According to the Fountas and Pinnel system, books are grouped because they have similar levels of difficulty, that is, books at a given level are said to be similar to one another in terms of the readability and scaffolding for the reader. The level of the text becomes harder as the letter of the alphabet increases. This progression is not a strict sequence; rather level designations are only approximations of text difficulty. Within a given level, it is not uncommon for students to have more difficulty with some books and require less support with others.

Readability levels for the Fountas and Pinnell system are such that books leveled from A – C are considered appropriate for typical kindergarten students, with levels D and E as transitional. Levels F – I are appropriate for First grade readers; J- M for second; N – P for 3rd; Q – S for 4th with S – U appropriate for 5th grade continuing on through Z which is said to be appropriate for students in grade 8 and beyond.

Many schools using the Reading leveling system devised by Fountas and Pinnell have begun using R-CBM for Universal screening and Benchmarking. After collecting CBM data a common question is, how does that relate to their "Guided Reading Level?"

The purpose of this report is to provide preliminary information relating the range of CBM scores that is typical within given placements in the Fountas and Pinnel system.

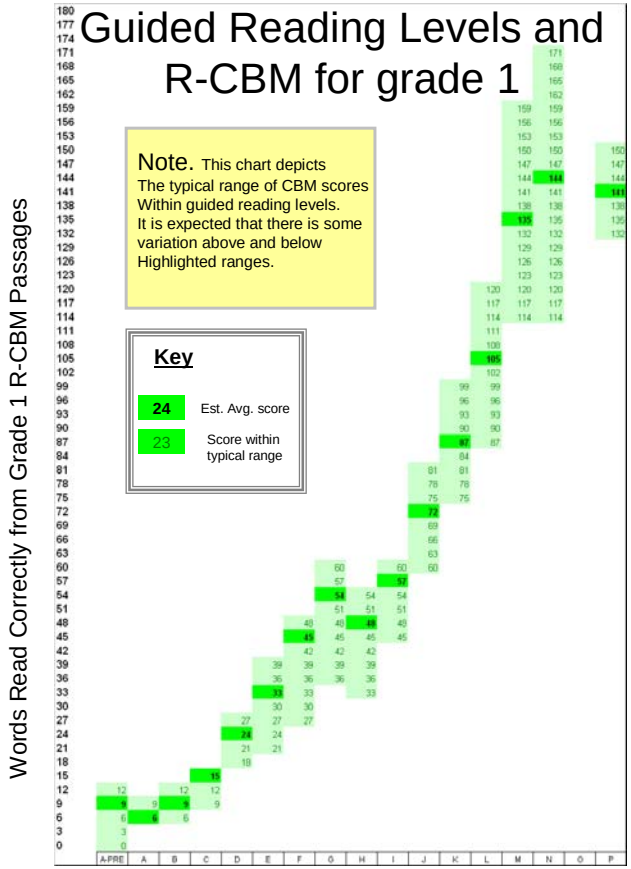
Method. Scores from two cohorts of first and second grade students were combined across fall winter and spring, to result in 651 First grade scores and 582 second grade scores. Each time period was initially examined independently and after preliminary data were evaluated it was determined that combining each score-pair (i.e., CBM and FP level) for each time period available added more substantially to the number of data points than variability within a FP level. As such all score-pairs within a grade level and across cohorts were combined to provide for maximum generalizability.

Procedure. All Fountas and Pinnel levels were converted into an ordinal system to allow for the calculation of a correlation coefficient. Because R-CBM scores are derived from different grade level material at different grades, scores were restricted within a given grade level. Next descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and interquartile ranges were computed for each FP level to describe typical performance for each level.

Results. First Grade Correlation based on 651 scores collected from two cohorts, combined Fall and Spring RCBM Scores. After converting levels to integers, Pearson r level *RCBM= .83. Second Grade Correlation based on 582 scores collected from two cohorts, combined Fall and Spring RCBM Scores. After converting levels to integers, Pearson r level *RCBM= .82. Data presented in Table 1 indicate typical performance on the RCBM task for students in grade 1. Cells in yellow have an insufficient n for accurate estimations.

