

Just Right Book Selection lesson by Ginger.txt

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Sent: Wednesday, September 17, 2003 9:44 PM

To: mosaic listserve

Subject: [mosaic] book selection

It's been great to hear from more of you about what you have been doing in your classroom.

I have been laying the foundation and working on procedures STILL. It seemed like forever before we even got to unpacking the boxes of books for our classroom library and "getting to know them". We spent several days doing that and making decisions about for our classroom library- how to organize our books. Spreading out a couple boxes on the tables, taking 8 minutes to view them and then rotating to the next table.

They decided to group them: nonfiction (into a few categories like animals, science, biographies, space/weather, jobs, history), picture books, brochures, mysteries, books about math, poetry, and easy books. We have yet to unpack and get to know our chapter books. I am holding them off and BOY are they chomping at the bit. I just wanted them to get their hands on shorter text while we are focusing on tricky word strategies and metacognitive thinking. They can bring a chapter book from home or from the school library and read that in between working times. Just not during independent reading quite yet.

Once most of our classroom library was in place we started to discuss (review) the whole book selection issue. Most of my kids are well versed in the "just right book" talk. But I wanted to create an anchor chart with their thinking from past learning. I have 8 round tables of 4 kids (except two tables just have 3 kids- I have 30 kids total). I had them activate their schema (what they already know) about EASY books first. Then we charted it.

EASY

- *you can read the words fluently (smooth and with an interesting voice)
- *there often are not a lot of words on a page
- *you know how to say all the words
- *there are not a lot of pages in the book
- *you have a lot of schema for the subject
- *sometimes the book has a larger font
- *you totally understand the story
- *your reading rate may be quicker
- *your thinking comes easy as you read the words

I wanted them to learn the word fluency (fluent, fluently) because to me

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that is important so I modeled disfluent reading vs. fluent reading. I told them we will be working on building our fluency throughout the year. I asked them what they like about easy books and how reading easy books can help them as a reader. I save the easy book boxes for last when we unpack and tell them that the easy books are my favorite. Setting the tone that it is acceptable to choose easy books with no stigma attached. I tell them that even if they are not where they would like to be as a reader (or as compared to others in the class) it is just their starting point. That each of them WILL GROW as a reader IF they can be honest and choose books that are not too hard. And IF they do NOT PRETEND to be reading. If a book is not just right at the MOMENT it doesn't mean they will NEVER be ready to read that book. But if they hide the truth and continue to choose books that are too hard, it won't help them get where they want to be. We talked a lot about that.

Then we talked about CHALLENGING books next. How everyone wants to be reading the latest favorite books. That even if they can read the words- that is NOT reading. Reading is making meaning and UNDERSTANDING what you are reading. Even the idea of having a conversation in your head AS you are reading is as important as the word level you are reading. I asked them to relax about the rush to just read chapter books (although I DO have very strong word readers) and to concentrate more on the enjoyment and meaning making parts of reading. I said, "You are only 8 years old. There is plenty of time for HARD books. Don't rush it!" Here is our CHALLENGING books category:

CHALLENGING

- *many of the words are too hard to decode (failed a five finger test)
- *you don't know what the tricky words MEAN
- *your reading becomes choppy more than it is fluent
- *you don't have any schema for the subject
- *there are often a lot of words on the page
- *often the font is small
- *you lose focus as you are reading
- *you are not enjoying the book because you have to do too much word work
- *your thinking is confused
- *your reading rate slows way down

THEN we charted JUST RIGHT. I save that for last as this is the category I want them to strive for. We talk about how a just right book is just on the EDGE of your comfort zone. You know it's got a taste of challenging but not too much. Either a couple challenging words or the subject of the book is new for you or you are just about ready for the text level in the book. But I stress over and over that if you are not paying attention to your thinking as you are reading and if you don't KNOW you are or are not understanding the story then the book may be too hard. I really want the thinking to be

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almost hand in hand with the decoding/word reading.

JUST RIGHT

*you can read most of the words

*you can understand what you are reading

*you enjoy the book

*you may have some schema for the subject

*you can read the book with smooth fluency but there are some choppy places

*your reading rate is just right- not too slow and not too fast

*you can figure out the tricky words and still get the meaning of the story

Before they choose books for independent reading I remind them to be honest and choose either easy or just right books. A few of each is best. Also different genre is important to choose We use the Sharon Taberski reading log to record the title, author, genre, (and we added the difficulty- easy, just right, challenging) for each day of the week. I need to start them with a "books read" list as well. The Taberski form has room for just one book each day.

I LOVE THIS TIME OF YEAR. The slower I go NOW (although it seems like we've not accomplished much yet) the better our entire year will be. I have had years where I rush through this basic procedure stuff. But I pay for it in the long run. My kids are now able to read independently almost 40 minutes and come right in from lunch and get themselves going. My afternoon 11:45-2:00 is reading workshop. I am trying independent reading BEFORE my shared lesson (or whatever stage I am at in the gradual release model) and so far that is working out fine. Today I modeled how to capture their use of the tricky word strategies on a post it note after we have done several days of work on those. They know that tomorrow they are to come right in and be watching for tricky words in their independent reading and they need to have at least 2 post its completed by the end of the time. I'll see how this goes doing it before the bulk of the lesson. Probably it will work out fine as they will be told the day before what their focus is for the next day. I will write it on the board during lunch that next day to remind them as they come in to the room.

I agree with Martha. KEEP SHARING!!!!!!!!!!!! That's how we all learn and grow.

Ginger
moderator

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