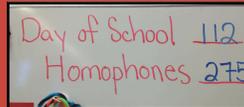
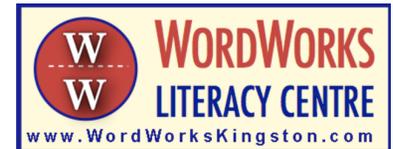
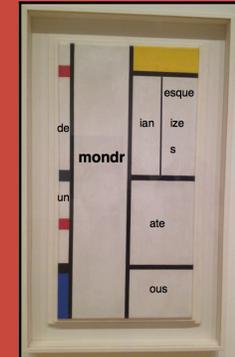


# WORDWORKS NEWSLETTER #69

A flowering of learning in the age of Wordstock!



Some of the crew gathers for a photo at "Wordstock" 2013



## The Highlights

April 11, 2013

- 👉 Upcoming events (Australia & Summer Course Update)
- 👉 Brief summary of recent events
- 👉 Real Script is here!
- 👉 Must see blog posts, investigations & lessons from around the world including...
  - ◆ A homophone challenge from a Grade 1 class;
  - ◆ A grand & eloquent Grade 1 morphological investigation;
  - ◆ Guided reading videos in Grade 1 with Skot Caldwell;
  - ◆ Videos of Grade 5 students as they discuss their study of syllables and morphemes;
  - ◆ *Structure & Meaning Tests*: A lesson for investigating the relationship between two written words;
  - ◆ Grade 7 Concept Ladders from Ann Whiting (with videos, free lesson & example student work);

- ◆ Hugo presents his first matrix!
- ◆ A morphological analysis challenge for you.

## The Details

### Upcoming Events:

👉 *April 25 - May 16: WW returns to Melbourne*

I am very excited about my return to [Wesley College](#). Due to the response to the one-day public workshop they hosted last year, I get to work with three other Melbourne schools, including a public school. Wesley will host two more workshops open to the public on this trip:

- April 29 - May 1 (3-day workshop / limited availability)
- May 10 a larger 1-day workshop

Click [here](#) for a flyer with more details if you are in the area.

## 👤 **WordWorks Summer Courses July 2-4 & 16-18**

### **July 2-4 (Still room for reservations)**

As of today, we have 4 confirmed participants, and a couple more participants awaiting final confirmation for funding. We can't hold the [Shanti Retreat](#) with less than 6 people confirmed, so we have moved this course back to our house where we've held many workshops in the past (like [this one!](#)). I will have to cap this course at 7 or 8. Email Pete asap if you are considering this course.

### **July 16 -18 (Waiting list started)**

I have capped the course at 13 due to the space available at the lovely Shanti Retreat. Contact Pete if you want to be put on the the wait list. Cancellations happen every year and I'm still awaiting confirmation from some.

## **Brief summary of recent events:**

### ***Alberta -- San Francisco -- Paoli, PA -- Kingston***

I'm beginning to recover from an amazing series of workshops in March. In quick succession I got to lead a structured word inquiry workshop in Kingston (for [TESL](#)), two in Edmonton (one for the St. Albert Public School board and one public workshop organized by [AARI](#) at the University of Alberta) and two in the San Francisco area (one at [Nueva](#) and one public workshop organized by Gail Venable and Nancy Cushen-White in San Francisco). On top of great sessions with teachers, I got to teach lessons in classrooms from pre-kindergarten to Grade 12. I was delighted that the two full-day workshops were extremely well attended. We had to limit the San Francisco session when we hit 50 because of the space.

**Wordstock:** As if that were not enough, the weekend after returning from San Francisco (which included a family trip!) I took off again; this time to be a participant in the epic etymology workshop led by [LEX's](#) Gina Cooke and [Etymonline](#) author Douglas Harper in Pennsylvania.

The chance to study with these two presenters was too much to pass up for many in our community. To be a part of this gathering of the tribes, people came from as places such as Japan and San Francisco. Many people familiar to WordWorks regulars met here for the first time in person -- including...

