

Learning Assistance Teachers' Association NEWSLETTER



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In this issue:

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- Introducing our new logo
- Redesigned website launching soon
- LATA's new screener workshop
- Summer reading recommendations
- Scholarships
- Articles from members
- and more

web: latabc.com

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[Click here to check out
the new website](#)

A Fresh New Look for LATA BC!

After thoughtful reflection, LATA BC knew it was time for a refresh. We were proud to partner with Cariboo Creative and Saltwater Digital to bring our vision to life through a vibrant new logo and website - one that truly reflects who we are and the students and communities we serve.

Every element of our new logo was chosen with care. A heart represents care and support, while a person highlights a student-centered focus. The hourglass reflects our commitment to responsiveness, and the rainbow celebrates the diversity of our students and the communities where we live and teach across the province. The bold, vibrant colours embody inclusion and the dynamic spirit of education.

Together, these elements tell a story of connection, care, and growth. We're excited to share this fresh new look ahead of summer and look forward to bringing our renewed brand to life through upcoming initiatives

LATA-BC Advanced Studies Scholarship Application

The Learning Assistance Teachers Association (LATA), a Provincial Specialist Association (PSA) of the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF), awards annual, non-renewable scholarships to LATA members pursuing further education in the field of inclusive education.

At least one scholarship is available each year to a BCTF member who holds current LATA membership and has completed advanced studies in the previous 2 years. Applications are accepted throughout the year, and must be received by July 15th to be considered for the current year's awards. Applications received between July 16th and the next AGM/conference will be considered for the following year. Scholarships are non-renewable and must be accepted in the year awarded.

For further details and to apply for this scholarship, please click the link below:

[Scholarship Application Form](#)

Every Voice, Every Learner

October 23, 2026
Virtual Conference

Keynote

Damon Kirsebom

Sessions with

- Nathaniel Swain
- Heather Willms
- Juliane Dmyterko
- Hina Mahmood
- Kate Winn
- Kim Lockhart
- David Fainstein
- Robert Vint
- Una Malcolm
- Calico Clark
- Leslie Laud
- Brennan Chandler
- Brian Poncy



LATA has a new workshop!

Using Screening Data to Guide Instruction

What should you do after screening? This workshop answers that.

LATA-BC's recent survey told us something important: teachers believe in literacy screening, but many don't feel confident using the data.

This workshop is about what comes next.

Screening identifies who may be at-risk. But real impact happens when we move from scores to skills and use that information to guide instruction. Together, we will clarify the difference between screening and diagnostics, connect data to teaching decisions, and look at how classroom patterns can signal when instructional shifts need to happen.

This isn't about adding more to your already full plate. It's about making what you're already doing more precise, responsive, and effective.

Join us to turn screening into something that impacts instruction and improves outcomes for kids.

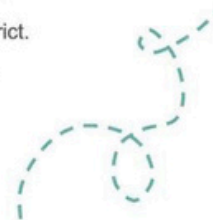


Bring LATA-BC to your local

Trained executive members available.

Workshop support for your school or district.

You don't have to do this work alone.



LATA Chapters

In addition to our provincial association, LATA sponsors several local chapters. Most recently, we have welcomed a new chapter in Richmond. Chapters receive seed money to help them get started. The Richmond chapter used some of this money to host a book club. They read the book *The ABCs of CBM: A Practical Guide to Curriculum-Based Measurement*, by Hosp, Hosp, and Howell.

For more information about starting a chapter, see our website.

Member Articles

We are fortunate this month to have article submissions from several of our members. Sharing ideas, strategies and resources is an important part of what LATA aims to do. If you have an article that you would like to submit to our newsletter, please email us at lata@bctf.ca.

Structured Literacy in the Adolescent Years - More to Learn!

Transitioning to structured literacy can seem like it's all about the primary years and foundational skills, but the intermediate and middle grades have a lot to learn too. If you're working in an intermediate or middle school classroom, or supporting teams who are, here are some tips to use or share that are easy to start today, but can have a big-impact specifically for adolescent readers:

1. Reading comprehension is not a transferable skill, but fluency, summarizing, and vocabulary knowledge are. When focusing on "comprehension", focus on transferable skills rather than outcomes to have a bigger impact.
2. Leverage writing for reading. Teaching writing structures and syntax explicitly feeds back to reading comprehension as they encounter a larger variety of sentence structures and complexity. Sentence combining with target conjunctions in Science and Socials is a great way to circle back to reviewing and reorganizing facts, while using a high-impact literacy strategy.
3. Explicit vocabulary instruction across subjects is a great way to include subject specialist teachers into your literacy efforts in Tier I. A word-wall is a high-impact environmental support for the Science and Socials classrooms that gets overlooked too often. AI can easily help teachers create these to keep them fresh and relevant.
4. Independent silent reading offers very little to students who are not yet proficient in reading. However, tweaks like partner reading routines, and creating meaningful reasons to reread like practicing before presenting are two of the many ways to improve the return on investment of that time. Even using that time to take a small group is better than the teacher "modeling silent reading" (what I was taught to do during this time).
5. Poetry can be seen as a fluffy novelty, but it offers opportunities to explicitly teach cadence and prosody, use novel word combinations to break habits of word guessing, and sometimes even a set of nonsense words for phonics review (Is that why *The Jabberwocky* has lasted all these years?).
6. Screeners should not be overlooked in the intermediate years. Oral reading fluency correlates to comprehension better than many direct measures of comprehension until Grade 8. At-risk readers of higher grades aren't out of the weeds until they reach about 150 CWPM. Involving students in measuring their progress data could create that elusive motivation.

