Kim B - Science of Reading

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning differences and learning disabilities. Over the past year, I brought you to conversations about French language learning in the classroom. Each of these brought in new perspectives and learning today.

I'm really excited to bring in another expert on French language, learning for students who struggle with learning as a French language speaker and having children in French language school. I am keenly aware of the challenges with finding support for students for a country that promotes the idea of two official languages.

It can be hard to find educational support for students in French. Finding support often takes hours and hours of Googling and only a small selection of people to provide this support today on the show I have with me. She's a teacher advocate and mother, she holds many qualifications, which allow her to use her knowledge and experience to support students in French immersion, both inside and outside of the classroom.

She is passionate about sharing her knowledge and expertise using a structured literacy approach in her French language classroom with other teachers in order to ensure more equitable access to essential reading instruction. Kim is also a literary coach for the international dyslexia association of Ontario's introduction to structured literacy coach a volunteer for the learning disability association of Ontario, and has been a guest presenter for the Ontario modern language teacher's association and Canadian association of second language teachers.

Kim, welcome to the show. This is going to be a conversation full of important. Nuggets information discussion. , and I love that it's French focused.

[00:01:40] **Kim B:** Well, thank you so much for having me. This is a really exciting opportunity. And hopefully after this episode, everyone will feel like they've taken something away, something useful.

So

[00:01:52] **Delphine:** let's say. I mean, I gave a bit of a background about who you are and what you've done, but you've done a lot more than what I talked about, but I wanted to give you the opportunity to tell us a bit more about yourself and to position yourself in terms of, you know, what you have done for French immersion and the learning that you have done, because you've done a lot.

So, can you start by telling us how you became interested in understanding how to support students in French immersion? Let's start with that.

[00:02:18] **Kim B:** Absolutely. Well, it's interesting because I have actually two degrees. I have a degree in French, and I have a degree in biology and people always thought that was a very strange.

Mix of interests and lo and behold, 20 years after doing my degree, the science of reading in French. So, the two have actually complimented each other very, very well. But I've always been interested in special education, especially in the French second language classroom. I've always been very passionate about working with children with learning disabilities.

So after nine years of teaching in the classroom, I applied to, the SST role, which is a student support teacher, different boards call it different [00:03:00] things. Sometimes it's S E R T assert or a student resource teacher essentially it was my dream job. I got to work with students in French immersion who was struggling to read in a bright, however, I quickly realized that I actually didn't have any additional knowledge or any extra strategies that the regular classroom teachers weren't already using.

I realized that the I didn't just need small group work. They actually needed new strategies. So, I always thought, oh, low ratio. They're going to learn to read with me, but there was something missing. I was using everything I had in my teacher toolbox that I had been taught in teacher's college, everything I had been taught in professional development workshops, all the resources that were available to me in the schools, I was using an approach called balanced literacy, or what is commonly known as whole language, which is based on the understanding that students would learn to read using strategies, like making connections to the stories I was reading or, , I was teaching them to [00:04:00] make predictions to sound at the first sound in a word like for VASH.

But I was also teaching them based on the balanced literacy approach to, to guess at words. So, you, you look at the word, you sounded the first sound. It says, W look at the picture. What do you think. Word is, and what I found was despite my greatest efforts, this wasn't working, um, my students were just stuck.

So I started to think about my teaching practices and I thought, okay, well with the balanced literacy approach that I was taught, the kids in the English classroom seem to be a little bit more successful because they had an oral vocabulary to use, to guess the words. So if they saw a picture of a cow, they could probably look at the picture and guess cow, that my students in grade one didn't have the French oral language vocabulary and the knowledge of the vocabulary to guess the word VASH for cow.

So I found in particular, [00:05:00] the strategies that were maybe kind of working in English, which we now know are not good strategies were just not working for me in French, they had to guess the word there was actually a lot of like from ballet, , We also really relied on something called predictable texts.

So, for example, level one for my grade, one readers might be wussy in VASH Resy and Mouton what's the shove out what's the, and there would be a picture. And so they had memorize the pattern, but you look at the picture and they wouldn't know the word for pig. So, they would say, was he a pig? They were really struggling to decode the word Kushawn.

