



DAY CLINIC

Examine Your Practices

Now it's your turn. Ask yourself the following questions to examine your instructional practices and materials as they relate to dictation.

1. Am I doing dictation each week? If so, how many times?
2. Which words am I choosing? How many words am I choosing? Am I including review words from previous weeks?
3. Do I regularly evaluate students' writing (e.g., at least once a week in journals or more formal writing assignments) for transfer of phonics skills? Do I use that information to adjust instruction (both small and whole group)?
4. Am I extending students' reading through writing activities, including summarizing or retelling in writing what they read, writing a new adventure with the same characters, creating a list of facts learned, extending the story to show "what happens next," and other ideas?

Note that for all these writing exercises, it is beneficial for students to begin by expressing these ideas orally first. This can be accomplished through the use of partners. Once students express their ideas orally and get help clarifying them, they will be better equipped to express them in writing. As James Britton (1983) says, "reading and writing float on a sea of talk." For example, I have seen teachers, before retelling a story in writing, draw a "retelling path" on chart paper and place it on the floor. The pathway includes the words *beginning*, *middle*, and *end* at varying points to show the major parts of the story. Students can work together to add words or pictures at each point to help them remember key events in the story. Then, one at a time, the students "walk" the story pathway as they orally retell it. You or classmates can assist the student walking the path to fill in key missing events or details. Then the student writes the retelling. This generally results in richer, more robust retellings.

Create dictation lines for the skills listed below. I have added one line for review words (I will detail their importance in the next section).

Dictation Line 1 (Kindergarten)

Focus Skill: Short *o*

Review Skills: All consonants, short *a*, short *i*

Line 1 (letter sounds) _____

Line 2 (words with new skill) _____

Line 3 (words with review skills) _____

Line 4 (sentence) _____

Dictation Line 2 (Grade 1)

Focus Skill: Long *o*

Review Skills: All consonants, consonant blends, consonant digraphs; all short vowels; long vowels *a* and *e*

Line 1 (words with new skill) _____

Line 2 (words with review skills) _____

Line 3 (sentence) _____

Line 4 (sentence) _____

Now list places in your weekly schedule in which you could include dictation. Consider replacing or modifying existing activities (e.g., modifying the spelling pretest, replacing a phonemic awareness activity with a Sound Box activity in which students orally segment a word using counters, then replace each counter with a letter or spelling).

Changes to My Weekly Phonics/Spelling Instructional Cycle

Monday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Thursday: _____

Friday: _____

