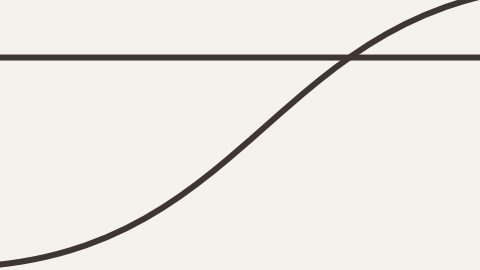# Description

Selecting texts for early readers has become a hot topic. Teachers need to be expert choosers of their instructional texts with knowledge of various book types, including leveled, decodable, and patterned. We will explore what the research actually tells us, as we dive into how to select the best texts for scaffolding our students' needs in early reading. Topics include types of early books, selection criteria from research, and honoring teachers as professional decision-makers.
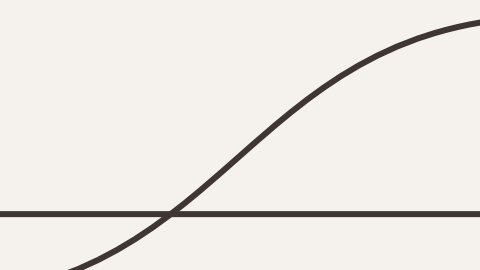
12:30 - 1:30 EST   (Manitoba time 11:30 - 12:30)

 Friday, October 25

Teacher Expertise
## in
Selecting Texts
for Early Readers

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@ssvincent

Session Overview

- **Introduction**

- **Historical Perspective:** Where have we been?
  - *The Eras Tour*

- **Research:** What guidance do we have?

- **Types & Purposes of Books**: How do we use our teacher expertise to match students to instructional purposes and then to books?

- **Selection:**
  - What criteria?

- **Final Thoughts / Discussion**

We've been debating for a lonnggg time!
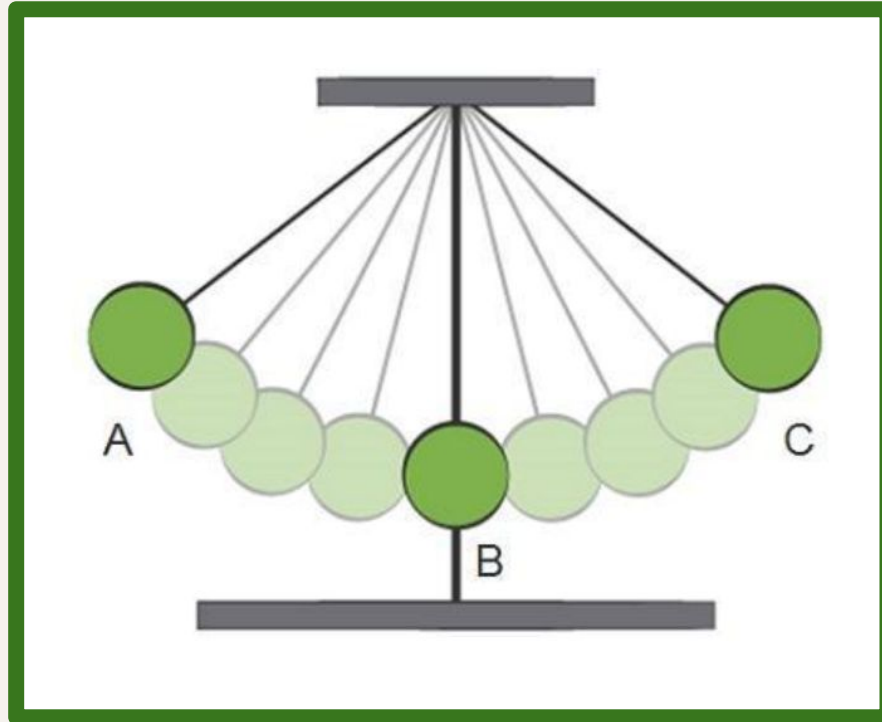
Bottom Up   vs.   Top Down

Part-to-whole   vs.   Whole-to-part

Code-based   vs.   Meaning-based (against Ohio law)

A teacher's theoretical approach will influence their choice of text type.

AND

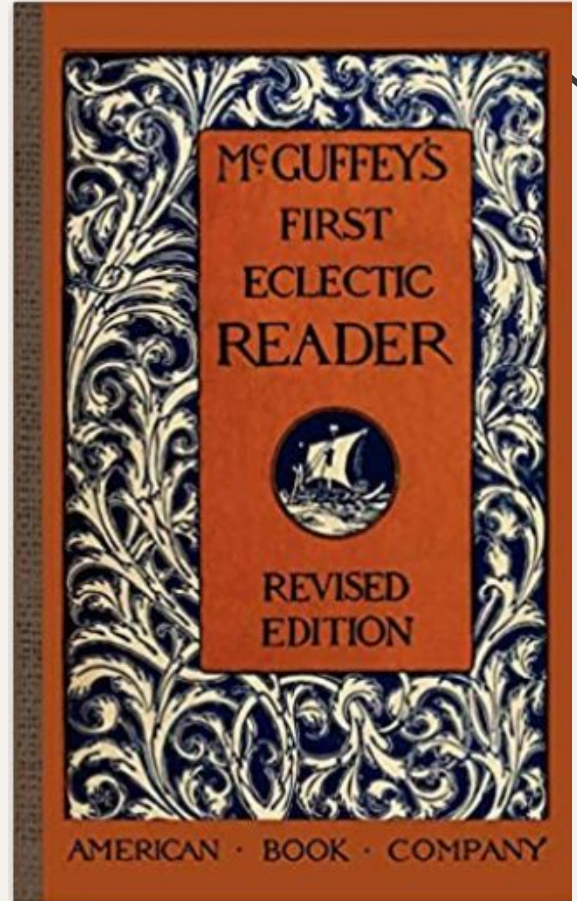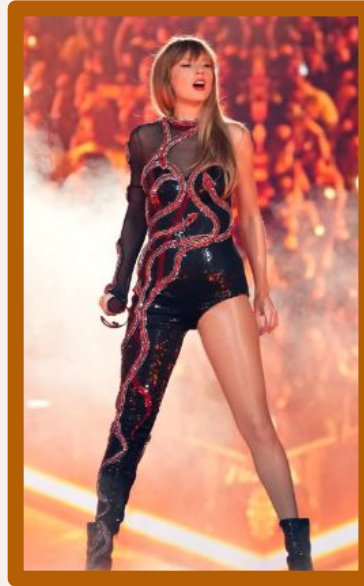*Book choices send messages to children about what reading is.*

