

Supporting Developing Readers at the Library

Collection Development

Presented by Sarah Dutelle, Children's Collection Specialist
and Amy Forrester, Children's Librarian



Christine

As people enter, have them introduce themselves and where they are logging in from.

Activity: At your current library, what do you call books for developing readers?

Introduce Sarah and Amy

Learning Objectives

1. Articulate the impact of third grade literacy
2. Explore ways collections can support third grade literacy
3. Explain the five grade level reading skills
4. Increase discoverability of developing reader materials at your library to better support K-3rd graders and their caregivers

AF

Thanks, Christine. Amy here. I'm going to talk about our learning objectives.

By the end of today's webinar, we hope that you'll be able to:

1. Articulate the impact of third grade literacy
2. Explore ways collections can support third grade literacy
3. Explain the five grade level reading skills
4. Increase discoverability of developing reader materials at your library to better support kindergarten through 3rd graders and their caregivers

Who We Are



Sarah Dutelle
Children's Collection Specialist



Amy Forrester
Children's Librarian

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Before we dive any deeper into today's webinar, we want to take a moment to introduce ourselves and our different perspectives on today's content.

SD

Hey, it's Sarah! It's my responsibility as the Children's Collection Specialist to select and purchase ALL of the juvenile and teen materials for all 26 of our Denver Public Library locations. I use my many years of experience as a front line Children's Librarian to inform those purchases, as well as to help me decide in which part of the collection those titles will ultimately land.

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Amy again. As a children's librarian, I'm very much informed by my experiences working on the front lines with customers. I've served on the Geisel Award Committee, an ALA beginning reader book award, and I co-host a mock blog about the award as well. Finally, as a member of DPL's Grade Level Reading Project Team, I have been involved in the strategic work supporting all the projects we're going to talk about today.

SD

We have worked on a number of projects together and we've found our experiences, passions, and knowledge really complement each other. Plus, we just really love working together!



★ Use the pods to share details about purchasing and selecting duties in your current position.

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To get us started, use the pods to share details about purchasing and selecting duties in your current position.

In the first pod, we're asking about your selecting and purchasing responsibilities. In the second, how is collection development done at your library. And in the third pod, whether or not your collection floats. To be clear, floating collections don't have a home base. Items stay at whichever location they're returned at.

Respond to and recap feedback

Pod #1 - What are your selecting and purchasing responsibilities?

- I select and purchase
- I recommend
- I don't do any selecting or purchasing

Pod #2 - How is collection development done at your library?

- Centralized for whole system
- Individual by branch/dept
- Divided by section/category/age
- Other

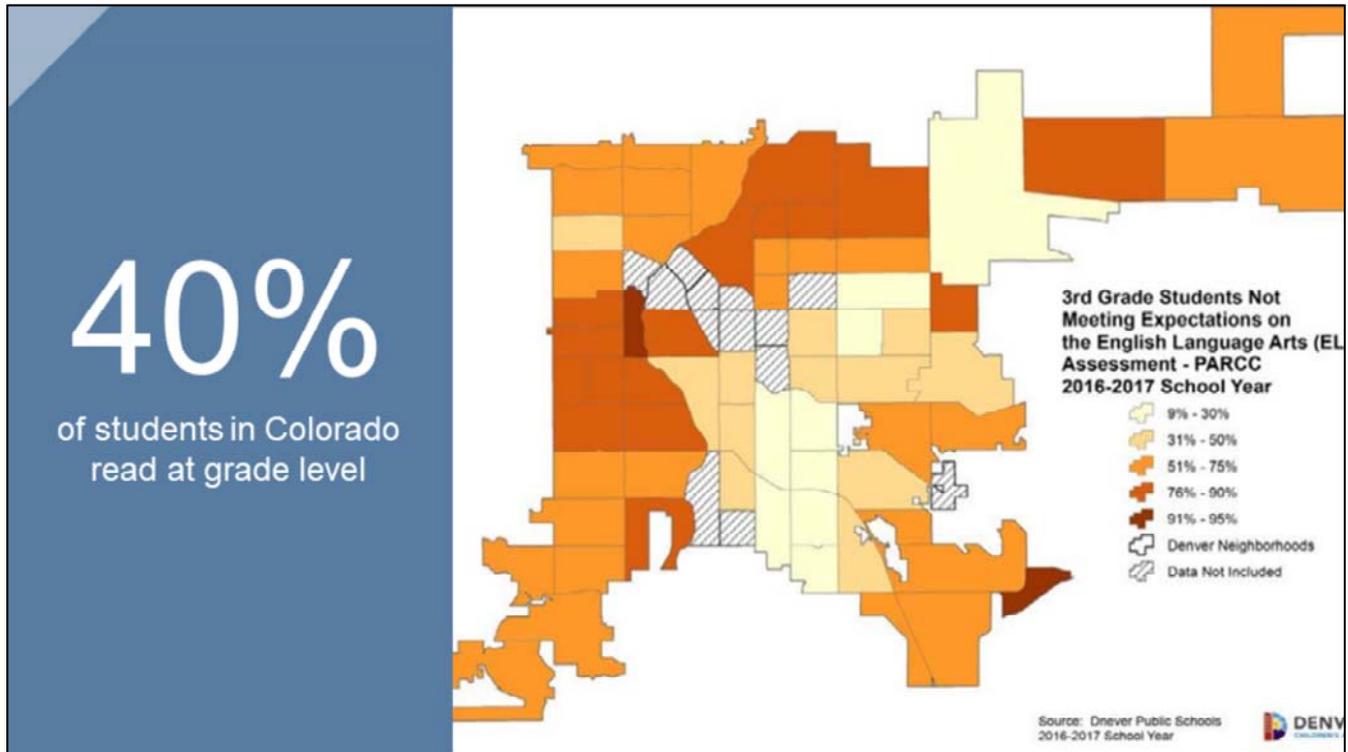
Pod #3 - Does your collection float?

- Yes
- No
- Other

Why focus on grade level reading?

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- So why focus on developing readers, or “grade level reading?”



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- For the Grade Level Reading (GLR) Project Team this heat map from the [Status of Denver's Children report](#) has been our constant companion.
- On this map, the darker the shade of orange the more students there are in the neighborhood NOT reading at grade level.
- According to a recent [Chalkbeat article](#), just 26 out of 178 Colorado districts have more than half of their third-graders reading at grade level.
- In other words, in Colorado, 40% of 3rd graders read at grade level.
- And in Denver that number's a little lower, 39.4%.
- The ability to read is a foundation students need to in order to navigate future grades, and life after school.
- The [Denver Office of Children's Affairs](#) states that "Beginning in fourth grade, children transition from learning how to read to reading to learn."
- In response to this, DPL put together an internal work team to look at what our role could be in supporting developing readers.
- At the public library, it's not our MO to limit children or our collection by reading level. So what does it mean for us to support this work?

Grade Level Reading Project Mission

Support and empower library staff, families and educators to connect children (K-3rd grade) with diverse books they enjoy and that inspire curiosity to foster lifelong readers.

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- After lots of research and discussion, the GLR Project Team came up with this project mission.
- To support and empower library staff, families and educators to connect children kindergarten through 3rd grade with diverse books they enjoy and that inspire curiosity to foster lifelong readers.
- In our meetings with Denver Public Schools, we heard a clearly articulated need for DPL to focus on the joy of reading, rather than the nuts and bolts of learning to read.
- And that made sense to us, because library employees aren't trained to teach people to read.
- But we are trained to match readers with materials that match their interests and reading levels!



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- We really see this as an extension of our early literacy and Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) work serving children from birth to 5 and their parents and caregivers.
- We want to be intentional about the transition from “ready to read” to “learning to read” and ensure library staff is just as confident serving and supporting kindergarteners to 3rd graders in their reading journey as they are serving younger children.

Early & Transitional Books

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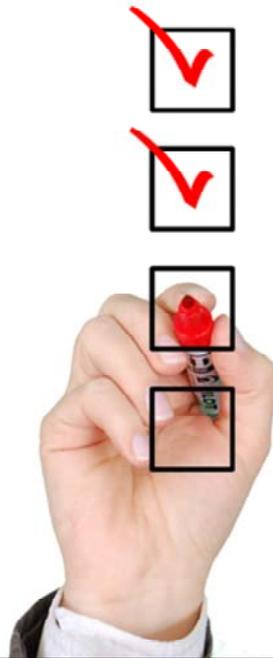
- Even before we had a GLR Project Team, Sarah and I were talking about books for developing readers.
- The more we talked, the more we realized that although many books for developing readers were cataloged in our beginning reader section, there were great titles shelved in nonfiction, picture books, graphic novels, and chapter books.
- We knew we didn't want to move all these titles to the beginning reader section.

How can we make it easier for caregivers and DPL staff to find excellent, diverse books for kindergarten through 3rd graders?

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- So the question became, how can we increase findability?
- How can we make it easier for caregivers and staff to find excellent, diverse books for kindergarten through 3rd graders?

