

Nose Creek Elementary School Sight Word Approach

At Nose Creek Elementary, our motto is “Learn to Read, Love to Read.” We understand that growing strong reading skills takes time and effort. We also know that reading is a complex process for all learners. One of the “building blocks” of successful reading is a **strong sight word vocabulary** – that is, the words a reader recognizes by sight without having to decode or sound out. This includes both high frequency words (very common words) and sight or learned words (words that cannot be sounded out using phonetic cues). The fewer words a reader must decode, the more attention the reader can devote to understanding and thinking about what is being read or written, resulting in the development of strong comprehension skills and written content. The key purpose of reading and writing, after all, is to make meaning from written text, for both learning and for readers’ and writers’ enjoyment.

“Poor readers at any grade level show slower than normal development of a sight word vocabulary they can read automatically and easily. Ultimately, it is this challenge in rapid word recognition that limits comprehension in older poor readers, for these skills allow children to focus on constructing the meaning of what they are reading rather than spending too many of their intellectual resources on trying to identify the words (Adams, 1990). The strongest current theories of reading growth link phonetic and “sight word” reading skills together by showing how good phonetic reading skills are necessary in the formation of accurate memory for the spelling patterns that are the basis of sight word recognition” (Ehri, 2001).

While having an extensive sight word vocabulary is an important step in creating strong readers, it is only one of several key components towards reading success. We do not want to “over focus” on sight word vocabulary. However, we believe that any tool that helps to build a child’s confidence, success, and understanding of what is read is worth working on daily. As such, we ask that families devote time each week to help their children to work on sight word vocabulary development as a portion of daily homework.

We have ten sight word vocabulary lists for children to work on during their time at Nose Creek Elementary School, starting in Kindergarten and extending to grade 4, comprising a list of 1000 sight words we would like our students to be able to read on sight and spell effortlessly. Our first 3 lists, our Power, Red and Pink Word Lists, contain over 65% of words found in elementary texts, many of which do not follow standard phonetic rules to allow successful “sounding out” of these words.

This program is personalized for each student; that is, students will be working through these words at their own rate, to allow a “just right” level of challenge. However, we are hoping that with home support, students will learn to read and spell all 1000 words before they finish grade 4 at our school. We also respectfully request that parents don’t push students to learn words at a rate above their comfort level, as we want this to be a positive, rewarding, and enjoyable experience for all involved, particularly our children.

Each evening, we ask that students work with an adult to learn, practice and play with their sight words. Fun ideas and game-based for word play activities are included in this package. These sessions should comprise no more than 5 to 10 minutes of your family homework time, at least 4 times per week. Once your child learns all of the words on the list, reading and spelling each without hesitation, please write a note in your child’s agenda to indicate that he or she is ready to be assessed. When your child is successful with all of the words, a new set of sight words will be assigned by their classroom teacher.

Thank you for your help in making our children the best readers they can be.

Nose Creek Elementary School Staff