

ABOVE THE LINE LEVELED READING SERIES

TEACHER GUIDE

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Above the Line Leveled Reading Series is a collection of wordless and semi-wordless books designed to help teachers provide developmentally appropriate reading instruction for prekindergarten and kindergarten students. This series of instructional books consists of three levels, each level moving students through increasingly sophisticated levels of foundational literacy skills.

The choice for the name of **Above the Line Leveled Reading Series** originated from one of our very first products, *My Pictures and Stories*. *My Pictures and Stories* is a writing journal for 3, 4, and 5 year olds. Before students take crayon to paper, the only thing visible on the student's writing page is a line located three-quarters down on the page. There's more space above the line because that's where children draw their pictures or stories. Because print does not yet hold much meaning for young children and it's the teacher who writes the words for the child's story, less space is needed below the line. Students quickly learn that the line is important because it helps orient them to where they do their "work" and where the teacher does his or her "work." Often, when talking to other teachers about any young children's work or activity, regardless of its content, you'll hear teachers referring to it as either an above the line experience or a below the line experience. Above the line refers to activities that support oral language and/or fine motor development, while below the line refers to more literal, skill based activities—hence the name for our leveled reading series.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

Comprehension is the reason we read. Children can and need to understand this at an early age. Pretend reading or picture reading is a comprehension activity and key in a child's early learning experiences. **Above the Line (ATL) Leveled Reading Series** helps teachers provide beginning reading activities in a systematic way that allows young students to gain control over critical concepts and skills. These concepts and skills include book handling skills and print concepts, oral (expressive) and aural (receptive) language, as well as important cognitive, social, and emotional concepts. As children build their skills in these foundational literacy concepts, they also build the ability and confidence needed to tackle reading below the line—letters, sounds, and words.

Many young children experience difficulty in learning to read. Often, these struggling students have entered prekindergarten or kindergarten classrooms without the necessary foundational reading experiences needed to support the word attack skills that frequently make up beginning reading instruction. It is critical that students have literacy experiences that are developmentally appropriate, such as pretend reading or picture reading, before being asked to practice more difficult skills like sound/letter connections or sight word recognition. **ATL Leveled Reading Series** helps teachers provide opportunities to develop these foundational skills and set the stage for more sophisticated reading concepts and skills.

The **ATL Leveled Reading Series** meets many instructional needs for teachers of emergent learners.

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Besides read alouds and independent reading, **ATL Leveled Reading Series** was developed to be used as another instructional component in beginning reading instruction with emergent learners. This means that for prekindergarten classrooms, **ATL Leveled Reading Series** can be the primary reading program throughout the year. In kindergarten, it means that **ATL Leveled Reading Series** can be used at the very beginning of the year, before students start their reading instruction in a district reading program. Whether it's prekindergarten or the beginning of kindergarten, the goal of **ATL Leveled Reading Series** is to develop children who understand broadly how books, stories, and print work and who feel confident in their reading ability. After all, it's easier to get children reading the words when they *feel* like readers.

The **ATL** leveled readers also make great resources to supplement any beginning reading program. Whether teachers use them to develop home/school connections or for remediation with struggling readers, these wordless and semi-wordless books let teachers tailor their use to a particular student, or group of students' reading issues. Students can take more control, practicing specific skills such as book handling and story concepts. These skills can be difficult for many beginning readers. This is the power of using **ATL** leveled readers. Because **ATL** leveled readers don't have words or have very few words, students are able to focus on foundational reading skills which traditional leveled readers just can't do.

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

The following sections outline the characteristics and skills of each **ATL** level. To highlight these characteristics and skills, teaching scenarios have been included to describe the teaching at all three levels. The prekindergarten scenario demonstrates how the teacher starts off his reading instruction beginning with level 1, and after he has put other critical instructional practices in place. The next scenario demonstrates how a kindergarten teacher uses **ATL Leveled Reading Series** to *frontload* the reading instruction before students move into the district reading program. The last teaching scenario demonstrates how another kindergarten teacher is supporting her struggling readers, not by going through all the **ATL** levels but

by using a specific level to be more explicit in teaching specific skills.

LEVEL 1

Characteristics of level 1 text

- Relatable topic (evident in title)
- Simple, predictable storyline
- One or two characters
- Easily identified story/picture detail
- Few or no story distractions
- One or two new text features (usually at end of story)

Book/Story Skills and Concepts

- Cover
 - Building prior knowledge about the story
 - Noticing important story/picture detail
 - Understanding front of book
 - Understanding how titles work
- Title Page
 - Building prior knowledge about the story
 - Attending to important story/picture detail
 - Understanding how titles work
 - Confirming or adjusting predictions
- Pages 1-4
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Understanding story beginnings
 - Understanding story patterns
 - Confirming or adjusting predictions
 - Understanding how dialogue works
 - Understanding where to start reading
 - Understanding left to right
- Page 5
 - Making predictions
- Page 6
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Understanding story patterns
 - Confirming or adjusting predictions
 - Understanding how dialogue works
- Page 7
 - Making predictions
 - Understanding story endings
- Page 8
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Understanding story endings
 - Confirming or adjusting prediction

- Understanding how dialogue works
- Understanding how text works within the picture

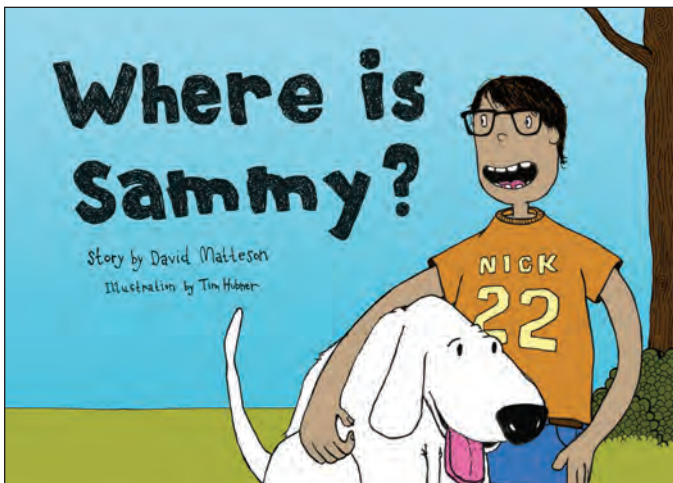
Instructional Example

In the following teaching scenario, Howard, a prekindergarten teacher, is starting reading instruction with his four-year-olds. It is the end of November and this is his first reading group of the year. He has waited to start reading groups until he has gotten his writing instruction solidly underway (see *My Pictures and Stories Teacher Guide*) and until his students have had several experiences with books in whole group settings (read alouds). In this group, he has pulled three of his highest students to start with, as he wants to get them picture reading in his classroom library as soon as possible. He knows that this hands-on small group time will support that process. He has picked a level 1 to start off their reading instruction, but he is anticipating that he will be able to move these students onto the more complicated story structure of a level 2 fairly soon. This is because the teacher has noticed that these students not only have good print and story concepts but they have particularly good control of language and attention to detail—critically important to reading success.

