



# *the* Spalding NEWS

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**Spalding Education**  
INTERNATIONAL

## *A Sign of the Times*



*Spalding now has a sign to call its own! Spalding can no longer be mistaken for an Allstate adjunct.*

Now that we are finally accustomed to writing 2008 on our documents, we look back at 2007 with both affection and fatigue. It was quite a year!

Not only did we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of WRTR, (in conjunction with the May Spalding Seminar), but we relocated our offices, added staff, and saw the first year (kindergarten) of a 4-year Arizona State University study of *The Spalding Method* completed with positive results. And that was just for openers.

In 2007 Spalding won approval as a

core reading program in Idaho (following Arizona approval in 2006), and completed *Introduction to Spalding*, a new course for parents with children in Spalding schools (for more about the course see page 5).

A 12-minute Spalding overview was filmed in a Spalding classroom, put on DVD, and made available free of charge to those interested in knowing more about Spalding. It has been posted on our web page.

Spalding Teachers' Guides 4, 5, and 6 were added to the K-3 Guides completed in 2006. The Guides are a significant achievement and the result of hours of exacting work

*(Continued on Page 4.)*

# "Fixing" No Child Left Behind

Those in the front lines of the reading wars welcomed NCLB as a sign that sanity was finally going to prevail. Here, at last, was official recognition that learning the sounds of the letters was the bedrock upon which all reading instruction should be built.

NCLB was also enthusiastically hailed by those who despaired of the education establishment's ever reforming itself, despite well-documented achievement declines. After decades of throwing money at education in the hope that improvement would follow, NCLB mandated accountability. Schools would be required to show that the money they received actually accomplished the purposes for which it was spent.

## Disappointing results

In order to get congressional approval of a law which intruded deeply into classrooms, the states would create their own tests to determine whether students achieved proficiency on state standards.

A Fordham Foundation study of tests in 26 states revealed significant differences in the levels of difficulty of both state standards and state tests. Instead of doing away with the "soft bigotry of low expectations," NCLB created an incentive system that had the opposite effect. To avoid public embarrassment, loss of jobs and school closures, many states lowered standards and passing scores on tests which were often revised to allow more students to be deemed proficient.<sup>1</sup>

Standardized tests were an early casualty of NCLB. Although much favored by parents for revealing how their students compared with peers around the country, (and how good a job local schools were doing), standardized tests were dropped in favor of state tests of dubious veracity.

Once again the pesky law of unintended consequences trumped good intentions. As John Merrow, education journalist

and Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wrote in a recent issue of *Education Week*,<sup>2</sup>

"...the federal law encourages statistical manipulations that make reports of academic progress suspect, and, in many cases, virtually meaningless."

## Finding solutions

If NCLB is going to be reauthorized, Congress will have to deal with these and other problems spawned by NCLB. Merrow summed up the problem, "Congress is between a rock and a hard place. If it closed the loopholes, someone in Washington would have to police all 15,000 school districts. Does anyone want the U.S. Secretary of Education to be the nation's school superintendent? On the other hand, not closing the loopholes breeds cynicism, hypocrisy and disrespect for the law."

In its present form, NCLB is the most massive expansion of federal control over education in the nation's history. Congressional fixes could expand federal control even further.

## Constitution as archaic

The once hallowed concept of local and state control over education is being argued away by those who say it has outlived its usefulness. According to this view, an inadequate public education system is causing the US to lose its competitive position in the world and only Washington has the muscle to improve it. Perhaps for the first time, national standards, national tests and a national curriculum are being seriously considered.

The nation's founders did not include education in the carefully limited duties of the federal government. Education was left to the state and local levels because deciding what and how children learn is a product of people's values, and people and values differ.



## Some things don't change

It is true that many things have changed since 1776, but American diversity isn't one of them. If anything, the case can be made that societal divisions have deepened.

### 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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The news on any given day illustrates the point. Most recently, an *Ethnic Studies* program in Tucson, AZ is causing an uproar. Critics describe the program as anti-Western, hostile to the United States, and sending the message to Mexican-American students that "they should be angry and rise up." District defenders insist that the program improves achievement and students' sense of self-worth.<sup>3</sup>

The debate over evolution and intelligent design is old news and on-going in South Carolina where a furor erupted over the content of middle school biology books.<sup>4</sup>

The dispute over sex education recently reached a new level of intensity in California where the battle over SB 777 is raging. Dan Walters of the *Sacramento Bee* summarized the problem of political intrusion in education.<sup>5</sup>

"Setting aside, for the moment, the underlying philosophical conflict, SB 777 is another troublesome step down the slippery slope of politics dictating what version of history and current events children should be taught."

