

# WORDWORKS NEWSLETTER #68

A word-wide community of learners leads the way in understanding and teaching the written word.

February, 5, 2013

## Upcoming WordWorks Workshops Open for Registration

See [WordWorksKingston.com](http://WordWorksKingston.com) for a more complete list of workshops. Below are only workshops currently open for registration

- **Feb. 19: Attend this webinar from anywhere!**  
2-Hour Structured Word Inquiry Webinar with the [Dyslexia Training Institute](#) (3 pm Pacific Time; 6 pm Eastern Standard Time). Register [here](#).
- **Mar. 2: Kingston, ON**  
Two-hour workshop with [TESL Ontario](#), in Kingston (10 am - noon). Download a poster with details [here](#) (registration on site). Contact [Pete](#) for inquiries.
- **Mar. 7: Edmonton, AB**  
Full day workshop for [AARI](#) at University of Alberta. (Download flyer with info [here](#).)
- **Mar. 16: San Francisco**  
1-Day Workshop (One-time special fee of \$25!). See details [here](#).
- **May 10: Melbourne Australia** (Details to be announced - if schools in that area are interested in a WW visit before April 29 or after May 10 contact [Pete](#))
- **July 2-4 & 16-18: Wolfe Island, ON**  
3-Day WordWorks Summer Courses! See details [here](#). The bookings for this are coming in faster than usual this year. If you are interested, Email [Pete](#) for more info.

## Sign up for a 3-Day WW Summer Course!

July 2-4 or July 16-18

Wolfe Island, ON

See details [here](#).

[Email](#) to book a spot.

As an Ace Word Detective with credentials in *Real Spelling*, Mubarak knew it must be there for a reason!



Grade 2 student in Bahrain sparks world-wide investigation



WordWorks travels to Dresden

## Highlights for WW Newsletter # 68

🌟 *WordWorks in 2013*

🌟 *Inspiring responses from recent on-line and on-site workshops*

🌟 *Student/Teacher co-learners share lessons and investigations including:*

- ◆ *World-wide investigation of the spelling <come> sparked by Grade 2 student, Mubarek*
- ◆ *Lyn Anderson shares lessons investigating morphological word families via collaborative word webs in K-2 (Of course lesson can be framed for upper grades also.)*

### *WordWorks in 2013*

I can't remember when I've been more proud of the stories and resources I have to share in a WW Newsletter. I'll start off with links for a couple of examples to make my case!

- Free lesson ideas aimed at younger students from Lyn Anderson "[Collaborative Round Table Words](#)"
- Just try not to be impressed by what [this Grade 7 class](#) in Kuala Lumpur has to teach us when they use their skills of orthographic investigation to dive into the meaning of Elie Wiesel's powerful words:

*"I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor never the tormented."*

[WWW.WORDWORKSKINGSTON.COM](http://WWW.WORDWORKSKINGSTON.COM)



## ***Recent on-site & on-line workshops: Alberta, Dresden, and a visit to Toronto middle school***

***On-Line Workshops:*** I was delighted to be asked by **AARI** at University of Alberta to teach a module on word reading instruction for intermediate teachers as part of a larger project. (My public lecture from that same project last year can be found [here](#).) My first duty with this new cohort of teachers from across Alberta was to teach a 1.5 hour on-line session. It is very strange to present without seeing faces or hearing voices for responses, but I sensed the session went pretty well. The follow-up messages I received were encouraging. Here's what Melanie emailed the day after our session:

*Hi Pete.*

*I have already experimented with the "struct" matrix with my grade 6 LA class. They were totally into it. Looks like matrix exercises will be part of my regular practice. Thanks Pete.*

I wrote back to ask permission to share what can happen with such a brief introduction. Melanie wrote back shortly and added this wonderful feedback in her students' own words.