Requirements

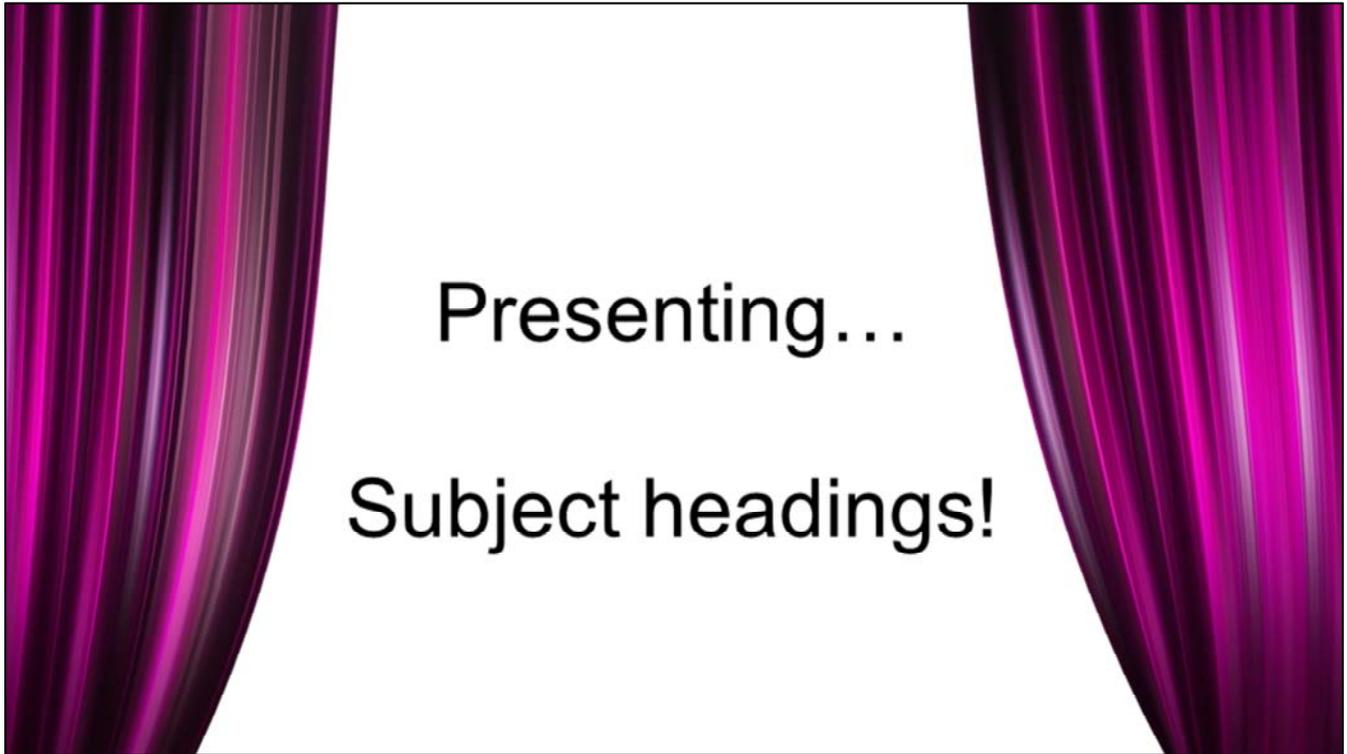


- Implementation across system
- Increased access, not increased stigma
- Not tied to a specific leveling system (DRA, Lexile, etc.)

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With this goal in mind, our cataloging, collection development, and children's library staff worked collaboratively to determine our project requirements.

- We have a floating collection, so whatever we decided to do had to be flexible enough to work at all of our locations.
- We wanted to focus on access, but not at the expense of reader confidence. We didn't want to create a stigma. For kids to feel like they were reading a "baby book" or that they could only select books from a certain section.
- Finally, we knew we didn't want to tie our method to any specific leveling system. This was for a variety of reasons.
- First, Denver Public Schools empowers their 200 plus schools to use any leveling system they like. In fact, individual teachers are allowed to choose whatever system they prefer. This means you could have a 1st grader and 3rd grader going to the same school, but using different leveling systems! Super confusing!
- Second, leveling systems are for-profit and so many titles are not leveled because it costs publishers to level a title.
- Finally, no leveling system is perfect and they don't necessarily align with publisher levels. I'm not going to talk about that now, but Sarah will elaborate later on.



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- Our goals and requirements lead us this: subject headings!
- Technically, they're local subject heading points. This basically means we created them in-house (locally), they weren't created by a vendor or given to us by the Library of Congress.
- We landed on subject headings as a way to provide more access points for customers and staff.
- Subject headings meant no shelving changes, no stickers, and no stigma!
- These subject headings are searchable via the online public access catalog (or OPAC), as well as our staff-side interface.
- We use Polaris, if you're curious.

Early Books

support kids beginning to read.

Transitional Books

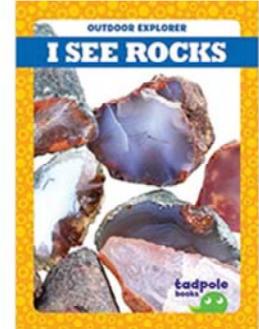
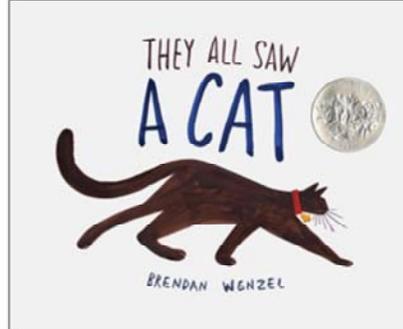
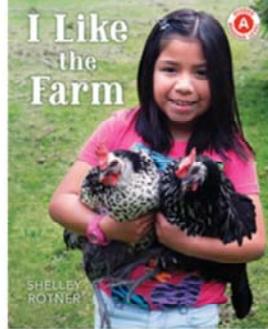
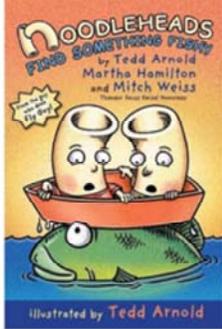
support kids bridging from early books to chapter books.



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- And, yes, subject headings plural! We created two.
- The first subject heading, Early Books, supports kids just beginning to read.
- And the second, Transitional Books, supports kids bridging from early books to chapter books.
- Titles with these subject headings are chosen because all the elements - design, font, vocabulary, narrative complexity, illustrations - come together to support new readers.
- We look for books that are great for pleasure reading, not textbooks/"basals".
- The inclusion of titles with diverse representations has been a major consideration for us. But I won't go into that now, as Sarah is going to talk about it in depth later.

Early Books Examples



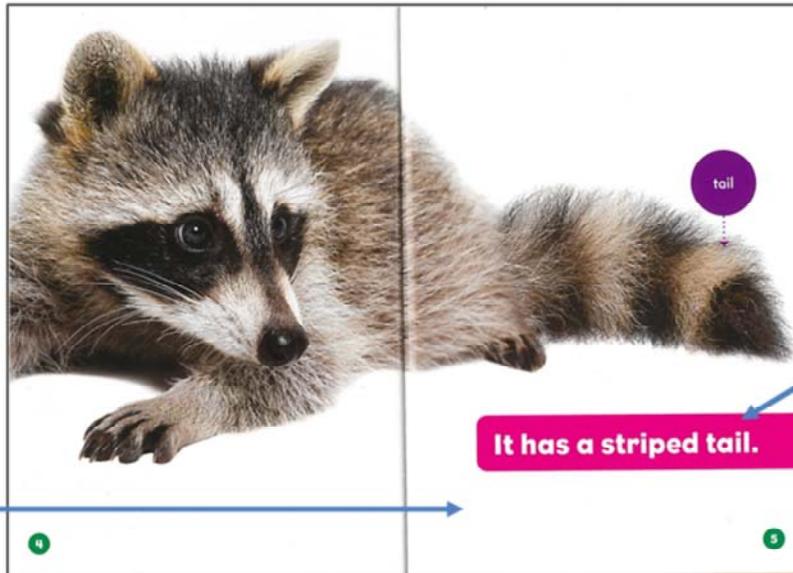
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- Here are a few examples of excellent Early Books. Title and author information is included in the slide notes. As you can see the titles include nonfiction, picture books, graphic novels, and beginning readers.
 - Noodleheads Find Something Fishy by Tedd Arnold, Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss
 - I Like the Farm by Shelley Rotner
 - They All Saw a Cat by Brendan Wenzel
 - I See Rocks by Tim Mayerling

