



**POPEY** 

Provincial Outreach Program

for the Early Years

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# *Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Instruction: The Science of Reading Meets the Art of Teaching*

April 13th

1:00 – 2:30pm

*Presenter:*

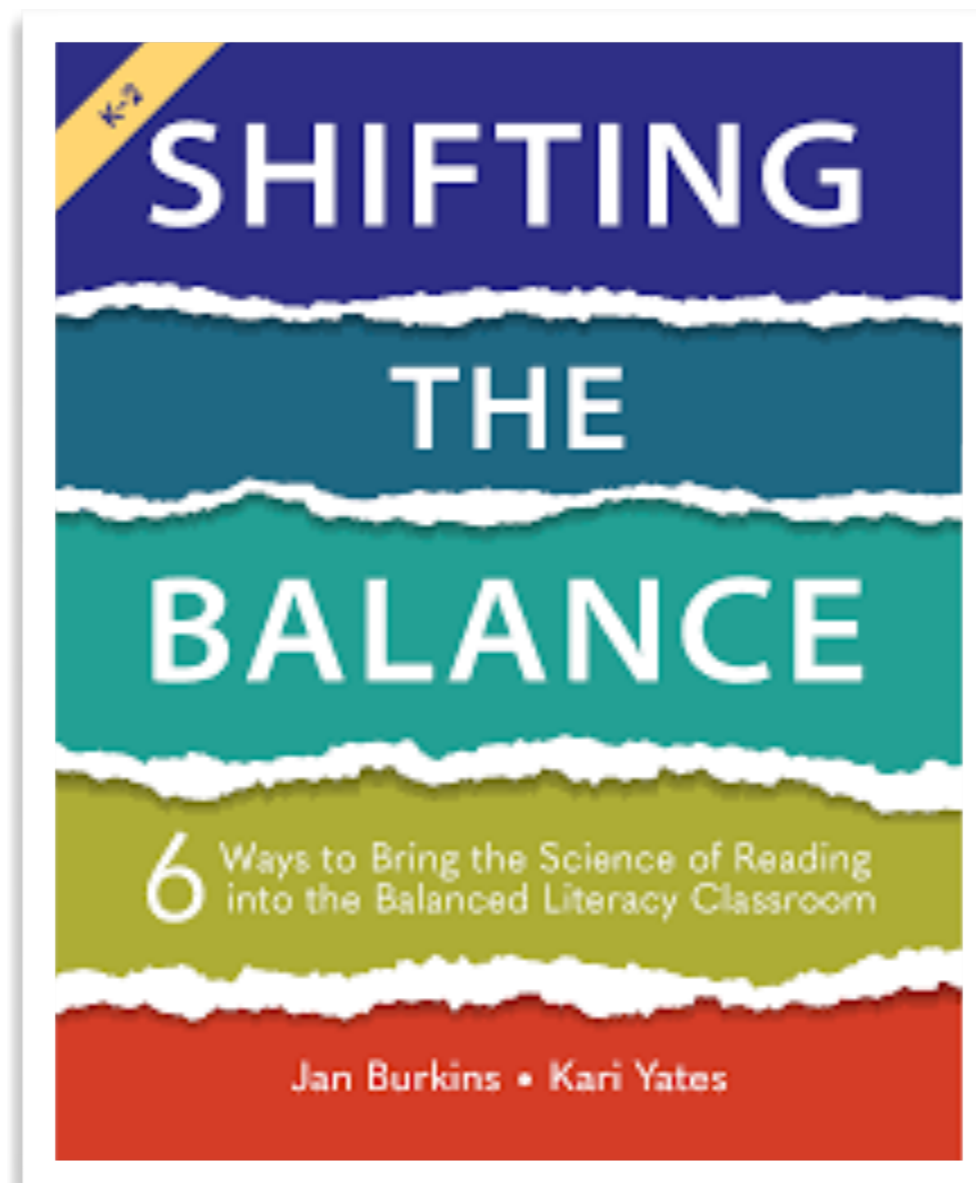
*Jen Kelly*

# Outcomes for Today



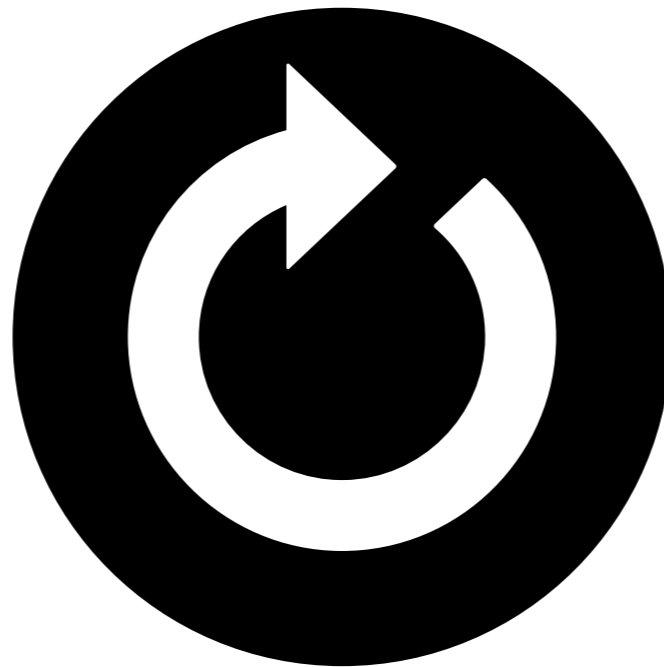
- ★ we will share strategies and resources to help align our current practices with the brain science on phonics instruction and reading comprehension.
- ★ we will focus on powerful instructional moves that support primary students as they develop their early literacy skills within a supportive framework.

# Foundational Text...



# Circle Story

*Let's make sense of our literacy instruction  
through participating in a Circle Story...*



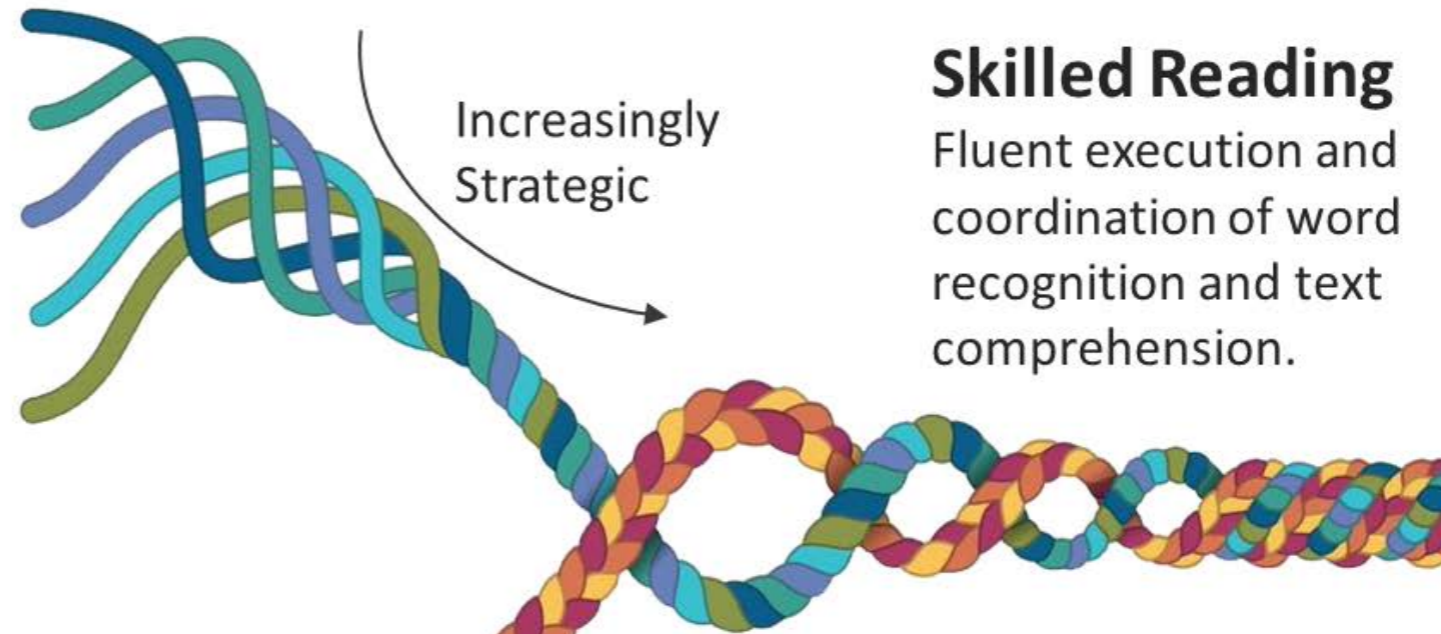
# Rethinking How Reading Comprehension Begins

