

# WordWorks Newsletter #97

Learning through WordWorks Workshops and the growing community of scholars around the world

## Highlights

- 🕒 Rundown of 2019 (so far) with WordWorks
- 🕒 Spotlight on upcoming SWI Nueva Institute & accounts of learning from such workshops.
- 🕒 Select list of upcoming workshops and conferences with Pete around the world into 2020  
\*\*\***See a full list of upcoming workshops [HERE](#).**\*\*\*
- 🕒 From 2001 till today: Celebrating the ever-growing community providing workshops, resources and blogs supporting SWI (many links!) and how we got here.

## Details

### ***Rundown of 2019 (so far) with WordWorks***

As the 2018-2019 school year nears its end, it is clear that it has been by far the busiest year for WordWorks and structured word inquiry research and practice. Here's some of what's been going on just since January.

- *3rd annual workshop in Bangkok with Fiona Hamilton ([www.wordtorque.com](http://www.wordtorque.com))*
- *Edmonton (repeat [ERLC](#) workshop)*
- *Montreal (first on-site workshop with [Montreal Fluency](#))*
- *Vancouver (first visit to [James Cameron School](#) - a school for dyslexics)*
- *Chicago (3-days in public schools, then first "Orthography in the Classroom" conference organized by [Language Insights](#) with keynotes by Gina Cooke, Douglas Harper and myself.*
- *San Francisco - (new and old schools)*
- *Moscow (first visit to [Anglo-American School of Moscow](#))*



## Structured Word Inquiry Institute

Monday, June 17 - Friday, June 21, 2019

Click [HERE](#) for a detailed description of this year's Institute.  
Register [HERE](#).

### *Online work with WordWorks with [Zoom](#)*

I'm excited about the growing use of online work. This past year has included a number of 5-session SWI Courses and online workshops and model lessons with schools in Jamaica, Switzerland, San Francisco and others. Zoom is a video conference tool that provides a remarkably effective forum for real-time face-to-face study with people from anywhere in the world.

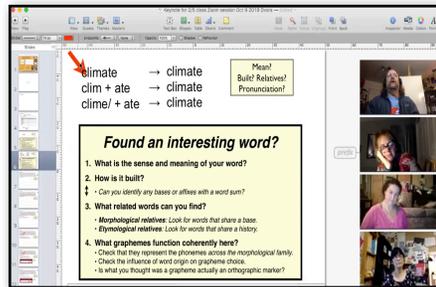
- 🕒 **See information on two 5-session Zoom courses coming up in September [HERE](#).**

See images (next page) from a 2018 5-session course.

Image at top is the "Gallery mode view" during a Zoom 5-session course. I use this view when I don't need to share the screen.



Below is the view when I share my screen. In this mode, we can all still talk and share ideas as we work through investigations including working with online tools like Etymonline, the Mini-Matrix-Maker etc.



This screen-share function is perfect for teaching model lessons in classrooms, leading teacher workshops or one-on-one tutoring.

### Recent publications re SWI in research & the media

I've co-authored three publications related to SWI in 2018 and two more in 2019. These include a new chapter co-authored by **Lyn Anderson, Ann Whiting, Gail Venable** and myself and an article in **The Washington Post** among other articles I've published with my brother Jeff Bowers, a cognitive psychologist in the UK, and a chapter with **John Kirby**. See a document with more details on these publications [HERE](#). I am involved with two other research projects related to SWI in process right now.

### About the upcoming Nueva SWI Institute

Click [HERE](#) for a detailed description of this Institute including information about how to choose between the 2-day intro, 3-day advanced or full 5-day sessions and the Nueva teacher guest presenters. You can register [HERE](#).

The 12th annual Wolfe Island Summer Workshop is fully booked. Thus the annual Nueva Institute is the only summer workshop I'm leading in North America that still has room. We already have a good-sized group booked for this institute, but there is room for more!

Below is an email Tahnee Munoz, a K-1 teacher from the Wildwood School sent after the Nueva Institute she attended. She captures key aspects of responses I get for all my workshops.

