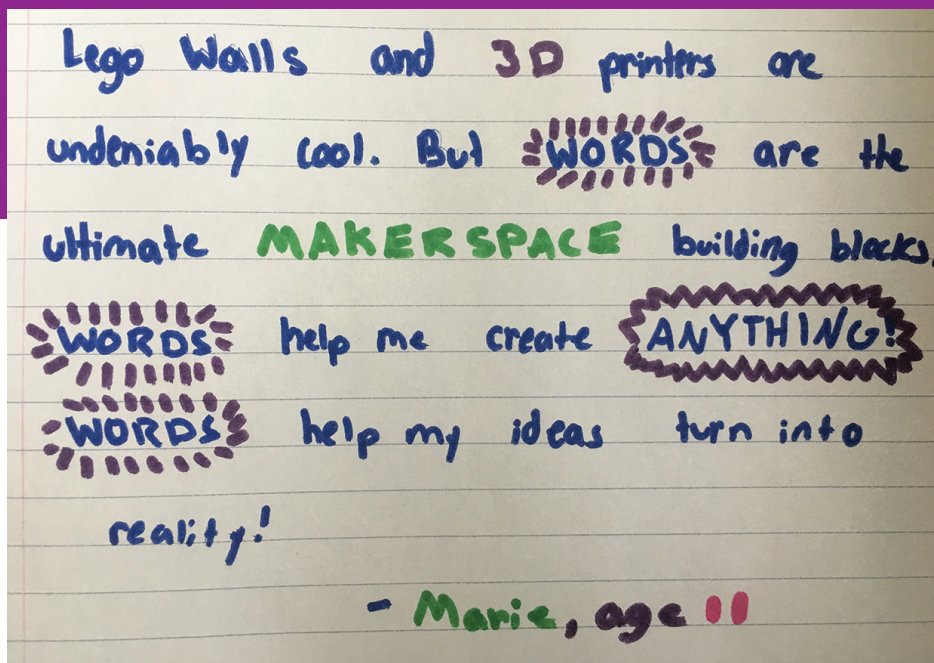


Building Vision for Word Learning



When we set up rich opportunities for word exploring and support student independence, students start to feel differently about words.

Word study instruction embedded in best practices and relevant for students today? It does exist! We've learned that traditional approaches (the isolated spelling lists and spoon-fed vocabulary definitions, and rote drills of yesteryear) don't help learners progress. They don't stick. They don't elicit collaboration, deep inquiry, engaging conversation, or a playful stance. Now is the time for word study routines that are collaborative, curiosity-driven, and designed for learners to take to the next level. With *Word Study That Sticks* (Koutrakos, 2018), and this companion book, I set out to prove that you *can* have your cake and eat it too. We *can* support students' developing language skills each day with rigor and joy!

PART I: **Launching Curious, Creative Word Study**

- Step 1: Learn about the research, ideas, and approach to this stepped-up approach to word study in *Word Study That Sticks*.
- Step 2: Use this book, *The Word Study That Sticks Companion*, to clear the path, pave the way, and help you put this approach into practice!

Get ready, get set, now is the time to GO.

Teaching and Tools Make for a Purposeful Partnership

Teaching tools will not be the answer to every problem you face in your classroom, nor will they all by themselves create rigor and independence just by being in your students' hands. You will also need good teaching practices, a strong curriculum, and solid relationships with your kids. But . . . teaching tools are powerful assistants along the way.
(Roberts & Beattie Roberts, 2016, p. 5)

Here is a not-so-secret secret: Most programs don't support meaningful, personalized, authentically engaging learning. Tools alone also won't do the trick. *You* are the expert on the students you observe, talk with, laugh with, and learn alongside. Colorful, boxed materials and cutesy, downloadable "stuff" could never replace you or your expertise. Teaching and learning are built upon connection, relationships, and responsiveness. Working alongside students takes tremendous patience, creativity, experimentation, and flexibility. It is our practiced skill set, commitment to continual professional growth, and knowledge of each unique group of learners that guide strong teaching and responsive decision making.