- Ann Whiting from Kuala Lumpur (author of the [Grade 7 Word Nerds blog](#))
- Dan Allen from Zurich (and author of a [Grade 5 Blog](#))
- Skot Caldwell (my fellow Kingstonian and author of the [Grade 1 Blog smallhumansthinkingbig](#)).

The weekend turned out to live up to its tongue-in-cheek branding -- **Wordstock**. Sus even had some special baseball caps made up. See Gina sporting hers in the picture to the right. I'm going to save my own reflections for my next WW Newsletter since I'm still working through so much of what I have to learn from the weekend. Fortunately, Dan Allen has posted [this brilliant reflection](#) on his blog. For now I'll let his words speak for me. That way I have time to start sharing the large pile of amazing links and resources I want to get out to you all.



Hold on to your hats, there is amazing stuff going on out there.

## Real Script is here!

If you already know about Real Script and you have been awaiting the brand new Tool Box 2 interactive resource, go right now to [Real Spelling](#) to order your copy.

I see the teaching of an efficient script as integral to instruction which seeks to foster effective learning of graphemic and morphemic spelling structures. Thus it is an inherent - not optional - aspect of the most effective structured word inquiry based instruction. The principles that underlie the very old script supported by Real Spelling are particularly important to understand for healthy guidance of this instruction.

Watch this [brilliant webinar](#) hosted by [Lexercise](#) that includes a Real Spelling Tutorial film on Real Script, and a question and answer session led by Dan Allen's Grade 5 students. This [post](#) on Dan's blog shows his Grade 5s teaching Real Script to their Kindergarten buddies (see image below!). Keep watching until the end where we get to hear the Grade 5 students reflect on teaching these young students.

See "This Month's Tutorial" at [Real Spelling](#) to see a film that explains this resource. My son Skyler and I have been enjoying learning with our copy!

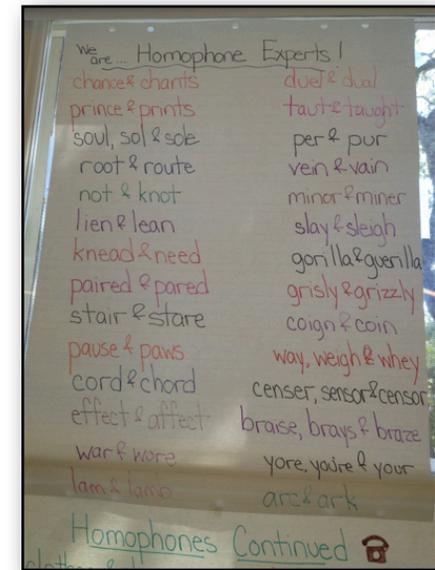


## Must see blog posts, investigations & lessons from around the world...

### 🌐 *A homophone challenge from a Grade 1 class*

Soon after I arrived at the Nueva School, I was told I had to see the amazing "Homophone Challenge" going on in Emily Mitchell's Grade 1 class. The basics of the story is that an encounter with one homophone pair, *ate / eight*, sparked a determination among the students, teachers and families to find as many homophones as possible.

They had found 112 homophone pairs by the time I arrived. At right is a picture of one of the many sheets of chart paper collecting the homophones they've found.



I hope members of our fine community of scholars will go to [this post](#) on Real Spellers where I have posted Emily's description of the challenge, and the current data base of their homophone discoveries that you can download. The challenge is to help them find homophones they have yet to uncover. With a data base it is easy to search their work to see if you and your class have found something they have not caught yet. If you do, please share those discoveries in the comments of that post.

Let's make this a world-wide homophone challenge. I see [here](#) that Skot Caldwell's Grade 1's have joined the quest! I also see that Old Grouch has offered an additional challenge in his comment on the "[Homophone Project](#)" string at Real Spellers. He found a quartet of homophones that he has shared. Can anyone else find another quartet or even a quintet? Let us know what you discover in the comment string.