Teacher Howard: (Before showing his students the book he asks) I've got a book that I want you to read. Do you think you can tell me the story that's in this book?

Students: (Nodding their heads)

Jesus: I can't read.



Teacher Howard: Well, if you get stuck I will help. (Handing the book to each student upside down and backwards, he watches to make sure each student has the book in the “ready-to-read” position.) Is everyone ready to read? I don't want you peeking. I'll tell you when to turn the pages. Right now everyone needs to be looking at the cover. What do you see?

Dominick: I see a dog.

Savannah: I see a man.

Teacher Howard: Yes, there is a dog but is the person on the cover a man or a boy?

Students: A boy.

Teacher Howard: Yes, it's a boy and his dog. What are they doing?

Jesus: Hugging.

Teacher Howard: Yes, they are hugging. They must like each other a lot, don't you think? Do any of you have a pet?

Savannah: I have a dog.

Jesus: Me too.

Teacher Howard: What about you, Dominick?

Dominick: I don't have a dog.

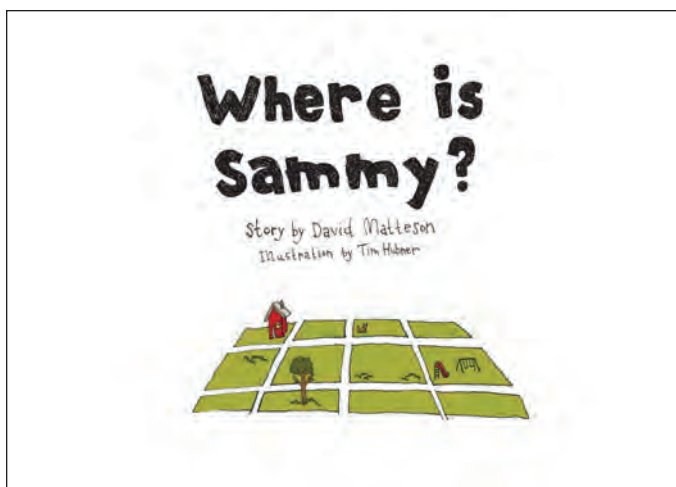
Teacher Howard: Do you have any other kind of pets at home?

Dominick: (Shakes his head no)

Teacher Howard: I bet you'll still like this story. Everyone point to the name or title of this book. (The teacher checks to make sure everyone is pointing to the title. He notices Jesus and Savannah are looking to see what their friends are doing because they are unsure of titles. After everyone has their finger securely on the title he asks) If you could give a name or title to this book, what would you call it?

Dominick: A Boy and Dog.

Teacher Howard: Yes, but remember they are hugging each other. Savannah, what would you call this book if you could name it?



Savannah: A Boy Loves His Dog?

Teacher Howard: That makes sense with the boy and dog hugging each other. Let's turn to the title page and see if there's something there that might help us with giving the story a good name or title. (The teacher watches as the students turn to the title page.)

Students: (Everyone has their book turned to the title page.)

Teacher Howard: What do you see on this page?

Jesus: I see a house.

Dominick: I see a slide.

Jesus: I see a dog.

Teacher Howard: Is that a dog? It's pretty small—look closely. It doesn't look like the dog on the cover.

Jesus: It's a cat.

Teacher Howard: Yes, it's a cat. I wonder why there's a cat in the picture. Actually it's not a picture, it's a map. Why do you think there's a map on the title page?

Students: (Silent.)

Teacher Howard: Well, everyone point to the title again. You thought a good name for this story would be "A Boy Loves his Dog." I think that would be a great title for this story. Actually the author named this book, "Where is Sammy?" Everyone say that.

Students: (In unison) Where is Sammy?

Teacher Howard: Now we know the dog's name. What is it?

Dominick: Sammy.

Teacher Howard: Right, Sammy. But we also know that something happens to Sammy. Remember the title is "Where is Sammy?" What do you think happens to him?

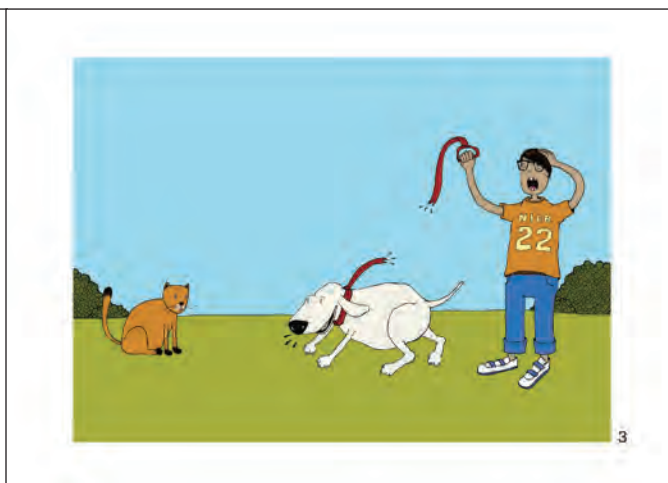
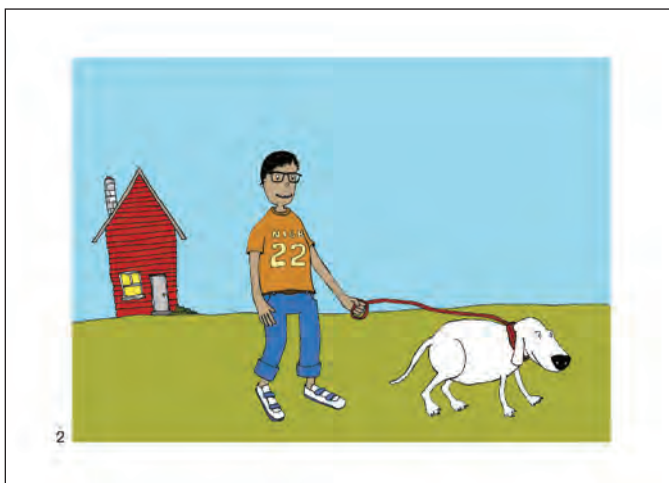
Jesus: He gets lost.