*"I've been talking to you in my head nonstop since leaving the institute. That sounds crazy but what I mean is I can no longer go a day without thinking about a word and wondering where it came from or looking it up or experimenting with how I would break it apart or what the affixes are. I'm currently teaching a summer writing class so I'm using these first graders as my practice round at getting started and they are eating it up. Just a few minutes here and there but it's been so easy to incorporate without needing to really plan it out. I've been taking about it since I came home to everyone!*

*Also, random silly thing. I have NEVER been able to spell the word "definitely" without trying it several times or checking it on my phone and now I can spell it because I can visualize a base word and suffix in it. It's mind boggling that I couldn't before.*

*Today the kids were so excited tapping out words. They're obsessed with beauty and the beast right now and they were having a blast writing sentences that had "beast", "feast", "least" in them completely on their own. I know this is way too much information but I cannot stop thinking about the 3 days I got to spend learning from you and hoping I'll get more of an opportunity...*

*I've been an awful speller my entire life and I never would have imagined leaving a spelling conference so jazzed but I would have gone to that institute even if I wasn't an educator."*

Notice Tahnee's emphasis on the on-going effect this workshop has had on *her own thinking about words*. "You can't ever look at words the same way again!" is a common refrain after these workshops. "Well then," I emphasize in return, "keep that experience in mind. This is the exact kind of learning experience you can offer your students." What could a struggling student want more than than a new way to look at the written word that *makes sense*? That shift for students requires that teachers take the time to start this journey themselves.

Tahnee also notes how quickly the process of "tapping-out word structure" engaged her Grade 1 students in the study of the written word. See [HERE](#) for resources on "spelling-out" word structure. This topic is central to the 5-session SWI courses on Zoom in September.

I encourage you to read the document on the Nueva Institute [HERE](#) whether or not you are able to attend this specific workshop. It gives a good sense of the kind of content and form of all of my workshops. Responses like Tahnee's gives an idea of why I get so many invitations to visit and revisit locations again and again. See a couple of images from past SWI Nueva Institutes below.



## Upcoming Workshops

### Interested in booking a workshop?

If you see that I'll be in your region, [email me](#) to ask about adding a stop at your location. Linking trips reduces costs to schools who can then share the cost of travel.

Click [HERE](#) for a page listing all the current bookings for my workshops from this summer until spring 2020. Below is a sample of some public workshops and conferences.

### Selection of upcoming conferences & workshops

- 🕒 **June 17- 21: San Francisco, 6th Annual SWI Nueva Institute.** Click [HERE](#) for details. Click [HERE](#) to register.
- 🕒 **July 9-12: Melbourne Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) Annual Conference**  
I am presenting a Keynote Address at this conference, which is the main annual literacy conference in Australia. Other presenters on SWI topics include: Lyn Anderson & Ann Whiting ([Caught in the Spell of Words](#)) Fiona Hamilton ([WordTorque](#)) and Julie Shepherd.
- 🕒 **July 13: Melbourne --** I lead a [full day SWI workshop ALEA Post-Conference](#)
- 🕒 **Sept: Two 5-session online SWI courses with Pete.** One on Thursdays, one on Saturdays. Click [HERE](#) for details. These online courses have been extremely productive and well received.
- 🕒 **Oct 9-10: Edmonton -- ERLC** workshop (Details TBA)
- 🕒 **Oct 17-18: San Francisco --** I present at the [Innovative Learning Conference](#).
- 🕒 **Oct 24: Chicago -- Everyone Reading Illinois (ERI) Conference.** I lead a 3-hour SWI workshop at the conference. (Maryanne Wolfe - Keynote)
- 🕒 **Nov 15-16: Switzerland public workshop hosted by Zurich International School** (Details TBA [email Pete](#) )

## 2020 Workshops

- 📍 **January 16 - 17: Winnipeg** (Details TBA)
- 📍 **January 22 - 23: Hobart, Australia** (Details TBA)
- 📍 **March 5-6-7: Bangkok.** 3rd Annual workshop co-led by Fiona Hamilton ([WordTorque](#)) and myself. Details TBA. [Email Fiona](#) for info.
- 📍 **March 14-15: Hong Kong**  
I present the Keynote at [12th Annual Literacy Institute Conference](#) hosted by [Hong Kong International School](#).