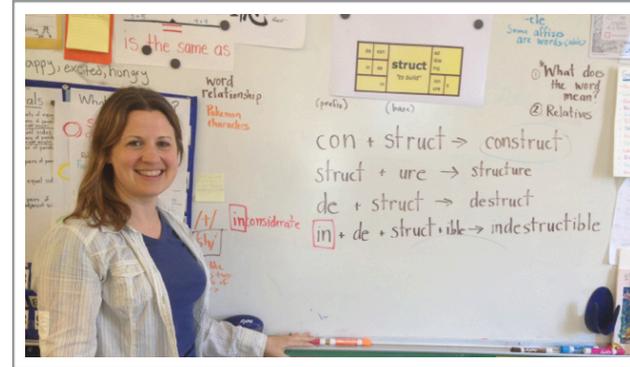
### 👤 *A grand & eloquent Grade 1 morphological investigation*

I will refrain from describing too much about [this amazing Real Spellers post](#) in the "[Beginners Forum](#)" from yet another Nueva Grade 1 teacher, Rebecca. I will, however, share this account from Rebecca's inaugural RS post:

"At this point Sam looked at me and asked, "Do you know the answer?" Immediately I responded, "No, I don't." This gave him a big smile, somewhat incredulous. It was my favorite moment of the whole experience."

To share a flavour of the confidence for inquiry-led teaching with which Rebecca has jumped into this work, consider the picture in the above, right column. This shot was taken from her Grade 1 class in a lesson she did on the bound base <struct> the day after the 2-day session I led on the weekend!

Do Grade 1 students know about the words *construct*, *deconstruct*, *structure*? Why not show them how these words work? On what evidence might someone base the belief that bound bases are too advanced for Grade 1 students? Rebecca chose to let her students show her what they can do. And this set the stage with background knowledge that will support the investigation in [the post](#) highlighted above.



Rebecca shows evidence of the **structured** word inquiry instruction she is using to *build* her Grade 1 students's understanding of the written word at [The Nueva School](#) the day after a 2-day WordWorks workshop!

### 👤 *Guided reading videos in Grade 1 with Skot Caldwell*

You are hereby encouraged to follow "[smallhumansthinkbig](#)", Skot Caldwell's blog. At last count I see 9 posts -- all of them rich sources of learning as Skot shares his learning with his Grade 1 students in a Kingston public school. [This post](#) includes Skot's first videos (screen shot below) in which he integrates the word structure knowledge they have developed to aid in the process of a guided reading episode. Go now!



🎥 **Videos of Grade 5 students as they discuss their study of syllables and morphemes**



For yet another example of what can happen within a few months of encountering this real spelling community, visit [this post](#) at Mrs Steven's Grade 5 blog. She has posted videos of the children in her public school in Wisconsin as they describe what they learn from creating word sums vs. clapping out words and dividing them into syllables.

If I understand the story correctly, this teacher happened across Dan Allen's blog about three months ago after searching "Grade 5 Blogs". That encounter has grown into the learning you see on her blog today.

🎥 **Grade 7 Concept Ladders from Ann Whiting (with videos, free lesson & example student work)**

Go to [this Real Spellers post](#) to download a lesson outline and description of Ann's "Concept Ladder" task that she uses to guide Grade 7 students to research and describe the shades of

meaning they find in words through orthographic investigation -- and then *how they apply that to humanities study*. [This post](#) includes not only a description of this lesson and a blank form for others to use/adapt, it also includes pdf's of students' work, and video of them describing their learning. To tantalize you with what this work is about, I'll just paste this short bit from Ann's description of this task:

*As always with word study my aim is to make connections be it to literature, history, art, movies... words do not exist in a vacuum waiting for us to dish them up to students to analyze. I want students to develop a love of and a joyousness in reading, writing and uttering words. I want students to be in the 'spell' of words.*

Of course the Real Spellers post also encourages you to visit Ann's original post "[Portals of Discovery](#)," which includes Ann's introduction and a number of student videos. The documents to download are only on the Real Spellers [post](#).