Centralizing control over education in Washington doesn't mean these disputes will fade away. It is too great a leap of faith to believe that the many education lobbies, teacher unions, universities, and other special interest groups will quietly fade away.

The education establishment's longstanding attachment to fads and social engineering increases the likelihood that altercations would move to the national stage.

It is one thing if flawed programs and misguided ideas are imposed upon some districts or even some states. It is far more serious if the entire nation is dragged along, with the outcome depending upon how the political winds blow and what group is empowered to impose its views on the rest of the country.

Believing that transferring control to Washington will raise standards and

improve achievement, as Samuel Johnson once famously said of second marriages, "represents the triumph of hope over experience."

### Another way

An article in the December 5, 2007 issue of *Education Week*<sup>6</sup> argues that "states and communities can accomplish more." The article cites Kentucky's citizen-driven comprehensive school reforms accomplished by focusing on research and achievement data.

Keeping authority in the states allows them to be the laboratories of reform many had become even before NCLB.

Harvard economist Caroline M. Hoxby examined three examples in her 2001 study, *The Rising Tide*.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, Hoxby examined the impact of competition on public schools.

She looked at the achievement gains of public schools that lost 6 percent or more of their enrollment to charter schools. She compared their gains with that of public schools in less competitive environments.

The study focused on achievement trends in locales where charters have captured significant market share, Milwaukee, Arizona, and Michigan.

She found that where public schools face high levels of competition, gains in 4th-grade reading scores were four times larger than those of public schools in less competitive environments. Academic gains were three times larger in 4th-grade mathematics, seven times larger in 7th-grade reading, and three times larger in 7th-grade mathematics.

Hoxby writes, "The findings presented here consistently show public schools' responding favorably to competition. In Milwaukee, schools facing more competition from vouchers improved at rates faster than schools facing little or no competition from vouchers. Public schools in Michigan and Arizona began improving at faster rates after they lost significant

shares of their enrollment to charter schools. It is risky to extrapolate from these short-term results, but the long term results found in my studies of traditional competition among districts and between public and private schools seem to confirm that competition is in general good for the public schools."

She concludes,

"To place the influence of competition on school performance in perspective, if every school in the nation were to face a high level of competition both from other districts and from private schools, the productivity of America's schools, in terms of students' level of learning at a given level of spending, would be 28 percent higher than it is now."

Incremental approaches to reform are not likely to satisfy those impatient for grand measures and grand solutions. For that reason alone they are a good deal safer.

1. "Do State Tests Make the Grade," *Arizona Capitol Times*, 1/25/08
2. "Learning Without Loopholes," *Education Week* 12/5/08
3. "Ethnic Studies Program at Tucson High School, Part II," *AZ Republic*, 2/23/08
4. "S.C. OKs Textbook After Heated Evolution Debate," *Education Week*, 1/16/08
5. "Gay Rights Duel Heads to Voters," *Sacramento Bee* 12/2/07
6. "Reform and the Dynamics of Governance," *Education Week*, 12/5/7
7. Winter 2001 / *Education Next* pp. 69-74.



## A Sign of the Times (continued from page 1)

by Spalding staff and the Curriculum Development Committee.

The *Spalding Word Analysis* CD was completed in 2007 and put in inventory in 2008. Judging by the number of orders received, this is a popular resource for teachers and a much needed time saver for teachers and home educators.

The *Comprehension Strategies* DVD was also completed in 2007 and made available in 2008. The four chapters format makes it possible to watch each step of teaching text structure and comprehension strategies. We expect this 60-minute DVD to become a standard professional development tool as well as sought by home educators who want to know more about teaching comprehension.

The Spalding Store was also added to the web site in 2008, enabling customers to use their credit cards on line to order instructional materials.

Our hard working Director of Outreach and Marketing, Jim Sexton, found time to provide an alignment of *The Spalding Method* with the K-3 Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho Language Arts Standards and the Arizona 4-6 Standards. The alignment shows *The Method* not only meets these state standards, but exceeds them. The Arizona alignment was added to our web site along with the Spalding alignment to *Arizona Science and Social Studies Standards* (now required of language arts programs by the Arizona Department of Education).

In 2007, Jim began work on aligning Spalding with Utah and Texas state standards. When completed they also will be posted on our web site.

The *Effective Spalding Coaching* Course (featured in the last issue of *Spalding News*) is another project

introduced in 2007. The advantages of effective coaching have recently been prominent in news about education. Education economist Eric A. Hanushek reanalyzed data from Washington state and found that \$100 spent on classroom coaches would result in about six times the learning gains from those realized by class-size reduction.