The Eras Tour

The McGuffy Readers Era

- Miami University
  - Oxford, Ohio

- Mid-1800's

- HFW

- Decodable words

- Stories children would like

Lesson 1
The New Book

Here is John.
And there are Ann and Jane.
Ann has got a new Book.
It is the First Book.
Ann must keep it clean.
John must not tear the book.
But he may see how he can learn.

John   and   there   learn

The Dick and Jane Era

- mid-1900's

- "Whole Word"

- Top Down

Look, Jane.
Look, look.
See Dick.

384 × 500   12

Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA)
(The What-Were-They-Thinking Era)

- 1960's

- Bottom Up

- Our code is too confusing for early readers, so we will make a code with training wheels.

Consonants

b	c	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	m	n
b	k	d	f	g	h	dʒ	k	l	m	n
bib	cake	dad	fife	gag	hat	judge	kick	lull	mime	noon

ŋ	p	r	s	z	t	v	w	y	z	ʒ
ŋ	p	r	s	z	t	v	w	j	z	ʒ
sing	pipe	rour	sauce	is	tot	valve	will	yes	zoo	vision

Joined consonants — **Short vowels**

ch	ſh	th	th	wh	a	e	i	o	u	ω

tʃ	ʃ	θ	ð	ʍ	æ	ɛ	ɪ	ɒ	ʌ	ʊ
church	shush	thin	then	whale	at	egg	in	odd	up	book

Long vowels / diphthongs

ɑ	æ	au	ɛɛ	œ	ω	ue	ie	oi	ou

ɑ:	eɪ	ɔ:	i:	oʊ	u:	ju:	ɪɑ	ɪc	aʊ
father	ape	all	eat	oak	oose	use	ice	oil	owl

Also, **ᴚ** is used following a vowel letter to write the sound in "earn" etc.

The Basal Readers & Workbooks Era

- 1960's & 1970's
- Bottom Up

The Whole Language Era

- 1980's

- Top Down

The No Child Left Behind Era

- 2001
- Bottom Up

fak	wab	ij	vim	sug	nin	kud
zan	bes	dof	vub	daj	wac	fef
duf	tas	bim	lol	fug	buc	zad
ik	em	zuz	puz	neg	zad	poz
bez	oc	ziv	wib	noz	huz	kav
nes	viz	vac	jov	zib	yis	sep
zuc	uc	loj	pas	wil	hib	nin
pab	hig	tat	nup	wup	em	ij

1000 × 1294

The Balanced Literacy Era

- 2010's - 2021
- Top Down **&** Bottom Up

(but viewed as Top Down)

- MSV

"I like this blue and yellow hat," said Harry.

He went off to school with his new hat on.
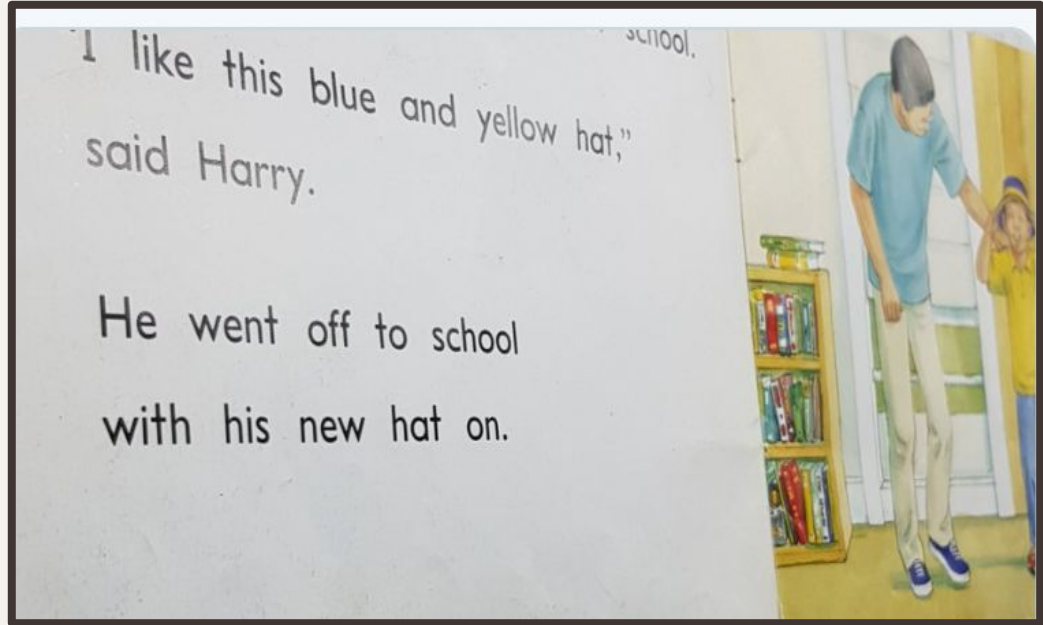
Science of Reading Era

What will we make of this era? How will we influence it?

