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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

The Goldilocks' Method of Choosing Books:

EVERY ONE Reads To, With and By Every Day!

Choose "easy" books to read sometimes for enjoyment, to build fluency and confidence: 99-100% mastery of vocabulary in the book

Choose "hard" books to read sometimes to build vocabulary, understanding of story structure, and a sense of what's coming: < 90% mastery

Choose "just-right" books sometimes to practice strategies: 90-99% mastery

To Make This Method Work: Gather Books for Your Classroom Library

Search garage sales and library sales. Encourage Book Club orders like Scholastic - parents pay online now! Beg for school money. Ask parents to contribute old books. Let people know you need books as gifts. Begging, borrowing, and checking out large numbers of books from school and public libraries are all acceptable. Collect a wide variety of books: fiction, nonfiction, paperbacks, hard cover, atlases, *Guinness' Book of World Records*, almanacs, comic books, newspapers, comic strips, graphic novels, encyclopedias, series books (like *Cam Jansen*), recipe books, poetry books, mysteries, biographies, Spanish/English dictionaries, dictionaries, thesauruses, etc. Try to get 2 books of the same title so that 2 people can read the same book. Collect all levels so that students can read 3 levels of books every day - as often as possible.

Dear Parents,

We recognize that you are your child's first teacher and teacher for life. We would like to team with you to help your child make progress in reading. At all ages, it is important that each child *read 3 different levels* throughout the day as many days as possible. We are teaching children to choose independent books to read using the **Goldilocks' Method**:

Choose "easy" books to read sometimes. These are books where your child can read almost every word without help. It also might be a book about a topic your child knows a lot about. Your child can read these books independently. Easy books are a good choice for students to read aloud to you or to a brother or sister. If the book is 1-2 years below your child's reading level, he or she will build confidence and smooth and expressive reading. Easy books are best for practicing fluent reading and even trying out different voices. It is by reading easy books and magazines that all of us learn to enjoy reading.

Choose "hard (challenging)" books to read sometimes. As a general rule, if your child reads the first page of a book and misses 5 or more words, that book a challenging read. Reading these books *aloud* to your child will help build knowledge of vocabulary, a sense of story, and build excitement for what's possible. These are books your child can listen to on tape. Sometimes children select hard books about hobbies or topics in which they're interested. They enjoy the pictures and captions or trying to read the story. Your child will probably need to ask many questions when reading challenging books. Talking about what's happening in these books will build comprehension. Plus, if you read aloud, it's just plain enjoyable to listen to you. No one is ever too old for that!

Choose "just-right" books sometimes. If your child can read 9 out of 10 words on a page, that's a "just-right" book. By missing one word every so often, your child gets a chance to practice the strategies that we are teaching at school. If your child misses more words per page, it will be difficult to get any meaning from the story he or she is reading independently. If you ask your child to read a just-right book to you, it is helpful if you know what to do when he or she comes across those few unfamiliar words. It's a good idea to let your child try a variety of strategies and figure out the confusing word independently. Obviously, don't let your child get to the point of frustration. Tell your child the word once he or she has tried 2-3 strategies with your coaching. We've made some suggestions for reading together on the back of this sheet to make sure that just-right reading is always fun!

Sincerely,

Reading Alternatives

You might want to supplement reading aloud to your child or listening to your child read to you with other reading alternatives:

1. Parent reads a paragraph or page. Child reads a paragraph or page.
2. Child “reads” the pictures. Parent reads the words.
3. Child reads on tape and then listens to the tape while reading the book. Child rereads on tape if interested.
4. Parent reads dialogue of characters using different voices. Child reads narration. Or, vice versa.
5. Divide the chapter or pages into parts and assign parts. Child rehearses his part several times, asking parent for help where needed. When ready, parent and child read their parts all the way through using their best expression, speed, and voices.

Reading Aloud

When your child is reading aloud and doesn't know a word, ask several questions before saying the words. Avoid asking your child to “sound it out.” Every reader sounds out words automatically. It is the first strategy we try. So, when a child says, “What's this word?” she's saying, “I sounded out this word and I don't know it.” That gives the parent a chance to coach her in using some other strategies. The goal is independent reading - not perfect word-for-word reading. For example,

1. Wait 5-10 seconds. Give your child time to figure out the word. Tell the word only after the child has tried a few strategies. We call this “wait time”.
2. Suggest that your child look at how the word begins and match the sound to a word that makes sense in the story. Ask your child, “What word would make sense there?” Encourage risking the use of a word that makes sense in the story.
3. Suggest going back to the beginning of the sentence or page and reread. Rereading sometimes makes the word click.
4. If your child says something like, “*we was dancing*,” the parent should respond with a question, “Can we say it that way?” (Is that Standard English?) And then, explain what would make it correct Standard English and a short explanation of why.
5. Tell your child to skip over the word for a minute, read to the end of the sentence, come back, and try the word again. “Now what makes sense there?” You may even have to read a few more sentences or a paragraph for this strategy to work.
6. Use what your reader knows to get “un-confused”. We call this strategy “making connections”. Point out that sometimes the reader can find the word on another page or on the title page. Point to a rhyming word on another page to see if your child can use her knowledge of rhyme to figure out the new word. Look at root words to see if that helps. Show your child how to read the words around the unfamiliar words to get clues to what the word means. Show your child how to make accurate guesses by using what he already knows to make predictions about new words.
7. Help your child summarize to the point of the confusing part. Say, “Think about the story. Tell me what already happened. What is happening now? Now, can you predict what that word might be?” If not, then tell the child the word and explain how it makes sense to you.
8. Encourage your child to look at the pictures. “Search the pictures for clues to help you.”
9. Encourage your child to read phrases of words together rather than calling single words. For example: In the sentence, *The black and white dog jumped over the fence*, it is helpful to learn to “chunk” the words like this:

The black and white dog jumped over the fence.

Chunking leads to better speed in reading. It's much better than sounding out letter-by-letter or word-by-word but it is a skill that needs to be explained. There are no rules, really. Experienced readers read phrases, not word for word so explaining that's what readers do might be very helpful.