Information & Methodology

eyewords™
Evidence-based Multisensory Learning

Building Blocks of Literacy
Multisensory Approach
Current Research
Implementation Strategies and Activities

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The Building Blocks of Literacy

Confident readers read fluently and with good comprehension while beginning and struggling readers pause frequently, stopping to unlock each word. The goal of phonics instruction is to teach students letter-sound relationships so that budding readers can decode or sound out unfamiliar words. This decoding ability is a cornerstone to reading success, however, stopping to sound out each word is effortful and interferes with reading fluency and comprehension. While decoding words phonetically, the reader expends a lot of energy attempting to segment and blend sounds to unlock words, rather than focusing on the meaning of words. When a reader can read words automatically and with accuracy, they can focus on the meaning of words to better comprehend text and read for knowledge with pleasure.

The Importance of Building a Strong Sight Word Vocabulary

Sight words are just what their name implies - words that a student can read by sight without having to sound them out. A growing sight word vocabulary contributes to more fluent reading as it allows a reader to quickly read entire words without having to decode them. When a child is able read words automatically, they can maintain a smoother pace and focus on the meaning of the words being read.
Why Commit the High Frequency Words to Sight Vocabulary?

All written material consists of a high proportion of common words referred to as high frequency words. Researchers have determined that the 100 most common words make up approximately half of all the material we read, with the 25 most common words making up about a third and the first 13 words making up about 25%. Learning the top 100 high frequency words gives beginner readers access to 50% of virtually any text, whether a children's book or a newspaper article. Given the need to recognize high frequency words automatically, sight word instruction remains one component of a comprehensive literacy program for early readers and for older students experiencing reading difficulties as part of reading intervention. When a core of high frequency words become sight words (can be read automatically without having to be sounded out) a reader’s fluency and comprehension improve significantly. By coupling knowledge of phonics with the ability to sight read the high frequency words, reading really takes off.
Barriers to Sight Reading High Frequency Words

Some high frequency words can be sounded out using basic phonic rules, e.g. "it" is an easy word to read by applying letter/sound association (orthographic mapping). However, many of the high frequency words are not phonetically regular and/or are tricky to sound out (e.g., the, was, of, are, to, is, as, etc.). In addition to being tricky to sound out, most high frequency words have little meaning on their own but contribute a great deal to the meaning of a sentence. Words that have a rather abstract meaning are hard to explain to a learner. It’s much easier to learn words like "cat" or "house" because they can be related to real objects or pictures, but it is difficult to conjure up a mental image for words like “the” and “of”.

Eyewords™ Multisensory Reading Materials create context for abstract words by embedding meaningful pictures into words, providing related auditory cues and corresponding kinesthetic actions. These cuing systems, along with segmenting and blending phonemes, provide a differentiated and comprehensive approach to the learning of high frequency words. The visual, verbal and kinesthetic input when learning create multiple neural pathways, helping learners form a stronger memory trace, and deepening their association between a word and its meaning. This process enables learners to sight read words more quickly and efficiently than with phonics instruction alone.
High frequency wordlists vary from source to source and are typically taken from one of three top wordlists: the Dolch Word List, the Fry Instant Word List and Fountas and Pinnell’s Benchmark Assessment List. The top 100 words from each list when compared comprise a total of 150 unique words with the majority appearing on all three lists. Eyewords™ Multisensory Teaching Cards, Sets #1-#3, Words 1-150 encompass the first 100 words from all three of the main wordlists.

Eyewords™ Multisensory Teaching Cards

Each multisensory teaching card is double sided. On the front side, a high frequency word is embedded with a contextual picture. On the reverse side the same word is written in plain-text and a meaningful auditory and corresponding kinesthetic action is provided. Also included with each set are a series of unique play-based activities designed to support learner engagement and build personal connections.
Initial Instruction for Errorless Learning

Present each Eyewords™ Teaching Card with the picture-side showing. Say the word, provide the auditory cue and model the kinesthetic action and then have the learner repeat the word, say the auditory cue and mirror the kinesthetic action. Next, review the letter sounds by segmenting and blending phonemes (see Eyewords Orthographic Mapping cards). Identify any irregular sounds in the word that do not follow phonetic patterns. This procedure should be followed for each word being introduced. Each Eyewords™ Teaching Card Set includes specific steps for initial instruction and errorless learning.

Play-Based Games and Activities

It is well understood that children learn naturally through active play. When children engage in play, their attention and learning retention is high. Each Eyewords™ Multisensory Teaching Card Set includes its own series of play-based reading games and activities designed to help consolidate sight word reading of the high frequency words quickly, efficiently and in a fun and engaging way. Learners activate all modalities through experiences of touching, moving, seeing and hearing.
Designed for Educators and Parents

Eyewords™ resources have been designed for both classroom and at home use. Materials integrate seamlessly with any reading curriculum or phonics program. Educators and parents love teaching with Eyewords™ materials as they require little prep, are practical, easy to use, and create opportunities to build positive social connections.

Additional Resources

Eyewords™ Inc. has developed many resources to support developing literacy skills. All materials are evidence-based and multisensory and have been designed to play to learners’ natural strengths. We offer products in both digital and hard good form. Please visit eyewords.com for more information about our play-based literacy resources for home and classroom use, remote and in-person learning.
Research

Research shows that pictures increase the relevance of a word and children’s motivation to learn it and also provide extra cues that assist learners in determining a word’s meaning. Having visual and auditory input when learning a high frequency word help learners form a stronger memory trace, deepening their association between the word and its meaning. Additionally, kinesthetic movement and play increase learner engagement and ability to retain the material they are learning.

Eyewords™ activates multiple senses simultaneously. When we learn using multiple senses simultaneously, neurons in the brain actually fire at the same time and wire together to create neural networks. These neural networks naturally integrate information to form a clear mental picture, as well as allow the brain to store and retrieve information more efficiently than with unisensory learning.

Stanford University

Eyewords™ Multisensory Sight Words and teaching methodology have received attention and acclaim and are proven to be a more effective method of high frequency word instruction than phonics alone. Eyewords™ materials and teaching methodology were the focus of scientific, iterative, and quantitative research conducted by a team of researchers from Stanford University. The formal study is published in the peer reviewed journal Learning and Instruction, Volume 65.
Who We Are

Eyewords™ was created by educator Jennifer Orr in collaboration with a multidisciplinary team of educators, children of different ages and abilities, speech and language pathologists, researchers and designers in an effort to address a need to differentiate reading instruction for learners.

Eyewords™ was initially developed to complement existing phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten and primary classrooms by providing a multisensory approach (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) to teaching the high frequency words.

Good For All

In addition to boosting the overall effectiveness of early literacy programs, it was quickly discovered that Eyewords™ is a tremendous benefit to learners who struggle to read through systematic phonics instruction alone. Eyewords is essential for those with the following learning exceptionalities:

- Dyslexia
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Central Auditory Processing Disorder
- English Language Learning
- Working Memory Defecits
- Speech Delayed
- Developmentally Challenged
At the heart of Eyewords™, we believe that ALL children are capable learners. Our mission is to remove barriers to literacy skills in an engaging and user-friendly way. Building confidence is nurtured through positive learning experiences that lead children to recognize the growth in their own abilities. With a strong foundation in universal design, we understand the importance of evidence-based methods to increase student achievement, not just for some but for all. Our core values can be summed up in one statement, "believe in the power of your potential".

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