Table 1. Typical R-CBM scores for FP levels in Grade 1.

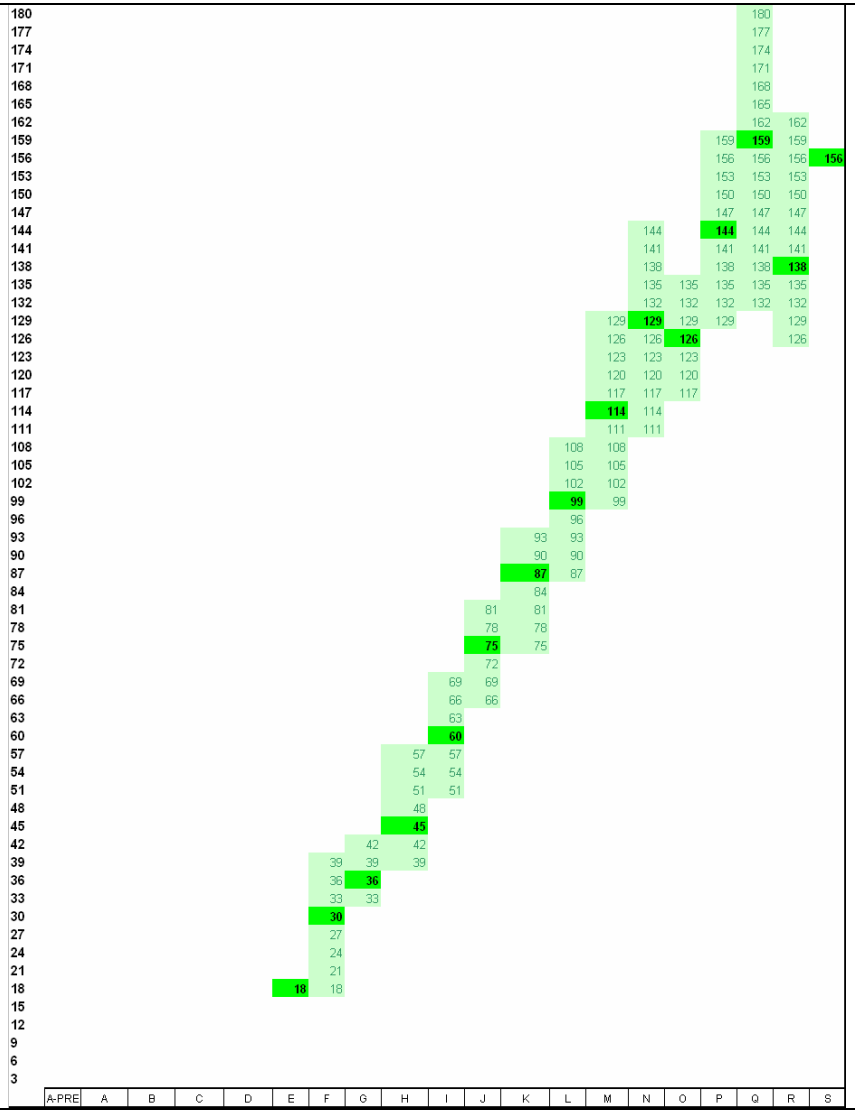
FP Lvl	N	Mean	SD	25%ile	75%ile
A-PRE	*5*	*10*	*13*	*0*	*12*
A	*7*	*8*	*5*	*5*	*10*
B	34	11	8	5	14
C	56	15	14	7	16
D	51	24	13	16	27
E	30	34	19	22	42
F	36	45	26	25	51
G	13	56	34	35	60
H	26	48	24	32	56
I	93	57	27	43	62
J	78	74	23	59	83
K	62	89	20	75	100
L	57	107	26	86	121
M	82	136	33	112	160
N	19	144	33	115	173
O	*0*	-	-	-	-
P	*2*	*142*	*30*	*132*	*153*



Data presented in Table 2 indicate typical performance on the RCBM task for students in grade 2. Cells in yellow have an insufficient n for accurate estimations.

