

Improving the “Text-Diet” for Early and Struggling Readers: Selecting and Adapting Text

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CHANGING MINDS

IES Funded Project Intensity: Our Team

Principal Investigators

- Jill Allor, PI
- Stephanie Al Otaiba, Co-PI
- Paul Yovanoff, Co-PI

Curriculum Authors

- Jill Allor
- Stephanie Al Otaiba
- Jennifer Cheatham

Purpose of the Grant

- create a new curriculum for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- for more information:
 - FriendsOnTheBlock.com
- Jill Allor and Stephanie Al Otaiba acknowledge a financial interest in the books and curriculum.



Why did we decide to create a new curriculum?

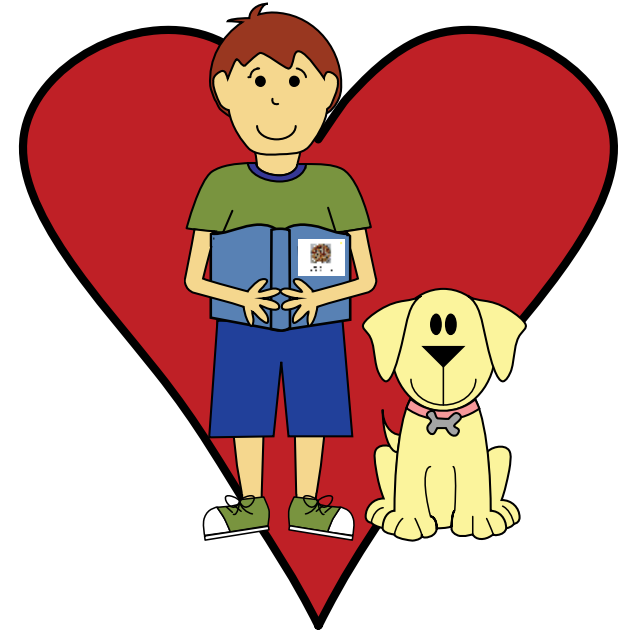
Just a few reasons...

- need for more books
 - especially ones that we be more **meaningful** to students with ID
 - needed more practice – more books and more **practice of high-frequency words** (decodable and irregular) within books
- challenge of transfer of skills – developed lessons that match books more directly
- wanted books that practiced a cluster of skills (level) so you could practice at one level for a while and rotate books, rather than repeating individual lessons or books
- NOTE: The curriculum follows evidence-based reading research and “Structured Literacy” as described by International Dyslexia Association



The  **books** are the  **heart** of the curriculum.

- Focus today is on the **books** and the **target word list** we created



Purpose

- Briefly present a **review of the literature** on the importance of multiple **early reading text characteristics**
- Show how we have addressed these characteristics in a **set of early readers** (Allor, Cheatham, & Al Otaiba, 2016), including **descriptive data**
- Discuss **practical methods** for selecting and adapting text for struggling readers, including those with learning disabilities, and intellectual and developmental disabilities



Rationale and Literature Review

- Relatively little research has been conducted on what constitutes a healthy early reading **text diet**.
- Currently, texts designed for early and struggling readers tend to rely primarily on one type of scaffold, such as:



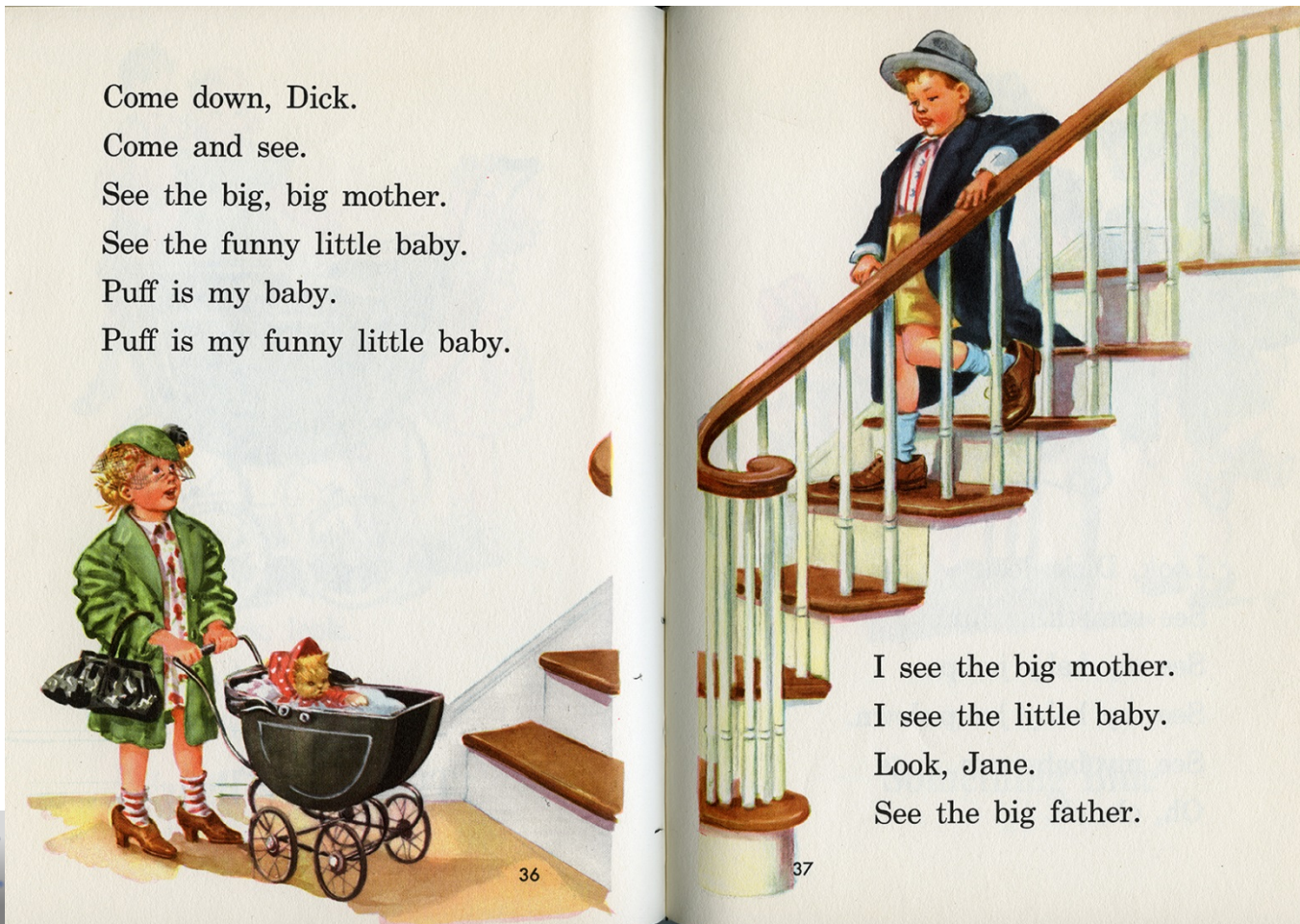
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High-Frequency Words