### ***Upgrading the WordWorks Website in process:***

You may have noticed technical difficulties with my website. What appears on-line only bears only a vague resemblance to what I produce on iWeb. The good news is that this has hastened my efforts to get a proper website going. You can still find a great deal of use at [www.wordworkskingston.com](http://www.wordworkskingston.com). However, I have to ask for your patience until I finally get a real website up and running.

**Structured Word Inquiry:**  
*Developing literacy and critical thinking through scientific inquiry about how English spelling works.*

re	de	<b>struct</b> <i>"build"</i>	s	ed	ing	ion	or
in	de		ive	ly	ity	ness	
in	ob		ure	es	ed	ing	
sub	super	infra	al	ly	ism	ist	

**Instruction** which builds understanding of word **structure** as a tool for investigating the interrelation of spelling and meaning.

in + **struct** + ion → instruction  
**struct** + ure + ed → structured

*From the intro to my presentation for Alberta teachers*

*I wanted to add that even the most struggling students in LA were extremely engaged in the matrix activity.*

*After we were finished, we did a reflection and these were the student reactions - no kidding, no scripting honest.*

*"Word creation follows formulas"*

*"Making words is easy with matrices"*

*"Making words is fun with matrices"*

*"Faster/easier to be accurate in spelling"*

*"Making words in the matrix increases my vocabulary"*

*"Radical how a few word parts can lead to exploring so many other words"*

*And the crème de le crème of answers -*

*"Word matrices make reading easier!"*

*I thought you might like these responses.*

*Mel*

Keep in mind that this reaction is after a teacher had exactly 1.5 hours of on-line training.

It turns out that this is not an uncommon reaction. When teachers are willing to - as my Aussie friends say -- “have a go” they don’t require a great deal of training to *get started* investigating the logical structure of English spelling with matrices and word sums.

When teachers have the experience of seeing the ordered spelling-meaning structure of words that previously had always been assumed to be irregular, they gain something that was not available through their previous training -- an *understanding* of English spelling. This is why I so often use the matrix of the <do> and <go> word families.

**Investigate word *structure & meaning***

An instructional emphasis on the role of sound in spelling *without* reference to morphology (or etymology) has predictable consequences.

- **Cannot teach that the pronunciation of morphemes shift across words in English.**

do	ing
go	es
	ne

do + ing → doing    go + ing → going  
do + es → does    go + es → goes  
do + ne → done    go + ne → gone

Mean?  
Built?  
Relatives?  
Pronunciation?

Another slide from my presentation to Alberta teachers.

When these tools make sense of the spelling of a word as basic as *does* -- which otherwise is virtually always treated as “irregular” -- many teachers recognize they are in the presence of something worth investigating that is unlike anything they have seen before.

There is much more to Real Spelling and structured word inquiry than the word sum and the matrix, but these tools reveal the inherent order and logic of written words in a way that is typically hidden from perception by an instructional focus on commonly occurring surface patterns. By revealing the underlying *meaning-based* structure of spelling, the matrix and word sum offer learners of any age access to the realization that it is worth trying to *understand* spelling instead of just trying to memorize it. Can you thin of a better motivator to convince busy teachers to put the effort into on-going study of how spelling works and how to refine their instruction of it than 1) evidence spelling is *understandable and meaningful*, and 2) student reactions like those of Mel, and of Kelli in the next story...

Some of you may remember the email I shared from Kelli Sandman-Hurley of the [Dyslexia Training Institute](#) in my [Dec. 2012 Update](#). After chatting a few times at the IDA conference in Chicago, Kelli bought my [book](#). A couple of days later, she sent this email:

*I was so excited to try this way to teach spelling, I did go ahead and use it with my most severe student today and I swear his eyes lit up like I have never seen before. He said, "Am I supposed to get this?" I gave him a funny look because I thought he was being sarcastic. Then he said, "Because I do." And he did. It was incredible. He has spent most of our spelling time together just guessing and adding letters waiting to read my facial expressions to see if he needed to continue guessing. This was a totally different experience....I am a full-blown skeptic and rarely get excited about a 'new' program or way of teaching, so I am really excited to come across something so legitimate and fascinating. Thank you for that.*

The brief exposure to these linguistic tools helped Melanie and Kelli (both experienced educators) think about spelling in a different way. Both realized that if these tools helped them reframe their own understanding of spelling, why not see the reaction of their students?

