

National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET)

THE PRACTICAL TEACHER

This Month's Topic:

Enjoying Favorite Books with Struggling Readers Part I

By Matthew Glavach, Ph.D.

Abstract

Struggling readers are so used to being corrected as they read and sound out words that they come to anticipate the constant interruption to their reading. You enhance learning when a good match is made between the reader's ability level and the difficulty level of the book. But this match is not stagnant. Children who choose the books they read usually read more books and spend more time reading, at school and at home. If children want to read books beyond their reading abilities, solve it by reading it aloud with them. This issue of **NASET's *Practical Teacher***, written by Matthew Glavach, Ph.D., presents a way to read favorite books with struggling readers that improves their reading and enjoyment of the books. And they do not stop to sound out the words. The method can be used with struggling readers at all age levels.

Introduction

Using Children's Interests in Books

Take advantage of children's interest in books even if the books seem too difficult. For young children, choose books with repeated phrases, repetition, and rhyme. Choose books such as nursery rhymes and other books that children will want to read again and again. From libraries or book stores, books that children want to read are the ones you want to take home.

Having Children Choose Reading Books

You can enhance learning when a good match is made between the reader's ability level and the difficulty level of the book. But this match is not stagnant. Children who choose the books they read usually read more books and spend more time reading, at school and at home. If children want to read books beyond their reading abilities, solve it by reading it aloud with them.

Reading Orally with Expression

Children have advantages when reading orally. They are using more than one sensory mode. They can see, pronounce, and hear the words, which helps them remember words. When children hear you read orally with expression, you provide a model for meaningful, fluent reading. By reading orally, you provide corrective feedback.

Using Favorite Books with Struggling Readers

Before I describe the method of using favorite books to help struggling readers improve reading skills and enjoy reading, I will tell why this works with many children, including children often referred to as dyslexic.

Understanding Some Causes of Reading Failure

There are various possible causes of reading failure. The most common cause of dyslexia for English speakers is a deficit in auditory processing of the sounds of the language, phonological processing. This deficit also shows in spelling and writing. These children often have the following characteristics: experience difficulty blending sounds; read word by word; need a sense of the whole story before reading; and read without expression.

Children with dyslexia may use different areas in the brain to process reading. Many studies show unusual reliance on the right hemisphere. In dyslexics, right hemisphere regions performed functions usually handled by the more efficient left hemisphere regions.

Children with right hemisphere dominance learn to read better in a different way, by going from the whole to the parts rather than from the parts to the whole as in phonics. In phonics they break unfamiliar words into parts and then join the parts to form words. By learning letter-sound relationships, students learn a decoding formula to apply to unfamiliar words. This is great instruction for students who respond to it. But in phonics, children rely on one cuing system, one that may not be well developed.

NOTE: Not all children with reading difficulties are dyslexic, but may have problems relating to auditory and visual processing. The method to be presented here works for these children as well.

Using Repeated Reading to Help Children Enjoy and Improve Reading.

While teaching children who had difficulty learning to read with phonics instruction, I tried a different way, repeated reading. The children listened while I read a book part, usually a few sentences or a paragraph. Then, after practice, the children read the part to me. This is repeated reading. In repeated reading, children read orally until reaching a specific reading level and speed. They learn to read by repeating the reading!

Four Steps to Enjoying Favorite Books with Struggling Readers

Step 1. Introduce Story. (Requires two copies of the same book.)

With beginning-level reading books, go through pictures and discuss what the story might be about. Link stories to information the child knows. For example, if there is a picture of a park, ask, “Have you been to a park?” and “What kinds of things do you see in a park?” For older children, discuss pictures and chapter titles.

Step 2. Read Book or Book Part to Child (Slow Pacing).

- For short books, pre primer and primer, read the whole book.
- For longer books, divide book into short parts (usually a paragraph).
- For first reading, read at a slow pace, but not so slow as to lack expression. (Reading researchers have found that for some children, slowing down the reading presentation makes it possible for their brains to extract letter sounds and to organize them into the brain’s word form area to be used to decode other words.)

Tracking

- Child follows under each word with his or her writing hand. This is tracking.
- Tracking helps the child focus on each word.

-To begin, sit across from the child, tracking on top of words while the child tracks under words.

Step 3. Read Book or Book Part to Child (Regular Pacing).

- For second reading, you read same text at a regular pace with expression.
- Child continues to track under words as you read them.

Step 4. Child Reads Book Part with You.

At first, read slightly ahead. Child reads the words with you and tracks under words. Then the child reads with you. After practice, child reads alone and with expression. You read words that are difficult for the child and continue reading. (DO NOT STOP TO SOUND OUT WORDS.)

DIFFICULT BOOK PARTS

For difficult parts of books or passages, read a phrase or sentence, and then have the child read right after you. Then read several sentences or more as child is able. For very difficult parts, read the part and have child read after you, but do not have child read alone. Use your judgment.

Is the Child Learning to Read or Only Memorizing Passages?

The child is developing general word recognition skills while practicing reading.

READING CHART, Summary of 4 Steps

➡ STEP 1. Introduce Story. (Requires 2 Identical Copies of a Book)

- With beginning reading books, go through pictures and discuss what the story might be about. Link stories to information the child knows.
- For older children, discuss pictures and chapter titles.

➡ STEP 2. Read Book or Book Part to Child. (Slow Pacing)

- For first reading, read at a slow pace, but not so slow as to lack expression.
- For short books, pre primer and primer, read the whole book.
- For longer books, divide book into short parts. (usually a paragraph)

TRACKING

- The child follows under each word with his or her writing hand.

➡ STEP 3. Read Book or Book Part to Child. (Regular Pacing)

- You read same text at a regular pace with expression.
- Child continues to track under words as you read them.

➡ STEP 4. Child Reads the Book Part with You and by Himself or Herself

- At first, read slightly ahead. Child reads words with you and tracks under the words. Then the child reads with you.
- After practice, child reads alone. You read words that are difficult for the child and continue reading. (DO NOT STOP TO SOUND OUT WORDS.)

DIFFICULT BOOK PARTS

- For difficult parts of books or passages, read a phrase or sentence and then have the child read right after you. Then read several sentences or more as child is able. For very difficult parts, you read the part and have child read parts that are not so difficult. This helps with frustration. Use your judgment.

Conclusion

With great success the reading method has been used with hundreds of the most difficult readers, young and older struggling readers, in schools and home schools.

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About the Author

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Matthew Glavach, Ph.D., teacher, researcher, and writer, has authored and coauthored over 40 educational programs, including High Interest Teaching Systems, *HITS*, a popular music based reading program for older struggling readers, and *Reading with Donny and Marie Osmond*, an original music based reading program for younger readers. He has also authored numerous research articles related to reading improvement with struggling readers.