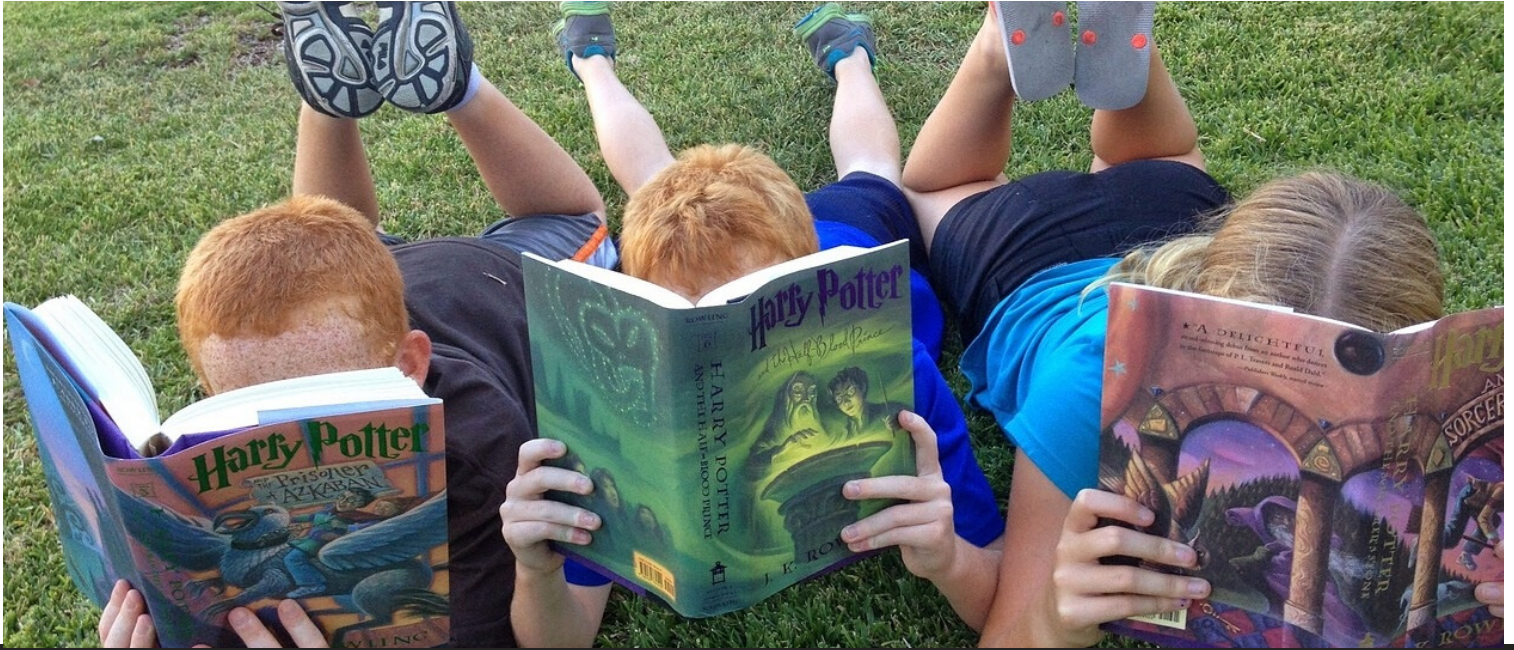


LEARNING MATTERS

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of Lethbridge School Division's Lead Teachers



LITERACY

Literacy Lead Teacher Bev Smith

Phonemic Awareness: A Foundation for Reading and Writing

Just what is phonemic awareness and why is it important? I had not really thought about that until I became a Kindergarten teacher. Those years taught me a lot about teaching in general, but particularly about phonemic awareness. Many researchers have found that a child's phonemic awareness development is one of the most important predictors and determinants of success in reading development. Phonemic awareness and phonics are not the same thing. Johnson and Keier provide a clear definition for phonemic awareness. They write, "Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken words are made up of distinct sounds and that these sounds can be manipulated" (2010, p. 120). Johnson and Keier further state, "Phonemic awareness refers to hearing and noticing things about the sounds (ears), and being able to manipulate the sounds (mouth), but it does not include being able to identify the letter (eyes)."

Phonemic awareness skills are:

- Rhyming – being able to identify and supply rhymes
- Identifying when words start the same, or the onset
- Blending – compound words, syllables, onset and rime, phonemes
- Identifying final or medial phonemes, when words have the same sound at the end or middle
- Segmenting – breaking words apart beginning with compound words, syllables, onset and rime, and finally individual phonemes
- Substituting, adding or deleting phonemes.

Given the importance of phonemic awareness upon reading development, it may be tempting to schedule large chunks of time into the day to develop these skills. The good news is that these skills can be fostered in as few as five minutes a day and then incidentally throughout the day using songs and word play games. The majority of children will develop sufficient phonemic awareness skills in Kindergarten, but some may still require instruction in Grade 1. If you have a child who is struggling to learn to read, it would be wise to check to see if there are some gaps in their acquisition of phonemic awareness skills.

There are some quick ways to check for phonemic awareness skills. If you would like more information, I would be happy to meet with you to discuss how you could assess skills your students may be missing.

onset - all of the consonants in the word up to the first vowel
rime - the part of a syllable from the first vowel and any consonants that come after it
phoneme - the units of sound within a word.