Early Books Criteria

Lexile 0-350

Ample white space around and between text



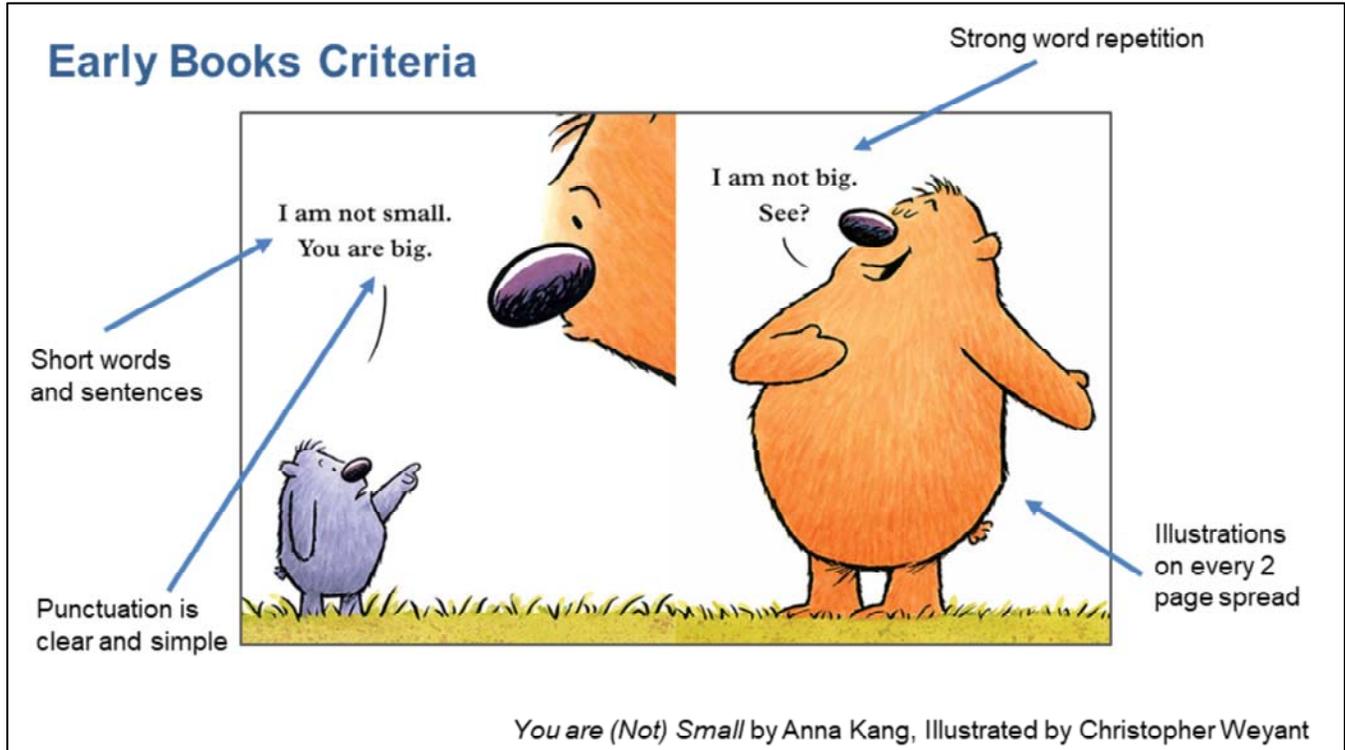
Font is 14 pts or larger

Forest Babies series: Raccoon Cubs by Genevieve Nielsen

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- Part of our work was putting together criteria for each of the subject headings.
- Much of it based on K.T. Horning's Book, *From Cover to Cover*, as well as the Geisel Award Criteria.
- We wanted the criteria to be detailed enough to help us determine if a book was a good fit.
- But there also needed to be some wiggle room for informed judgement.
- For instance, our criteria for Early Books includes a Lexile range of 0 to 350, which we've found is usually about on target.
- However, if a title doesn't have a Lexile level or it fits all the other criteria except the Lexile level, we'll use our own informed judgement as librarians to decide what to do.
- In the case of this example, it's pretty clear. This title has a Lexile level of 110.
- We look for a large font that has ample white space between words, as well as around the text. This helps the eye focus because we have to train our eye muscles to read.
- White space doesn't have to be white, it could be blue or green or in this case pink. The important thing is that it provides an uncluttered background to make the words stand out to readers.

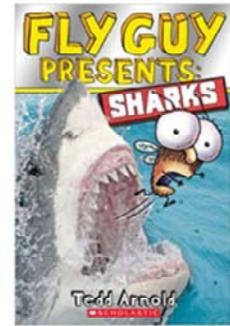
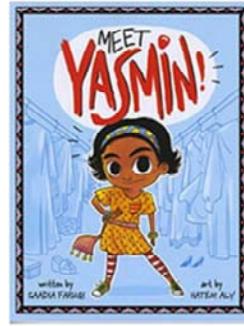
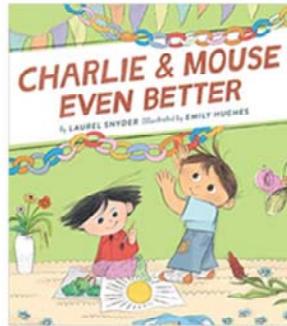
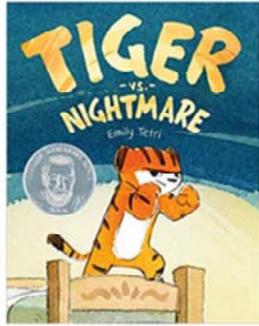
Early Books Criteria



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- Here's another Early Book example.
- We look for sentences made up of no more than 12 short (just one or two syllables a piece) words.
- And it's best if those words repeat often so readers have a chance to practice and gain confidence with them.
- Simple punctuation is another important element for very new readers. Colons, semi-colons, and my least favorite, ellipses, can be really confusing!
- For Early Books, we want illustrations on every two page spread that help readers by supporting the text.
- In this example, we have visual representations of you and I, big and small.
- Also, illustrations are enticing and promote reading motivation.
- In case you're wondering, *You Are (Not) Small* has a lexile level of 60.

Transitional Books Examples



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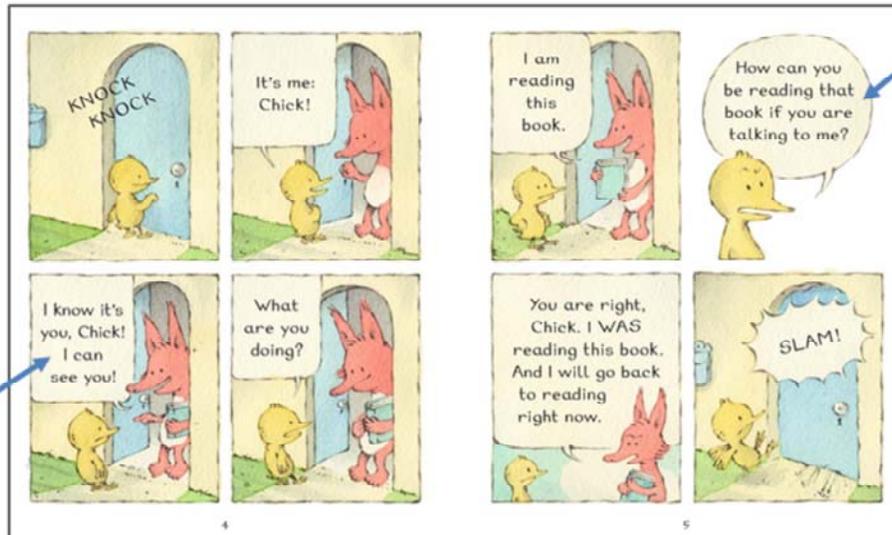
- Here are a few examples of wonderful Transitional Books. Again, you'll see we have beginning readers, early chapter books, graphic novels, and nonfiction.
 - Tiger vs. Nightmare by Emily Tetri
 - Charlie & Mouse Even Better by Laurel Snyder, illustrated by Emily Hughes
 - Meet Yasmin by Saadia Faruqi, illustrated by Hatem Aly
 - Fly Guy Presents: Sharks by Tedd Arnold

Transitional Books Criteria

100 pages
or less

Wide margins and
sufficient white space
around and between text

Font is 13
pts or larger



Fox + Chick: The Party and Other Stories by Sergio Ruzzier

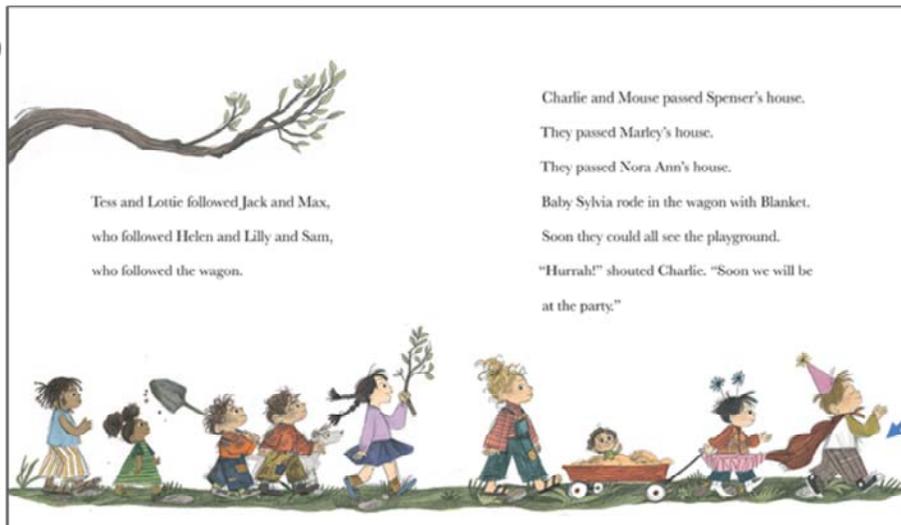
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- Criteria for Transitional Books, as you might expect, allows for longer books with more text.
- In general, we're looking for books no longer than 100 pages. Although, nonfiction titles are often much shorter.
- The font should still be large, though it doesn't need to be as large as the font we find in an Early Book.
- We still want wide margins and white space, but as we can see in this example, it doesn't have to be as plentiful as in an Early Book.

Transitional Books Criteria

Lexile 350-750

If chapters
are present,
no more than
15 pages long



Illustrations
about twice
a chapter

Charlie & Mouse by Laurel Snyder, Illustrated by Emily Hughes

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- Here's a second Transitional Book example.
- Lexile-wise, we're looking at titles around 350 to 750. Fox + Chick, our example from the previous slide, comes in at 370 and on this slide Charlie & Mouse is leveled at 420.
- Although not all Transitional Books have chapters, we have found it helpful to have a ballpark number of pages per chapter.
- For context, chapters in Charlie & Mouse are between 6-12 pages. Fox + Chick has longer chapters, between 15-16 pages, but that makes sense because it's a graphic novel.
- Finally, we still want illustrations to provide occasional visual context clues and also keep readers engaged, but they don't need to be on every page as with Early Books.