Hanushek was cited in an *Education Week* article entitled "Coaching Teachers to Help Students Learn."\* Discussing professional development, the article pointed out that "Workshops and courses ... don't come close to doing the job. The assistance has to be sustained, and as much a part of teachers' daily work as possible."

A letter to the editor following the *Education Week* article stated, "If schools and districts are truly committed to improving the quality of teaching and leadership in their schools, on-site coaching of educators is a powerful professional-development strategy."

According to one director of professional development, with old style professional development "there really isn't any transfer to the actual classroom ... But to have a person on-site, able to do problem-solving right there and part of the same community - we thought that was the most cost-effective way to build capacity."


We couldn't have said it any better. That is the reason Spalding Accredited Schools are required to have one Spalding Certified Teacher at every grade level and one Spalding Certified Teacher Instructor on-site for on-going professional development.

Although the *Education News* article mentioned the importance of coaches trained in content areas and noted that

they "have to be screened for quality" little mention was made of the kind of training coaches should receive.

Coaches must certainly be well versed in content, but they also have to be able to gauge the receptivity of individual teachers and craft their approach accordingly. The focus of *Effective Spalding Coaching* is on the "people skills" that are needed.

2007 was a productive year by any standard, arguably the most productive since SEI's inception. Dr. Mary North, Director of Research and Curriculum, Associate Director Janie Carnal, Assistant to the Director, Betty Henson and the rest of the Curriculum Development Committee deserve a hearty round of applause.

The pace continues in 2008 with the same cast hard at work on a new course, *Spalding for Home Educators*. 

\* *Education Week* 12/12/2007

*Answers to word game on page 7.*

1. helm, 2. gusty, 3. country, 4. Spine, 5. Belfry, 6 carpet, 7. balder.

From *The Game of Words* by Willard R. Espy, Bramhall House, N.Y. 1971 p.28.



# Spalding Parents go to School

All parents want their children to succeed in school, and it was with that thought in mind that a *Parents Introduction to Spalding* was developed. Realizing that time is precious to both teachers and parents, the course takes only 10 hours and those hours can be arranged at the site as convenient.

From the teacher's point of view, the course takes little prep time since everything, from the instructor's script to the parent binders, are provided by SEI.

Teachers report that they love getting to know parents and helping them attain the knowledge and skills necessary to support students at home.



Parents like the assurance that the instructor is fully qualified (certified by SEI) and that the course has been written by SEI.

Administrators find that not only does student achievement improve, but parents who have taken the course are much more involved with and supportive of the school.



Village Christian School (VCS) in California held the first 10-hour *Parents Introduction to Spalding* course during five weeks in October and November of 2007. Twenty-five VCS parents participated.

We are indebted to David Vegas, Principal of Village Christian Elementary School, for sharing these photographs and a parent's review of the course.



To say that the course was well received seems an understatement. Here is the parent's review.

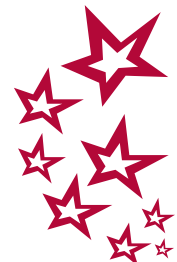
Mrs. Lori Battle wrote,

"This is my daughter's first year at VCS and when her teacher mentioned there would be a parent's course, I immediately signed up for it. Taking the parent Spalding class was one of the best decisions I could have made for my child. Not only was I able to learn the fundamentals of *The Spalding Method*, but I was able to work with my daughter on her phonograms at home.

The classes were taught in great detail and every parent received a binder that covered all course materials and a set of phonogram cards for practicing. There was a lot of review of the coursework and every parent was able to ask ample questions during the classes.

The instructor for the class was simply great! She was extremely knowledgeable about *The Spalding Method*, and she gave every parent the opportunity to practice reading, writing, and spelling the phonograms during the classroom instruction. One of the best parts of the class was working in pairs pronouncing different groups of phonograms. The class was so much fun and encouraging that I found it hard to part at the end of each session.

The class was incredible and I'm extremely glad that I decided to take the course. I would strongly recommend it to any parent who has a child learning phonograms at their school."★



# Spalding in Australia

## Education Revolution Begins

by Michael Byrne

The recent national election in Australia saw a change in government with the Labor Party winning power and its energetic leader, Kevin Rudd, becoming the country's new Prime Minister. In Mr Rudd's words, one policy that remains 'front and centre' of Labor's election platform was its promise to implement an 'Education Revolution.' The change of government was widely-expected, and perhaps because of this, its key policy announcements including the 'Education Revolution,' were subject to a greater than normal level of scrutiny.

