

*Journal #2 Chapter Five: Cracking the Alphabetic Code*

February 26, 2010

Dear Professor Schilling,

Chapter five, "Cracking the Alphabetic Code," contains information on how students break down and gain an understanding of phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. The chapter provides information on how students must practice phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling in order to completely grasp and understand the alphabetic code. Children become phonemically aware by identifying sounds in words, categorizing sounds in words, substituting sounds to make new words, blending sounds to form words, and finally by segmenting a word into sounds. While reading chapter five, one will gain new insights on phonemic awareness and how it should be presented in the classroom through activities such as songs, rhymes, games, matching, and so on. The chapter breaks phonics down into ways that make teaching students easier for teachers. The book gives the rules of phonics, and how to use word walls to teach important words to students. This chapter also discusses spelling. There are many different stages of spelling development such as emergent spelling, letter name-alphabetic spelling, within-word pattern spelling, syllables and affixes spelling, and derivational relations spelling. It is important for teachers to know these stages and the stages that their students are in. This chapter is a great resource for educators in need of information on breaking the alphabetic code with students.

After reading chapter five, I was able to relate the information with my elementary school days. As a young student, I remember taking weekly spelling test every Friday. Although it sounds like a good way to assess students, from my own experiences I would have to disagree. I, being a poor speller, found ways of getting through the spelling test without actually knowing how the words are spelled. When our spelling list was handed out, I would create rhymes, songs, and sayings to help memorize the order of the letters. At the time it seemed like a great idea because I was receiving perfects on my tests. However, as soon as I took the test I would lose all the knowledge of the spelling, and the sayings would leave my head. I am thankful for my good grades in spelling, but I wish I would have mastered the actual spelling of the words instead of the rhymes, songs, and sayings I created to go with the letters. Although my ways of remembering spelling words is not fully to blame, I do associate my still poor spelling abilities to the lack of learning the spelling of words in the correct way.

Recently, I observed a kindergarten class at a local elementary school. During my observation the students were reviewing word wall words and their spelling. To learn how the words are spelled, the classroom teacher had the students sound out each word letter by letter. After sounding them out, the students each wrote the word on their white boards and waited for the teacher to check for correct spelling. They were using phonics, phonemic awareness, and

spelling all throughout this lesson. After they completed their words on their boards, the teacher went around the room and had the students take turns reading their sight words and then spelling them aloud. I found this to be good ways of helping students grasp their spelling words using phonics and their phonemic awareness. Even as young as kindergarten, students start to build their knowledge of sounds and blend them together to form words. It is important that teachers use a variety of teaching methods to reach students due to the many different types of learners that there is.

As I look back on chapter five, I am able to see how important it is for students to have a good phonemic awareness, to understand phonics, and to be able to spell words. All three of these things go hand in hand and should not be treated lightly. Educators must find ways and strategies to help students gain these skills and apply them. The opening vignette set the stage for chapter five. Mrs. Firpo's lesson provides an example for educators to use as a resource. The vignette is a long phonics lesson given by Mrs. Firpo to her first grade class. It takes time and practice in order for students to grasp the understanding of phonics and spelling. The lesson given by Mrs. Firpo is a great example that represents how much time and effort should be put on helping students grasp these skills. The vignette made me question how I will create lesson plans to reach all of my students and the variety of ways they learn. How will I adapt to my students who have special needs, but still keep the lessons educational for those who are advancing at a greater speed? For those who are more advanced, will they need a separate word wall with higher level words? There are many questions that come to mind when thinking about teaching students how to read and spell, and how to help them achieve a great phonemic awareness. As I approach a time in which I will have my own classroom of students, I want to make sure that I am able to meet all of their needs. I need to learn more about phonemic awareness and how to make every day a positive learning experience for all of my students regardless of their many different levels and speeds of understanding. As I continue on my road to being an educator, I hope to learn as much as possible before entering the classroom. This knowledge will help give me the ability to be the best teacher that I can be!

I hope that you have a wonderful day!

Your student,

Jessica Stiffler