



Assigning Levels to Spanish Books A Guide for TBE and Dual Language Classrooms (K-9)

Background

In the last few months Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) and Dual Language Kindergarten through ninth-grade classrooms have received new books in Spanish that cover a wide range of interests and literary genres. These new classroom libraries will help all stages of readers practice and develop literacy skills in Spanish. Early-stage readers can practice decoding and fluency while more advanced readers can strengthen their comprehension, (e.g., character analysis, conflict development). To assist teachers with assigning books so that reading objectives are fulfilled, a team of bilingual educators reviewed and assigned levels to each book in June and July, 2004.

Assigning Levels

The **Book Leveling Team** worked under the direction of Dr. Patricia Velasco, and members include: Felicia Bentine, Lissette Colon, Carmen Demoleas, Clotilde Eccardi, Luis Espinoza, Martha Franz, Yvonne Marrero, Yvonne Morales, Evelyn Ruiz Willis and Ada Torres. Each book was reviewed and assigned a level; that determination was then reviewed and confirmed by another team member.

Emergent-level books: The books for beginning or emergent readers—those who are in the process of learning how to read—had already been assigned levels by the publisher, Houghton Mifflin (below level, on-level, and above level). Therefore, the team found it unnecessary to re-categorize them.

Kindergarten through Sixth-Grade-Level Books: The specific methodology that was used to review and assign levels to books written in Spanish comes from

Fountas and Pinnel (2003). Levels are assigned according to the characteristics of the book, (such as content, size of print, relationship between drawings and print, number of pages) and how they relate to students' reading skills. For example, students reading at an advanced level require fewer illustrations than students reading at lower levels. Although Dr. Pinnel's method of assigning levels uses numbers for books written in Spanish up to a third-grade level, the team assigned levels to Kindergarten through sixth-grade books using letters (A-Z). The team also used both the text and readers' descriptions to assign levels, similar to the methodology used to assign levels to books in English. An appendix is attached with a description of each of the leveling categories so that teachers can better understand the characteristics of books and readers.

Books for Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Graders: For the three upper grades, books were categorized using numbers (1-3) based on students' anticipated reading level using the following classifications:

1. **Beginner** (for when the school year has just started).
2. **Middle** (for the middle of the school year).
3. **Advanced** (by the end of the school year, students will be able to read and understand this text).

Teachers may choose to guide their students to read books that are classified as 1 (less difficult to read), rather than books classified as 2 or 3, at the beginning of the year. As the school year progresses and students' reading skills grow, books classified as 2 or 3 should become more accessible. Those students whose reading skills are more advanced at the beginning of the school year can, obviously, read books that exhibit a higher degree of difficulty.

The books that were selected for each grade represent a variety of reading skills and interests (it is possible that even within seventh or eighth grade there are books that are classified with an "S" because they are from the K-6 books). In

this way even students whose reading comprehension skills are low compared to their classmates can find books that are interesting and are written according to their reading level.

The objective of assigning book levels is to facilitate book selection, not to categorize students. Inclusion of books from various classifications should help students:

- independently select books that are within their reading and comprehension skills;
- read for pleasure, independent of specific assignments;
- move from level to level in order to develop comprehension and vocabulary skills while reading from a variety of topics.

Books in classroom libraries that appear in two grade levels are usually aligned with some aspect of the curriculum. For instance, The *Diary of Anne Frank* can be read and used as a resource book in both eighth and ninth grade.

While these books were selected, reviewed and organized into cores and modules by a team of individuals, teachers are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with their library collections prior to classroom use, taking into consideration the review team's criteria, specifically the books' content and illustrations. Teachers know their students best and are urged to utilize books in the manner most appropriate for each lesson or activity.

Resource Books

There are books that, due to their rich content (fables, maps) and their presentation, have been classified as Resource Books. These books can be consulted and read by students and teachers, individually or in groups.

Resource Books

Kindergarten

Hansel y Gretel
Fábulas de Esopo
Antología Poética para Niños

First grade

Fito, Fito, Rimas, Adivinanzas y Juegos Infantiles
Poesía Infantil
Hansel y gretel
Fábulas de Esopo
Se presentó la orquesta

Second grade

Cuentos de Andersen
Fito, Fito, Rimas, Adivinanzas y Juegos Infantiles
A cazar palabras
Fábulas de Esopo
La melodía de la Naturaleza: Leyendas mexicanas
Por el Mar de las Antillas
Poemas con sol y son
El Medio Ambiente explicado a los Niños

Third Grade

Tito, Tito, Rimas, Adivinanzas y juegos infantiles
Fábulas de Esopo
Fábulas Clásicas
Fábulas de Siempre