- ★ By listening comprehension, we are not referring to how well children follow directions or to how well they can sit for us to offer long explanations. We are referring, instead, to their capacity to understand spoken language. This capacity develops through conversation, through hearing and sharing personal stories, and through interactions with rich texts.
- ★ Listening comprehension—which is built through language interaction—is, after all, an essential precondition of reading comprehension.

# Scarborough's Reading Rope

## Language Comprehension

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge



## Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

## Word Recognition

- Phonological Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition



Scarborough, H. 2001. Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. Pp. 97-110 in S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.) *Handbook of Early Literacy*. NY: Guilford Press.



# Scarborough's Reading Rope



“Being strong on the lower strands affords more opportunities to acquire knowledge of the upper strands and being strong on the upper strands has been shown to enable faster and more accurate decoding of unfamiliar words.

Therefore, if any of the strands gets frayed, it can hold back development of the other strands and by extension can eventually weaken the entire rope.”

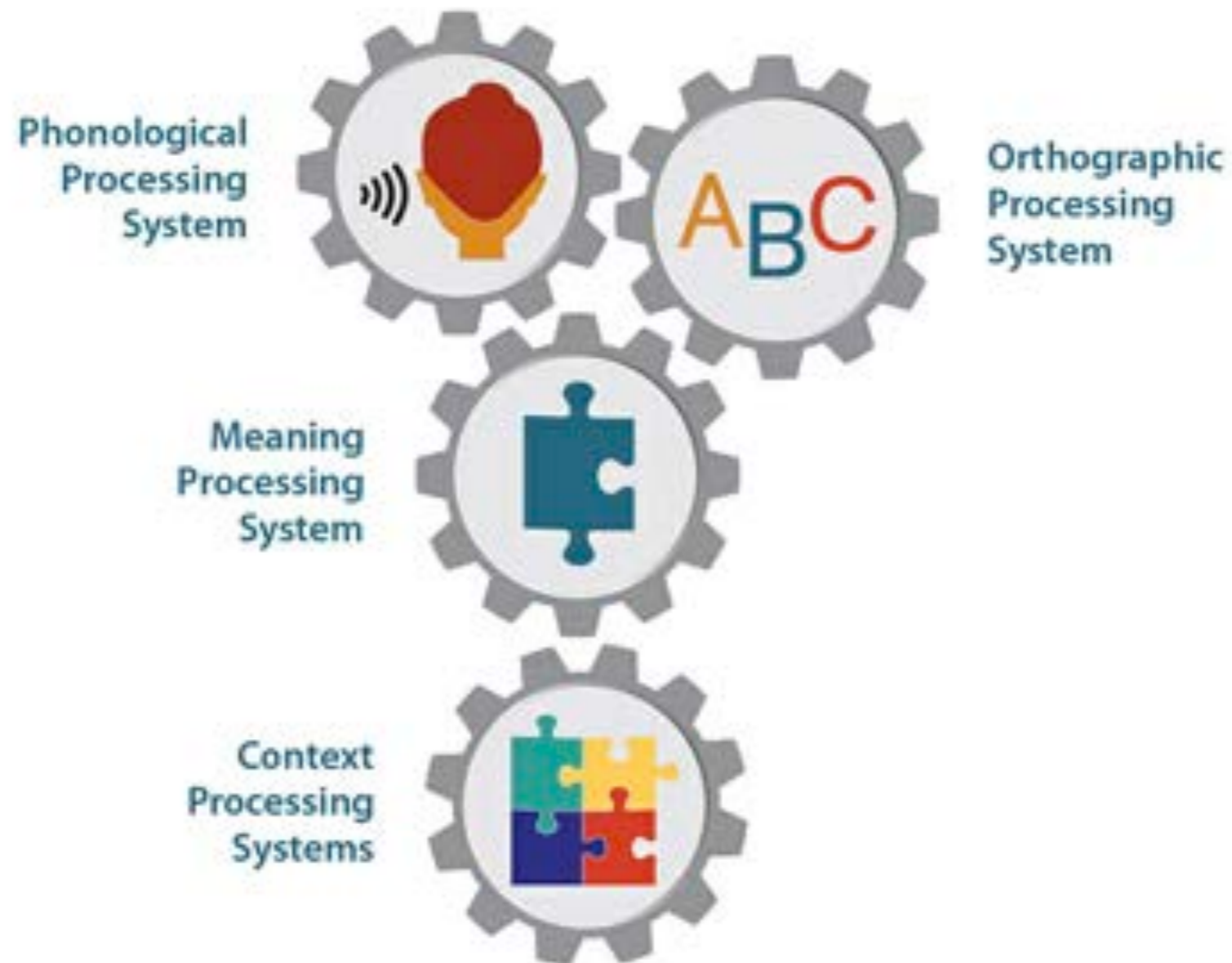
# The Importance of Language Comprehension



Our full capacity  
to understand  
the language  
all around us

# Model for Reading Comprehension

## THE FOUR-PART PROCESSING MODEL FOR READING COMPREHENSION



*Adapted from Seidenberg and McClellan (1989)*

# Language Comprehension

- \* Reading comprehension begins with spoken language
- \* To comprehend a text, enough words on the page have to activate language we already have

