

## Back to School, for Parents!

When the back-to-school bell starts ringing, parents often hear and read school-related terms that are unfamiliar to them. Below are three terms and descriptions related to reading instruction that may help give you a better understanding of what's happening in your child's classroom and what it all means for your young learner.

**Screening:** Benjamin Franklin famously said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In the classroom, this quote translates to the use of reading *screening* for all kids. Screenings usually take place within the first few weeks of school. Rather than waiting for kids to fail at school, screenings give teachers a chance to identify kids who are at risk of having difficulty. Scores on screenings help teachers identify kids who may need extra help through small group or one-on-one instruction. For example, most kindergarten screenings include measures of alphabet and letter-sound knowledge.

**Differentiated reading instruction:** A teacher who provides *differentiated reading instruction* is one who meets the instructional needs of all the students in the class by planning different instruction based on the results of an assessment she's given. For example, while all the students in the class may be working to develop their fluency skills, kids may be working with different books, and some may still be working on their sight words. Some students may be working in pairs, others working one-on-one with the teacher.

**Leveled text:** Many teachers use *leveled texts* in their classrooms. Most of the books used in elementary classrooms are leveled, or placed in a certain category, based on certain criteria such as number of words and sentence length. There are several common leveling systems; some use letters to indicate levels and others use numbers. The levels correspond to different grade level materials. For example, if a school is using a Guided Reading leveling system, levels E-I typically refer to books written at a first-grade level. If your school uses leveled texts, ask your teacher what leveling system they use.

As a parent, it can be tough to keep up with the language of schools. These three terms are just a few of the many reading-related words you'll hear this year. We encourage parents to work closely with teachers and ask lots of questions. You'll be glad you did!

For more resources, visit our Back to School sections:  
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