So, just to explain a little bit about this, this, instructional approach, it's called the three-queuing system and Dr. Kilpatrick is a researcher in phonological awareness, and he calls this a strategy that poor you readers views. I'll say that again, poor readers use guessing strategies and it's based on, looking at the pictures, drawing information from visual cues, making meaning from letters or parts of words.

So, I was thinking this isn't working for my students, so I need to change. I need to do something different. I've always said I'm a born problem solver. And I saw this as a huge problem, and I needed to find a solution. So, I decided to apply to get my master of education. And I did this, right after I had my second child.

And so. I decided to really focus on the area of supporting students with learning difficulties in French second language programs. And this is where I discovered Nancy Wise's research. Um, Nancy, why is, is a strong advocate for French for all. And, including students with exceptionalities in French immersion, she did some groundbreaking work in this area.

However, I did still find that there was a missing piece in all of the research out there. There just wasn't research on how to support struggling readers in French immersion, because historically students who were struggling were switched into the English program. So, this research didn't exist because these students were actually counseled out in, into the, into the English stream.

So, I ended up doing my masters research project. On supporting students with learning difficulties in French immersion programs and creating a parent guide, which would help parents of students, of children with learning disabilities, navigate the education system, particularly in French immersion.

However, during my research, I stumbled across something called the Orton-Gillingham method. So, I always tucked that in the back of my mind, what is this Orton-Gillingham approach? But there wasn't any research on using the Orton-Gillingham approach, French immersion and FSL settings. So, I ended up going back to the classroom, shared my parent document with the parents in my school community.

And I still had that nagging feeling that. There were still a missing piece. And so I ended up registering for my Orton-Gillingham training in Toronto. It was a two week intensive course, and it is the best investment in my education and my career I have ever made. I learned more in those two weeks of Orton-Gillingham training that I did in my two year master's degree.

And so what I ended up doing was learning that the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction is essential for students with dyslexia. So I thought, Hmm. If it's essential for students with dyslexia, I wonder if I can adapt this approach to a French immersion classroom. So that's what I did. I took my OJI training and adopted it to my French immersion kindergarten classroom, as well as my French immersion SST, small reading remediation groups, and I saw success.

It was amazing, I just want to clarify out there. The Orton-Gillingham is an approach. It is not a program. So there are some misconceptions that this can only be used for students in English language programs. And I often compare it to Montessori. Maria Montessori was Italian, but we all know that the Montessori program can be applied to other, language, classrooms, and OJI is the same. ,

[00:09:26] **Delphine:** so but hang on. I'm just cause you’re; you're making me think. So, oh, OGE is an English. Yes. Taught in English. It's geared towards English language learners, but there isn't an OJI program in French. So you would have had to take the training and then based on your knowledge of French, then create. A similar or a streamline, I guess, maybe kind of program yourself.

Right. So you would have taken the ideas in terms of the very structured approach to how OJI or Orton-Gillingham is done in terms of understanding the rules around why a vowel says, oh, instead of awe, for example. So you would have had to take those ideas and create your support program.

[00:10:24] **Kim B:** Well, and that's really interesting. You would clarify that because I actually, it's not reinventing the wheel. I didn't spend hours and hours and hours creating a program. And that is one thing I want to get through today is that we are not talking about a program. We're talking about knowledge. And once you have that knowledge, if I taught Spanish, I could adapt the Orton-Gillingham program to Spanish language learners.

I could adapt the program to. Italian learners. It's like Montessori, Maria Montessori was Italian, but we have a English Montessori here where I lived and we have a French Montessori. It doesn't just, it's, it's an approach. It's a, it's a system that works. So I decided to take this incredible new knowledge I had and say, okay, let's insert French vocabulary.

Let's see what happens. So just to give anyone out there, who's listening a little bit of background information on Orton Gillingham. Orton-Gillingham has been around since 1930 and it falls under the umbrella of a term called structured literacy and structured literacy is a term that was first coined by the international dyslexia association in 2016.

And it encompasses many different approaches, including Orton-Gillingham Barton and Wilson. And it is characterized by, it's an approach that is characterized by being explicit, systematic, cumulative, and integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing. So there's nothing in that definition that says, this is an English language approach.