“We are natural born  
sense-makers”  
-Burkins



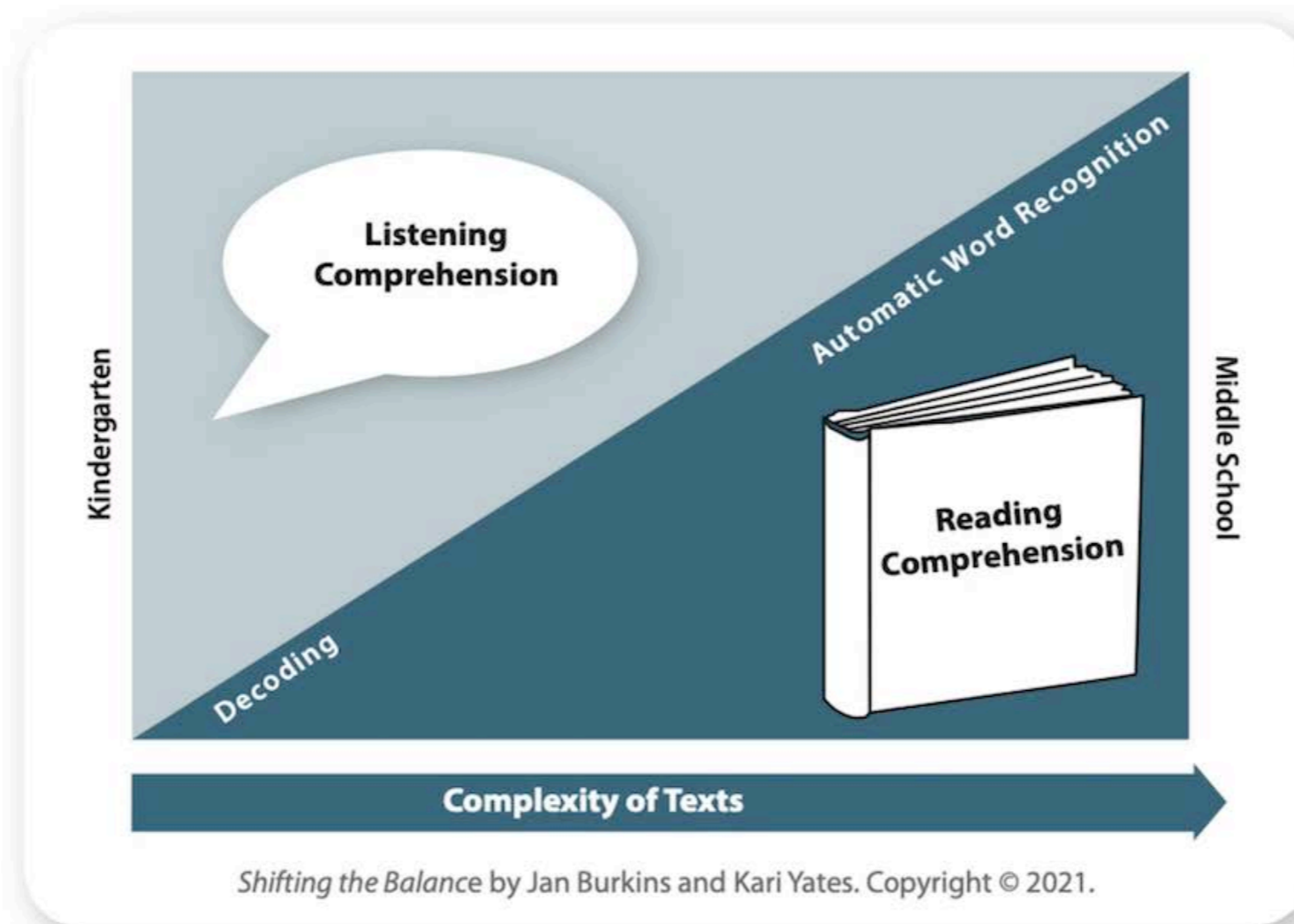
# Language Comprehension

“Comprehension problems – which tend to be linked to limited language skills – often stay hidden until later grades (Nation et al. 2004) when the complexity of the text begins to exceed the limits of the child’s listening comprehension.”



# Language Comprehension & Reading Comprehension

Access to Complex Language and Opportunities for Deep Thinking



Conversations with our students are an investment in their future reading comprehension

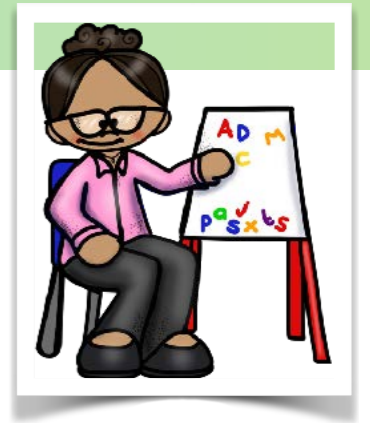
# Recommitting to Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Volumes of compelling research point to the fact that phonemic awareness instruction – teaching children to notice, articulate, and manipulate the smallest sounds in words – can pay huge dividends in getting readers off to a stronger start with both reading and writing.

–Brady 2020; Clayton et al. 2020; Suggate 2016

# Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

These work in concert to **explicitly** and **systematically** support our students as they navigate the unpredictable, complex alphabetic structure of language & print.



## Phonemic Awareness

- main focus is on **sounds**
- deals with **spoken language**
- lessons are **oral** and **auditory**
- students work with **manipulating sounds in words**
- there are **44 sounds** in the English language

## Phonics

- main focus is on **letters** and their **sounds**  
*there are 26 letters that make 44 sounds*
- deals with **written language** and **print**
- lessons are both **visual** and **auditory**
- students work with **reading** and **writing letters**  
*according to their sounds, spelling patterns, and phonological structure*
- there are **over 200 ways** to **spell** the 44 sounds we hear

Phonemic awareness **instruction** improves phonics **skills**, and phonics **instruction** improves phonemic awareness; the relationship is **reciprocal**.

–Lane & Pullen, 2004

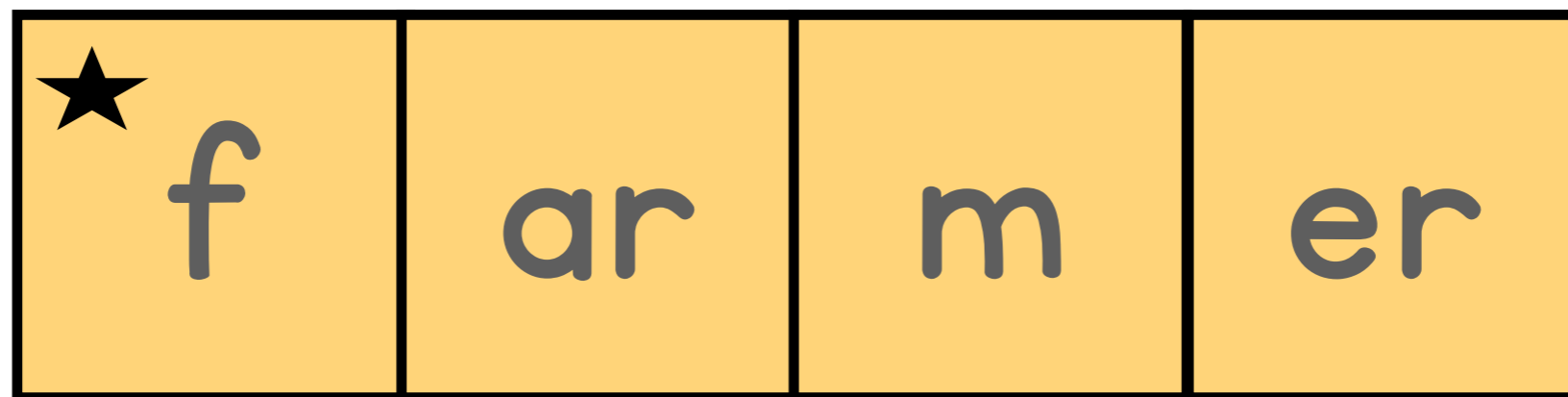
# Using Elkonin boxes

## Why use Elkonin boxes?

- \*it helps build students' phonemic awareness & phonics
- \*it helps connect letters to sounds
- \*it helps students hear and record all sounds in a word
- \*it helps solidify left to right directionality

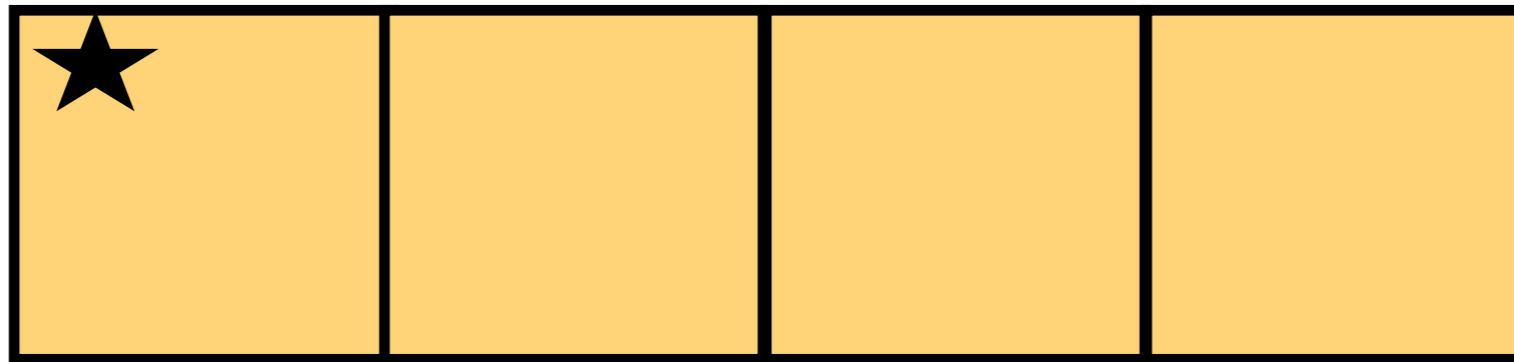
## Once students are proficient with phonemic awareness:

- \*You can transition to teaching **letter** boxes (this helps with spelling)
- \*Students gain independence with this problem-solving strategy



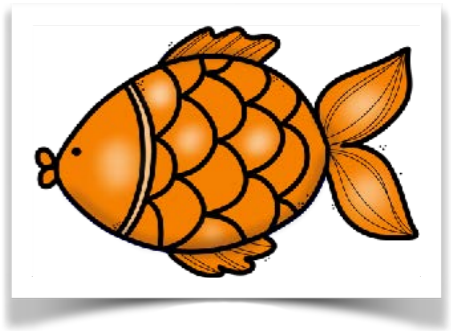
# The process of using Elkonin boxes during Writing

- \* Give the student a 'practice page' or white board
  - \* When the student is writing and they come to a word they need to problem solve, model the use of Elkonin boxes on the practice page
- \* Model the task for the student
  - \* Say the word slowly and touch the boxes (or push objects into the boxes) as you say the word
- \* Have the student try it themselves
  - \* You may do the task together until the student can take over



# Using Elkonin Boxes to Develop Phonemic Awareness

Phoneme placement within words makes working with them easier or harder



bat

fish

stand

Put the  
phonemes in  
order of  
difficulty to  
solve

beginning  
phoneme

final  
phoneme

medial vowel  
phoneme

internal consonants in  
blends and clusters

# Readiness Skills



The two best predictors of early reading success are phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition.

## Phonemic Awareness

A range of subskills is taught to develop phonemic awareness, with oral blending and oral segmentation having the **most positive impact** on reading and writing development.

★ These skills are **power skills**.

## Alphabet Recognition

Involves learning the **names, shapes, and sounds** of the **letters** of the alphabet with **fluency**.

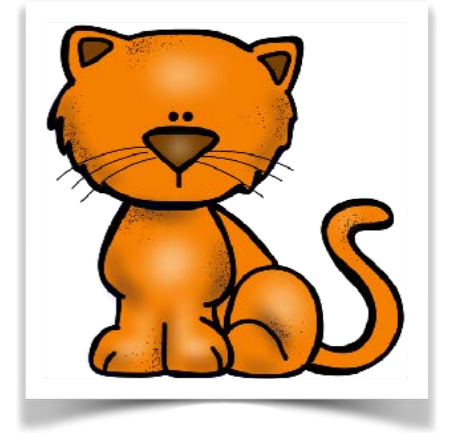
Phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition are focused on primarily in Kindergarten and Grade 1.

# Scope and Sequence of Phonemic Awareness

...the understanding that spoken words are made up of individual sounds

## Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills

Taught and learned in the order of easiest to most difficult...



### 1. Sound and word discrimination:

*What word doesn't belong with the others? cat, mat, bat, ran*

### 2. Rhyming: *What word rhymes with 'cat'? bat*

### 3. Syllable splitting: *The onset of 'cat' is /k/, the rime is /at/*

### 4. Blending: *What word is made up of the sounds /k/ /a/ /t/? cat*

### 5. Phonemic segmentation: *What are the sounds in 'cat'? /k/ /a/ /t/*

### 6. Phoneme deletion: *What is 'cat' without the /k/? at*

### 7. Phoneme manipulation: *What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in 'cat' to an /n/? can*

# Reimagining Ways to Teach Phonics

Given the way the brain reads, the complexities of our alphabetic system, and the amount of practice students need to learn to read, it is worth mustering the courage to look for opportunities to better leverage phonics instruction. After all, one important purpose of phonics instruction is to develop the brain's orthographic processing system, bringing letters, sounds, meaning, and context together.

# Characteristics of Strong Phonics Instruction



- ✓ **Readiness Skills** – phonemic awareness & alphabet recognition
- ✓ **Scope and sequence** – build student learning from simple to complex
- ✓ **Blending** – must be frequently modelled and applied
- ✓ **Dictation** – guided spelling helps transition growing reading skills to writing
- ✓ **Word Awareness Activities** – word sorts and word building provide opportunities to play with words and experiment with how word parts combine
- ✓ **Teaching High-Frequency Words** – teaching high utility words that are irregular based on common sound-spelling patterns (typically the top 200–300 high frequency words are taught in K–2)
- ✓ **Reading Connected Text** – controlled, decodable text at the beginning level of reading instruction helps students develop a sense of comfort in and control over their reading growth – a key learning tool in early phonics instruction

Active \* Social \* Reflective

# Possible Phonics Scope and Sequence

## 1 Teach short-vowel sounds before long-vowel sounds

- efficiency and ease of learning are critical
- the simplicity of using short-vowel spellings and CVC words is beneficial to struggling readers

## 2 Teach consonants and short vowels in combination so that words can be generated as early as possible

- you can create decodable, connected text so kids can apply their knowledge of learned sound-spelling relationships

## 3 The majority of consonants taught early on should be continuous consonants

- such as f, l, m, n, r, and s – because these consonant sounds can be sustained without distortion; it's easier to model blending

## 4 Use a sequence in which the most words can be generated

- for example, many words can be generated using the letter t; very few using x
- higher-frequency sound-spelling relationships should precede less-frequent ones

## 5 Progress from simple to more complex sound-spellings

- consonant sounds should be taught before digraphs and blends
- short-vowel sound-spellings should be taught before long-vowel sound-spellings

## WHY a Scope and Sequence?

Scope and sequence are created so that many words can be formed as early as possible.

How many words can you potentially read and write with the following letters?

\* s, m, t, d, l

\* s, m, a, t, d



Quick generation of useful words is not only more efficient, but highly motivating!