This companion text contains a plethora of resources to support the stepped-up approach to word learning presented in *Word Study That Sticks*. But please remember that tools alone are unable to provide a complete picture of what word learning looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Perhaps most important, resources (even those of high quality) do not share the complete "why" teachers crave to back up their instructional decisions and practices. As Kate and Maggie Beattie Roberts share in the quote above, tools are there to assist. **When used in conjunction with the strong instruction outlined in *Word Study That Sticks*, these resources will amplify student learning and increase independence and success.**

To that end, in *this* book, you will find the following:

- Advice to make rolling out word study more successful than you had originally hoped
- Resources to greatly minimize the time you spend preparing, creating, and revamping
- Tools that will help students empower themselves and create more of their own successes

Multifaceted Word Study

Many people think of word study as spelling. Although spelling plays a critical role in word study, this view ignores the bigger picture and important factors such as the role of orthographic knowledge in reading and writing, the importance of oral language and vocabulary knowledge for reading and writing, and the interrelatedness of reading and writing. (Ganske, 2014, p. 4)

Word study is not just one thing. The study of words includes nurturing phonemic awareness, building a strong phonics foundation, studying word parts and patterns, and studying actual words. I believe that anything learned in isolation stays there. As such, for word study to stick, we need to integrate different facets of word study into our instruction. Furthermore, we also need to study words throughout the day, not just in a tiny window of our day labeled *word study*.

Vocabulary building is a key component to word study. Students need a strong handle on the meaning of words (including lesser-known definitions), contexts for using



Each facet of word study is essential and, furthermore, interrelated.

words, and opportunities to use words (and their knowledge of how words work) in authentic conversation, reading, and writing. This is as much a part of word study as studying how words look and sound and the why behind these visual and auditory features.

However, perhaps more than anything else, a truly student-centered approach to word study most emphasizes teaching the mindset, habits, and behaviors of one who is curious about and interested in discovering more and more about words. This is what's laid out in *Word Study That Sticks*—structures, lessons, and routines that promote inquiry-based, joyful word learning.

Organizing Our Time: Creating a Cycle of Word Learning

A1: Many Ts say time is the challenge, but if we view our schedule by the week rather than just day . . . there is always time. #G2Great. (Howard, 2018)

Teachers and schools have made the thoughtful choice to move away from one size fits all instruction. However, even when we trust and believe in this approach to teaching, it can feel overwhelming to organize our time and provide equitable support to all classroom learners. In word study, as we plan to meet with small groups of learners, it is helpful to think in cycles as opposed to a daily or even a Monday through Friday schedule. Cycles help us organize our time with greater efficiency and less stress. By using a cycle model (like those shown below), teachers are freed up to meet with different learners on different days. As a result, all learners get equal billing in the classroom. Learners receive appropriate and meaningful instruction. Learners grow and progress. *And* learners experience greater success. When we make the time to observe what is happening in classrooms, listen to, and meet with students, we become truly student-centered in our approach. Cycles help us make this all happen!

I have often found having a “mentor text” to lean on helps me feel ready and inspired to consider how a new practice might look. Building my vision of how others have done this work enables me to feel more prepared and ready to start. To that end, I have included three different examples of cycles I have used in word study at different points in my career. I invite you to look over these mentor texts. Consider your style of teaching and the personalities and next steps of the group of learners you currently work with. Then, tweak and twist the following starting suggestions.