It is systematic explicit instruction that has provided an accumulative way that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing. And what's really important to note is that an effective structured literacy approach includes the following elements, phonological awareness skills, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and skills, listening, comprehension, reading comprehension, and written expression.

So. Again, these are elements that can be applied in any language. And there's nothing that says this cannot work in French. So I basically took this approach and applied it in my, kindergarten classroom where I had 29 students and they loved it , and you know, I just, I just really want to say that, like, I truly feel that the Orton-Gillingham approach not only changed the way that I teach, but it changed the way that my students saw reading.

They were more motivated. They were more engaged and they felt more successful. So. One thing, you know, I keep saying the one thing I was trying to do was to bring the Orton-Gillingham magic that I had ever only seen in private schools or in private tutoring programs. I want to bring that OGE magic into my FSL classroom.

So I think there's probably a couple of parents listening, who, I mean, my experience with OGE is one-to-one right. So my experience and to be clear, my kids aren't even doing OG. They're doing a Barton method, um, and have been up to this point, but you know, it's that one-to-one intensive support. And I think I'm, I'm guessing that there are families listening, their educators, listening they're whatever.

And they're saying, well, this, this methodology, or this structured literacy idea is man, to be a one-to-one. So, can you talk for a minute about how you can actually take the structured literacy program and, and do it for all students? That it isn't necessarily a one-to-one because those of us who have experienced it, I think we have, we have experienced the idea that it doesn't have to be an intensive one-to-one 50 minutes long.

You can do it as a whole group and still, still get it. So how did you use this system, the structured literacy approach. How did you use this approach as a whole class, rather than a one-to-one? No,

that's, that's an excellent question. And as a student support teacher, I am considered to be tier two. So tier one is considered to be the mainstream classroom and as a tier two SST, what I have found over the years is an increase in.

Referrals for SST support. And so I thought, okay, I've got this, you know, I'm not full time. I'm only 40%, but I've got this. So I went from seeing him about 20 kids to about 58 kids over the last few years. So I was really scratching my head thinking, oh my gosh, why do we have so many struggling readers?

And why is the number, why are the number of referrals increasing? And what I am finding is if we apply a structured literacy approach that is used as explicit instruction, it's systematic, it's not jumping all over the place. There's a lot of reviewing and frequency in the reviewing a lot of opportunities for the child to apply the information.

Then maybe I wouldn't have so many referrals to tier two, because what I was finding was a lot of the students who were referred to me. Didn't necessarily have a reading disability, they just needed that instruction. And I'm going to talk a little bit about it. Later about Nancy Young's reading ladder and the percentage of students who benefit from structured literacy is a hundred percent, but the number of students who need structured literacy is 50%.

So if we provide in tier one of the mainstream classroom, I say an Orton-Gillingham approach Orton-Gillingham truly is essential for students with dyslexia. And one-on-one hourly five times a week is obviously going to. Better than 15 minutes, which is what I can provide students 15 minutes in a small group of five, three times a week.

That is all I can provide. So I'm not trying to say that I am able to provide the same intensity of intervention, but what I'm trying to do is take aspects of Orton-Gillingham using a structured literacy approach and making the most of that 15 minutes I have with those students. And, really being intentional with my instruction.

There is not a moment wasted. The moment they come in that door. We can do a lot of fun stuff in a very short period

[00:17:06] **Delphine:** of time. And I think something that I would love for parents to check out and maybe I'll link it in this episode. Kim, cause I think it's a great example. There's the color purple.

There's a YouTube video, the color purple. And it's a mom who's reading with her child about painting a fence purple. And she goes through the motions of covering up the picture and trying to get her child to read the story. And I actually did this with a student today because the teacher said to me, oh, this child can read this book really, really well read this book.

And it was one of our, you know, predictable readers about the shopping mall. And I covered up each picture and it all of a sudden became harder. And when I pointed out to the student, the word shopping, I said, what's the first letter in shopping. See.

[00:17:52] **Kim B:** Well, let's look

[00:17:53] **Delphine:** Really hard at the first letter. So that for me even was like, okay, but we haven't even learnt the letter C so how do you know that?