Fourth Grade

Cuentos de Andersen
Reyes sin corona: fábulas afrocubanas
Ala rueda, rueda
Un pueblo llamado Pan y otros cuentos infantiles
Fábulas clásicas
Fábulas de siempre
Precisamente así
El Medio Ambiente explicado a los Niños
La historia de la vida: los animales
100 preguntas y respuestas
Pachamama: Nuestra tierra, nuestro futuro
El libro de los porqués

Fifth grade

De aro y esmeralda: mitos, leyendas y cuentos populares de Latinoamérica

Un pueblo llamado pan y otros cuentos infantiles
Fábulas clásicas
Fábulas de siempre
Gabriela Mistral: poesía infantil
La piedra y el metal: cuentos, mitos y leyendas de América Latina
Cuentos favoritos de Puerto Rico
Canciones, poemas y romances para niños
Las 100 grandes maravillas del mundo
El libro de las 1000 preguntas y respuestas
Maravillas de la antigüedad

Sixth grade

Ajilimoje
Cuentos populares de Latinoamérica
Cuentos para chicos y grandes
250 poesías para niños
Poemas y cantares de América y el Mundo
Si canto soy un cantueso
Las 100 grandes maravillas del mundo
El mundo prehistórico

Seventh grade

Ciencia para todo

**Books that are Recommended
With Parent Participation**

Hola Hermanito
Espero un hermanito

Appendix

Characteristics of text along the gradient

Adapted from (Fountas and Pinnell 2003)

Level A

(K to 1)

Simple books with one to six words per page, easy to see print, ample space between words; children can focus on print and gradually increase their control over words. Topics are familiar to children. Emphasis on word boundaries. One line of text at the same place on every page.

Level B

(K to 1)

Books focus on a simple story line or single idea, direct correspondence between text and picture. One or two lines per print per page, variety of punctuation. Many books at this level feature repeated patterns in the text. One to four lines of text, greater range of frequently used words.

Level C

(K to 1)

Books explore familiar topics in a variety of ways to offer viewpoints to the reader; simple sentences may have simple introductory clauses. Text may be patterned but it is not as predictable as in the two previous levels. Two to five lines of text. Pictures support meaning. Topics are familiar to children. Introduction to dialogue and punctuation.

Level D

(K to 1)

Books cover familiar topics but introduce more abstract ideas, illustrations support the text but more attention to print is required, text contains more multi syllabic words and full range of punctuation. Two to six lines of text, longer sentences. More attention to print. Variations in word structure. Illustrations only support print.

Level E

(1 and 2)

Stories have longer episodes, informational books present more complex ideas, and books are longer than in previous stages, with more pages or more lines of text on each page. Sentences carry over several pages with more complex punctuation. Three to eight lines of text. Subtle ideas require interpretation. Text carries storyline. Various text layouts. Less familiar concepts to children. Illustration includes several ideas.

Level F

(1 and 2)

Concepts are more distant from familiar topics, larger variety of frequently used words and many more words, text looks more written than spoken language. Three to eight lines and smaller print. Text carries more meaning. Introduction to literacy language. Storyline includes more episodes and actions. Greater variety in dialogue and characters. Distinct beginning, middle and end of story. Fully developed characters. Punctuation supports phrasing and meaning.

**Level G
(1 and 2)**

Language changes on every page. Rather than using patterns, books offer challenges in ideas and vocabulary with some introduction to technical language. Variety of print styles and text layout require readers' close attention and flexibility. Four to eight lines of text and longer sentences. More challenging ideas. Expansion in vocabulary. Less repetition. Greater range of content expanding the child's experience.

**Level H
(1 and 2)**

Books are similar in difficulty to level G, but texts vary in size of print, length of sentences, and type of language. Texts are less repetitive in events and language structures with expanded vocabulary. Less repetition in the episodic structure.

**Level I
(1 to 3)**

Longer and more complex stories than in levels G and H, with more highly elaborated information, multi syllable words arranged in longer sentences and paragraphs that require complex word solving. Illustrations enhance meaning but provide less support for understanding the meaning of the text. Introduction to informational text. Opportunities for comparisons. More words and sentences per text.

**Level J
(1 to 3)**

Chapter books begin at this level. Readers have to recall more than one setting, fewer illustrations with whole pages of text in some books. Reading stamina required, 30 to 60 pages. Greater level of independent reading. Variety of text and genre. Requires problem solving and fluency for sustained periods of time. Student must follow changes in character development.

