In the *emergent* stage of reading development, the student will display many of the following behaviors.

Emergent Readers:

❧ understand print carries a message

❧ display directional movement:

- −*left* to *right*
- −*top* to *bottom*
- −return sweep

❧ match voice to print with one-to-one word matching by finger pointing

❧ locate some known words and unknown words

❧ use picture clues

❧ recognize difference between a *letter* and a *word*

❧ may invent text

❧ begin to use pattern and repetition of text to read

❧ use oral language/story structure to make a connection to print

❧ use some letter sounds (beginning/ending)

❧ begin to use known, high-frequency words to monitor reading

Sample Characteristics of Books
at the **Emergent** Level

I go to school
on a bike.

Early in the emergent stage

- consistent placement of print on each page
- illustrations provide high support
- natural language structure
- familiar experiences

- some known high-frequency words
- one/two lines of print (L to R with return sweep)
- predictable, repetitive sentence pattern with one/two word changes

"Woof," barked Sammy.

Sammy saw a horse but the horse didn't see Sammy.
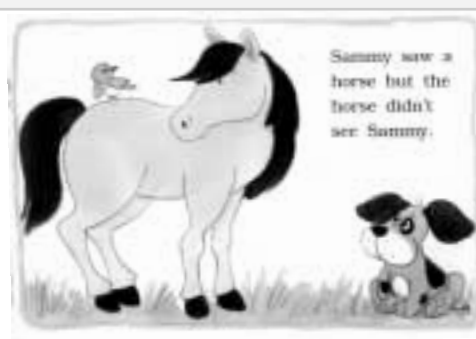
Later in the emergent stage

- some punctuation conventions
- illustrations provide high support
- repeated sentence pattern every few pages
- print in various positions on page

- varied sentence patterns
- multiple lines of print
- familiar objects and experiences
- simple story line

Matching Readers with Books

During each guided reading session, you will spend time introducing the students to the story ideas, linking the text to their personal experiences, and helping them talk and think about the book. The students then read the selection on their own. If there is a good match between the reader and the book, students will be able to read and understand most of the text. They may meet some unknown words, but will be able to problem-solve many of them using a variety of strategies, thereby building confidence and competency as readers.

Clearly, the importance of selecting texts matched to the needs of readers in guided reading groups cannot be overstated. Ongoing assessment—from informal anecdotal notes to more formalized running records—allows teachers to be aware of each student's abilities and needs as a reader. With this knowledge, you can choose books that have appropriate supports and challenges for readers at each stage of their development. Of course, this expertise—being able to match readers with books—takes time to develop. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to acquaint yourself with the books in your classroom library and in the school bookroom. Develop a system for organizing books by levels or stages, so you can easily reach for an appropriate book for a specific reader.

The bookrooms at Centre Ridge and Halley are centrally located and serve as a place to house sets of guided reading books for school-wide use. Books are color-coded and organized by literacy stages.

Always keep in mind the readers, and ask yourself, "What is this book about? What will make it easy? What will make it challenging?" By selecting appropriately, you provide the support for further reading learning to occur. Students will have the opportunity to practice and build on the skills and strategies they know.

Take a look, below, at some specific features to consider in book selection. The importance of these depends on the literacy stage of your students. A reproducible checklist for book selection can be found in the Appendix.

Features to Consider for Book Selection

🗫 Concepts in the Book
- Can students relate to concepts or experiences in the text?
- What background knowledge is necessary to understand the text?
- Do events in the story follow a sequential and/or predictable pattern?
- Are students able to understand this type of literary genre?

🗫 Illustrations
- Do they provide high, moderate, or low support?
- Where are they located on the page?
- Are they clear or do they need interpretation?

🗫 Language/Structure
- Is the text structure repetitive, familiar, or natural to spoken language?
- Are there high-frequency words that can serve as anchors for emergent readers?
- Is there difficult or technical vocabulary that might present a problem?

🗫 Text Features/Layout
- How many lines of print on a page?
- Is there clear spacing between words?
- Is the size and placement of the print supportive to the reader?
- Are there unusual print fonts that are distracting or confusing?
- Is the text length appropriate for the reader?
- Are there any unusual text formats—such as diagrams, charts, or maps—that require explanation?

Our next chapter will describe ways to manage guided reading in the classroom, including scheduling, grouping, and using literacy centers.