The response of her students resulted in Kelli inviting me to lead a 2 hour on-line webinar for her company, *The Dyslexia Training Institute*. The response to the 1.5 hour session with the Alberta teachers gives me even more confidence that this technology provides an effective means of presenting this information. If you have not attended a structured word inquiry workshop, I encourage you to consider signing up for this on-line session. Click [here](#) for details.



Structured Word Inquiry  
Webinar Feb. 19, 2013  
3pm PST

**On-Site Workshops & Classroom Visits:** My first on-site workshop of the year was at the [Dresden International School \(DIS\)](#). This workshop was only made possible because of the collaboration with [Chapters International](#). Chapters organized a 2-day workshop hosted

by DIS that included 12 teachers from DIS and 12 from schools around Europe. The response was such that plans for follow up workshops in a number of these schools are already under way. (See box below for more on how you can work with *Chapters*.)

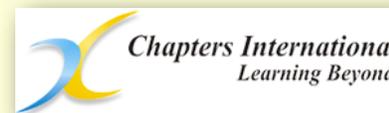


The Group from the Chapters workshop in Dresden attends to Bri (centre) as she describes how she got started at her school with just one weekend course from another Chapters workshop two years earlier in Sofia.

**WordWorks Summer Courses July 2-4 & 16-18: Wolfe Island, ON**

These summer workshops are undoubtedly the richest workshops I offer. With this setting, my wife's famous delicious and healthy meals (she's back at it this year!) and no other responsibilities for the 3 days, participants are able to truly focus on their learning. Click [here](#) for more information.

Many spots have been booked recently. There is still quite a bit of room, but it is common for groups of 4-6 or even more from a school or other institution to book together. The availability can change quickly.

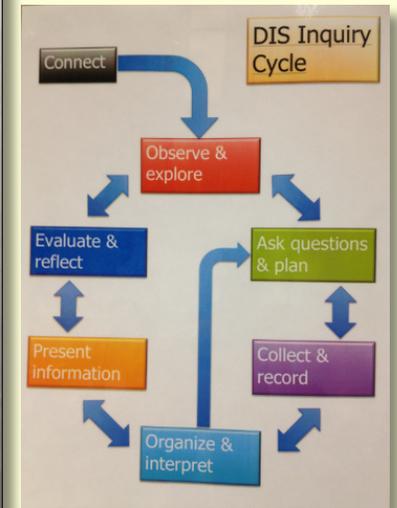
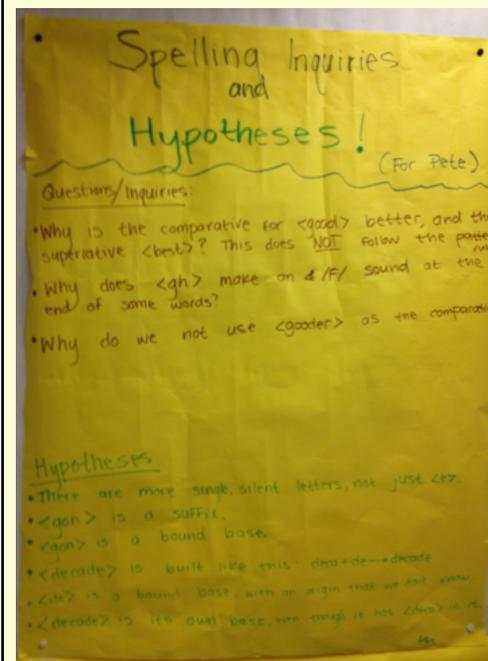
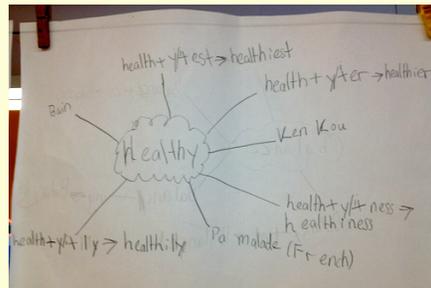
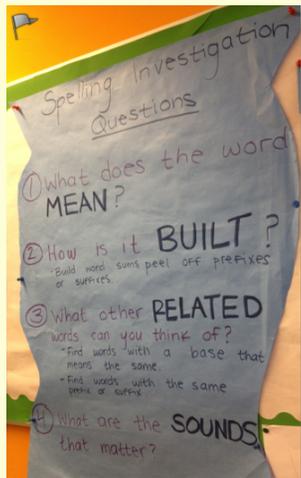