PRIMARY

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Routine	Meaning intro	Meaning practice center	Pattern intro Pattern practice	Pattern practice: Fluency center	Phonemic awareness and phonics center

ELEMENTARY

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Routine	Meaning intro	Meaning practice	Pattern intro Pattern practice	Pattern practice	Pattern practice with emphasis on fluency	Extra phonemic awareness and phonics routine

UPPER-ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE GRADES

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Routine	Meaning intro	Meaning practice	Pattern intro Pattern practice	Pattern practice with emphasis on fluency	Additional meaning, spelling, or hybrid practice	Transfer work	Assess and/or reflect

Source: Koutrakos, P. (2018). *Word Study That Sticks*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Schmoker (2001) offers poignant words of advice in his article “The Crayola Curriculum.” He reminds us that the reality is that many classrooms have way too much stuff taking the place of meaningful literate activities. Often, the problem is not how much time we have but how we spend that time. When more time is not possible, we have two choices: Wish and hope . . . or make a new choice. Worksheets and word search puzzles take up precious minutes that can be spent engaging in more dynamic word-centered practices. We can always rethink the status quo and make a different choice about what stays and what goes. Looking for a win-win scenario? These kinds of choices about how we spend our classroom time often mean a whole lot less “correcting” done during prep periods and more in-the-moment feedback that makes a real difference to learners.

Find It

Several additional examples of five-, six-, and seven-day cycles across all grade levels are included in *Word Study That Sticks*. Check out both Chapter 2 and Appendix E for even more ideas!

Minichart Essentials

No quick fix exists. Worksheets and workbooks aren't a necessary evil. We don't need pages of fill-in-the-blank exercises designed to cram language into a tidy black-and-white package tied up with a chevron bow. (Anderson & LaRocca, 2018, p. 2)

This book contains a variety of helpful tools and resources (the antidote to worksheets and workbooks) to bring about greater independence and success in word study. A core feature of this book is the over 100 minicharts. A *minichart* is a student-friendly reminder of the why, what, and how of a word study routine. A *word study routine* is a practice students use regularly in word study. Routines are how students explore the why, what, and how of letters, sounds, patterns, and words: playfully making sense of and deepening their ideas about words. **The routines suggested and supported in this text can be used with *any* set of words, as they transcend any one pattern, program, philosophy, or approach to word study.** By infusing these routines into classroom practice, teachers can start up or step up their approach to word study, feeling confident their instruction reflects research-based best practices. Essentially, here is how it goes:

1. The teacher introduces a new routine (way to actively study words) to the class or a small group of learners.
2. The teacher models *how* to do the routine.
3. The students practice carrying out the routine with teacher support.
4. The class reflects on their interest in and understanding of the routine.
5. The teacher provides a minichart (a student-friendly reminder of how to do the routine) for each student, and this chart gets glued into a student's word study notebook (or added to a digital notebook).
6. In the future, whenever a student chooses to use a specific routine to explore words, they can look back to the minichart to see what it is, what materials are needed, how to do it, and even "how it looks."

It is quite simple: By using the process of gradual release (I GO, WE GO, YOU GO), students become confident in their daily word study practice. Because students feel comfortable using taught routines, their competence also increases. If, at any point, the student wavers in their confidence or even "forgets" how to do a routine (we know this happens to every student at one time or another), they have these minichart resources to lean on. As a result, instead of coming to us, students get *themselves* unstuck. The students feel proud of their independence and success. And, our teaching time becomes freed up. Instead of managing materials and reteaching the same thing time and again, we can instead provide meaningful feedback to students to help them take next steps. Minicharts help us feel prepared to begin and ready to trust that students will become more independent and successful.

Getting Started: A Successful Launch for a Year of Word Learning

Today, we are a whole lot smarter about classroom design, learning styles, and student preferences. We know our classrooms need to be arranged in ways that make a variety of whole-class, small-group, partner, and individual work a natural and manageable part of the day. We know kids need chances to connect and interact easily and frequently. . . .
(Yates, 2015, p. 13)

Very often, the toughest and most exhausting part of the school year is setting up the structures and routines for a year of productive learning. Explicit instruction in “the getting things going” is essential and yet is usually not taught in college or included in district curriculum. In *Word Study That Sticks*, I outlined a why, what, when, and how of getting word study up and running in kindergarten through Grade 6 classrooms. It goes something like this: Before the school year even begins, teachers look at their schedules and carve out the actual space for word learning. Next come gathering, creating, or finding ways to purchase needed materials. Together, teachers and students ponder and co-create a plan for facilitating student ownership of getting, respectfully using, and cleaning up these materials. Once time, space, and materials are organized, it is time to officially launch word study.

