

Lesson 2: How to Choose “Just Right” Books

Supplies Needed:

- Three t-shirts (one that is too small for an average sized child in your class, one that is about right for an average sized child in your class and one that is extremely large for an averaged sized child in your class – we suggest child’s x-small, youth medium and adult x-large)
- Three t-shirt template posters (one small, one medium and one large sized poster)
- Markers
- Individual student book bags or baskets

Procedure:

- Choose three average sized students from your class. (Be sure to keep in mind the students who might get embarrassed easily. For the x-small and x-large shirts – pick students who may be have a funny sense of humor or are more outgoing.)
- Hand each student a t-shirt and tell them to put the shirts on. (The rest of the class will most likely start giggling at the students putting on the x-small and x-large t-shirts. It gets funny!)
- Once the students all have their shirts on ask each one how he/she feels in the shirt. Try to elicit more than just a “good” or “not good” from the students – uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, just right, too tight, too loose, etc. Then ask the rest of the class what their observations are for all of the students with shirts on.
- Tell students that choosing “just right” books to read is almost like choosing clothes that fit “just right”. It is very important! (At this point the students can take off the shirts if they wish.)
- Display the small t-shirt poster. Write the title “Books that are Too Hard” at the top. Tell the class that books that are too hard are very much like shirts that are way too small. They are uncomfortable and just don’t feel right. Ask the class how they think they know if a book

is too difficult for them and what kinds of questions they should be asking themselves to figure that out. Write their responses on the small t-shirt poster. Some possible questions to record:

- Does the book “feel” uncomfortable?
 - Am I confused about what is happening in the book?
 - Does it sound fluent (smooth) when I read the book aloud?
 - Are there more than five words on a page that I can’t figure out?
 - Could I talk to a friend about this book?
- Next display the large t-shirt poster. Write the title “Books that are Too Easy” at the top. Tell the class that books that are too easy are very much like shirts that are way too big. They are TOO comfortable and easy to wear. T-shirts that are too large are something people wear sometimes to be extra comfortable. They are easy to move around in, and some people even sleep in them! They are fine for every now and then, but not something they would wear every day. Ask students how they know if a book is too easy for them and what kinds of questions they should be asking themselves to figure that out. Write their responses on the large t-shirt poster. Some possible responses:
 - Is the book way too comfortable?
 - Have I read this book LOTS of times before?
 - Can I read the book VERY smoothly/fluently?
 - Am I still interested in this book or am I bored?
 - Do I know EVERY word and read them easily?
 - Am I still “wondering” while reading this book?
 - Am I still thinking while reading this book?
 - Am I ready to move on to something a little more challenging?
- Finally, display the medium t-shirt poster. Write the title “Books that are Just Right” at the top. Tell the class that books that are “just right” are very much like shirts that fit perfectly. They are comfortable and just feel right. They are something that should be read most of the time, but should still give the reader a little room to grow (aka – challenge them a bit as a reader and as a thinker.) Ask students how they know if a book is “just right” for them and what kinds of questions

they should be asking themselves to figure that out. Write their responses on the medium t-shirt poster. Some possible questions to record:

- Does the book feel comfortable?
- Am I interested in the book?
- Do I understand what I am reading?
- Are there a few challenging words that I can figure out using my reading strategies?
- Am I able to think and talk about this book to friends?
- Do I have questions or wondering about the book that make me want to read it again?
- Ask students if everyone wears the same size shirts. When they respond with “no”, then remind them that books are the same way. Everyone’s “just right” books fit them the way they should and not everyone reads the same types, length or level of book.
- Send students to their independent reading spots with their book baggies/baskets. Tell them that their task is to check their books to see if they are “just right” for them.
- Display the t-shirt posters in your classroom to remind students of questions they can ask themselves to figure out if a book is “just right” for them.

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