Teacher Howard: That could be. Do you think that's why there's a map on the title page?

Savannah: It will help the boy find him.

Teacher Howard: Oh, you think the map will help the boy find Sammy? Let's find out. Let's turn to the first page and see what happens. (Everyone turns the page but the teacher notices most of the students are looking at page 3, not page 2.)

Savannah: He breaks the rope.



Teacher Howard: Yes, he does but where do we start to read—on this page (pointing to page 3) or this page (pointing to page 2)?

Dominick: On this page (pointing to page 2).

Teacher Howard: Yes, Dominick, on page 2. Everyone look at page 2. What is happening at the beginning of our story?

Dominick: They are walking.

Jesus: They left the house.

Teacher Howard: They DID leave the house and they ARE going for a walk. Doesn't it look like they are both happy about that? Who can remember the dog's name?

Savannah: Sammy.

Teacher Howard: What could the boy's name be?

Students: (Silent)

Teacher Howard: Does anyone know a boy's name?

Jesus: Robert. I have a friend Robert.

Teacher Howard: Oh, that's a good name. Let's call him Robert. So what could we say about Robert and Sammy?

Dominick: They went for a walk.

Teacher Howard: Yes, that would make a good beginning for our story. Everyone say that—Robert and Sammy went for a walk.

Students: (In unison) Robert and Sammy went for a walk.

Teacher Howard: Now Savannah, what happens in our story on page 3?

Savannah: He breaks the rope. He saw a cat.

Teacher Howard: Who saw a cat?

Savannah: Sammy.

Teacher Howard: So let's say that. Sammy saw a cat and broke the rope.

Students: (Repeating the teacher) Sammy saw a cat and broke the rope.

Teacher Howard: Does anyone know another word for the rope around Sammy's neck?

Jesus: A leash.

Teacher Howard: Yes, a leash. Sammy sees a cat and breaks the leash. Let's turn the page. Let's see what happens next.

Dominick: He's yelling.

Teacher Howard: Who's yelling?

Dominick: Robert.

Teacher Howard: What do you thinking he is yelling?

Dominick: He's yelling for Sammy.

Teacher Howard: What would that sound like? Let's pretend we are Robert and yelling for Sammy. Ready?



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(The teacher holds his hands up to his mouth and yells)
Sammy!

Students: (In unison) Sammy!

Teacher Howard: Jesus, what is happening on page 5?

Jesus: He's yelling.

Teacher Howard: Robert's yelling again? He must really be worried about Sammy. Where is he?

Savannah: At the slide.

Teacher Howard: Robert IS at the slide. What do you think he's yelling there?

Savannah: For Sammy.

Teacher Howard: What does he sound like? Let's pretend we're yelling. (Again, the teacher puts his hand up to his mouth and yells) Sammy, where are you?

Students: (Repeating the teacher) Sammy, where are you?

Teacher Howard: Before we turn the page, what do you think will happen next? Will he find Sammy?

Jesus: (Nodding his head)

Teacher Howard: Jesus thinks so. Let's find out. Turn the page.

Students: (Everyone turns the page.)

Teacher Howard: Did Robert find Sammy?

Students: (Shaking their heads no)

Teacher Howard: Where is Robert looking now?

Savannah: By the house.

Teacher Howard: Well, not yet. Look at page 6.

Savannah: In the bushes.

Teacher Howard: Right, he's looking in the bushes. Look at his mouth. It looks like Robert is still yelling. Everyone yell for Sammy.

Students: (Everyone yells) Sammy!

Teacher Howard: (Adding on) Where are you?

Students: (Some of them repeating) Where are you?

Teacher Howard: Where does Robert look for Sammy next? Dominick?

Dominick: The house?

Teacher Howard: Yes, he looks BEHIND or AROUND the house. Let's say that—Robert...

Students: ... looks behind the house.

Teacher Howard: He's not yelling any more. Do you think he will find Sammy?

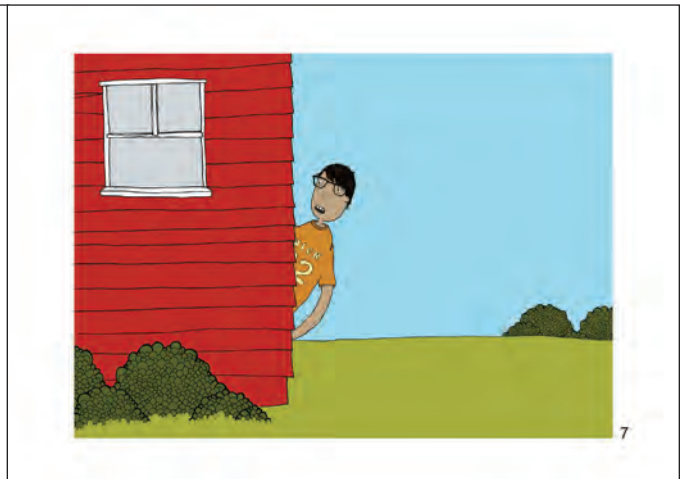
Jesus: (Nodding his head)

Teacher Howard: Okay, let's find out. Turn to the last page.

Jesus: I was right. He found Sammy.

Teacher Howard: Who found Sammy?

Dominick: Robert.



Teacher Howard: Yes, it looks like they found each other. They both look pretty happy, don't they? Look at Sammy's tail. What's it doing?

Savannah: It's shaking because he's happy.

Teacher Howard: Yes, Sammy's tail IS wagging. What about Robert? Is he happy?

Students: (Nodding)

Teacher Howard: Look at this bubble by Robert's mouth. Everyone point to it. It means that he is saying something. What do you think Robert is saying to Sammy? He's not yelling any more. What could he be saying?

Savannah: He might be saying he's happy.

Teacher Howard: Yes, he could be saying "I'm happy." What else could he be saying? Dominick?

Dominick: (Thinking)

Teacher Howard: Could he be saying, "You're home Sammy!" Jesus, what do you think he's saying?

Jesus: You're home Sammy!

Teacher Howard: Did this story have a happy ending?

Students: (In unison) Yes.

Teacher Howard: It DID have a happy ending. Did you like this story?

Students: (All nodding with big smiles)

Teacher Howard: Let's read this again. This time we'll read it a little bit faster. Turn to where we start to read. Where does the story begin?

This teacher understands that fluency is important, so a rereading, with students taking more of the lead, is important. He will also be listening to how well his students remember the text—a critical skill for emergent readers. Typically, after he brings the students through a text like this, he has students take turns reading the pages, supporting them when necessary. In this reading group he noticed that Jesus asked after his turn reading, "When is it my turn to read again?" The teacher smiled because he remembered when they started the story, Jesus said he couldn't read. "Success!" thought the teacher. He was reminded that when reading instruction is developmentally appropriate, it doesn't take long for kids to feel like readers!