That's the word

[00:18:02] **Kim B:** shopping well, and also it's a diagraph, it's actually two letters, right? So it's got

[00:18:10] **Delphine:** a lot of levels. It's complicated, but this, you know, I was told, oh, this, this is no big deal. This child can read this story. No problem. It's, you know, whatever. And, and initially I could see he was he child, the child was looking at the pictures more than the words.

And as soon as I covered up the words for them, it became much more complicated because they were unsure. So even the word we, I said, how do you know, what's the word. I don't know, what's the first letter. I don't know. Well, what sound does it make? I don't know. And those are all the things that then when we get older and the texts gets longer and there isn't a picture anymore.

I mean, how many of your university textbooks pictures in them? Not many in my time, it becomes really complicated. So we need to take those crutches away and really get back down to the basics. And not that, you know, there might be some parts of whole language learning that, that are. That are good, but I think that we need to come back to the basics and start with really those foundational skills of understanding that letters create words that create meaning.

And if you can't get to the basics of letters have sound that allow them to create words that allow you to get meaning that allow you to get understanding. Then we're just always, we're pushing a Boulder uphill and we're never going to get to the top. So, yeah, it's quite challenging. So Kim, let's talk for a minute about just finding support.

Okay. In French in general. And I want to try and keep the conversation focused to Ontario, because I know that, you know, in a province like Quebec, there is probably more out there. But I know as a teacher who has worked in French immersion schools, many of my friends and mentors and teachers would be like, I'm going to Montreal over the summer because I that's where I go by my resources.

That's where I go get, because it was easier to find. So, , and there might be other provinces that, you know, maybe are easier. I don't know, but I'm gonna stick to kind of mainly Ontario and even sort of Eastern Ontario, you know, Southern Ontario. Cause those are the areas that I know. So I don't want to generalize too much because there's the potential that I'm going to have somebody to say, but in my IRA, so we know that it differs, but both as a parent and an educator.

Can you talk a little bit about the struggle of finding support, for French immersion students, because even for me and my French language kids and I live in downtown Toronto, for lack of like, to be really specific. I mean, I live in a pretty big city. It's a pretty diverse city, but when I was looking for resources and tutoring, specifically tutoring for my kids in French, I mean, it was not easy.

And again, I work in a French immersion school, like I at the time. So it just talk a little bit about the challenges that we have there.

[00:21:00] **Kim B:** Yeah. Well, I can admit that it is so hard and like your friends, every time I went to Montreal, I collected lists from teachers in my school. What do you want? And going to indigo chapters there, tell me what books you want.

But I very quickly learned that just because something is in French doesn't mean it is an appropriate resource to use. And so I was bringing home. What will these resources and French, but were they appropriate? And did they align with the science of reading? No, not always. Were there other ways to use them in the classroom?

Absolutely, but I think people, especially French, second language teachers are always looking for the golden ticket. They're looking for that one program that makes their life easier. They want to find that, you know, nicely wrapped box that comes in the mail that says, this is how you teach literacy to your French immersion grade two class.

And after 20 years of teaching, , 15 of those years have been in French immersion. I have realized no one program can replace. Sound teacher knowledge, because even if you find an excellent program and I'm going to talk about some programs and resources later on, you still need to be a critical thinker and know how to use them.

Um, my husband's in technology and he says, a fool with a tool is still a fool. You have to know how to implement it. So, , I just want to throw that caution to the wind. It, we're not constant to the wind, but I do want to throw caution at people when you do buy something in French, make sure it aligns with your teaching practice and better yet the science of reading.

I also want to clarify that I do have two children of my own, and so I am a parent, but my own two children. I have not had difficulty reading. They fall in that 5% that seemed to learn how to read almost by osmosis, however, I often tell people, these people say to me, well, Kim, why are you so passionate about this?

Your own kids? Don't struggle with reading. If your children aren't dyslexic. And I will say I have 53 kids with reading difficulties. I have 53, you have one or two. I have 53 kids. And a lot of my students don't have parents who are actually able to advocate for them. Maybe they had dyslexia themselves.

Maybe they had a really undesirable educational experience. And a lot of them are intimidated by the education system. So I actually get a little mama bear protective, because I. Work in a school that serves one of my city's most vulnerable populations and those parents, um, first of all, can't get to the school easily.