## Phonics Instruction The Connection Between Decoding & Comprehension

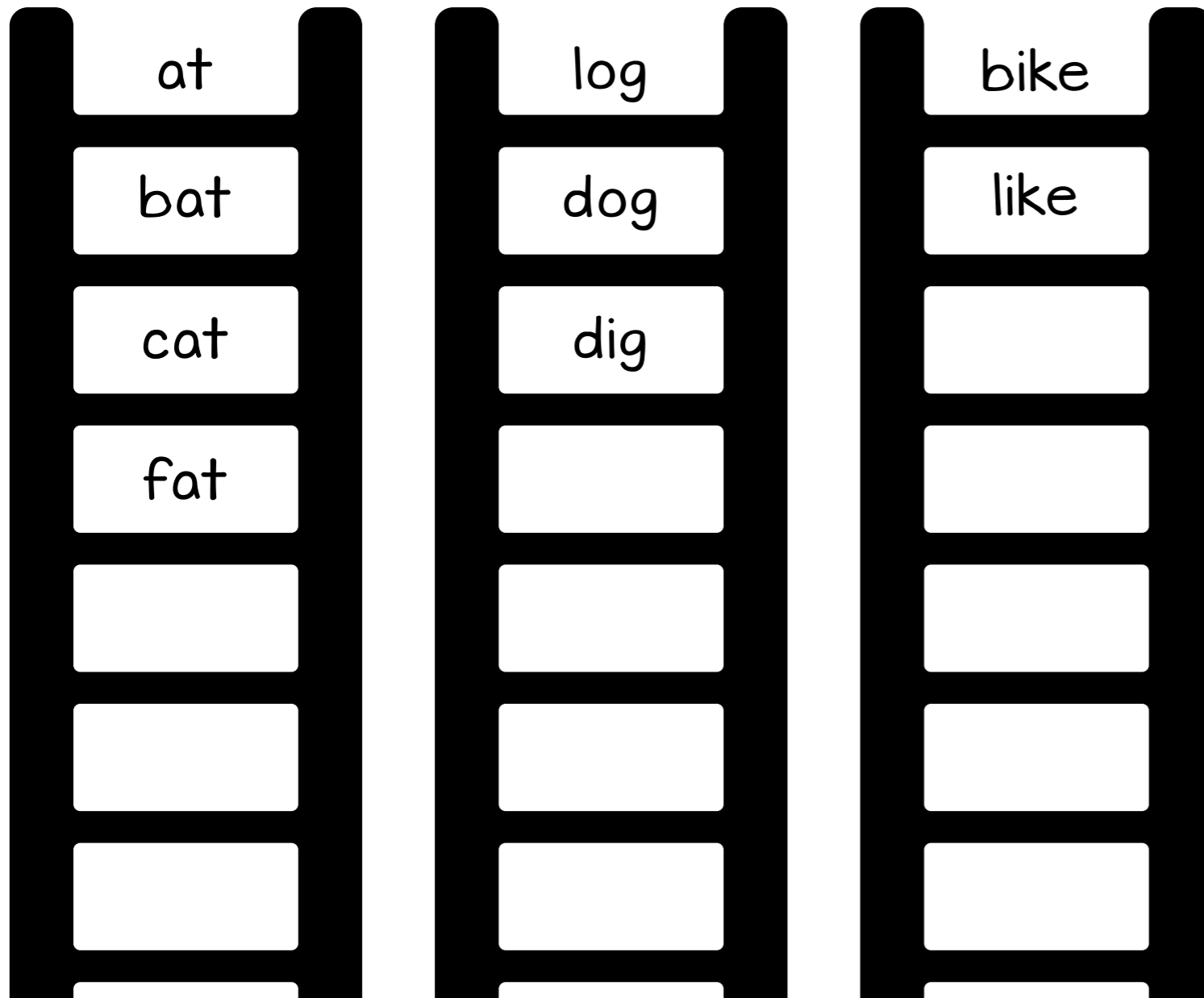
Phonics instruction helps the reader to map sounds onto spellings. This ability enables readers to decode words. **Decoding** words aids in the development of and improvement in **word recognition**. The more words one recognizes, the easier the reading task. Therefore, phonics instruction aids in the development of word recognition by providing children with an important and useful way to figure out unfamiliar words while reading.

When children begin to be able to recognize a large amount of words quickly and accurately, **reading fluency** improves. As more and more words become firmly stored in a child's memory (that is, the child recognizes more and more words on sight) they gain fluency and **automaticity** in word recognition. Having **many opportunities to decode words in text** is critical to learning words by sight...and to avoid making reading errors.

Reading fluency improves **reading comprehension**. Since children are no longer struggling with decoding words, they can devote their full attention (mental energies) to **making meaning from the text**.

As the **vocabulary and concept demands** increase in text, children need to be able to devote more of their **attention** to making meaning from text, and increasingly **less attention to decoding**.

## Word Ladders - Playing With Sounds, Letters, Words



Take a few minutes to finish **one** of these word ladders, or create your own word ladder.

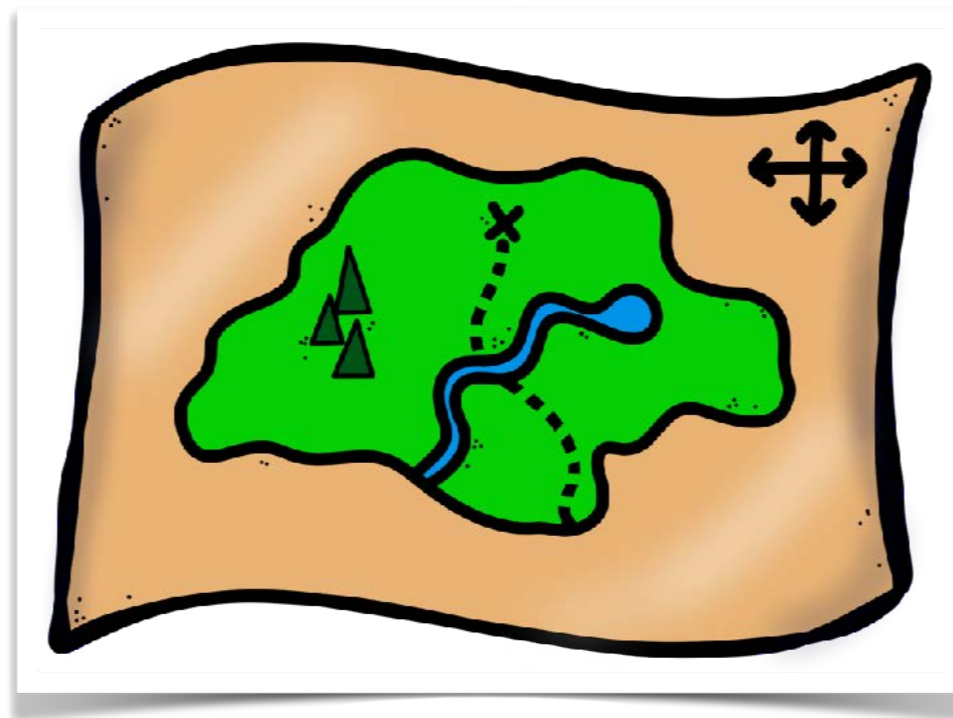
See if you can come up with 8 words in your ladder.

Easily differentiated to be responsive to your students' varied abilities & needs, and can be extended to a literacy centre/station for additional engagement & practice.

# *A Systematic Plan for Instruction, Practice & Mastery*

“When a new skill is introduced, it should be systematically and purposefully reviewed for the next four to six weeks.”

– Wiley Blevins



# Revisiting High-Frequency Word Instruction

High-frequency words are the ubiquitous and abstract words that are the glue of spoken language. But in English, the written form of some of these words is represented by seemingly unpredictable strings of letters.

These irregular words present the reader with unexpected silent letters (**should**), rule-breaking vowels (**want**), and consonants that take on surprising roles (**does**).

# Vocabulary Development

*Come up with a more interesting word than “interesting”*

- \* Vocabulary is correlated to increased reading comprehension
- \* Rich content words can increase background knowledge

*What interesting word did you discover this weekend?*

# High Frequency Power Words

109 words comprise 50% of the words found in children's texts

*the	*for	from	were	do	some
*of	*was	I	when	will	so
*and	on	have	we	each	these
*a	are	or	there	about	would
*to	as	by	can	how	other
*in	with	one	an	up	into
*is	his	had	your	out	has
*you	they	not	which	them	more
*that	at	but	their	then	her
*it	be	what	said	she	two
*he	this	all	if	many	like

*\* Words 1-13 make up 25% of the words in children's texts*

# High Frequency Power Words

109 words comprise 50% of the words found in children's texts

him	its	only	after	back
see	who	way	words	much
time	now	find	called	before
could	people	use	just	go
no	my	may	where	good
make	made	water	most	new
than	over	long	know	write
first	did	little	get	
been	down	very	through	

# Word Wall I Spy

- ▶ the word starts with 'm'
- ▶ the word has 3 letters
- ▶ the word has 2 syllables
- ▶ the word has a long 'e' sound
- ▶ it's a compound word
- ▶ it's a word that means the opposite of **last**

and	animal	because	another
ball	big	crash	community
can	friend	eating	discover
day	have	make	everybody
fun	look	outside	first
like	night	really	question
play	said	school	recycle
see	talk	sometimes	terrible
the	thing	truck	usually
up	your	writing	weather