The sharing of costs between DIS and [Chapters International](#) was what made this trip possible. In addition, DIS was able to have me stay to work with their whole staff and to teach lessons in classrooms. The feedback from both workshops was entirely enthusiastic. We will no doubt be hearing more from many of the schools that attended this workshop.

That is a safe bet because this workshop only came about because DIS teacher *Bri Caldwell* attended a *Chapters International* workshop in Sofia a couple of years ago. She returned to her Grade 3 class and soon got her teaching partner Anne was diving in too. By the end of the year it was a unanimous request of the staff to get WordWorks professional development.

I share this story to make sure that schools looking at this work realize that collaborating with Chapters International is an great way to bring excellent, relatively inexpensive and intensive professional development of all types to your door. Contact Chapters CEO [Shonal Agarwal](#) if you have questions.

These are images from the Grade 3 classrooms in DIS of Bri and her teaching partner Anne. The understanding of spelling -- and thus the daily practice of these two teachers -- has been utterly transformed because *one* of them attended a 3-day workshop, two years before.



Note that Bri's "Spelling Inquiries and Hypotheses chart (and the other charts) provide evidence that she has incorporated their PYP "DIS Inquiry Cycle" right into their spelling curriculum. (Also note the beautiful student created "vowel letter" chart under the morpheme chart in Anne's class!)

**Back in Canada:** Upon my return from Dresden I managed to get an invitation through a friend to visit a Toronto middle school in a lower income area. I got to tutor a student in the learning support class and then I taught *double* classes in a Grade 6 class and a Grade 7 class. Both 1.5 hour sessions! And in both cases the students were engaged and excited as we dove into spelling investigations. I was most impressed that both the vice principal and the principal made time to observe most of the Grade 7 session. Let's hope this is the beginning of a productive connection.

## Our outstanding community of student and teacher learners

For me the most exciting development of the last year is the extent to which our community has begun to support its own learning. It used to be that my Newsletters mostly recounted investigations in which I had a major role, or at least one that no-one would be able to learn from unless I shared them through WordWorks. For the rest of this Newsletter, however, I get to point you to amazing investigations and learning going on in schools that are already published on classroom blogs or on [Real Spellers](#) -- the virtual meeting place for our community of learners. When I play a part in any of the investigations, it is only as one of many in our community.

### A Grade 2 Student and his teacher mark the trail of their investigation of the spelling <come>

As an Ace Word Detective with credentials in *Real Spelling*, Mubarek knew it must be there for a reason!



Slide from Mubarek's & Fiona's school assembly presentation

Here is Fiona's description of the beginning of that investigation:

A grade 2 student stopped me in the corridor today and asked me about the spelling of come. His question was what is the reason for the single silent <e> on the end of the word. As he said - it is not there to make the vowel long and it is not there to prevent the word from ending with <v> so what job is the single silent e doing? I said 'great question' and promised I'd get back to him!

