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HANDBOOK



Welcome!

Thank you for considering me to work with your child on their language literacy.

My first job would be to establish a bond of trust and build a safe space where your child will feel seen and heard. Students who struggle with their reading and writing often suffer a great deal of educational trauma in our school system. Part of my job is to help them begin to have positive learning experiences around their literacy work.

As they begin to feel safe with me, we will start exploring the amazing world of spelling, reading and writing in English.



Kate McQuiggan

Approach

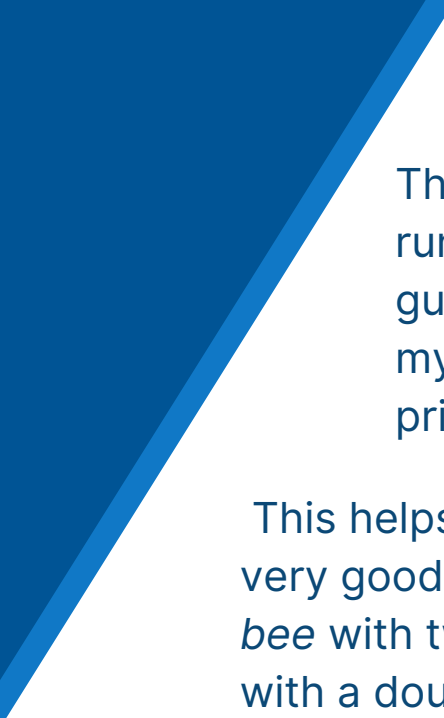
How will you be teaching my child to read and spell?

I use a multi-pronged approach to teaching spelling, reading and writing. I have learned that my students thrive best when I do not try to separate into individual silos the many elements of language literacy – reading, reading comprehension, fluency, background knowledge, vocabulary, writing, grammar, syntax and spelling (which includes orthography, morphology, phonology & etymology). These elements are intertwined and reinforce one another when they are taught in tandem.

In order to teach these skills in an integrated manner, I have trained in multiple teaching methods and studied many facets of literacy and language. I am not limited by adherence to one methodology or approach. I have a wide array of tools to draw on and when faced with each individual student's needs, I can pick the right tool for the job.

If a student is struggling with mapping their letter-sound relationships, I use my training in Structured Literacy to help them. We use a systematic approach to learning the essential letter-sound relationships in English and work together to build an understanding of why so many letters, and groups of letters, in English write more than one sound. I help student's build their decoding and fluency skills.

While we do this, I am also using my training in Word Inquiry to help my students understand that all words have a structure (they are built from morphemes) and we explore how the phonology of words fit into that structure. This builds their understanding of English spelling (encoding) which we practice through word sums, dictations, and sentence writing



There is also a larger structure that can be seen running throughout English spelling. There are guiding principles that we can uncover. Together, my students and I explore how these guiding principles apply across the entire writing system.

This helps students to understand not only that there is a very good reason for why we spell *be* with one <e> and *bee* with two, it is also the same reason why we spell *egg* with a double <g> and *such* with a <ch> instead of a <tch>. Thus, students develop tools that help them spell many words instead of learning to spell one word at a time.

The basic morphemes in words are bases, suffixes and prefixes. So in order to study the structure of words, we have to discuss the parts of speech. This means grammar is a natural part of our studies.

The parts of speech are the building blocks of sentences. You have to know what jobs words can do in a sentence, in order to really understand how sentences work. A student's syntactic skill is their awareness and understanding of the ways words and phrases are organized into sentences. Written text is entirely unlike spoken language with respect to its syntactic complexity. I therefore explicitly teach syntax to my students in order to build their understanding of complex sentence structure. This, in turn, builds both their writing skills and their reading comprehension.

All this takes time and I work at each student's individual pace. I let our work move at the rate of their growing understanding. Parents are linked to all our working documents, are sent pdfs of each week's work and so are able to see what we are doing during every lesson.

Do you use a curriculum or “sequence”?

Word Inquiry (WI) believes that learning is cumulative rather than linear. While the approach involves make many spelling concepts and conventions explicit, they do not follow a specific sequence. By studying the English language, your student will encounter the same concepts and conventions repeatedly in their investigations and, ultimately, integrate that understanding into their long-term knowledge.

Structured Literacy (SL) believes that teaching must not only be explicit but it must also be sequential, each small understanding building on the last. It therefore follows a very specific sequence. It also follows a mastery model in which the student must show mastery of each level before moving onto the next one in the sequence.

Combining these two approaches obviously has its challenges. I no longer follow an explicit SL scope and sequence. However, I assess my students for gaps in their knowledge of letter-sound relationships and I use many of the SL methods to help my students fill those gaps. I have developed my own rough sequence for moving through learning the basics of English phonology, orthography (spelling), grammar, and syntax which form the core knowledge my students need. While all my students will learn the same core concepts and conventions, they learn them in a slightly different sequence, or at a slightly different pace, depending on their needs and abilities.

I do not work on a mastery model. I will not require your child to master a particular concept or convention before we move on to another. Because I integrate so many different elements of literacy into my lessons at the same time, and because the different elements bootstrap and reinforce one another, students will keep coming across, and practising, the same ideas at many different points in our lessons.

