

**Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Reading Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2015-2016
Overview of the Year for Kindergarten Readers**



Overview of the Year for Kindergarten Readers

September	Unit One – We Are Readers
October/November	Unit Two – Emergent Reading: Looking Closely at Familiar Texts
November/December	Unit Three – Super Powers: Reading with Print Strategies and Sight Word Power
January/February	Unit Four – Bigger Books, Bigger Reading Muscles
February/March	Unit Five – Growing Expertise in Little Books: Reading for Information
April/May	Unit Six – Becoming Avid Readers
May/June	Unit Seven – Readers Get to Know Characters by Performing Their Books

We are very pleased to share the 2015-2016 Kindergarten Reading Curricular Calendar. Those of you who receive new calendars every year will notice right away that this has similarities to last year’s calendar. But look more closely and you will see differences. The write ups are simpler and more practical, there is less rhetorical flourish (and less talk about reading in general), and the components of balanced literacy continue to play a more central role.

You will notice that this year, as last, we suggest a first priority assessment or two for each unit of study as well as ways to conduct formative assessments throughout the unit. In some units, we suggest additional assessments that you may administer to more specifically assess particular skills—if *you have the time*. We are aware how much there is to assess in kindergarten, and that it is often hard to decide what to assess when. You will notice, too, that we kept some of the units as many as six weeks long, so that your assessments don’t take away from your teaching time. You may decide to structure your units in other ways. Always, our intent is that teachers adapt this curriculum in ways that

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benefit their particular students. Knowing your students' strengths and needs will position you to make a better matched instructional plan.

You will see that many of the kindergarten units of study position students to read across genres—reading both fiction and nonfiction. For example, *We Are Readers*, *Super Powers*, *Bigger Books*, *Bigger Reading Muscles*, and *Avid Readers*, contain fiction and nonfiction components. Unit 5 is a reading for information unit. We understand that while some of your libraries can support an entire nonfiction unit, others cannot, and therefore have designed the unit so that children can do the work of it while reading books of any kind. Meanwhile, the emphasis for this unit will still be in reading for information, regardless of the genre. If you have enough nonfiction books to support this unit, please do so!

The curriculum and the expected benchmark levels are of course aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The TCRWP's Benchmark Levels chart aligns to the CCSS and is on our website: www.readingandwritingproject.org. This chart has been developed based on data that we have collected over many years. We have data from hundreds of thousands of students showing what level children who ended up getting a 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the high stakes test in third grade were reading at various points during the kindergarten year, and that, plus the CCSS and research on reading all contributed to our benchmarks. Obviously, it is up to your district whether you wish to accept the benchmarks we recommend as yours—some argue they are too high, but we disagree.

Once again, we included the expected reading benchmarks at the top of each unit, whether or not this is a month when those of you who use our web-based assessment system, Assessment Pro, can enter the benchmarks into the software. We've done this to give you a rough sense of how children will ideally progress across the entire year so that this can help you pace your students, but we are fully aware that children grow in spurts and plateaus. Our benchmarks represent just a suggested path and will not hold true for all children.

We've written this curricular plan imagining that your classroom contains a wide array of readers, as kindergarten classrooms most certainly do. We also assume your children will enter at various stages of reading. Some may know how to read leveled books while others will know many letter names and sounds. And then some will only know a few letter names. The calendar is designed with an eye toward helping your readers progress so that by the end of the year, they'll be in the proximity of Levels D, E, or higher. If the majority of your readers enter kindergarten reading books like *Father Bear Goes Fishing* (D), you'll probably want to look at the first-grade curricular calendar for the way each of the units described here looks when it supports readers who are working at those levels.

Reading instruction happens moment-to-moment in the classroom as teachers establish the conditions under which children learn to read and to write, assess what children can do, and then teach children to take one step and then subsequent steps forward as readers.

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Starting in kindergarten and continuing through higher education, teaching is always responsive; it is always assessment-based. But this doesn't mean that you need not imagine beforehand how your children's reading work will probably evolve across the year.

