

Gallego Beats The Odds

On May 1, the students and staff at Gallego Basic Elementary School were awarded a Certificate of Achievement by Arizona State School Superintendent Tom Horne. Horne told the special assembly convened for the occasion:

“Test results show the Gallego Basic Elementary School to be the best school in the state for teaching English language learners. We did a study measuring the percentage of students who were classified as English language learners in 2003, and who passed all three AIMS tests in English in 2005. The Gallego Basic Elementary School was first in the state, with 84% passing all three tests. Simultaneously, the Morrison Institute did a study, using totally different criteria. Their study (*Why Some Schools with Latino Children BEAT THE ODDS ... and Others Don't*) was for schools with high percentages of Latinos, not limited to English language learners, and measured third grade reading and eighth grade math scores on the Stanford 9 test, entirely different tests and less subjects than used by the Department. Again, the Gallego Basic Elementary School came out on top.”

Historical perspective

Gallego probably would not exist today had it not been for the determined efforts of Maria Mendoza and a group (Mexican Americans for Quality Education) of other Hispanic parents in Tucson, AZ. When their request for a back-to-basics school using Spalding was denied, they took the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) to federal court on the grounds that Hispanic children in experimental bilingual programs were not receiving an equal education. The year was 1978.

Specifically, the parents wanted their children to learn English; they wanted them out of bilingual programs that were

not accomplishing that goal, and they wanted them in Spalding.

Despite opposing testimony from TUSD and leading whole language advocates, the judge ruled for the parents. They could have one Spalding classroom. A study in which the performance of Spalding-taught students was compared to control groups confirmed the parents' wisdom.

Inspired by these events, a back-to-basics school was organized in a mostly Hispanic area of the Sunnyside Unified School District with Spalding as its language arts program. That school was Gallego. (By 1983, Spalding had mostly disappeared in TUSD.)

Recipe for success

SEI is thrilled that the students and staff at Gallego have received the recognition they deserve. In his congratulatory message, Supt. Horne recommended:

“To succeed in bringing academic success to English language learners, schools around the state should copy the methods used by the Gallego Basic Elementary School: English immersion, uniforms, homework, parental involvement, emphasis on academics, and the other traditional methods of a traditional school. It is an honor to have the opportunity to present an achievement certificate to this outstanding school that should be a model for other schools throughout the state.”

The Morrison Institute was more specific: "At Gallego Basic Elementary School, a set of interlocking practices are designed to create a continuous process of customizing instruction. The school uses the Spaulding (sic) Method, a diagnostic method that focuses on elementary-level reading and encourages individual educational approaches. As part of the Spaulding (sic) Method, assessments are done weekly and monthly."



The study used eight years (1997 to 2004) of Stanford 9 test scores to identify 12 schools that showed either steady performance or steady improvement in key measures.


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The Spalding News

In 1986, Romalda B. Spalding established the Spalding Education Foundation (now Spalding Education International, or SEI) to perpetuate her Method, and to maintain the principles and procedures which have made *The Spalding Method* so effective.

Through ongoing professional development, SEI provides the highest quality literacy instruction to public, private and home educators, and ultimately to all students. Today, SEI trains teachers and accredits schools in *The Spalding Method*, which continues to be validated by current research about the way children learn.

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Correction:

In last issue's Q&A we got our hands mixed up in the answer to the first question. The last sentence of the answer should have read, "For words with more syllables, cross your *right* arm over your *left*."

Q Why do you skip a line in the spelling notebook to write a base word, then go above it to write the word with an ending? For example, *sincerely* and *sincere*.

A Brackets are used to show relationships among words. In your example, *sincere* is the base word so it is dictated before the Ayres word *sincerely*. The Ayres word is always in the order of frequency. (See WRTR 47 for a detailed explanation.)

Q How many times do you have children mark their spelling words? I have them mark them in the notebooks. Do I need to have them mark the words more than once?

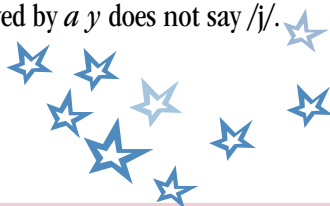
A That depends on the time of instruction and word difficulty. At the beginning of instruction, children may need to say, write, and mark words more than once to learn the marking system. When children know the marking system, select one or two words that have unusual or difficult markings for them to practice after spelling dictation.

Q When should rule pages be completed?

A Rule pages are entered in the spelling/vocabulary notebook in the first half of third grade. The new *Teachers' Guides* sequence Rule Page introduction into each grade level's objectives so children are taught and practice the rule prior to applying it in the Ayres Word List.

Q In Rule 3, it looks like *g* MAY say /g/ if it is followed by *e* and *i*. Leaving out the *y* indicates *g* MUST say its second sound if it is followed by *y*. Is that correct?

A No. WRTR 223 says, "The letter *g* before *e*, *i*, or *y* may say *j*, but followed by any other letter says /g/. The dictionary shows a few medical terms in which the *g* followed by *a y* does not say /j/."



Gallego (Continued from page 2)

Of the six characteristics found to be common to all "beat the odds schools," three are embedded in *The Spalding Method*: concern for every student, on-going assessment, and diagnostic teaching. The other factors are related to school organization. (See page 7.)

Editor's Note:

Many thanks to Maria Mendoza of Tucson, AZ for refreshing the memory of your Spalding News Editor of these long ago events.

In a phone interview, Maria expressed her appreciation of Bettina Rubicam, (see page 3 of this newsletter) and Romalda Spalding for all they did to help Mexican American parents obtain quality education for their children. Maria said she cannot remember how many times she took the Spalding course so she could help in the classroom, but her daughter, who was five at the time, learned to read by listening to her mother practice the phonograms!

Kindergartners Explain Quality Literature

Thanks to Sharon Malone, Principal of Valley Academy (Phx.) for sharing.

Sharon visited Shirley Leach's kindergarten class and asked if anyone could name one of the attributes of quality literature. These were their responses:

The first child called upon chose *universality* and defined it as, "That means that if anyone anywhere in the world would read the book, they would understand all the feelings."

The next child explained *precise language*. "It means using good words to describe something." When asked if the sentence, "He has a big dog," was a good example, the response was "no." "He has a big, black dog with floppy ears," received a "yes".

Child number three named and defined *insight*. "That means you learn how and why people act as they do."

Isn't it amazing what Spalding-taught children can do!

