

# LOWER Pottsgrove Elementary School

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*"A Great Place to Learn and Grow Together"*

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This year Lower Pottsgrove Elementary will be implementing *Words Their Way*, a word study program for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction. Word study teaches children to look closely at words to build an understanding of how spelling works to represent sounds and meaning. Studies have found that the development of word knowledge increases a student's ability to read, spell, and understand vocabulary.

## **What does word study look like?**

*Words Their Way* uses a developmental approach to spelling. Instruction is differentiated according to student assessment and based on development of concepts rather than on simple memorization. Students learn phonics, spelling, and vocabulary through engaging hands-on activities.

There are five developmental stages of spelling: Emergent, Letter Name, Within Word Pattern, Syllables and Affixes, and Derivational Relations. Students progress through the stages at different rates.

## **How is word study different from the traditional spelling program?**

Traditional spelling programs provided a single list of spelling words for the students in a class to memorize, with a weekly spelling test given at the end of the week. Word study is taught in small groups based on students' developmental spelling levels and common instructional needs. Students are assessed at the beginning of the school year in order to determine their levels of spelling development. Teachers plan for small group instruction based on the students needs. Students work with words that are relevant to their instructional stage of development. Students complete a variety of word sorts by sorting words into categories based on features the words share. Typical classrooms may have two or three word study groups, each working on different words focusing on common features. Groups meet with the teacher for a short lesson each week. Students are also asked to complete weekly spelling routines during class, as well as part of their nightly homework.

## **How can I help my child at home?**

Your child will bring home a page of words each week. The words are not meant to be memorized or written multiple times for rote practice. Instead, you will receive a parent page with instructions for a certain types of activities and word sorts to be done with your child each night. Through active exploration, students will compare and contrast words by sound, pattern, and meaning to discover the regularities, patterns and conventions needed to read and spell.

We have found this word study program to compliment our current reading and writing programs. We are excited about implementing *Words Their Way* this fall. If you have any questions, please feel free to the school. Thank you for your continued support at home.