***Some common threads to these stories...***

What a gift it is to get a peek into these classrooms. Of course, observing students in the process of constructing and refining their understanding of the written word is a great way to deepen our own learning. But crucially, these teachers have also invited us to observe the process that *they* -- as teachers -- go through as they construct and refine *their* understanding of the written word and how it can be taught.

In these stories and in my own correspondences with them, all of these teachers have conveyed their lack of certainty about their understanding of aspects of this content and their instruction. These illustrations of classroom learning are

particularly valuable because these teachers and students are sharing attempts at developing their own learning -- complete with the uncertainties, mistakes and successes that are inherent in any rich learning experience. Leading by their examples of experimenting with ideas, identifying errors and refining understanding in the face of evidence, these teachers help their students and our community gain confidence to do the same.

It was exactly this openness and enthusiasm for an investigation for which Rebecca did not know the answer that gave Sam, her Grade 1 student a big smile as they investigated his spelling question as a team. There is a joy of learning *with* one's teacher that is different from just trying to learn what one's teacher already knows. It is the difference between just *practicing* inquiry and actually *doing* it.

The 2001 PYP monograph describes goals for students that are echoed by just about every curriculum I've seen. It states:

*"The PYP supports children to become inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers; to be knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well-balanced, and reflective" (p. 8).*

If these are the characteristics of the kind of learners schools want children to be, shouldn't schools expect and support these characteristics from their teachers?

One of the characteristics that allows teachers like Rebecca, Mrs. Stevens or Emily to dive in so quickly, is that they are willing to be risk-takers who take on new ideas once they have seen good evidence that they are worth exploring. Teachers like Ann and Skot who have been doing this work for years are risk-

takers too. They keep trying new instructional ideas, revising them and asking for feedback. All the while they are deepening their own understanding of the spelling system they are charged with teaching. When one looks at Dan Allen's blog one might think he's a veteran, but he hasn't even reached the end of his second year with this work!

One does not need to feel like an "expert" to be a part of this community of learners. The novices and veterans highlighted in these pages, however, do share a commitment for an ongoing refinement of their *expertise* in terms of their own understanding of the content they teach and of their instructional practice. With that approach to learning it is not surprising that their content knowledge and instructional skill increases steadily.

It's worth noting that if you explore the words *expert*, *expertise*, *experience*, and *experiment* on [Etymonline](#), you will find a common Latin root that denotes 'to try, test.'

I hope that little etymological nugget motivates you to have a go with the challenge in the next item. A rich learning experience lies ahead... *if you are willing to give it a try!*

### ***Structure & Meaning Tests: A lesson for investigating the relationship between two written words***

It seems quite obvious that the words <unhelpful> and <helpless> are related in spelling structure and meaning. But what about words such as <repercussion> and <concussion>? How do we find reliable evidence we can use to come to a principled, scientific conclusion about any connection between these words in terms of meaning, structure and history?

Recently I took on this question when I taught a class in Kingston. I created a lesson outlined on a two page document that is available for download from [this link](#). I hope you try it out to see if the questions and steps outlined in the example investigation help you learn how to test any two words with the “structure and meaning test”. I’m looking for suggestions for improvement of the document I’ve posted, and perhaps stories of investigations you used with his resource. Since I made the document for my own teaching, it is hard for me to know if it has sufficient explanation for other users. I’d love to refine it with the help of input of students and teachers.

### 👉 *Hugo’s first Matrix*

For a variety of reasons, I am presenting this last “gem from the field” for this Newsletter as a Part 1 of a 2 part story that will be concluded in the next Newsletter. For me, this story of Hugo’s first matrix is a particularly moving example of the joyous motivational effect *understanding* of the written word can have for focused study.

