



Understanding your elementary child's *Instructional Reading Level*

Over the course of the school year, your child's elementary classroom teacher will listen to your child read and respond to different levels of text. In the fall and spring, the teacher will conduct this observation using the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) to help determine the most appropriate level of text to help your child grow as a reader. Additionally, the teacher will listen to your child read during small-group time or independent time to complete less formal observations. These observations and assessments are used to target specific reading skills during instruction and to determine whether or not your child is ready for the next reading level. The level the teacher determines during these observations and assessments is for instructional purposes, and it is not a fixed level. Like athletes, readers develop individually, and experience growth spurts and plateaus during their development. Expect to see these growth spurts and plateaus in your own child's reading journey.

In Stillwater Area Public Schools, we believe a child is a reader with a variety of skills to be nurtured and stretched. While leveled text is a tool that can help us accomplish this in school, we also encourage exploration. **It is important to encourage your child to read a wide variety of books at home and to encourage exploration of ideas, even if the level of a book does not match what is being used for instruction in school.**

You can help at home by reading to your child daily, by helping with reading assignments sent home by your child's teacher, by talking regularly about ideas and the world around them, by expecting mistakes, and by celebrating perseverance in the face of challenge.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of building readers!

Additional information on reading levels can be found on the back of this sheet.



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In school, children's performance on different levels of text is generally categorized in three ways. Your child and your child's teacher will work with all three categories of text in class. Remember, reading level is not fixed: Your child may be able to read more difficult texts, depending on interest and prior knowledge, or your child may struggle with easier texts due to lack of interest or lack of prior knowledge. The following information will help you to better understand the categories your teacher is using and the purpose for reading within each.

Independent Reading Level

Children read at their independent reading level for enjoyment, to build reading endurance, and to build background knowledge on a variety of subjects. This is the reading level that your child will feel most comfortable reading at home or on his/her own and will likely be the level of book your child's teacher sends home for reading practice. A child's independent reading level is determined by high accuracy and excellent or satisfactory comprehension on informal reading inventories conducted by the teacher.

Instructional Reading Level

Children read at their instructional level to stretch their reading skills and to build background knowledge. This is the reading level in which your child will need support from a teacher or parent to feel successful. This support might include previewing a story together, providing important background information to aid understanding, or help with challenging vocabulary or difficult-to-read words. Teachers generally use instructional reading level text in small groups or in partner reads. A child's instructional reading level is determined by accuracy and comprehension that is slightly lower than with an independent reading level book.

Difficult or Frustration Reading Level

Since listening comprehension develops faster than reading comprehension, children are able to understand this level of book when it is read to them, but they struggle when asked to read it on their own. Children may encounter this level of book during teacher read-alouds or shared readings. These may also be the types of books that you read aloud with your child at home.