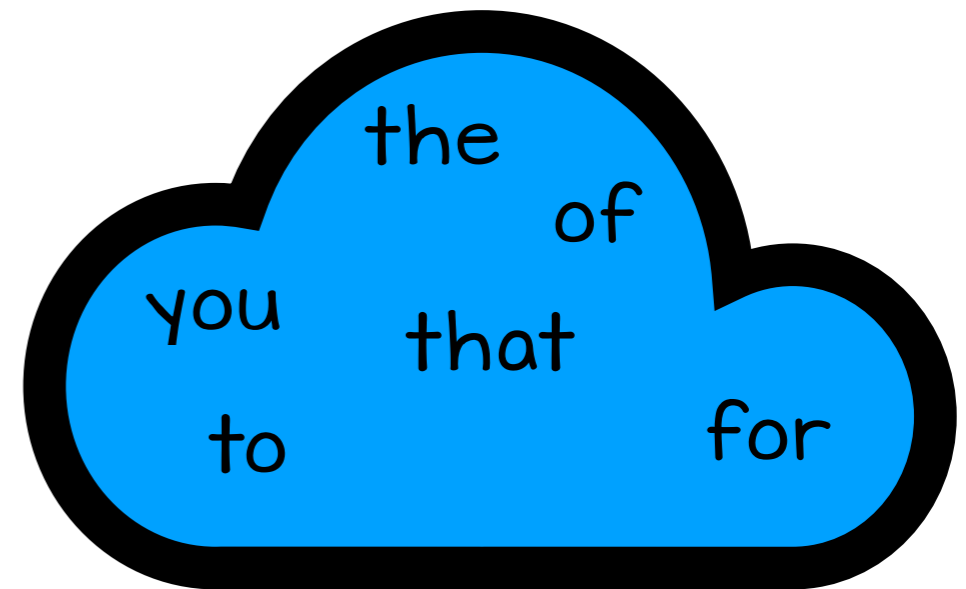
Easily differentiated to be responsive to your students' varied abilities & needs.

Can be adapted to use with vocabulary words from across the curriculum, and extended to a literacy centre/station – Portable Personalized Word Wall Folders.

# High Frequency Words

Prioritize which high frequency words you explicitly teach...

	Low Frequency	High Frequency
Regular	quake	went
Irregular	choir	was



# Orthographic Mapping

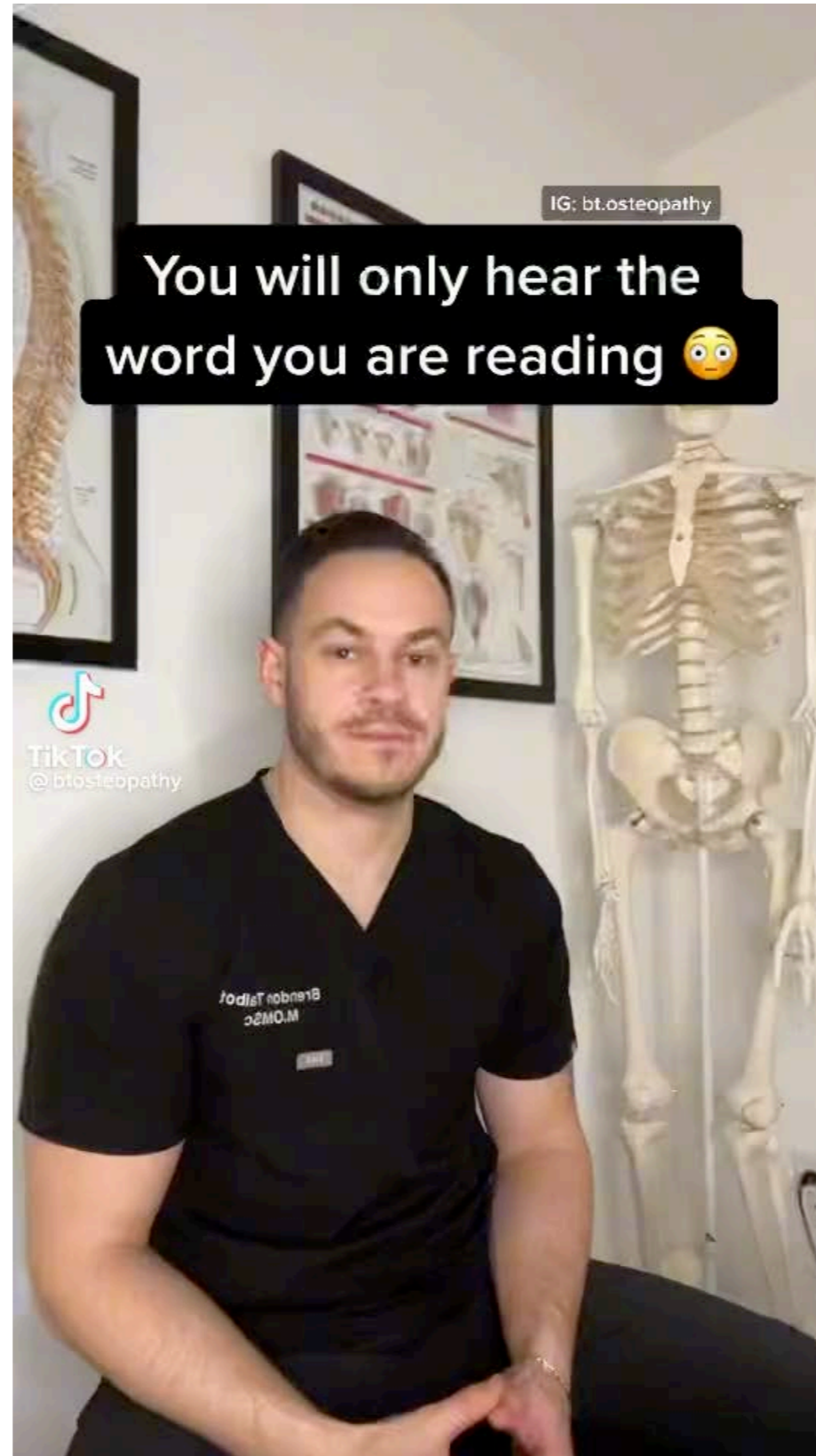
Orthographic mapping proposes that we use the pronunciations of words that are already stored in long-term memory as the anchoring points for the orthographic sequences (letters) used to represent those pronunciations.

*Let's Explore an Orthographic Mapping Routine for the word*

*does*



# Tik Tok to Explain Orthographic Mapping



# More Advanced Language Comprehension

Common Prefixes and Suffixes we can **explicitly** teach:

Prefix	% of words	Meaning	Examples
un-	26%	not, opposite of	unaware, unsure
re-	14%	again	redo, replay
im-, in-, il-, ir-	11%	not	impossible, illogical

Suffix	% of words	Part of Speech	Examples
-s,-es	31%	plural of noun	cats, boxes
-ed	20%	past tense of verb	sailed
-ing	14%	progressive tense of verb	jumping, racing

Look what knowledge students can gain from these explicit lessons!

# Reconsidering Texts for Beginning Readers

Like us, maybe you find that there is a fine line between beginning texts that are too easy, requiring very little thinking or decoding, and those that are too hard, requiring orthographic work that is a complete mismatch for what students have learned in their phonics lessons. As balanced literacy teachers, we believe wholeheartedly in teaching skills that are transferable to authentic reading.

But what can we do about the disconnect between the skills in our phonics lessons and the words students encounter in their early reading texts? And how do we align our phonics instruction to our beginning reading texts when level A texts may have words like umbrella, caterpillar, and even cereal.

