

Structured Word Inquiry Workshop

Presented By: Dr. Peter Bowers

Date(s):

Monday, April 27, 2020
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Session Location:

Central Alberta Regional Consortium
8 Page Avenue, Red Deer, AB

Registration Fee:

\$125.00

Audience: Teachers

Grade Level: 4-9

About the Session:

What is Structured Word Inquiry?

“Structured word inquiry” Bowers and Kirby (2010) is wordlevel literacy instruction that engages learners of all ages and abilities by making sense of our surprisingly logical spelling system through scientific word investigation.

Dr. Bowers introduced the phrase “structured word inquiry” (SWI) to describe the vocabulary instruction used scientific investigation of English spelling in his Grade 4/5 instructional study (Bowers and Kirby, 2010) SWI reflects the linguistic understanding that English spelling is a well-ordered system for representing meaning (see C. Chomsky, 1970) that can only be understood when the interrelationship of morphology, etymology and phonology is taken into account.

All meta-analyses about morphological instruction found that including morphology in literacy instruction benefits learners in general, and that that less able and younger students gain the most. This is in direct contrast to decades of assumptions that phonological factors must be taught *before* morphological factors are included. There is little direct research evidence about SWI, but what we do have and the evidence about morphological instruction suggests it should be effective compared to isolated phonics instruction. A key aspect of SWI is that it uses explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences from the beginning of instruction, but unlike “phonology first” approaches, it targets these abstract linguistic structures from within the meaningful context of related words. By reflecting morphological and etymological constraints on spelling from the start words and countless others can be *understood*. Far from reducing attention to phonology, SWI provides explicit instruction about how grapheme-phoneme correspondences work. In this talk, Dr. Bowers will model how the linguistic tools of the matrix, the word sum and IPA in grapheme-phoneme diagrams are used in classrooms to make sense of how spelling works, and how to use this knowledge in the context of reading, vocabulary and spelling instruction. Dr. Bowers will model SWI investigations from teachers and tutors around the world to help you understand English spelling and he will address where SWI sits in the research today.

About the Presenter(s):

Dr. Peter Bowers

Pete Bowers, Ph.D., is a teacher, researcher, author, and founder of WordWorks Literacy Centre. Pete taught Grades 3-6 for 10 years before earning his Ph.D. from the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University. His research and practical work with schools and educational groups has been pivotal in transforming how teachers, tutors and students around the world understand English spelling. Instead of putting up with a frustrating system full of exceptions, the structured word inquiry (SWI) community understands that *investigating* the spelling-meaning connections in words is not only rich literacy instruction -- it is also a rich context for learning about any subject. His teacher resource book, *Teaching How the Written Word Works* expands on the lessons of his vocabulary intervention (Bowers & Kirby, 2010), and introduced the term “structured word inquiry.” His workshops have taken him to Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and North America.