### **A long strange orthographic trip from 2001 till today: Celebrating the ever-growing community of scholars offering workshops, resources and courses supporting SWI**

When I look back to when I started with this work, it is truly hard to believe the current interest in scientific inquiry of orthography as a means of guiding literacy instruction. It was in 2001 that I first encountered the assertion that English spelling is a highly-ordered system that can be studied and understood through scientific inquiry. This claim, in a program for an education conference in Bangkok, seemed so audacious that it was irresistible. Everyone knows English spelling is filled with “exceptions” I thought to myself. I had to check out what this Real Spelling snake oil salesman had to say.

What a joy it was to have my long-held assumptions contradicted with such clear evidence! Within the first 10 minutes, the Old Grouch had made sense of many words that all my previous training had taught me to think of as “irregular words” to (unsuccessfully) memorize.

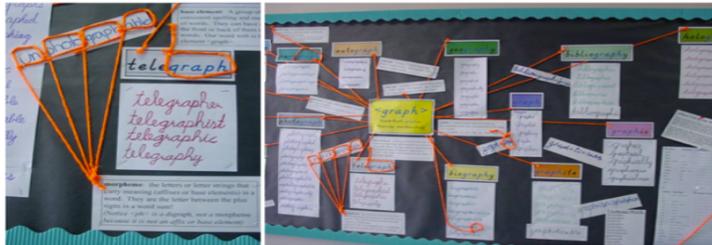
It was particularly joyous for me as I had always been a horrendous speller. [This video](#) from a Kingston, Ontario classroom in 2007 shares the story of how transformational it was for me to see the word <real> and its relationship with <really> and <reality> in a matrix in that Bangkok session. And these are not even words typically thought of as irregular!

Back in Canada, other than Skot Caldwell and a few others, I had no luck generating any interest in what I had been learning. (See his recent glorious post “[On Greek Dinosaurs and a Scholarly Symposium](#)” in Skot’s Gr 4/5 class and the archive of his Gr. 1 blog [HERE](#) ). In 2003, I started grad school to address the evidence question. In 2006, I started WordWorks Literacy Centre during my doctoral studies to build the interest of schools and teachers. However, even 5 years after I encountered Real Spelling, if I had a spelling question in I couldn’t resolve, the only option I had was to email my friend the Old Grouch (Real Spelling). This was not a good state of affairs. What if he packed it in? As far as I knew then, almost no one seemed to recognize the significance of the orthographic understanding offered by Real Spelling.

The first major relief came when [Gina Cooke](#) became aware of Real Spelling. Unlike me, Gina was a trained linguist. She had also worked for years with children and adults in O-G based organizations. It took very little time of studying with Real Spelling for Gina’s orthographic understanding to surpass my own. Once she started [LEX](#) and began publishing her [grapheme deck and other resources](#) and then started her online [LEXinars](#) and on-site workshops I was relieved that there was another source to support this learning.

It was Marcia Henry who introduced Gina to me and Real Spelling. Amazingly, Marcia had been in that same 45-minute Real Spelling workshop in Bangkok! During my research for what became our morphological meta-analysis (Bowers, Kirby and Deacon, 2010), it became clear why Real Spelling had always been so impressed with Marcia's work. Her articles (1988, 1989, 1993) made the case *very early* for teaching about morphology, etymology and phonology.

Marcia and I were in the same room, but I didn't actually meet or know who she was during that 2001 Real Spelling session. That connection was made through Real Spelling when he showed Marcia images from my Grade 4 classroom of a morphological web on the <graph> family, and Marcia asked if she could include the images in her 2003 book *Unlocking Literacy*.