Hugo’s Mom, Robyn, is a teacher in Melbourne that I’m going to get to work with on my upcoming trip. She contacted me recently, wondering if I could Skype with her son Hugo before I came. I was delighted to work with this Mother/teacher and son team, and I could not be happier with what has transpired since. I’ll just share some of the correspondence and images she has shared so far. For Part 2 in the next Newsletter I hope to edit some of the amazing videos Robyn sent as Hugo became fascinated constructing his first matrices.

Before our one Skype session (so far), I suggested Robyn ask Hugo if he had any words he wanted to investigate together.

Hi Pete,

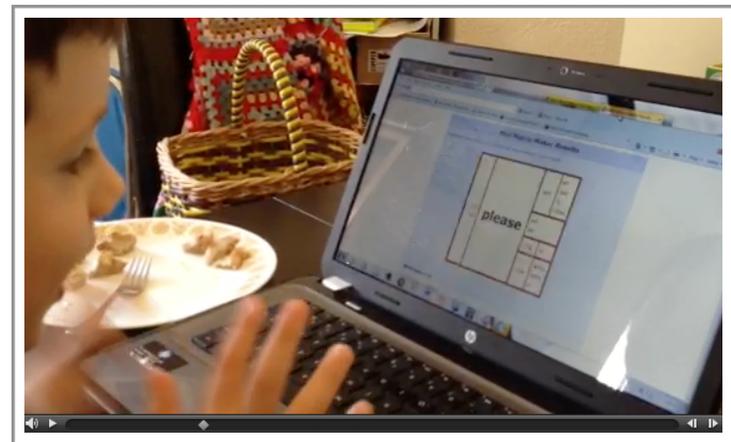
Hugo said he would like to work on *please* with you. He spelt it *plese* today on his chalk board. He would love to work on any words in your book really. We have only flicked through the resource book together briefly a couple of times and I have shown him some word sums using <help> as the base.

He is very much into Lego – he used to love Ninjago and now he loves Chima. So any words to do with fighting and defeating would delight him too!

Thanks Pete!

Robyn

I noted the comment about Lego, and thought -- ah, this boy is going to like matrices and word sums! We had a great session, and I was able to introduce him to the [Mini-Matrix-Maker](#). Little did I know what this would unleash! Look at this screen shot of the video of the instant Hugo’s first self-made matrix appeared on the screen:



See the correspondences with Robyn about Hugo’s learning on the next page.

I was trying to get Hugo to spell out as he typed but it didn't always happen because he was so excited and so driven to complete it!

He keeps asking if we can 'play a game' with the matrix - I am thinking of putting numbers next to the word sums, rolling a dice and then choosing a word to spell out loud and put in a sentence.

Just wait until you get to see the video of Hugo's response to the appearance of his first matrix. As Robyn shared:

Hello Pete, Hugo loved making this matrix. He is very keen to make another!

BUT we are off to [the store] now to buy a prefix + base + suffix board so we can make our own chart.

More fun times ahead!

When I shared a draft of my newsletter with Robyn before sending it out, she emphasized the following:

"When Hugo made his first matrix, he said with joy, 'I'm helping you with your work!' Flicking through your book made him very keen. It was the catalyst.

I know it is self-serving to include the comment about my book. However, I have to admit that part of my delight in this story has been the role that book played in getting this process started. While the lessons were originally created for Grade 4/5 classrooms, I'm delighted to find 6.5 year olds like Hugo being inspired by it.

On the right, see a screen shot of Hugo's first matrix from Mini-Matrix-Maker. After receiving this latest work from Hugo, I received this in a follow-up email...

He REALLY wants to do another matrix. Keen to do <help> next.

We are going to make our sticky note boards tomorrow.

Hugo has been watching Gina's youtube clips and some of yours. He is right into it.

Thanks for [homophone links](#), they look great. I have four boards so we'll make one for homophones.

See the pride with which Hugo organizes his matrix collection I can't wait to see his collection when I visit in April-May!

