

NetWORDing

Professional learning for K-3 educators exploring the art & science of reading

8:50-9:50	Opening Keynote Kate Winn - Assessment, Action, Achievement: A Teacher's Journey with Screening	Gym
10:00-10:50	Breakout Sessions 1	See Breakout Grid
11:00-11:50	Breakout Sessions 2	See Breakout Grid
11:50-12:30	Lunch	Lunch
12:30-1:20	Breakout Sessions 3	See Breakout Grid
1:30-2:30	Closing Keynote Una Malcolm - Making Sense of Evidence: What it Means in a Changing National Landscape	Gym

10:00-10:50 Concurrent Breakout Sessions #1

<p>Rethinking Spelling Activities in K-3: Evidence-Informed Practices that Build Strong Readers and Writers Marnie Heintz</p> <p>1410</p>	<p>Decontextualized Language: A Platform for Academic Language Dakota Lucyk</p> <p>1414</p>	<p>Inclusion Within and Beyond Reading Through Play Harrison Campbell & Trisa Soroski</p> <p>1418</p>	<p>Loose Parts, Big Possibilities: Supporting Inclusive Language and Literacy Development in K-3 Classrooms Karlee Zelmer & Alisha Brignall</p> <p>1422</p>	<p>Sentence Combining for Stronger Readers, Writers, and Thinkers Una Malcolm</p> <p>1424</p>	<p>From Jumbled Thoughts to Clear Writing Strategies that Work Marnee Somers & Andra Coulter</p> <p>1428</p>	<p>Small Parts, Big Meaning: Teaching Morphology in the Primary Grades Kristy Dunn</p> <p>1432</p>	<p>MRU Reads: Future Teachers Helping Future Readers Jodi Nickel & MRU Teacher Candidates</p> <p>1436</p>
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11:00-11:50 Concurrent Breakout Sessions #2

<p>Blazing Trails: Building Brain Connections through Multi-Sensory Literacy Instruction Stacey Miner</p> <p>1412</p>	<p>Bridging the Gap through Teacher-SLP Collaboration Ashley Floyd, Mila Flynn, Michelle Britt & Maria Nelson</p> <p>1416</p>	<p>Aligned Literacy Centers: Taking Guesswork Out of Differentiation Lori Jones & Jen Snow</p> <p>1420</p>	<p>Leveraging Loose Parts as a Tool for Language Development with Multilingual Learners Anna Breuer, Heather Mitschke & Sarah Power</p> <p>1426</p>	<p>Writing Across the Curriculum: Leveraging the Reading-Writing Relationship Nadine Storrier & Robyn Zboya</p> <p>1430</p>	<p>Bridging Reading and Writing in Diverse Classrooms Sharon Minhas</p> <p>1440</p>	<p>Small Parts, Big Meaning: Teaching Morphology in the Primary Grades Kristy Dunn</p> <p>1432</p>	<p>Le pouvoir de la lecture à haute voix : stratégies fondées sur la recherche pour améliorer la compréhension linguistique des élèves de FLS Kim Lockhart</p> <p>1444</p>
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12:30-1:20 Concurrent Breakout Sessions #3							
<p>Start WINNING at Early Literacy - One Game at a Time Stacey Rayment</p> <p>1410</p>	<p>Growing Readers Through Oral Language Lisa Kohel</p> <p>1414</p>	<p>The Power of Play in Early Literacy Jaclyn Richards</p> <p>1418</p>	<p>Books to Build On: Indigenous Literatures for Learning Aubrey Hanson, Tracy Dinh, Anja Dressler Aaruj, Erin Spring & Rachel Stubbs</p> <p>1422</p>	<p>Unlocking Thinking and Writing Through Text Structure Miriam Ramzy & Michelle Bence</p> <p>1431</p>	<p>Optimizing Early Reading Success Assessment to Inform Responsive Tiered Instruction Nicole Belcher & Terra Xavier</p> <p>1438</p>	<p>Active Literacy: Engaging Inclusive Strategies for Early Readers Nicole Belanger & Rebecca Shoesmith</p> <p>1434</p>	<p>Read Alouds for ALL Learners Kim Lockhart</p> <p>1444</p>

