



Provincial Outreach
Program for the Early Years
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Foundational Literacy Skills

January 30, 2025

Presenter:
Megan Zeni



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Learning Objectives



- In this workshop, we will explore a scope & sequence for foundational literacy skills, focusing on:
 - evidence-based instructional routines for phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension
 - strategies to support early reading and writing development, including a multi-tiered system of support

POPEY's Approach

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Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years

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- POPEY shares research and knowledge around how we learn to read, the reading brain, and the foundational skills that support learning to read and write.
- In workshops, we offer a collection of evidence-based strategies for teachers to consider.
- Teaching reading is not a one-size fits all model - no two districts are the same, just as no two students are the same.
- We invite teachers to consider implementing evidence-based instructional techniques to ensure literacy success for their diverse learners.



Shape of the day

- 8:30 - 10:30
 - the science of reading and learning
 - comparing three models of reading
 - routines and strategies to support instruction
- 10:45 - 12:00
 - characteristics of strong phonics instruction
 - the reading brain and the role of orthographic mapping
 - Routines and strategies to support instruction
- 1:00 – 2:30
 - article reading and professional dialogue
 - decodable texts - what, when, and why?
 - Routines and strategies to support instruction
 - putting it all together - reflections, connections, and next steps





How did you learn to...



ride a bike?



swim?



drive a car?

Please choose ONE activity and take ONE minute to reflect individually - how did you learn this skill?

When you are ready, go ahead and share your thoughts with your table group...





How do we learn?



- * Observations of someone skilled (modelling/demonstrating)
- * Direct (explicit) instruction
- * In environments that support a gradual release of responsibility
- * Guided practice / repetition
- * Protected time and opportunity for practice
- * Supportive encouragement and feedback
- * In environments where we feel safe to take risks and try new things
- * Within relationships that cultivate motivation and engagement

With this in mind, how do we create the learning experiences and environments our students need to build foundational literacy skills?





Foundations of Literacy

Our goal is for students to be enthusiastic explorers of words who:

- **Can recognize letters and sounds**
- **Can decode and blend sounds together to create words**
- **Can recognize words quickly and automatically**
- **Can build their vocabulary and background knowledge**
- **Can make meaning of what they read**
- **Can read with fluency**
- **Can present their ideas in writing**





Effective literacy is not an either/ or

and, and, and...

Decodable texts	vs.	Authentic literature
Research	vs.	Classroom Practice
The art of teaching	vs.	The science of reading
Individual student needs	vs.	Whole class efficiency
Direct instruction	vs.	Discovery learning
Practice in isolation	vs.	Practice in context
Mastery of skills	vs.	Joy of reading
Structure	vs.	Choice
Urgency	vs.	Joy

Comprehensive = complete; including all elements or aspects of something

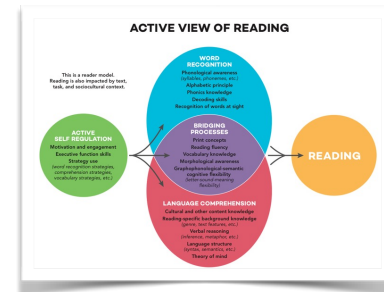
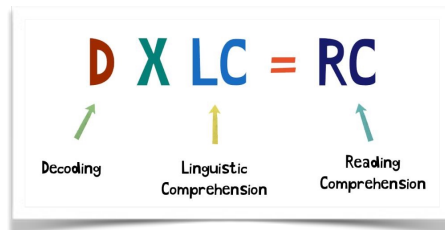
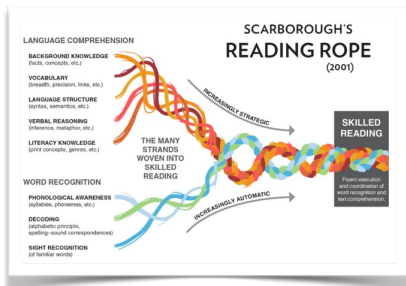




Let's unpack this together..

At your table groups, take a look at these three models of reading:

- Notice what is **similar**
- Notice what is **different**
- What's **new, interesting, or affirming** to you?