LEVEL 2

Characteristics of level 2 text

- Relatable topic (evident in title)
- More complicated storyline
- Less predictable/more surprises
- Two or more characters
- Text within picture
- Story/picture detail may not be as obvious
- May contain some distractions in illustrations
- One or two new concepts (usually at end of story)

Book/Story Skills and Concepts

- Cover
 - Building prior knowledge about the story
 - Attending to important story/picture detail
 - Understanding how titles work
 - Understanding front of book
- Title Page
 - Building prior knowledge about the story
 - Attending to important story/picture detail
 - Understanding how titles work
 - Confirming or adjusting predictions
- Pages 1-4
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Attending to text within picture
 - Understanding story beginnings



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- Understanding story patterns
- Confirming or adjusting predictions
- Understanding how dialogue works
- Understanding where to start reading
- Understanding left to right
- Page 5
 - Making predictions
- Page 6
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Attending to text within picture
 - Understanding story patterns
 - Confirming or adjusting predictions
 - Understanding how dialogue works
- Page 7
 - Making predictions
 - Understanding story endings
- Page 8
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Attending to text within picture
 - Understanding story endings
 - Confirming or adjusting prediction
 - Understanding how dialogue works
 - Understanding top to bottom
 - Understanding how text works below the picture

Instructional example

In this kindergarten classroom, the teacher started reading groups the third week of school. Because she understands the importance of comprehension in reading, and knows that pictures contain the meaning for young children, the teacher has been reading wordless books during her read alouds. Her goal for the first nine weeks of school is to get her students feeling like readers and using the classroom library as an independent center as soon as possible. The teacher knows that hands-on practice will speed this process up, so she has placed her students into groups to develop their “pretend” reading. Because several of her students haven’t had many experiences with reading at home, they are reading level 1 books. There are a few students though, that have had lots of “reading” experiences prior to school and have caught on quickly to reading level 1 books. For their reading instruction, the teacher has placed them in level 2 books to increase the level of challenge for them. A longer term reading goal for this teacher is to get all students into level 3 by the



end of November so she can begin using her district reading program. The following teaching episode is one of her reading groups reading a level 2 book.

Mrs. Sorbo: (Before showing her students the book she asks) I’ve got a book that I want you to read. Do you think you can tell me the story that’s in this book?

Students: (Nodding their heads)

Mrs. Sorbo: Good, I think you’ll like this story. (Even though she knows these students have basic book handling skills, the teacher still hands the book to each student upside down and backwards.) Is everyone ready to read? (The teacher smiles as she can see the students have already learned some of her expectations for reading group—turn the book right-side up and cover facing out and wait for the teacher’s direction.) What do you see on the cover?

Lipi: I see a dog and a boy.

Brooke: He looks sad.

Mrs. Sorbo: Is he sad? Look at his clothes. What is he wearing?

Avery: Jammies.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, he is wearing his pajamas and what’s he holding?

Avery: His blanket.

Mrs. Sorbo: So what do you think he is doing?

Kyle: Going to bed.



Mrs. Sorbo: I think so too. So, do you still think he is sad?

Brooke: He's tired.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, look at his eyes. They're almost closed. He must be very tired. So what would be a good title for this story?

Kyle: "Bedtime".

Mrs. Sorbo: I think that would work. Anyone else? Avery?

Avery: "Going to Bed."

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, both of those would be good choices for a title but let's go with "Bedtime." It's nice and short and really fits the picture on the cover. (Since the choices from both students were so close to the real title, the teacher decided not to tell the students the actual title. She knows they will see this book again at a later date and by then they will have the skills to read

the title the author gave it.) Everyone point to the title. What did we think it could be called again?

Students: "Bedtime"

Mrs. Sorbo: Let's see what's on the title page.

Avery: A TV.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, it is. Why do you think there's a television on this page, Lipi?

Lipi: Maybe he wants to watch TV in his bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: That could be but I know when I was a little girl sometimes I wanted to watch TV and didn't want to go to bed. Has that ever happened to you?

Lipi: I wanted to watch TV last night and mom said no.

Mrs. Sorbo: That happens sometimes. Do you think that's what happened with this boy?

Kyle: I don't think he wanted to go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: Okay, let's read and find out. Turn the page.

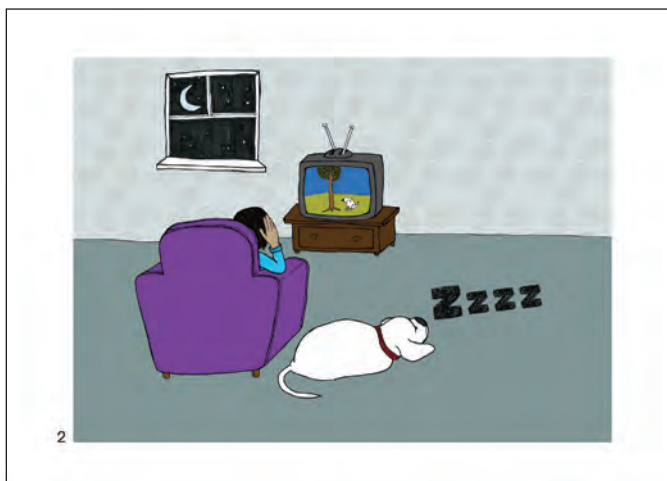
Kyle: I was right. He's watching TV. He didn't want to go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: How do you know that?

Kyle: His dad is telling him to go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, and you can tell it's late can't you?—how?

Avery: The moon is out.



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Mrs. Sorbo: (Talking to Avery) Yes, you can see the moon and stars out the window. Do you think he will go to bed?

Avery: No.

Mrs. Sorbo: Before we find out, what should we say on these two pages? Brooke?

Brooke: His dad told him to go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: Oh, let's give the boy a name first.

Kyle: I'm a boy.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, since you're the only boy in the group we could call him Kyle. Is that alright with everyone?

Students: (Nodding)

Mrs. Sorbo: Let's get reading, alright? Brooke, you said, "His dad told him to go to bed." But what could we say for page 2?

Kyle: He was watching TV.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, but don't forget his name.

Kyle: (Smiling) Kyle.

Mrs. Sorbo: "Kyle was watching TV." Remember though, it is late. Lipi, what could we say on page 2?

Lipi: "It was late and Kyle was watching TV."