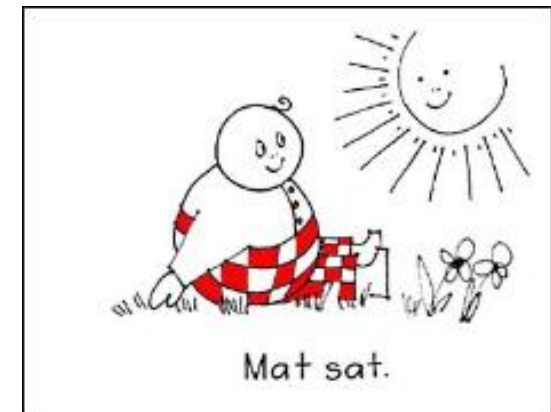
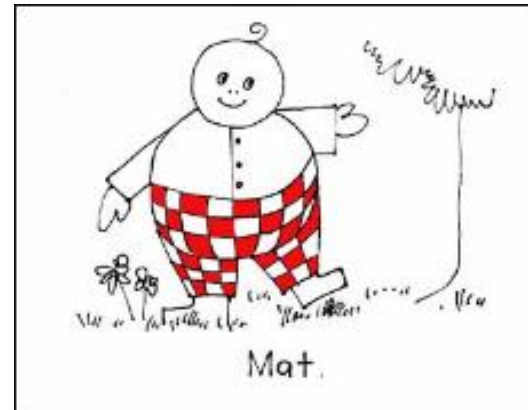
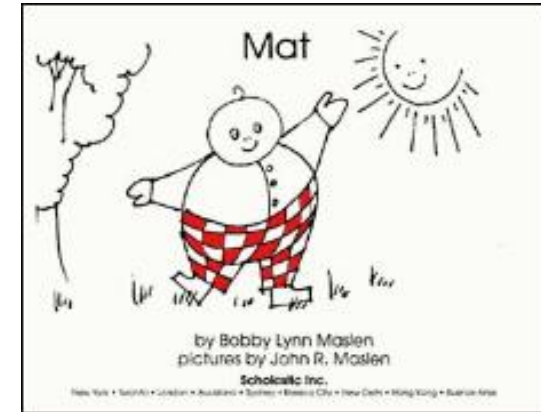
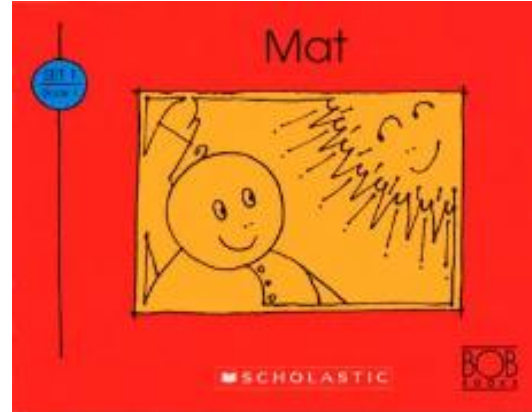
- Some books focus on **high-frequency**, or common, words (Dick and Jane books)



come
down
see
funny
little
is
big

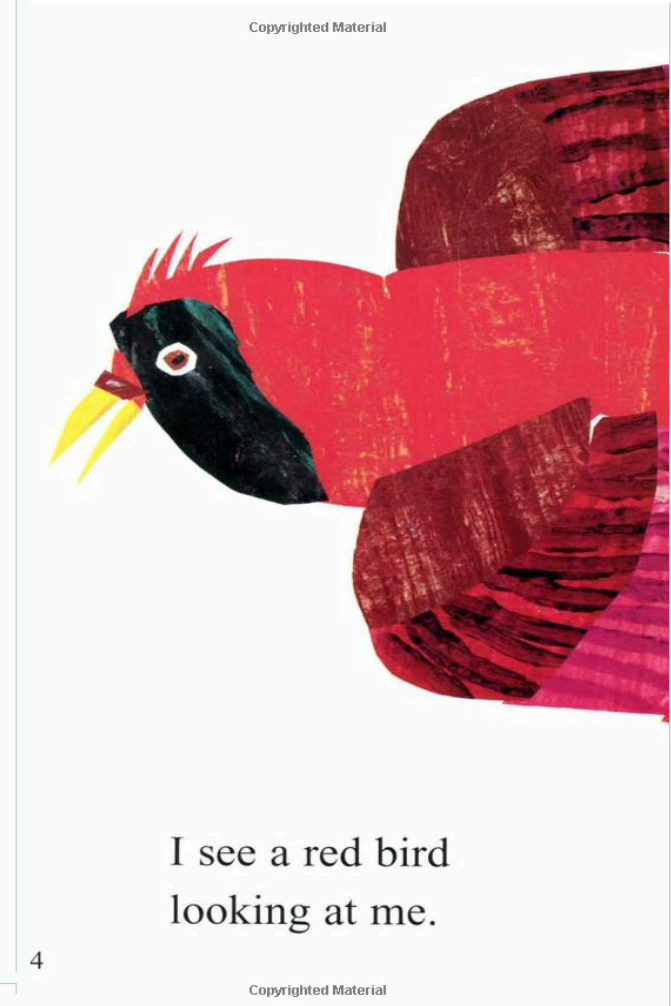
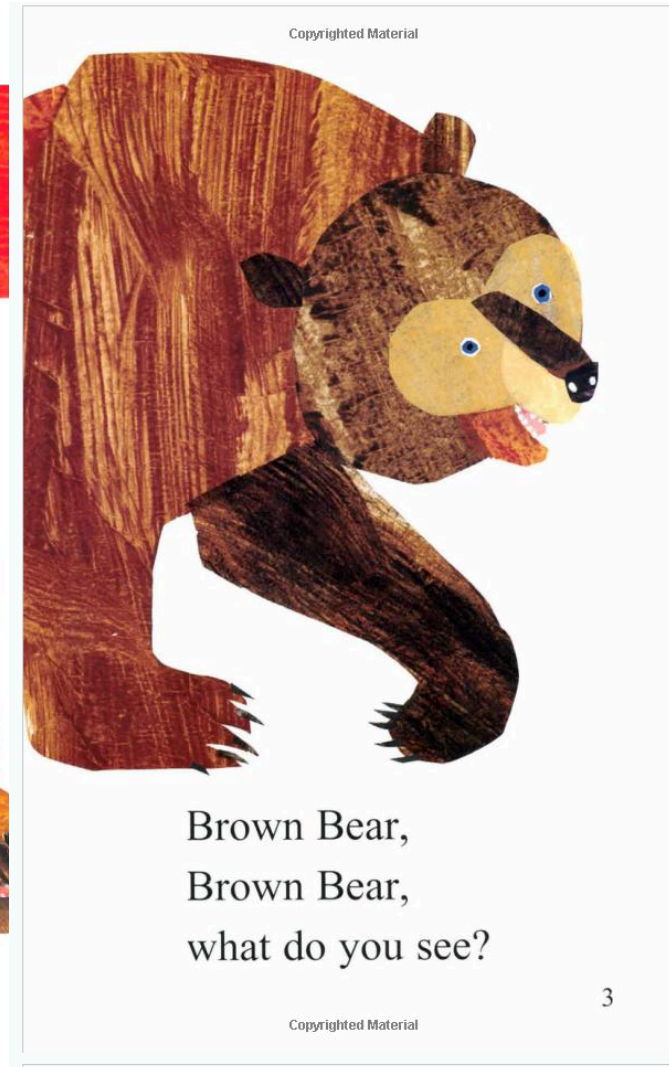
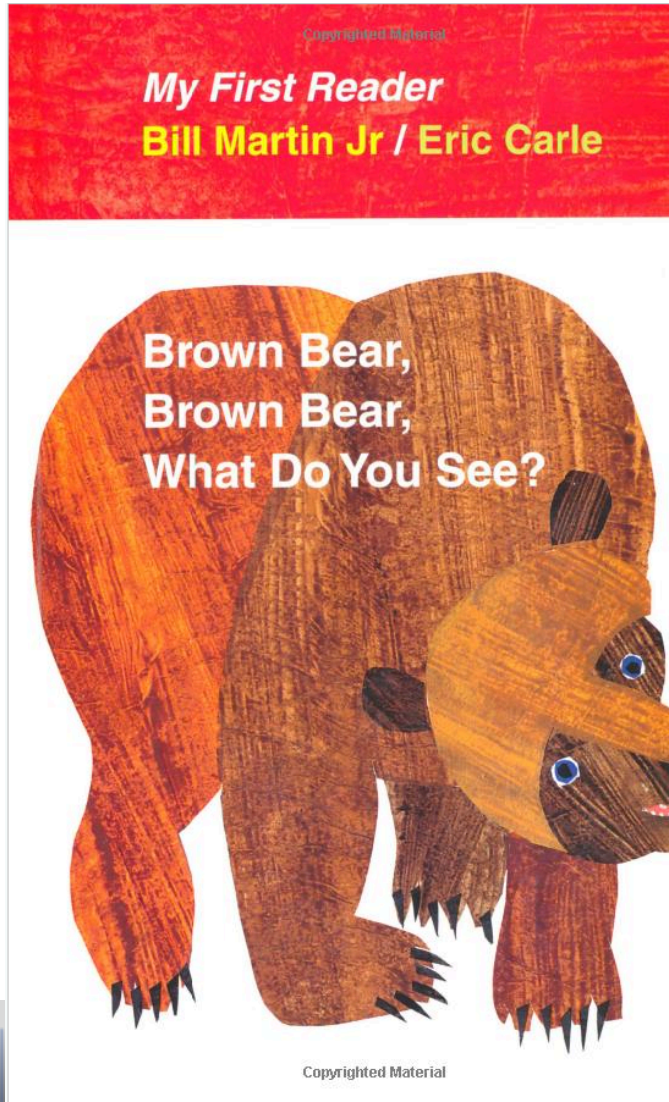
Decodability