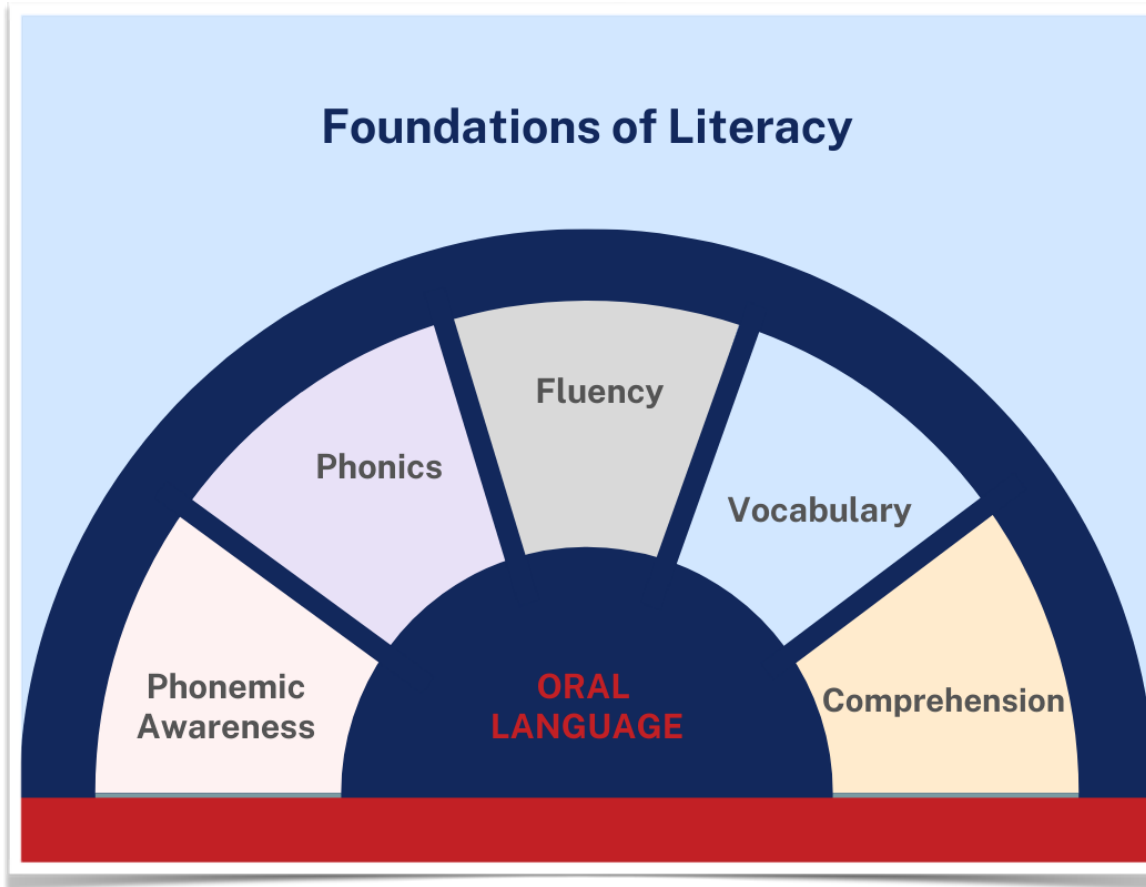


It is worth noting that:

All three of these are **models/representations** of reading, not of reading instruction or learning to read. They describe the process of reading, the abilities one must marshal to read. - Shanahan, 2023



Foundational Skills for Reading



Proficiency in these foundational skills is necessary for all students to be reflective, critical, and independent readers.

Adapted from the National Reading Panel's Five Pillars model



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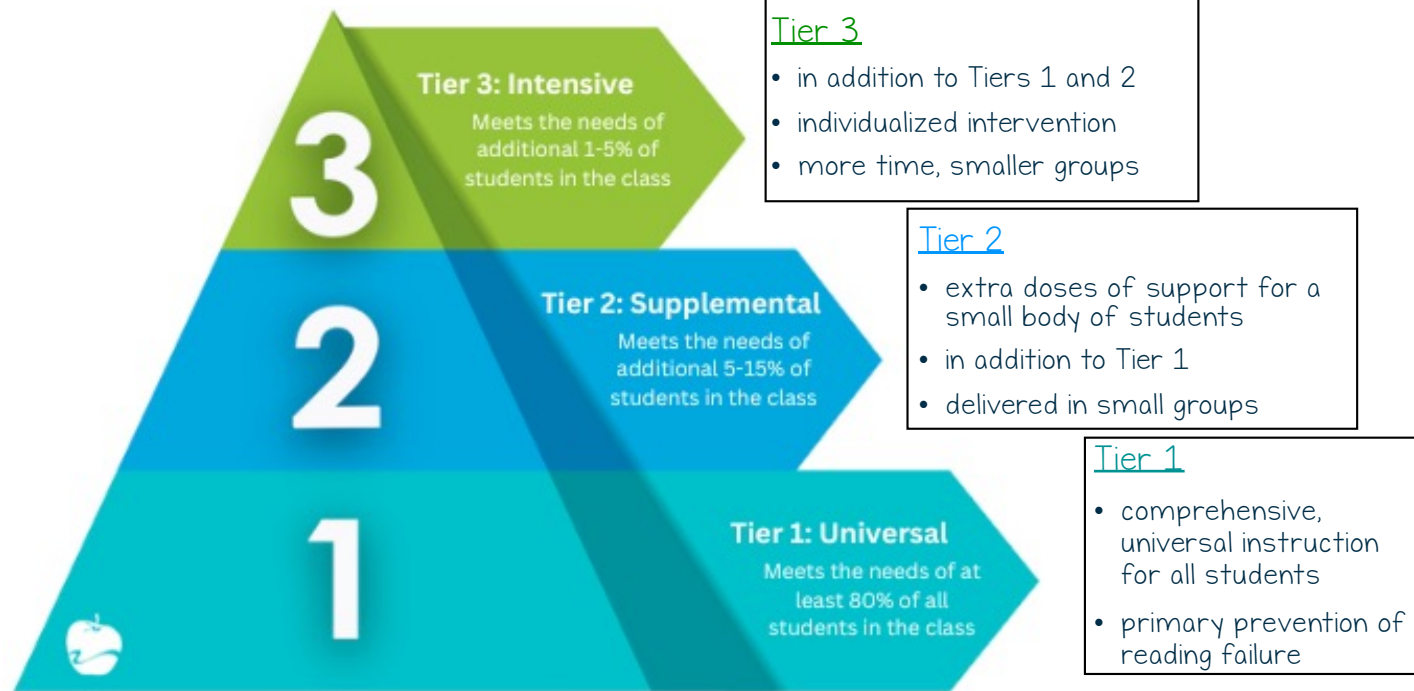
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MTSS - Multi-Tiered System of Supports

