

The Road to Decode Dyslexia Awareness Month Program Guide 2022

During Dyslexia Awareness Month in October 2022, Teach My Kid to Read is partnering with libraries to generate awareness of evidence-based strategies that help all kids learn to read. Our program, The Road to Decode, highlights essential but lesser-known books called Decodable Readers.

Why are we highlighting Decodable Books?

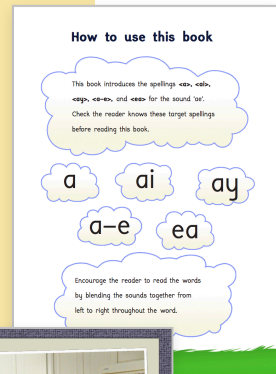
Decodable books, used with appropriate instruction, are the most valuable books available for an emergent or struggling reader. Unfortunately, these books are frequently misunderstood and even misrepresented. Everyday, but especially during Dyslexia Awareness Month, one of our primary goals is to spread the word about decodable books – what they are, what they are not and how to use them effectively.

What are Decodable Books?

Decodable books follow a phonics-based structure for teaching letter patterns in a logical and cumulative sequence. Decoding is the process of breaking a word into its sounds and then blending the sounds together. Learning the individual grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) connections and practicing them until they become automatic requires dedicated, and frequently intensive, work for the struggling reader.

Decodable books are designed to provide the reader with efficient and enjoyable practice by matching the skills they have already been taught. Repeated successful practice in decoding specific letter-sound connections provides much-needed encouragement as well as keeps the reader from developing poor reading habits such as guessing or using pictures to figure out the word.

With an understanding of the grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) connections and having developed good reading the great majority of children can develop the confidence to pick up any book they choose.



Courtesy of Phonic Books

What books are commonly available in libraries for emergent readers?

Most emergent readers are “leveled” or “Easy Reader” books, organized by a gradient scale from A-Z, with A being the easiest and Z being the hardest. Unlike decodable books, which provide children the opportunity to practice the phonics and decoding skills they are simultaneously being taught, leveled books contain words with random spelling patterns and minimal or no deliberate connection to phonics instruction. The children are instead expected to learn to read on their own by being guided to memorize high-frequency words, look at picture cues, or guess based on context. While some children can and do advance using this Guided Reading approach, others struggle and never learn how to decode words once the pictures and other cues are removed in 4th grade and beyond.

How do you know which Decodable Books to purchase or recommend?

Decodables are used the most successfully when the reader has the “code knowledge” covered in that book. They are designed to allow the child to practice what they already know. Practice builds fluency.

Every publisher provides a phonics “scope and sequence.” This is simply a list with the order in which the phonics skills are taught. The books will be written sequentially to support the new decoding skill as well as the ones that came before. For instance, short “a” is frequently taught before short “u”. The scope and sequence will tell you which books support successful practice for a child who knows short “a” but not yet short “u”.

How do you use the Decodable Books?

Encourage children to read through each word. They might be in the habit of guessing by looking at the first letter and using the picture or context. Decodable books are designed to give children the confidence that they know enough to read through the whole word.

Encourage children to read in syllables, not sound-by-sound. The decodables are meant for fluency as well as accuracy. Show children how to blend one sound into the next. Many struggling readers want to stick with just sounds rather than trying to blend sounds because it is safe, and some cannot remember all the sounds to read in the word. Model how to blend sounds and use the books for practice.

We want children to have multiple exposures to the alphabetic rules to retain the letter patterns for reading and spelling. Many children do not get enough practice to set the decoding and blending skills firmly in their long-term memory.

As a note of caution: do not use the decodables in the same way as a leveled book. The picture should not be used to cue a word. Pictures should confirm understanding of what was read and can be used after the child reads the page. For some children, you might want to cover the picture with a sticky note until after the page was read to reduce the desire to guess.

Are there Decodables written for older students who are just learning to read?

Yes! Some books are designed for the older, struggling reader that will be a better fit than books that are meant for beginning, younger readers. There are even decodables in development now that are for adults. It’s an exciting time to be part of this journey!

Decodables are often the missing tool in the toolbox

Libraries are rich in resources of all kinds and Decodables are a perfect, and necessary, addition!

Here are some common myths about decodables debunked:

MYTH: Decodable books are contrived.

Authentic children's literature provides engaging and often complex meaning and vocabulary. But decodable books are meant to be used for a short time. They are the "training wheels" before placing children in books with code variation. It can be compared to a child first learning to play the recorder. The song "Hot Cross Buns" is used because it only has three notes. Once children can play these three notes, more notes are added. No one would expect a child learning how to play an instrument to be given random notes that have never been taught. Learning to read is no different.



FACT

MYTH: Meaning and vocabulary are not the focus.