- Some books focus on **decodable** words



Predictability

- Some books focus on **predictability** and **meaning**



Sometimes address both decodability and frequency

I am at bat.

But I have to hit the ball. I hit the ball.

I run and run. We win!

✓ /a/ /i/ /u/

✓ (high-frequency, sight words) I have, to, the, ball, we

Textproject.com



I run and run. We win!



What does the research/literature say?

What should be included in early reading texts???

- Word level factors include: frequency, imageability, regularity (decodability) and word meaning
- Text level factors include: cohesion, genre, and text length

(Mesmer, Cunningham, & Hiebert, 2012)



What does the research/literature say?

What should be included in early reading texts???

- Opportunities to apply word recognition skills, specifically phonics skills, in text (i.e., **decodability**; Hiebert, 1999; Mesmer et al., 2012; Cheatham & Allor, 2012)
- The opportunity to read and reread beneath-frustration level
- Familiarity, as determined by the frequency of words written in text
 - When students learn the 100 or so **most frequent words combined** with 64 of the **most common letter-sound mappings**, they are **able to read 90% of the words** in texts they typically encounter (Solity & Vousden, 2009)



What does the research/literature say?

What should be included in early reading texts???

- Familiarity of word meaning improves word recognition (Adams, 1990; Ricketts, et al., 2016; Kearns, et al., 2016)
- Repetition of individual words is important
 - 46% of the words in decodable texts not repeated (Foorman, Francis, Davidson, Harm, & Griffin, 2004)
 - students with disabilities require extensive practice to build automaticity



What does the research/literature say? What should be included in early reading texts???

Therefore, multiple criteria should be considered when
designing early reading text!

(Cheatham & Allor, 2012; Hiebert, 1999; Mesmer,
Cunningham, & Hiebert, 2012).



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How have we addressed these characteristics?

- in a new set of early readers (Allor, Cheatham, & Al Otaiba, 2016)
- Friends on the Block (FriendsOnTheBlock.com)

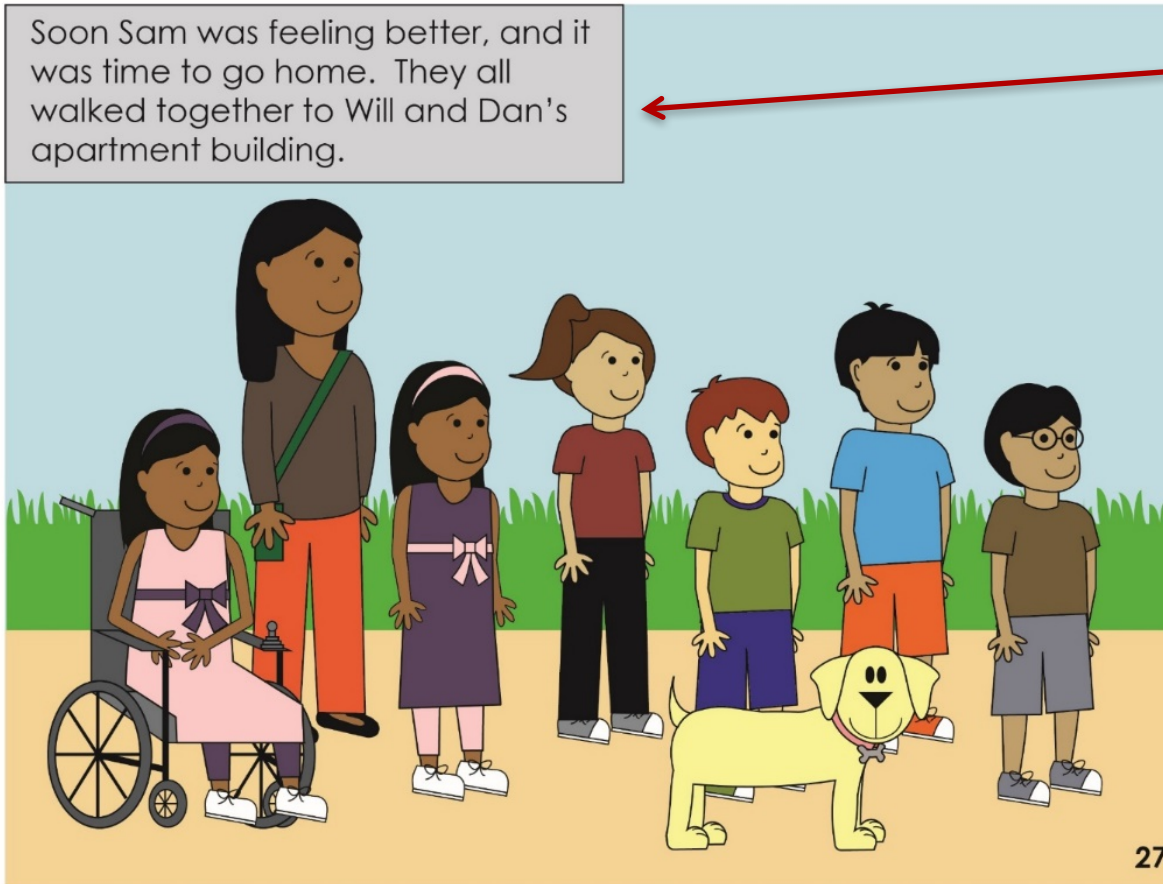


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How are ©Friends on the Block books different? ...based on multiple criteria



Meaningful Helper
Text (read by a
teacher or a tutor)



Books... based on multiple criteria

Varied Sentence Structure
(less predictable)

Language similar to
spoken language

Repetition

Pam asked, "Dan, did you get a big cut? If it is a big cut, we
would help you take care of it."