Opening Keynote
Kate Winn

Assessment, Action, Achievement: A Teacher's Journey with Screening

Join Kate Winn for a practical keynote grounded in her own classroom experience and evolving understanding of early literacy. She will share how her thinking about assessment, particularly the role of universal screening tools, has shifted over time. Blending research with real-world application, Kate will explore how screening data can help educators better understand learners, make informed instructional decisions, and strengthen early reading outcomes. This session offers clear, actionable ideas and an invitation to continue the important shifts happening in early literacy.

Breakout Sessions 1

Marnie Heintz

Rethinking Spelling Activities in K-3: Evidence-Informed Practices that Build Strong Readers and Writers

How can we make spelling instruction in K-3 meaningful and impactful? This session bridges research with classroom practice to examine common spelling activities and explores what supports literacy development, what doesn't, and why.

Grounded in the science of reading, we will explore how spelling connects to phonological awareness, orthographic mapping, and writing development. Participants will reflect on familiar practices and consider how to adapt or replace them with more effective, inclusive approaches for diverse learners.

Through collaborative discussion and practical examples, educators will leave with actionable, high-impact strategies to strengthen spelling instruction and maximize instructional time to support all early learners.

Dakota Lucyk

Decontextualized Language: A Platform for Academic Language

This session will define decontextualized language, provide educators with the researched academic benefits of using decontextualized language when communicating with students, and provide actionable strategies that teachers can take into their classroom communities!

Strategies shared will include; how to set up routines that promote decontextualized language interactions, how to support students that use AAC devices to engage in generating decontextualized language, and ideas for how to link decontextualized language to writing instruction (with links to the AB ELAL curriculum for grade levels K-3).

Harrison Campbell & Trisa Soroski

Inclusion Within and Beyond Reading Through Play

Our session engages participants in hands-on play centers and collaborative problem-solving tasks that explore two guiding questions: Why do we study literacy? And What counts as literacy, anyway? Approaching these questions, through a playful lens, we position play as a powerful pedagogical tool that promotes social-emotional development, executive functioning, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Participants will be invited to explore the art of reading through interactive centers that highlight key Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles foundational to early literacy development. Participants will receive activity guides, and curated reading lists to support the ongoing implementation of these strategies in their classrooms.

Karlee Zelmer & Alisha Brignall

Loose Parts, Big Possibilities: Supporting Inclusive Language and Literacy in K-3 Classrooms

In this interactive session, participants will explore how loose parts can be used as powerful tools to support language and literacy development in inclusive classrooms. Grounded in play-based and inquiry-

Sessions Descriptions

driven practices, this session will highlight how open-ended materials can foster oral language, vocabulary development, storytelling, and early writing skills for all learners, particularly those with diverse needs (ADHD, Learning Disabilities, EAL, etc). Attendees will learn how to design learning experiences to promote communication and engagement. They will leave with adaptable ideas and strategies to create inclusive literacy experiences that support diverse learners and encourage meaningful language development through play.

Una Malcolm

Sentence Combining for Stronger Readers, Writers, and Thinkers

Sentence combining is a research-supported practice that helps students develop syntax, strengthen writing, and better understand the language they read. In this session, educators will explore how combining, expanding, and manipulating sentences can support reading comprehension, written expression, and oral language in Kindergarten to Grade 3 classrooms. We will look at practical ways to embed sentence-level instruction within content-rich literacy learning, using texts, discussion, and knowledge-building topics as meaningful contexts for grammar and sentence work. Participants will leave with developmentally appropriate routines, classroom examples, and ready-to-use ideas that strengthen literacy while building knowledge.

