Decodable & Uncontrolled Texts

PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What Are Decodable Texts and When Do Students Move On?

Decodable texts are books written using specific phonics patterns. These books help early readers practice using phonics patterns that have been taught. Once students crack the phonics code and can effortlessly read words with many phonics patterns. Students do not need more decodable drills. They need to spend time reading uncontrolled texts!

Example: A decodable book might include sentences like *"Sam had a cat and a pan."*

What Are Uncontrolled Texts?

Uncontrolled texts are "regular" books that are not limited in phonics patterns that students have been taught. They include a mix of taught and untaught phonics patterns, so students must rely on a broader range of strategies—like sight word recognition, context clues, and vocabulary knowledge. These texts are more appropriate as students have learned more phonics patterns so that guessing words does not become a habit.

Build a Love for Reading

Students can, and should, read decodable books and books they choose for fun. Interesting stories help grow curiosity and excitement for reading!

How We Use these Types of Text at School

Students read decodable books in small groups with teachers, on their own, and with partners to practice specific phonics patterns. When students master decodable patterns, we use uncontrolled text appropriate for the grade level. If students can effortlessly read grade-level text, we increase the complexity of the text.

Practice Makes Progress

Decodable texts train students to sound out unfamiliar words by matching letters to sounds. This builds strong habits for reading.

Ready to Read More?

When students can confidently use phonics in their reading and writing, they do not need more decodable drills, they need uncontrolled text. Provide time for them to read books they have chosen. Students may read uncontrolled text in small group, partners and independently to continue to foster a love for reading!

Repetition Builds Fluency

Fluent reading comes from re-reading. Encourage repeated reading of books, word lists, phrases, and short passages to build appropriate pace, accuracy, expression, and confidence.