Other terms we considered for:

Early Books

- Beginning Readers
- Early Readers
- Easy Readers
- Emergent Readers
- Emergent Books

Transitional Books

- In-Betweens
- Next Steps
- Early Chapter Books
- Elementary Books
- Elementary Chapter Books



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- We also spent a good bit of time researching and discussing terms for our subject headings.
- This slide shows some of the names we discussed.
- We finally decided to go with Early and Transitional Books for a couple reasons.
- First, we felt they defined the book, rather than the reader.
- Second, we wanted subject headings that would work for keyword and subject heading searches. We know our staff and customers use both types of searching.
- The terms “Early” and “Transitional” are specific enough that they don’t bring back too many irrelevant results if searching just by keyword.
- Finally, we felt that chapter book seemed confusing because some nonfiction and graphic novels don’t have chapters.



★ Where Do You Shelve Books for Developing Readers?

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There are great books for developing readers across many genres. We're curious, where do you shelve the following genres when titles are supportive for developing readers. Use the checkboxes to let us know.

Our three genres are nonfiction, picture books, and graphic novels.

Respond to and recap feedback

Nonfiction

- Interfiled with beginning readers
- Interfiled with Dewey
- Separate nonfiction beginning reader section
- Other

Picture Books

- Interfiled with beginning readers
- Interfiled with Dewey
- Separate picture beginning reader section
- Other

Graphic Novels

- Interfiled with beginning readers
- Interfiled with Dewey

- Separate graphic novel beginning reader section
- Other

Project Timeline

- Jan 2017 - Meetings between Cataloging, Collection Development, Children's to discuss goals, challenges, and opportunities
- May-Aug 2017 - Children's Library staff created title list (pub. 2016 and before)
- Aug 2017 - Launched and promoted access points
- Dec 2017 - Added 2017 titles
- Ongoing - Subject headings updated twice a year (May & Dec)



AF

- I won't go through the entire timeline now, but in case you're curious, we're including the info.
- The important things to know are that it launched in 2017 and we add titles biannually in May and December.
- As of our most recent update, we have identified 3,500 Early Books and just under 2,000 Transitional Books titles.

Staff and Customer Promotion

- [Website](#)
- [Personalized Reading List service](#)



READ · PLAY · LEARN

Find Books for Your Developing Reader

Is a child in your life developing their reading skills? One way to find books for them is to search the library catalog for "Early Books" or

Facebook, Pinterest, Email, Print icons

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- The subject headings are great, but they're only really useful if people know they exist!
- Our promotion plan targets customers and staff.
- We have a post on our website, Read Play Learn.
- And we include a link to that post when we create Personalized Reading Lists for customers that include books for developing readers.

Staff and Customer Promotion

- Bookmark
- Internal trainings
- [Social media](#)

Find Books for Your Developing Reader

To find books for your developing reader, search the library catalog for "Early Books" or "Transitional Books."

Early Books

- For the first stages of learning to read
- As little as 1-2 sentences per page
- Easy to sound out words
- Helpful pictures

Transitional Books

- Longer sentences and up to a full page of text
- Plenty of white space and large fonts
- Still have fun pictures

Add a Keyword

Keywords can help you quickly find books that match your child's interests. You might try:

"Early Books" dinosaurs or
"Transitional Books" dinosaurs

More Keywords

To use along with "early books" or "transitional books":

- Friendship
- Mystery
- Humorous Stories
- Animals
- Adventure

To motivate your child, choose books with topics and themes that excite them. Interest is as important as reading level.

 DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

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- Additional promotions include, our bookmark with tips for searching using the online public access catalog, which helps both staff and customers.
- The subject headings are also a big focus of our internal trainings, which include information and discussion about the elements of a supportive book for developing readers.
- And we post about the subject headings regularly on the Children's Library Facebook.

Staff and Customer Promotion

- Displays
- [Sticky notes](#)



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- Don't forget displays!
- Our Marketing and Communications Department created a sort of logo for us that any of our branches can request in any size. We really love our giant pillar sign.
- In addition, we created sticky notes with GLR tips to help customers know why a book is supportive. We've linked to a how to doc in case you want to print your own stickies. They're easy to make on a regular printer.

[How to Print Developing Reader Sticky Notes for Display](#)

Subject Headings Wrap Up

- Stickers and shelf locations
- Learning curve
- Promotion is key
- Evaluation

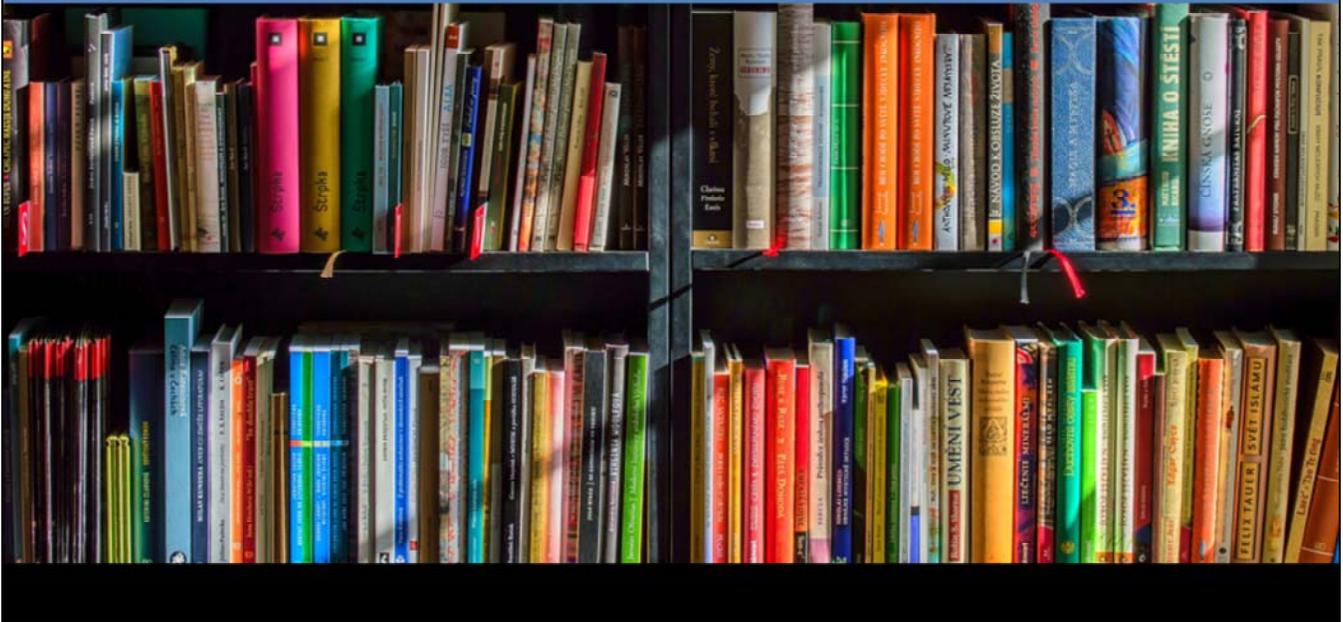


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If you're interested in doing something similar at your library, here are a few things to keep in mind.

- First, in this specific case we felt the stigma of a sticker or new shelf location would create more obstacles than it would remove. However, in looking at your collection, you may decide that a sticker or a new shelving location better serves your community and your goals than a local subject heading. In many ways stickers and shelving are more easily accessible for customers and staff.
- And that's because local subject headings require people to know they exist in order to utilize them. They're not visually obvious, as a sticker or a shelving location would be. There's a bit of a learning curve as staff and customers become comfortable using them. In our case, we were okay with this trade off. But it does mean...
- That promoting the subject headings is essential to the success of the project.
- Speaking of success, how will you evaluate the success of your project? The size of our collection is constantly influx as we add new items and delete old ones, so we use the ratio of items to circs as a stable method of measurement. However, you may find a better or more accurate method for your project.
- That wraps up my section. I'm going to turn it over to Sarah now for a look at our diversity audit.

Diversity Audit



SD:

So, another piece of the puzzle, in terms of what makes up our collection, and how I do my own job in collection development, is making sure that the collection our kids in Denver have access to is as diverse in person and interest as they are! And this is where the idea of a Diversity Audit came into play.

In November 2017, Amy and I took an online LJ class titled Diversity and Cultural Competency Training: Collections and RA. As part of that class, we were instructed to perform a Diversity Audit of a portion of our collection. That is to say, we were to look at a specific portion of our juvenile collection here at DPL and determine, based on some parameters that we came up with, just how much diversity was reflected on the pages. In short, we were attempting to discover how much of our collection reflected the diversity of the children in our city.

The titles that we had already identified as part of our Early and Transitional books project seemed like an obvious choice and one that we wanted to work on together. I wanted more information to inform my purchasing decisions and Amy wanted more information to help share out with staff doing readers advisory.