The launch of word study happens in the first few weeks of school. During this time, the structures and inner workings of a fluent, independent, smooth-running word study classroom are taught. The core baseline routines that students can use to study words are practiced. These early routines incorporate developmentally appropriate aspects of word study: phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling pattern work, and meaning work. Additionally, during these early weeks, there are prioritized lessons on talking with partners, setting up and organizing word study notebooks, reflecting, and staying accountable. In *Word Study That Sticks*, you will find lists, ideas, suggestions, tips, and the actual lessons to launch word study. It is here, in this companion book, that you will find ready-to-go tools students can use during and after this “whole-class launch” to keep themselves independent, accountable, and progressing all year long. In the chapters ahead, you’ll gain access to materials that will help you take the first steps with confidence and keep your motivation and “I can do this” mindset high all year.

Building Repertoire: Active and Engaged Word Learning All Year

Talk to your students about the joy of being truly engaged. Differentiate between compliance, participation and collaboration, motivation, and engagement. Describe how all are important for learners but that, as a proportion of time, you would like them to spend

increasing periods of time engaged rather than in compliance as the school year goes on.
(Keene, 2018, p. 31)

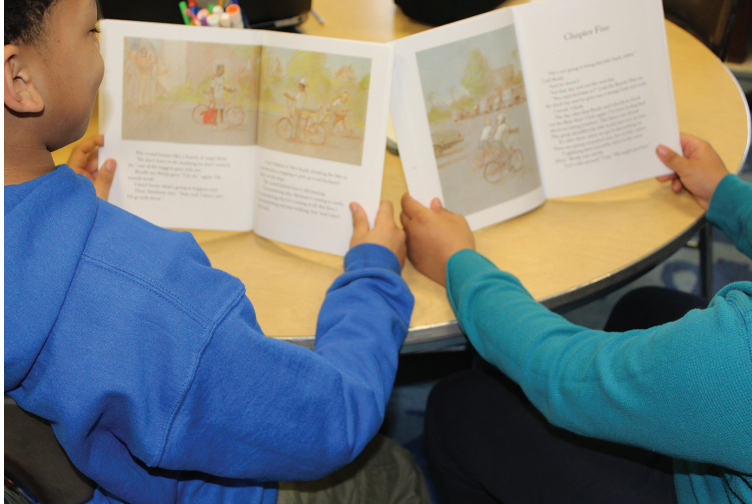
As the year progresses, I recommend teaching students additional routines for exploring and studying words. After the launch is complete, students will be ready to dig in and expand their repertoire for studying words. These new routines can be taught whole class or small group. By peppering in new routines throughout the year, we sustain tried-and-true comfort with the original routines taught while also adding in a regular dose of new and fresh. This keeps word study from becoming mundane and keeps classroom word exploring active and exciting. This also nurtures the continued progress and growth of classroom learners.