And secondly, certainly, aren't equipped to advocate for their kids. So I, um, it does bring it to the moment, bear in me a little bit because someone needs to advocate for them. Um, I also believe very, very strongly in parent advocacy, um, which is why I chose to do my masters project on supporting parents of children with learning disabilities and, and reading difficulties in FSL programs.

There have been a lot of great positive changes in FSL over the years. As I said, I've been in FSL teacher for 15 years and I've seen some great changes. For example, French immersion has certainly become a more diverse program than it was 15 years ago. When I first started out, we are certainly a more inclusive program, more inclusive, inclusive of students with exceptionalities and learning disabilities.

We have fewer students switching out to the English program. We have increased parent advocacy for keeping their kids in French immersion. However, I feel that we can't just be a more inclusive, diverse program. We actually need to provide the essential services and support. To help those students be successful in French immersion.

So just being a more diverse program, French immersion program, isn't good enough and being inclusive can't just mean including, cause we've done that we are more diverse. We are more inclusive. Now we actually need to be inclusive and provide students with the essential services, skills and strategies that their English program counterparts are receiving.

And so I feel like this too has been a bit of the missing piece of the action plan. In fact, I was, I was on my way to Costco today and I was listening to a podcast called read capita. It's an acronym, R E A D. And it stands for research education advocacy. And I was listening to this episode, getting ready for today.

And I heard this awesome new acronym it's called. Which stands for S L a P slack structured literacy action plan. And it's based on, okay. Yeah, we're inclusive. We're diverse, but what is the action plan? We, what are we doing to actually help support these students? I know when you interviewed Nancy Wise, she made reference to, the, Ontario government released a parent document called French for all, including students with exceptionalities and French immersion.

And I have gone through that with a fine tooth comb, looking for the golden ticket, including these kids. How do I help support them? Because I certainly didn't learn how to help dyslexic students in French second language programs at the faculty of education and something needed to change, , because we're essentially teaching them the same way we did 20 years ago, a way that actually worked for me and for thousands of other kids.

But this is not an approach that works for all kids. So, you know, I, I know many parents look for OJI trained tutors or reading clinics, but there are very, very few Orton-Gillingham or, , Oxford learning that uses the science of reading it for FSL students in French. So I feel that parents are often left on their own.

They don't speak French and during school closures over COVID-19 was exceptionally difficult. We're always telling parents that it's okay, that you don't speak French. It's okay. That your child's in French immersion and you can still support them. However, I don't think parents were prepared or equipped to be at the forefront of their children's education during 26 weeks of school closures.

And we had a lot of kids. In French immersion, who really struggled because they were first at home in the virtual environment, which may not have been ideal for everyone, but also weren't getting the parents support that maybe their English language peers were getting because their parents spoke the language of instruction.

[00:28:06] **Delphine:** Yeah. And it's, I think one of the things I've encountered as a teacher, In French immersion and I didn't teach French immersion, but I supported on the special education side. So I was one of the rare teachers early on in my career when it was, we were just starting to stop moving kids from French immersion to English, because I had a French language background.

I was able to do similar to what you do, in English, in the mornings. And then I did what you do in French in the afternoon. And I, but I didn't have at the time, the information about the science of reading. And so now that I have it, and I've seen it in action with my own children. So that has been the drive for me to bring it to my students in my school and to talk to people like yourself and Nancy Wise and others who really can start to talk about.

Y, we need to start to shift the way we're teaching reading, because we know better, we need to do better so now, right. But, you know, we understand now that there is, you know, there's the Scarborough reading rope, which for me is like that dinning. Okay. Well, my gosh, I get it like to your point of the oral language, to know that in VASH is invalid.

You know, that is that that's important that that understanding the visual connection, the, the verbal skills to be able to express what you're seeing. And when we read, we use our oral language knowledge to anticipate what's coming in the story. And if you don't have that, you can't even begin to understand how the letters work together.

Anyway, we could go on about this for ages and ages, but let's talk a little bit about the human rights council. because some of us listening might know those of us in the know those of us for whom, we have, a deep, need for this to come through, those of us who have children who struggle to read, I have two of them.

I don't know that we'll have a third one who struggles, but for sure, we have two who struggle have struggled, are struggling with reading, this , human rights council. Tribunal that's coming out is important to me as a parent, but it's also really important to me as an educator. And as an administrator in a building, because, part of my role is to, to guide the learning and to guide the education of the children in the building.