Decodability

Dan said, "No, I did not get a big cut. Look at it. It is just a
little scratch."

High-
Frequency
(sight words)



Systematic Introduction of Skills: New Sequence

- Focus on words that are high frequency
- Both irregular/temporarily irregular (e.g., do, like) and decodable (e.g., and)



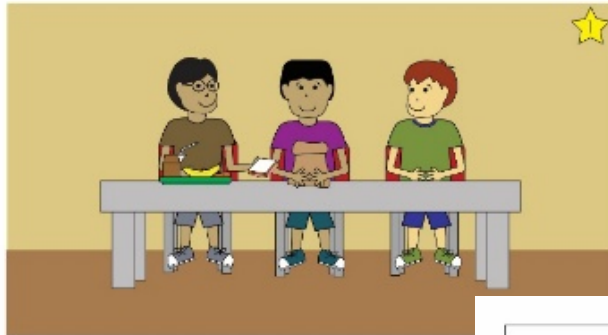
“Sight” Words
(high-frequency irregular
or temporarily irregular)

	Sight Words			Sight & Short a Words		Sight Words, Short Vowels & Review			Sight Words, Vowel Patterns & Review			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11	Level 12
Letter Sounds	c, f, p, m, s, t	d, j, n	b, g, h, l, r	ck, k, a	u	ch, th, w, x, y, z	i, o, sh, qu, v	e	a-e, i-e, o-e	ai, ay, ol	al, ea, ee	ar, igh, er
Target Sight Words	a do I like not want	dad here is look Mom see the where	are at happy in no she yes you	good help play there to was	big have little my please very what	be friend give go he feel her it me on so thank we who with your	because care come could clothes eat down family question easy four learn money new probably review these two watch	again away came day done does boy our eat food every girl more most second soon sure thought review these two watch	about animal been day done does boy our eat food every girl more most second soon sure thought review these two watch	any ball both done know boy our eat food every girl more most second soon sure thought review these two watch	another answer kind know our question really right second soon sure thought review these two watch	almost book bought break buy easy four learn money new probably review these two watch
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11	Level 12
Target Decodable Words	No decodable target words in Levels 1-3 (early decoding skills are practiced in activities to prepare students for later decoding)			am and at can dad mad sad	am and at can dad mad sad	am and at can dad fun had hat mad ran run sad sun up us	big did got him if in it mom not on sit stop this will with	bed best end get help let next red step tell them then went when yes	came fine five gave home hope like made make nine same side smile time white	cold day hold may old plain play rain roll say stay tail told wait way	all call clean each eat feel green neat need read see seem small tall wall	after better chapter different hard high light might never night number part right start together

Decodable Words
(high-frequency; made
up of taught letter
patterns)

See handout and
FriendsOnTheBlock.com







Sample Pages from Level 1 Book



Sam's Lunch

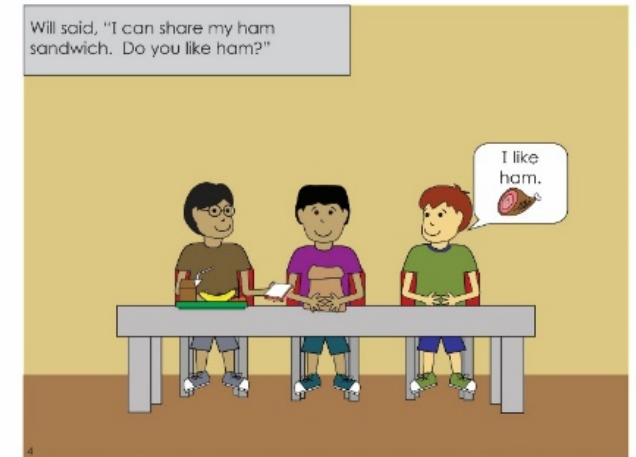
Written and Illustrated by Jennifer Cheatham

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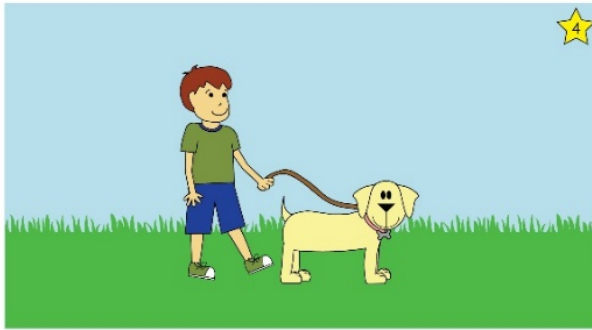
Read It					
a	do	I	like	not	want
Picture Words					
apples 	banana 	cake 			
cookies 	ham 	muffin 			
Story Starter					
This is a story about when Sam forgot to take his lunch to school.					

Picture Words

Teacher or tutor reads "helper text" and child reads text in conversation bubbles






Sample Pages from Level 4 Book



Sam and Jazz Take a Walk

Written by Jill Allor, Francesca Jones, and Ashley Sandoval
Illustrated by Jennifer Cheatham

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www.FondleTheBook.com

Read It		
good	help	play
there	to	was
Sound It Out		
am	and	at
can	Jazz	mad
Picture Words		
dog	dogs	scared
		
Story Starter		
This is a story about a boy who takes his dog on a walk.		

Includes Some
Decodable Words

8 Page Books

Teacher/tutor/parent
reads “helper text” in
gray boxes and
student reads text in
white bubbles/boxes