Mrs. Sorbo: Perfect! "It was late at night and Kyle was watching TV. His father said..."

Kyle: "Bedtime."

Mrs. Sorbo: Where does it say that?

Kyle: Right here (pointing to the speech bubble).

Mrs. Sorbo: Great. Turn the page. What could we say here?

Brooke: "His mother came in."

Mrs. Sorbo: "And said..."

Lipi: (With expression) "Bedtime!"

Mrs. Sorbo: I like how you said that. Look at page 5—Avery, will you read that page?

Avery: "His sister said Bedtime!"

Mrs. Sorbo: Good job. Make a prediction. What do you think will happen next?

Avery: His brother will tell him to go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: Do you think so? Let's find out. Turn the page.

Brooke: The dog's barking.

Mrs. Sorbo: How do you know he's barking?

Kyle: It says so right here (pointing to the word "RUFF").

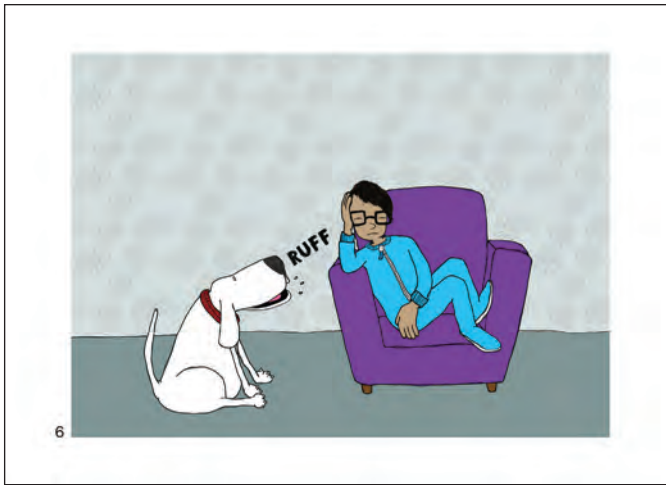
Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, why do you think he's barking?

Kyle: He's telling Kyle to go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, even the dog is telling Kyle to go to bed. Can we say that for this page? "Even the dog told Kyle to go to bed."

Students: (Repeating the teacher) "Even the dog told Kyle to go to bed."





Mrs. Sorbo: But look at Kyle's eyes—has he been watching TV or has he already been sleeping?

Kyle: He's already been sleeping.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, he must have fallen asleep watching TV and finally goes to bed when the dog barks at him. You say that—Kyle fell asleep, but goes to bed when Sammy barks.

Students: He falls asleep and goes to bed when Sammy barks.

Mrs. Sorbo: So, where are we in the story—the beginning, middle or end? Lipi?

Lipi: The middle.

Mrs. Sorbo: Well, if we only have one page left, would that be the middle or the end of our story?

Lipi: The end.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, we ARE at the end. Can you think about how this story might end?

Lipi: He'll go to bed.

Mrs. Sorbo: So, you think Kyle will finally go to bed? Do you think anything else will happen?

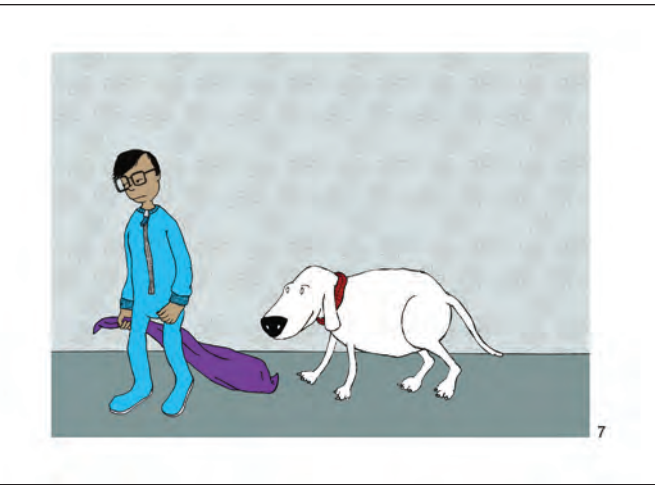
Students: (Silent)

Mrs. Sorbo: Okay, let's see. Turn the page.

Brooke: He did go to bed.

Lipi: I was right!

Avery: The dog is sleeping.



Mrs. Sorbo: How do you know the dog is sleeping?

Lipi: He's snoring.

Mrs. Sorbo: That's right, look at all those Z's. He's sound asleep. How about our character Kyle? Is he sleeping?

Kyle: He's awake.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes he is. How do you know?

Kyle: His eyes are open.

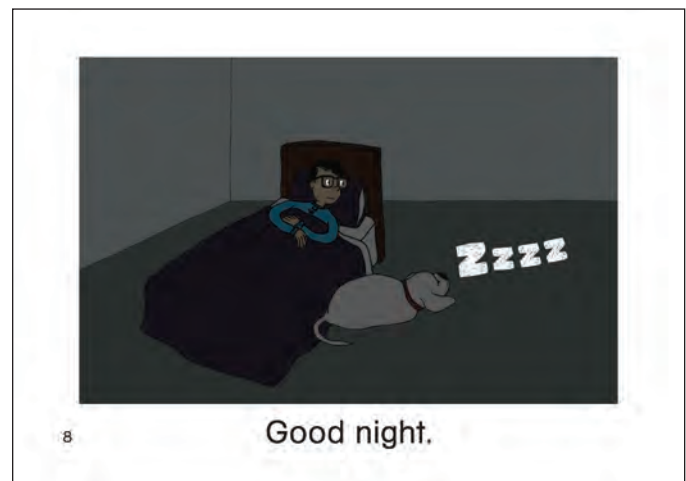
Mrs. Sorbo: Why do you think he's awake?

Lipi: He's scared because it's dark.

Mrs. Sorbo: Oh, do you think so? Avery, what do you think?

Avery: I think he's scared too.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, he could be scared but I'm wondering if he might not be tired anymore because he slept while he was watching television. What do you think?



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Students: (Nodding)

Mrs. Sorbo: What could we say on this page?

Students: (Silent)

Mrs. Sorbo: How about “When they got to bed, the dog fell asleep but *not* Kyle. He wasn’t sleepy anymore.” Now you say that.

Students: (Repeating the teacher) “When they got to bed, the dog fell asleep but not Kyle.”

Mrs. Sorbo: Great. Where does it tell us that Kyle couldn’t sleep?

Students: (Pointing to Kyle in the picture)

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, the picture tells us Kyle couldn’t sleep--where else does it tell us?