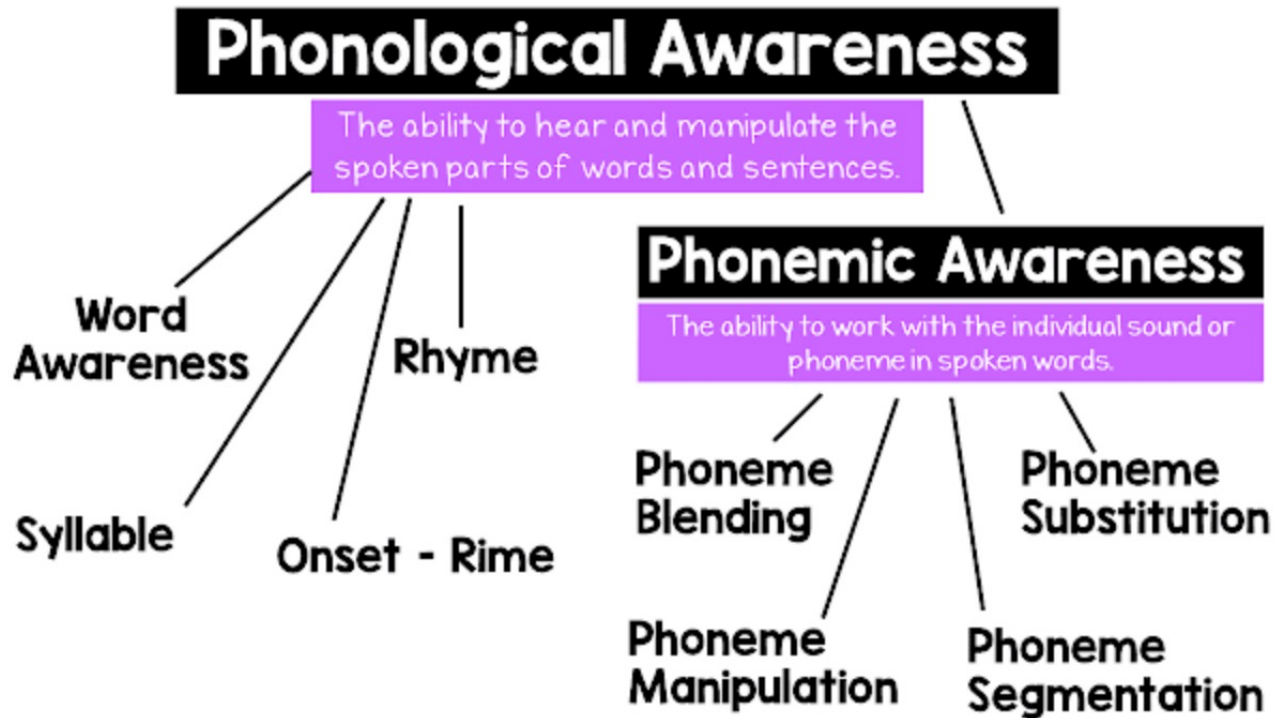
set up to be a *continuum of instructional supports* that are available to every student from day one of kindergarten



The MTSS model comes from the idea that we can prevent reading failure for the vast majority of students.



Where do we start?



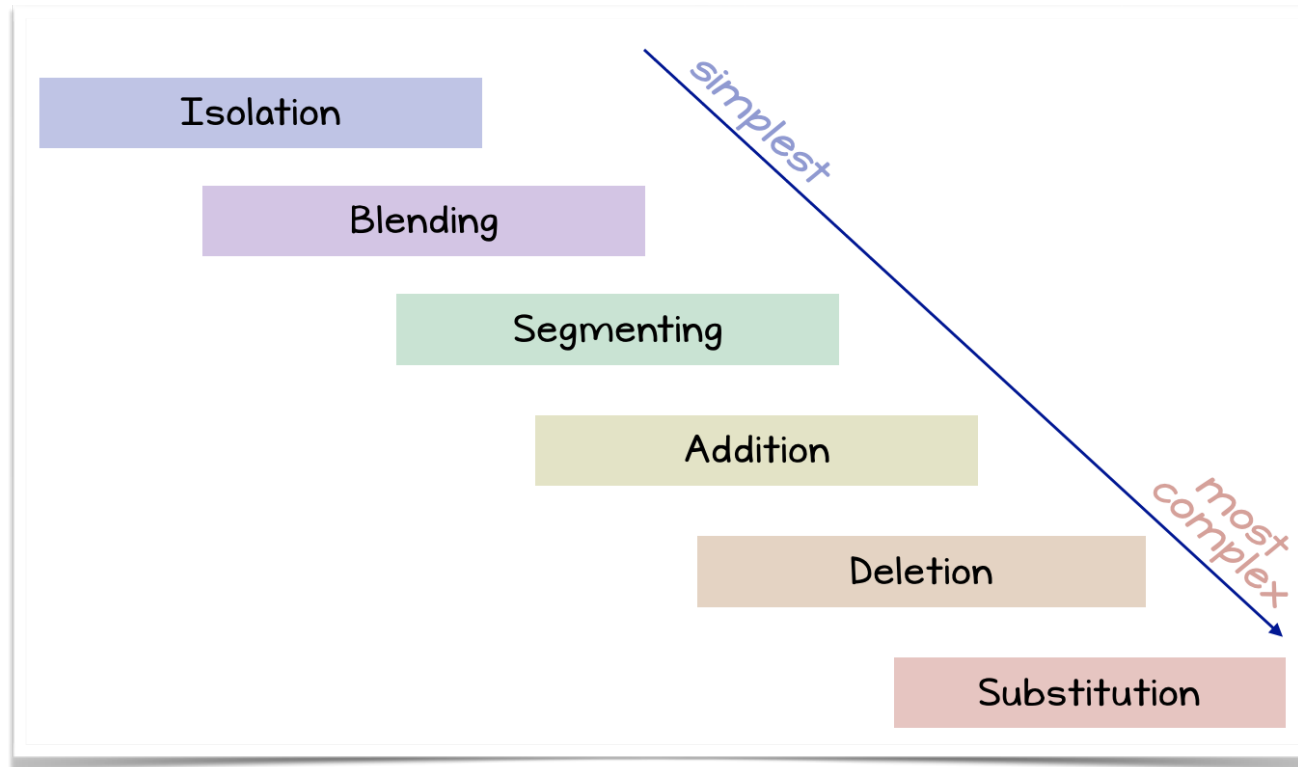
© Popey Around in Primary





A scope & sequence for phonemic awareness

...the understanding that spoken words are made up of individual sounds





Ways to play with phonemic awareness

- Rhyming walks (tree/ she; sun/ fun; flower/ tower)
- Segmenting and blending walks with environmental print (stop signs)
- I spy games
- Scavenger hunts
- Chalk hopscotch segmenting
- Sound sorts (alphabet tubs)
- Songs and tongue twister line ups

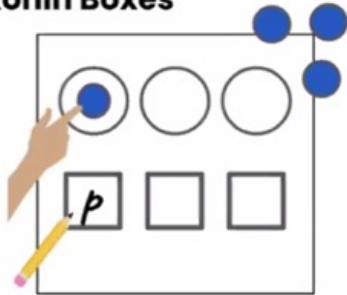




Small Group Supports for Phonemic Awareness

Manipulatives to support phonemic awareness & orthographic mapping







Elkonin Boxes



Tip: Mix it up and use play-doh balls, pompoms, little toys, or paint stampers to represent the sound!

