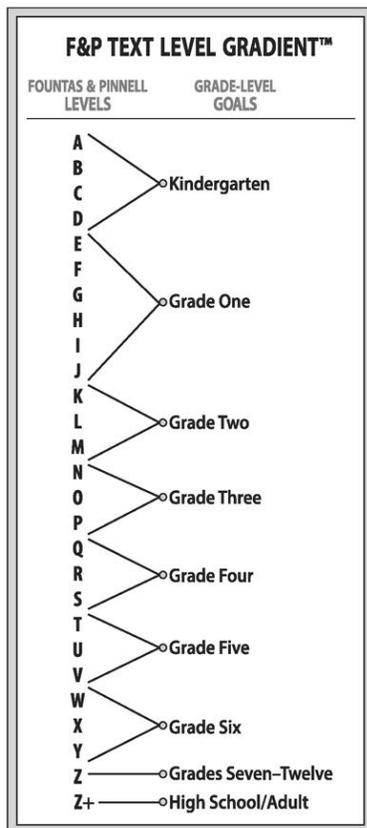


This is Mrs. Hessefort from Title One Reading Land with some information on reading levels. So, I bet you've been wondering what your child's reading level really means, right? Here at Athens Elementary School, we use 3 different types of reading levels to best meet the needs of our learners. Older students may bring home a Lexile reading level that correlates to the big MAP computer-based assessment done throughout the year. Lexile is a numbering system to sort books from easier to more difficult text and themes. It has a range from 0 - 2000. Check out www.lexile.com for more detailed information on approximate levels for various grades.

Accelerated Reader (AR) is also used in our happy school and that too uses a numbering system for its books. It begins at 0.1, meaning this book is appropriate for possible independent readers in the first month (*September*) of Kindergarten. If your child is reading a level 2.4, that is supposed to be a fine book for a typical second grader in the 4th month of the school year (*December*). What do you think a 4.8 book level means? (*Insert theme song to final Jeopardy here...*) □ If you said a 4th grader in the 8th month of a school year (*April*) should enjoy and be capable of reading it, you are correct!

The last leveling system used by our teachers is the opposite of numbers. Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell are considered literacy gurus and created a book leveling system based on the letters of the alphabet. Students are tested in September, January and May to show reading growth. The biggest thing that parents have to remember is that it's not a race to get to level Z. Please don't think that a teacher is holding your child back if you feel they should be reading in a higher level. As educators, we are taught to teach far beyond just reading the words in a book. Many students sound like very strong readers because they can decode difficult words and read at a steady rate with appropriate expression. However, there is so much more to a book that needs to be uncovered. Read on to find out what those things are!



The grade-level goals on the F&P Text Level Gradient™ are intended to provide general guidelines, which should be adjusted based on school/district requirements and professional teacher judgement.

Comprehension skills need to be deepened beyond just recall-only facts. Comprehension is like a hole you dig to plant a tree. That hole needs to be deep and wide in order for the tree to grow. We are growing readers in every grade by expanding their thinking beyond just the words on each page. Students need to synthesize, make connections, visualize, summarize, build vocabulary, analyze and interpret to comprehend like a champ. Whew! There's a lot to teach in comprehension. Reading at a more comfortable book level would sure make it easier to practice these higher-level thinking skills.

Have you ever caught your child reading with way too much excitement or sounding monotone like a robot? Some

students need extra work on using appropriate expression. Others need to increase or decrease their speed. Still others need to pay close attention to punctuation and not skip any that the author intentionally chose to use. I know of students who are not careful readers and skip, add or change words in books. All of these concepts tie into the theme of fluency which many students take years to fully master. Working in an appropriate book level allows for intentional teaching of fluency.

The ability to write about what was read needs to be taught and practiced as well. Reading and writing are partners in life. It's important to be able to do both successfully. If a child can read the words from a book, hopefully he/she would be able to transfer them with spelling on paper, too. That shows mastery of vocabulary in the English language big time!

Another thing to keep in mind is the content of higher level books. It's great if your 1st grader, for instance, can accurately read the words in level N books (*beginning grade 3*). Most often, the themes and content of level N books would not be the most appropriate for the mindset of a 1st grader, though.

By not straying super far from recommended grade level books, students can still develop strong reading skills to sustain them for life!

As with anything, there are always exceptions to rules. Perhaps your child truly is a gifted reader in all of the above aspects (*comprehension, fluency, writing, and more mature content*) and needs to be appropriately challenged with higher level books. In that case, sitting down with your child's teacher and figuring out a plan to best safely meet these unique needs is probably a swell idea.

By the way, when you visit your local public library to borrow free, awesome books, ask the librarians what leveling system(s) they use. Many use the same 3 we do at school (*Lexile, Accelerated Reader-AR, and Fountas and Pinnell*) making it easier for you to discover ideal books for your son or daughter. Cool, right?!

Well, you made it to the end of this informational piece. I hope you might have learned a thing or two about what your child's book level means.

Continued Happy Reading Adventures to You and Yours,

Mrs. Hessefort
Reading Specialist
School District of Athens