Many of these ideas aren't new, but these ideas are easy to dip your toes into to try out today, or to share on the fly. Each of these ideas also have a wealth of resources online if not books supporting them if you are curious enough for a deep dive. Hopefully this list gives you or your colleagues enough ideas to be curious about how we can all join-in the fun of structured literacy.

Meaghan MacDonald

Oral Language: A Small Shift with a Big Impact

In every classroom, students bring a wide range of oral language strengths that shape how they learn, connect, and participate. Some students arrive ready to express their ideas with confidence and complexity, while others are still building the vocabulary and sentence structures they need to fully participate. These differences matter, not only for literacy development, but for students' overall sense of belonging and success in school. Students with less developed oral language, often due to fewer opportunities for rich language exposure, are more likely to experience challenges both academically and socially (Justice et al., 2013; Snow, 2020).

Research consistently shows that oral language plays a central role in reading comprehension. In fact, it is just as important as decoding fluency when it comes to understanding text (Foorman et al., 2015). This highlights an important truth: literacy instruction isn't only about helping students read words, it's also about helping them develop the language they need to make meaning.

The good news is that supporting oral language doesn't require a complete shift in practice. Often, it's about being more intentional with the strategies we already use. One powerful approach is to model language that is slightly more complex than what students can produce on their own (Justice et al., 2013). This might look like expanding on a student's response or introducing more precise vocabulary during everyday interactions. These small, responsive moves can have a significant cumulative impact.

Equally important is creating regular, structured opportunities for students to talk. Strategies such as A/B partner talk, dialogic reading, and extended back-and-forth conversations give students the chance to practice and refine their language skills in meaningful contexts. Even small adjustments like extending a conversation for a few more exchanges can deepen students' thinking and language use. Frameworks like Strive for Five, which encourage longer, more sustained conversations between educators and students, offer practical ways to embed this work into daily routines (Cabell & Zucker, 2023). Techniques such as recasting and expanding student responses help move language development forward without interrupting the flow of conversation.

These practices are especially impactful for multilingual learners and for students who may have had fewer opportunities for rich language experiences outside of school. By intentionally building in time for talk, explicitly supporting vocabulary and sentence development, and modelling increasingly complex language, educators can help ensure that all students have access to the tools they need to succeed.

Oral language instruction is more than a literacy strategy; it's an equity-driven practice. By making small, intentional shifts in how we support student talk, we can help close opportunity gaps and set all learners up for stronger literacy outcomes.

References:

- Sonia Q. Cabell, & Tricia A. Zucker. (2023). Using strive-for-five conversations to strengthen language comprehension in preschool through grade one. *The Reading Teacher*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2266>
- Barbara R. Foorman, Sarah Herrera, Yaacov Petscher, Alison Mitchell, & Adrea Truckenmiller. (2015). The structure of oral language and reading and their relation to comprehension in kindergarten through grade 2. *Reading and Writing*, 28(5), 655–681. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1145-015-9544-5>
- Laura M. Justice, Anita S. McGinty, Tricia Zucker, Sonia Q. Cabell, & Shayne B. Piasta. (2013). Bi-directional dynamics underlie the complexity of talk in teacher–child play-based conversations in classrooms serving at-risk pupils. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(3), 496–508. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.02.002>
- Pamela Snow. (2020, January 27). Updating the language (and literacy) house. *The Snow Report*. <https://pamelasnow.blogspot.com/2020/01/updating-language-and-literacy-house.html>

Resources:

Dialogic Reading Resources:

-<https://thesixshifts.com/2025/06/dialogic-reading/>

Strive for Five Conversations text: -<https://www.amazon.ca/Strive-Five-Conversations-Accelerate-Comprehension/dp/1546113886>

Turn & Talk Resources:

-[Turn and Talk: An Evidence-Based Practice: https://thesixshifts.com/2024/07/turn-and-talk/](https://thesixshifts.com/2024/07/turn-and-talk/)

Bio:

Ali Peterson is a member-at-large on the LATA Executive and works as a literacy collaboration teacher in Greater Victoria. She has recently completed coursework in evidence-aligned literacy practices through the University of Victoria, taught by Dr. Shelby Pollitt. [UVic Micro-certificate in Evidence-Aligned Literacy Practices](#)

Syllable Sleuth: A Strategy for Decoding Multisyllabic Words

I was fortunate to attend the 2026 International Dyslexia Association Ontario Literacy and Learning Educator Conference in April alongside several colleagues from my district. One of the sessions I attended was Beyond Phonics: Strengthening Foundational Skills in Adolescent Readers, presented by Dr. Brennan Chandler.

