

Developing Leveled Early Readers

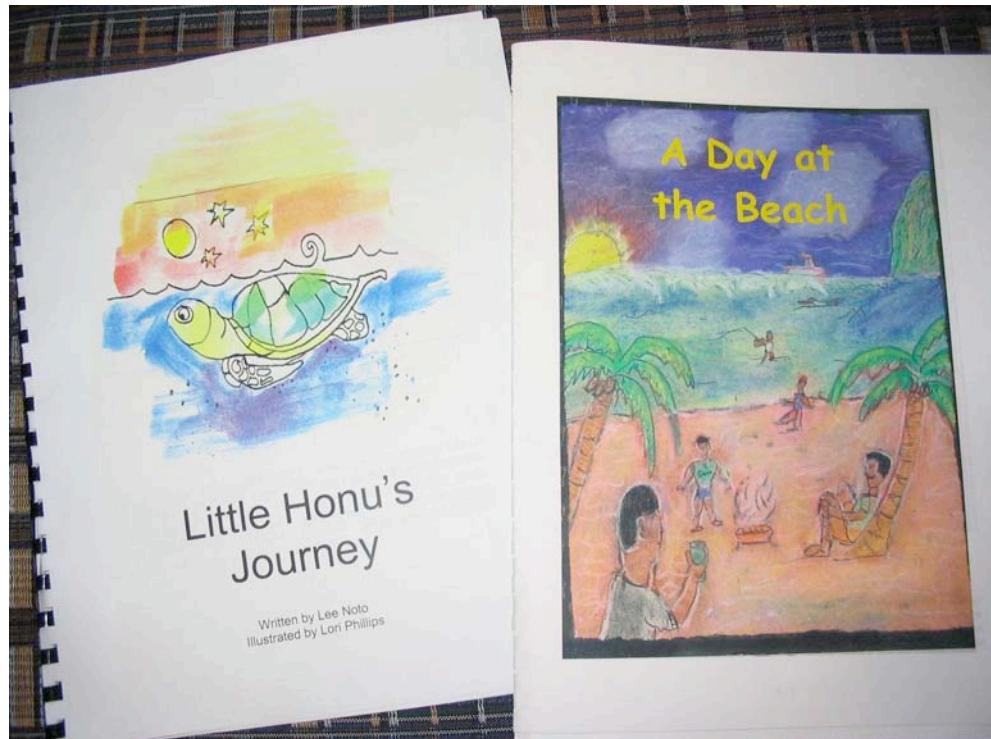


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Introduction

Learning to read is a challenging task. Simply placing a book in front of a student and expecting him or her to know how to read may be problematic. Factors such as amount and type of literacy experience the student has, and the type of text the student interacts with, contribute to the student's success in reading text. In addition, teachers need to have knowledge about how students learn *how* to read and the type of text that is appropriate for each student.

The Pacific region is diverse in culture and language. Much of the tradition is passed orally from generation to generation. As times have changed, so has the need for an increase in printed literacy materials.

This guide, *Developing Early Leveled Readers* is one way to address the desire and need to create more printed materials. It can assist educators in determining the purposes for developing reading materials, ways to develop materials, and the varying text factors that must be taken into consideration for students in different stages of reading development. Though much of this information is based on English instruction, this guide can be used to generate discussion among teachers and cause them to reflect upon the essential elements of how language is structured and how print is used in the vernacular. It is recommended that this guide be used in conjunction with *Using Microsoft Publisher 2000 to Develop Local Language Materials*.



Purposes for Developing Materials

In different schools, there are classrooms that have little or no materials, while others have extensive amounts of literacy materials. Regardless of the type or amount, if teachers do not know *why* or *how* to use the materials, opportunities for increased student learning will be minimal.

Teachers need to think about the needs of their students and the materials that will support their learners in the classroom. A teacher might use the following questions to think and reflect on as they begin to develop materials:

- Is your purpose for personal enjoyment or instruction?
- How do you plan to use the material once it has been developed?
- How can you develop material that will address areas of study or the grade level expectations?
- What do you expect students to learn from the material that is being developed?

It is important for teachers to share with colleagues. This will provide opportunities to receive feedback and help clarify thinking of their purposes for developing materials.



Ways to Develop Reading Materials

There are plenty of ways to develop reading materials. For example, when looking at purpose, a teacher will need to think about what local resources are available and how they can be utilized. Two key factors of this process are *content* and *method*. Content refers to information of the text. Method refers to the printed version of how the content is presented.

