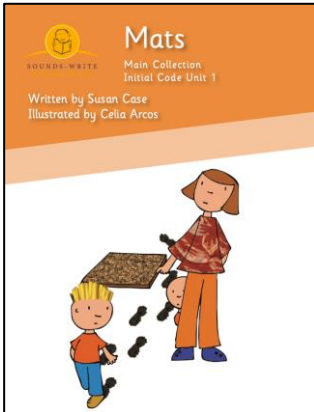


Dear Parents and caregivers,

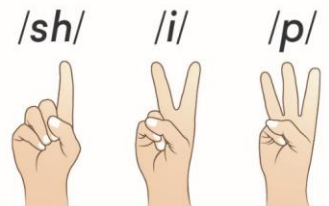
RE: Important Change in Reading Material for Your Child



We want to inform you about an exciting change in our approach to teaching reading that reflects current research and best practice, and will ensure we maximise your child's literacy development. We are transitioning from using 'levelled readers' that you may be used to (texts levelled on 1 to 30 rating) to books called "decodables."

Decodable books are specially designed for early readers and help students become confident and independent in their reading skills. Here's why they are important:

Focused on Phonics: Decodable books are written to match the phonics skills your child is learning. They contain words that your child can sound out using their knowledge of sounds and the letter(s) that represent these. The



content/language in decodables are designed to provide learners with the opportunity to use their developing segmenting and blending skills to read words in order to develop automaticity, or the ability to recognise words quickly and effortlessly, and experience independent reading success.

“Decoding is...
the ability to take letter-sound knowledge and be able to blend those sounds together to make words. **”**

Encouraging Decoding Skills: Instead of guessing words from pictures or other cues, as they are often forced to do with levelled texts, decodables encourage children to use decoding strategies to sound out words. This helps them read more accurately.

Building a Strong Foundation: The reading material we introduce to students initially shapes their reading habits. Decodable books help children rely on their knowledge of letter-sound relationships, which is crucial for becoming skilled readers.

Progressive Learning: Decodable books gradually introduce more complex words as your child's phonics skills grow. This allows children to progress at their own pace.

Improving Reading Reflex: Decodable books help develop a "reading reflex," where children naturally use their phonics knowledge as their **first** reading strategy. This leads to more confident and independent reading.

It's important to note that while decodable books are valuable, they are not the only type of reading material your child will encounter. We will continue to read high-quality children's literature with more complex vocabulary and sentence structures to further enhance their reading skills, including comprehension. This diverse approach ensures that your child not only learns to read but also gains an understanding of what they read.

*“If a reader has not developed **fluency**, the process of decoding words drains attention, and insufficient attention is available for constructing the meaning of texts” (Pikulski & Chard, 2005)*

Now, you might wonder why your child may need to **re-read the same book**. Re-reading decodable books has a significant purpose. It helps build **fluency**, which is the ability to read quickly and smoothly. Here's why re-reading is beneficial:

Reinforcing Skills: Re-reading allows your child to practice and reinforce the phonics skills they've learned.

Boosting Confidence: As your child becomes more familiar with the book, they will gain confidence in their reading abilities, which is a big motivation for early readers.

Increasing Speed: Reading the same book multiple times helps your child read more fluently, with better comprehension and less effort.

Late in 2023, we hosted a parent workshop with Genine Riley from SPELD, who presented to families about our reading and spelling program, 'Sounds Write'. This included further information about the use of decodables within the program. Maria Colarusso, a Year 4 teacher, also presented to families about 'SSP', our spelling approach in Years 3-6. The session will be repeated at 9am on Thursday the 8th of February, which is Thursday of Week 2. The session will be filmed and made available to our school community.

So how do I know where my child is at with their reading development without a reading level? The students in R-2 follow a specific scope and sequence in line with our spelling and reading program, 'Sounds Write', so that they can progressively develop and practice their phonic knowledge and skills in a gradual, systematic way, giving them confidence and success. Children (and their teachers) will know where they are at in their reading development by knowing which part of the reading 'code' they are up to, based on the phase/units they have mastered through 'Sounds Write'. In addition, our teachers use a number of different assessment and diagnostic tools to develop data sets that articulate where students are at.

Reading with your child at home is an absolutely essential aspect of their learning journey and development as a reader. You can gauge your child's progress by observing their ability to confidently sound out words and read with increasing fluency while using decodable books. If your child gets stuck on a word, encourage them to sound out the individual letter sounds to see if they can blend the sounds together. This aligns with the decoding strategy we're emphasising. However, if they're still struggling, it's perfectly fine to provide the word to keep the reading experience positive and enjoyable. Additionally, when reading non-decodables, engage in discussions about the story's content, ask questions, make predictions, anything that helps them develop their comprehension skills. When supporting reading at home, please remember to make sure your child's book comes back to school each day.

In summary, our switch to decodable books as a learning resource is a positive step in your child's reading journey. These books align with the phonics skills your child is learning, promote independent reading, and build strong foundations. Re-reading these books will enhance your child's fluency and confidence in reading. It is an important goal for children to become accurate, efficient, and therefore fluent readers. Facilitating repeated practice of reading aloud is key to developing fluency. The goal for all children is for decoding to become easy and automatic, so they can free up their attention to focus on the meaning of the text.

Rasinski and Samuels (2011, p. 95) note that when readers develop fluency, 'they are able to devote their finite cognitive resources to the more important task in reading – that is, comprehension'.

We're excited about this change and look forward to seeing the progress your child will make. If you have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to reach out.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.decodablereadersaustralia.com.au/>

Thank you for your support in helping your child become a successful and confident reader.

Sincerely,

Sounds-Write sequence Initial Code

	NEW CODE KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS AND WORD STRUCTURE	CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING
Unit 1	a, i, m, s, t	Segment, blend and manipulate sounds in CVC words	Sounds can be represented by spellings with one letter
Unit 2	n, o, p	CVC	



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