

Sight Words / High Frequency Words

What exactly are "sight words?" These are words that good readers may instantly recognize without having to "figure them out." There are two reasons why sight words are an essential component of good reading: First of all, many of these words do not sound like their spellings might suggest, so "sounding them out" would be unproductive. Also, a good reader really can't afford the time to dwell on too many words, or he may lose the speed and fluency necessary for determining the author's message. How should we decide which words to teach as sight words? Studies suggest that the most common words in our language, known as "high-frequency words" would be the best place to start. Believe it or not, the 100 most common words actually make up about 50 percent of the material we read! The 25 most common words make up about one-third of our written material (Fry, Kress, and Fountoukidis, 2000).

Manoa School and many other schools statewide are adopting a new Common Core reading program called Reading Wonders. The program incorporates high frequency words into both teacher and student readings. To support students, these high frequency words are taught explicitly. The philosophy behind why these words are taught is the same. The more words that a student can recognize quickly, the better prepared they will be to tackle and read new texts. The Reading Wonders high frequency word list was generated using a combination of different lists, including Fry's, Dolch, and American Heritage top 150 words list.

Our kindergarten team believes it is important for the students to learn the Reading Wonders high frequency words in order to read texts within the program successfully. However, we also believe learning all of the Fry's words (50 for kindergarten) are essential because of how frequently these words are encountered in everyday texts. Therefore, the students will have a goal of reading a total of 68 high frequency words by the end of the school year.

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