c / a / t

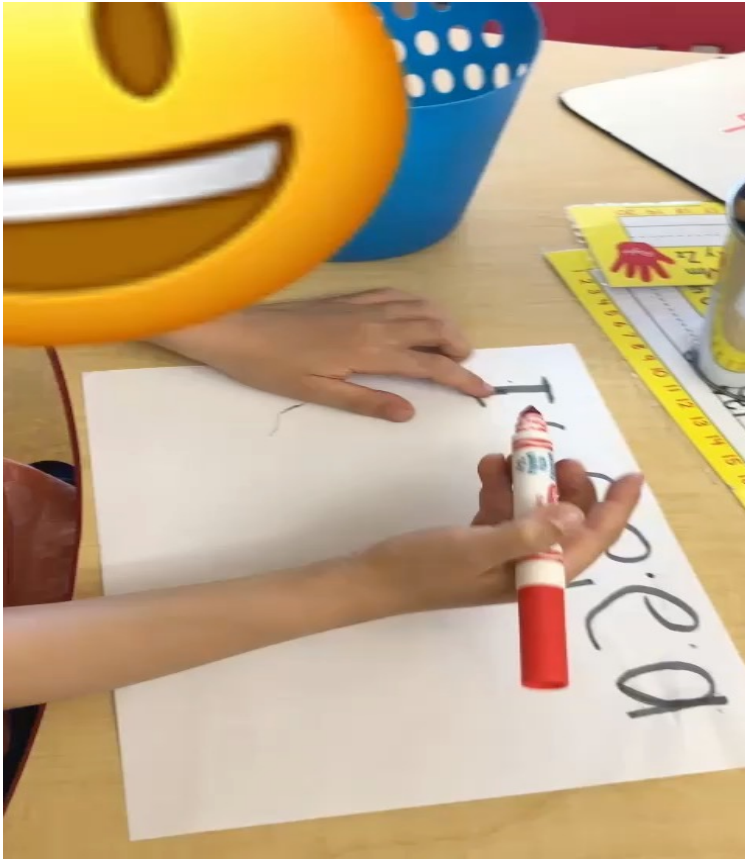


Say it 	Connect to Meaning 	Stretch it 
Tap it  ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ □ □ □ □ □		
Write it _____ _____ _____		Check it!  





Phonemic Awareness Application



Erhi et al. suggest that “phonemic awareness is not taught for its own sake but rather for its value in helping children understand and use the alphabetic system to read and write”. Further, that it ought not to be taught “blindly in isolation ad nauseam without any connection to reading and writing” (2001).



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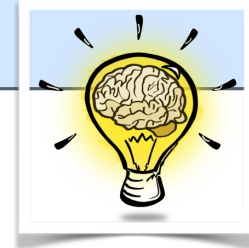


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Readiness Skills



The two best predictors of early reading success are phonemic awareness and a student's understanding of the alphabetic principle.

Phonemic Awareness

Students' ability to hear and manipulate the smallest units of sound in a word – phonemes

Alphabetic Principle

The understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between sounds and letters.

“these skills open the gate for reading.” – Wiley Blevins





Letter Sound Recognition & Alphabetic Principle

**How many words can
you make from these
letters?**

s, m, t, d, l

VS

s, m, a, t, d

When a child memorizes ten words, they can only read ten words.

If a child learns the sounds of ten letters, they will be able to read:
350 three-sound words
4,320 four-sound words, and
21,650 five-sound words.

Dr Martin Kozloff





Phonemic Awareness Instruction



Keep in mind:

- Short and frequent sessions
- Focus primarily on blending and segmenting (phoneme-level skills)
- Begin to add letters to this work
- Often integrated into phonics lesson

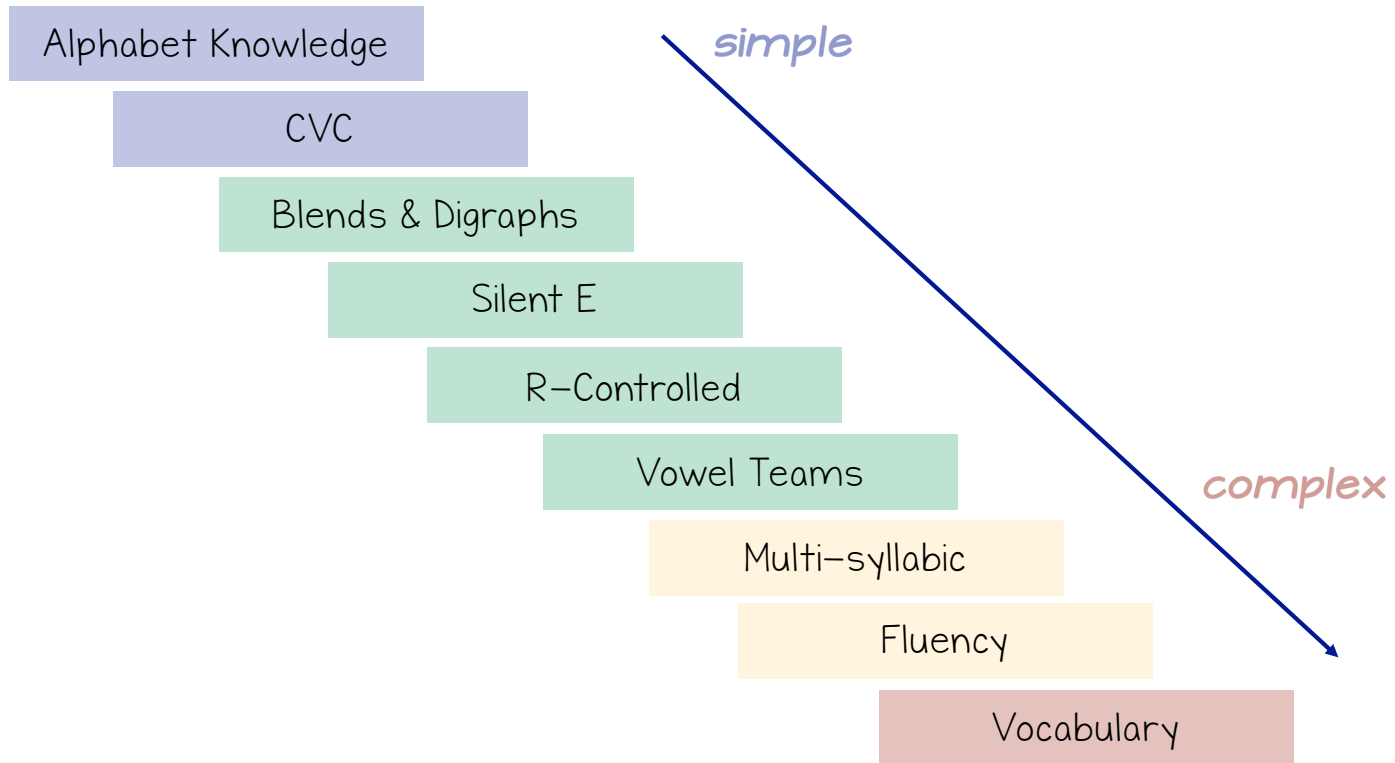
Ideas for instructional strategies:

- Use manipulatives to keep it playful
 - ★ Elkonin boxes + bingo chips
 - ★ Pop It fidget toys
 - ★ Race cars + tracks
 - ★ Unifix cubes
- Encourage gestures
 - ★ Hand choppers
 - ★ Tap down arm
 - ★ Finger/thumb tap
- Word Chains - build phonemic awareness and phonics skills at the same time





A scope and sequence for phonics instruction





Characteristics of Strong Phonics Instruction

- Systematic
 - * It has a logical scope and sequence
 - * Skills and concepts are taught in a particular order - prerequisite skills are taught first
- Explicit
 - * Clear and direct instruction of important skills and concepts
- Cumulative
 - * Build on previously learned skills
 - * Sufficient repetition and review for mastery



Mini-Lesson: time for students to do the heavy lifting



- mini, not maxi (five minutes)
- strategy-focused
- model, model, model
- direct and explicit instruction
- guided practice in a safe, supportive setting
- gradual transfer to independence

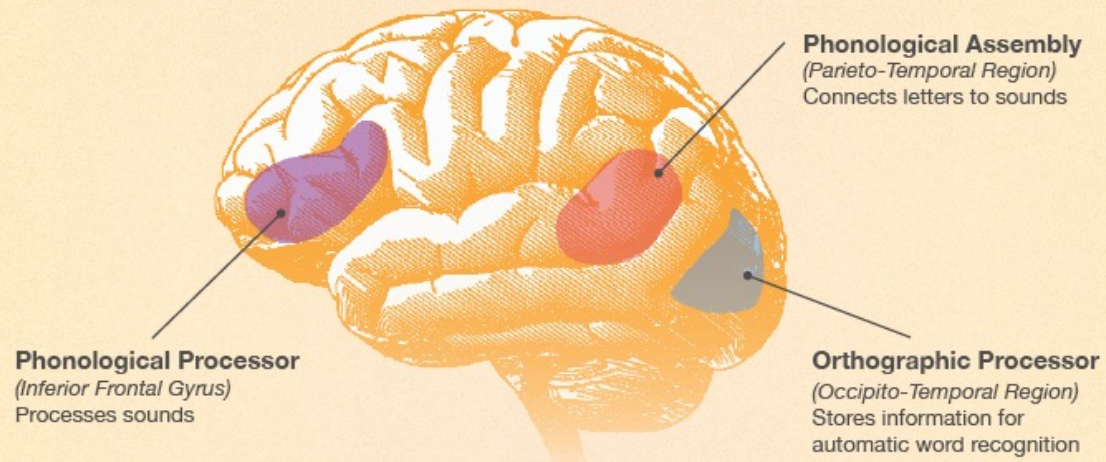
“Whoever does the **work** in the lesson does the **learning**” – Wiley Blevins





The Reading Brain

REGIONS OF THE BRAIN ASSOCIATED WITH READING



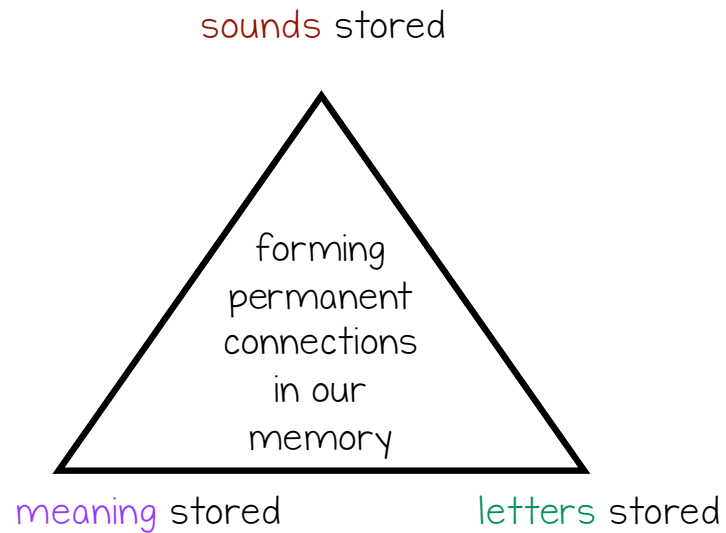
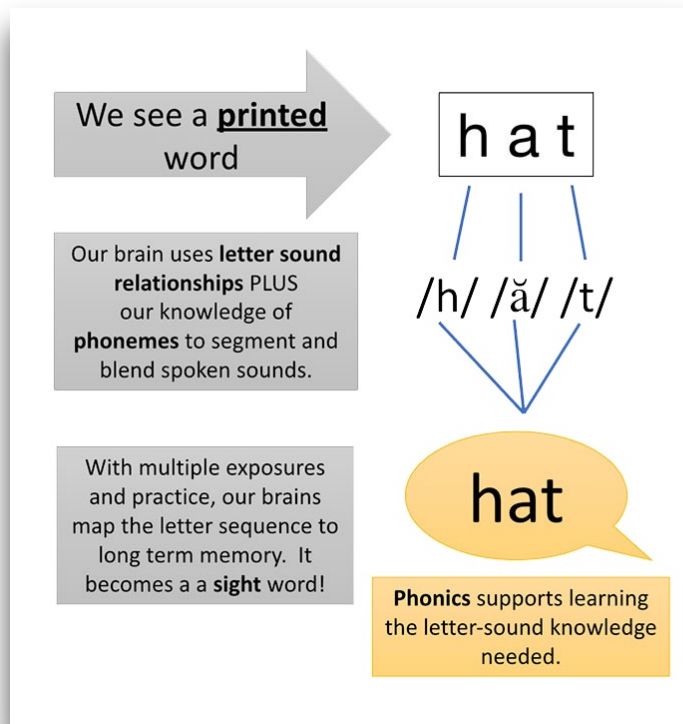
Left hemisphere of the brain





Orthographic Mapping

The **process** of storing a word permanently in memory for instant retrieval is called **orthographic mapping**.