Avery: (Pointing to the Z’s in the picture) Here—the dog is snoring.

Mrs. Sorbo: Yes, the picture tells us about Kyle and the dog but what about the words down here (pointing to the text below the picture)? Could the words tell us that the dog was asleep and that Kyle wasn’t?

Students: (Nodding)

Mrs. Sorbo: Great. Did you like this story? Let’s read it one more time.

This kindergarten teacher understands that a level 2 book supports students in knowing there is more to reading than just using the picture. On each page of the reading, the teacher brought her students to the words in the pictures only after they used the picture to gain meaning. This gave them more confidence to know what the words *could* say in the speech bubble. Her goal wasn’t to have them read the words in the pictures verbatim but to know that words have meaning and that the pictures and/or storyline can support an understanding of text even before they come to reading text. Once her students feel comfortable with words *in* the picture, the teacher will put her students in level 3 text, which will support students in the same way but with words *below* the picture. A level 2 text gives students a taste of what’s to come by including text below the picture on the last page.

LEVEL 3

Characteristics of level 3 text

- Relatable topic (evident in title)
- Simple, predictable storyline
- Only one or two characters
- Easily identified story/picture details
- Few or no story distractions
- Text within picture
- Text below picture

Book/Story Skills and Concepts

- Cover
 - Building prior knowledge about the story
 - Noticing important story/picture detail
 - Understanding how titles work
 - Understanding how text works
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 - Understanding top to bottom
 - Understanding how text works within the picture
 - Understanding how text works below the picture
- Page 5
 - Making predictions
 - Understanding how text works below the picture
- Page 6
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Understanding story patterns
 - Confirming or adjusting predictions
 - Understanding how dialogue works

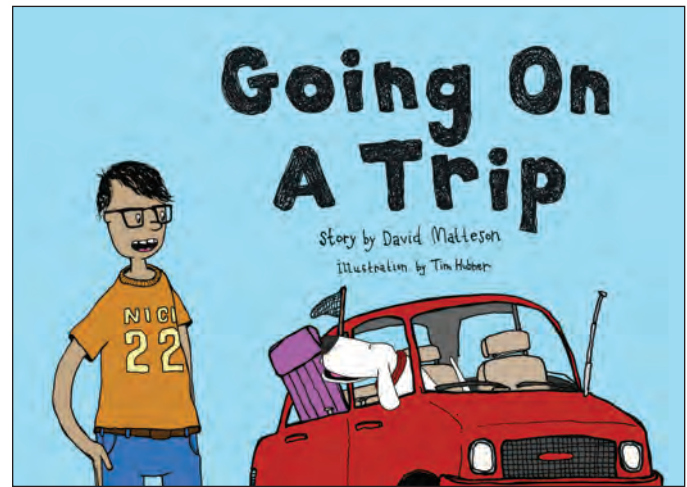
- Understanding how text works within the picture
- Page 7
 - Making predictions
 - Understanding story endings
 - Understanding how text works below the picture
- Page 8
 - Attending to story/picture detail
 - Understanding story endings
 - Confirming or adjusting prediction
 - Understanding how dialogue works
 - Understanding how text works below the picture

Instructional Example

In this teaching episode, a kindergarten teacher is working with her lowest readers. It is the end of January and these three students are not making adequate progress. They are still struggling with basic sight word recognition and attending to beginning sounds. This is keeping them from moving into the next section in the district reading program, which has to do with word families. After coming back from winter break, the teacher decided to jumpstart their instruction by putting them into **Above the Line Leveled Reading Series**. The teacher knows that the main focus of this series is on the use of pictures, which will be a good support for these particular students. It's the last level in this series that the teacher hopes will be a good match for the problems these students are experiencing. Level 3 books begin to bring students to the text below the picture through the use of controlled language. The teacher is hoping that the combination of strong picture support and controlled language will reinforce the instruction that the students have had, but without any unnecessary distractions, such as overly long text or complicated pictures. Notice how the teacher shifts the focus of her instruction from using the pictures in the beginning of the lesson to using words and sounds by the end.

Ms. Hugo: (Before showing her students the book she asks) I've got a book that I want you to read. Do you think you can tell me the story that's in this book?

Students: (Nodding their heads)



Ms. Hugo: Good. I think you'll like this story. (Looking at the position students are holding their books, she asks) Is everyone ready to read?

Students: (Nodding their heads)

Ms. Hugo: Perfect. Look at the cover. What do you think this story is going to be about?

Kerra: They're going somewhere?

Ms. Hugo: How do you know that?

Kerra: There's a dog in a car.

Ms. Hugo: What else? Zephyr?

Zephyr: (Pointing) A butterfly net.

Ms. Hugo: Yes. It looks like the dog is waiting to go somewhere and they are bringing things like a net along with them. Everyone point to the title. What's this story called?

Students: (Silent)

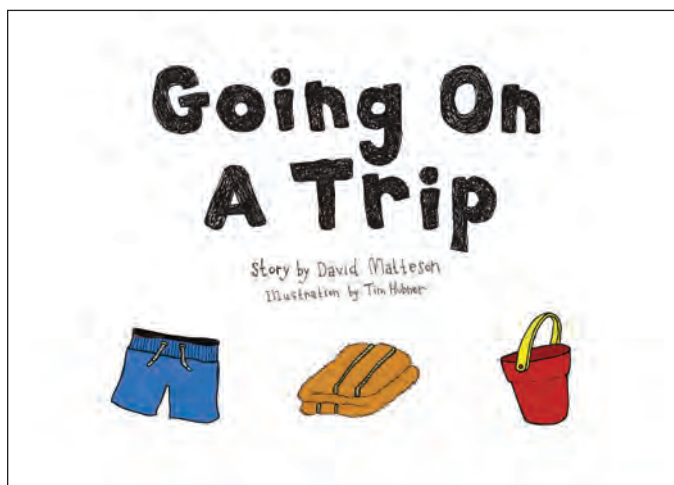
Ms. Hugo: Well, I think you know some words in the title. Can you see any of your sight words?

Kerra: (Pointing) I see "A."

Ms. Hugo: Yes, there's the word "A." Any other words you know?

Brian: I see a "T."

Ms. Hugo: Yes, there is a "T" but that's a letter, not a word. How about this word (covering up the "ing" in "Going")?



Kerra: “Go.”

Ms. Hugo: Right, “Go.” We know the words “Go” and “A”. How about this word (pointing to the word “On”)?

Zephyr: “In.”

Ms. Hugo: You’re close. (On a small white board she writes “In.”) That’s the word “In” (spelling it aloud for them). “In” is one of your sight words, but this is another one of your sight words. (The teacher writes “On” and says) “On”—O-n. Say “On.”