Who will create it?
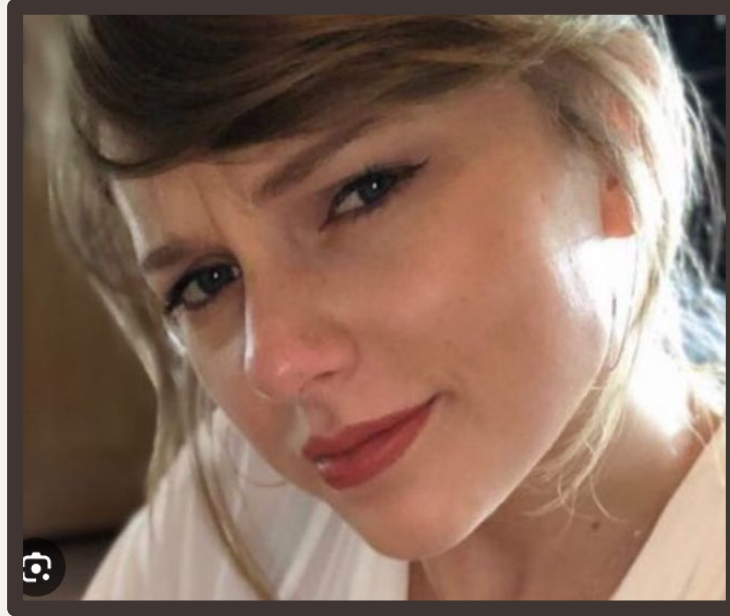
Research on book types

Let's read about instructional books!

(Most existing research is on books used in intervention.)

1. Birch, Sharp, Miller, Ritchie, Ledger: <u>Literature Review on Decodable and Leveled Books</u>

2. Reading Research Quarterly: <u>Text Types and Relation to Efficacy in EL</u>

3. EdWeek: <u>Decodables: Boring, Useful, or Both?</u>

4. T. Shanahan: <u>How Decodable do Decodables Need to Be?</u> *and* <u>Should We Teach with Decodables?</u>

5. H.A. Mesmer on Heinemann blog: <u>Fear Not the Decodable</u>

6. Reading Rockets article: <u>Using Decodable Books</u>

7. Backseat Linguist: <u>Shaky Science on Decodables</u> blog citing research

8. BOOKS:

   ○ Choosing and Using Decodable Texts, Wiley Blevins

   ○ Teaching Reading Sourcebook, CORE Learning, Honig, Diamond, Gutlohn

   ○ Letter Learning and First Words, Heidi Anne Mesmer

<u>Lit Review on Decodable and Leveled Book</u>s (Birch, Sharp, Miller, Ritchie, Ledger)

❖ Individual students at various stages and ages should be offered a **variety of texts,** including reading books, for their reading development (Brown, 2000; Jenkins et al., 2003; Mesmer, 1999, Beverley et al., 2009).

❖ **Exclusive use of one type of book has a detrimental effect.** Rather, carefully selected and varied reading materials leads to more positive outcomes and attitudes to reading (Mesmer, 2005; Wood, 2005)

❖ Quality instructional reading materials for students need to include **multiple features** and components to accommodate the complexity of reading and to provide opportunities for the explicit teaching of specific components (Mesmer, 2010; Cheatham et al, 2014).

❖ The **teacher's expertise and judgment are just as important** as the model, approach, or text (Rightmyer et al., 2006).

Fear Not the Decodable (Mesmer)

❖ Final note:

"I believe[1] that decodables are most useful for propelling children through the period in which they are learning to decode words or blend sounds together. **This period is usually 2-3 months.** Once a child can quickly and **easily blend c-v-c words with all short vowels, I believe they no longer need decodables**. I would also add that these words should also include c-c-v-c words that contain consonant blends or digraphs (e.g. ship, plan)....**Typically, this point will occur in spring of Kindergarten or fall/winter of first grade**."

How Decodable do Decodables Need to Be? _and_ Should We Teach with Decodables? (Shanahan)

❖ "That's why it is so important that we **not overly constrain the decodabilty** of the texts that young children read, and why I recommend using a combination of both highly decodable texts and controlled vocabulary readers. **We want kids actively looking to see spelling patterns, including ones that have not been taught.**"

❖ "...kids with more advanced first-grade decoding abilities i**ncrease their decoding** competency faster when working with text than from explicit phonics instruction (Connor, Morrison, & Katch, 2004) and why **the spelling patterns in the texts children read can have a bigger impact on their phonics development than the explicit teaching sequence** (Guthrie & Seifert, 1977), and why **word repetition** in these early texts can be more potent (Mesmer, Cunningham, & Hiebert, 2012)."

❖ "That's why studies have found **no particular learning benefit from limiting young children's reading to decodable texts alone** (Jenkins, Peyton, Sanders, & Vadasy, 2004), why **constraining texts to match immediate pedagogical goals may have long-term, negative, unintended consequences for students' word reading abilities** (Venezky & Johnson, 1973), and why **research supports developing a "mental set for diversity" rather than a "mental set for consistency" in young readers** (Gibson & Levin, 1975)."