Marnee Somers & Andra Coulter

From Jumbled Thoughts to Clear Writing Strategies that Work

Want your students to write with confidence and clarity? Discover how the thinkSRSD (Self-Regulated Strategy Development) framework can transform writing instruction. In this session, two Calgary literacy teachers from Dr. Oakley, a public Literacy Intervention school, will guide you through practical strategies for teaching summarizing and informative writing. Explore how to use summarizing strategies to identify main ideas, and graphic organizers to build strong, evidence-based paragraphs. With student examples and hands-on practice, you'll leave equipped with ready-to-use approaches that support all learners (grades 1 - 12) in developing structured, purposeful writing. This session is ideal for teachers looking to strengthen their writing instruction and help students succeed across content areas.

Kristy Dunn

Small Parts, Big Meaning: Teaching Morphology in the Primary Grades

How can young learners begin to notice how words work? This session demonstrates classroom activities that introduce K–3 students to morphology through meaningful exploration of word structure and meaning. Using read-aloud texts as a starting point, participants will learn how to identify rich vocabulary and guide students in building morphological awareness through activities that explore morphemic elements, word meaning, and analysis. Simple routines—such as word hunts, word building, and collaborative word analysis—will be modeled to help students connect word parts to meaning.

Jodi Nickel & MRU Teaching Candidates

MRU Reads: Future Teachers Helping Future Readers

Thanks to a generous donation, a group of MRU teacher candidates had the opportunity to support 10 students in a free after school literacy program twice weekly for 5 months. With the mentorship of two senior tutors and their professor, they planned, taught, and reflected upon ways to accelerate the growth of these students using structured literacy practices. Come hear the story of how the children and the teacher candidates learned from each other and our vision to help more children access the literacy support they need.

Breakout Sessions 2

Stacey Miner

Blazing Trails: Building Brain Connections through Multi-Sensory Literacy Instruction

Discover how understanding the science of how the brain learns to read can transform literacy instruction. This interactive 50-minute session explores the neural pathways involved in reading and demonstrates how multi-sensory strategies—engaging sight, sound, and movement—strengthen those connections for all learners. Participants will connect reading research to classroom practice, gain practical techniques to enhance decoding, fluency, and comprehension, and leave with evidence-based tools to support diverse learners. Empower your instruction by aligning what

you teach with how the brain learns best—through meaningful, multi-sensory experiences that ignite literacy growth.

Ashley Floyd, Mila Flynn, Michelle Britt & Maria Nelson

Bridging the Gap through Teacher–SLP Collaboration

This session explores a collaborative approach to early intervention, bridging the gap between research and classroom practice to support K–3 literacy. We will examine a service delivery model where Teachers and Speech–Language Pathologists (SLPs) partner to implement evidence-based oral language and literacy screenings. Participants will learn how this multidisciplinary team utilizes universal oral language screenings for early identification and provides targeted interventions through specialized support teams in alignment with the science of reading and Structured Literacy. We will share measurable impacts on student results and feedback from educators and parents, highlighting the “Living Waters Approach” to inclusive, effective literacy instruction.

Lori Jones & Jen Snow

Aligned Literacy Centers: Taking the Guesswork Out of Differentiation

This session explores how our K–3 high needs school designed a data-driven system for targeted phonics instruction grounded in the Science of Reading. Attendees will explore how a tracking system aligned with the CBE Scope and Sequence enables calibration across grades and streamlines differentiation. Participants will also discover how learning leaders build teacher capacity by modeling instruction, establishing routines, and supporting the development of engaging literacy centers that meet diverse learning needs. The session highlights effective use of the teacher table for small group instruction and demonstrates how resources like UFLI, Heggerty, and decodable books simplify planning and support an inclusive classroom.

Anna Breuer, Heather Mitschke & Sarah Power

Leveraging Loose Parts as a Tool for Language Development with Multilingual Learners

Educators will engage in hands-on provocations that position students as storytellers. Using modelled language, participants learn to extend conversations, build vocabulary, and support complex sentence structures. Through guided practice and classroom examples, educators will learn how to extend student thinking by responding with rich, grammatically complex sentences, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging sustained back-and-forth conversations. Emphasis will be placed on noticing and naming opportunities to build Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, expand sentence structures, and support students in moving from simple to more complex discourse patterns. The session also centres culturally responsive teaching by encouraging educators to incorporate materials, stories, and ways of knowing that reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their learners.

