), and comprehension (the ability to identify and remember important information from what is read.) By improving these skills, it is our hope to foster a desire and interest in reading in the students.

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