Students: “On.”

Ms. Hugo: Okay, let’s read the title together. “Go On A”...

Kerra: “Trip.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, “Trip.” How did you know?

Kerra: Because they are going on a trip.

Ms. Hugo: Yes, the car is packed and they are ready to go on a trip. The word “Trip” also starts with what letter?

Kerra: “T.”

Ms. Hugo: Perfect. It does start with a “T.” The title of this story is “Going On A Trip.” Point to the title and say “Going On A Trip.”

Students: (All pointing to the title) “Going On A Trip.”

Ms. Hugo: Turn to the title page. Tell me again. What’s the title of this book?

Students: “Going On A Trip.”

Ms. Hugo: What do you notice on this page? Brian, what do you see?

Brian: A bucket.

Ms. Hugo: Yes, there’s a bucket. What else do you see? Zephyr?

Zephyr: Pants.

Ms. Hugo: Are those pants? I think pants are longer.

Kerra: It’s a bathing suit.

Ms. Hugo: I think you might be right, Kerra.

Zephyr: They’re going to the beach.

Ms. Hugo: Do you think so? There’s a picture of a bucket, a bathing suit—what’s this?

Kerra: A blanket.

Ms. Hugo: Yes, it looks like a blanket. Are you still thinking they are going to the beach?

Students: (Nodding)

Ms. Hugo: Well, let’s see. Turn to the next page.

Zephyr: He’s thinking.

Ms. Hugo: He IS thinking. What do you think he’s thinking about?

Brian: What to put in the box.

Ms. Hugo: Oh, you think he’s wondering what to pack in the suitcase? Do you think that’s what the speech bubble says—“What should I pack?”

Brian: Uh-huh

Ms. Hugo: What do you think we’ll see on the next page if he is packing for the beach?

Kerra: His bathing suit.

Ms. Hugo: Oh, you’re remembering the items we saw on the title page, aren’t you? He WOULD need his bathing suit at the beach. Let’s see. Turn the page.



Kerra: I was right. He has his bathing suit.

Ms. Hugo: He does. What else might he pack for his trip? Remember what we saw on the title page?

Kerra: A blanket.

Ms. Hugo: Oh, you think we'll see him packing a blanket on the next page? Does anyone think we'll see him packing something else?

Students: (silent)

Ms. Hugo: Well, let's look and see.

Brian: He's got a shovel and a pail.

Ms. Hugo: Yes, he's packing his pail and shovel but what did he pack before he packed the pail and shovel?

Brian: A blanket.

Kerra: I was right. He's got a blanket.

Ms. Hugo: It looks too short to be a blanket. What else could it be?



Kerra: Maybe it's a towel.

Ms. Hugo: It DOES look more like a towel—so he can dry himself off after he swims, hmmm? Zephyr, do you think the boy will pack anything else?

Zephyr: (Shrugs his shoulders)

Ms. Hugo: I'm trying to think too. I'm not sure what else he might need—so let's see. Turn the page.

Kerra: He has a float.

Ms. Hugo: Right, he's taking a float. (Laughing, she says) I think that might be kind of hard to pack in his suitcase, don't you?

Zephyr: Yeah, he'll have to let the air out first.

Ms. Hugo: I think you're right, Zephyr. Look at the page before he packed the float. What is happening there? Brian?

Brian: He's thinking.





Ms. Hugo: Yes, it's like the first page. (Showing the students the first page, the teacher asks) What did the speech bubble say there? Kerra?

Kerra: What should I take to the beach?

Ms. Hugo: Right. Do you think that's what he is asking himself again?

Students: (Nodding)

Ms. Hugo: Alright, where are we in this story? Are we at the beginning, middle or end? Zephyr?

Zephyr: The end?

Ms. Hugo: Yes, I think you might be right. We only have one page left. What do you think we'll find out on the last page?

Students: (Silent)

Ms. Hugo: (Showing the students the cover, the teacher says) Do you think we'll find out if he went to the beach?

Kerra: I think he did go to the beach because he brought a float.

Ms. Hugo: What do others think? Brian? Zephyr?

Zephyr: Me too.

Ms. Hugo: Oh, you're thinking the beach too? Brian, where do you think he is going?

Brian: (Nodding) I think the beach too.

Ms. Hugo: Why do you say the beach?

Brian: Because he has his float and suit.

Ms. Hugo: Okay, turn the page. Let's see what happens at the end of this story.

Kerra: I was right. He went to the beach.

Zephyr: That's what I said.

Brian: Me too.

Ms. Hugo: We were ALL right. We used the pictures to help us find out where the character in our story was going, didn't we?

Students: (Nodding)

Ms. Hugo: Did you like this story?

Students: (Nodding)

Ms. Hugo: What did you like about it?

Kerra: I liked that he went to the beach.





Ms. Hugo: Yes, it looks like he's having fun at the beach. Look at that page. The word beach—/b/ beach—what does “beach” start with? Zephyr?

Zephyr: (Thinking)

Ms. Hugo: Use your yellow card to help you. (Each student has their own sound card which they use to help them

match sounds to letters whether they are reading or writing—see DMA's *Text Feature Cards*.) The word “beach” starts like what picture on the card?

Zephyr: “Boy?”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, exactly—what letter is that?

Zephyr: “B.”

Ms. Hugo: Right. Point to the word on the page that starts with “b.”

Zephyr: (Pointing to “beach”)

Ms. Hugo: What's that word, Zephyr?

Zephyr: “Beach.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, it's the beach. Looking at the picture and the first letter helps you read the word. Zephyr, look at the first word. That's one of your sight words. What word is that?

Zephyr: “The.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, it's the word “The.” Now read that page, Zephyr. Use your finger.

Zephyr: “The beach.”

Ms. Hugo: Everyone read that.

Students: (Repeating after the teacher)

Ms. Hugo: Was there another part you liked besides the ending?

Kerra: I liked when he brought the float.

Ms. Hugo: Oh that was funny! We thought it was going to be hard to pack a float, didn't we? Turn to the page with the float on it. /F/, /f/, float. What letter does float start with Kerra? Use your card—/f/, /f/, float.

Kerra: “F.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, like what picture on your card?

Kerra: “Fish.”

Ms. Hugo: Good. Float starts with an “f” like fish. Point to the word “float.” (Looking to make sure everyone is pointing, the teacher says) Look at the word before float. It's one of your sight words. What is that word?

Kerra: “My.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, it's the word “My.” Now with your finger read that page.

Kerra: “My float.”

