

HOW WE TEACH READING AT CHARIHO



At Chariho, we are deeply committed to delivering on the promise of education and equipping every child with the ability to read well! We are learning more about what research says about how children learn to read, how to make sure every student learns to read, and what to do when a child encounters difficulty in learning to read. The research that we're learning about and implementing is called the Science of Reading.

The Science of Reading

"The body of work referred to as the "science of reading" is not an ideology, a philosophy, a political agenda, a one-size-fits-all approach, a program of instruction, nor a specific component of instruction. It is the emerging consensus from many related disciplines, based on literally thousands of studies, supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages. These studies have revealed a great deal about how we learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and what kind of instruction is most likely to work the best for the most students." -Dr. Louisa Moats

A NEW PATH AT CHARIHO

If your family has been a part of Chariho for some time, you'll notice some changes in how we teach reading; if you're new to Chariho, jump on board, it's going to be a fantastic journey! It's an exciting time to be in education as we align our instruction with the Science of Reading!

Out with the old...

Leveled Readers. Your child will not be assigned a reading level that corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. They will work with a variety of text. Some text may address specific phonics needs, some may be grade level text to build knowledge that is pertinent to their grade level, some may be interest-based, some will be at a determined level for fluency practice, but they will not be confined to a certain 'level.'

Three-cueing system. This is the practice of teaching kids to identify words by using strategies other than decoding. In the three-cueing system, students are taught that they can identify a word by deciding if it makes sense, if it would structurally/grammatically 'fit' in a sentence, or if it looks right rather than closely examining the phonics patterns in the word and sounding it out. This is a practice that the research has indicated that we must abandon. Your child will **not** be taught to check pictures to identify words or make guesses based on the first letter they see. We want our students to look at every letter in the words, apply phonics knowledge, and sound words out!

Guided Reading. We are choosing to distance ourselves from the term 'Guided Reading' because that term is connected closely with the teaching of the Three-Cueing system which has been debunked by research. Students will be grouped according to various reasons: needs in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, writing projects or knowledge building/interest, but they will not be grouped based on a reading level. We will simply be calling this small group instruction.

In with the new...

Decodable Readers. Our early readers will be working with decodable text. These are books or passages that only include words that the students can 'decode' (sound-out) according to the skills they have been taught thus far. Our kids need practice with the phonics skills they are learning and these books and passages provide that practice. So be aware that at times, your primary students may be bringing home a sheet of paper with a passage for practice rather than a book.

Explicit and systematic phonics instruction. We will have an order or continuum of phonics skills, progressing from simple to complex, that will be followed throughout the early grades. Students will progress through the continuum as they master skills. In the intermediate grades (3-5), word study will continue with morphology (learning about word parts such as Greek and Latin roots).

Comprehension. The ultimate goal of all reading instruction is for students to understand what they read. The model of The Simple View of Reading demonstrates that reading comprehension occurs only when students have both Decoding/Word Recognition Skills and Language Comprehension skills. Children need the essential skills to get the words off the page as well as knowledge, vocabulary, and a good understanding of how our language works in order to comprehend what they read. We must provide instruction that will help students achieve these goals.

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING

$$\text{WORD RECOGNITION} \times \text{LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION} = \text{READING COMPREHENSION}$$

All readers learn to read the same way,...

Listed below are some additional points of research that we will be addressing as we embark on a new school year and our 2nd year of Into Reading at Chariho.

Code Emphasis in Primary Grades. This means that grades K-2 especially will focus on acquiring the skills to crack the code of our alphabet to the speech sounds in English. (There are 44 speech sounds in English and 150 ways to read and spell them!) Kids must first learn to decode/sound-out words before they can understand the meaning of text, therefore, we will emphasize instruction in 'cracking the code' in grades K-2.

Early intervention. If we see any signs that your child may be struggling with the foundational skills of reading, we will not take a 'wait and see' approach; we will immediately implement interventions and monitor their progress. The best solution to the problem of reading failure is early identification and intervention.

Phonemic awareness. This is the ability to get to the individual sounds in words by listening and to identify and manipulate those sounds orally. While this skill will be emphasized in grades K-2, we will make sure all students at Chariho have this necessary foundation. Students in the intermediate grades may need to practice these skills until they have firmed up this foundation of reading. Don't be surprised if you have a 3rd - 5th grader who will be working on phonemic awareness! This is an area that the research has indicated is hugely important!

Assessments. Your child will not be assigned a reading level, such as A, or M, or R (any level A- Z) as in the past. Students will be assessed on passages for accuracy and fluency for their grade level. These assessments give us a good indication of how easy or difficult reading is for your child. Comprehension of these passages will also be checked. Phonemic Awareness will be assessed so that we can make sure they have those crucial foundational skills. We will also assess word reading and nonsense word reading to find out which areas in the continuum of phonics skills they need help with. They will be given a Spelling Inventory that will show which phonics patterns they are able to apply in their writing. As students become proficient word readers, comprehension is a natural outcome. If your child shows a weakness in any area, interventions will be provided to help them become stronger in their area of weakness.

Knowledge Building and Vocabulary. Research has indicated that reading comprehension is closely connected to the background knowledge we have on a topic we're reading about and by understanding the vocabulary contained in the text. Chariho has adopted knowledge-building language arts curriculum called Into Reading for students in grades K - 5. Our students will have the opportunity to build a broad knowledge base of history/social studies, science, and the arts. Kids will have access to complex text to help them gain more complex vocabulary. The research tells us that building knowledge and vocabulary contributes significantly to their reading comprehension and should be taught beginning in the earliest grades.

When we know better, we do better!

The research is telling us that while reading is more challenging for some students than others, with evidence-based reading instruction, nearly every child can become proficient. Decades of research have determined that reading occurs in a specific way in the brain in all people. It does not occur naturally the way that speech does. The process must be taught. It is a process of building neuro-pathways in the brain that link sounds of speech to written symbols or letters. The strings of letters are attached to meaning, and then those 'letter strings with meaning' are stored in the brain's "letterbox" for later retrieval that is instantaneous and effortless. This process is called orthographic mapping and it is our goal to help our students build a giant 'letterbox' of instantly retrievable words. That translates into fluent reading and subsequent comprehension. Guessing at words based on context does not aid in orthographic mapping, phonic decoding does.

We now know a great deal about how the brain develops as we learn to read and what instructional practices are most effective for all children. We are committed to stop doing what doesn't work and be guided by scientific research to ensure that we deliver on the promise of literacy for every Chariho student. Again, it's an exciting time to be in education and we need you parents as our partners!