

# An Overview of Reading Workshop

## A FEW NOTES ON LEVELED BOOKS

### Why are leveled books important?

By reading books that are at their independent levels, children are free to practice other critical reading and comprehending skills without being entangled by the mechanics of word-solving, all the while building confidence and enthusiasm for reading.

### What is the INDEPENDENT READING LEVEL?

The Independent Reading Level is the level at which children can fluently read **and** comprehend with accuracy of 95% or greater. While typically assigned a "letter" for his/her level, the reality is that most children have a range of levels at which they feel comfortable reading independently.

### How is the Independent Level determined?

Formally, benchmark assessments (during which the child reads a passage aloud and answers comprehension questions) are completed at various points throughout the year to determine a child's reading level. Informally, teachers are able to listen to a student reading and determine whether he/she is ready to *independently* read more difficult texts.

These assessments, or Running Records, are also useful in determining a child's *Instructional Level*. Instructional Levels are used for guided practice in the classroom.

Many variables factor into a reading level, and the focus is determining patterns of reading behavior over time and matching books to a reader's growing abilities.

### How are leveled books used in the classroom?

Leveled books are used for practicing skills taught during mini-lessons, conferences, and small group instruction. There is a centralized Leveled Library in the first/second grade wing where children can "shop" for new books to read each week. Additionally, our AC librarians have created a "Reading Spectrum" to correlate with guided reading levels.

### At what level should my child be reading?

A child's reading level is based on several factors, and we look at the strengths and needs of the individual when determining a level. Our goal for each student is *steady progress* along a continuum of difficulty, rather than aiming for a specific level.

### Should my child **ONLY** be reading books at his/her level?

The answer to this question is a resounding **NO!** Reading levels are certainly useful and necessary for independent and guided practice in the classroom.

However, the sole purpose for reading **MUST NOT** be simply becoming a better reader. Readers need to be engaged and interested in reading. They should be encouraged to choose books that are exciting, motivating, and accessible (either read independently or with an adult).

Your child's teacher, our AC librarians, and the librarians at your local library should be able to offer suggestions and help point you in the right direction...take advantage of their expertise!