**Mini Matrix-Maker Results**

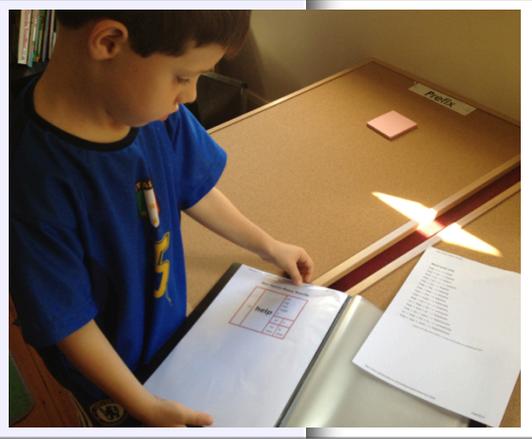
[Morphology Home](#) / [Matrix Home](#) / [Matrix Edit \(close window\)](#) / [Matrix Results](#)

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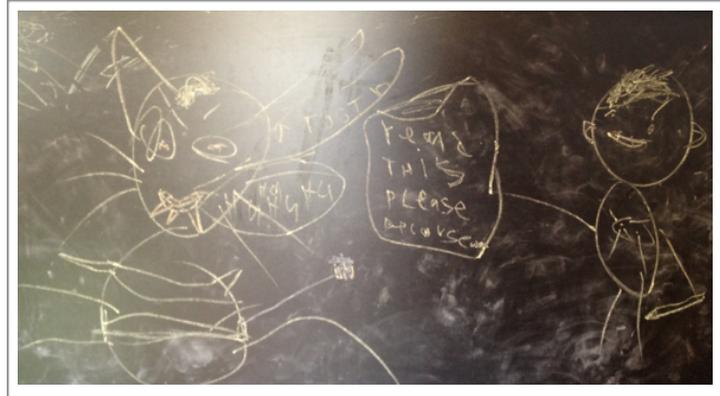
**Word sums (19)**

- please + ed --> pleased
- please + es --> pleases
- please + ant --> pleasant
- please + ing --> pleasing
- please + ure --> pleasure
- dis + please --> displeasure
- please + ure + s --> pleasures
- dis + please + ed --> displeased
- dis + please + es --> displeases
- please + ant + er --> pleasantly
- please + ant + ly --> pleasantly
- please + ing + ly --> pleasingly
- un + please + ant --> unpleasant
- dis + please + ing --> displeasing
- dis + please + ure --> displeasure
- please + ant + est --> pleasantest
- please + ure + able --> pleasurable
- please + ure + ably --> pleausurably
- un + please + ant + ness --> unpleasantness

Created with Mini Matrix-Maker, at [www.melramaden.co.uk/spelling/matrix](http://www.melramaden.co.uk/spelling/matrix) [Input data](#) [Print](#) [Close](#)



Now recall the first email in which Robyn mentioned Hugo's misspelling <\*plese>. See what happened next:



Hugo drew this early last week. He spelt 'please' as 'plese'. He has corrected himself!

How wonderful that, based on his experience of building the <please> matrix, Hugo recognized the error in his previous work, and decided -- on his own -- to correct a spelling. How lovely that is Mom let him make his own mistakes, and thus the power to correct them himself!

There is more to share about this story, but that will have to wait until the next Newsletter. In the meantime, Hugo and his Mom have done a find job of setting the stage for the challenge I want to leave you with -- something that I will revisit next time.

### 🤔 **What could possibly offer a greater motivation for learning than understanding?**

I've been asking teachers to consider this question in my workshops recently. I'm often disappointed by the way teaching resources target motivation. Often students are offered flashy

pictures, games, all sorts of gimmicks contrived to "trick" kids into learning by making it fun. I don't mean lessons should *avoid* fun. But if we purposely use "fun" to grab students attention in a lesson, we need to make sure the source of that fun *directs the learner to attend to the concept under study*.

