

Dictation and Spelling, Grade 1

Classroom Management

In order to keep lessons flowing smoothly and keep children's attention focused on the activity's purpose—which in this course, is to learn strategies for mapping spellings onto sounds—it is essential to be prepared. The following management tips, demonstrated in the video clips, can help to assure successful dictation sessions:

- Prior to any Word Building Game activity, put the *Letter Cards* necessary for the upcoming game into containers for each student. These containers can be as simple as small plastic sandwich bags. The cards contained in the plastic bags will change from lesson to lesson. Preparing the bags before the lesson will eliminate confusion and allow your children to quickly and efficiently get ready. It also ensures that each of the children will have the materials they need. As part of Workshop, you may want to have the children fill their own bags with the appropriate letters.
- Conclude Word Building Game sessions by having the children put the *Letter Cards* back in their containers. Note how Ms. Foster combines putting the *Letter Cards* away with a final reinforcing activity—she has her children name the card and say what the sound is before placing the cards in their bags. Note also how she models this for the children at the beginning of the year.
- Make sure the *Sound/Spelling Cards* are visible to the children and that you can reach them. Continual reference to the cards is an important element of the dictation lessons. The children need to be able to see them clearly so that they can use them in their spelling throughout the day.
- Note that Ms. Foster has the children give "thumbs up" and "pencils up" signals once they have completed a task and are ready to continue. Develop, in your own daily routines, ways in which your children may respond.
- Make sure all of the children have the books and equipment they will need in order to complete the required tasks. For dictation activities, children need a piece of lined paper, a pencil or pen to print the words, and a proofreading pencil or pen to correct their work. Note that Ms. Foster always asks the children to hold up the appropriate pen/pencil for the task at hand. In addition, Ms. Foster has taken the time to put a small piece of Velcro® on each proofreading pencil and a small piece on each desk. Proofreading pencils are always available to the children throughout the day. The Velcro® is a nice touch that eliminates another potential distraction by keeping the pencils from rolling off the desk or getting lost.

Developing routines for basic activities has many benefits. In this course, the dictation and spelling routines:

- Give children the comfort of knowing what to expect—how to respond, what is expected of them, what comes next.
- Free children to concentrate on spelling rather than on learning new presentations or response modes.
- Allow learning activities to start quickly and move smoothly. You will know that any problems or confusions are based on what is being learned—the sounds and spellings—rather than confusion over how to respond.
- Reduce the amount of time spent on giving directions and allow more time for instruction and learning.

Review the videos, watching specifically to see how Ms. Foster eliminates distractions and uses the materials she and the children need for the activity.