Title	Author	Call Number	No Apparent Diversity	Animals Inanimate Objects	OwnVoices		Diverse Representation							Family Diversity						
					Illus.	Author	Cultural Markers Present	LatinX	POC	Asian	Indig.	Multi	Abil Div	Socio Ec Div	Same Sex parents	Interracial	Blended Parent	Sing. Parent	No Parent	Adopt/Foster
Clark the shark and Syd Hoff's Danny a	Hale, Bruc	JR1 HALE	1	1																
Time for school, Li	Herman, C	JR1 HERMAN	1	1																
Meet the Beat Bug	Lamb, An	JR1 LAMB	1	1																
Chicken in mittens	Lehmaup	JR1 LEHRHAUP	1	1																
Ticket to ride	Meister, C	JR1 MEISTER	1	1																
Oulette and the gr	Pendergra	JR1 PENDERGR	1	1																
Tooth fairy's night	Ransom, C	JR1 RANSOM	1	1																
Tootie	Redbank,	JR1 REDBANK	1	1																
Magical mermaids	Svenlin, B	JR1 SWENLIN	1	1																
Woof & Quack in v	Svenson,	JR1 SWENSON	1	1																
Miffy at the library	Testa, Mag	JR1 TESTA	1	1																
Miffy rides a bike	Testa, Mag	JR1 TESTA	1	1																
Go, go, truck!	Weinberg	JR1 WEINBERG	1	1																
I am thankful	Capozzi, S	JR2 CAPOZZI	1	1				1												
I am kind	Capozzi, S	JR2 CAPOZZI	1	1																
Sing your song!	Depken, K	JR2 DEPKEN	1	1																
Winter wishes!	Depken, K	JR2 DEPKEN	1	1																
The big birthday su	Finnegan,	JR2 FINNEGAN	1	1				1												
Alvin and the super	Forte, Lau	JR2 FORTE	1	1																
Class pet mess!	Gutman, C	JR2 GUTMAN	1	1																
Raopy goes to the	Gutman, C	JR2 GUTMAN	1	1																
Henry in the dark	Aindry	JR2 HENRY	1	1																
Vampoodie	Hollub, Jo	JR2 HOLLUB	1	1																
Wild winter creatu	Kraft, Mar	JR2 KRAFT	1	1																
Blaze's big race!	Mangual,	JR2 MANGUAL	1	1																
Freckleface Strain	Moore, Ju	JR2 MOORE	1	1																
The birthday surpr	Stephens,	JR2 STEPHENS	1	1																
TOTALS			2033	1264	9	17	9	45	74	58	2	0	2	1	0	5	0	15	13	4
TOTAL TITLES	2277	PERCENTAGE	89.3%	55.5%	0.4%	0.7%	0.4%	2.0%	3.2%	2.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%	0.2%

SD:

Here's a sample of how we captured our data.

- We started with a master shelf list of titles currently in our collection in the Early and Transitional categories, and then whittled it down to our Beginning Readers within each of those categories, as we felt that would be both a helpful collection to look at and a manageable one to do with only 2 of us.
- Next, we decided what we wanted to focus on. It was a big project, so we had to be selective about what kind of diversity we wanted to look for, and really tried to focus on the types of diversity represented in Denver's demographics. We took a look at Denver demographic statistics and filled in with Colorado and National stats where there were gaps. We've listed our data sources in the notes at the end of the presentation.
- We chose to look at cultural representations and family structures and also noted whether or not the title was OwnVoices
- This was a time consuming project because we had to get our hands, eyes and minds on each of these books and manually talley each area of representation
- We used informed judgement and stats to pick things that were age appropriate and relevant

Results - Cultural Representation

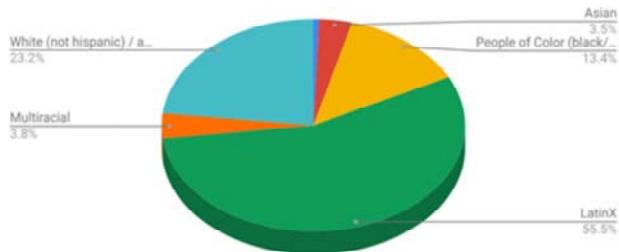
Category	Denver Child Population	Actual - Early Books	Actual - Transitional Books
Indigenous	0.60%	0.10%	0%
Asian	3.50%	2.50%	0.70%
People of Color (black/African American)	13.40%	3.20%	5.60%
LatinX	55.50%	2.00%	2.40%
Multiracial	3.8%	0%	1.10%
White (not hispanic) / animals / inanimate objects	23.2%	91.80%	86.00%
Cultural markers present		0.40%	3.90%
Ability diverse (based on the number of children enrolled in special education classes)	11%	0.10%	1%
Socio-economic (based on the number of children receiving free/reduced lunch)	67.30%	0%	0.20%

SD: I think for me, this chart is very impactful.

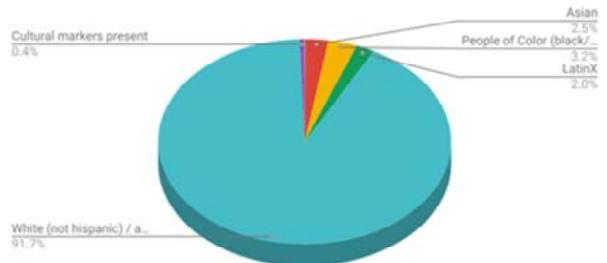
- When you think about wanting to make sure that every child has the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the pages of a story and then you take a hard look at the actual collection, at those individual stories the children are seeing, well, I guess the numbers speak for themselves.
- Just to highlight one example, more than 55% of Denver's Child population identifies as LatinX. Barely 2% of the Early and less than 2 ½% of the Transitional books have characters that reflect these kids back to themselves.
- In comparison, only 23 % of Denver's child population identifies as white whereas over 90% of the Early Books in the collection default to either white children or animals or inanimate objects.

Results - Cultural Representation

Denver Child Population



Actual - Early Books



SD:

Here are the results in graph format of the cultural representation portion. For the sake of this project, we combined the books that depicted animals or inanimate objects as the main characters with those using white children as a default. If you choose to do a diversity audit for your collection, you might choose to separate these two categories out.

We felt that there were many instances where the animals or inanimate objects seemed to be a stand in for dominant culture, or a way of sidestepping any direct association with a specific cultural group. And, as these books did nothing to further the goal of reflecting diversity in the collection beyond dominant culture, we decided they could be grouped together.

Results

Early Books

- 55.5% non-human protagonists
- 11% diversity of any kind
- 1% OwnVoices authors or illustrators

Transitional Books

- 44% non-human protagonists
- 11% diversity of any kind
- 4.4% OwnVoices authors or illustrators

SD:

So, just to pull out those numbers in a different way, here you can see that in our Early and Transitional areas (and again, we're only talking about the Beginning Readers in each of these areas), those non-human protagonists really dominate the scene with more than 55% for the Early books and 44% for the Transitionals.

Why do we see SO many in this category? Well, we really don't know for sure, but some of our guesses would be that they are: "cute" (so the kids will be drawn to those illustrations), maybe a "safe" choice as it sidesteps the entire realm of cultural identity, they could be a stand-in for dominant culture without being overt, they might be spin-offs (of tv, picture books, movies, chapter books, etc), and, if we're being honest, it might just also be a result of the knowledge that books with non-human protagonists have a long standing history of popularity and therefore a proven track record.

So, we've been looking at the results of a segment of Denver Public Library's juvenile collection. And, while we're aware that we do not own every single title ever published, we feel we have a fairly comprehensive collection.

Let's take it one step further now, and look at the results of a much larger and more comprehensive survey performed by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in 2015 and again in 2018.

Diversity in Children's Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds. Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison: ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pclist.asp



0.9%
American
Indians/
First Nations

2.4%
Latinx

3.3%
Asian Pacifics/
Asian Pacific
Americans

7.6%
African/
African
Americans

12.5%*
Animals, Trucks, etc.

73.3%**
White

Illustration by David Huyck, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlén & Molly Beth Griffin. Released under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

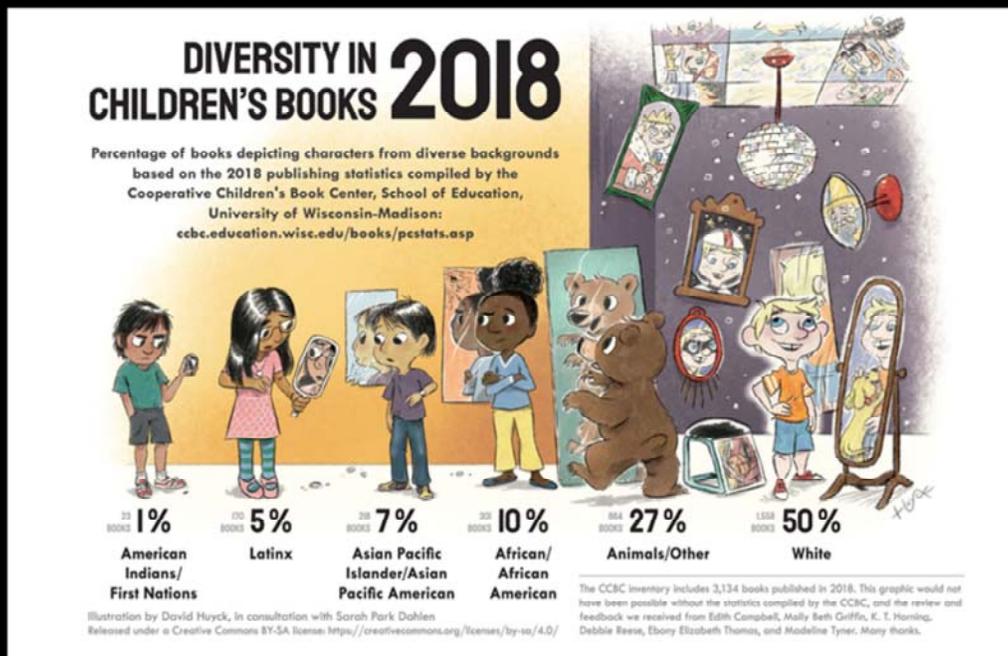
* About a quarter of the total children's books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.
** The remainder depict white characters.