Deciding on the text content should be carefully thought through. Teachers need to think about how the content relates to the students, how it will be used for instruction, and how it connects back to the purpose of developing the material. Examples of options to acquire content include translating existing text, having adults generate text, or allowing students to generate text.

Translating Existing Text

In places where the vernacular is the language of instruction, translating English text is a quick alternative to provide students with reading material. In essence, a teacher finds grade-level-appropriate text and translates it into the local language. The teacher can type up the text and paste it over the existing English text or place the text into a new book. Questions for the teacher to consider when translating text include:

- Can a linguist or someone knowledgeable about the local language review the translations?
- How will you address words or concepts that are not translatable?
- After translating, does the concept and content remain grade-level-appropriate?
- Are there any copyright issues?
- How will the translated materials be used?

Teacher/Adult-Generated Materials

Teachers and adults have a wealth of experiences. They can establish a time when everyone can gather, share and write content that will achieve the purpose(s) and be of high interest to students. Sharing the purpose and intention of developing materials is a good first step. It is important for adults to focus and take time to write and get their ideas on paper. They can always go back and edit the content. The main point is to have various selections to choose from. With regard to illustrations, there are many people (children and adults) whose talents can help complete this piece.

Teachers/adults can consider the following questions when they create content:

- Does the content reach the desired purpose?
- Is the content appropriate for the student's background and grade level?
- If written in the local language, has it been reviewed by a linguist or another local language authority?



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Student-Generated Materials

Students are very creative. Giving them opportunities to share and write stories will increase the amount of materials you have in the classroom. One of the advantages of having students generate stories is they often will write using grade-appropriate language.

Teachers and adults can consider the following questions when having students create content:

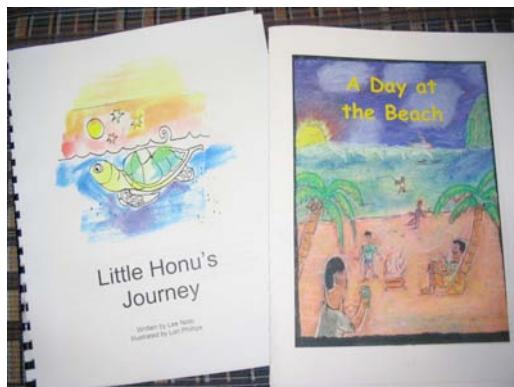
- Does the content fit the desired purpose?
- If the material requires revising/editing, how will this be addressed?



Methods to Develop Materials

Determining which method of how the content is presented is highly dependent on the available local resources. In an ideal situation, books can look professionally made. However, if there are limited resources, this option may not be feasible. If the intent is to provide students with more materials, there are other alternatives to ensure print is made available. The goal is to make certain the material is neat and presentable and serves its purpose. Here are some possibilities:

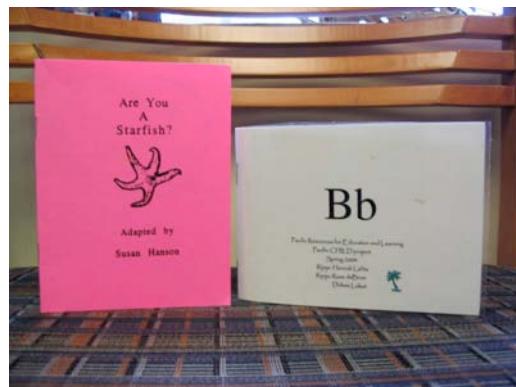
- Handwriting the text
- Typing the text
- Using technology (computer and digital camera)
- Self-illustrating (sketch, chalk, water color, colored pencils)
- Supplies for binding: stapler, chopsticks and rubber bands, yarn or string, spiral binding combs



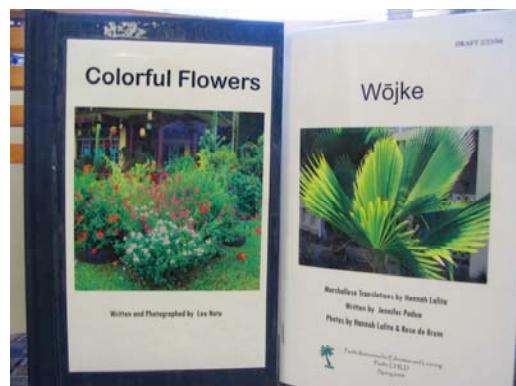
Teachers and students illustrated these books using watercolor paints and chalk. They were later scanned, and multiple copies were printed. A binding machine was used to assemble the book.