Marcia's been an invaluable supporter of this work ever since. We agree on a great deal, but there have always been important differences in our views as well. Those differences never stopped Marcia from encouraging people to look carefully at what my research, and SWI practice in general, have to offer.

Funny story. When our Bowers and Bowers (2017) paper, "[Beyond Phonics: The Case for Teaching Children the Logic of the English Spelling System](#)" came out, I shared it

with Marcia. She wrote back, delighted to remind me of the similar title of her first article in *Annals of Dyslexia* [Beyond phonics: Integrated decoding and spelling instruction based on word origin and structure](#).

But back to the SWI timeline. The next major actor to provide resources and PD related to SWI was Lyn Anderson. She was a friend and Grade 1 teacher at the same school in Indonesia at which I was teaching when I went to that 2001 conference in Bangkok. She was actually at that conference, but missed the Real Spelling session. She did, however, dive into Real Spelling with her Grade 1 students while I got going in my grade 4 class. She then moved on to a school in Sophia and kept going deeper and deeper. It was in 2014 that her seminal [Beyond the Word](#) website arrived. Her work provides a particularly brilliant resource for teachers interested in SWI in younger grades.

To recap. From 2001 to 2005, Real Spelling was the only game in town for teachers looking for the rigorous, linguistically-based instruction that characterizes SWI. By 2014, *WordWorks*, *LEX* and *Beyond the Word* made it feel like we had a plethora of for people to study. But this was just an early step. What we have in 2019 is nothing short of extraordinary.

The above names are likely familiar to most people working with SWI. I thought I'd take this opportunity to point to just a sample of the other amazing resources that have emerged. I know I will leave valuable resources out, but this at least offers a starting point. These links will help build your orthographic understanding and literacy instruction.





Like all of Mary Beth’s posts, this one is full of images and videos of her students in action. Assimilated prefixes provide a rich context for orthographic lessons.

Consider this extract from Mary Beth:

*I turned on my camera and the students were engaged in discussion for 50 minutes. **Fifty minutes!** Take a listen and see where their questions and observations took the discussion. (Don’t worry. I edited so that the first video is 12 minutes and the second is 7 minutes. I must say it was hard to find parts of the discussion to cut. It was all as great and interesting as what you are about to see!)*

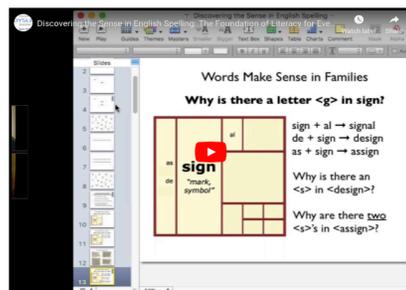
Mary Beth’s website is an archive of her astonishing orthographic work over the years with her students. She also teaches online classes. (See [HERE](#).)

### Sue Hegland: [Learning about Spelling](#)

Read what Sue <says> about “[Comprehending Spelling](#).” This post is a particularly strong description of the principles of SWI.

Sue is a wonderful force for learning in the SWI community. She came to this work with a long history with O-G and IDA. Seeing a matrix during a talk in 2012 set her off on this second part of her orthographic journey. Sue is also an wonderful writer with a deep understanding of orthography.

I also regularly point to [this video of a talk on SWI](#) (screen shot at right) that Sue did with Dr. Timothy Houge for IDA.



### Scott Mills: [Language Innerviews](#)

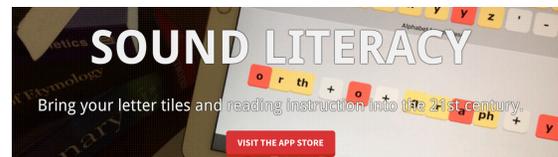
In the short time Scott studied orthography with LEX, Real Spelling and WordWorks, he accomplished a remarkable amount.



