

During Reading Section

HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS Transcript

How do we support struggling readers to become automatic with high frequency words during reading?

HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS 1 (Level 4), Maryann McBride, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader

High frequency words are critical for young readers because they form what we refer to as “islands of certainty.” In other words, they are things they should be sure of. Those words also become the building blocks, or links, to other unknown words that children have to work on. So this core of high frequency words is critical. It’s also critical to fluency and flexibility, because without these words that you know instantaneously and so well, you don’t have the energy left over to work on other things.

T: What would make sense to say? What’s the story?

S: bumps

T: Are you right?

S: Nods

T: Yeah, good for you. (Puts in masking card). What’s this one say?

S: I

T: How about this one?

S: Like

T: Nice and fast.

S: look

T: (masks see)

S: see

T: um-hum

S: me (for am)

T: watch – (she slides card back to show only first letter)

S: aa – am

T: What does that one say?

S: am

T: Oh, what word on this page do you know?

S: Stop

T: Can you write that one says stop? Are you thinking about what it looks like, “stop”? OK, write it. Let’s see how fast you can write “stop.”

S: (writes sto -)

T: think what comes at the end

S: (writes p)

T: There you go. What does that say?

S: stop

T: Good. Can you write it faster? What are you writing?

S: stop

T: What does that one say?

S: stop

T: Can you write look?

S: (writes a k)

T: (erases) How are you going to write "look"?

S: (write k again)

T: (erases) How are you going to start llllook?

S: (writes and says) l

T: Good. Now what comes next?

S: (writes look)

T: What does that one say?

S: look

T: Where do you start that word?

S: l

T: That's right. That's where you have to start. That's where you look first. Write look again, nice and fast.

S: (writes look)

T: What did you write?

S: look

T: Good

T: Can you write the one that says "the"? That you saw in the book?

S: (writes the)

T: Good. What does that one say?

S: the

T: good for you. (opens book again) Read this page.

S: Look. I see big bumps.

T: Yes. Read this page. Start right there.

S: The bumps are too big.

T: Yeah. Those are words you know. Good for you.

HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS 2 (Level 3), Katie Babb, Springfield Elementary School

These Rigby books are full of sight words so it gave them lots of good practice with that. As they were reading, for the most part, the words they were working on were the sight words. If they're having to work on the sight words, it's going to break down their meaning, it's going to break down their fluency. D__, she got here, "Look at mm.." She really had to slow down and think about it, which was good, but we want them to start to know these sight words fast. I'd rather she be working on some of the other ones and not have to work on the sight words quite so much, so her reading wouldn't be as labored. They're confusing my and me. All of those are confused, and so we just really have to firm those up.

T: We did this one yesterday. What do you see there? (masking card)

S: Come

T: Well,

S: Here

T: How do you know? (slides from beginning)

S: hherre

T: See how that one looks? Good. Tell me this one

S: I

T: Yes, we need to be faster with these. Tell me this one

S: my

T: See that. Write "my" on the board with your finger. (child writes) Do you see? Good. You've got to be looking and knowing these. Tell me this one

S: at

T: Tell me this one

S: Look

T: Very good. You've got to take a close look. This one?

S: My

T: Very good. Go back and read this page again.

T: Let's see if you can get a little faster with reading and writing some of these words. Look here. Tell me this one.

S: My

T: My. Write it on your board. You have to be able to read and write these fast. See how fast you were? These little ones, we don't want to be working on them. We've just got to know them.

T: Make sure you're searching all the way through. Look here. What do you see?

S: Look

T: You see that and how it looks? Look at it? Do you see it? Yes. Take a good look. (puts book down) Write it. Let me see how fast you are. Go. Look. What did you just write?

S: look.

T: OK. That's the only one that can say look. See the letters in it? Good. Let's do one more.

The word "here" – in these level 3 and 4 books, it comes up all the time, and so that's a really good one for them to know. It's a longer word; it's visually different. Some of these two-letter sight words are some of the hardest ones for them to hold onto because they're so short, they visually look very similar. So that's why I chose to stick with here, because it is very different from some of the other ones. I think a lot of times we throw too words at them that look visually very similar, so that confused them even more.

With G, I've noticed "the" and "here" is confused. So for now, I might expect her, if I'm teaching her "here," expect her to get "here" every time, and I might take away the "the" from her, do it for her for a while until she straightens out that confusion.

