Chunking for Reading/Decoding

Reading/decoding requires the student to look at the sequence of the letters in words and understand the organization of specific sounds in order. Some students have difficulty with long sequences of letters and may benefit from instruction that helps them break the word into smaller, more manageable units, called *chunks.* Sometimes the order of the sounds in a word is more easily organized if the entire word is broken into these units. These chunks can be combined into units for accurate decoding. Chunking for reading/decoding is a strategy designed to do that.

How to Teach Chunking for Reading/Decoding

Teachers should first teach the children what it means to chunk or group information so that it can be remembered more easily. Use number sequences and letters for illustration (e.g., how telephone numbers are grouped). Then introduce words to be read and break the words into units, such as *re-mem-ber* for *remember* or *car-pet* for *carpet.* Try to organize the groups of letters in the word in ways that are natural (see Figure 1). For example, *re-me-mb-er* organizes the letters in groups of two, but that is not as easy to remember as *re-mem-ber* because it does not follow the way people naturally say the sounds.

Plan	Action
Look at the word.	"I see the word *beginning*."
Find the chunk.	"I see the chunk *ginn* in the middle."
Sound out the chunk.	"I say, 'ginn.'"
Sound out the beginning.	"I say, 'be.'"
Sound out the chunk.	"I say, 'ginn.'"
Sound out the ending.	"I say, 'ing.'"
Say the word.	"I say, 'beginning.'"

Figure 1.   Recommended organization of letter groups in a word.

Who Should Learn Chunking for Reading/Decoding?

Children who have difficulty with sounding out words are likely to find chunking for reading / decoding helpful. Children who have difficulty working with things in order often have low Successive processing ability and may find this strategy particularly helpful. This strategy also teaches children with low Planning processing scores some ways of reading.

Resources

Ashman, A., & Conway, R. (1993). *Using cognitive methods in the classroom*. New York: Routledge.
Naglieri, J.A. (1999). *Essentials of CAS assessment*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.