Making Words (originated by Pat Cunningham)

In “making words,” students manipulate magnetic letters, letter tiles, or letter cards to create words. One way to manage the activity is to have your letters grouped so that you can give A’s to one student, S’s to another, etc., and they pass out letters to all of the students. For children who are a bit older, they can write the chosen letters on small ceramic tiles. There are some commercially produced letter tile sets that have capitals on one side and lower-case on the other, which makes it handy for inserting names and teaching capitalization of some proper nouns. **MY FAVORITE IDEA** is a laminated folder for each child with post-its for each letter. Students pull the letters they need and manipulate on the front of the folder. They can show them to the teacher easily, too.

**Making Your Own Making Words Lesson**

1. **Decide what the final word in the lesson will be.** In choosing this word, consider its number of vowels, child interest, what curriculum tie-ins you can make, and what letter-sound patterns you can draw children's attention to through the word sorting at the end.

2. **Make a list of shorter words that can be made from the letters of the final word.** (Note: The Words in a Word website -- [http://www.wordplays.com/fcgi-bin/jumble.pl](http://www.wordplays.com/fcgi-bin/jumble.pl) -- will generate a list of 3 letter or larger words for you.)

3. **From all the words you listed, pick approximately fifteen words** that include:
   - Words that you can sort for the pattern(s) you want to emphasize.
   - Little words and big words so that the lesson is a multilevel lesson.
   - Words that can be made with the same letters in different places (barn/bran) so children are reminded that when spelling words, the order of the letters is crucial.
   - A proper name or two to remind them where we use capital letters.
   - Words that most of the students have in their listening vocabularies.

4. **Write all the words on index cards and order them from smallest to biggest.**

5. **Once you have the two-letter, three-letter, etc., words together, order them further so that you can emphasize letter patterns** and how changing the position of the letters or changing or adding just one letter results in a different word.

6. **Store the cards in an envelope.** Write on the envelope the words in order and the patterns you will sort for at the end.
Example Making Words Activity: TEACHER

Ahead of time, prepare word cards for pocket chart (or use magnets on back if using board): at, cat, eat, ear, hear, heat, each, reach, teach, cheat, there, teacher, cheater

Have children make words with their own tiles: at, cat, eat, ear, hear, heat, each, reach, teach, cheat, there

Challenge: Use all of the letters to make a secret word (teacher, cheater)

Group related words and discuss: teach/teacher cheat/cheater

Group rhymes or rimes and discuss: at/cat eat/heat/cheat reach/each/teach ear/hear

Transfer useful spelling chunks to other words: spear peach beach treat

An interesting innovation on this kind of activity (for older students) is Tim Rasinski’s “Making & Writing Words”: http://www.readingonline.org/articles/words/rasinski.html