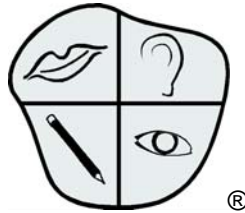


**#27 Subjects: Asking Children to Do Masters' Work When They Are Apprentices**  
**Forcing Children to MEMORIZE by Withholding Information from Them**  
**Prizing MEMORIZATION Over UNDERSTANDING**

**Think about every word through the eyes of SYLLABLE IDENTIFICATION:  
Fundamental Spelling and Reading Considerations Reside Therein.**



----- Original Message -----

From: "Mary"

To: "Joe Madsen" <[info@madsenmethod.com](mailto:info@madsenmethod.com)>

Sent: Friday, May 28, 2010 4:17 PM

Subject: Section 9 and 10: We do not retain information.

Hello Joe and Sharon,

We are finishing up Section 8 and will need book 9 starting August 1st when we start school again.

We are currently reviewing the material for the test in a couple of weeks. **I am concerned because we do not know by heart all the spelling rules, observations and limits.** I find them so confusing and difficult to teach that it makes the teaching/learning process frustrating.

**I have gone step by step to ensure that we understand, but we do not retain the information. My kids look at me in confusion when I ask them for an example.**

**I have to coach them with the examples you give and then and only then do they have an idea of what is expected.**

Is there an easier way to teach the spelling rules, observations and limits? What suggestions do you have? We cannot slow down any more than what we have, because we are already behind. I have begun to supplement with another spelling program in hopes the rules are easier to understand. Is there an easier way to teach this information?

Mary

**I first wrote this reply.**

----- Original Message -----

From: [Sharon Madsen](#)

To: [Mary](#)

**Sent:** Friday, May 28, 2010 10:51 PM

**Subject:** Understanding vs. Memorization, Guessing, and Frustration

Dear Mary,

Sounds like I haven't spoken with you about the way to think about, therefore teach, **Governing Concepts**. I surely wish I had. I hope this e-mail will make your task easier. I highlighted some parts of your previous e-mail (and copied them for my e-mail below).

I speak compassionately to you, for I see how frustrated you are. I also speak passionately about how you should think about this way of teaching. The difference between understanding and memorizing is critical to each child's success, and certainly, it is critical to your success too.

If a sound is within a syllable, **all you are asked to do is understand that!**

If a sound is at the beginning of a syllable or at the end of an internal syllable or at the end of a last syllable or in a Speechless e syllable ... the TEAM is asked to nod its collective four-member head and say, "Yep, I see that! I'm getting experience noting this sound in various positions in a syllable, and noting which phonogram I am using to spell it." That's a TEAM's job. And I know your children's TEAMS can do this!

You said...

**I am concerned because we do not know by heart all the spelling rules, observations and limits.**

**...we do not retain the information. My kids look at me in confusion when I ask them for an example.**

By "retain" do you mean "memorize?"

We wouldn't ask a plumber or an electrician to MEMORIZE his TOOLS, would we? However, we would expect him to UNDERSTAND their uses, right?

The goal NEVER is to **MEMORIZE** Governing Concepts. That's the rotten Phonics Philosophy of conditioned response visual memory instruction. It puts a premium on visual memorization, knowing **most** have trouble with it. Those who can as well as those who cannot memorize are controlled by the curriculum. On the one hand, it says, "You are a superior student!" On the other hand, it says, "You are an inferior student!" Education's special education diagnosticians carry it further. Their tests and reports say, "You are topnotch material!" or "You are inferior, period!" Special education is funded by these "inferior" students, and all because of a falsely promoted educational philosophy, that arbitrarily rewards natural, untaught talent! Madsen Method does not agree!!!!

Understanding goes a lot further than memorization, because **what is understood administers a far greater body of knowledge than that which can be memorized even by the best memorizer!** What we understand is remembered in precepts, not in visual representations. It is **precepts** that serve us when deliberating information about diverse matters! Consider this. When the TEAM has understood "something," and that "something" reappears, understanding holds the TEAM steady.

Many teachers become trapped, because educational dogma teaches them that memorization is a sign of understanding. It is not. Application is a sign of understanding. The result of prizing

memorization is that the teacher withholds guidance, and students, both those who do and do not have natural untaught visual talent, are forced to rely on visual memorization and guessing. But should not the result of teaching be that children understand TOOLS?"

I'd be frustrated too if I had to memorize all those Observations and Rules and Limits and Expectancies. I can't do it! But I can and do understand every one of them, and I know when I have to look up one of them. That's what I do. If I were your student, I'd ask you to bring them before me again so I could show I still understand them!

**Praise is given for understanding!** Here's an example of studying a Spelling Observation in relationship to a specific *speaking/spelling/pattern*, which is another name for a *syllable*.

I'm sure when on [page 8-102](#) you studied **Spelling Observation "Sound ou(out)"** of **Phonogram ou4** you understood every part of it. You studied:

"**Phonogram ou4** may spell 'sound ou(out)' at the beginning of a word, (you studied illustrative word "**out**")

within a one-syllable word, (you studied illustrative word "**shout**")

at the end of a syllable that is not a last syllable, (you studied illustrative word "**thousand**")

and with Speechless e." (you studied illustrative word "**house**")

You spoke and discerned and wrote **sound ou(out)** in each of these *speaking/spelling/patterns* and you UNDERSTOOD every bit of it!! **Praise is deserved!** I praise you!! I praise your children!! Yeah! You UNDERSTOOD! I do not extend praise for any rote memorization attempt!