**Level K
(2 to 3)**

Includes chapter books and short informational books with difficult concepts. Readers learn about concepts and events outside their own experiences. Readers need to use a variety of strategies to figure out different writing styles. Ten to fifteen lines of print. Long stretches of chapter-like print. Text and print

alternates with clear spaces between words and line. Stories have multiple episodes related to one plot. Stories that readers heard as young children can now be read independently. Books are appropriate for silent reading and independent reading.

Level L
(2 to 3)

More complex, longer texts. This level includes biographies, multi syllable words. Expansion of vocabulary. Smaller text size, smaller word spacing. Stories are more involved. More sophisticated language structures. Books are read over a period of several days with more discussion during and after.

Level M
(2 to 4)

More complex language requires readers to make interpretations; most books at this level have greatly expanded vocabulary. Many books at this level have smaller print with narrower word spacing. Mostly text. Language and sophisticated vocabulary. Character development is a prominent feature. Subtitles of text require more background knowledge.

Level N
(2 to 4)

Vocabulary continues to expand and go beyond the reader's own experience, variety of texts offer the reader a chance to interpret information and speculate on alternate meanings. Chapter books of 100 or more pages. Books address social issues. Literacy devices like irony and whimsy.

Level O
(3 to 5)

Longer books at this level present varied vocabulary that will require readers to interpret the meaning of the text. Texts have more sophisticated subjects and more complex sentence structures. More interpretation of themes is required. Characters are revealed through dialogue and action instead of by author narration. Range of punctuation. Varied and sophisticated vocabulary.

Level P
(3 to 5)

Informational texts at this level include history and biography, enabling readers to learn how to gain information from a variety of structures. Concepts may include issues of early adolescence. More interpretation of themes required. Characters revealed through dialogue and action instead of by narration. Range of punctuation. More varied and sophisticated vocabulary.

Level Q
(3 to 5)

Selections contain themes to foster group discussions, relationship of illustration to text also provides opportunity for exploration and discussion, text contains difficult words and some from languages other than English. Themes about relationships, death, moral issues are conveyed through a variety of genres. Texts can be interpreted on a literal and figurative level. Introduction to metaphor and simile.

Level R
(3 to 5)

Vocabulary challenges readers, longer chapter books require sustained reading effort over several settings, and books represent a range of times in history. Understanding of connotative meanings. Informational books extend readers understanding. Mature themes, e.g., war, death, family problems.

Level S
(4 to 6)

Selections challenge readers to make connections with previous reading and with historical events. Words represent many shades of meaning that require interpretation. This level includes chapter books in a variety of genres. Good foundation for group discussion. Variety of topics and cultures addressed. Historical fiction is prevalent. Complex sentences and paragraphs. Appropriate for rapid and fluent reading.

Level T
(4 to 6)

Readers encounter a variety of nonfiction text structures. Expanded vocabulary requires readers to consider both literal and connotative meaning. Character development and symbolism. Long chapter books, multi syllable words. Wide range of genres. More information on political and historical periods.

Level U
(4 to 6)

Books cover a breadth of topics and present specific, technical information. Illustrations require interpretation and connection to text; readers have to use a wide variety of reading skills. Narrative text includes plots and subplots. Texts have many themes and characters are multidimensional.

Level V
(4 to 6)

Texts present complex issues and use technical language. Topics are distant from the student's experience in terms of time and geographic area, and may contain realistic historical information and more difficult themes. Biographies go beyond simple narratives, and focus on harsh themes and difficult periods in history. Fiction includes science fiction. Books require critical thinking that may include recognizing aspects of writer's craft. Books contain small fonts, 200 to 300 pages.

**Level W
(5 to 6)**

Books present complex information requiring readers to employ a wide range of content knowledge. Texts are designed to present a significant amount of new information. Themes explore human condition, awareness of social and political issues. Fiction includes historic characters, moral questions, conflicts between good and evil.

**Level X
(5 to 6)**

Mature themes, requires extensive prior knowledge. Texts are designed to present a significant amount of new information. Science fiction includes technical knowledge and high fantasy. Implied meaning constructed through use of symbolism. More sophisticated vocabulary, language and topics.

**Level Y
(5 to 6)**

Books feature similar themes to previous levels, with more explicit detail. Reading requires critical interpretations to evaluate the quality and objectivity of the text. Subtle themes, complex plots. Explicit details within themes. Books include irony and satire. Readers discern underlying lessons and analyze texts for traditional elements.

**Level Z
(5 to 6)**

Books are a challenge for more well-read students, as texts require critical reading skills. Topics include controversial social and political issues. Readers experience complex examples of nonfiction organizational structures. Historical accounts of less well known periods. More technical information. Readers encounter complex examples of basic organizational structure for informational texts.

Bibliography

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