

Forewords

Spelling assessment and instruction should be approached as an exercise in language exploration. Through spelling we can learn how well a student processes the speech sound system and how much a student understands about the meaningful parts of words. Spelling can tell a great deal about the student's grasp of our writing system—the orthographic system through which we represent speech. With the *SPELL-2: Spelling Performance Evaluation for Language and Literacy* assessment system, teachers and specialists can pinpoint exactly what language structures the student needs to understand and can receive expert advice on exactly how to meet those instructional needs.

SPELL-2 embodies the findings of 30 years of research on the structure of English orthography, the developmental stages of learning to spell, and the nature of proficient and deficient spelling. Beginning in about 1970, researchers began to turn away from the traditional view that spelling was a rote, visual memory activity, discovering instead that spelling is one of the most complex forms of language production, mediated by phonological, orthographic, and morphological processing. When the linguistic challenges of spelling were uncovered by research, we could understand more easily why spelling is so difficult for so many students and why people often can read better than they can spell. *SPELL-2*'s authors have studied the extant literature on these topics and conducted the experiments necessary to produce a theoretically sound and useful tool. They have selected the most valid theories of orthographic learning to organize this instrument and have contributed a valuable innovation to our field.

The study of spelling is the study of words—their history, meaning, grammatical role, and linguistic structure. *SPELL-2* will direct teachers toward these aspects of language, and encourage the use of more enlightened instructional practices that truly educate students in word study. I am pleased to be among the first to appreciate the excellent work that has gone into this product, and I applaud the authors' achievement.

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