Choosing & Using Decodable Texts   (Blevins)

❖ State definitions vary: Texas- 80%   California- 75-80%
No research evidence for those percentages.

❖ Blevins study: Decodable vs. trade book by famous children's authors.
Decodable group tested higher on posttests.
(The control group used *trade books*.)

❖ Jenkins, Peyton, Sanders, Vadasy (2004): Decodable and "predictable"
groups showed **no difference** on posttest.

❖ Cheatham, Allor (2012): Decodability is one important criteria, but **texts
need multiple criteria** to make them effective tools.

❖ **Criteria**
  ➢ **Comprehensible** (able to be understood)
  ➢ **Instructive** (opportunity to practice skills)
  ➢ **Engaging** (kids want to read them and talk about them)

Teaching Reading Sourcebook (CORE Learning)

❖ No research on optimum percentage of decodable words or what "defines" a decodable book

➢ No empirical base for states requiring 75-80% decodable words

❖ Criteria for effective decodables:

➢ "Majority" of words should be decodable (>51%)

➢ Must contain high frequency sight words

➢ Must be coherent and comprehensible

Soooo….

The best instructional books seem to:

- have meaningful stories which engage readers
- have opportunities to practice decoding skills
- but do not constrain decodability too strictly
- contain naturally occurring high frequency words to maintain natural language
- represent a variety of text types
- match a reader's development (ie. "Decodable" texts aren't needed for very long.)

Book Types

Types of Texts: Definitions (Part of the Problem)

❖ Predictable / Patterned (often part of leveled sets)

❖ Decodable (defined how?)

❖ Leveled (defined by whom?)

❖ Authentic children's literature (trade books)

Patterned
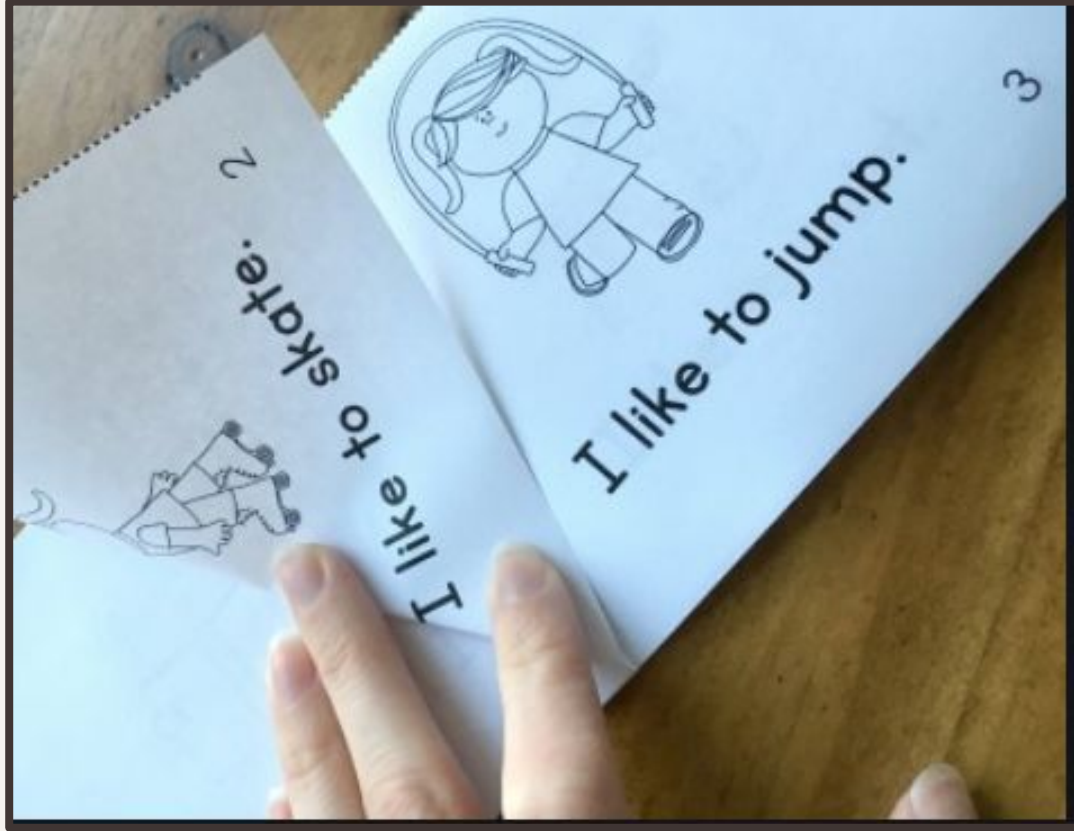
Choose student books with intention.

Instructional Purpose: Concepts About Print (1-1)

Book Type: Patterned

Rationale: Child needs to learn how print works and they do not have decoding skills.

* Use for a VERY short time!!!

