

I've been busily re-calculating our Early Reader collection. We have over 800 fiction and non-fiction titles in our children's room that have historically been classified and "Early Readers" to support children as the 'outgrow' the picture book format. Years ago a parent volunteer marked each book with a 'level.' We used a tape system to designate the very easiest reading level, from a moderately difficult level, to a challenging read. She reviewed the books for word count, vocabulary, supporting artwork, and just an over-all 'feel' based on her assessment of how an emergent reader might respond to the book. I was new to the job and let her go at it but did ask our local reading teacher to take a look at our final project to see if we were close enough in our assessment of the books. She approved but also suggested some very beginner books from Rigby that are still well-used and well-loved by our youngest patrons.

Years have passed, the tapes have fallen off, and we've greatly expanded our non-fiction. I've been re-coding the books using a mixture of word count, white space, supporting art, and vocabulary primarily. For simplicity's sake and because we have shelving limitations as a public library, we are still using three levels. Very simple books are L1 and are shelved together. L2's have the greatest range in terms of word count. And L3's are longer and have diverse content. The non-fiction books are color-coded with the same "Level" number system but kept in their Dewey order. It's not an exact science but hopefully will help parents and children choose books that support their reading development. Mindy

Submitted by Mindy Hacker, Milne Public Library in Williamstown, Massachusetts. October 2011.

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