Even in her writing, if she comes to the word "the," I might just do it for her for a time. I'm not going to continue to do that, but until she really knows – we've got to overlearn one, and so if she really knows "here," I'm not going to expect her to muddy the water and do "the" if she's confusing those two. We want to separate that and just let her focus on one. And that right there, if she's confusing "the" and "here," makes me wonder, is she looking left to right, because they have some of the same letters in them, but if she's looking at that first letter and going through – that makes me wonder how she's looking at these words.

HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS 3 (Level 10), CC Bates, Clemson University

They need some high frequency words just to be able to control things like one to one correspondence or voice to print match. We can't let that go. Once they get that under control we have to continue to teach for those high frequency words and to build a visual memory around those words, because they contribute to phrasing and fluency. When they can solve those words quickly and automatically, it allows them to pull those things together and extract meaning. I don't want him bogging down on regular high frequency words that absolutely can't be sounded out.

S: (reading) They made a little bed. They – the monkey was to sleep? Pip took care of the monkey. He gave it some milk.

S: (reading) They took the monkey to the zoo. Pip cried and cried. They was – The – they – (waits) went to the monkey's home. The little monkey ran to its mom.

T: I want to ask you something right here. Something was tricky but you worked at it. Can you read this to me again?

S: They went to the monkey's home.

T: I want you to do that same thing right here. Something was tricky here and you looked at me.

S: sleepy.

T: You read it out loud to me.

S: The monkey went to sleep.

T: right. What's this word? (frames)

S: went

T: went. You have a good look at it? (brings out writing board)

S: w-e-n-t

T: Don't spell it to me, just write it. (takes away the book) Just write it please.

S: (writes "went")

T: What's the word?

S: went

T: (erases) Write it one more time please.

S: (writes went)

T: What's the word?

S: went

T: (brings book back) Read this page to me

S: The monkey went to sleep.

T: Yeah.

HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS 4 (Level 10), CC Bates, Clemson University

One of the things too that I'm always focusing on is the ways in which I go back into text and have him not only isolate the letters but also go back and ask him about high frequency words in isolation within the text, "What's this word? What's this word? What's this word?" Those high frequency words change over time. So if we looked at the early level text, he needs to control I, and the, and a. But as we move into level 5s and 6s, he's now having new words come before him and as he moves into 8s to 10s, again. Now he's seeing those words like this and there and then and them. Earlier I showed you the procedure where I'm having him look at the first two letters and then he keeps looking. This is not something I would do early on. Early on he probably is getting to some of these high frequency words because of context. But now these words are appearing oftentimes on the same page in the same text. And so he really has to sort out the difference between "they" and "them." Doing work around these words helps solidify those words as known and that work changes over time. So early on the words that I'm framing are not the same words that I'm framing now. Went" is an exception. It's one of those words that he continues to have trouble with. So I will continue to work on it.

"Read this word" is different than me saying "find the word 'went' on this page." Find the word "went" gives them some phonological information to hang onto. "Read this word," I'm not giving him that at all. So I also have to vary the ways in which I'm asking him and if I feel like he needs that extra support I may say "find the word 'went' on this page" early on, but now I'm just saying "what's this word? What's this word? What's this word?" So there's like a level of different ways to support, even around just going back and revisiting these high frequency words.

It's both in his reading and in his writing, and writing really allows an in in a way that just saying, "What's this word?" doesn't. Because it forces him to produce that word and the letters in the exact order. So Clay talks about it being like a little program where everything has to be in the right order and writing forces him to do that in a way that just reading the word doesn't. So usually when it's a word that he's having difficulty with like "went," or it's a new high frequency word, I'll say to him after he's read it, "Get a good look at this, I want you to take a look." Then I'll cover it up and I'll ask him to write it, because it forces him to call on his visual memory of that word and that visual memory is the same memory that's helping him seek patterns. So when he uses "come" and "some" and recognizes that they have a part that sounds the same but also that looks the same, it's his visual memory for that pattern. And I have to tap into that visual memory so that he begins to make those connections.

Assessing the Problem (Fall), Ashinique Owens, Nevitt Forest Elementary School

When J__ first came in, she really struggled with high frequency (HF) words, I mean really struggled, and not, not just second grade high frequency words. It was some first-grade high frequency words that she struggled with as well. I felt like, in order for J__ to move on and be successful, I needed to get those high frequency words firmed up and I needed to do it in a quick way, because she has a lot of catching up to do. J__ is now able to write high frequency words. Those HF words are very important, because “could” is going to help me get that word “shouldn’t” that I need, or making those connections, being able to use analogies to help me get to other words or just parts that I know from other words to get to those words.

