**What is a “Just Right” Level Anyway?**

Lots of parents have concerns about levels, and rightfully so. We want our children challenged and reading at a level that will allow him or her to make maximum growth.

**Here's what teachers are looking for when they determine your child's "just right" level:**

•Can the child read the text fluently with 96% or greater accuracy? (quantitative measure of fluency)

•Does the child's reading sound like fluent reading? (qualitative measure of fluency)

•Does the child's retell provide evidence of true understanding of the text: It's clear, sequential, important details are included, no extraneous information is added, character's names are included in the retell when appropriate, some understanding of character motivation or feelings is evident, child identifies the main idea (nonfiction) or problem (fiction).

•The child is able to answer some basic comprehension questions that are both literal and inferential.

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As you can see, a lot goes into determining a child's just right level. Many children seem like they are able to read at much higher levels than they truly comprehend, but often, that's a result of strong fluent reading. In order to master the complex thinking needed in the higher levels of text, students need to master literal and inferential understanding of texts at levels they can read fluently with basic comprehension.

**Here are some questions that can help support your child with retell and comprehension that use the language of the classroom to help your child transfer the learning they are doing at school to home reading:**

•What theories are you growing about your character?

•Are you walking in your character's footsteps?

•How has your character changed from the beginning to the end of the book? From one book in the series to another?

•For younger readers: Are you noticing the pattern the book follows? (Think: Brown Bear, Brown Bear)

•For nonfiction: What are the boxes (main idea) and bullets (details) of your book/part you're reading?

•How is the setting of the story affecting the way the characters act or the decisions they make?

A final word on fluency: Some experts are actually suggesting that a child should be reading with 99%-98% fluency for it to be considered their "independent" level. As adults, if we are reading text with 95% accuracy, we would be missing about 18 words per page! When was the last time to read something and understood it clearly while missing that many words per page? As you can see, that number, while high, really does impact a child's ability to comprehend text.

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Lastly, on behalf of all the teachers and staff at Washam, we thank you for all your hard work at home to support the work we are doing. We recognize you juggle a lot: crazy schedules, making dinner, working and making time for reading along with other homework. We appreciate your efforts as parents to send us kids who are well-behaved, well-fed, well-rested, and ready to learn!