Scott’s website includes [interviews with major figures in linguistics, and education](#). His [blog](#) and [resources](#) are extremely rich. I have had the pleasure of observing Scott teach in his own classroom. His work has particularly influenced the way I teach about the interrelation of morphology and etymology. Recently he has been focusing on online tutoring that I highly recommend.

### Kathy Penn: [Sound Literacy](#)

Kathy attended a Wolfe Island Summer course years ago just after her “Sound Literacy App” was published. During that 3-day session, she recognized that the orthographic evidence I was presenting was going to demand dramatic revision of her app to represent her new orthographic understanding.



Instead of despairing, or deciding that her new labour-of-love tool was “good enough” she just got on with the job of studying more and fundamentally reframing her app. Not only is Sound Literacy an engaging and linguistically sound app, Kathy’s [blog](#) shares brilliant orthographic investigations.

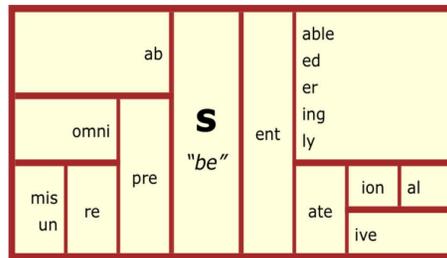
An inspiring study of <representation>: Click [HERE](#).

Although **Susie Pickett** has studied again and again with me and most of the people described in this Newsletter, she will return for this year's SWI Institute. Susie knows there is no stepping in the same river twice.



This post from Susie's [blog](#) shares the joyous trail of a study that grew out of an observation by a student about the word <representation>. The matrix below shows the current state of Susie's thinking about this family. I encourage you to interrogate the study that led to this fascinating hypothesis!

Many will be surprised or dubious about the idea of a single consonant letter bound base element. It was not *that* long ago that our community was shocked but convinced by the evidence of a vowelless bound base element <st> from the Latin root *st(are)* for "stand". Go to another key driver of SWI understanding, Matt Berman's [Real Spellers](#) website for [THIS POST](#) where you can see a story about this base and another single-letter base <d> from the Latin root *d(are)* for "give" that my son Skyler helped me find when we investigated the word <condiment>.



Beware! On this post, you'll see an error I made for years when constructing matrices. I used to include the

historical etymological information for the root below the central base element in the matrix. It took me a while to understand that the matrix is strictly about synchronic morphological information. It is not appropriate for it to include etymological information.