Checking In: Noticing Growth and Maintaining Progress

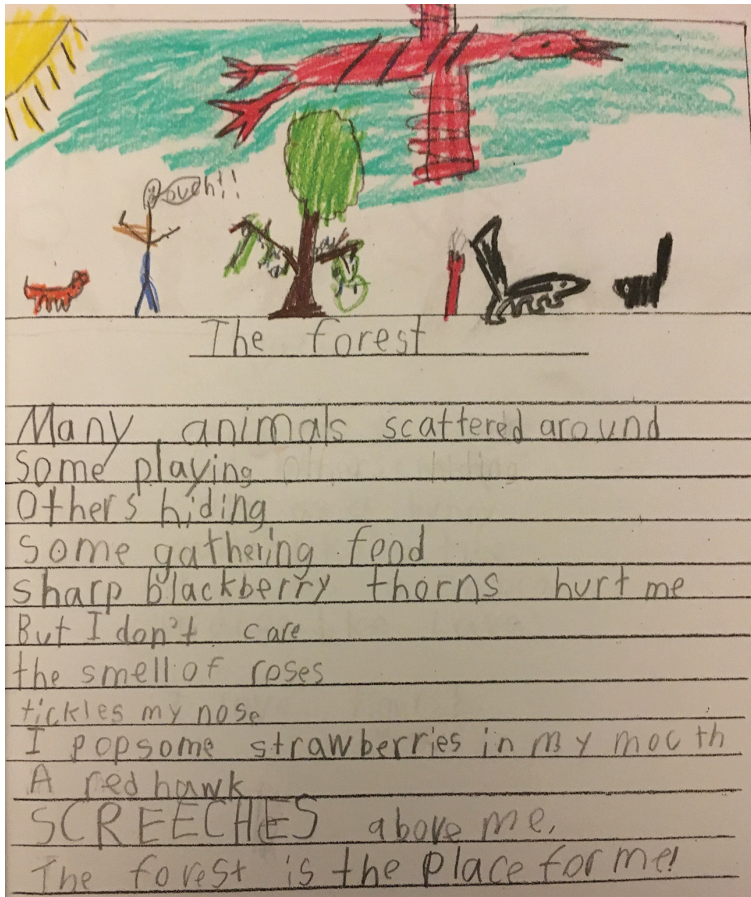
If we truly believe a growth mindset is vital for children's positive growth and development, then we can't just teach about it, we also have to assess children across the curriculum with growth in mind. Assessment conversations that look at growth in learning are very different from those that look only at finished products. . . . A child can move across the continuum, and we as teachers can help her get there with helpful strategies and support. (Mraz, Porcelli, & Tyler, 2016, pp. 101–102)

What are the first words that come to mind when you hear “spelling test”? If your initial reaction brings grumbles or face contortions, then it might be a sign you recognize *how* we check in on student progress in word study needs a face-lift. Traditional spelling tests do let us know if a student (today . . . this minute) can spell a few identified words. However, these types of assessments are not reliable indicators of a student's understanding of why a word is spelled that way. They also do not prioritize the application of word knowledge: how students can use learned word parts to decode and encode infinite other words. Traditional spelling tests are often not even predictive of whether a student will remember how to spell that word on Monday morning!

As we help students expand their repertoire for studying words, we might also want to revamp how we, as educators, check in on that learning. In *Word Study That Sticks*, I introduced several different methods for goal setting, reflection, celebration, and assessment. In that core resource, the ins and outs of each assessment method are provided in detail. Often when our assessments become more of an “*unassessment*,” we end up gleaning more useful information about what students have learned—and guidance for our next instructional steps. To get students more involved, this companion text includes minicharts for students to promote greater ownership of goal setting, reflection, celebration, and—yes—even assessment!



Partners demonstrate applying their gained word knowledge by first identifying pattern words in a text and then chorally reading that book with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.



This student demonstrates gained word knowledge by using pattern words in his writing. After finishing a word study unit centered on inflectional endings, he worked to apply learning to his poetry writing.

How to Navigate This Book

I imagine readers might first quickly skim this book cover to cover to get the lay of the land but then use the included resources in bits and pieces, selecting the right parts at the right time. It is very likely that teachers will use many of the same resources year to year. However, in our effort to nurture the unique next steps of each special group of learners, responsive educators may also find that they end up using different tools to support different learners in different ways and different times—and that this looks different period to period and/or year to year. Here's the lowdown on what's included and how to easily and quickly find what you need.

WORD STUDY NOTEBOOKS AND CHOICE CHARTS

Chapter 2 provides a visual tour of the word study notebooks used in Grade 1 and up. Each notebook section is shown, and the purpose is explained. Additionally, you'll find ideas for digital word study notebooks and read advice for when and how to infuse digital tools into daily practices. Furthermore, you'll gain an introduction to kindergarten choice charts so even the youngest word explorers can feel ownership of their daily practices.