This curricular calendar was written with input from teachers, literacy coaches, staff developers, and reading experts. We are under no illusion, however, that there is something sacred about this suggested path. We know that there are hundreds of ways a teacher could plan a curriculum calendar for the upcoming year and we expect that each of you will work with grade level colleagues to determine your school's own curricular calendar for your kindergarteners. We hope that you can produce a written document representing your own curricular calendar—that you write your own descriptions of units that are different from our own, or bring units from last year's calendar or from a professional text on teaching reading. Above all, we strongly recommend that you and your colleagues agree upon a shared journey, one in which you support one another along the way.

Workshop Structures

You will begin your workshop with a minilesson (usually “on the rug”) that is not more than ten minutes long. You will teach a single strategy during each minilesson. For example, you might teach your children that it is important to try their best to figure out what the words in their books are saying or that there are ways to problem-solve when they come to tricky words, and to use the beginning letter sound(s) and consider what would make sense based on what is happening in the story. Because the goal is for readers to accrue a repertoire of strategies they will draw upon over and over, it helps to create and post a chart of abbreviated teaching points so that readers can review what they have learned from prior minilessons. You can then bring these anchor charts from one unit of study into subsequent ones. Always, it is essential that you make these charts fresh each year within the presence of new learners.

The most important part of a reading workshop is the actual reading time. Children disperse from the minilesson, and go to their tables or to a special spot in the room to read. At the start of the year, kindergarten children read out of tubs that are usually placed at the center of a table or a rug. When kindergartners are assessed and assigned to long term partners, they are given individual or partner bins, which hold several baggies, each of which holds a different kind of book. One baggie will hold books that match the big book or the enlarged poem that a child has been reading with the class during shared reading. Another will hold a storybook that the child has heard read aloud over and over—so many times that the child can “read” the book even without being able to read the words. Yet another baggie will hold an assortment of any other books the child is reading—some nonfiction books, some alphabet books, some picture books. In general, children should have about ten to twelve texts to read.

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Later in the year, or whenever kids are ready to read conventionally, they'll have books to read at their just-right level, as well as some texts that they have read in a guided reading or a shared reading session that may be above their just-right book level.

While children read, you will work with small groups, partners, and individuals. You will probably have raised eyebrows at the notion that children read for long stretches. The first thing to know is that those stretches grow longer over time. The second thing is that while children are learning to read, they approximate reading during this time—they look at books, they pretend to read, they sing their way through familiar books. Finally, once the year is underway, you will put students into partnerships, after which point reading time will be divided between “private reading time” and “partner reading time.” Children will have time to “read” alone as well as time to sit hip-to-hip with a partner, one copy of a book between them, reading aloud or approximating their reading, in unison or taking turns. You'll also convene in small groups within the reading workshop. The workshop ends with a share which may or may not involve convening children on the rug again.

Independent reading time will grow as children's skills grow. By February, reading workshops last forty-five to fifty minutes, with at least thirty minutes of this time for readers to actually read, alone or with a partner.

Usually at the start of a week, when kids have a new bin full of books, they read first with a partner and then alone. That is, whenever kids read new texts, social support should come first. It is especially important that as kids move up levels, they read new and hard books with a partner initially, and then practice those on their own. When children read by themselves, they can use Post-its for places they are eager to talk about: funny parts, important pages, parts where they grew a big idea or learned something surprising. Later, they can share those parts with partners. Across the year, you will want to vary their configurations so children sometimes meet with just one partner, and sometimes meet in clubs consisting of foursomes. Usually, children will select about ten to twelve leveled texts to read each week, which they will reread over and over throughout the week, before getting an entirely new stack the next week.

Teaching reading has a lot to do with getting youngsters ready to move up a level and then providing the scaffolding so they can do this with success. During the transition from one level to the next, a student's bin of books will be a “transitional one,” that is, the bin will include titles at the child's just-right level as well as a handful of books at the next one. The latter can come from books you've shared with the child through a book introduction, or during guided reading, or it might include titles that the child has read with his or her partner. The idea is to scaffold readers as they move into a new level.