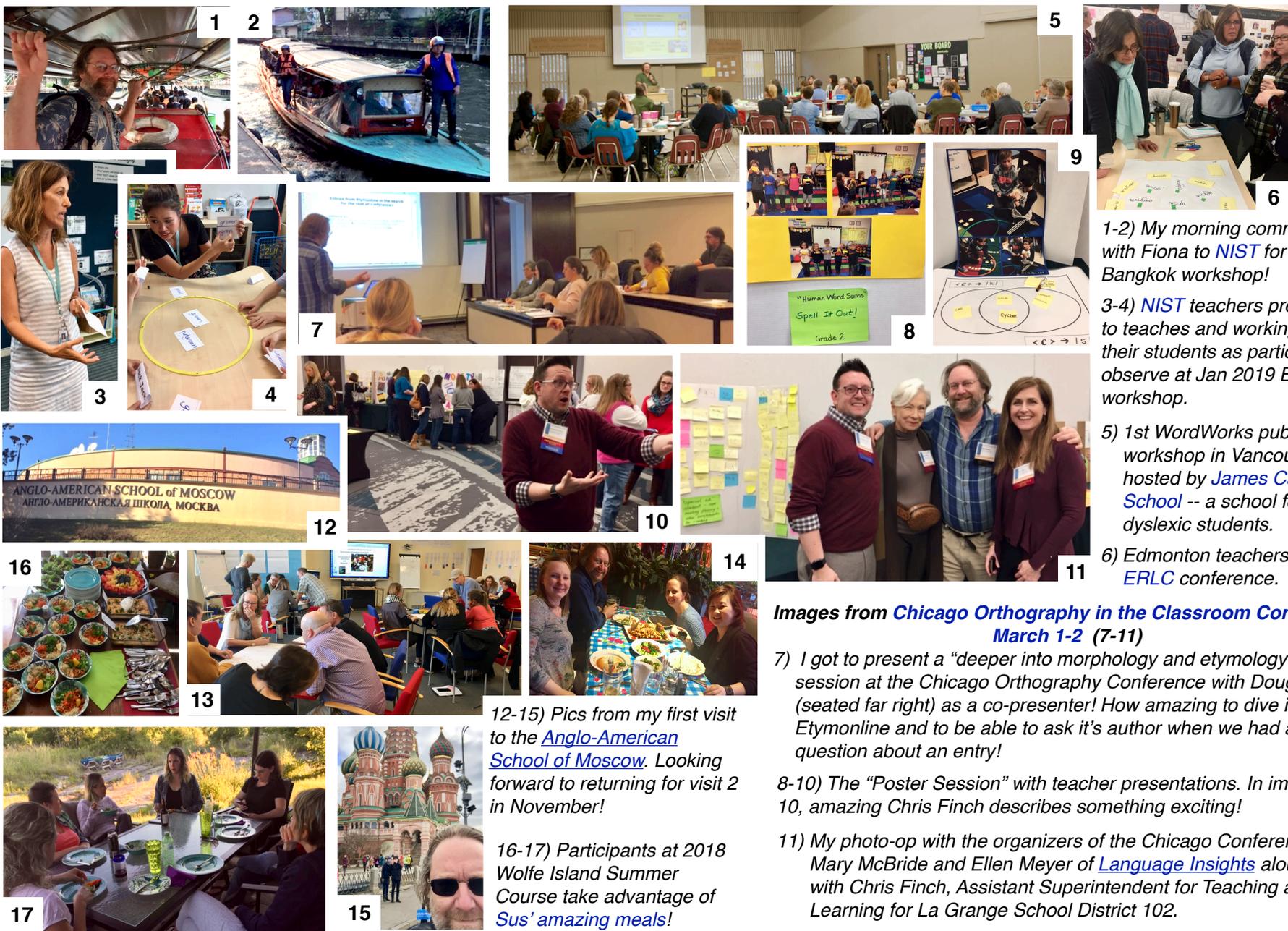
With that, I will leave you with some images of WordWorks over the 2018-2019 school year. Many thanks to all of you for helping deepen the understanding of orthography in literacy instruction around the world!

*Pete Bowers,  
May 28, 2019*

**Some images from WW Workshops this school year**

Below: *Fiona Hamilton* ([WordTorque](#)) with group investigations in our January Bangkok workshop. Next one at [NIST](#) will be [March 5-6-7!](#)





1-2) My morning commute with Fiona to **NIST** for Bangkok workshop!  
 3-4) **NIST** teachers presenting to teachers and working with their students as participants observe at Jan 2019 Bangkok workshop.  
 5) 1st WordWorks public workshop in Vancouver hosted by **James Cameron School** -- a school for dyslexic students.  
 6) Edmonton teachers at an **ERLC** conference.

**Images from Chicago Orthography in the Classroom Conference March 1-2 (7-11)**

7) I got to present a “deeper into morphology and etymology” session at the Chicago Orthography Conference with Doug Harper (seated far right) as a co-presenter! How amazing to dive into Etymonline and to be able to ask it’s author when we had a question about an entry!  
 8-10) The “Poster Session” with teacher presentations. In image 10, amazing Chris Finch describes something exciting!  
 11) My photo-op with the organizers of the Chicago Conference. Mary McBride and Ellen Meyer of **Language Insights** along with Chris Finch, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning for La Grange School District 102.

12-15) Pics from my first visit to the **Anglo-American School of Moscow**. Looking forward to returning for visit 2 in November!

16-17) Participants at 2018 Wolfe Island Summer Course take advantage of **Sus’ amazing meals!**