The session introduced several practical instructional routines for supporting intermediate and secondary students who continue to struggle with reading multisyllabic words. In my role as a Learning Assistance Teacher, I work with many students who have mastered basic phonics skills but still lack efficient decoding strategies for longer, more complex words. These students often struggle with variant vowel spellings and patterns and have not yet internalized the flexibility needed to adjust vowel sounds when decoding unfamiliar words. They also benefit from developing a deeper understanding of the morphophonological complexity of words.

Dr. Chandler discussed 4 high-impact instructional routines, including: Vowel Power Up, Morph Mastery, Syllable Sleuth, and Fluency Flex. The routine that immediately caught my attention was Syllable Sleuth. This strategy is designed for students who can decode short words but misread long ones, who struggle with unpredictable vowel sounds, schwa, or shifting stress and students who need a flexible strategy, not a rule based system. These are my Grade 6/7 students, so I figured why not give this a try!

Dr. Chandler recommends the following lesson format:

Vowel Roll Call

- review long and short vowel sounds, including y
- I have also found the vowel combinations chart from the Word Connections© program, developed by Dr. Brennan Chandler and Jessica Toste, to be a helpful support during this stage.

Teach ESHLOV

Teach students to break words into chunks based on the idea that each syllable must have at least one vowel and the chunks shouldn't start with letter combinations that don't come at the beginning of English words (ck/rt) and that chunks shouldn't end with unusual letter combos (like str/bl)

1. Underline vowels
2. Join vowel teams
3. Circle known parts (affixes)
4. Count word parts
5. Break the word apart
6. Read the word aloud

Practice and Prompt

Teachers then provide guided practice using increasingly complex words.

Dr Chandler suggests:

1. Using word lists with both clear and less obvious syllable breaks (ChatGPT can be a helpful tool for generating word lists). Use word lists with clear and unclear syllable breaks (ChatGPT can help create word lists).
2. Including high-utility academic vocabulary and content-area words drawn from classroom topics/learning.
3. Practising the strategy in both isolated word lists and connected text.

When students encounter difficulty, Dr. Chandler suggests prompts such as:

"Not quite. What real word makes sense here?" and "Flexing the vowel to make it a real word."

I am aware of the ongoing discussion surrounding the teaching of syllable division rules and the limited research evidence supporting this practice. However, my students have responded well to this routine. They enjoy breaking words into parts, and already have a basic understanding of syllable division patterns. After giving the strategy a try, I have been pleased to see how students are using it in their reading and how it has supported their confidence when approaching longer, more complex words.

Sarah Soltau

LATA is excited to welcome Dr. Brennan Chandler as a presenter at our virtual conference, Every Voice, Every Learner, on October 23, 2026.

Summer Reading Recommendations

One of our members at large, Stacey Joyce, has shared the following books for your summer reading list. For more reading lists, see the June issue of the BC Teacher Magazine.

Reading Assessment Done Right by Stephanie Stollar and Kate Winn

This handbook on reading screening is both too easy to read and understand. It demystifies the assessment measures that help teachers improve reading outcomes for all students. Kate Winn will be a presenter at our upcoming October virtual conference.

Beneath the Surface of Words by Sue Scibetta Hegland

This is an excellent book for building educator knowledge and understanding of how English spelling works, revealing the logical patterns behind morphology, etymology, and word structure. This knowledge empowers educators to teach spelling and vocabulary more confidently and accurately, allowing students to make sense of words rather than just memorizing them.

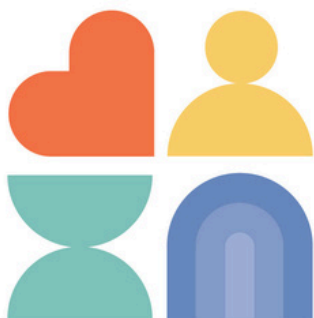
Shifting the Balance 3-5 by Katie Egan Cunningham, Jan Burkins, Kari Yates

What does structured literacy look like after grade 2? This book offers practical, easy-to-implement routines that help teachers bridge the gap between reading science and everyday instruction while keeping students at the center. It provides clear, research-aligned guidance for improving reading instruction specifically in upper elementary classrooms.

UBC Master's of Education in School and Child Psychology

Train as a School Psychologist. Support Learning, Mental Health, and Well-Being in Schools. The next cohort start date for this program is July 2027. For more information, contact Simon Lisaingo, cohort advisor, simon.lisaingo@ubc.ca.

We wish you a relaxing, sun-filled and stress-free summer!



**Learning Assistance
Teachers' Association**