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A comparative content analysis of five spelling programs in the 1st, 3rd, and 5th grade

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Abstract:

This study investigated the content of five widely used spelling programs at three grade levels. Five spelling programs (Houghton Mifflin, Scholastic Spelling, Sitton Spelling, Words Their Way, and Treasures) were analyzed. The following questions guided the study: To what extent do current spelling series reflect research-based practices and what underlying theoretical framework is stated or implied in each series? What types of spelling strategies, activities, and techniques are used in student workbooks and teacher edition books? Two sub questions included: Do they reflect current research-based theoretical frameworks stated or implied in each series and do spelling programs provide multiple strategies, activities to differentiate instruction? The final question asked, in what ways are these programs similar? A comparative content analysis was used to examine the spelling series at three grade levels, one, three and five. An Allred-Tolman spelling program evaluation instrument and a teacher and student edition evaluation scale were used. The results revealed that a specific philosophy for teaching spelling was not addressed in the Houghton Mifflin, Scholastic Spelling, and Treasures series. These series did not promote a specific spelling approach to teaching spelling lessons, used a combination of strategies to teach spelling. The Words Their Way program was the only spelling program that outlined the developmental spelling approach theory and followed this specific theory throughout their program. The theoretical basis were represented in the activities and the lessons focus primarily on studying word patterns and word study practice for students at their developmental spelling stage. When analyzing the components of the Words Their Way, Sitton Spelling, and Treasures program materials and lessons were complex in organization and management. Differentiated instruction was addressed in all programs and specifically meeting the needs of

learners was a component that was included in all programs except Sitton Spelling. Lastly, when comparing was found that three of the five programs continue to use many of the same strategies to teach spelling that past. Houghton Mifflin, Scholastic Spelling, and Treasures all follow a traditional 5-day format that included w of 10-20 words. All of the spelling programs did focus on integrating writing with spelling and included writing all their lessons. Three of the five programs, Houghton Mifflin, Scholastic Spelling, and Treasures continue to the same strategies for teaching spelling that were used 20 years ago. The Sitton Spelling series does offer som components but does not instruct students at a developmental stage of spelling. While all the programs inclu components for teaching spelling, such as the integrated writing component, word sorting activities, a instruction lessons, only the Words Their Way program offers a truly individualized approach to teaching spelli their stage of developmental spelling.

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