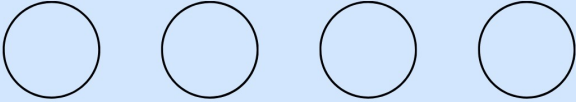
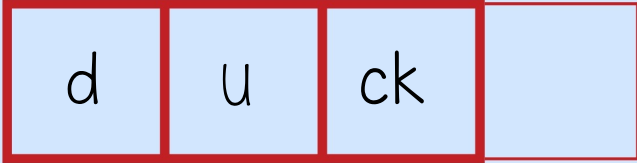
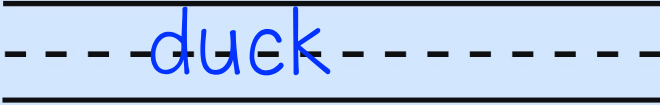




Word Mapping

supporting the cognitive process of orthographic mapping

Word mapping is a **physical** way to represent the **relationship** between the phonemes (**sounds**) and graphemes (**letters**).

WORD MAPPING

 Say the word
 Tap the word
 Map the word
 Graph the word
 Write the word
 Check for meaning
 Check for context




High frequency power words

109 Power Words

Jan Burkins and Kari Yates © 2020 TheSixShifts.com

1	*the	21	be	41	which	61	into	81	made	101	get
2	*of	22	this	42	their	62	has	82	over	102	through
3	*and	23	from	43	said	63	more	83	did	103	back
4	*a	24	I	44	if	64	her	84	down	104	much
5	*to	25	have	45	do	65	two	85	only	105	before
6	*in	26	or	46	will	66	like	86	way	106	go
7	*is	27	by	47	each	67	him	87	find	107	good
8	*you	28	one	48	about	68	see	88	use	108	new
9	*that	29	had	49	how	69	time	89	may	109	write
10	*it	30	not	50	up	70	could	90	water		
11	*he	31	but	51	out	71	no	91	long		
12	*for	32	what	52	them	72	make	92	little		
13	*was	33	all	53	then	73	than	93	very		
14	on	34	were	54	she	74	first	94	after		
15	are	35	when	55	many	75	been	95	words		
16	as	36	we	56	some	76	its	96	called		
17	with	37	there	57	so	77	who	97	just		
18	his	38	can	58	these	78	now	98	where		
19	they	39	an	59	would	79	people	99	most		
20	at	40	your	60	other	80	my	100	know		

Adapted from Adams, 1990 and Carroll, Davies, and Richmond, 1971

**These 109 words
comprise 50%
of the words
found in
children's texts.**

* Words 1–13 make up
25% of the words in
children's texts.





High-leverage instructional routines for phonics instruction

Explicitly and systematically teach the secrets of how to crack the written code.

- ✓ Let's play with sounds - daily
 - ✓ Let's study something new - 1-3 times per week
 - ✓ Let's blend some words - daily
 - ✓ Let's build some words - 2-3 times per week
 - ✓ Let's write some words - 2-3 times per week
 - ✓ Let's study some spellings - 2-3 times per week
 - ✓ Let's read! - daily
 - ✓ Let's review something that was a little tricky - as needed
-

Including **both systematic phonics and meaningful interactions with texts** leads to the most powerful outcomes for **beginning readers**.





Phonics Instruction: A Lesson Flow



HEAR IT

- phonemic awareness



TEACH IT

- name and teach new skill/sound



DECODE IT

- decode words with target skill



ENCODE IT

- spell words with target skill



READ IT

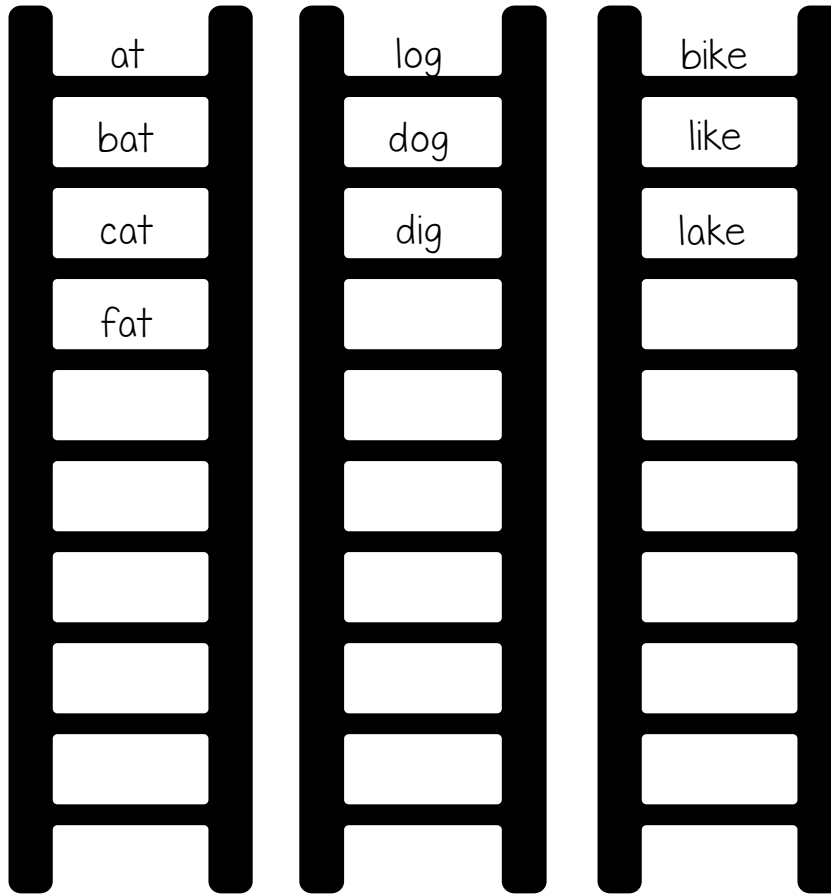
- read words, sentences and decodable passages

The last two steps should be approximately 50% of your lesson time. Blevins states “students progress at a much faster rate in phonics when the bulk of instructional time is spent on applying the skill to authentic reading and writing experiences” (2017).