Decodable Text: Bad and Good Examples
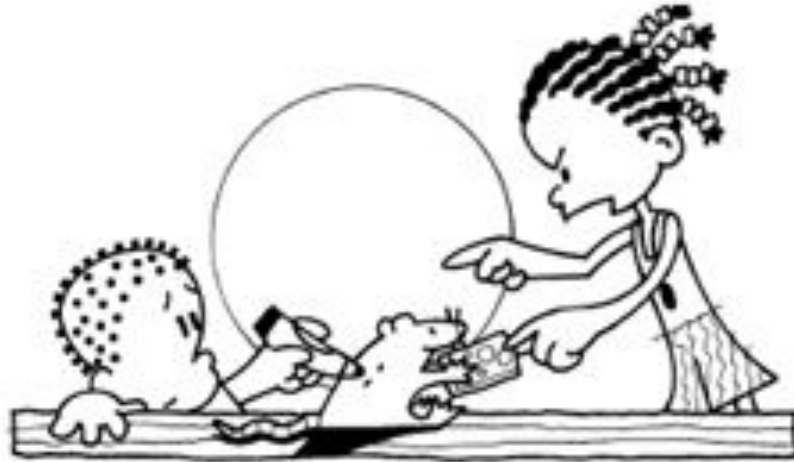
Tot put tan dots on Pat's rat.
"No, Tot. I do not like dots
on my rat," said Pat.

8

Michelle K-Janke @mkjreads · Jun 17   ···

I can't help but go to a place of meaning here . . .Why is there a period after the subject—A map? Who taps a map or a pin? Usually a pin is pushed into a map to mark a specific place . . .I have seen a pin on(not in) the map nor 'in' the tin. #meaningmatters #readingformeaning

Lesson 9: n /n/

UFLI
FOUNDATIONS

The Pin in the Map

Illustrate the story here:

A map. I tap the map.

A tin. A pin is in the tin.

I tap the pin. I tap it in.

The pin is in the map.
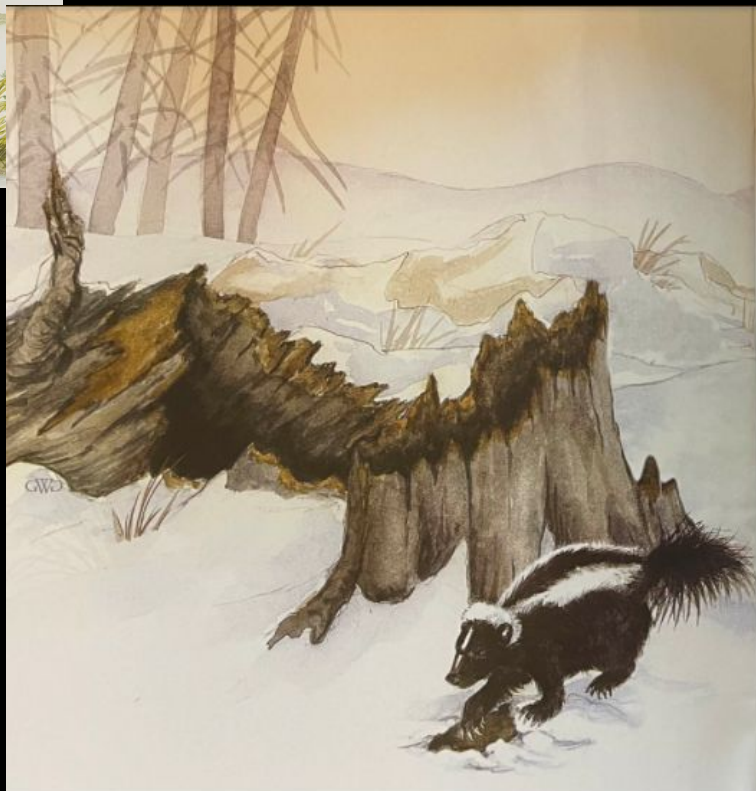
The Skunk
by Kenni Alden
Illustrated by Gail Guth

She naps a lot but must come out for water.

She sniffs. There isn't much to snack on.

Collaborative Classroom, Being a Reader

Run and Hop

ProjectText.org — book written by Pat Cunningham

Tim and I play games.

We run up the hill.
We run and run. Tim wins.

Tim and I hop down the hill.
We hop and hop. I win!

Choose student books with intention.

Instructional Purpose: Practice targeted phonics principles in context

Book Type: Decodable (well written)

Rationale: Child needs to practice newly learned phonics skills in meaningful contexts.

Heidi Anne Mesmer article: Do's and Don'ts

Leveled Books: Bad and Good Examples
The Monkey Bridge - Level 7

Number one monkey
went over the river.

4

Number two monkey
went over the river.

5

Ben helps Mom with the painting.

And then along comes Jake!