<https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/picture-this-reflecting-diversity-in-childrens-book-publishing/>

SD:

I think these images are incredibly powerful. This study done by the CCBC in Madison, WI, was published in 2016, based on books for children birth-14 that were published in the US in 2015. As you can see, the mirrors for anyone that wasn't white or non-human were awfully small.

The links for these pictures and associated studies are available in the presentation and I really encourage you to come back and look at these images and take some time to digest what you see there.



<https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2019/06/19/picture-this-diversity-in-childrens-books-2018-infographic/>

SD:

So, fast forward 3 years. The We Need Diverse Books movement is starting to help change the picture. At a glance, things are starting to look a little different. You'll notice that some of the mirrors over on the left hand side of the slide are a little larger than they were 3 years ago.

However, there are a few things I'd like to point out here:

--Let's look at the animals and the white representation. The percentage of white representation went down from more than 73% to 50% whereas the animal depiction moved from 12.5% up to 27%. To me, this decrease in white representation but increase in animals reinforces this idea that animals are a stand in for dominant culture. The majority of titles published in English in the USA still lands over on the right hand side of this slide.

-You may notice that twice as many latinx books were published in 2018. Sounds great. But, when we're talking about it moving from 2.4% to 5%, there's still a long way to go!

-Now, Let's take a closer look at the mirrors the children on the left hand side of the slide are holding. Notice the cracks in those mirrors. These cracks are meant to represent the distortion of representation. That's to say, that just because a character from an underrepresented group is present does not mean that their experience is accurately portrayed or reflected. For me, and for many out there, this begs the question: is it better to HAVE representation, even if it's inaccurate, in order to at least have some representation in our collections, or is it better for us to not have anything in our collections that does not

reflect authentic experience, even if it means we have gaps of representation in our collections?

-This also leads to the question about how to determine authenticity of experience and representation. Who gets to say whether an experience/description is authentic? Add in the complicated fact that each person is an individual made up of so many intersecting pieces and we can really start to see how complex these questions are. I struggle with this on the Collection Development end of things a daily basis, as my colleagues can attest to!



What This Audit Does Not Do

- Assess quality
 - Not all representation is good representation
- Assess for stereotypes
 - Even “positive” attitudes or beliefs can be unintentionally harmful, they are still stereotypes

I do want to really highlight that last point as relates to the Diversity Audit we did here at DPL. We did NOT assess for quality of representation. We simply noted whether or not any diversity was present.

-We also did not assess for stereotypes. When we hear the word “stereotypes”, many of us think of ideas that have a negative connotation such as “all people from such and such a place/culture/generation are loud/lazy/unfriendly. Obviously, holding onto the idea that an entire group of people possesses the same so called negative trait is a harmful act.

-However, Even the so-called “positive” beliefs about people, such as the idea that certain groups of people are thought of as smart and high achievers, can be harmful.

Basically, any time we categorically apply a label to an entire group of people, we are negating people’s individuality and perpetuating harmful ideas.

And while we did not assess for this in our Diversity Audit, I do watch for both the so called positive and negative stereotyping to be called out in reviews and take that into account when I am selecting for our collections.



What Did We Do with our Findings?

- Purchase additional titles using state grant funding
- Increase awareness around the need for future purchases
- Reader's advisory (online, in person, book lists)
- Beginning Reader and Juvenile Fiction Core Collection Committees
- GLR Team work

Finally, doing a diversity audit, or any kind of study really, doesn't mean much unless you somehow apply it.

So, what did we do here at DPL with our Findings?

-We decided to dedicate a portion of our State Grant funding to the purchase of additional titles and copies of more diverse books for these Early and Transitional areas.

-This audit has really increased my own awareness around the need for diverse representation in future purchases. I have always tried to be mindful in my purchases, but this has really dialed up my awareness and keeps me looking for quality diverse representation for our collections.

-This has really influenced our readers' advisory, including our online personalized reading lists, in person recommendations, displays, and formal book lists created by staff. We've really made a push for folks to be mindful of what they are recommending and make sure that they're including diverse books.

-Lastly, our Core Collection and GLR teams are using not just this particular audit, but the concept of the audit itself, to do their own analysis of portions of the collection in order to raise up more diverse titles in their project areas.

-With that in mind, I'm now going to turn it back over to Amy to talk more about one of the GLR projects, which they're calling the Welcome to Reading Kits.

Welcome to Reading Kits



AF

- Just about the time we wrapped up our subject heading and audit projects, the GLR Team was created.
- It was the perfect time to look at increasing ways to support caregivers with developing readers.
- Welcome to Reading Kits are the result of months of brainstorming. And I'm super duper excited about them!

GOAL

Create kits that contain books, activities, tips and more to introduce caregivers to excellent, engaging and diverse books that support new readers by displaying them in attractive bags that are quick and easy to check out.

AF

- Before we had the kits, we had this goal. We wanted to make it fun for developing readers and their caregivers to practice reading.
- We also knew that many caregivers were looking for tips and activities to help their new readers.
- No one teaches a caregiver how to teach their child to read, so we wanted to make it easy for families starting the learning to read journey.

The Five Grade Level Reading Skills

AF

- We decided to create themed kits around the five Grade Level Reading Skills.
- These are skills the GLR Project Team created because we realized we needed a touchstone to tie all our work together and to empower our library staff to confidently serve and support kindergarteners through 3rd graders in their reading journeys.
- You might notice they're similar to the Every Child Ready to Read Skills and that's intentional.
- We wanted this to be the logical next step as kids transition from "ready to read" to "learning to read"



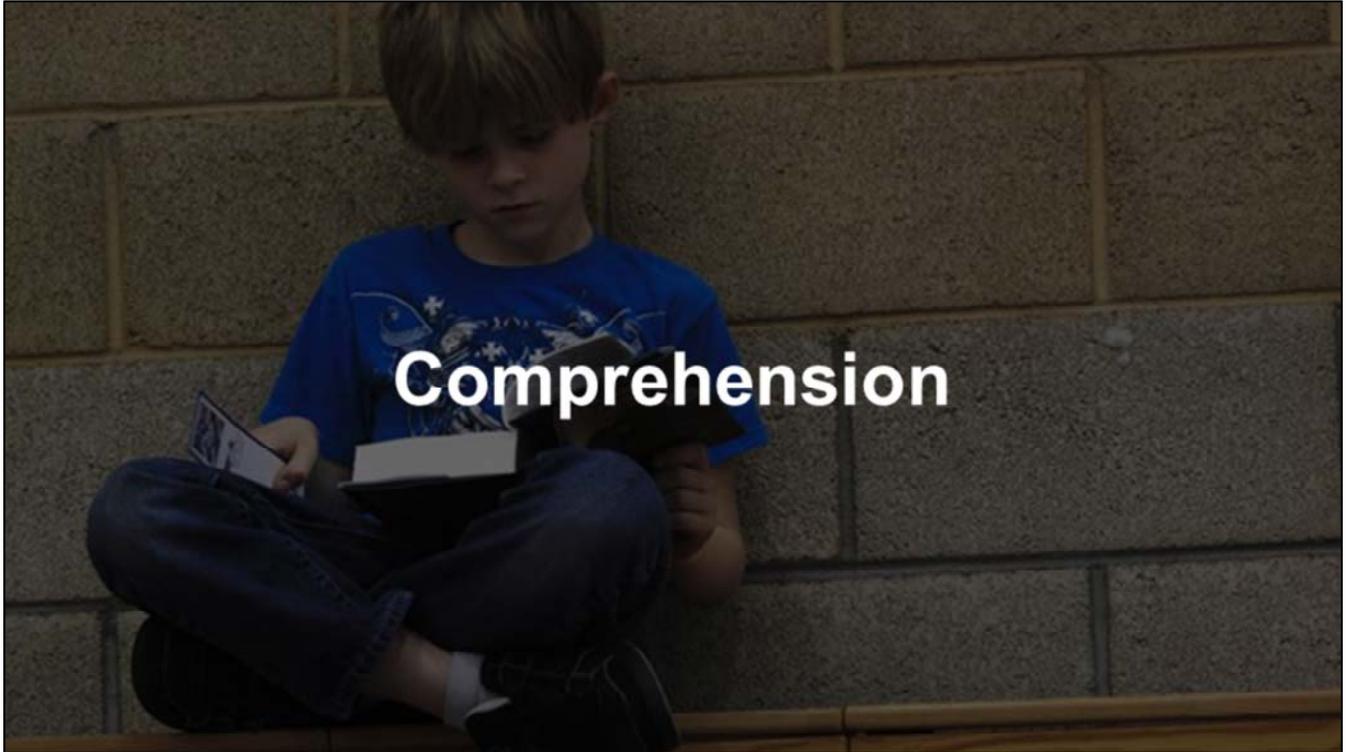
AF

- Let's take a look at our first skill, decoding. That's our ability to recognize the shape of a letter and match it to an associated sound. We string all those sounds together to pronounce words.
- When kids sound out words, they are decoding them.
- That relationship, between the way letters look and the way they sound, is called phonics. So, understanding phonics helps us decode words.