However, despite the election rhetoric, education was not a central issue in the campaign. Political analysts largely agree that the issues of economic management, climate change and unpopular labour laws energized the voters. Nonetheless, proponents of the 'Education Revolution' continually talked it up as evidence of plans for a brighter and better future for the nation.

So, exactly what does the revolution entail? Will it prove to be a watershed in education or, as some critics have suggested, just catchy election puffery?

The main planks of the policy (so far) include a 'digital revolution' that will make computers available to every secondary school child in Yr 9-12, a focus on teaching trade skills within schools and 'a commitment to lift school standards.' The latter focuses on accountability, consistency, and improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

The policy commitments outlined in the media release include:

1. 'Greater accountability through easy to understand reports for parents, national testing and the introduction of annual reports comparing the performance of schools.

2. Improved quality of teaching.
3. A focus on the basics – reading, writing, arithmetic and computer skills.
4. A focus on the early years – intervening early.
5. The development of individual learning plans.
6. The development of a national curriculum - and an uncluttered primary school curriculum.'

The paper goes on to say that 'Children should learn how to spell rather than relying on a spell check' and 'All children should be able to write in sentences and use a comma or an apostrophe properly.' Tellingly, the policy paper doesn't set out how children should be taught these critical skills.

US readers of this newsletter may recall that in 2005 the Australian Federal Government conducted the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*. Like the *National Reading Panel* report in the US, the Australian inquiry's report supported the teaching of phonics using integrated language approaches and stressed the importance of teacher training.

Sadly, the Inquiry became highly politicized and was swept up in broader ideological battles between the state and federal governments. Education Minister, Dr. Brendan Nelson, the report's chief sponsor, moved to the Defence portfolio shortly after the findings were handed down and his successor, Julie Bishop made little progress. Nelson is now the Opposition Leader and Bishop his part deputy so there is a chance that their interest in literacy will be re-kindled.

It remains to be seen where the Rudd Government stands on the issue of



methodology and if it would be prepared to tackle the state education authorities and the powerful education unions, or will it let them set the agenda.

On the positive side, Prime Minister Rudd claims to be passionate about education, he has an intellectual pedigree and, importantly, he earned a reputation for taking a results-driven, managerial approach while working as a technocrat in the Queensland state government.

As far as action on the ground is concerned, there has been progress. The Government appointed Professor Barry McGaw to head its new National Curriculum Board. McGaw has an academic research pedigree and has previously worked with the OECD and the Australian Council for Education Research. By sheer coincidence within days of McGaw's appointment, two economists from the Australian National University released research that suggested "over the past three to four decades, neither literacy nor numeracy have improved, and may even have declined slightly". This study was based on OECD results for 13-yr and 14-yr old students.

So, the revolution has begun, but it remains to be seen where the major battlegrounds will lie and how the sides will line up. ★



**Q** Re the First-Grade Teacher's Guides, I've been teaching my son 30 words per week. We learn 10 new words and then quiz on the previous 10 words each day. At the end of 30 words, I've been testing on all 30 words. Should I test all 30 or just the ones that were spelled incorrectly on the previous quizzes?

**A** Testing all 30 words on the weekly test helps to ensure that the child has committed the spellings to long-term memory. The procedures for Daily and Weekly Assessments are found on pages 10-11 of the Assessing section of the Teacher Guide.

**Q** I am stressing over how to approach the word list for first grade beginning with K. These words are not expected to be mastered, but I/P. I can see how you would want to dictate and practice writing and using them. Would you test on them though? Wouldn't that set the child up for discouragement?

**A** Don't be worried. We have found that first-grade children can easily write Sections A- N in their spelling/vocabulary notebook. It is true they may not master every word, but we encourage you to assess their progress daily, weekly, and monthly. (See either the Spelling Assessment Manual pages 7-11 or the Assessing section of the First-Grade Teacher Guide pages 9-13). Daily assessing helps you identify which phonograms/rules need to be re-taught. Weekly assessment helps you know which words are committed to long-term memory and which phonograms and rules need to be re-taught the next week. You will be amazed at how many words

they can read fluently and how many they can spell.

**Q** I know this is the point I begin the spelling lists, but do I keep teaching the additional phonograms. I have read and re-read WRTR and have read through the *Spelling Assessment Manual* once, but don't remember seeing the answer to this question when I wasn't looking!