As children read, you'll lead small groups and confer with individuals. You'll also sometimes just give book introductions—especially to help children who are relatively new to a level. Your conferences in reading may follow the research-compliment-teach structure

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of many writing conferences. Otherwise, they'll consist of you coaching into children's reading. Reading recovery teachers are expert at the latter, so learn from them!

Your small groups will not all be the same. In some small groups, you'll conduct shared reading. In others, you'll help readers retell. Some small groups may need support moving to the next level with book introductions, in which case you may do guided reading with them. Your small groups need to be flexible, need-based, and quick, lasting no more than ten minutes a group.

Additional Components of Balanced Literacy

A full balanced reading program includes not only a reading workshop, but also a variety of other structures. Some of the most important for early elementary school-aged children are reading aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, phonics (also referred to as word study), and writing workshop.

You'll want to read aloud every day. At least a few times a week, you'll support conversations about the read-aloud book. You will also need to lead a writing workshop, and this, like the reading workshop, will last approximately an hour a day. Kindergarten children have a lot to learn about spelling and phonics, and so it will be important for you to lead word study time every day. In addition, you'll draw on the other components of balanced literacy: shared reading and interactive writing are crucial throughout the primary grades but exponentially more important in kindergarten than anywhere else. Sometimes, the components of balanced literacy will be woven into your social studies, science work, or morning meetings and they will include additional small-group work, shared reading, and interactive writing.

Reading Aloud

We cannot stress enough the importance of reading aloud. You will read aloud to teach children discipline-based concepts that are integral to social studies and science, to create a sense of community, and to foster a love of reading. You'll also read aloud to teach children vocabulary and higher-level comprehension skills, which are integral to their growth.

Be sure that many of your read aloud sessions include opportunities for accountable talk. To do this, plan the read-aloud to demonstrate a skill or a collection of skills. For example, you may decide to help your children know that when reading, the pages in a book go together. After reading a bit, pause to think about what might come next. Suggest some outlandish thing and then self-correct saying, "No! It can't be *that*!! The pages need to go together. Hmm... Let me reread and then think what *might* come next..." This time, the children might chime in with ideas for what might come next in the story, or you might pause and say, "Turn and tell your partner what you think might come next."

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To use the read-aloud text as a forum for teaching reading skills, many teachers plan for the read-aloud by placing Post-its in the text ahead of time, marking places where they'll either think aloud to model a reading strategy or where they'll ask students to do similar work by turning to talk to a partner about their ideas. After you prompt children to do a bit of thinking aloud with a partner, you'll read on, not wanting to lose the thread of the text.

After pausing several times, either to demonstrate or to provide children with guided practice, and after reading the chapter or the section of the text, you might engage in a whole-class conversation. During these longer conversations, which will happen at least twice a week, it is important for children to direct their comments to each other. That is, rather than posing questions, calling on one child and then another to respond, instead, pose a question to the entire class—and then set children up to respond to it with one another. You might throw out prompts such as “I want to add on to what you said. . .” or “Another example of that is. . .” or “But I’m not sure you’re right because. . .” to keep children engaged in a back and forth dialogue.

You may wonder about the read-aloud partnerships, asking, “Do the same partnerships support both independent reading partnerships [these are ability matched, as partners read the same books] and reading aloud?” This is a question you will need to answer. It is organizationally easier for children to maintain the same partnerships across both independent reading and read-aloud, but it is educationally preferable for read-aloud partnerships to be different, so these relationships need not be ability-based. In fact, you might call one partner “Partner A” and the other “Partner B” and quietly group students so that the A partners are the stronger readers and talkers. Then, when you set children up to do challenging work, you can say, “Partner A, will you tell Partner B . . .,” and if the task is one that you believe is perfect for Partner B, you can channel the work that way.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is the time in the day when teachers and children read in sync with one another, eyes on the same text. Usually shared reading revolves around big books, songs, or enlarged texts written on chart paper, with the teacher pointing under words as the class reads in sync. A classroom community spends some time rereading familiar texts and also some time, usually less, working together with a new text. With each unit, we have included a template on planning shared reading across the units of study. Unit one begins with a week-long plan of teaching early reading skills with *Mrs. Wishy-Washy* by Joy Cowley.