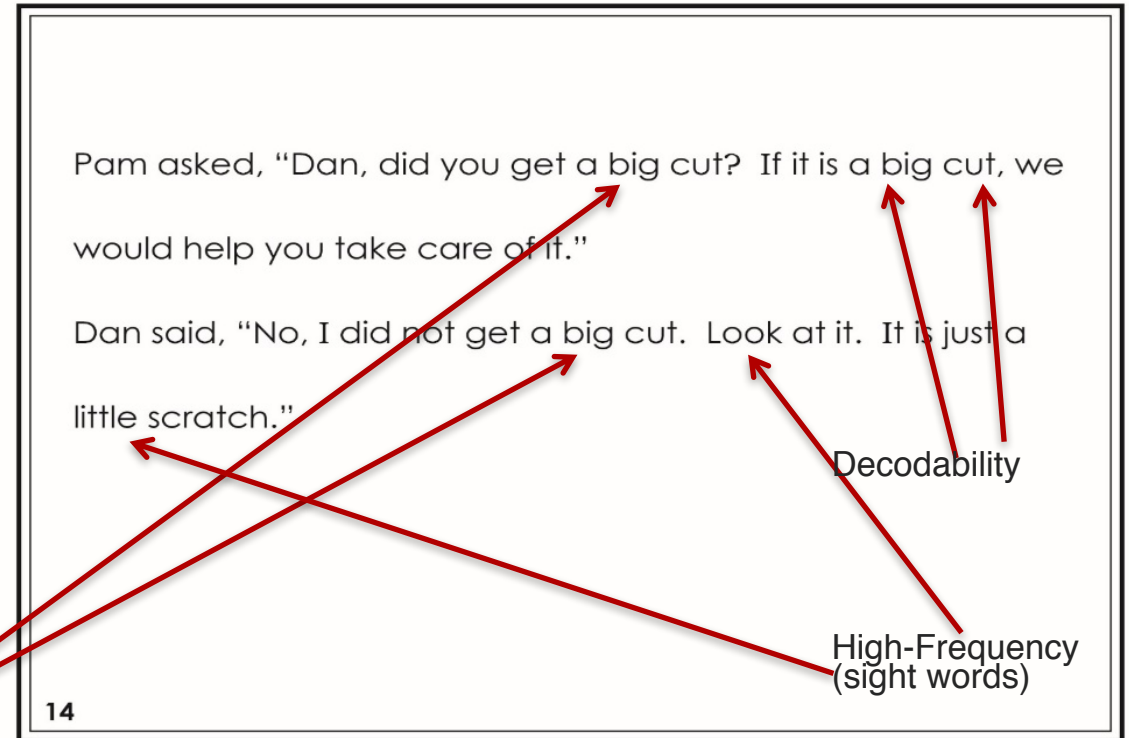


Sample Pages from Level 7B

Meaningful Helper Text
(read by a teacher or a tutor)







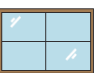


Repetition



Sample Pages from Level 9 Book

Picture support for key content words

Picture Words			
angel 	angels 	ball 	balls 
carrot 	chocolate 	window 	


Story Starter
This is a story about Sam and his dad having fun one day when it snowed.

Sound-spelling patterns & common word parts

Sam ran to tell his mom about the snow. She was still in bed. Sam said, "Look outside! It has been snowing! Everything has white snow on it! Will you please help me get ready to go outside? There are so many things I want to do."

Mom said, "Sam, I am not ready to get up yet. I think Dad went to the kitchen to make some eggs. You can ask Dad to help you."

"Dad is home?" asked Sam with a smile. Sam ran to the kitchen.



6



Don't just take our word for it...



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Research Questions

- What are the **characteristics of the target words** included in the books specifically age of acquisition, frequencies, and concreteness (Table 1)
- What are the **characteristics of the texts themselves**, specifically their word counts, type-token ratios, sentence counts, unique sight words, unique decodable words, and content (i.e., picture-supported) words? (Table 2)



Results: RQ#1 (characteristics of the target words)

- The mean age of acquisition for the target words was low ranging from 3.56 to 5.19.
- Frequency was measured using Sight-word Frequency Index (SFI) as well as comparing the target words to common high-frequency word lists (i.e., Carnine et al., 2004; Dolch, 1948).
 - target words are of high utility
 - meanings of the words are likely to be understood.
- Concreteness varied across the target word levels and was relatively low with a mean of 3.06 (SD = 1.08) on a 7-point scale, where 4 would be within a normal range for imageability.
 - We think this is unsurprising as many words on our target list are functional, high-frequency words that are not very concrete, such as *was* and *are*.



Table 1. *Characteristics of Target Words*

	Age of Acquisition in years		Standard Frequency Index		Concreteness	
Level	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 Sight	3.65	0.47	74.74	5.94	2.19	0.37
2 Sight	3.60	0.94	70.63	9.96	3.03	1.12
3 Sight	3.56	0.94	73.47	7.73	2.26	0.42
4 Sight	4.27	0.74	73.43	7.45	2.82	0.77
4 Decodable	3.92	0.86	66.87	11.58	3.33	1.08
5 Sight	3.64	0.73	69.81	5.69	2.52	1.08
5 Decodable	3.92	0.86	66.87	11.58	3.33	1.08
6 Sight	4.31	0.62	71.92	6.88	2.55	0.73
6 Decodable	3.84	0.69	66.46	8.89	3.50	1.16
7 Sight	4.80	1.20	70.53	4.92	2.02	0.69
7 Decodable	3.99	1.27	71.81	19.27	3.37	1.06

8 Sight	4.11	0.93	68.34	5.32	2.99	1.22
8 Decodable	4.04	1.01	67.31	4.17	2.94	1.18
9 Sight	4.33	0.76	70.43	5.98	3.20	1.29
9 Decodable	4.60	1.04	66.70	4.66	2.96	1.00
10 Sight	4.36	0.87	67.34	3.78	3.84	1.15
10 Decodable	4.42	1.04	64.13	4.87	3.25	0.95
11 Sight	5.03	0.66	66.36	2.91	2.51	0.83
11 Decodable	4.29	1.04	64.99	5.23	3.23	0.98
12 Sight	5.17	1.28	64.92	5.40	3.24	1.18
12 Decodable	4.93	0.84	66.76	2.22	3.05	0.88
13 Sight	4.85	1.22	65.77	4.92	3.29	1.21
13 Decodable	4.75	1.11	64.21	4.96	3.35	0.90
14 Sight	5.19	0.90	65.36	4.07	2.87	0.81
14 Decodable	4.55	1.27	60.05	5.97	3.99	3.99



Results: RQ#2 (characteristics of texts)

- The basic text characteristics (see Table 2) showed that the total number of words per book, as well as the number of both sight words (i.e., irregular) and decodable words gradually increased across the levels of the book series.
- The type-token ratio across all levels (see Figure 4) showed that the number of unique words grew more slowly than the total number of words, meaning that the words within each text were repetitive, providing students with many opportunities to practice the words in the text.
 - Early texts had the highest type-token ratios primarily because they were very short and included some picture-supported words which did not repeat frequently (e.g., ingredients on a pizza)



Table 2. *Characteristics of Texts*

	# of Words Per Book (Tokens)		# of Sentences Per Book		# of Unique Sight Words Per Book (Types)		# of Decodable Words (Types)		# of Picture Words (Types)	
Level	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	28	4.97	7.25	.96	6	0	0	0	6.5	0.58
2	42	9.93	11.25	2.87	11	2.16	7.00	0.82	4.75	3.20
3	72.5	17.75	18	4.69	17.75	2.22	8.25	0.50	4.75	2.50
4	116.75	28.39	26.25	6.02	22.75	2.22	15.25	2.75	2.5	1.29
5	122.75	19.5	23.75	6.7	28.25	1.26	15.50	2.08	5.75	2.87
6A	269.75	67.71	48.75	6.70	28.75	5.12	22.25	3.20	2.25	1.89
6B	324.5	21.3	50.75	3.5	40.75	2.99	26.75	4.35	6	2.71
7A	384.75	90.44	61	14.12	36.25	6.70	28.25	5.68	2	2.45
7B	628	106.57	87.5	16.98	58.50	2.38	39.25	1.71	5.5	2.88
8A	540.25	45.92	77.5	15.61	51.75	4.35	40.50	3.70	1	0.82
8B	738	145.53	107.75	24.16	68.50	4.36	51.75	3.40	4.5	1.29
9	1000.75	219.52	134.25	36.51	75.25	7.14	57.25	4.50	7	0.82
10	1232.25	158	160.75	33.68	85.75	3.77	68.00	2.31	4.50	2.52
11	1369.5	4.95	134.5	20.51	91.50	0.71	67.50	0.71	4.50	0.71
12	1658.5	0.71	180	15.56	96.50	14.85	75.00	4.24	1.50	0.71
13	1652	0	154	0	100.00	0	84.00	0	1	0
14	1626	0	132	0	102.00	0	69.00	0	1	0

Note. Levels 13 and 14 only contain 1 book resulting in the low standard deviations



So what does this mean?