AF

- Fluency is the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with expression. In other words: effortlessly.
- Readers who aren't yet fluent will sound slow and choppy when reading out loud.
- Fluency might change depending on how hard or easy a text is for an individual, and reading books at a lower level can help build fluency skills.



AF

- Comprehension is the ability to understand and/or explain what you are reading.
- Successful readers can identify what they do and don't understand, and use strategies to problem solve.



Background Knowledge

AF

- Background Knowledge is helping kids build familiarity with new vocabulary and concepts. Without background knowledge of a word or concept, it's harder for kids to understand what they're reading.
- For instance, readers who are familiar with soccer will be able to decode and comprehend words like goalie or dribble more successfully than those who have no context for the sport.



Reading Motivation

AF

- Finally, we have reading motivation. This is where public libraries really shine!
- A huge factor in developing reading motivation is choice. Kids who are allowed and encouraged to choose what they read are much more motivated, and more likely to think of themselves as “readers.”
- Learning to read takes a lot of practice and brainpower.
- And kids who are excited to read are much more likely to get the practice they need, and therefore more likely to develop the necessary focus to become skilled, lifelong readers.
- As Sarah mentioned earlier with the diversity audit, a big part of reading motivation is seeing yourself reflected in the books you read.

Each kit contains:

- 5 Early Books
- 1 activity
- 1 laminated tip sheet
- 1 bookmark with subject heading info
- 1 customer survey

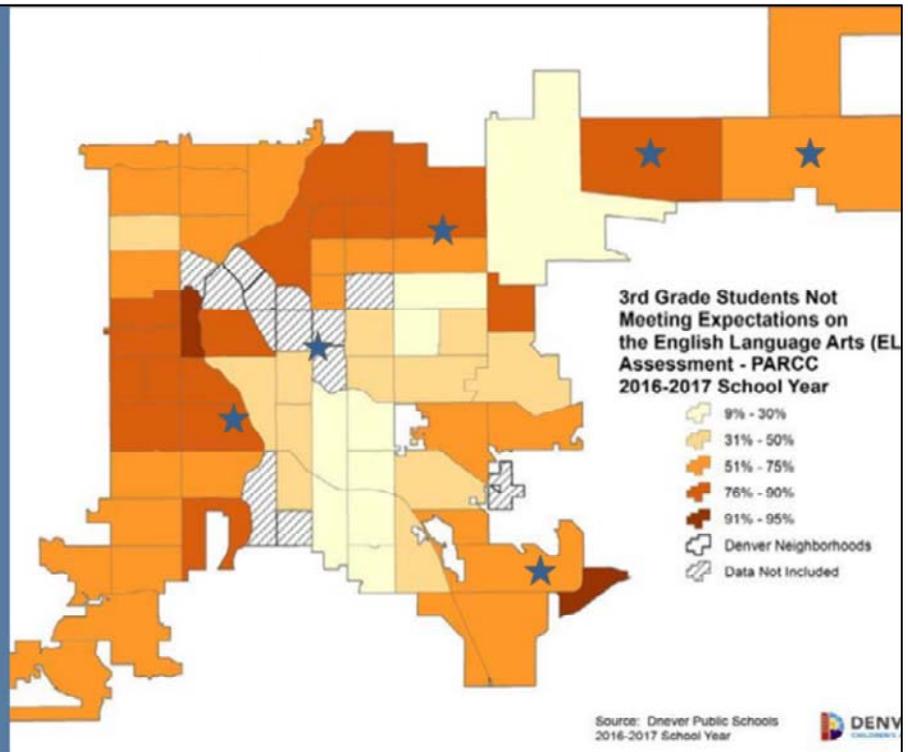


AF

- With our GLR Skills in mind, we created four themed kits that target very new readers.
- In case you're wondering which of the five skills we left out, it's Reading Motivation because it's present in all of the kits.
- Here's an example of our Decoding Kit. You can see the five books. Every kit has at least one nonfiction title, as well as at least one or more titles with diverse characters. And I'll be honest, it's not easy to find excellent books that are also diverse in their representation. We really relied on our diversity audit when selecting titles. In this kit, I See a Cat features a dog waiting for their brown-skinned owner to come home.
- The activity for this kit is My First Banagrams. We contemplated creating our own activities from scratch, but ultimately decided to purchase them to save time and for longevity.
- We worked hard to make the tips as concise as possible.
 - Things like, help your reader hear letter and syllable sounds by asking questions like, "Do we hear mmmmm in the word Moon?"
 - Another tip for this kit is: Reading the same words multiple times helps readers reinforce neural pathways so they can retain new words.
- We also include a customer survey for evaluation purposes.
- On average, the cost of a kit is \$75. This includes the bag, activity, and books. We've included vendor information at the end of our webinar.
- Shout out to the awesome library staff at Multnomah County Library in Oregon! They have kits that also target new readers and they were so helpful in sharing

photos and info.

Pilot Locations

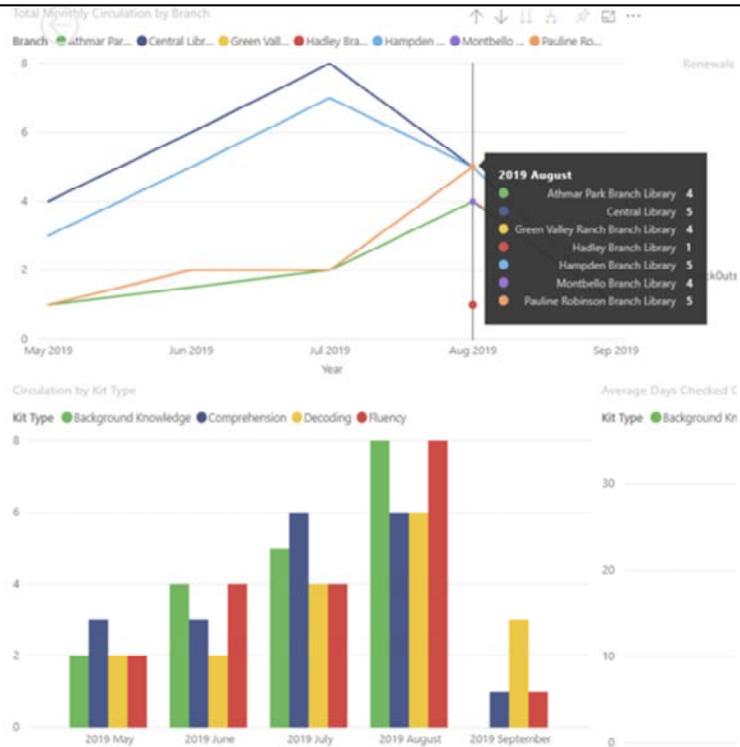


AF

- As I mentioned, this is a pilot project. With 26 locations, plus several bookmobiles, we're a large system and we wanted to try our idea out on a smaller scale.
- We picked 6 locations based on 3rd grade reading scores and the presence or absence of supporting services in the immediate area.
- The pilot launched in June of this year.
- Each pilot location has 4 kits, one for each of the skills.

Next Steps

- Evaluation
- 2020 Expansion



AF

- As always, we've built evaluation methods into this project. Our goal is to have 90% positive responses from customer surveys and to establish a baseline and then a target for circulation goals.
- This is a screenshot of the data visualizations from our PowerBI dashboard. The top one shows total monthly circulation by branch and the bottom one shows circulation by kit type.
- These visualizations automatically update, which is pretty awesome. A shout out to Monica in our Collection Development Office. She's a PowerBI whiz!
- As of the second week of September, our kits have circulated over 70 times. And, as you can see, in August most pilot locations circulated 4-5 kits.
- Right now, our stats based on just a few months of circulation, so we still need to gather more data to get a better picture.
- We've just changed the kits to be non-renewable, so we expect this to impact turnover in the coming months.
- The GLR Project Team is working on an expansion request for 2020. Our goal is to expand to a second level of kits for more confident readers. How much we expand will depend on funding.
- We put a lot of thought into these kits, especially around selecting titles that would support very new readers.
- We wanted these kits to be a gateway to the rest of the collection. So that once a caregiver realized we had books that their child could read successfully, we could show them the rest of our collection.
- But the more we worked on these kits and other GLR projects, the more we

realized our beginning reader collection as a whole was not set up in a way that made it easy for caregivers to find books at a supportive level for their individual child.

Beginning Reader Criteria

SD:

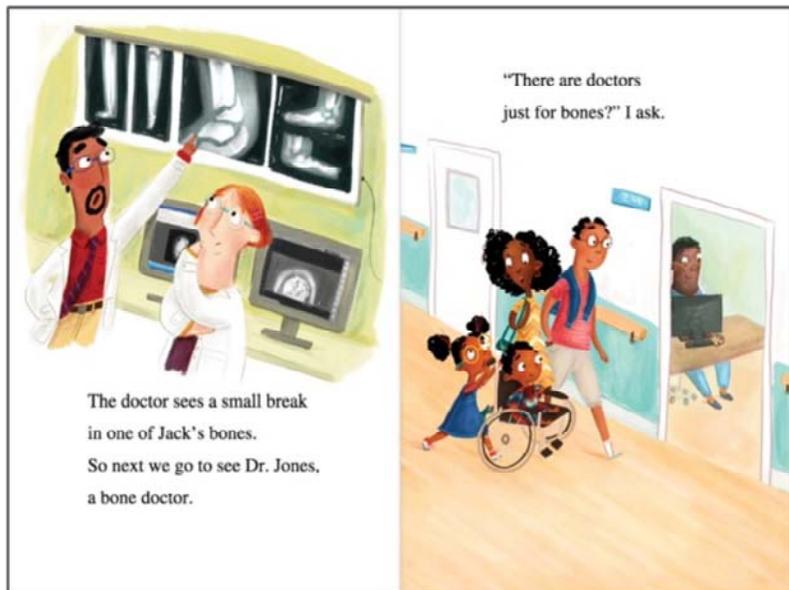
So, how are we, as a library system making these readers available to those on their reading journey? Historically, we have placed the beginning readers in one of 4 levels: jR, jR1, jR2, and jR3, based mostly on the level assigned at the publishing house and roughly “eyeballing” it for those that are not leveled by the publisher.