Word Ladders - playing with sounds, letters, words

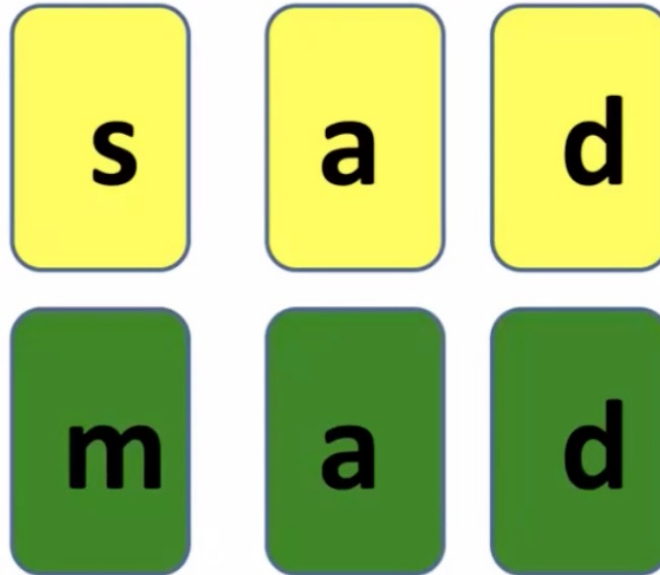


Word ladders are easily differentiated to be responsive to your students' varied abilities & needs and can be extended to literacy centres for additional engagement & practice.





Word Building / Word Chains



This is sophisticated phonemic awareness work:

Students are substituting, deleting, and adding sounds (encoding). And then they're using their knowledge of spelling to create the new word and then read (decode) the new word to make sure it's correct.










Instructional Strategy: Word Chains

<u>Teacher Language</u>	<u>Skill</u>
(Begin with mat.) Change mat to sat.	encoding
Change the S to an F. Now tell me what word you have?	decoding
Change fat to fit.	encoding
Change the F to an S. What word is that?	decoding
What letter do you need to change sit to lit?	encoding
Now add an S to the beginning of lit. What word do you get?	decoding





A Phonics Centre Activity - Letter Bank

1		l	e	g
2				
3				
4				
5				

Letter Bank

b d d e

e e

e

l n n

p s t





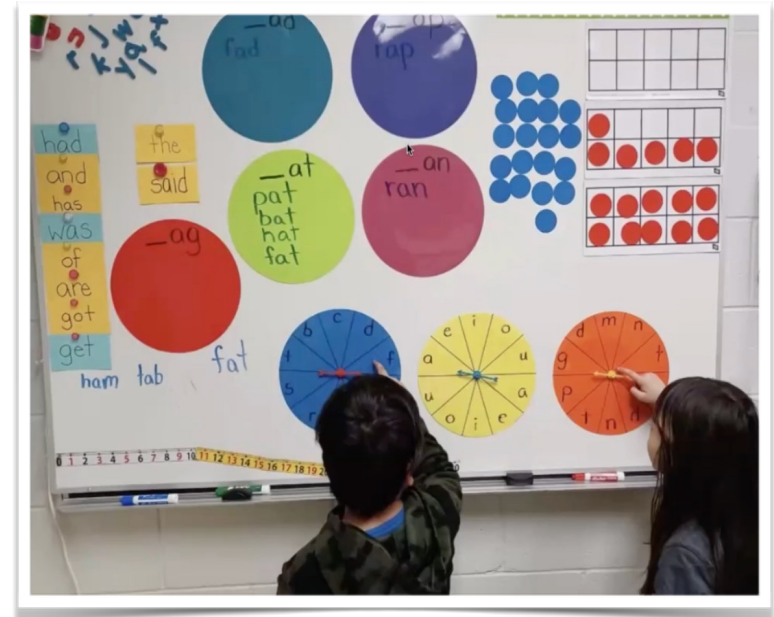
A Phonics Centre Activity - Spin It

Word Awareness

Spinner 1 Spinner 2 Spinner 3

TEAM 1 **TEAM 2**

Organize list by spelling pattern





A Phonics Centre Activity - Roll It

Word Awareness



TEAM 1			TEAM 2		
-ear	-air	-are	-ear	-air	-are





Spelling or Syllable Cards

Students practice **decoding** and **encoding** by manipulating, deleting, substituting, and blending **recently taught** letters & sounds to make new words.



- Use small set of letter cards.
- Focus on target skill at first.
- Then fold in review skills.
- Do subset during small groups for students needing extra support.

sad	sad	sad	sad	sad
mad	sat	sat	mad	mad
bad	hat	sit	map	map
had	had	hit	tap	mop
		hat	tan	top
			man	tap
				tan
				man





A Phonics Centre Activity - Word Sorts

road
show
grow
boat
blow
coat
row
goat

Word Sort

-o	-oa	-ow	oddballs

no mother soak know snow throw cold toast boat toad yellow soap were goal don't father show old yolk follow





Living Words - make a word





Living Words - make a word



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Phonics Instruction Review!

Keep in mind:

- Systematic: Move from simple to complex
 - Following a scope and sequence
- Explicit: “Today I want to teach you...”
- Keep students engaged by:
 - Inviting student responses
 - Have students come to the board to find a word, highlight a phonics skill in a word



Ideas for instructional Strategies:

- Understand “the code” yourself
- Consider using a systematic and explicit phonics program
- White boards are a fabulous tool!
- Keep lessons lively, and stick to suggested times
- Don’t forget to unpack word meaning
- Word sorts
- Word chains
- Try multi-sensory methods
- Use Elkonin (sound) boxes to support encoding





The best phonics instruction is active, engaging, and thought provoking. Students are playing with letters and sounds and discussing what they observe about how words work to deepen their understanding of our alphabetic system so they can read and write.