Table 2 Typical R-CBM scores for FP levels in Grade 2.

FP Lvl	N	Mean	SD	25%ile	75%ile
A-PRE	*0*	-	-	-	-
A	*0*	-	-	-	-
B	*0*	-	-	-	-
C	*0*	-	-	-	-
D	*0*	-	-	-	-
E	*2*	*18*	*1*	*17*	*18*
F	*6*	*31*	*19*	*17*	*40*
G	*7*	*38*	*7*	*34*	*43*
H	24	47	14	37	58
I	68	61	16	50	69
J	62	77	23	65	81
K	59	87	18	76	95
L	99	99	17	87	109
M	92	114	23	99	131
N	76	129	24	112	145
O	31	126	16	117	136
P	41	144	21	127	160
Q	*11*	*160*	*35*	*130*	*181*
R	*3*	*139*	*41*	*127*	*163*
S	*1*	*158*	-	*158*	*158*
T	0	-	-	-	-



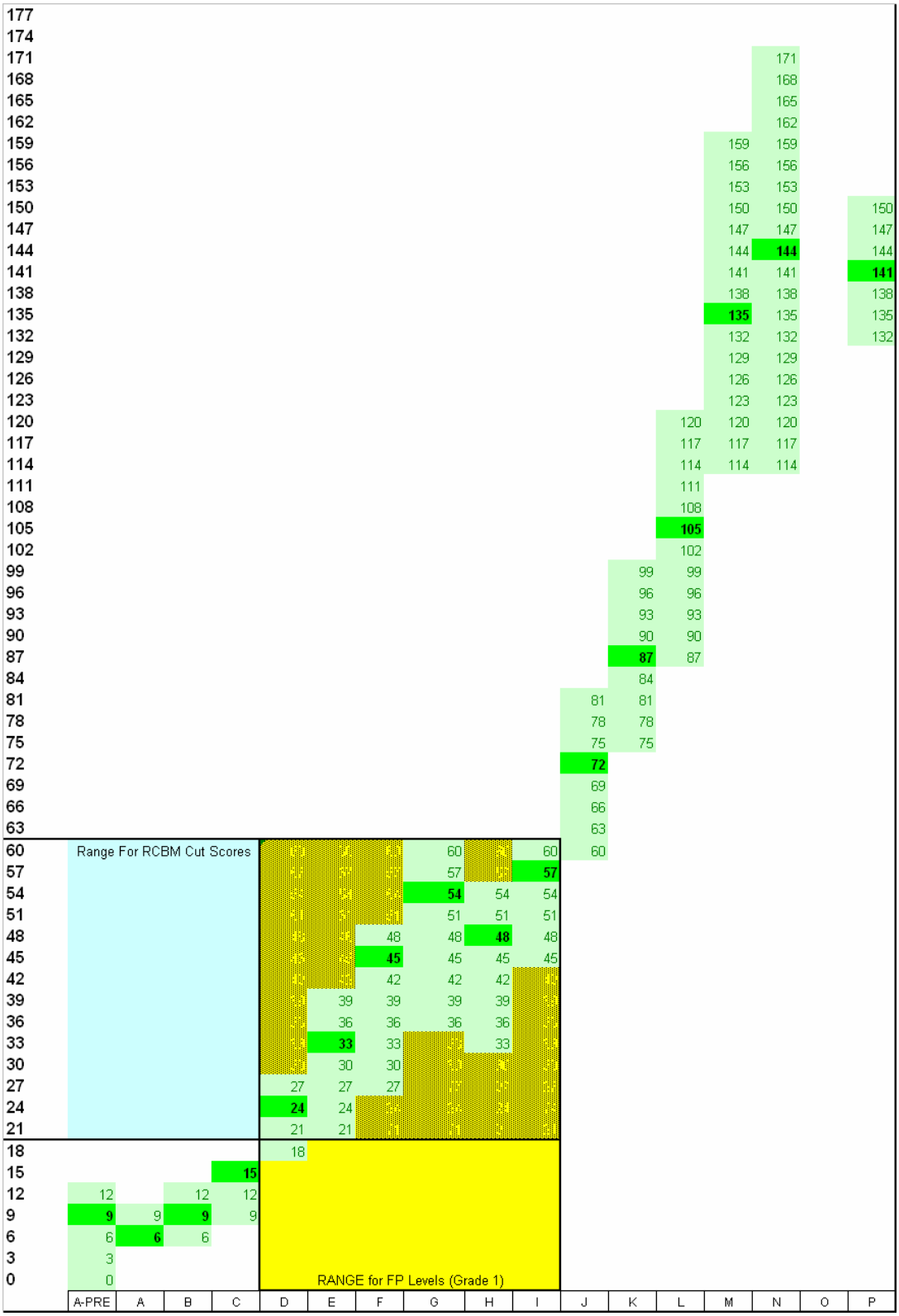
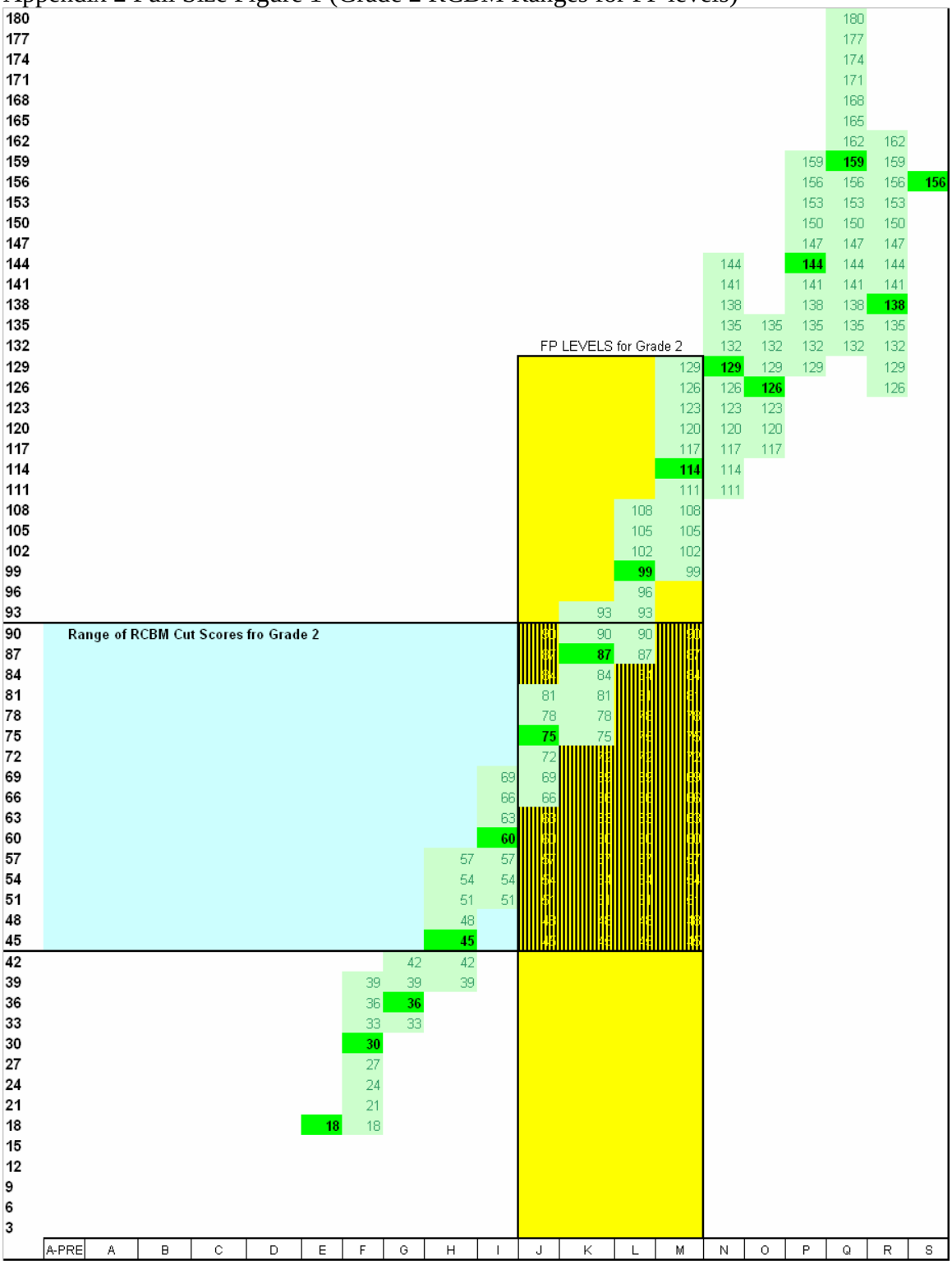
Discussion. Although many people have questioned the alignment of the instructional perspectives of R-CBM and the FP guided Reading levels, strong correlations exist between the two estimates of student skill in reading. If additional research confirms this strong relationship, it is likely that the time required to determine levels using traditional methods can be reduced substantially using data collected during Universal screening.