We’ve talked on and off over the years about the frustrations at the inconsistencies within each level and the books that are lumped in with the readers that do not necessarily support new readers. But every time we got to the point of saying, well, what can we do differently, we would decide it was just an impossible task given external forces and internal lack of staff.

However, recently, with the focus on Grade Level Reading, it seemed like the opportune time to revisit this quandary and try to figure out ways that we could make it better, even if we couldn’t make it perfect.

Creating Criteria

- Word repetition
- Sentence length
- Punctuation
- Font and font size
- White space and margins
- Visual context clues
- Lexile



I Want to Be a Doctor by Laura Driscoll, illustrated by Catalina Echeverri

SD

Members of the DPL Grade Level Reading team invited me to work with them to come up with a rubric for leveling these beginning readers in house. We discussed a variety of criteria that we pulled from some respected sources (namely, K T Horning's *From Cover to Cover* and the Geisel Award criteria), and compiled them together in a rubric representing each of our 4 levels of beginning readers.

Sources used to create criteria:

- *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books* by K. T. Horning
- Geisel Award Criteria

Informed judgement, not hard and fast

Creating a Rubric

Title	Repetition		Illustrations			Additional Criteria							Total Weighted Score (out of possible 10)	Reviewed by	Recommendation		
	Words & sentence structure repeated often	Letter or blend sound repeated	SUMPRODUCT	On every pg	Provide context clues as each word is introduced	Pg completely/ mostly illustration	SUMPRODUCT	Storyline- simple & predictable (1-3 characters)	Narration (instead of dialogue)	White space between lines & words	Font: 14+ points & legibility	Lexile: 0 - 150				EDI	SUMPRODUCT
Weight	60.00%	40.00%		50.00%	40.00%	10.00%	10.00%	25.00%	25.00%	10.00%	Y/N						
Using a scale - (0...not at all, 1...some)																	
Titles with HIGHER scores have more																	
Chicken Sled, "Cluck"	1	1	1	2	2	1	1.9	2	0	1	2	2	N	1.15	5.7	Gigi	Move to Level 1
Everything Goes: Henry in a Jam	1	1	1	2	1	1	1.5	1	0	1	2	2	Y	1.05	5.1	Gigi	Move to Level 1
Biscuit Goes to School	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	Y	1.2	5.85	Gigi	Move to Level 1
Who Can? Daniel Carl	2	1	1.6	2	1	2	1.6	2	2	2	2	2	Y	1.6	7.75	Gigi	Keep in current level
There You Are, Olivia!	2	1	1.6	2	1	2	1.6	2	1	2	2	2	N	1.5	7.55	Gigi	Keep in current level
Dinosaur Train: Train Ride Fun!	2	1	1.6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	N	1.6	8.65	Gigi	Keep in current level
Can a Cat do That?	2	1	1.6	2	1	2	1.6	2	2	2	2	2	N	1.6	8.05	Gigi	Keep in current level
Gus Makes a Gift	2	1	1.6	2	1	2	1.6	2	1	2	2	2	N	1.5	8.6	Gigi	Keep in current level
See Otto	2	2	2	2	1	2	1.6	2	2	2	2	2	N	1.6	8.7	Gigi	Keep in current level
Puppy Mudge Finds a Friend	2	1	1.6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	N	1.4	8.6	Gigi	Keep in current level
I Dig	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	N	1.6	9.35	AB	Move to Level 0
Dinosaur Train: Buddy and Pals	2	2	2	2	1	2	1.6	1	2	2	1	1	N	1.15	7.65	Gigi	Keep in current level
Digger the Dinosaur and the Cake Mix	1	0	0.6	2	1	2	1.6	1	1	1	2	0	N	0.95	3.35	Gigi	Move to Level 1
Ry, Bity, Kitty, Firehouse Fun	1	0	0.6	2	1	2	1.6	2	1	2	1	0	Y	1.05	4.75	Warren	Move to Level 1
Walk Your Dog	2	0	1.2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	N	1.6	8.55	Warren	Keep in current level

SD:

Using the criteria discussed, our colleague came up with a weighted rubric. We decided to weight the categories since some of them were more critical in terms of contribution to a successful reading experience.

We wanted to create a Legacy tool, one that would support current usage and still be relevant to future purchases. Because the person in my position has been the only one assigning levels, and because this job has changed hands a few times over the last decade, we felt strongly that we needed to come up with a tool that depended less on who was in this role and more on what was in the text of the books!

This is a very new tool for us, still in beta testing, but so far, I think it has really great potential!

Our next steps will be for me to meet with a representative from the GLR team and the Senior in Cataloging to decide how to implement this at a wider level. Do we retroactively apply this matrix to the collection? Is it to be used only going forward? Time will tell!



★ Chat

How do you level your books for developing readers? Do you level them at all?

SD:

Using the chat feature, please chime in and let us know how you decide where a beginning reader lives in your collection. Do you go with publisher levels? Do you level in house? Do you level at all? Please share!

Collection
Development
Beginning
Reader
Dilemmas



SD

And finally, I'm going to talk just a little bit about the challenges I face with the beginning readers from the Collection Development standpoint.



SD

It seems like most publishers use [Fountas and Pinnell's Guided Reading Levels](#) to determine which publisher level a title will be placed in. It appears that many publishers might use the same company/person to level them (Marla Conn, [Read-Ability, Inc.](#)).

However, it's not clear from publisher websites which Guided Reading Levels are included in each publisher determined category. In some cases, it seems as though the publisher level stays the same across a series, even when reading level varies. And each publisher seems to have its own system in terms of what eventually gets assigned to each level.

Sometimes the publishers will indicate on the back of a book that it falls within a certain range, but none of that is available to me when I am ordering.

So, we are dealing with inconsistencies in levels not only across publishers, but also within the same publisher's own levels.

The quality is another challenge when considering publisher levels. Some titles aren't really supportive for developing readers. (For example, they might have a cluttered background, unfamiliar vocabulary, long words and sentences, lack of repetition, etc.). This is especially prevalent in commercial tie-in titles.

Reading (like collection development), combines art and science. So to come up with exact, well defined criteria for what goes where is difficult because there are so many variables. Here are some of the conundrums I face on a daily basis:

- Many kids want to read the media tie-ins, but most of those are not written to be supportive of developing readers, even though they may have "level 1" stamped on their covers.

- And what about books in a series? (Like the excellent I Like to Read series published by Holiday House), or the Corduroy, Paddington, Biscuit type series? Should they all stay together in the same level or should they be broken out into different levels, despite what the publishers have printed on the covers?

- many times a book feels like it could go in 2 places and it is challenging to decide where the best fit would be. Is it a graphic novel or a beginning reader? Is it a level 1 or does it tip over into a Level 2?

- Some of you might be asking why we level our readers at all. Some places don't because they feel to level the books is an infringement of Intellectual Freedom. Others, feel it's imperative to level books to create more opportunities for easy discoverability. It is a delicate line we have to walk in libraries between supporting those beginning their reading journey and not creating a system that feels demeaning or unsupportive.

- There's also the sad reality of time constraints: I am the only children's selector for the entire DPL system. It's difficult to find time to touch every book that comes through. Publishers don't make a lot of money on the beginning readers, so they don't put a lot of money into the publication of the readers. This means that advance reader copies are practically non-existent, so I don't get to see the books ahead of time, and have to assign their collection on the fly as they come in.

- I will still be doing this in the future, but at least now I have a tool that seems to be providing some consistency in terms of getting books of a similar reading level all put together where young readers can discover them and take those crucial steps along the path to a lifelong love of reading.



Questions?

AF

We have a little bit of time left. Anyone have any questions?

Thank you for attending!

Join DPL librarians for the other webinars in our grade level reading series:

- Part 1 – [Supporting Developing Readers at the Library: Reader's Advisory for K-3rd Graders](#) is archived.
- Part 2 – [Literacy-Based Programs for K-3rd Graders](#) is archived
- Part 4 – [Outreach for K-3rd Graders](#) is scheduled for November 4, 2019.



AF

Thank you for your time and engagement today! Be sure to sign up for the fourth webinar in our series focused on grade level reading. You can also go back and see the archived webinars of parts 1 and 2.

Sources and further reading

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AF

And, last but certainly not least, here are two slides of sources. We hope you'll find some new ideas that get your brain juices going.

Welcome to Reading Kit Resources

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- Amazon. uKloo Early Reader Treasure Hunt Game. <https://www.amazon.com/uKloo-Early-Reader-Treasure-Hunt/dp/B0071KNPCK>
- Eeboo. Create a Story (Tell Me a Story) Volcano Island. http://shop.eeboo.com/p/create-a-story-tell-me-a-story-volcano-island/our-products_literacy?pp=24
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Here are a few more specifically about Welcome to Reading Kits and Diversity Audits. Thanks to everyone for attending today! Goodbye.