Phonics instruction involves talk. It involves observation. And it involves tons of application to authentic reading and writing experiences.

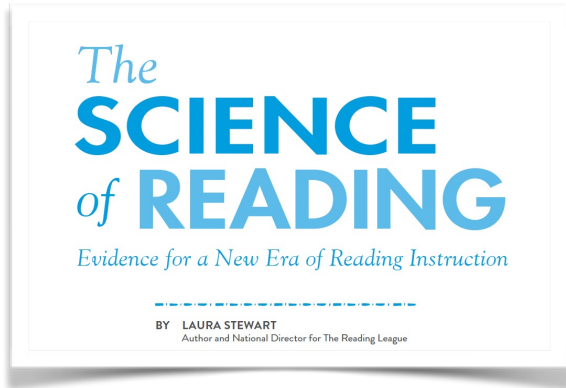




Reflect & Share: What are your mirrors? Windows? Next steps?

Nell Duke & Heidi Anne Mesmer

- a meaningful sentence
 - a powerful phrase
 - words that caught your attention
- Read the article **on your own** (20 minutes)
 - Find a partner and discuss your **reflections, connections, and wonderings** in pairs of 2 (10 minutes)



- Join another pair to **make a quadrant** and share your **biggest takeaways** from the article (10 minutes)

Laura Stewart, The Reading League



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Patterned, Levelled Texts



	
<p>Puppies get into lots of silly spots. 2 puppies are in the boots.</p> 	<p>Puppies get into lots of silly spots. 3 puppies are in the flowers.</p> 



Decodable Texts: letter/sound



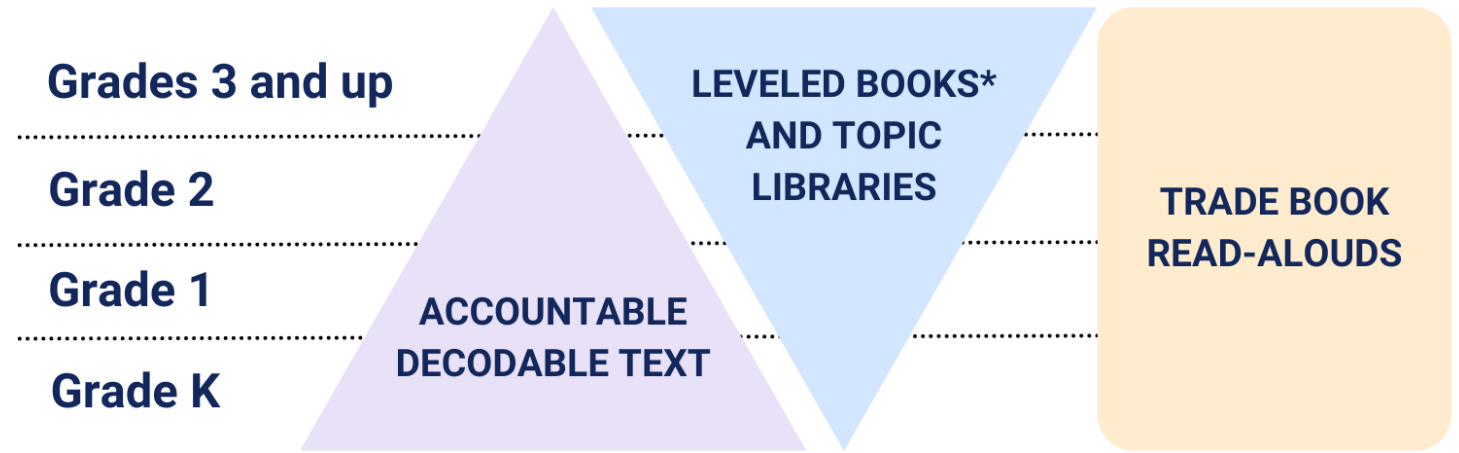
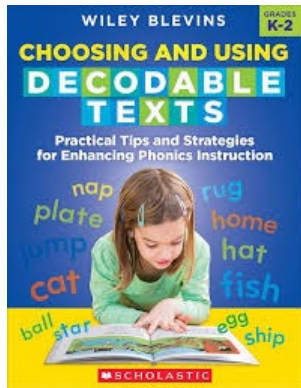
Is the cap on a mat?
No! It is not on the mat.



Is Zac's cap on a can?
No! It is not on the can.



Decodable Texts



Important to remember that students need access to a variety of texts
for different instructional purposes



Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, at an appropriate pace, with expression.

- As decoding is automatized, students increase their ability to read texts fluently, freeing cognitive resources to focus on the meaning of the texts.
 - Reading fluency develops as a result of strong instruction in other core components of literacy: phonological awareness, phonics, and vocabulary.
 - To read a text fluently, students must have accurate and automatic word reading skills (Hudson et al., 2009). Text-level fluency develops with extended opportunities to practice oral reading. (Zimmermann et al., 2021).
-

Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension.



Building Fluency

Keep in mind:

- More than just reading fast
- Don't teach phonics in isolation
- Avoid "round robin" reading
- Be mindful of how you use independent reading time



7 Mighty Moves – Kemeny, 2023

Ideas for instructional Strategies:

- Remember...fluency is not an isolated skill
 - subskills: phonemic awareness, sound-symbol knowledge, automaticity at letter or word level
- Small Group instruction affords specific, immediate feedback
- Model, model, model!!!
- Whole Group Reading including:
 - Read aloud, cloze reading, choral reading, echo reading
- Partner Reading
- Reader's Theatre
- Beat the Clock Timed Reading
- Repeated Reading



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Reading as Meaning Making

For students to become efficient meaning makers, they need to:

- **build knowledge of text type and content**
- **undertake practice with decoding texts**
- **develop and use vocabulary**
- **make links between prior knowledge and the texts they are reading**





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