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Discussion

- The results showed that the books addressed **multiple criteria that are theoretically and empirically important** in early reading text
- The data supported that we met our goals of providing students:
 - many **opportunities to practice high-frequency words**,
 - including those that were **decodable**,
 - in text that was **likely to be meaningful and facilitate comprehension**.
- To our knowledge, our reading series is the first of its type

Practical Instructional Implications



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Instructional Implications

- Teachers and authors of early reading books should consider **multiple criteria** when selecting and writing early reading books,
- particularly for students who require **intensive literacy intervention**
- keep in mind the benefits and limitations of various types of books.



Selecting Books

- Do they include opportunities to practice phonics skills and high-frequency words that students are learning?
- Do the stories contain familiar settings and vocabulary?
Are the stories relevant and engaging?
- Do the stories provide opportunities to increase vocabulary or general knowledge?



Recommended Early Readers



Textproject.com



Flyleafpublishing.com



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Addresses decodability and frequency...

I am at bat.

But I have to hit the ball.
I hit the ball.

I run and run. We win!

✓ /a/ /i/ /u/

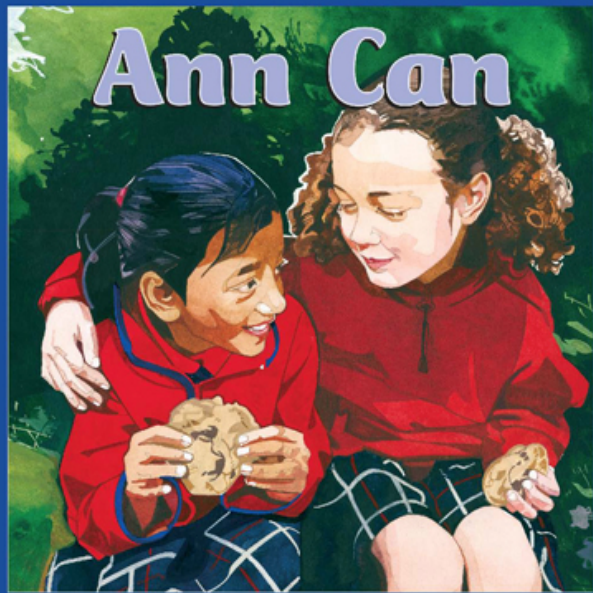
✓ (sight words) I have, to,
the, ball, we

Textproject.com



I run and run. We win!

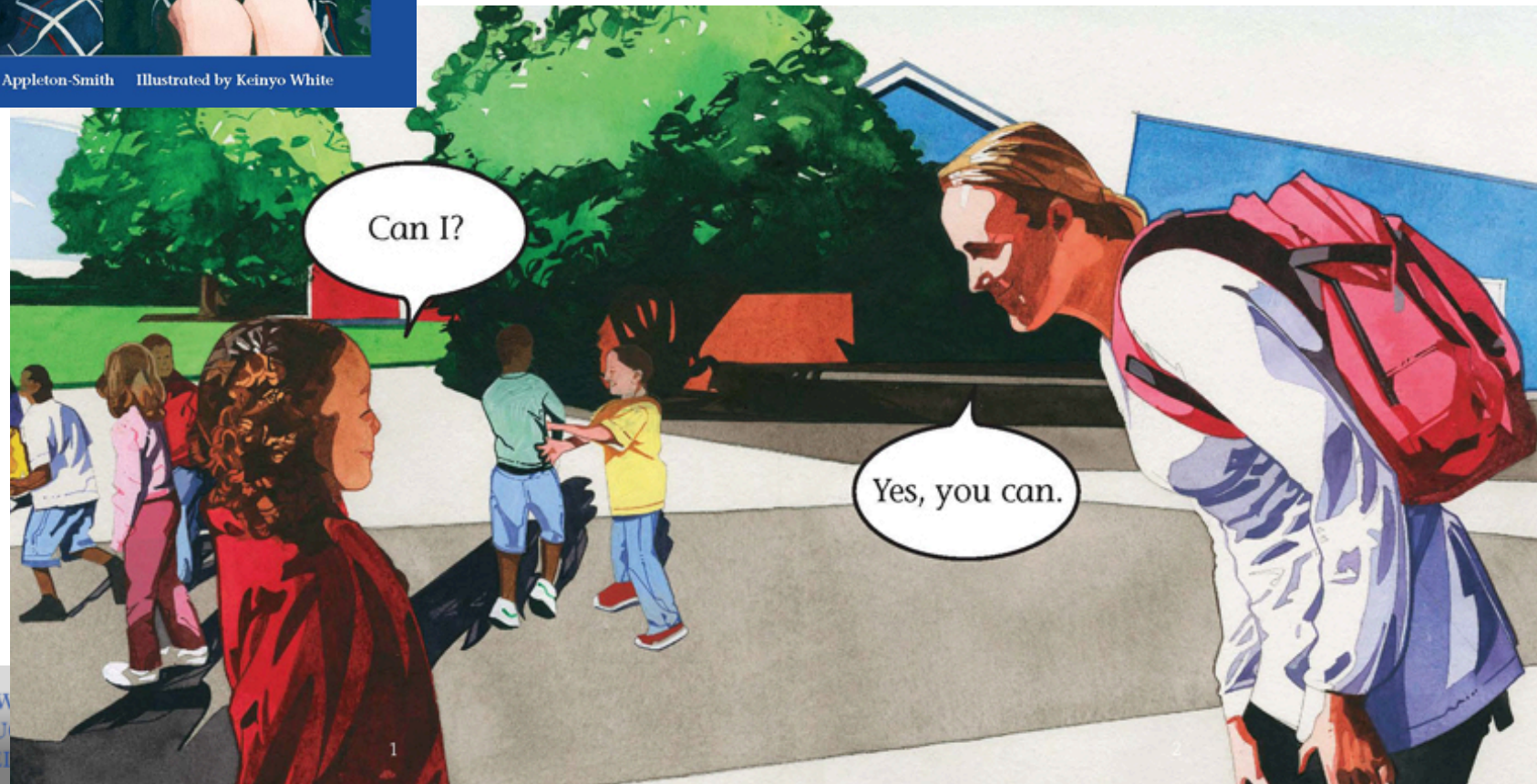




Written by Laura Appleton-Smith Illustrated by Keinyo White

Address decodability and frequency

Flyleafpublishing.com



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Previously Introduced Letter-Sound Correspondences:

Consonant /s/ sound spelled **s**, **ss**
 Consonant /m/ sound spelled **m**
 Short /a/ sound spelled **a**
 Consonant /k/ sound spelled **c**

Prerequisite Skills are foundational phonics skills that have been previously introduced.

Target Letter-Sound Correspondence is the letter-sound correspondence introduced in the story.

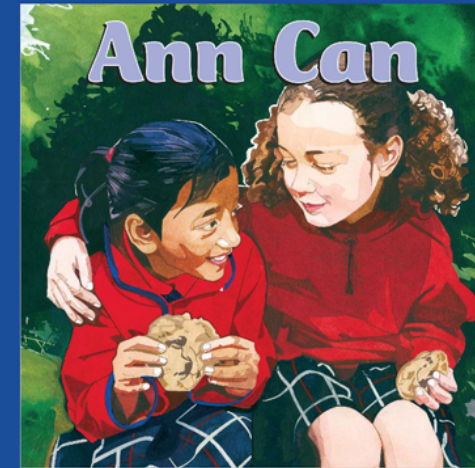
High-Frequency Puzzle Words are high-frequency irregular words.