Students wrote and illustrated this book, *All About the Rain Forests*. Pages were copied on a copy machine and stapled in the center.



Books come in different sizes. These books were folded in half and printed on both sides of letter-sized paper. Only two sheets of paper were used to make books this size.



Digital cameras were used to illustrate these books. *Colorful Flowers* is a hard back using a store-bought machine. *Wōjke* is printed on cardstock and stapled in the center. The cover was laminated for extra protection.

Factors in Text

In the English language, teachers use different characteristics of text to select books for students. According to Fountas and Pinnell, there are four major factors in text that require attention (Fountas and Pinnell, 1999).

Book and print features relate to the length of pages, words, and sentences. It also includes the layout of the print (e.g., top/bottom of the page), type of punctuation being used, and how print and illustrations support one another with meaning.

Content, themes, and ideas refer to the subject matter of the text. In early readers, most of these focus around concepts familiar to the student, such as family, school, and “everyday” things they do. Themes and ideas are simple, like helping others or friendship. As students progress as readers, the content, themes, and ideas expand and become more complex.

Text structure is associated with how the text is written. Narrative text is written in a story structure format with character development, setting, plot, problem, and resolution. Expository text is factual or non-fiction information. Expository text may include graphs, diagrams, and figures to help the reader understand complex ideas.

Language and literary features are the qualitative aspects of written text. This involves author’s perspective, point of view, literary devices (e.g., similes, metaphors), language structures (e.g., sentence, paragraphs), and choice of vocabulary and words (e.g., high interest words, sight words, content words).



Stages of Reading Development

(Fountas and Pinnell, 1996; Mooney 1998; Taberski, 2000)

The *Stages of Reading Development* is a continuum that explains how students progress as readers. These stages are based on the students' experience and not their age or grade level. Knowing these stages is helpful when developing materials for specific types of readers.

Emergent readers need enriching and enjoyable experiences with books, especially picture books. Students can become comfortable with books even before they can read independently—recognizing letters and words and even language patterns. They are able to work with concepts of print and are at the beginning stages of developing the ability to focus attention on letter-sound relationships. Sharing books over and over, extending stories, relating experiences to both print and pictures, and guiding students to “read,” helps children begin to make predictions about what they are reading.

Early readers are able to use several strategies to predict a word, often using pictures to confirm predictions. They can discuss the background of the story to better understand the actions in the story and the message the story carries. It is this time in the reader’s development that the cueing systems are called upon significantly, so they must pay close attention to the visual cues and language patterns, and read for meaning. It is a time when reading habits of risk-taking, and of predicting and confirming words while keeping the meaning in mind are established.

Transitional readers often like to read books in a series as a comprehension strategy; the shared characters, settings, and events support their reading development. They read at a good pace; reading rate is one sign of a child’s over-all comprehension. At this stage, children generally have strategies to figure out most words but continue to need help with understanding increasingly more difficult text.

Fluent (effective) readers are confident in their understandings of text and how text works, and they are reading independently. The teacher focuses on students’ competence in using strategies to integrate the cueing systems. Students are maintaining meaning through longer and more complex stretches of language. An effective reader has come to understand text as something that influences people’s ideas.



Relating the Factors in Text to Stages of Reading Development

Every book is different and so is every student. Matching books appropriate to the reader helps them become successful. As stated earlier in this guide, there are various stages of reading development. It would not be appropriate to give the same book to students who are reading at various levels. For example, how appropriate would it be to give an emergent-level reader a book about physics? However, a book that had strong illustrations and 1–2 words per page would better suit an emergent reader.

For these reasons, it's important for teachers to know the type of readers that are in their classroom. Once a teacher has determined the levels of the readers and identified the purpose, the materials development process can begin.

The following pages will guide teachers on how to develop material based on text factors for emergent and early readers. A teacher will need to keep in mind that even within the emergent and early stage, there is a range of text that builds from one stage to another. These have been marked with the word *level*. For example, levels A and B would be considered books in the emergent stage. Level A may have text which consists of 1–2 words versus text in a level B which may have more words and be written in complete sentences. Although the differences are minute, they support the development of the reader. As teachers get better at developing text at the emergent and early levels, creating text at the transitional and fluent levels will come more easily.

See the References for further reading.