Lessons

What would a typical lesson look like?

I do not have a set structure for each lesson because I use a combination of child-led inquiry and direct instruction in my lessons. I believe strongly in child-centred learning, and I tailor my lessons to the learning needs of each individual student. Each lesson is based on the work done in the prior lesson. This allows me to build on new discoveries or pivot in new directions depending on where the student's learning is taking us.

However, there *are* 7 areas of language literacy that I focus on with my students: spelling, phonology, reading, fluency, grammar, syntax, and writing. For a period of time, I may focus on only one or two of these areas of literacy because that is what my student needs. Nevertheless, I am always keeping all 7 areas in mind and working towards my student's growing proficiency in all of them.

In terms of skills, I work with my students on spelling (encoding), reading (decoding and reading comprehension), fluency, grammar and syntax, sentence writing, background knowledge and vocabulary building. When and how this gets done in each lesson and across the months, varies with each individual student. While I do use dictation, much of the necessary repetition and review is done through games and more lively activities.



Feedback

How will I know how my child is doing?

My students do handwritten work as well as work on the computer. Copies of all of their work is documented and kept in a google slides document. You are given the link to this document at the beginning of every term.

In addition, at the end of each week, I will send you a pdf of the slides where I have recorded the work from our lessons that week. These slides include my notes so you can follow along with the work we are doing.

I meet with parents at the end of each term (December, March and June) to discuss what we have covered in the past term, what I have observed about your child's learning (both their progress and what needs work) and my plans for the upcoming term.

I am always available for meetings with parents and, if I have any concerns that cannot wait until end-of-term reports, I contact parents to set up meetings.

Parent's Role

From the moment I begin working with your child, we are a team. You know your child better than anyone and working collaboratively with you is the best way for me to provide your child with the support they need.

I am happy for parents to sit in on my lessons, but I do ask that they stay quiet and let their child do the talking. It is important for the student to make their own discoveries and for the lesson to be guided by the student's learning and interests.

Will there be homework after every lesson?



I prefer not to give students homework as I do not like to intrude upon their family time.

However, there is substantial research supporting the value of both retrieval practice and repeated reading in supporting learning. So there may be times when I will ask students to re-read sentences or paragraphs on a daily basis, or practice certain skills at regular intervals during our work together.

As a parent, what can I do to help?

Please ensure that your child is at my house, or logged into the computer, on time. My students are booked with only a small window in-between so I cannot extend your lesson time.

For online lessons, your child will need to have access to a laptop. A tablet or phone will *not* be sufficient as my lessons are interactive and require your child to be able to manipulate objects on the screen. They cannot do this when using a tablet or phone. A strong wifi connection is also essential so that we can see and hear each other clearly during the lesson.

If we are working online, please ensure that your child has a reasonably quiet environment to work in. It will help if outside distractions (people moving through the room or calling to one another, pets going in and out, etc) are kept to a minimum.





There will be times when your child will need pen and paper to complete an activity during our online lesson. Please ensure that your child has a notebook (or binder) dedicated to our lessons that they have ready for each online lesson. For in-person lessons, I will provide all necessary writing supplies.

I am happy to have children snack during our lessons. Food is fuel for the brain and kids cannot concentrate if they are hungry.

Fidget toys and room to move (if they need it) are always helpful for students who struggle with attention issues and are welcome at our online lessons. If you are unsure as to what kind of fidget toys might work for your child, I am happy to discuss some inexpensive possibilities that you can try. There are also some great ways to build movement into our lessons that don't necessarily require a lot of space, such as using a stability ball for a chair.

For In-person students, I have plenty of fidget toys available but students are also welcome to bring their own. I build movement breaks into our lessons and use a lot of games to make the necessary repetition and review more engaging.

For the most part, I hope that working with me will begin to relieve the pressure on you rather than increase it!



Fees

My current hourly rate is \$100/hour. I use a “tuition model” that employs an equal payment plan. The cost for all your child’s lessons for the entire year is added up and then divided by the number of months in the school year (Sept-June), giving you equal payments each month.

This means that you won’t get the sudden high cost created by months with more lessons (such as November and May). These will be evened out by combining them with the months that have fewer lessons (such as December and March). You will be able to plan your expenses more easily because **your monthly payment for tutoring will always be the same.**

This payment plan is **not an obligation to work together and does not require an advance commitment of ten months.**

Most families work with me for the full year, but if for any reason this tutoring relationship is not feeling like a good fit, either of us can choose to discontinue the lessons.

I have provisions in place for monthly make-up lessons in the event of unavoidable cancellations. These will be explained in detail when we set up the equal payment plan.

I send invoices at the beginning of the month and payment can be made via e-transfer. I provide monthly receipts and, if requested, can provide an annual receipt as well.

I do not teach during the summer months. I have found that with so many inevitable interruptions (summer camp, family holidays, etc) we are not able to achieve the consistency necessary for learning.



Any more questions?

I hope this handbook has answered any questions you still had about your child's upcoming work with me. If not, please, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

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