Johnson, P. and Keier, K. (2010). *Catching readers before they fall: Supporting readers who struggle, K-4*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Heggerty, M. (2017). *Phonemic awareness: The skills that they need to help them succeed! (Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Primary)*. www.literacyresourcesinc.com

Links:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnUhPhKvC2g>

<https://fivefromfive.com.au/teacher-resources/phonemic-awareness>

NUMERACY

Numeracy Lead Teacher Jenn Giles

Mathematical Thinking Classrooms

Thinking classrooms are spaces where individuals or small groups are engaged in learning together and are constructing collective understanding of concepts or skills usually through an activity, routine, or discussion. It takes careful consideration on the teacher's part to ensure thinking is an expectation and that it is valued, visible and promoted in the classroom (Ritchhart, 2015).

Peter Lilejdahl, a Mathematics Professor at Simon Fraser University, has performed extensive research in the area of Building Thinking Classrooms. Through his work he has uncovered that using optimal practices for thinking in the mathematics classrooms increases engagement in thinking and learning for students. These optimal practices include using thinking tasks that given verbally and early on in the lesson, grouping students frequently in visibly random methods, using vertical non-permanent surfaces for students to work through their thinking, and only answering questions that encourage students to keep thinking (Lilejdahl, 2019).

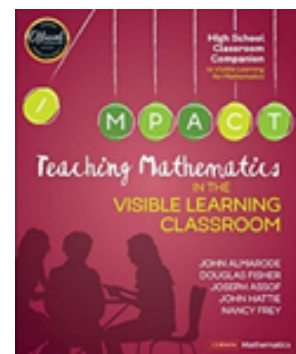
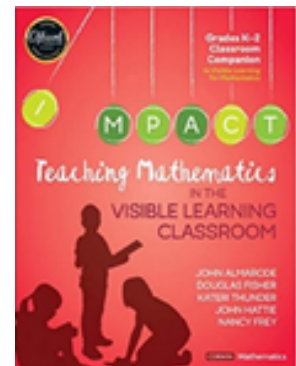
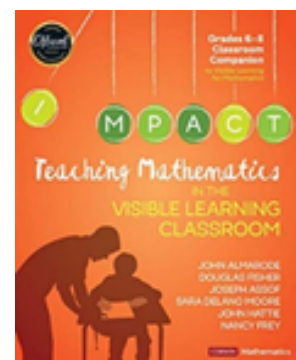
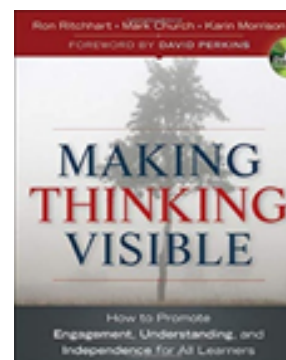
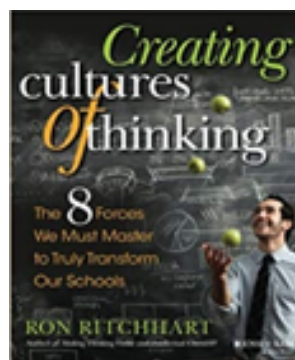
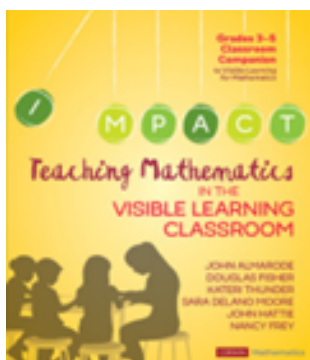
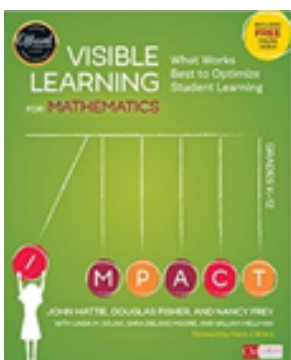
Using thinking routines and thinking tasks in the math classroom supports concept-based teaching and learning. It is through using these high impact teaching practices that students build initial understandings and then deepen their understandings of concepts and skills. This allows for seamless transfer to new contexts and future units of study (Almarode et. al, 2019).

Almarode, J., Fisher, D., Thunder, K., Hattie, J., Frey, N. (2019). Teaching Mathematics in the Visible Learning Classroom Grades K-2. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Lilejdahl, P. (2019, December 9). Building Thinking Classrooms. Holy Spirit Education Centre, Lethbridge, AB.

Ritchhart, R. (2015) Creating Cultures of Thinking: The 8 Forces We Must Master to Truly Transform Our Schools. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Using thinking routines and thinking tasks in the math classroom supports concept-based teaching and learning.





ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Naomi Den Haan - Making Connections

Making Connections - English Language Learners

The Making Connections-ELL role is multi-faceted and diverse. I am available to support ELL students and families, from various Immigration streams, in all Lethbridge School Division schools.

The purpose of my role is to remove barriers to success in the classroom for ELL students. This means engagement at many levels including school, home and community.

I support individual families through facilitated referrals to community supports and can assist families as they navigate the systems that exist in our Canadian context. I liaise with community resources to assist families and schools in their understanding of resources available. I specifically engage often with the Youth Settlement Services team at Lethbridge Family Services Immigrant Services.

Together, we connect to support students who are clients of YSS. Additionally, I work to encourage open communication between a student's home and school, offering connection to translation resources and functional strategies for communication across languages.

A unique component of this role is the Student Background Intake, completed in tandem with an academic assessment upon the arrival of a new ELL student to our division. When working with students who are learning English and coming across borders, it is helpful to know basic family information, preferences, and needs. The Student Background Intake consists of information useful for building rapport with those whose educational experiences differ from our Canadian context.

In this role, I hope to increase the confidence and inclusion of our ELL students within their school communities, support healthy connections between families and schools, increase knowledge at the family level of resources in our community, and increase knowledge at the school level of resources and supports available as we welcome ELL students.



The Student Background Intake consists of information useful for building rapport with those whose educational experiences differ from our Canadian context.