Nadine Storrier & Robyn Zboya

Writing Across the Curriculum: Leveraging the Reading–Writing Relationship

Learning to read unlocks opportunities that transform life trajectories. Similarly, writing is an increasingly essential skill in today’s digital world. Reading and writing are interrelated, drawing on shared knowledge bases and cognitive processes that form a critical foundation for literacy development (Kim et al., 2025; Shanahan, 2016). Teachers can leverage this relationship by integrating writing instruction across content areas. In this session, participants will explore how integrated instruction can improve reading comprehension, writing quality, and sentence construction through evidence-based, classroom-tested, teacher-approved practices. Leave with effective routines and tools ready to implement tomorrow.

Sharon Minhas

Bridging Reading and Writing in Diverse Classrooms

In many K–3 classrooms, reading and writing are taught as separate skills, leaving a critical gap between decoding, language, and composition. This session explores “the missing middle” by focusing on how oral language and sentence-level instruction can bridge reading and writing, particularly for multilingual learners. Grounded in current research, participants will engage in high-leverage, classroom-ready routines that strengthen sentence construction, support comprehension, and improve written expression. Through interactive activities and practical examples, educators will leave with clear, transferable strategies they can implement immediately to better connect reading and writing in diverse classrooms.

Kristy Dunn

Small Parts, Big Meaning: Teaching Morphology in the Primary Grades

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Kim Lockhart

Le pouvoir de la lecture à haute voix : stratégies fondées sur la recherche pour améliorer la compréhension linguistique des élèves de FLS

Dans cette présentation destinée aux enseignants d'élèves en FSL, Kim Lockhart va expliquer les avantages de la lecture à voix haute pour les apprenants en FSL et comment une planification et un enseignement réfléchis de cette pratique peuvent enrichir les connaissances de base des élèves, leur vocabulaire, leurs capacités de raisonnement verbal et leur compréhension écrite ! Une planification délibérée de la lecture à voix haute

peut développer les compétences de communication expressive, réceptive et écrite des élèves (Baker et al., 2016), accroître leurs connaissances disciplinaires (Strachan, 2015) et favoriser la compréhension de la lecture (Duke, Ward et Pearson, 2021). Chaque participant à cet atelier recevra GRATUITEMENT un modèle de lecture à voix haute en français, conçu à l'origine par le Dr Molly Ness (2024).

Breakout Sessions 3

Stacey Rayment

Start WINNING at Early Literacy – One Game at a Time

Unlock the power of play with literacy games that supercharge phonemic awareness. You'll receive free hands-on materials, clear instructions, online instructional videos, and fun, flexible strategies to engage students at any reading or spelling level.

Discover game hacks to transform commercial board games into powerful literacy tools! Playful, high-impact activities make it easy for learners to explore the sounds of language.

Experiment with games designed to build and assess foundational literacy skills, aligned with AFRS, PASS, PAST, CTOPP, and LAC.

- Phonemic awareness
 - Syllabication
 - Rapid automatic naming
 - Rhyming, vocabulary, sentences
- + NEW for 2026 “Morphology Rummy”

Lisa Kohel

Growing Readers Through Oral Language

This professional learning session focuses on how early learning and early elementary teachers can support oral language development with reading comprehension in mind. Participants will explore research connecting syntax, vocabulary, and discourse skills to reading comprehension, with an emphasis on practical classroom application. The session introduces evidence-

based teacher talk strategies that support students' understanding and use of language. Teachers will examine how to embed rich oral language opportunities throughout the school day to support all students, including learners with diverse needs. Participants will leave with practical strategies to strengthen students' oral language skills and reading outcomes.