Ms. Hugo: Nice job. Everyone use your finger and read.

Students: “My float.”

Ms. Hugo: Great. Brian, what about you? I think I know what part you liked.

Brian: The bucket.

Ms. Hugo: That's what I was thinking you would say. Everyone turn to that page. Brian, what would the word “bucket” start with?

Brian: “B.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, like what picture on your card.

Brian: “Boy.”

Ms. Hugo: Yes, and like your name /b/, /b/—Brian. But look at the words under the picture. Do any of the words start with a “b?”

Brian: (Shaking his head) There's “My.”

Ms. Hugo: Oh, good. That is the word “My.” My what? The next word can't be the word “bucket”—it doesn't start with a “b” does it?

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Brian: (Smiling) “My pail and shovel.”

Ms. Hugo: Right. How did you know the next word was “pail”?

Brian: It started with a “p.”

Ms. Hugo: Right, like what picture on the card?

Brian: “Pencil.”

Ms. Hugo: Perfect. Use your finger and read for us, will you Brian?

Brian: “My pail and shovel.”

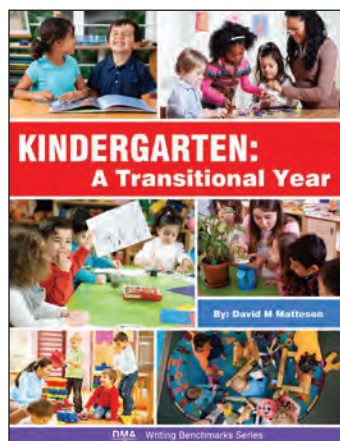
Ms. Hugo: Now everyone read that. (The teacher takes Brian’s hand and helps him point to the words because she noticed his word matching was off.)

Students: (Repeating Brian)

Ms. Hugo: Okay, let’s go back to the beginning and read the story all the way through, this time without stopping.

The teacher in this teaching scenario understands that most kindergarten students at this time of the year don’t need the structured text of a level 3. This teacher feels though, that if these three students are to progress in their reading, they need *more* support and *less* challenge. That’s what the level 3 text offers beginning or struggling readers. For the students in this group, the *more* support was the simple pictures. The *less* challenge was the controlled text. The only other way to have a text that has both a lot of support and less challenge is to have students create their own books. This is what the teacher is doing with all of her students in their writing. After students are done drafting a personal story in

their writing journal, the teacher publishes it in a little book. (see DMA’s *Kindergarten: A Transitional Year*) For these three students, the teacher will make sure that each book they publish will have simple detailed illustrations and simple text that supports the illustrations.



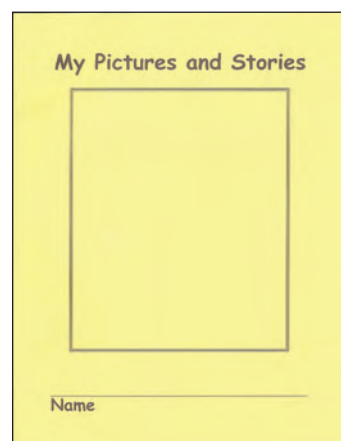
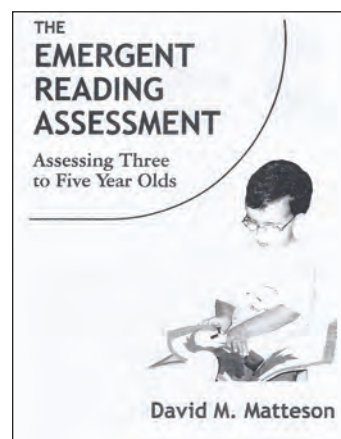
CONCLUSION

Above the Line (ATL) Leveled Reading Series is an instructional tool for use in prekindergarten and kindergarten that can help teachers meet the standards for many different literacy initiatives in developmentally appropriate ways. For example, in prekindergarten, **ATL Leveled Reading Series** can help teachers with many of the objectives for Teaching Strategies GOLD, especially in the areas of (1) Uses language to express thoughts and needs, (2) Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills, (3) Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses and (4) Comprehends and responds to books and other text. In kindergarten, **ATL Leveled Reading Series** can help teachers meet many of the Common Core State Standards, such as the kindergarten literature standards, speaking and listening standards, and language standards.

As a way to assess the success of **ATL Leveled Reading Series** with students, it is recommended that teachers use *The Emergent Reading Assessment (ERA)*. *The ERA* was designed to capture what 3-5 year old children know about reading and provide insights for classroom instruction.

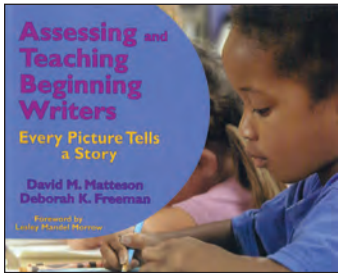
This developmental reading assessment package is easy-to-use and helps teachers measure book-handling skills (print concepts), story concepts, and jumpstart reading instruction appropriate for this age group. *The ERA* is an excellent precursor to many commercial reading programs and assessment protocols.

In order to develop a more comprehensive emergent literacy program, *My Pictures and Stories (The Yellow Book)* is a writing journal that, like the **ATL Leveled Reading Series**,



reinforces foundational literacy skills. Both the **ATL Leveled Reading Series** and *The Yellow Book* support the development of language skills but instead of telling stories through visually attending to details within pictures, *The Yellow Book* supports the telling of personal stories through the drawing of detailed pictures. It's the drawing of detailed pictures that develops a student's fine motor control, another important foundational literacy skill.

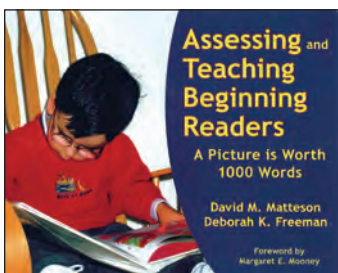
To find out more information about developmentally appropriate literacy activities and teaching in primary classrooms, read *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story* (Matteson and Freeman, 2005).



This book contains detailed teaching episodes that outline a more formal structure to developing picture/story detail and oral language. *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers* supplies teachers with a formal

continuum that supports teachers in the assessing and teaching of young children. In doing so, the book also supports teachers in developing teaching objectives as well as organizing the assessment information for use with parents, colleagues, and school administrators.

Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers: A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words (Matteson and Freeman, 2006) is a companion book that looks at the role of picture/story detail and oral language in early experiences with



reading. *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers* helps give a balanced picture to literacy, and like *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers*, gives teachers a structure for assessing and teaching.

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