Decodable Words are words that can be decoded solely on the basis of the letter-sound correspondences or phonetic elements that have been introduced.

Target Letter-Sound Correspondence

Consonant /n/ sound spelled **n**

A Book to Remember from Flyleaf Publishing



Written by Laura Appleton-Smith Illustrated by Keinyo White

High-Frequency Puzzle Words

like	yes
you	

Bold indicates new high-frequency word.

Decodable Words

am	Mack
Ann	man
can	Nan
I	Sam

Bold indicates high-frequency word.



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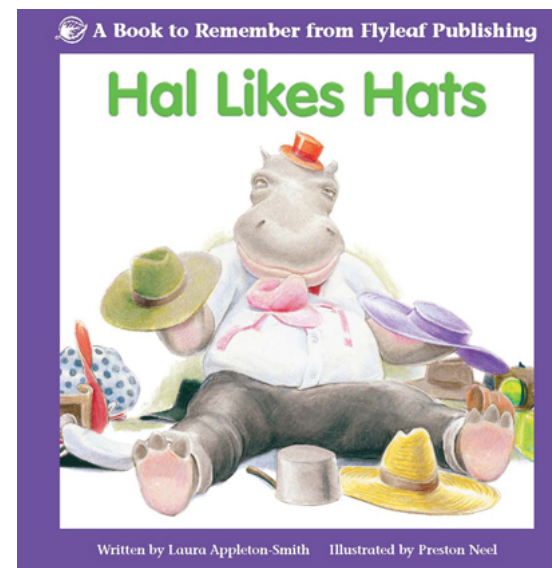
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Hal has go hats.
Hal has stop hats.



10



The top hat tips.
Hal slips.



18



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Previously Introduced Letter-Sound Correspondences:

Correspondences:

Consonant /s/ sound spelled **s, ss**

Consonant /m/ sound spelled **m**

Short /a/ sound spelled **a**

Consonant /k/ sound spelled **c**

Consonant /n/ sound spelled **n, nn**

Consonant /k/ sound spelled **k, ck**

Consonant /t/ sound spelled **t, tt**

Consonant /z/ sound spelled **s**

Consonant /p/ sound spelled **p**

Short /o/ sound spelled **o**

Consonant /g/ sound spelled **g, gg**

Consonant /d/ sound spelled **d**

Short /i/ sound spelled **i**

Consonant /r/ sound spelled **r**

Consonant /l/ sound spelled **l, ll**

Prerequisite Skills are foundational phonics skills that have been previously introduced.

Target Letter-Sound Correspondence is the letter-sound correspondence introduced in the story.

High-Frequency Puzzle Words are high-frequency irregular words.

Decodable Words are words that can be decoded solely on the basis of the letter-sound correspondences or phonetic elements that have been introduced.

Target Letter-Sound Correspondence

Consonant /h/ sound spelled **h**

High-Frequency Puzzle Words

go	of
he	oh
like	that
likes	the
my	yes
no	

Bold indicates new high-frequency word.

Decodable Words

a	hat	pan	tick
and	hats	pink	tin
clock	I	plop	tips
dot	lot	pot	tock
Hal	lots	slips	top
Hal's	not	stop	
has	on	tan	

Bold indicates high-frequency word.



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Adapting Books: Write your own “student text”

- Choose a favorite read-aloud book. That book becomes your “helper text.”
- Write sentences for the student to read made up of words the student is working on. This text becomes your “student text.”
- Example
 - Words working on: a, do, I, like, not, want
 - Read-Aloud: Green Eggs and Ham
 - Write the following sentence on a large post-it:
I do not like eggs.



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Adapting Books:

Write your own “story starter” and “helper text”

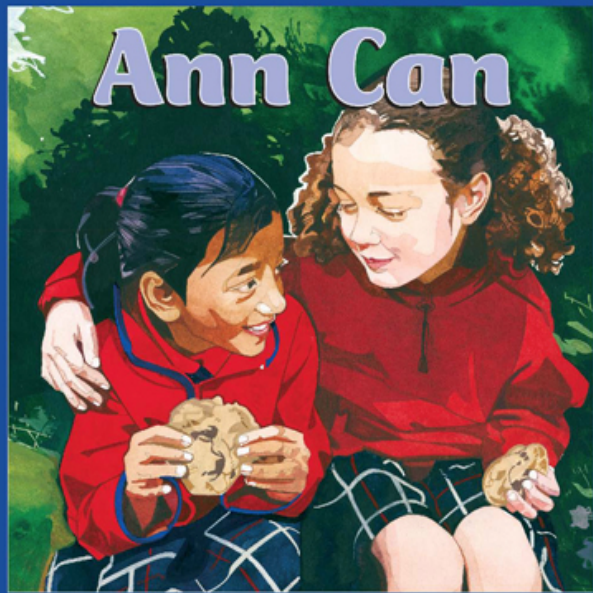
- Choose a book that is good word-level practice.
- Write your own “story starter” and “helper text” to increase comprehension and engagement.



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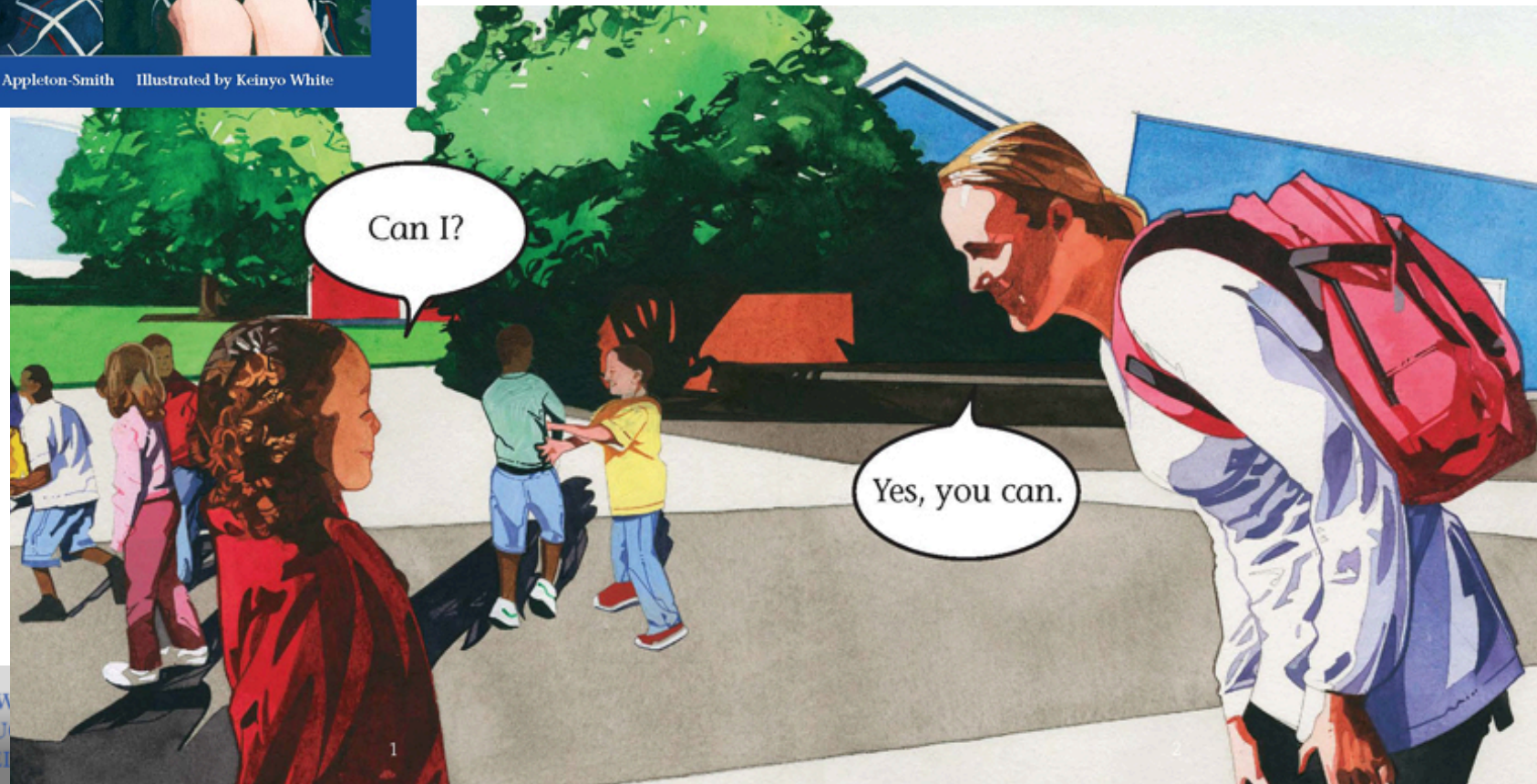
CHANGING MINDS



