

Dear Parents,

Because improving and enriching our current program is so important to all of us, our special and general education teachers participated in an extensive 30-hour training program. The training focused not only on improving reading, writing and spelling skills, but also taught us how to give the students the necessary tools to achieve greater success in school and in life.

Rather than having the students memorize lists from a spelling workbook to store in their short-term memories, we are incorporating a methodology called Orton-Gillingham, a technique to use with our existing curriculum. It is a multi-sensory program that will enable students, by direct instruction, to review, learn new concepts, practice, and apply what they are learning. Orton-Gillingham is a methodology that has been utilized for over 50 years. Based on early research in dyslexia by Dr. Samuel T. Orton and Anna Gillingham, it was concluded that children who experience difficulty with reading and spelling need a solid phonics approach that is multi-sensory, systematic, structured, sequential, cumulative and success-oriented. We will conduct ongoing assessments to monitor what students have mastered. Most importantly, they will acquire concepts that will be stored in their long-term memories.

Quite often, students study for weekly spelling tests and do very well, but, when later asked to read or write a particular word from that test, they cannot apply the knowledge in context or on paper. On the other hand, some students struggle and will continue to have a difficult time because they can't make the connections to understand the significance of what they are learning. For the benefit of all of our students, we are integrating this hands-on, systematic, structured, sequential, cumulative, and success-oriented multi-sensory learning program.

The spelling of English words is either phonetic, which can be sounded out; or irregular, words that are unexpected and must be learned through a multi-sensory technique. Phonetic concepts will be taught each week in a sequential, relevant manner. Once concepts are taught, students will apply them in words, sentences, and stories. Every week the teachers will review, teach new concepts, discover, apply, and assess for mastery. Students will not have to study phonetic concepts or spelling rules due to the constant review and application based on previous knowledge. The irregular, or unexpected, words must be studied weekly. Spelling tests will contain both phonetic and irregular words, as well as sentence application.

As you can see, the idea of producing confident, independent and knowledgeable readers with strategies to fall back on in school and in life ensures success. Please share in our enthusiasm that the new program using IMSE's Orton-Gillingham will be part of your child's lifelong accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Fort Payne City Schools