In many classrooms, with a large number of students learning their concepts about print, many teachers begin the year with daily shared reading time (often doing this at least twice a day) for about ten to fifteen minutes. They use shared reading to work on concepts about print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and to practice the print strategies that they've determined many of their students still need to internalize and to use on the run as

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they read. Additionally, the act of gathering all students around a text in the beginning of the year helps build community and inspires enthusiasm for reading.

Word Study

As a school, you will need to decide upon an approach to phonics. The TCRWP does not try to make this decision for a school. Most schools that we work with draw on a combination of *Words Their Way*, *Phonics Lessons*, (the *Firsthand* series by Fountas and Pinnell), *Foundations*, and Pat Cunningham's work, *Month-by-Month Phonics*.

Assess your students' knowledge to determine what features you will focus on. Most kindergarten teachers use the Letter Identification Task, Concepts about Print, and student writing to find out their students' stages of spelling development. Once you have assessed your students, you will want to organize your teaching into whole-class instruction or small-group instruction. You may want to begin with whole-class instruction for the first few months of school as you teach your students routines and concepts they all need to learn. Plan to focus on what most students are ready to learn next. Choose features to work on that most students are confusing. For example, if you notice that many students are confusing ending sounds; you'll want to make that your focus. Once you differentiate your class into three groups for word study, begin by teaching students the routines to several word study activities so that kids can work in partnerships as you are working with one group.

Once you have assessed your students and decided how to organize your instruction, we suggest following Donald Bear's *Words Their Way* and/or Fountas and Pinnell's *Phonics Lessons* as a phonics curriculum. Be sure you spend enough time on studying each feature (ex. beginning sounds, spelling patterns) in a variety of ways. You will want to make sure that you are supporting students' ability to read and write these features both in isolation and in context, and that you are doing plenty of Shared Reading and Interactive Writing to help students understand how letters and words work within the context of reading and writing. Always make sure to provide explicit teaching of phonics as part of your day. In some units, there is an emphasis on word solving. During these units you will want to support children's transfer of their word knowledge into their reading.

Small-Group Instruction

Much of your instruction is based on ongoing assessment of your class. Kindergarten literacy work rests on keeping up-to-the-minute with how your children are progressing. Of all grades, the different levels of students in kindergarten are most varied, and the changes, or sometimes the plateaus, are especially intriguing. Therefore, you'll spend the year looking for key indicators that will guide you as you make crucial decisions for your

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class. Throughout the year, make it a habit to use the writing of your children so you know when to gently nudge each child to the next level of word work.

It is critically important that you lead small-group instruction as often as you can. When you think about small-group work, start with the idea that any teaching you do as a whole class can also be done in a small group. So you can do small-group shared reading, small-group interactive writing, small-group phonics, small-group read-aloud and accountable talk, and so forth. Your small-group work can be used to reteach, or enrich, and can also be used to pre-teach.

Your small-group work will be shaped especially by your assessments. For example, if you have some children whose writing is not readable, who do not yet represent every sound they hear in a word with a letter (correctly or incorrectly), then you will want to begin with extra assessments. Do they know their letters of the alphabet? Their sound-letter connections? How many sight words do they know? Once you've determined the level of work at which these children can be successful, you can look back in these calendars to be reminded of the sort of instruction they will need. You may decide to do some book introductions to level A, B, or C books. You might want to pull a small group and work on one-to-one matching or even bring a group together to practice retelling with a partner.

Assessment and Moving Students up Levels

You will see in Unit One that we suggest using the TCRWP Assessment Tools as soon as possible in September to help you learn about the strengths and needs of the readers and writers in your classroom. You may want to administer the Letter and Sound Identification Assessment individually during your word study time and to give the spelling inventory to the whole class or in small groups at another time during the day. (You can consult Donald Bear's book *Words Their Way: Word Study for Vocabulary and Spelling Instruction* for more information on how to analyze this inventory.) You could administer the Concepts about Print assessment during reading workshop.