This book, *Road Builders*, was a nonfiction text. J would really just make it up. Some of these were high frequency words. One of the things that I said was she’s not integrating at difficulty. She either was using meaning and structure and neglecting the visual, or using visual and neglecting meaning and structure. So she really wasn’t putting anything together, and it was a lot on top of not knowing those high frequency words. So like here, it says, “This machine brings more dirt.” She said this much dirt digs. Naaw. It didn’t really make sense post the error. Up until the error, some of them did make sense, but it didn’t make sense post, and she didn’t go back and reread, which now she does.

These are some of her anecdotal notes. This is the actual day when we recorded the book we did, *Where Does Your Pizza Come From?* You can see here it was just – guess, just say whatever. Pizza for pepper, that looks somewhat right, but “sow” for “saw” which is a high frequency word, foren – I’m not sure what she said but I tried to get it down the best way I could – for from. So we really struggled with high frequency words at this point. She was doing so much work on high frequency words, til those places that I left for her to work, she had already worked so hard that she had exhausted herself, and it was hard for her to pull it together, which was really a red flag to me. If you don’t get this straightened out now, then it’s going to be hard to teach her to read, to use those strategies.

Teaching for High Frequency Words, Ashinique Owens, Nevitt Forest Elementary School

Every day we started with writing high frequency words. I would just give three, let's write them. When she got to one that she didn't know, or for any of them, I erased up until the error. OK, let's think about how that one looks, what do we see next. If we're looking at it in the book, what do we see next? Sometimes that helped; sometimes it didn't. So if I realized you're not going to get it, I went on ahead and wrote it for her – see, this is how it looks. So really getting them to see how it looks, because for her I noticed it was more of how it sounded and not how it looked. So just getting her to think about how words look really helped her.

Allowing them opportunities to see it in the book, because the high frequency words I picked for the day were words that came from, were in the text that she was going to read for the day. Really, I try to make things echo throughout the lesson. I don't want you just to see it here and that's it, because we're trying to make that connection: You can write that word; you can read that word. OK, you read it here, so you should be able to write it here. It's the same way. It looks the same all the time. So just trying to make those connections. The high frequency words that I did for the day would come from the text, and at the end of the lesson we would do a word work, whether it be analogies, making words, using those activities. And I would usually pull from one of the high frequency words that I use, like for example, we may have had could. Could was one of the words that we practiced at the beginning of the lesson. So at the end of the lesson, the words that they had to write would have been should, would, now let's write wouldn't, kind of up the ante for that last word. Just showing them how words work, or using those letters to manipulate and make other words.

Getting her to try things, and getting her to reread. Her meaning now is really helping her. Meaning is great, it's what we want all kids to have, but for her, the good thing about her is, OK, it makes sense, but she'll check it to make sure it looks right. She's not going on just the meaning alone so that when I was teaching, OK did that make sense, did that look right, did that sound right, for her it has really helped because she checks all three to make sure, OK, I was right, when she's unsure.

Observing Progress (January – March), Ashinique Owens, Nevitt Forest Elementary School

This one, *The Contest*, was taken in January, and really this is about when she turned the corner. We had high frequency words firmed up, and she started using what she knew, like her for “instead” – in – st- instead, and she is able to pull it back together quick. Now, if she gets stuck, if I know it’s a word that she’s seen, or that she knows, if she gets stuck during writing, if I draw letter boxes for her, she gets it kind of quickly. That really helps her. So she’s going back and rereading now, whereas before, she was just, that’s what I think it is. I’m fine with that. And she would just go on.

On her later running records, she does a lot of rereading when she gets to difficulty. If she’s not sure, she goes back and she tries to reread, and then she’s able to pull it together. Right here, “a small cottage far out in the country, a man – and then I think she looked (at giant) – no, a mean giant lived in a castle high up in the clouds.” So see she could have said, “a man,” because that made sense, but now she’s starting to look, and I also think she looked on and saw giant, and said, “No, that’s not right.” Because she went back and reread. She said “a man – a mean giant” lived in a castle high in the clouds.

J__, now is really fluent with HF words. When she comes to something she knows, she’s kind of gone underground on me, but whatever she’s doing, it’s working. So she’s gone underground and she’s quick.

S: (reading) Emily wanted to be a photographer when she grew up.
Collecting photographs was her hobby.

I think it has a lot to do with her just learning those high frequency words, and just seeing how words work. For J, I do feel it was just her getting strategies and getting some things known – and really known for her, because she has really taken off.