ACTIVITY

Evaluating Decodable Books

Words in decodable books can be controlled in two ways. Ideally, both kinds of control are in use in books assigned for reading practice.

1. Only regular words with patterns that the student has studied or sight words already learned should be included.
2. The type of words/patterns that are currently being study are featured and used with high frequency.

In this activity, we will evaluate some decodable books on the first criteria above. In order to do this you must have an idea about what the student, who will use the books, has learned. Assume that the student has learned the following and only the following:

* All single consonants
* All short vowels
* Consonant digraphs ck, ch, sh, th, wh
* All beginning and ending blends of two or three consonants

You and your partner will examine the book you have been given to determine what percentage of the words are decodable by the student whose learning is described above. The following steps will guide you through this process:

1. Count the first 100 words in the book and mark the last word with a light pencil mark.
2. Go back and examine each word to determine if it is decodable using the knowledge the student has, as described above.
3. Write down each word that is not decodable. If the same non-decodable word appears more than once put a hash mark by the word on your list each time it appears.
4. Count the number of non-decodable words. Repeated words count each time they appear.
5. Subtract the number of non-decodable words from 100 to estimate the percentage of words in the book that are decodable.

Generally, at least 80% decodable words are considered very good.

If time permits, read the rest of the book and be ready to share with the group your evaluation of the book in the following areas:

Is it understandable?

Is the story appealing?

Is there content that can lead to questions and discussion?