If praise is dependent upon memorizing this Spelling Observation, I'm teaching no differently than the failed public schools and most private and home schools. But if I'm training students to understand, I'm doing it right. **Neurological memory** is based on understanding. Once the TEAM understands, it retains understanding, just as you pointed out in your letter when you said:

**I have to coach them with the examples you give and then and only then do they have an idea of what is expected.**

**This is how your studying should go!** How you describe what you have done in the preceding two short paragraphs is exactly the way to teach Spelling Rules, Observations and Limits! This is called "gaining experience." Moreover, a teacher is required while the student gains this experience! Students aren't expected to come up with examples. Examples are in the script, because even teachers need them, and students need a teacher...you! I say, **Mary, you did it right when you helped your children. However, you would not have done it right if you had flipped over to prizing memorization over guiding their understanding?**

This is how life is; this is life at work! When we encounter a situation we previously understood, we have an idea of what is expected. We couldn't possibly memorize all life throws at us. But we can understand principles and applications that carry us through! That's what these language studies do for us. However, you dare not leave your students without resources, thus making them memorize or guess. You are in the position to "supply all their needs" according to the information given in the script, and they will understand it. Whether the activity is daily work or summarizing or testing...you always must supply their need so, as your apprentices, they experience understanding in all situations.

I hope this makes you heave a sigh of relief, knowing that you are doing it right (when you provide examples in your studies). I also hope you let go of the idea that "memorizing has merit over understanding." It will settle each of you in your minds and hearts, because "understanding" is achievable, whereas memorizing is not. Also "understanding" will serve you, while memorization will limit you, since not all that should be known can be memorized. Also, children do not have a choice as to how or how much they can memorize, since this is determined by what they bring with them at birth. Finally, you must remember to "supply your children's knowledge-based needs." When you don't, you force them into trying to memorize, guessing, and unbearable frustration. That's just how forced memorization pans out.

Mary, I hope this e-mail relieves your mind and makes learning bearable, even restores the joy to it that should be there. Let me know if it does.

Love,

Sharon

**I followed up with this e-mail.**

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Sharon Madsen](#)

**To:** [Mary](#)

**Sent:** Saturday, May 29, 2010 2:00 PM

**Subject:** Something else for you

Hi, Mary,

I'm still thinking about (and loving) you and your children! And I want to do my job well too. I think you are very capable of instructing your children in Governing Concepts. I hope this second letter helps you zero in on how to achieve the goal.

You can give the children this #34 attachment, though there may be some *syllables* in it that contain phonograms they presently do not know. I also attached for your encouragement some **Letters to Teachers** which are on our web site: [www.madsenmethod.com](http://www.madsenmethod.com), **Letters to Teachers** link. **27 Letters** are posted so far.

Handout #34 is the mindset I wish you all to develop...the TEAM's approach to spelling and reading...how to think **about every word through the eyes of syllable identification**. Each sound, and each phonogram that may spell it, have a relationship with an identified syllable. It's called **syllable sense**! Phonograms give us **sound sense**, speaking and writing sentences give us **sentence sense**, but only spelling gives the TEAM **syllable sense**.

This is the **sensibility with syllables** we wish the TEAM to develop through studying *syllables*. Your children (and you also to a certain extent) are apprentices. They are not master spellers yet. So they require the master craftsman's (you along with the script) **presence** and **supervision** and **provision** as they gain experience. They need on-the-job-training! By the end of Part Two, they will be masterful at handling *syllables*! But, even then, as master craftsmen, they will seek help. However, by then they will have developed experience to the point they know when they do and when they do not need help plus how and where to obtain it. **By means of understanding, they will have purged themselves from guessing!**

The questions a TEAM should ever place before itself as it approaches spelling are:

Is this **speaking/spelling/pattern** made of one syllable or multi-syllables?

What are the sounds in each *syllable*?

What phonograms are available to spell each sound in each *syllable*...one *syllable* at a time?

The TEAM's experience with this unflinching thought process develops **neurological memory**, which is **grounded in understanding and applying TOOLS. THIS IS THE MEMORY** we wish to acquire! Governing Concepts are merely notations the TEAM makes about each sound and phonogram and syllable he studies. His TEAM files these experience-based truths for future reference; when he meets the same situation again, he has something to bring forth, with or without help at first, but after much experience, he will bring forth truth more readily, much as life brings forth and grows an understanding of truth! Life is not a memorized!

We wish to retain and hone understanding. Retaining data is not the same as retaining understanding. If one is able to retain columns and pages of data, he might do so without possessing understanding of it. I've seen it. I've done it! Students can regurgitate 100% of words and sentences they've memorized. However, when the need to show understanding arises, they cannot. The need to show understanding is defined as: Students are asked orally to apply meanings of words and sentences, or they are asked to recall and write words and sentences in a different setting from that which was present when they originally memorized the data.

Why not? **This is because they could "do without knowing" simply by using their natural visual and/or auditory memorizing talents.** This also is due to the method of instruction they were under, receiving instruction to half the members of their TEAMS. They were running on two, and sometimes, only one cylinder out of four! Neither did the curriculum require very much from them. It wouldn't dare! Too many already have failed its paltry requirements.

Maybe the #34 attached reference will be handy as you all zero in on its essence: **a sound in a specific position in relationship to a syllable plus phonogram(s) available to spell it, and choosing the correct one.** You make sure they use the correct one! But don't do their mental work for them. Require them to run all considerations past their TEAMS. This means talking and hearing, yes, but that's half the TEAM. They must become their TEAMS' chorale directors—as it were—conducting and seeing what they are talking about and hearing. If they don't, **neurological memory** will not develop. This is an upfront truth!

Well, let me know how you come along with instruction.

Again, love and prayers to you and the children,

Sharon

P.S. Thanks to Sherry Frattini for editing **Letters to Teachers**, thereby improving my understanding of the inseparable oral/ written English Grammar partnership.

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