**Fountas and Pinnell Continuum**

With the implementation of the Balanced Literacy in our classrooms, we have also made the switch from leveling our classroom libraries using Accelerated Reader levels to using the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system. Please understand there is **NO** correlation between Accelerated Reader and Fountas and Pinnell levels. Accelerated Reader levels are based upon words that students at a specific grade level would understand. The Fountas and Pinnell leveling system takes a great deal more of the information about the text under consideration when assigning a level.

When assigning a level to a piece of text using Fountas and Pinnell, the genre, the text structure, content, theme, literary features, sentence complexity and vocabulary are all considered. At each level the text becomes more challenging. The content of the text requires an increased amount of background knowledge of vocabulary and concepts. The themes and ideas grow more mature, requiring the reader to consider perspectives and understand cultures beyond their own. This knowledge growth at each level is built upon what the reader learned at the previous level.

I have included some more specific information about several of the Fountas and Pinnell bands, which are several levels that tend to be grouped together. Also included are several questions that can be posed of any text in that band.

**Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Bands**

**K, L, M**

* While a character’s feelings may change, their traits remain consistent and related to the central problem and/or the solution
* Settings are familiar
* Narrative in structure including chapters with multiple episodes related to a single plot
* Universal themes illustrating important human issues and attributes (friendship, courage, challenges)
* Some complex and memorable characters

Characters can be described by what they thought, by what they did, or by what other characters think about them.

How have you come to understand a character in this story?

Characters make choices in stories. Think about the choices your character has made so far.

**N,O,P,Q**

* Multiple causes and layers of the main problem
* Main character is complicated, ambivalent
* Main character tends to change traits as well as feelings
* Figurative language
* Tricky passages (not just words)

Characters are complicated. They can have many different sides. We need to keep up with this and ask why.

Characters change from beginning to end. Can we find ways we see them changing and think about why they are becoming different?

There are lots of problems, we as readers have to keep up with how our characters deal with them.

Writers don’t always tell us about our character’s personality or feelings. Other times, the author shows us through our character’s actions and words.

**R,S,T**

* Characters’ feelings, traits and changes are implicit
* Characters are often multidimensional (not all good or all bad)
* Motives and values are complex
* Plots unfold gradually, over many chapters
* Minor characters are often important to main plot
* Subordinate plots could become more important
* Setting tends to be important, influencing characters and plot
* Setting is symbolic and undergoes changes
* Confusing parts are often purposeful and must be carried through the text for further clarification

Settings affect the story. It gives it a mood or tone. We as readers can figure out what parts of the story we see this happening.

Minor characters are important. We need to pay attention to them and how they fit in our story and with others.

Characters are like real people. They can be more than one way, depending on what’s happening around them. Can we find places where we see this is true and think why?

**U,V,W,X,Y, Z**

* Characters are unreliable, changing radically across the book
* Many things are symbolic, and are not often repeated
* Problems are resolved and then new ones arise
* The overarching issue takes time to reveal itself
* Often characters and their actions change entire communities and the story makes a statement about the major social issues

In our books, there are often things we don’t understand…yet. What are those things (actions, people, feelings, etc.) in your book?

When we find those things in our books, we turn our minds on HIGH as we try to figure out what they could mean.

Little things (actions, words, etc.) often are more than what they first seem. Are there little actions you’ve realized were important? What are they and how did they affect how the story is going?

Characters in our books are not always what they seem at first. Do you see any of these characters?