According to CBM Cut Scores to ISAT (measuredEffects.com) proficient students in first grade should read between 20 Correct Words per minute in the Fall to 60 Correct Words per minute in Spring. According to FP levels, first grade levels Span from Level E to Level I. Obtained RCBM scores indicate that the typical range of scores for students in Level E is consistent with RCBM cut scores in the fall (i.e., 22 to 42 Correct Words per minute) and Level I is consistent with RCBM proficiency in the Spring (i.e., 43 to 62 Correct Words per minute). This agreement serves to validate both FP levels and RCBM Cut scores for grade 1. See Appendix 1 (overlap in Outlined boxes represents fit)

According to CBM Cut Scores to ISAT (measuredEffects.com) proficient students in second grade should read between 45 Correct Words per minute in the Fall to 90 Correct Words per minute in Spring. According to FP levels, second grade levels Span from Level J to Level M. Obtained RCBM scores indicate that the typical range of scores for students in Level J is somewhat higher than RCBM cut scores in the fall (i.e., 65 to 81 Correct Words per minute). The RCBM range for Level H in second grade (i.e., 37 to 58) may be more consistent with Fall Proficiency. Similarly, Level M is somewhat higher than RCBM Cut Scores for proficiency in the spring (i.e., 99 to 131 Correct Words per minute). The RCBM range for Level L in second grade (i.e., 87 to 109) may be more consistent with Spring Proficiency. This finding may suggest that RCBM Cut scores in grade 2 or placement in FP levels may have been low estimates. More data would be required to reliably make either statement. See Appendix 2 (overlap in Outlined boxes represents fit, lack of overlap represents over / under estimates).

Limitations. Scores for the analyses run were limited to those collected over two years in one school district. This is a significant limitation to the generality of findings. In addition, the combination of scores for individual students (i.e., Billy's score for Fall and Spring of Grade 1, Fall and Spring of Grade 2) is a violation of the independence of scores necessary for the validity of correlations, it was decided that this violation was acceptable for a preliminary report. Additional collection of data and analysis is required before conclusive findings and statements can be made.

Appendix 1 Full Size Figure 1 (Grade 1 RCBM Ranges for FP levels)



Appendix 2 Full Size Figure 1 (Grade 2 RCBM Ranges for FP levels)