Consider the ubiquitous paper maché volcano. Students have a great time with this project. It is "hands on" and the kids are really "engaged in science class." On the surface, it looks like a great way to make sure kids enjoy science.

But which concepts about how volcanoes work are taught by mixing vinegar, baking soda and food colouring to get the desired effect of lava shooting out of the volcano hole? How does this chemical reaction make sense of the principles of pressure, heat, and molten rock under the surface of the earth finally escaping and forming new parts of the earth's crust?

We might consider the reverse link between "fun" and learning. (I prefer the term "joy" to "fun" in this context. Check these terms in [Etymonline](#) to see why.)

It seems to me that going from a state of confusion about something one of understanding is an inherently pleasurable experience for anyone -- student *or* teacher. I would suggest the joy for learning conveyed in the stories in this newsletter spring from the discovery of a clarity of understanding of how written words work. Especially for learners who have assumed spelling is irregular and frustrating, suddenly beginning to gain traction with an understanding of that system is an inherently positive, and often joyful experience. That experience then motivates further work to try and make sense of new questions. At each step of this learning spiral, a deeper knowledge base provides a

foundation from which new questions can be perceived and investigated. In structured word inquiry, teachers need not work at dressing up lessons with gimmicks or tricks to make studying words interesting. Building understanding is the best motivator we can offer.

***And so for your challenge...***

Use word sums to analyze the morphological structure of the words <**motivation**> and <**understanding**> as a means to consider the layers of meaning signalled by this question:

*What could possibly provide greater motivation for learning than understanding?*

You may want to take advantage of the guidance offered the “[Structure & Meaning Test](#)” document linked earlier.

Use Etymonline and other etymological references to identify the underlying root of the bases you find in these words. Then, take the lead of Anne’s Grade 7 students by using what you learn from the etymology of these words to help you reflect on the meaning captured in the wording of this question. Hint: there is a subtle irony to be found!

Once you think you have found the bases, go ahead and construct matrices from them with help from the [Word Searcher](#) and the [Mini-Matrix-Maker](#) or the [Word Microscope](#).

Why not have a go at this task with your colleagues (students and/or teachers). I do recommend that you guide your thinking by writing down your hypotheses in a word sum, *before you worry about whether it is right or not!* By writing down your ideas, you and your colleagues can look at your thinking carefully. Word sums give you evidence to reject hypotheses

false hypotheses, perceive alternative hypotheses you would not otherwise see -- and a means to test that hypothesis.

Why not use the comments after the “[Structure & Meaning Test](#)” [post](#) on Real Spellers as a community drawing board where you can share your hypotheses and discoveries. If you come up with matrices or other images you’d like to share but are not sure how, [email me](#) and I’ll help you.

If you take this work on with your class, I’d love to share images of your work in the next newsletter too!

Cheers, Pete

***A couple notes about the next WW Newsletter...***

One topic I plan to investigate in the next Newsletter is a theme that was planted in my mind back in November of 2007 when I got to visit the amazing [Teboho Trust](#), a special school across the street from Nelson Mandela’s old house in *Soweto*. See my post about this unforgettable visit [here](#). José Bright, the founder of this inspiring example of community and education made a statement that has never left me. He argued that in a place like Soweto where the village is broken, ***the only option is for the children to raise the village.***

I have shared this framing many times since, but somehow I was reminded of this profound insight while talking about making sense of spelling as a context for generative learning with a Preschool Teacher at the Nueva school. Carolee, is passionate about the [Reggio Emilia](#) philosophy she has studied and brings alive in her classroom. I was struck by the connections between what I try to facilitate in my work, what she does through Reggio -- and this observation Jose planted for me so many years ago.

I think if you reflect on the stories highlighted in this Newsletter, you may perceive something of the connections that I hope to explore more. In the mean time, I’m very excited that I’ve reconnected with José and am looking forward to Skyping with his students and teachers very soon. In the meantime, take a look at what is going on at [this school called Teboho Trust!](#)