You simply have to click this [link](#) for a post on Real Spellers that allows you to follow the trail of this collaborative, inquiry-led teaching and learning episode. It is co-led by Mubarek, a Grade 2 student at [Riffa Views International School](#) in Bahrain and his teacher Fiona Al Rowie, a literacy coach there.

Mubarek already knows two good reasons for the final single, silent <e>. (One of which has nothing to do with pronunciation. The spellings <have>, <give> and <love> are not presented as "irregular" in this Grade 2 classroom!). Given that foundational knowledge, Mubarek has every reason to believe there could be still more uses for this letter. He asks, "what is the reason for the single silent <e> on the end of the word?" This wording suggests the assumption that there *is* a reason. Mubarek is lucky to be learning in a school which treats surprising spellings as signals of interesting questions - not as irregular spellings that need to be memorized.

Equally important to this story is Fiona's response. She doesn't know the answer, but signals that there must be a good reason to find.

This is how the richest inquiry-led teaching/learning episode begin. A student asks a perceptive question to which the teacher does not have an immediate answer - but he/she is equipped with knowledge of how to begin a quest for answers to questions!

Fiona collected some colleagues and together, they practiced using the questions they have been learning to ask. Their school had recently finished an "on-line consultancy" with me which involved a number of Skype sessions with teachers and leading students. One of the things we practiced was letting this [reference chart](#) guide our thinking when we encounter a spelling we don't know:

**Stuck on a Spelling?**  
**Investigate with these questions...**

1. **What does the word mean?**
2. **How is it built?**  
*(Can you identify any affixes with a word sum?)*
3. **What other related words can you think of?**  
*(Can the [Word Searcher](#) help you make a matrix?)* → morphological connections?  
*(Can a word origin dictionary help you?)* → etymological connections?
4. **What are the sounds that matter?**  
*(What grapheme/phoneme correspondences can you find that fit in your hypothesized morphemes?)*

You will have to go to Real Spellers to find the hypotheses the developed about the spelling of the word <come>. You can then also see how that learning was shared and refined by a community of learners that includes educators and linguists from places such as Nashville, France, and Ghana.

👤 ***The knowledge of the group is greater than that of the most knowledgable in the group***

While I really recommend that you follow the whole discussion from the [beginning](#), I will also share this [link](#) to the latest post in which Fiona summarizes their learning and shares the PowerPoint she and her student made together so that Mubarek could describe their learning in a school assembly!

### **Classroom Blogs Extraordinaire!**

If you are a WordWorks regular, you know that I keep pointing to the work of Dan Allen's Grade 5 blog in Zurich and Ann Whiting's Grade 7 blog from Kuala Lumpur. I encourage all of you to subscribe/follow these blogs so that you get notices of new posts. Recently more and more Blogs are entering the discussion. Some particularly rich investigations, class videos and discussions from these blogs follow...



**Dan Allen's Grade 5 Class Blog:** [This post](#) includes a series of videos from the beginning of an investigation of the word *cohesion*. It's wonderful to see an inquiry-led investigation from the beginning.

Their inquiry leads an investigation of *twin bases* that has been a hot topic on [Real Spellers](#) recently. This [discussion](#) of the words *persuade* and *persuasion* provided a spark for this investigation by Dan and his students.

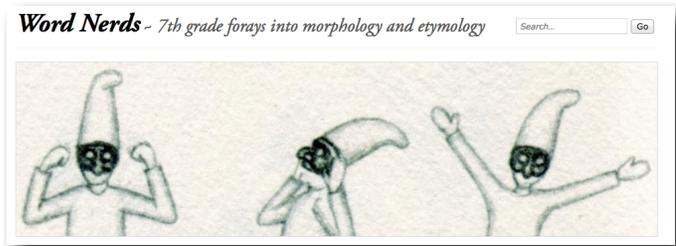
(A good introduction to twin bases is also provided by [this video](#) of The Old Grouch investigating this concept with a Grade 5 class.).