5

Road Builders
by David Earl

Big Machines Series
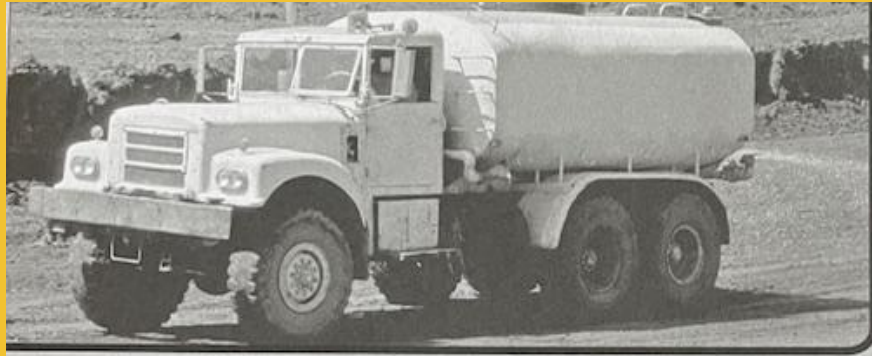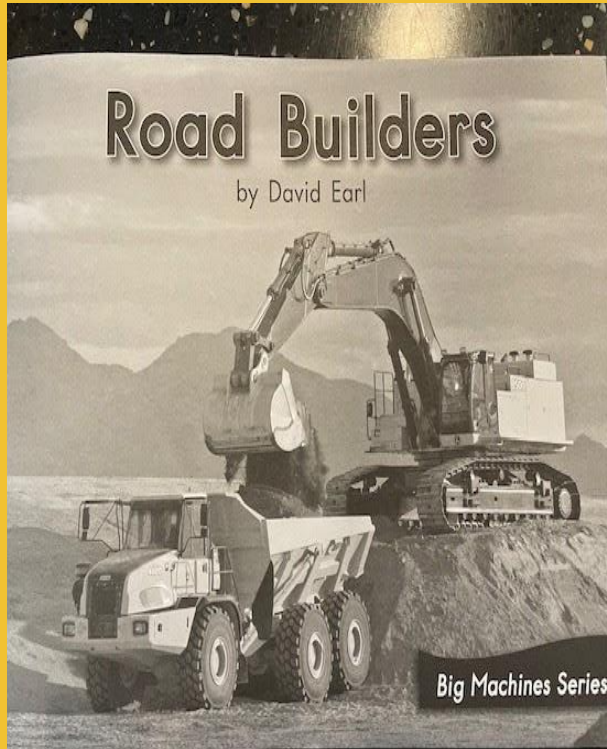
A truck sprays water
on the new road.
The water wets down
the dirt and dust.

A Home on Its Back
by Lorraine Lordi
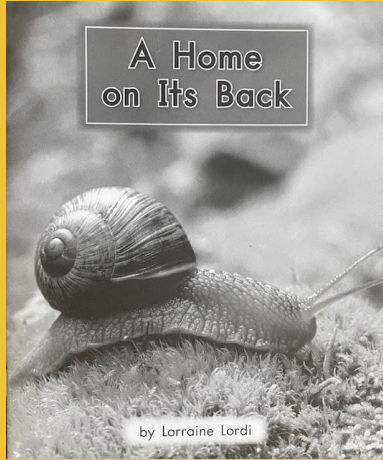
A snail needs a safe home.
Birds and snakes
eat snails.
But a snail can hide
in its shell.

8

9
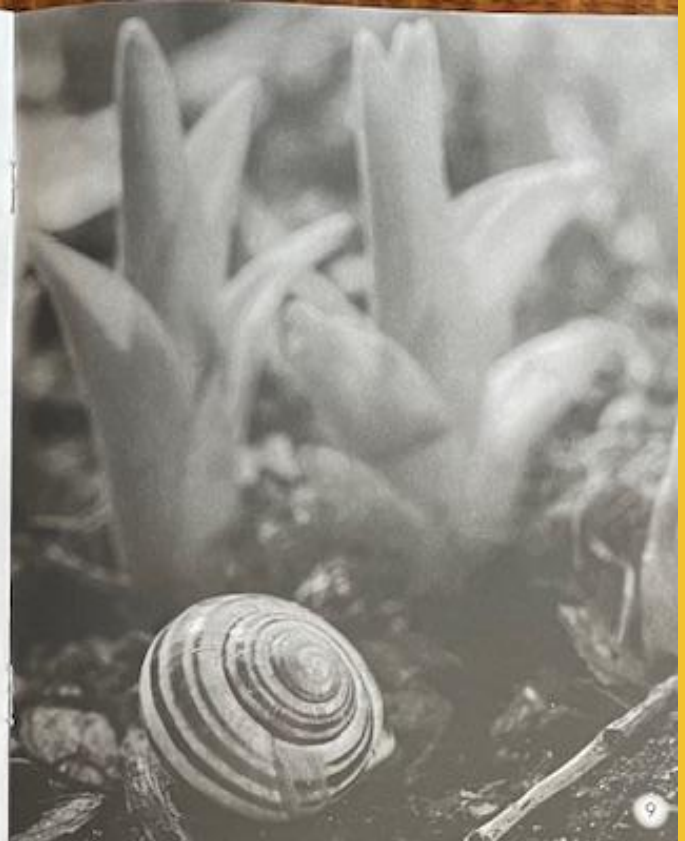
Choose student books with intention.

Instructional Purpose: Practice multiple phonics principles and comprehension skills in context

Book Type: Leveled (well written) *(only 'leveled' because someone slapped a level on it!)*

Rationale: Child needs to practice multiple phonics and comprehension skills in meaningful contexts.

A Quote from Timothy Shanahan

"Personally—based on my own experiences as a primary grade teacher—<mark>I would use all of these kinds of text</mark>. My thinking then, and my thinking now, is that the way to prevent someone from being hurt by over dependence on a crutch is to employ a variety of crutches; <mark>deriving the benefits of each, while trying to minimize potential damages.</mark>"

Tim Shanahan, blog

Criteria for Book Selection with Teacher Expertise

- Engaging story (comprehensible)
  Otherwise, use word lists.

