



The Spalding Method

The Total Language Program for Redfield Years 2 – 6 Classes.

Background

- In the USA in the late 1930s a brilliant teacher, Romalda Spalding, working with an eminent neurologist, Dr Samuel Orton, devised the Spalding Method for teaching literacy. In 1956 she published *The Writing Road to Reading*. In 1986 Romalda Spalding established the Spalding Education Foundation (SEF), a non-profit organisation designed to educate teachers and parents in the principles and teaching strategies responsible for Spalding's effectiveness. Its present President, Dr Warren North, was one of the founders of NASA. and the engineer who had the major responsibility for bringing Apollo 13 to earth.
- Well-documented testing shows that school districts in the USA that have adopted Spalding have exhibited consistently high standards of student literacy.
- Converging international cognitive research over the past 3 decades (e.g. a 30-year US government study released in 1997) shows that Spalding imparts all of the teaching strategies considered essential for imparting basic literacy skills. Spalding's highly structured, step-by-step, research-based approach seems particularly suited to boys' ways of learning.
- In the early 1990s Australian educators, speech pathologists and educational psychologists, disillusioned with the ineffectiveness of existing approaches to literacy, first trialled Spalding in Australia. In January, 1997, all of Tangara's full-time and part-time K-6 staff undertook Spalding training with a view to implementation from the start of the school year.
- In February, 1997, implementation with K-6 girls and K and 1 boys (at PARED Foundation feeder infants schools) began. Teachers all agreed that the method was the most effective one for imparting foundational literacy skills that they had met. In-house testing of Spelling, Reading Decoding and Comprehension showed that, on average, students at the school were 2 years or more ahead of their age cohorts, and that every targeted learning-disabled child had improved in 2 out of 3 or all 3 areas—which had not happened with earlier Methods. Parents showed nearly unanimous approval of the initiative, as did many visitors from NSW and out of state who observed classes and talked with staff.
- Initial research into Australian effectiveness is provided in Dr Susan Moore's 1997 DEETYA-funded *Spalding in Australia. A Pilot Research Study*, evaluating the implementation of Spalding at Tangara.
- Redfield teachers undertook two weeks training in Spalding over the 1997-8 summer holidays.
- In February, 1998, all primary classes at Redfield began work in Spalding.

A Description of Spalding Method

The **Spalding Method** is a total language arts approach providing explicit, sequential, multisensory instruction in handwriting, spelling, writing, listening, reading decoding and comprehension, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary. Starting in infant school, it develops critical thinking skills applicable across the curriculum, and it enables teachers to plan lessons based on continuous assessment of individual needs.

The **Spalding Method** is taught in the PARED infants schools in K and Year 1. Boys continue in the Spalding program through Years 2 to 6 at Redfield.

The **Spalding Method** consists of four elements.

1. Spelling

This is taught by teaching the sounds of English language (phonograms), together with spelling and language rules and concepts. The use of a spelling notebook enables your son to progressively develop vocabulary, reading and writing skills simultaneously.

2 Writing

Students are taught using the rules of English to write sentences and paragraphs of quality in all subject areas. They will learn analytical skills and develop a capacity to analyse their own writing.

3 Comprehension

These skills are an essential basis for a love of reading. Students learn to appreciate the characteristics of quality literature and writing together with an understanding how passages are organised.

4 Philosophy

The **Spalding Method** emphasises the importance of the child as a learner now and for life by integrating all subject areas and developing the child's listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through a multi-sensory approach. It develops higher level thinking processes and expectations in students.

Further Information

- Acting on the research finding that the core deficiency of pupils with specific learning difficulties is the inability to hear all the 45 sounds of English, Spalding builds phonemic awareness by implementing the recommendations of the most up-to-date cognitive studies of early childhood.
- A common question from teachers encountering Spalding for the first time is “Can they really learn all this?” because even experienced teachers can underestimate the capacity of young children to learn. Visitors to Tangara last year who came at their own request through good word-of-mouth reports (e.g. Board of Studies President Sam Weller and Head of the Primary Division of the Dept. of School Education Phil Lambert) were struck by the Method's ability to keep children “on task”, and to help them consolidate a wide range of literacy skills between Years K and 6.
- It is important that students are punctual to class as the Spalding sessions commence first thing in the morning. and late students distract the group as a whole.
- Teachers assess individual and group progress every month.