# Spelling - Ehri's phases of reading development

## Reciprocity – reading and spelling

Phase 1:  
pre-  
alphabetic

(not using  
alphabetic  
principles)

Phase 2:  
partial

(write with  
consonants-  
initial & final  
sounds)

Phase 3:  
full  
alphabet

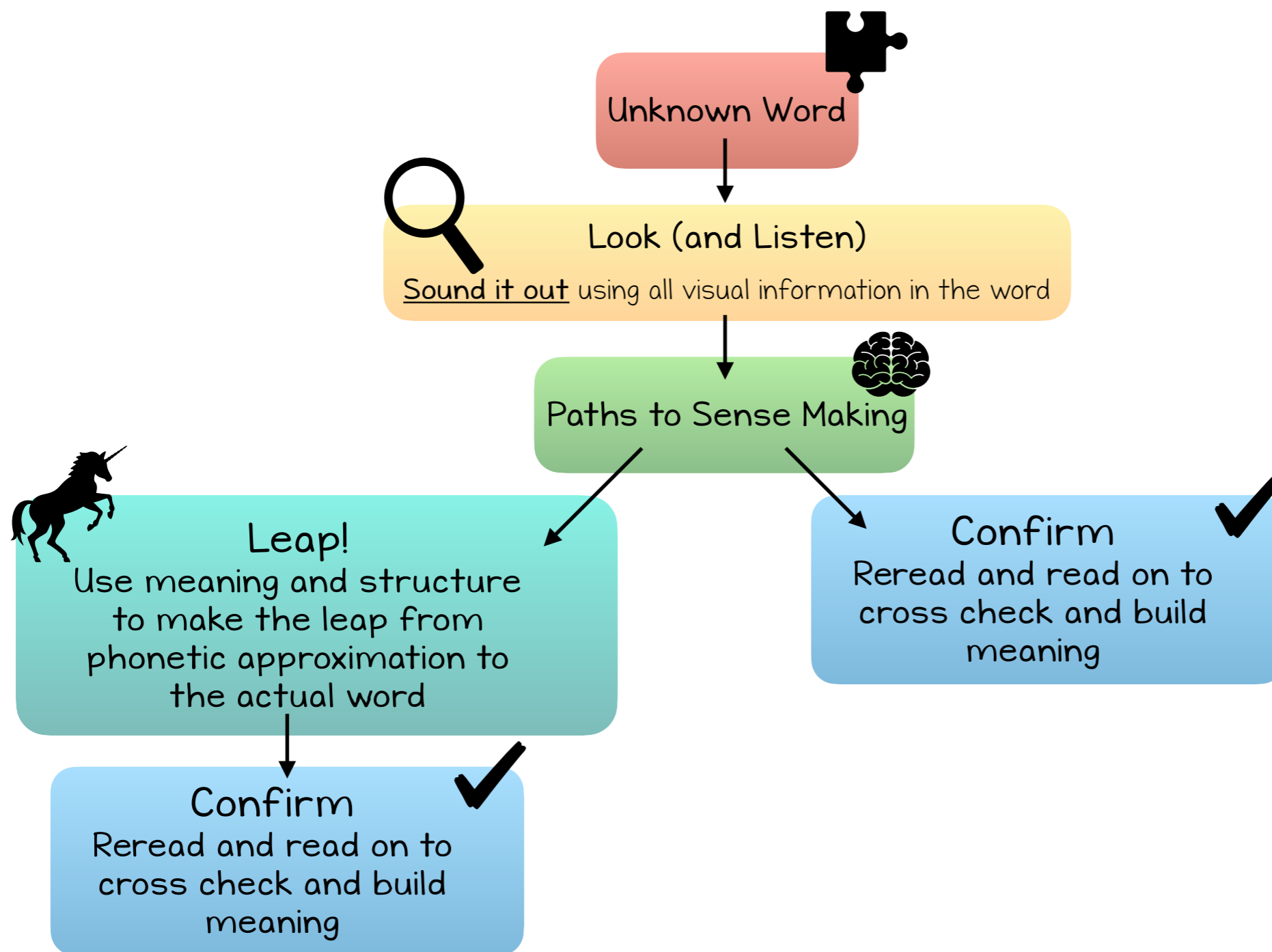
(All the  
sounds are  
present, not  
necessary  
spelled  
correctly)

Phase 4:  
consolidated  
alphabetic

(Writing  
multi-syllabic  
words)

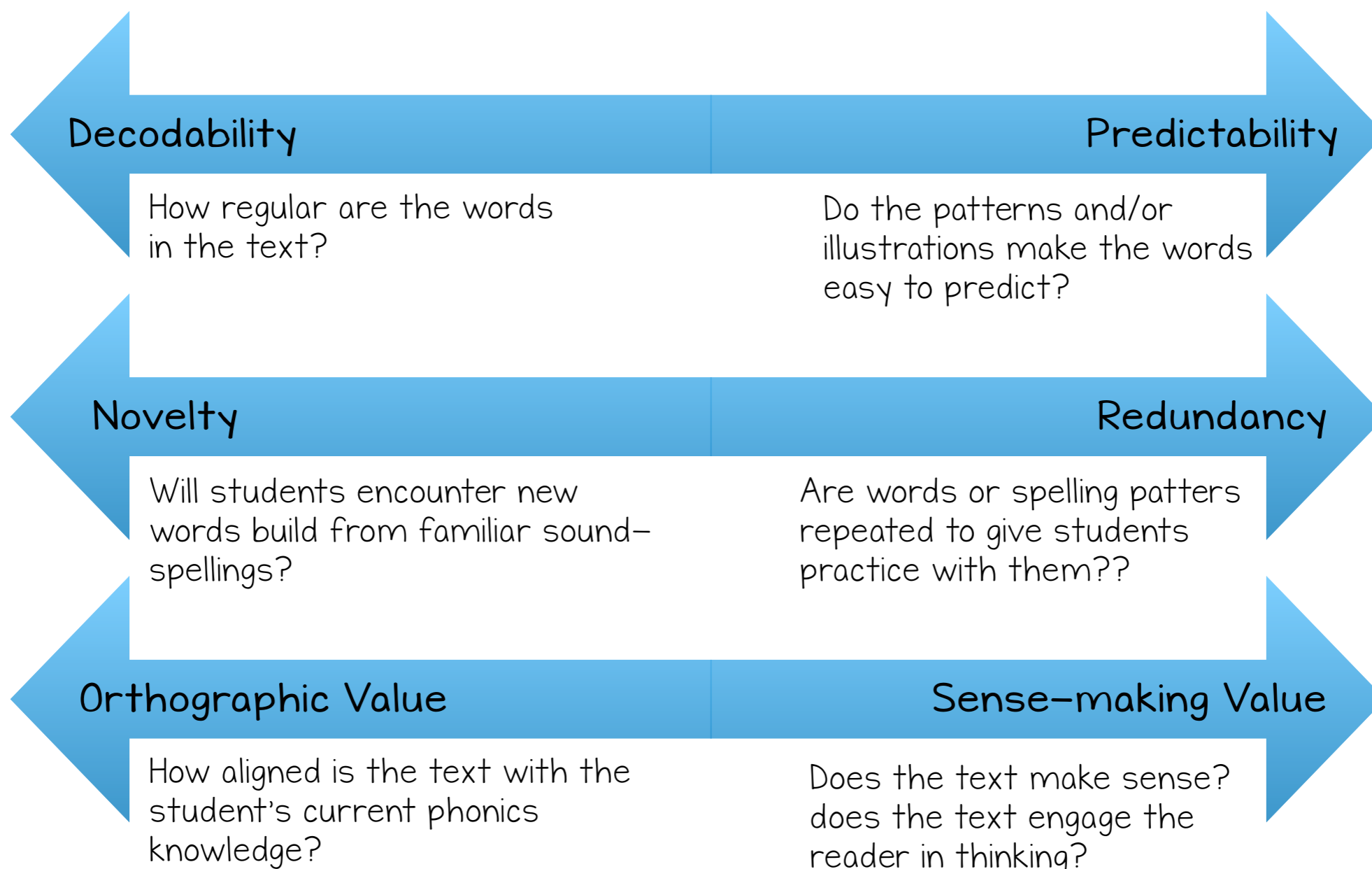
# Path to Problem Solving

Look (and Listen) before you Leap:

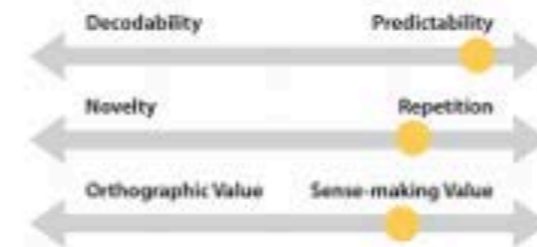
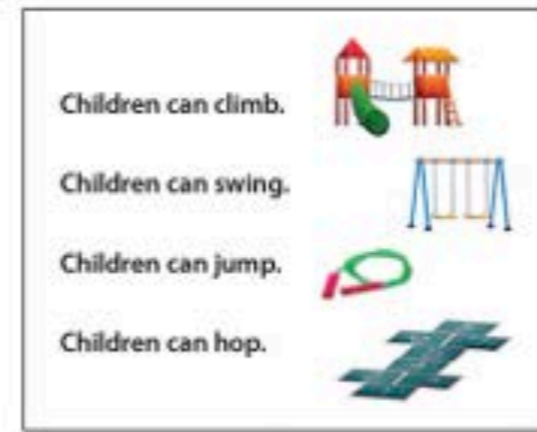
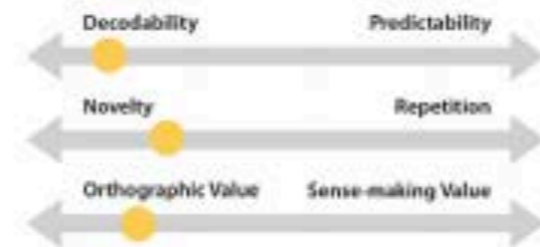
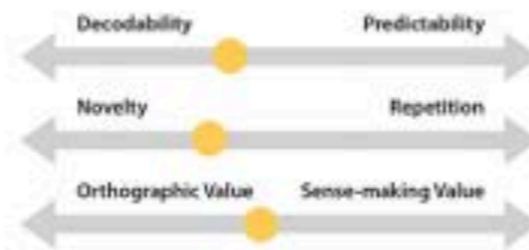


# Choosing books

## Questions to ask when considering beginning texts:



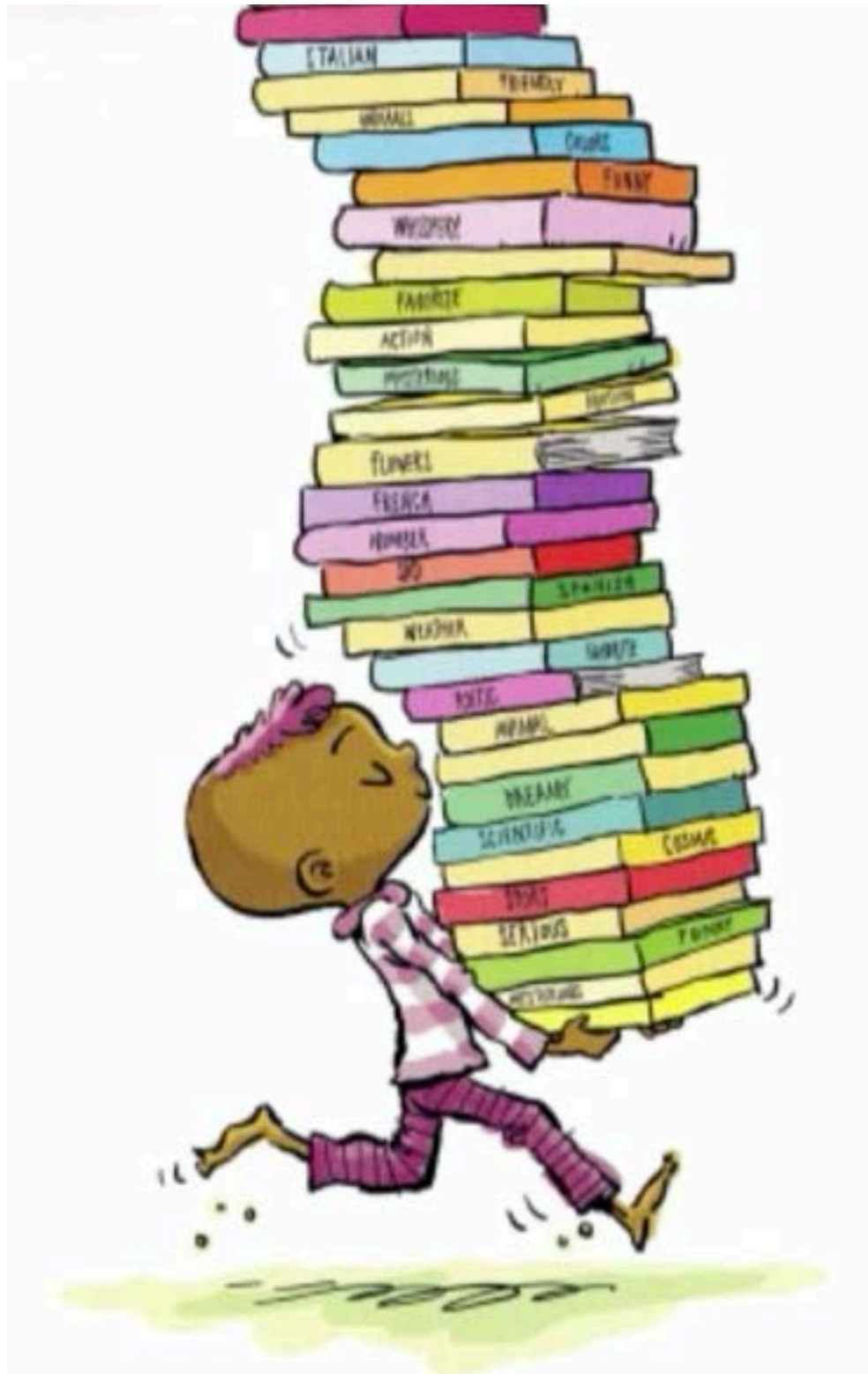
# Choosing books



Shifting the Balance by Jan Burkins and Kari Yates. Copyright © 2021.

# Choosing books

	<b>“Read-All-the-Words” Texts</b>	<b>“Read-in-Other-Ways” Texts</b>
<b>What it mostly looks like</b>	Children read all the words on the page.	Children study and “read” the pictures. They talk with friends about the texts.
<b>What else might children do with these books?</b>	Children may also notice and talk about the illustrations and story information.	Children may notice the print and attempt to decode some words.
<b>Why it’s important</b>	Children strengthen their understanding of the alphabetic principle.	Children engage with familiar and new texts, extending their oral language.
<b>Who chooses the texts?</b>	Teacher chooses some texts.	Students choose from a wide selection.



Engagement deepens further as children actually deploy their developing phonics and spelling abilities to read and write texts to inform, persuade, entertain, and innovate.

—Nell Duke

# Reflections & Next Steps

*Reflect on the activities & resources shared today:*

Activities to support and develop language comprehension:

- \* Reading & Language Comprehension
- \* Phonemic Awareness
- \* Phonics
- \* Vocabulary / High Frequency Words
- \* Choosing texts

*What is **ONE** thing you're most likely to **try** in your classroom or role?*

# Sources

## Info Links

more info links are available on our [website](#)

[Carroll, Davies, & Richman](#)

[University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning: Phonemic Awareness](#)

[Tim Rasinski's Word Ladders](#)

[BC Education Curriculum](#)

## Books

Literacy Lessons Part Two – Clay

When Readers Struggle: Teaching that Works – Fountas and Pinnell

Phonics From A to Z: A Practical Guide – Blevins

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum

A Fresh Look at Phonics, Grade K-2 – Blevins

Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities – Scarborough

Shifting the Balance – Burkins & Yates

## Videos

more videos are available on our [website](#)

[POPEY YouTube video: Word Ladders](#)

[Video: Q&A with Hollis Scarborough – YouTube](#)

[Balanced Literacy Diet – YouTube](#)

[Balanced Literacy Diet – Word Wall I Spy](#)

[The Big Five: Phonics-Orthographic Mapping – Wooldridge](#)

[Tik Tok](#)

*Contact me!*

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