

How to Know When to Move Students Up

So now you're on your way. You've put together your guided reading groups. You made a couple of adjustments from your original plan but are pleased with how the groups are organized and the books they will be reading. Let's review how you got to this point:

- You took notes about books students chose to read on their own.
- Each day you observed one or two students and noted their reading behaviors and interests.
- You asked students to orally read a leveled passage previously evaluated for complexity and
 - kept a running record of correct reading and miscues.
 - asked them to retell the story to determine their understanding.
 - observed their problem solving for unknown words or lack of understanding/sense.
 - kept a record of your observations.
- You placed together students with similar interests and instructional needs.

You will meet with most of your groups several times a week. You might meet with your most fluent readers two or three times a week. Also, you can make different groups for other activities, such as a literature group, a shared-reading group, or a skills group.

As you meet with your groups, you will continue to take notes and keep running records every two or three weeks, or once or twice a quarter for your most fluent readers. After a while, you may observe some students reading a new book on his or her level fluently and smoothly, and doing little or no work at reading. Take a look at running records. If a student is reading with 95 percent or higher accuracy, you need to think about putting the student in a higher level where there will be more challenges.

Observing individual students while they read their guided reading books, as well as the analysis of their running records over time, allows me to make the best decisions about each student's placement in groups.

—Joe Silva, second-grade teacher

At the same time, you may observe students experiencing a lot of difficulty reading the leveled book. This may include stopping often to problem solve, reading word-by-word, asking for help, or being unable to retell what they read. You need to evaluate whether it is just the book or if it is a pattern. Check your notes and past running records. You will need to think about scaffolding this student with additional supports and with more carefully selected, considerate texts or moving the student to a lower level.

As you monitor your guided reading groups, you may find it necessary to move only one or two students at a given time. Some students may move to another group for a few weeks and then back to their original group. The chart below shows the changes made in a first-grade class.