The data you collect from these three assessments will help you plan your minilessons in upcoming units of study. For example, if most of your children don't know the difference between a letter and a word, as indicated on the Concepts about Print Assessment, include instructions on this concept in your plans for shared reading, reading workshop, and interactive writing. It's also important to plan for how you'll continue to assess your children throughout the year. Many teachers institute a system for keeping track of children's reading levels and growth (both by individual and by class) and for moving readers along to more challenging texts when they are ready.

Take note of the sight words that your children can read with automaticity. If your children are progressing well, they will be learning words throughout the year. By March, many students reading C or above will have around twenty or more high-frequency words that

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they can read. To help your students learn and use these words throughout the year, you may decide to give each child a keychain full of word cards representing the sight words that the child knows or almost knows, and the child may take time during every reading workshop to flip through these cards, reading each aloud to herself. Children may play “I spy a word that . . .” games with partners involving word wall words, and certainly you may ask each child to take time each day to use the pointer and read aloud all the words on the word wall. (Some teachers try to jazz this up by asking the child to pull directions from a can. One day the directions will say, “Read the sight words in a witch’s voice,” and another day, “Read the sight words like you are a cat—meow each word.” Do whatever you need to do to lure kids to develop automaticity in reading an increasing bank of sight words, and of course, help children use these words as they read.)

You’ll need also to attend to your readers’ developing abilities to comprehend texts deeply. You’ll learn this best by listening closely to book talks, by hearing what children say to their partner, and by listening to children’s retelling of their independent reading books. Although we do not have a scale with which to measure this, the truth is that there is little that is more important. You may want each child to keep a reading portfolio that includes artifacts that represent the child’s growing abilities to comprehend. For example, you might read aloud a short story and, at preset places in the text, ask each child to either turn and talk (as you record his or her responses) or stop and jot (or sketch) in response to the prompt, “What do you think will happen next?” or “How does the character feel and why?” You could date the child’s responses and keep them, plus the text, from September and from several subsequent months, perhaps also including a rubric that analyzes what that child does and does not do when asked to predict. Or you may ask students to stop and jot during a read-aloud and then collect and analyze these responses. Similar records could be kept for any other comprehension skill, and we strongly suggest you select a few skills and make a point of keeping this sort of record. There is a rule of thumb that says, “We inspect what we respect.”

In order to assess individual student reading progress, we have developed and field-tested newly Revised TCRWP Running Records Assessments. Based on feedback, we have made critically important revisions to last year’s tool and to the assessments— they are comparable to last year’s assessment and do not invalidate any ability to think between prior data and new data. We have made small but consequential changes in the design of the forms as well as to some book introductions and questions.

There are two new sets of A-K books and accompanying assessments. These books are published by Kaeden publishers. There are two titles at every level, giving opportunities for rechecking a student’s level with a clean text in cases where the outcome of one assessment is unclear. The Kaeden order form can be found on our website following the Resources tab, under Assessments, in the “Supporting Documents” folder. All of our former running records assessments are archived on our website as well.

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Assessing Throughout the Year

It's important also to plan for how you'll continue to assess your students throughout the year. Many teachers institute a system for keeping track of children's reading levels and growth (both individual and by class) and for moving readers along to more challenging texts when they are ready. That is, you may decide to devote the reading workshop on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of each month to a consideration of whether children are ready to progress to new levels. In general, your children need to make rapid progress this year, at least moving to a higher level of text every other month (if not more than that), so teachers need to vigilantly watch for and seize opportunities.

You will find that the TCRWP has assessment tools on our website:
www.readingandwritingproject.org.

Following is a table of benchmark reading levels. They are derived from a study of data from AssessmentPro, the online database that allows Project schools to track their reading data, as well as the state and city benchmarks.

The chart is updated and available always at www.readingandwritingproject.org. These levels are comparable to the bands recommended by the CCSS.