**Kathy Penn's Sound Literacy Blog:** I also need to point you all to this [post](#) on twin bases by yet another wonderful [blog](#) This one is by Kathy Penn, tutor, and the brain behind *Sound Literacy* which you should investigate to see her excellent iPad app. This app is built on a rare knowledge of orthographic morphology and phonology, and supports the use of word sums. Kathy made many revisions to the first version of this app after attending our summer course and after working countless hours working with Real Spelling and many others in our supportive community.

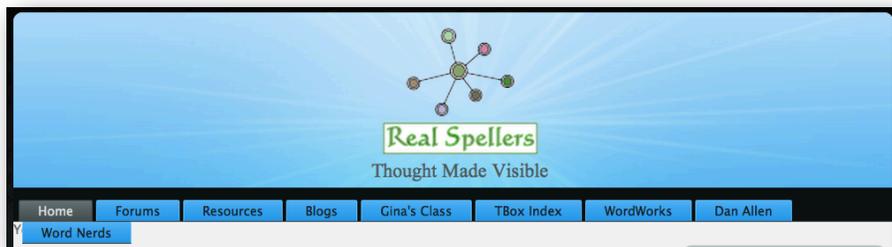


**Mrs. Steven's Classroom Blog:** [Here](#) is yet another exciting new entry in the world of orthographically accurate classroom blogs. I highly recommend this [post](#) on an investigation of the words judge and justice. See the preceding post as well to see how much this class learns by working through an initial big fat juicy mistake with the Old Grouch!



**Ann Whiting's Grade 7 Class Blog:** I am astounded by what I learn every time I visit this rich classroom. Go to this [post](#) for an example of the clear, deep thinking that Ann's students have to share about the concepts of "humiliation and silence" with the support of their skills as word scientists.

Those familiar with the vocabulary research have likely heard of the emphasis on developing "word consciousness". Nagy and Scott (2004, p. 201) described as "the knowledge and dispositions necessary for students to learn, appreciate, and effectively use words." I think I'd have a hard time pointing to richer evidence of students developing such knowledge and dispositions than the videos posted in this more recent Word Nerds [post](#) by Ann's class.



**Matt Berman's Real Spellers:** *Real Spellers* is not a classroom blog. To me it is the virtual meeting place that is open to our whole community of learners. Unlike the classroom blogs or the WordWorks or [Real Spelling](#) websites, Real Spellers has no content of its own, it

simply provides our community with a free place to meet, ask questions, or share discoveries, lessons, resources etc. Simply put, Real Spellers is whatever our community chooses to make it. Its webmaster, Matt Berman is an elementary teacher at [The NUEVA School](#) near San Francisco. Matt began this site soon after attending our 3-day summer course (entirely via Skype!). He was a part of a number of email discussions with novice and experienced "real spellers" and decided that our community needed a public space to share our learning.

Notice the ways that this meeting space has facilitated many of the investigations described in this Newsletter so far. Of course it was crucial for the teacher-student investigation of the spelling <come>. It also provided a means to share the presentation of that learning. The Real Spellers post on the words *persuasion* and *persuade* highlighted the concept of *twin bases*, which planted the seeds for work in Dan Allen's class that was then shared on his blog. Real Spellers is also crucial to the final part of this Newsletter - the promised sharing of a lesson for younger classes. As our community grows I hope more and more teachers/tutors find ways of shaping Real Spellers to their purposes. If you struggle with posting comments, images, videos or anything, don't give up! Matt is happy to help with such technical issues. You can email [Matt](#), or [me](#) with questions regarding making the best use of Real Spellers.

**Innovations at Real Spellers:** Notice the new tabs on the Real Spellers menu bar. Now you can visit the blogs of Dan Allen and Ann Whiting, or to the WordWorks website from within Real Spellers. The sites are accessible in their typical location, but by having these sites accessible from right in the Real Spellers frame the chances of increased cross-pollination of ideas is increased.

