

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

### SYMBALOO!

One of the newest additions to the website is Symbaloo! This is a collection of links that take you to websites commonly used by us elementary teachers. I am currently working on one for students (K-2) and elementary parents. You are more than welcome to pass along the link to anyone!

<https://www.symbaloo.com/mix/departmentofprimaryed>



### CALLING ALL BLOGGERS

The main Concept Schools website is starting a new student blogging initiative! We are looking for student bloggers to share their perspective, explore their creative writing, and engage our community online. Concept Schools is offering students a \$100 gift card for every student who gets their entry published on the main website. We are also considering potential rewards for you teachers that help them reach this success and student rewards for adding to our page.

A blog post can look different for younger elementary students. They can draw a picture and write a caption or post a video.

See here for more details:

<http://conceptelementary.blogspot.com/?view=snapshot>

If you and/or your students would like to participate, you can reach out to Don Shanahan (Director of Upper Elementary) at [shanahan@conceptschoools.org](mailto:shanahan@conceptschoools.org).

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## FREE?!?!?

### NWEA (MAP) Test Prep

It's that time of year! Teachers and students are gearing up for the final MAP test of the year. Now, we're not saying "Stop, Drop and Test Prep" but there are several ways to help prepare your students for taking a computer-based assessment, such as NWEA.

Most of what students need to practice are basic skills related to taking the test, such as using a mouse and hearing a question again. The following sites can help develop these key skills before students even log in to take MAP.

### NWEA Practice Test

[http://warmup.nwea.org/warmup\\_start\\_educators\\_mpg.html](http://warmup.nwea.org/warmup_start_educators_mpg.html)

One of the first places to start is giving your students the MPG (Map for Primary Grades) practice test. You can do this as a whole group, explaining as you go, and you can also have students take the practice test themselves. Although students have taken MAP two other times during the year, it is ALWAYS a good idea to practice again just before the test.

Here is another tutorial offered by NWEA:

<https://scs-admin.mapnwea.org/contents/warmups/mpg.htm>

### Practice Questions

NWEA Practice Question:

<https://legacysupport.nwea.org/support/article/1140>

See what questions at each RIT band look like.

### Math Study Jams:

<https://legacysupport.nwea.org/support/article/1140>

Study Jams math gives brief tutorial videos but you can also click on "Test Yourself" and practice selecting answers with your class.

### Khan Academy:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/math/early-math>

Khan Academy is another where students can practice taking a "math online test". For example, if you select counting with small numbers and then "Count with small numbers", students can practice dragging and dropping the correct amount.

### Practice Computer/Tablet Skills

Below are several site where students can practice computer skills such as using a mouse, drag and drop, and click on the correct items.

<http://www.tvokids.com/games/beesandhoney>

<http://minimouse.us/>

[http://www.abcya.com/take\\_a\\_trip.htm](http://www.abcya.com/take_a_trip.htm)

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION!

NWEA just released an app where student can now take MAP for Primary Grades right on an iPad or tablet. This eliminate the need for a mouse. After observing students using both a computer-based assessment and a tablet-based assessment, we found that the students did MUCH better on a tablet.

# What's the Deal with Sight Words?!

By Jennifer Sajovec

Did you know that Dr. Seuss wrote *Green Eggs and Ham* on a bet? When Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) wrote *The Cat in the Hat*, he tried to include as many "sight words" as he could but still make the text fun and engaging. Then, his publisher bet him that he could not complete an entire book using just 50 words (most being sight words.) Dr. Seuss did just that using exactly 50 of the most popular vocabulary words for early readers!

<http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2011/05/dr-seuss-wrote-green-eggs-and-ham-on-a-bet-that-he-couldnt-write-a-book-with-50-or-fewer-words/>

Call them what you want (Dolch words, Fry Words, High Frequency Words or Sight Words), these very simple words make up about 50-75% of all the words in any children's text. In other words, they are called High Frequency Words because they make up most of what our students read and write!

Here are some tips on how to get students to learn, memorize and use Sight Words!

## WORD WALL

Do you just stick words up at the beginning of the school year and hope students use this resource? Do you find many students still don't look? Try making your Word Wall interactive!

1. Only post words once they have been explicitly taught to the whole group.
2. Start out the week with a set of words (see your textbook series) and cover these words EVERY DAY.
3. At the end of the week, have the class "observe" as a word is added to the Word Wall.
4. Consider playing a game where you and the students can review words that have been placed on the Word Wall in previous weeks.

TIP 1: Did you ever see Word Walls where the words are cut out following their shape? This is for a GREAT reason! Some students learn to recognize words by their shape

TIP 2: Do your students have trouble find the words? "It's under 's'." "No, the other one." Under each letter, make each word a different color. Then you can say "It starts with s and is orange."

Here is a free site that allows you to generate Word Wall cards (draw lines around to give them "shape.")

<http://www.scholastic.com/teacher/word-workshop/>



## INTEGRATE WITH SPELLING

In the early grades, spelling lists go hand in hand with the weekly phonics lesson. You may want to try adding in a couple of sight words to that list. Our Kindergarten students currently do not have "spelling tests" but you may want to plan "sight word tests" instead. Start with just a 2-3 words. If students have difficulties, keep the list limited to just a few simple words. It is also a great idea to differentiate your lists.

## PERSONAL WORD WALLS OR POCKET DICTIONARIES

Word Walls are great but they can be limiting. Students can have a hard time seeing the Wall or have trouble transferring what they see into their writing. Combine your Word Wall with the use of "Personal Word Walls." These can be made by simply taking a file folder, printing out a recording sheet to glue into the folder, and letting students write the weekly sight words as they learn them.

Here is a link to a great Personal Word Wall printable:

<http://www.1plus1plus1equals1.net/2014/07/personal-word-wall-printables/>



## THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

The following sites have a TON of free apps for iPads.

<http://iteach1to1.blogspot.com/2014/11/ipad-apps-and-activities-for-sight-word.html?m=1>

<http://rachelktutoring.com/blog/free-sight-word-apps/>

I've tested out most of these and my favorites are where a student hears the word and practices writing the sight word. You may even want to send a list home with students. Parents would love to have some specific apps that could help their students learn to read!