Level A

Emergent Reader

Characteristics of Text	<p><u>Book and Print Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent placement of print on page • 1–2 words per page • One of the words is usually a sight word • Text is patterned on each page (e.g., My cat. My dog. My fish.). • One line of text • 6–8 pages • Illustrations highly support text <p><u>Content, Themes, Ideas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a specific theme that readers can relate to (e.g., fruits, animals, toys) <p><u>Text Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Predictable <p><u>Language and Literary Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed language reflects words in oral conversations • Phrases may be used
How does this text support the reader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds directionality (left to right) • Introduces sight words • Uses pictures to problem solve • Uses word to word matching • Uses personal experience
Sample Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My dog. • My cat. • My pig. • A ball. • A bat. • A glove. • The apple. • The banana. • The breadfruit.



Level B Emergent

Characteristics of Text	<p><u>Book and Print Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent placement of print on page • 1–2 lines of text • Print is large and clear, easy to understand • Ample spacing between words so students can point with their finger • Illustrations provide high support • Periods and question marks are used; may also include exclamation point and comma • 6–8 pages <p><u>Content, Themes, Ideas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar objects and actions • Single idea throughout the book • One character <p><u>Text Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Predictable <p><u>Language and Literary Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed language reflect words used in oral conversations • Commonly used sight words • Repetitive sentence pattern (1–2 word changes) • Vocabulary words are usually the words that change
How does this text support the reader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads top to bottom, left to right, and front to back • Knows most letter names and some letter sounds • Uses illustrations to tell stories • Recognizes names and words in context • Is developing a bank of known words • Stops at an unknown word • Rhymes and plays with words • Memorizes pattern books, poems, and familiar books • Begins to make meaningful predictions • Independently uses behaviors from levels A
Sample Text	<p>Where is the dog? Where is the cat? Where is the pig?</p> <p>I have a ball. I have a bat. I have a glove.</p> <p>The apples taste good. The bananas taste good. The breadfruit taste good.</p>



Level C Early Reader

Characteristics of Text	<p><u>Book and Print Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2–5 lines of text per page • Sentences have more words compared to those in levels A or B • Illustrations provide moderate to high support of text • Periods, question marks, and quotation marks are used • Estimate 6–10 pages <p><u>Content, Themes, Ideas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many familiar objects, themes, and actions • Story line is simple <p><u>Text Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Few characters • Events are straightforward, predictable <p><u>Language and Literary Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied simple sentence patterns that may begin or end differently or have phrase changes • Printed language reflects words used in oral conversations • Increased number of sight words and vocabulary words • Compound words appear (e.g., something, everyone) • Suffixes are used (e.g., ing, es, s) • Use of dialogue begins to appear
How does this text support the reader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses known words to move through text • Knows most letter sounds • Begins to solve unfamiliar words using visual strategies (sounding out) • Uses illustrations to predict meaning and events • Is developing fluency in oral reading • Is extending bank of known words and/or sight words • Uses basic punctuation in reading • Notices own miscues and self-corrects • Independently uses behaviors from levels A–B
Sample Text	<p>“ I am going to the market,” said Mary. “Wait for me,” said Rose.</p> <p>Page 1- I see the brown dog. Page 2- The dog is running. Page 3- Run dog, run.</p>



Level D Early Reader

Characteristics of Text	<p><u>Book and Print Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3–6 lines of text • Increased number of words in a sentence • Illustrations provide low to moderate support; students must pay more attention to print • All punctuation marks are used • New punctuation: ellipses (...) • Some sentences carry over to the next page • Over 10 pages <p><u>Content, Themes, Ideas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single event that continues over several pages • Familiar experiences <p><u>Text Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Few characters <p><u>Language and Literary Features</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied simple sentence patterns with repeated phrases • Printed text reflects a combination of oral conversation and book language • Varied word endings (e.g., es, ing, s) • Increased number of sight words, multi-syllable
How does this text support the reader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to use eyes to read, no longer needs to point to words • Can cross-check to see if voice-print matches, rereads for meaning, checking if what is said makes sense • Uses word parts to read unknown words (e.g., endings, blends, digraphs, chunks like <i>ing</i> and <i>at</i>) • Increased fluency • Actively reading for meaning • Independently uses behaviors from levels A–C
Sample Text	<p>Greedy cat sat on a mat by the fridge. Meow, meow, meow!</p> <p>“No!” said Uncle. “You’re a greedy cat!”</p>



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