

## Lucy Calkins Classroom Libraries Video Interview Transcript

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**Question:** *How were the books in the primary grades Libraries selected?*

**Lucy Calkins:** I'm really excited to talk to you about the primary grades libraries because they are a little bit different than the grades 3-8 libraries. What you need to know about the grades K-2 libraries is that when we sent out the requests to everybody, saying "send us your book recommendations," we didn't tend to get a lot of people saying my favorite book is *Vegetables*, this Level B book or *The Zoo*, this Level A book. Instead, at the primary level, a lot of the recommendations that we got were for publishers, not for particular titles. And if you think about it, at the primary level, these little books don't have websites written about them. You don't have Newbery awards being given to this marvelous Level C book. It's an entirely different kind of landscape and world out there.

So what we really set out to do was to understand the publishers. It was interesting because teachers from different parts of the world would recommend different publishers, so we came to realize that in terms of building little collections of leveled libraries, that people in California have these three or four publishers that they tend to go to and people in Edmonton, Canada have these three or four publishers they go to. And then people in Charlotte have these three or four. So for us, it was a really big privilege to be able to kind of get to know about 30 or 35 publishers of leveled books. We got to know those publishers well enough that we were able to feel comfortable knowing where to go for shared reading books, or nonfiction books that have a lot of text features even at the Level D, E, F.

So we studied the publishers, figured out what each of them seemed to us to be best at. Then we developed libraries for kindergarten, first-grade and second-grade readers where there are enough books at those levels so that the kids could really read up a storm. You know, if you're a first grade reader, you're going to be reading 10 of those little books in a day. The volume of books that those classrooms need is considerable, and it's really important that they are getting those books from a variety of publishers. Oftentimes classrooms will just get books from two or three publishers and actually, when they do that, they're getting books sometimes from just a few authors, because a lot of publishers that have the little leveled books have just a couple main authors, and they have just a couple formats. The kids need a variety of books. We're proud of the way in which our primary libraries have lots and lots of leveled books from lots and lots of publishers.

Additionally, it was really important to the curators that even though the books are from all these different publishers, they're leveled with a lot of precision. We wanted to make sure that if kids are reading a Level D book it's not a "Lee & Low" D versus a "Rigby" D. Or, this is a D that's been leveled by Fountas & Pinnell versus this is a D that's been leveled by somebody totally different. We wanted to make sure that we

had a really consistent and tight leveling system. Of course the Fountas & Pinnell has leveled the books, and so if it was leveled by Fountas & Pinnell, we left it as an F&P Level. For some of the other books, though, we needed to double-check the levels and make some adjustments. We brought in a person who has been a senior leader of reading recovery for many years to thoroughly double-check every single level of the K-2 libraries to make sure that you can rely on the levels presented. Of course, we also wanted to have marvelous read-aloud books and to make sure that we had the series books. It's important for first and second graders to be able to look across books and think about characters and do some compare and contrast work. For that, they needed the really rich series books. So we were excited to find those and select what we think are the very best of those books.

**Molly Picardi:** For each individual book we (the primary grades curators) would gather in a room full of literacy experts, staff developers and teachers and we would look through each individual book and asked ourselves, is this a book that's going to make kids want to like pull out of a box and read it over and over again and practice certain skills and learn from the story? And, is it a book that's going to support the work that they need to do to gain those vital early reading skills?

Another thing that we thought about when we developed the K-2 classroom libraries is if you think back to your own reading experiences, most avid readers will find that there was a series of books that really impacted them. Those are the books that they read through book after book after book, learning more about characters and setting with each re-read. For some people it was Harry Potter, for some people maybe Magic Treehouse or Frog and Toad. We know that to be avid readers, kids need to find those series books that they really love. So we polled experts around the country and around the world, and we asked them “what are your favorite series books in your classroom? What are the books that are constantly being taken off your shelves?” We got some really great answers—we found some old classics like the Frog and Toad series, the My Father's Dragon series, but we also found some really brilliant new series are out there that people not might know about yet. Books like Bunjitsu Bunny, books like Captain Awesome, and EllRay Jakes—those are books that are going to be flying off your shelves as students discover them.

For each series we included just a small sampling of that series, usually just the first three or four books. That ensures that after getting hooked on the beginning of a series, kids go out and they seek out more of that series or more of related series. If a student reads the first two Judy Moody books, she's going to be running to the library to get more of that series as well as to seek out the related series like Stink and Judy Moody and Friends.

Another thing that was really important to us in this curation process is asking ourselves what are readers doing before they become those avid-series readers? So we polled our publishers to find a few little leveled series books that aren't episodic chapter books. These were for students who are not yet reading chapter books, as these books have just a few lines of print on a page. In these books, though, students

can learn to follow a character through multiple episodes. For example, the Quack series from Pioneer Valley, or the Mouse series from Candlewick brand new readers. In these books kids learn to love characters and think about how a character changes over time and what kinds of things they do. This sets kids up to be series readers as they progress.

We also thought about collecting, about creating sets of books that would help a student learn and do some deep thinking about a nonfiction topic. So a student who is interested in insects or in spiders might choose one book on a low level about spiders in general, which might then lead him to another book about specific types of spiders like tarantulas or perhaps a book about spider habitats or other insects. Within each library there are ways to read across a specific nonfiction topic so that readers can think about all the different things they're learning and start to synthesize information across text.

*To learn more about the TCRWP Classroom Libraries, browse representative titles, and order shelves, visit [calkinslibraries.com](http://calkinslibraries.com)*