SEPTEMBER	NOVEMBER	JANUARY	MARCH	JUNE
<u>Kindergarten</u> Emergent Story Books Shared Reading	<u>Kindergarten</u> Emergent Story Books Shared Reading A/B (with book intro)	<u>Kindergarten</u> B/C (with book intro)	<u>Kindergarten</u> 1=Early Emergent 2=A/B (with book intro) 3=C (with book intro) 4=D/E	<u>Kindergarten</u> 1=B or below 2=C (with book intro) 3=D/E 4=F or above
<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=B or below 2=C 3=D/E 4=F or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=C or below 2=D/E 3=F/G 4=H or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=D or below 2=E/F 3=G/H 4=I or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=E or below 2=F 3=G/H 4=I or above	<u>Grade 1:</u> 1=G or below 2=H 3=I/J/K 4=L or above
<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=F or below 2=G/H 3=I/J/K 4=L or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=G or below 2=H/I 3=J/K/L 4=M or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=H or below 2=I/J 3=K/L 4=M or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=I or below 2=J/K 3=L/M 4=N or above	<u>Grade 2:</u> 1=J or below 2=K/L 3=M 4=N or above

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* The numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 in this table represent the NY ELA test scores that would predictably follow from a student reading at the text level named, at the grade level named. There is no text level that predicts a 4, because a score of 4 generally only allows for one or two errors—and is therefore unpredictable.

Choice Time

Kindergartners need the opportunity to have a regularly scheduled choice time as part of their curriculum. By choice time, we mean the time of the day when children play in centers of their choosing, such as blocks, art, or dramatic play, to name a few. These centers often highlight different modes or styles of learning, and many children gravitate to their area of strength. When children are given the time to play in these different choice time centers (especially those that reflect a child’s area of strength), many important skills are developed. As children dramatize pretend stories—or the stories from their lives—they are developing an understanding of narrative structure. As children build pretend cities and rebuild these to make them look just right, they are working on the important skills of revision and problem solving.

Above all, choice time is a vehicle for language development. As children engage in authentic conversations around their work, they are learning the language of negotiation and planning. Vocabulary development occurs naturally as children talk about the structures they are creating: “Hey, give me that triangle so I can put a roof on this firehouse!” a child might say. Lev Vygotsky, the famous Russian psychologist who studied child development, said that “[i]n play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself.” Choice time opens doors so that all students can innovate, approximate, build stamina, and work with zeal on collaborative projects. These are all qualities that are essential to early literacy development.

Choice time is also a perfect time to observe and to take notes on the work your class is doing. Listen for language, keep the bits of writing generated, step back, and observe how conversations start and how they are sustained. You will learn new things about your children, and these observations will influence your next steps in instruction.

Finding Great Literature to Build and Refresh Our Libraries

Once your students have each been assessed and you’ve matched them to just-right books, you will want to be sure that they know where to get their just-right books in your classroom library. If you have lots of children reading levels B, C, D, for example, then you will need lots of books at those levels. If you have no children reading levels J and K, then there is not a lot of reason to have those books in your library at this time. That is, your library should reflect your readers. Students will need help, especially early in the year, as

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they learn to manage their independent book choices. You should establish a system for checking out and returning books that travel between home and school.

One of the key factors in making any unit of study successful is having a collection of excellent books that can be used as emergent story books, shared reading texts, just-right books, and read-alouds. Through our work with students and educators across the country, we have begun developing lists of books to support particular units of study. On our website you will find many book lists that support our reading units. The book lists will include levels. We use Fountas and Pinnell's levels, if those exist, or Scholastic levels. If neither source exists we note the Lexile level, which you can use to create a level by converting this Lexile level to an approximation of Fountas and Pinnell levels (take those with a grain of salt).

You may want to visit our website at www.readingandwritingproject.org throughout the year for updated information.

As you well know, this is a transformative year for children. They are ready to dive into the reading world and to set and try to reach big goals. It is a year of huge growth and a time for children to meet high expectations as they take on the demands of kindergarten. Enjoy the wonderful work with your energetic readers!