



Waterford Township
School District

Dr. Brenda Harring
Superintendent

Daniel J. Fox, CPA
Assistant Superintendent for Business

Julie C. Lyons
Director of Elementary Education

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As an invested partner in your child's learning, we want to share some information about the literacy assessment we'll be using in our district this year. *The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, Third Edition* is a one-on-one assessment that helps teachers identify your child's specific reading strengths and appropriate instructional reading level for small-group instruction as determined by the F&P Text Level Gradient. The data gained from this standardized assessment helps the teacher identify goals and plan instruction that supports your child's reading progress across the school year. Within each level are easier and harder books, and a range of topics and book types. The text levels are not intended for students or for families to categorize readers, but in the hands of teachers, they inform instruction.

The *Benchmark Assessment System* provides a snapshot in time of your child's literacy development and will be given several times across the year. Over the next few weeks, your child's teacher will assess each student in the class by having him/her read several *Benchmark Assessment* books, having him/her think about the books, and talking one-on-one with them about each book. This natural, authentic assessment conference is a wonderful opportunity for your child's teacher to get to know your child as a reader and to observe him/her engaged in literacy activities. It will provide a rich source of information to inform teaching.

Your child will experience a wide variety of book levels across the day. When selecting books for enjoyment, your child selects from a wide range of books that appeal to his/her interests; they are not selected based on reading level. Your child will have the leveled instruction (guided reading) in a small part of the day, as it is one critical component of our literacy teaching for lifting your child's competencies.

During guided reading, teachers meet with small groups of students that are similar in their development of the reading process. The teacher guides students in a discussion of the text in a way that encourages them to express their thinking and learn from the thinking of others (*Fountas and Pinnell, Guided Reading*). Teachers make decisions to move students forward in guided reading when:

- A student begins to read each new, harder text with high accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.
- Their observations and running records show that the readers are expanding their reading power across increasingly challenging texts.
- A student self-initiates problem-solving actions and constantly searches for and uses multiple sources of information as they read for understanding.

It is important to understand that teachers are using a variety of information to make decisions in regards to your child's literacy development. Although we use this assessment several times throughout the year, decisions are made to move your child forward based on the above and do not require this assessment to be administered to make that decision.



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We invite you to ask questions that arise throughout the school year and we look forward to upcoming parent/teacher conferences so we can discuss your child's literacy progress. In the meantime, here are some ways you can support your child's literacy learning at home:

1. Visit your local library together. Encourage your child to select books that interest and excite him/her.
2. Read books to or with your child and talk about them together.
3. Listen to your child read books and talk about them together.
4. Most importantly, enjoy your time together reading, writing, and talking!