- Natural language (comprehensible)

- High frequency words (known by sight)
  Relates to oral language and fluency

- Decoding opportunities that match student skill and increase in complexity in a systematic way

- Supports learning increasingly complex print concepts (font, print size and layout, punctuation)

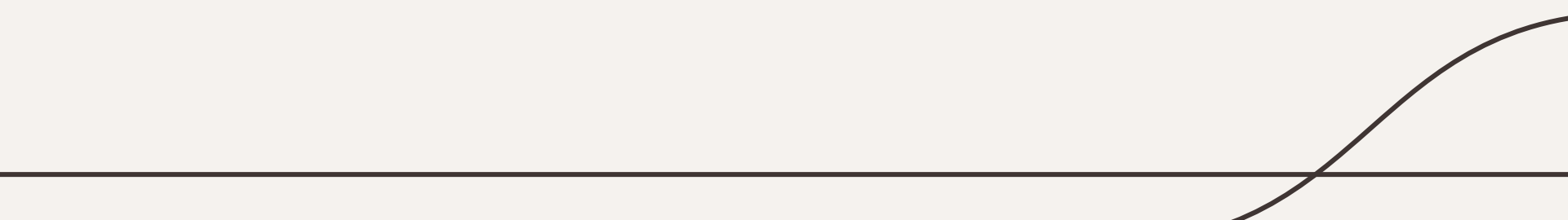**Sources: Wiley Blevins, Heidi Anne Mesmer, Rachael Gabriel, John Shefelbine**

Which words are:

- Decodable by students?
- high frequency?
- content words?
- words needed for natural language or story?

Textproject.org (Nell Duke)
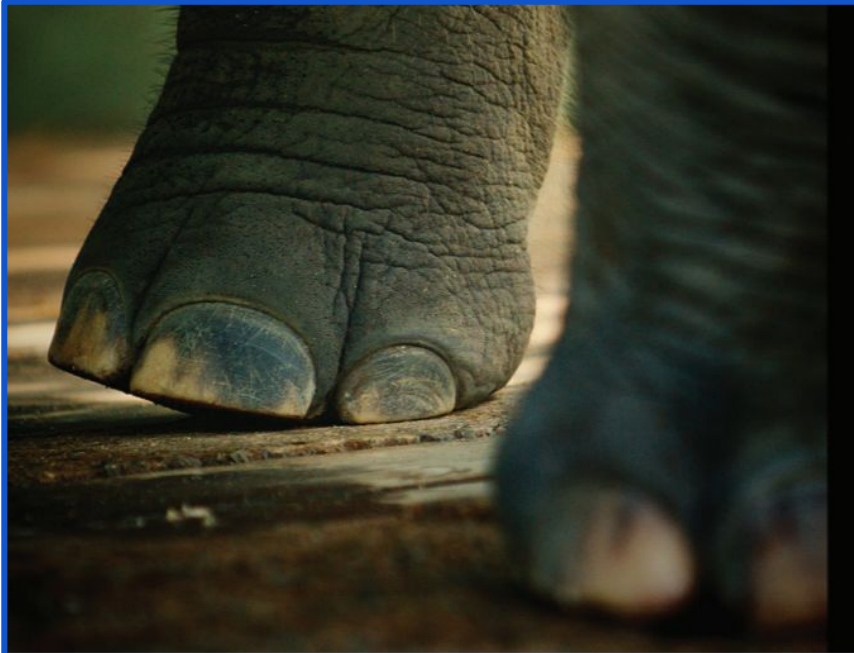
See elephants have nails on their feet too! They only have two or three. I have five.

Let's practice examining:

★   decodability

★   use of HFWs

★   use of natural language

★   how engaging and meaningful the story is

Let's examine some books:

★ Count the number of:
  ○ 'decodable' words
  ○ HFW (not decodable by student)
  ○ content/interest words

★ Determine the percentage of each.

  ○ # of decodable words ÷ # total words x 100.

★ Rate the book for:
  ○ Natural language (bad 1 -5 good)
  ○ Engaging story (1-5)

Decodable - 63%
Non Decodable HFW - 37%
Other - 0%
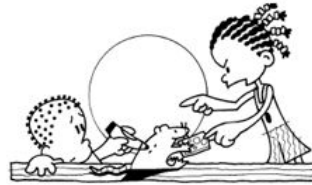
Tot put tan dots on Pat's rat.
"No, Tot. I do not like dots
on my rat," said Pat.
8

decodable (12)	Tot (2), tan, dots(2), on (2), Pat's, rat(2), not, Pat
HFW (7)	put, No, I, do, like, my, said
Other	—

Rate 1-5 for:
- Natural language
- Engaging story

Tot put tan dots on Pat's rat. "No, Tot. I do not like dots on my rat," said Pat.

8

THE ROLLER COASTER, SET C1, LEVEL 6/D

4

"Can we go on it, Dad?" said Carlos.

"Can we, **please**?" said Maria.

Dad looked at the roller coaster.

Then he looked at Carlos and Maria.

26 Total Words

First grade - learning vowel patterns
(short, long, diphthongs, r-controlled)

Decodable	can(2), we (2), go, on, it, Dad (2), Carlos(2), please, at(2), coaster, he, and
Non-D HFW	said(2), looked (2), the, then (?)
Other	Maria(2), roller, Carlos (?)

Decodable - 65%   HFW- 23%   Other - 12%

THE ROLLER COASTER, Set C1, Level 6/D

4

"Can we go on it, Dad?" said Carlos.

"Can we, **please**?" said Maria.

Dad looked at the roller coaster.

Then he looked at Carlos and Maria.

