Quick Spelling Assessment

Gentry and Gillett (1993) developed a way to estimate spelling ability related to a stage theory of spelling development, and to identify specific needs. Simply dictate the ten words below for students to spell on paper. They are not expected to spell all words correctly. Use their attempts to determine their stage in spelling development by checking performance against the stages noted in language suggested by a teacher (see Figure 4.1). This same guide can be used as a rubric to determine progress in writing.

1. monster 6. human
2. united 7. eagle
3. dress 8. closed
4. bottom 9. bumped
5. hiked 10. type
STAGES OF SPELLING DEVELOPMENT

Precommunicative Stage:
Spelling at this stage contains scribbles, circles, and lines with a few letters thrown in at random. These letters are usually just there and any connection between these letters and the words they are thinking is pure coincidence.

Semiphonetic Stage:
The second stage can be seen when words begin to be represented by a letter or two. The word *monster* may be written with just the *m* or an *mr* or a *mtr*. *Type* might be spelled with just a *t* or *tp*. This stage indicates that the child is beginning to understand letter-sound relationships and knows the consonant letters that represent some sounds.

Phonetic Stage:
In the third stage, vowels appear—not always the right vowels but vowels are used and most sounds are represented by at least one letter. Phonetic spellings of *monster* might include *munstr* and *mostr*. *Type* will probably be spelled *tp*. You can usually tell when a child is in the phonetic stage because you can read most of what children in this stage will write.

Transitional Stage:
In this stage all sounds are represented and the spelling is usually a possible English spelling, just not the correct spelling. *Monster* in this stage might be spelled *monstr* or *monstur*. *Type* is probably spelled *tipe*.

Conventional Stage:
Finally, the child reaches the stage of conventional spelling in which most words that children at that grade level could be expected to spell correctly are in fact spelled correctly.