Written by Laura Appleton-Smith Illustrated by Keinyo White

Add your own “story starter” and “helper text”

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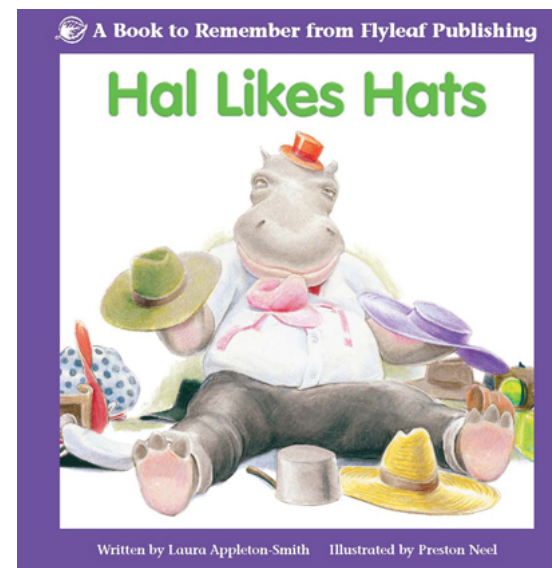
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MINDS

Hal has go hats.
Hal has stop hats.



10



The top hat tips.
Hal slips.



18



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CHANGING MINDS

Aligned Instruction:

Teach transfer by focusing on target words

- Provide additional “mini-lessons” (to match words in books)
 - phonics instruction/decodable words
 - high-frequency words, and with immediate corrective feedback.
- Focus on high-frequency words, both irregular/temporarily irregular and decodable words (use our list or other lists)
- Create games (Bingo, Memory, etc.)



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CHANGING MINDS

Sample Pages from Level 7B Book & Warm-Up

Pam asked, "Dan, did you get a big cut? If it is a big cut, we would help you take care of it."

Dan said, "No, I did not get a big cut. Look at it. It is just a little scratch."

Decodability

High-Frequency (sight words)

14

Warm-Up

Say the Letter-Sound

i m wh s o

Sound It Out

block did got him just

Read It

first of how next said



Sample Pages from Level 9 Book & Warm-Up

Sound-spelling patterns
& common word parts

Warm-Up

Read the Groups

snow snows snowing

run runs running

Read the Parts

kit chen kitchen kitchen

mit tens mittens mittens

Lesson practice directly
linked to books

Sam ran to tell his mom about the snow. She was still in bed. Sam said, "Look outside! It has been snowing! Everything has white snow on it! Will you please help me get ready to go outside? There are so many things I want to do."

Mom said, "Sam, I am not ready to get up yet. I think Dad went to the kitchen to make some eggs. You can ask Dad to help you."

"Dad is home?" asked Sam with a smile. Sam ran to the kitchen.



6

Picture support for
key content words

Picture Words

angel angels ball balls

carrot chocolate window

Story Starter

This is a story about Sam and his dad having fun one day when it snowed.



Effective Instructional Techniques

- Explicit Instruction (e.g., model blending by stretching and connecting with words like “sit”)
- Provide immediate corrective feedback
- Use errorless learning, as needed



Aligned Instruction:

Use books as opportunity to develop oral language

Developing Children's Oral Language Skills Through Dialogic Reading *Guidelines for Implementation*

Kylie S. Flynn

- engaging students in discussion about the stories and topics, relating those to their lives

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CHANGING MINDS

Book Reading Options: Echo Reading

- For students with minimal skills or with a new level
- Typically used for students just beginning to read
- Highly scaffolded, so use only as long as needed

Reminder: Only the teacher (or tutor/helper) reads the Helper Text in the gray boxes.

1. Teacher reads a sentence, pointing to each word
2. Student “echoes” by reading the same sentence, pointing to each word

Error Correction:

I: Listen. (The teacher repeats the sentence, pointing to each word.)

We: Say it with me. (Teacher and students practice together.)

You: Your turn. (The students practice independently.)

Repeat the sentence.



Reminder: Only the teacher (or tutor/helper) reads the Helper Text in the gray boxes.

Book Reading Options (cont.)

1:1 or Taking Turns

- Works well with very small groups; disadvantage is wait time
- Increases independence

Choral reading (unison)

- Highly scaffolded, so be careful not to overuse

Whisper reading

- Students read very quietly to themselves
- Teacher listens, rotating among students as needed
- Provides more practice; works well as students skills progress



Book Reading Options: Error Correction

If student(s) miss a word (say wrong word or take than 2-4 seconds to say a word):

Reminder: Only the teacher (or tutor/helper) reads the Helper Text in the gray boxes.

I: Listen. That word is _____.

We: Say it with me. (Teacher and student(s) say word.)

You: Your turn. What word? (Student(s) repeat the word.)

Read the sentence again. (The student(s) reads from the beginning of the sentence.)

Notes:

- If students become frustrated, use echo reading for a while.
- May want to skip “we” step or shorten directions to:
 - **That word is _____.**
 - **What word?** (Student(s) repeats word.)
 - **Read the sentence again.** (Student(s) reads from beginning of the sentence)



Book Reading Options: Paired Reading

Details

- Increases practice time and independence; strong research support
- Students need to be taught procedures
- Teacher role is the same (monitor closely; provide feedback)

Procedures

- Students take turns reading text with a partner
- When student is not reading, he/she is the “coach”
- Encourage students to use same correction procedure as teacher

That word is _____.

What word? (Student repeats word.)

Read the sentence again. (Student reads from the beginning of the sentence.)



Finally...

- Contact us with questions and comments!
- See our website for more information, including this powerpoint, and free sample e-books
- Fill out the “For More Information” form and note that you were at CEC and we’ll give you a coupon code for one free level of electronic materials (use the free placement test to decide which level you would like)
- FriendsOnTheBlock.com
- jallor@smu.edu
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