**A** Teach the first 45 phonograms (needed for writing Sections A-G) before beginning dictation in the primary spelling notebook. Teach all concepts listed on Preparation for Dictation in the Spelling/Vocabulary Notebook (WRTR 46-47) before starting spelling dictation. Continue introducing four new phonograms each day just before OPR, WPR, and spelling dictation. After you begin dictation of Sections A-G, use the daily and weekly assessment directions on pages 7-10 in the *Spelling Assessment Manual* (SAM). After your children have written Sections A-G in their notebooks, begin monthly assessments using the *Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale*. See directions beginning on page 11 of SAM. Good luck and let us

know how your children progress.

**Q** I am using the fourth grade level guide. I have a question about how I should implement the two parts of Spalding objective 6. Please explain exactly how to teach each part of the objective. I know that the first part is word analysis and the second part is check application.

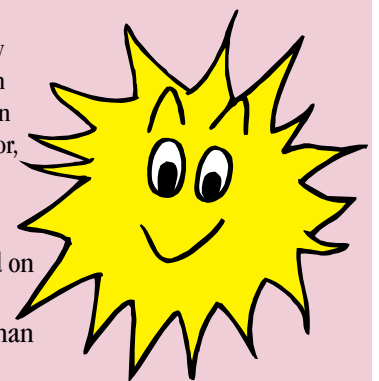
**A** Yes. The first part of Objective 6 is word analysis which means students orally explain (in whole group) syllable division, pronunciation, spelling, or marking of selected words from the week's spelling list. Example: On day 1 of Week 25, you might ask children to explain syllable division, pronunciation, spelling, or marking of two words: *frequency* and *gradually*. You might have the boys think about the spelling and marking and girls think about syllable division and pronunciation. After a few minutes, call on individual children to orally explain. One student response might sound like this: "In *frequency*, we underline the first *e* because it ends the syllable." Each day you have them analyze different words in the list.

In the second part of Objective 6, Check Application, children independently syllabicate or mark a few words. This enables you to assess whether they understand the concepts. ☆

*Editors Note:*

A delightful book entitled *The Game of Words* recently came my way. Your students may enjoy playing with words, too. Here's an example. The author writes that an "infinite variety of words can be created by adding words or letters to existing words or letter or, contrawise, subtracting."

1. Add a tree to *b*: may your sloop answer to its \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Drop the *n* from gun; add a home for swine; better hold on to your hat.
3. Drop the *t* from count; add effort; it has less pollution than the city.
4. Add a tree to *s*; often mine needs stiffening.
5. Drop the final *l* from bell and add to cook in hot fat, not ordinarily in a church tower.
6. Take your dog in your automobile, and you have a floor covering.
7. Add a tree to *b*, and it shows you are no longer a youth: but you can't do much about it.



Answers on page 4.

# Research Tidbits From Around the Country

**L**earning "improves dramatically among young children who take the time to explain academic concepts to their mothers or who explain their logic aloud to themselves."

Such was the finding of a study\* conducted by a team of researchers at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

The subjects of the study were 4- and 5-year-olds, but Mrs. Spalding believed that all students benefit when they articulate concepts they have learned. Experience convinced her that it clarifies student thinking and anchors the new learning in long-term memory.

That is why articulation has always been an important part of *The Spalding Method*. ★

\*Researchers Examine the Importance of Learning From Explaining," *Education Week*, 1/30/08



**T**he following excerpts are from the Executive Summary of a report commissioned by the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy in North Carolina.\* This paper examines a major problem found in the University of North Carolina system and education schools around the country.

"Most people believe that the purpose of schools is to ensure that young people learn the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in life.

"Accordingly, they expect teachers to impart skills and knowledge to their students. The objective of our teachers, first and foremost, should be their students' academic achievement. That view, however, is not generally accepted in schools of education, where the great majority of teachers receive their training. The philosophy that dominates schools of education—in North Carolina and across the nation—stresses the importance

of objectives other than academic achievement, such as building self-esteem and multicultural awareness.

"The dominant 'progressive/constructivist' philosophy in education schools leads to teacher training that prescribes a student-centered classroom where the teacher's role is to serve mainly as a facilitator for student-directed learning ...Unfortunately, the progressive/constructivist approach is markedly inferior to traditional, 'teacher-centered' pedagogy, particularly when it comes to teaching students important skills like reading and math...

"Consequently, students taught by teachers who have absorbed that approach are unlikely to progress as fast or as far as they would if their teachers were more appropriately trained..." ★

\* *UNC Education Schools: Helping or Hindering Potential Teachers?* by George K. Cunningham  
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Take The Writing Road  
to Reading success