That's what authentic children's literature is for. Adults can read aloud to children and have rich discussions. The primary goal of decodable books is learning to read by learning to decode accurately and fluently. Even so, many decodable books provide ample opportunity to learn vocabulary and discuss content.



FACT

MYTH: Use "authentic" books to teach decoding skills.

There is no way a struggling reader can make sense of books with mixed letter patterns without resorting to guessing.



FACT

MYTH: There is no storyline.

Many decodable books have excellent stories while adhering to the phonics principle taught and reviewed. The better decodable books weave in enjoyable characters and engaging content.



FACT

MYTH: They don't teach the "joy" of reading.

Success breeds joy and confidence. For many children, it is the first time they feel successful. There is nothing pleasurable about reading books that benefit only the children who can break the alphabetic code.



FACT

MYTH: Sounds alone are not sufficient to support a struggling reader.

Nobody who advocates for phonics, advocates for phonics alone. As a matter of fact, most people who support phonics, also support access to rich, diverse literature and equitable access to books that engage all children.



FACT

MYTH: Decodable readers are not "efficient."

Inaccurate, slow, labored reading results from never getting the basic skills right. Without a strong foundation, children will not be motivated to read. What children learn in the early years influences what strategies they use in the later years.



FACT

Creating Awareness in Your Community!

We have compiled several ways to promote awareness of reading issues like dyslexia and help your community access tools that help all kids learn to read:

1. Set up a display for Dyslexia Awareness Month

Everything you need to create a display for Dyslexia Awareness Month is available in the [Dyslexia Awareness Month 2022 Toolkit](#)

- Print out The Road to Decode Leads to the Library to show where decodable books fit in the process of learning to read.
- Print out The Roadmap to Reading to show patrons all the components that lead to skilled reading.
- Print out the handouts “How we Learn to Read and Decodable Books” and “Struggling Reader Action Plan.”
- Display decodable books, graphic novels, high-low books, and books that teach children and adults about dyslexia. [Our bookstore](#) offers excellent options to start a collection, and any purchases support our work and independent booksellers.

*If you prefer hard copies of posters, handouts, and book samples, you can order a display kit for \$250. (2 hard copy posters, 25 copies of each handout, book samples, and two t-shirts)

2. Create an Event to Highlight Literacy

Expand the display to include additional resources, kits, and activities.

- Offer early literacy kits to emerging readers (First 6 *I See Sam* books with manual, phonics chart, crayons, and pad)
- Install a pop-up StoryWalk® (*A Pig and His Wig*)
- Include printouts of workbook pages that support the StoryWalk® and fun manipulatives that support the story.

Early literacy kits are sold for \$14.95 per kit through the [TMKTR store](#), and starter sets of decodable books are sold for \$29.95 through the store.

3. Pop-Up Decodable StoryWalk®

A pop-up decodable StoryWalk® is an easy way to show your patrons and communities the value of decodable books. You can access the files [here](#) and print out each page on a lawn sign. We recommend purchasing at least one set of [Level 1 Whole Phonics](#) since your patrons will want to see the book and the whole series.

The StoryWalk® is another way to involve your community in literacy. You can put signs in various places, including local shops and businesses! Here's a [card](#) to track the different signs in The StoryWalk®

4. The Dr. Richard E. Schutz Walk for Community Literacy Solutions

Dr. Richard E. Schutz “Dick” is the creator of *Beginning Reading Instruction* (BRI), also known as *I See Sam*. TMKTR worked closely with Dick to make *I See Sam* widely available through libraries and communities. Sadly, Dick passed away in 2021. TMKTR organizes an annual walk in Dick's honor to raise money to print copies of *I See Sam* for outreach in libraries—big and small. You can join us in Albany or organize your own walk to help support access to decodable books. <https://www.bonfire.com/all-kids-deserve-to-learn-to-read/>

Volunteers

TMKTR coordinates with volunteers and partner organizations all over the country eager to support libraries and communities with access to decodable books. To help with staff time creating events, volunteers are solicited when possible.



Creating a Collection of Decodable Books

Chances are, you already stock Bob Books or some decodables. To help get you started growing your collection of decodables, we offer [decodable spine stickers](#) in our store! In addition, we encourage all librarians to educate themselves more about decodable books through our free Webinars or in-person presentations. Contact us at info@teachmykidtoread.org to learn more.



Creating an Impact!

You will receive surveys documenting attendees, resources provided, and what your patrons want to see as the next steps.

About Teach My Kid to Read

Teach My Kid to Read is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit with a mission to educate librarians, parents, guardians, or anyone interested in literacy education, about ways to help all kids learn to read. TMKTR creates awareness of resources that help all kids learn to read and partners with libraries and communities to support equitable access to decodable books and diverse children's literature.

To learn more about Teach My Kid to Read, visit us at <http://www.teachmykidtoread.org>