Jaclyn Richards

The Power of Play in Early Literacy

Join Jaclyn Richards for a hands-on session exploring how play can transform early literacy learning. Drawing from over 16 years of classroom experience, Jaclyn will share practical strategies, toys, and games that spark curiosity, excitement, and meaningful engagement in young learners. With a creative approach and a passion for thrifting, she reimagines everyday and unique materials in ways that inspire language, imagination, and literacy development. Participants will see real examples from her kindergarten classroom and leave with ready-to-use ideas that can be applied immediately. This session highlights how intentional, play-based experiences can build strong foundations for lifelong learning.

Aubrey Hanson, Tracy Dinh, Anja Dressler Aarujó, Erin Spring & Rachel Stubbs

Books to Build On: Indigenous Literatures for Learning

Whose stories children encounter in early literacy matters deeply. This presentation introduces an online resource bringing curated Indigenous literary works, including picturebooks, directly to K–3 educators and preservice teachers. Developed collaboratively by Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, K–12 teachers, and graduate students, the resource responds to the TRC's Calls to Action and Alberta's Teaching Quality Standards by making Indigenous stories classroom-ready. Participants will explore the Books to Build On website interactively, engaging with texts, lesson plans, and practical K–3 connections. Freely available to educators everywhere, this resource helps educators build culturally sustaining literacy practices, and bring Indigenous voices into their classrooms with intention and care.

Miriam Ramzy & Michelle Bence**Unlocking Thinking and Writing Through Text Structure**

In this hands-on session, teachers will explore how text structure help young writers organize their ideas and make their thinking visible. We will begin with a look at the Layers of Writing and how children develop as writers. Then, we will consider how text structure and thinking patterns give students the confidence and tools to communicate their ideas and messages. Teachers will engage in activities that show how each structure helps students organize their thinking. We end with six easy steps you can use tomorrow and an open invitation to keep learning together.

Nicole Belcher & Terra Xavier**Optimizing Early Reading Success | Assessment to Inform Responsive Tiered Instruction**

Join us for a focused session exploring current research on early identification of reading difficulties and how to recognize reading problems before they escalate. Participants will be guided through using the Alberta K-3 Government Assessments and how to interpret results for next steps in classroom implementation. Grounded in research on early reading development, participants will examine how universal screening and diagnostic data can be used within a structured literacy framework. This session will also provide actionable strategies for tiered support, progress monitoring, and intervention planning. Attendees will leave with clear, actionable strategies to strengthen early intervention, ensuring that all students receive timely instruction.

Nicole Belanger & Rebecca Shoesmith**Active Literacy: Engaging, Inclusive Strategies for Early Readers**

This interactive session equips future teachers with hands-on, evidence-based strategies grounded in the science of reading. Participants will explore practical approaches to building phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension through engaging activities they can apply in K-3 classrooms. Emphasis is placed on inclusive practices that support diverse

learners, including multilingual students and those with varied abilities. Through collaboration and active learning, attendees will leave with adaptable tools and strategies that foster equitable, responsive literacy instruction for all students.

Kim Lockhart**Read Alouds for ALL Learners**

“Read Alouds epitomize the translation of the science of reading into classroom practice.” (Ness, 2024, p.9) In this presentation, teachers will learn how to use read alouds to improve students’ language comprehension, including students’ background knowledge, academic vocabulary and syntax. All participants will receive a FREE read aloud template, in English and in French, and learn how to use a read aloud more intentionally to improve student language and literacy outcomes.

*Closing Keynote***Una Malcolm****Making Sense of Evidence: What it Means in a Changing National Landscape**

Across Canada, changes to literacy policy and practice are placing new attention on how evidence is used to support students and systems. With increased focus on screening, research-aligned curriculum expectations, and more effective intervention, decisions about practice are being shaped by both research and assessment in new and sometimes unclear ways. In this session, we will take a national perspective on these shifts while examining how to make sense of different types of evidence and use them appropriately. What question was the study designed to answer? What can we actually conclude? We will also unpack common misinterpretations, including when studies about relationships or prediction get stretched into claims about instruction, and what that means for the decisions we make in practice.