Chunk Letters and Sounds
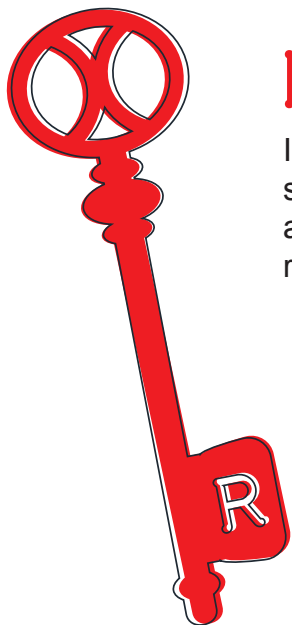
Keys to Accuracy

Ruby Reader

Chunk Letters and Sounds

Keys for the Teacher

In the beginning, we ask emergent readers to break words apart into individual sounds. Once this skill is mastered, children can begin to combine certain letters and sounds together into chunks to make reading more efficient. As the pace of reading picks up, the focus shifts from decoding words to reading for meaning.

Keys for the Children

Good readers look for bigger chunks of letters and sounds within words. Reading the chunk in one piece will make reading faster. The quicker you can read a word, the more time you have to think about what the word means.

Lesson

A good way to illustrate the concept of chunks is to use linking cubes. Write a letter on each cube and lay them in order with a small space between each one. Put a mini chocolate chip on top of each letter cube. Explain to the children that reading is easier if you put certain letters together to make chunks. Demonstrate this by linking letters into chunks and replace the mini chocolate chips with one regular sized chocolate chip on top of the chunk. Share that chunking letters can make reading faster and give you more time to think about what words means. Take it one step further by linking all the cubes together to make the whole word. Replace the chocolate chips with a candy kiss.

Here are some words that could be used to illustrate the chunking concept:

Flower, dragon, flash, school, sled, story, think, swim

After students understand the concept, it can be fun and motivating to look for chunks in words using a magnifying glass.

Going forward, have students identify chunks in class poems and charts. Circling chunks is a good way for children to see them hiding within words.

Notes...

1 The concept of chunking can be used to illustrate hidden words, blends, word families, digraphs, word endings and more. This skill is advanced for many beginning readers. Often this strategy will be taught later in the year or individually to those who are ready.