RESOURCES TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD

In Chapter 3, you will find plentiful resources to support robust word exploring. Whether your district has the minimal necessities or full-blown access to all the supplies and materials you could imagine (where do you work, by the way?), here is where you can find tools to crystalize priorities, organize instruction, and make student learning stickier. Checklists, look-fors, planning guides, and record-keeping forms are just a few of the many valuable tools found here.

MINICHARTS, MINICHARTS, AND MORE MINICHARTS

This text is heavily saturated with minicharts for a reason: Teachers love them, and students love them! It is a win-win situation.

There are five chapters dedicated to minicharts:

- Chapter 4: Meaning Routines
- Chapter 5: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Routines

- Chapter 6: Spelling Pattern Routines
- Chapter 7: Habit and Hybrid Routines
- Chapter 8: Check-In and Assessment Routines

All these chapters contain minicharts that “summarize” routines in each area of word study. Each minichart starts with the why, briefly explaining the purpose and value of the routine. Then, the needed materials and the how of the routine are listed. The charts end with a visual example, tip, or reminder of what the routine looks like. Each chapter contains both primary-grade minicharts, which are appropriate for students in kindergarten through Grade 2, and upper-elementary minicharts, which are for students in Grades 3 through 6. The primary minicharts have icons that accompany steps and support learner understanding. The upper-elementary charts include the same basics but look a bit more sophisticated for older students. You will find that some routines overlap because there are both primary and upper-elementary versions. You will also find routines unique to each grade-level band. These reflect more developmentally appropriate practices appropriate for students in specific grades.

STRETCHING THE LEARNING EVEN FURTHER

We want to do all we can to support students and their growth. Partnering with caregivers is essential in making this happen. Chapter 9 offers tips, ideas, and resources to connect school to home. These tools help the important people in a child’s life feel informed and included.

Additionally, Chapter 10 of this book is dedicated solely to the twenty lessons that introduce the twenty new bonus routines included in this book. These additional lessons build confidence and readiness to support all classroom learners. They also yield excitement about word study from the start of school through the end.

FINDING IT SNAPPY

This is the kind of professional text that makes us love and appreciate the table of contents and index. Looking for a new way to support students’ vocabulary development? Peruse the options in the meaning chapter, and turn right to that page. Looking for playful ways to get kids hearing and noticing sounds in words? Check out the table of contents to find pages filled with minicharts that support phonemic awareness. It really is that simple!

FEATURE KEY

Recurring Feature	Purpose
Find It	Signals where to find an accompanying lesson or additional useful information in <i>Word Study That Sticks</i>
Bonus	Signals that an accompanying introductory lesson for this routine is available in Chapter 10 of this book
Tech Tip	Signals how to use this resource digitally and/or options to digitally enhance this practice
Word Wall	Signals that this routine can also be done with high-frequency words and word wall words
eTool	Signals that there are related downloadable and reproducible resources available on the companion website: resources.corwin.com/wstscpanion
Tying It Together	Synthesizes and summarizes information and ideas presented in the chapter

Tying It Together

GETTING THE FULL PICTURE OF THE WHY, WHAT, AND HOW

REFER

Refer to *Word Study That Sticks* to build a vision for a more purposeful and productive approach to word study. You will find research, lessons, and ideas that reflect best practices in all facets of word study. In this companion book, you will find coordinated resources that support student success and independence in *all* aspects of word study.

USE

Use the table of contents to help you quickly and easily find resources that match learner readiness, interests, and passions. Use the recurring Find It and Bonus icons for guidance in where to find lesson details that accompany each included resource.

REMEMBER

Remember that tools are not intended to teach. As Kate and Maggie Beattie Roberts (2016) write in *DIY Literacy*, “Tools are not enough—we need to explicitly teach strategies, tricks, tips, and small steps to help students progress along a certain skill” (p. 20). The tools and resources in this book are intended to be used as *part* of a thoughtful, planned approach to instruction to help students become independent and successful word explorers.