26 Total Words

Rate 1 - 5 for:
- Natural Language
- Engaging Story

The Skunk
by Kenni Alden
illustrated by Gail Guth

She naps a lot but must come out for water.
She sniffs. There isn't much to snack on.
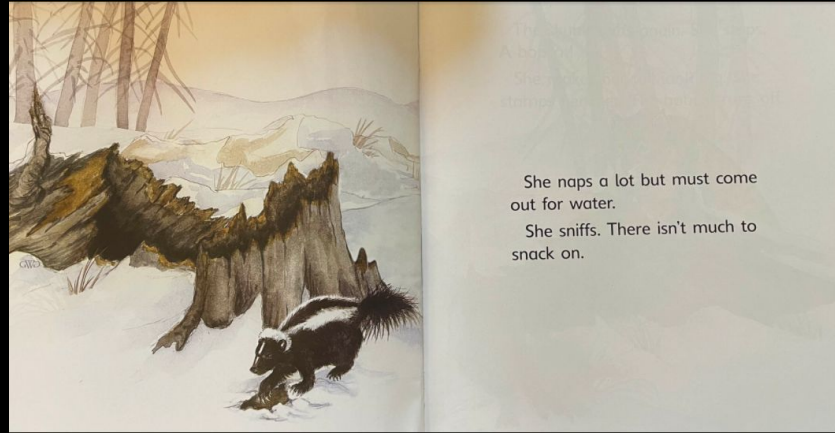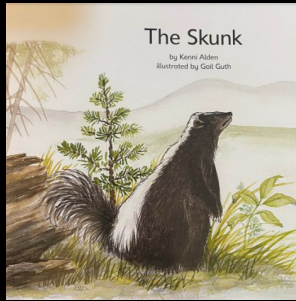
18 words

She naps a lot but must come out for water.
She sniffs. There isn't much to snack on.

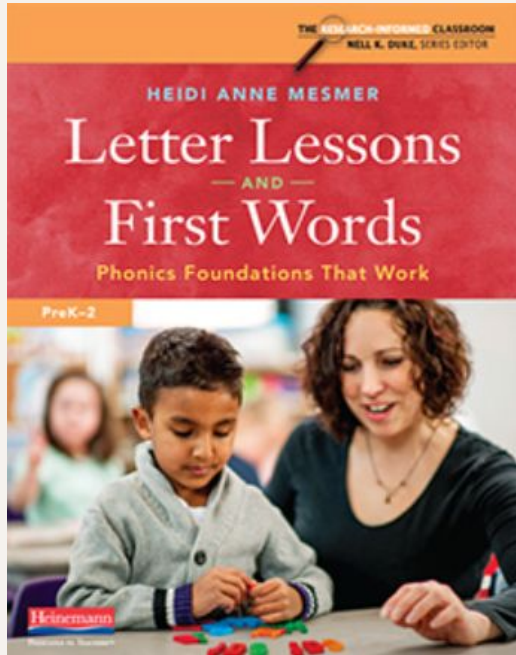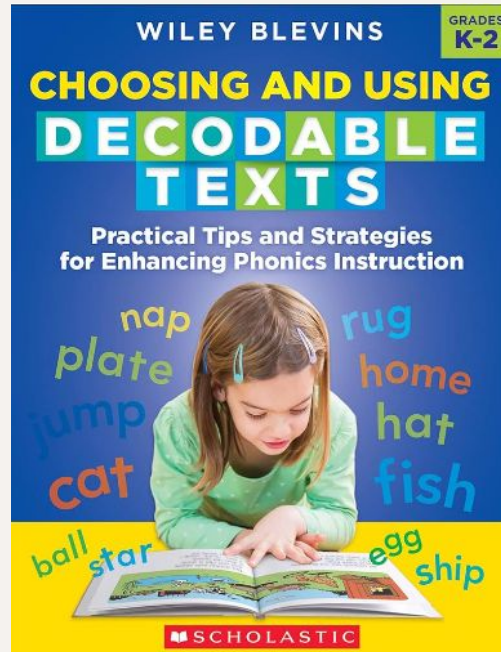Decodable: 61%   Non-decod HFW: 33%   Other: 5%

Are we choosing and rejecting books based on their features or based on the publisher's label?
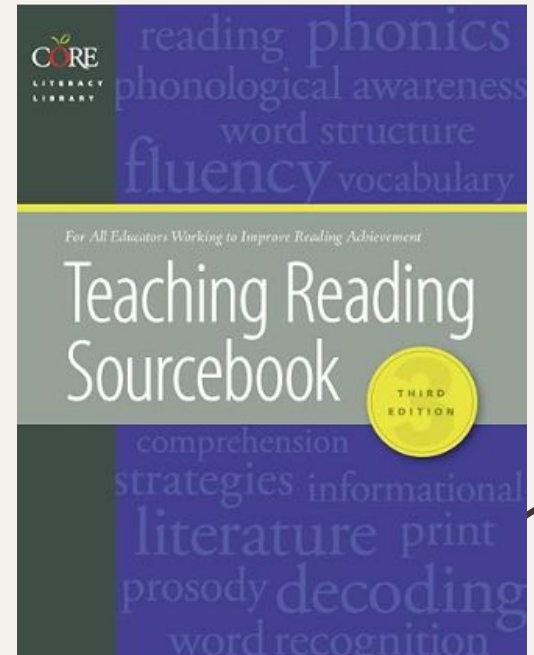
Want to explore more?

Heidi Anne Mesmer

Wiley Blevins

Core Learning

My take-aways from exploring text types:

- Publisher labels of "decodable" or "leveled" are not informative.

- Research has not determined optimum decodability percentages.

- Research does not support using decodable text for very long.

- Research does not support using only one type of text. No one should toss their leveled book rooms!

- Research provides us with criteria for evaluating the quality of the books we use. Several factors matter.

- TEACHER EXPERTISE MATTERS MOST.