

Text selection

Careful, planned selection of text for instruction enhances the effective teaching of reading

Decodable texts

Decodable texts are specifically constructed texts that contain only those elements of the phonetic code that the student has already learned. They may also contain some high frequency words that are taught simultaneously (National Reading Panel, 2000). The phonetic code refers to the correspondence between the sounds of a language and the letters that represent them. The role of decodable texts is to support beginning and struggling readers to master the code before they transition to independently reading curriculum texts and high-quality literature known as authentic texts.

Authentic texts

Authentic texts are an essential component for growth in language and content knowledge. They are: not predictable; written to be read aloud, with support or independently; read for any purpose; and used across childhood and into adolescence. Authentic texts are not designed for systematic instruction of phonic skills and knowledge.

Children's literature

Children's literature often features predictable text with repetition of words, phrases and sentences and often big bold colourful illustrations. The repetitive use of words, phrases and sentences gives value to predictive texts in building children's **oral language** and **emergent literacy** skills. The use of highly predictable texts in teaching students letter-sound relationships and decoding however is counterproductive. The use of predictable or levelled texts promotes guessing based on content and pictures rather than application of decoding skills.

Selecting texts

Research indicates that students learn to read by engaging with a combination of these texts. As students develop automaticity in knowledge of the phonic code and using decoding skills, a wider range of text selections are introduced. Be discerning about text selection and think carefully about purpose. Throughout the beginning reading process, it is essential that students are continually exposed to authentic texts, rich in language and content, through shared reading experiences (Konza 2014).

Beginning and struggling readers

Competent reading requires skills that extend beyond the single-word level to contextual reading, and this skill can best be acquired by practising reading texts in which the words are in a meaningful context (National Reading Panel, 2000). Decodable texts are important for beginning and struggling readers as they provide the opportunity to practise and apply the phonic knowledge and skills students have learned within a controlled text. They provide immediate practice of new skills to build automaticity, fluency and confidence (Konza, 2014).

Next steps

For more information, contact your school speech language pathologist or the Reading and Writing Disorders Advisory Service. The Advisory service may be accessed by telephone or email on weekdays between 8:30am and 4:30pm.

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