And so that means that when these things come out, I need to be paying attention because it means that I need to, I need to change. I need to follow the change that's coming. So. Can you talk a little bit about the right to read, uh, and what are your hopes? Because I know you've been involved with it. What are your hopes for this write to read when it comes out?

We're recording this in October. It's supposed to be out November ish. Um, unfortunately like everything else, pandemic has delayed the release of all of this, and it did interrupt the tribunal's ability to get to families and, and hear stories in person. Now they were able to do it in other ways, which was great.

They, you know, but it has delayed it, which is a little bit unfortunate, but it is coming. And so I'm curious to hear sort of, what the hopes are and, and maybe talk a little bit about the right to read.

[00:31:27] **Kim B:** Absolutely. So I think that the right to read inquiry first and foremost, we'll draw awareness to the fact that, inclusion alone is not enough that we need to change the way that we are instructing students.

We need to change our instructional practices. We need to provide necessary supports and services. I was actually reviewing the update today in anticipation for our conversation tonight. And I was thrilled to hear that they did address students with exceptionalities in French immersion. I was worried that that might actually not be one of their issues to address, but at a minute, 12 minutes, 40 seconds, they do make reference to students in French immersion.

Perhaps with dyslexia or other reading disabilities are disproportionately switched out a French immersion into English.

[00:32:32] **Delphine:** And I just, I need to just point something out really quickly as you're saying that. So what is important to know for families? And, and I know this from personal experience and because I've been told by the psychologist, who's worked with my children, that, that language learning that specific language learning disability, which is what they'll write on the reports at the stead of the word dyslexia, that's a different podcast together, but that language disability is present.

No matter whether the language is English, whether the language is French, whether it's Spanish, whether it's Italian, like eight is not going to matter. So that's why that wording is so important because it really doesn't matter what language the child is learning and that disability or that, , different wiring in the brain, quite frankly, because that's what it is right.

Will be present regardless. So, sorry, go ahead.

[00:33:25] **Kim B:** Keep going. Well, and I agree, and I disagree. I think we are under the assumption, knowing what we know now, a child with dyslexia, it's an invisible disability. They're going to have it in any program and they live with it through their whole lives. It is the instruction that is going to make a difference.

You can't assume if they switch into the English language program, that they're going to have a structured literacy program or a teacher who knows about the science of reading and implementing that. So my argument is, it's so important regardless if it's in the French immersion program or the English language program to provide a structured literacy approach for that child.

However, I do feel that the English program continues to have more services and supports available to them. And so it wasn't going to get into an empower Justy. Jump the gun a little bit for sure. And I know that empower is used across the province for many schools. It, I have never had empower training, so I can't speak to empower.

However, I know that only a very, very limited number of students get the empower. And as I said before, I feel teacher knowledge and teacher training is more important than any program because once the funding runs out for empower, it's gone. And if we used the money that we use to purchase the license for the [00:35:00] empower program to train teachers, French immersion and English, you can't take that away.

That knowledge, there is no that expires for teacher knowledge.

[00:35:12] **Delphine:** I'm part of, I think what stops. Some schools, boards, educational facilities from investing in the empower program is that if that teacher is in your building and they've been trained in empower, it costs X, thousands of dollars to train them in power.

And then let's say the following year, that teacher moves to a new location, and they move that teacher who had that training, who that school invested that money into train and to do all the things they, all of a sudden don't have that teacher anymore. Whereas to your point, if we just trained all teachers in a way that the.

That is scientific, right? In a way that empowers children to learn how to read, but empowers teachers to feel confident, to teach reading in a way that is effective for all students, then to your point of, you know, then it, it, it helps everybody, everybody sort of wins instead of just putting money in one bucket.

[00:36:17] **Kim B:** Well, and I'll be honest, everything I do. I look at through an equity lens. I can't help it. I don't know if it was the way I was raised or. But I, everything I look at is through an equity lens. Is this available for my French immersion students? No, it it's not. And

[00:36:34] **Delphine:** it's not. Yeah. That's some big thing for French immersion teachers is that, but the program isn't offered, but the program, but can I get the program?

Is it in French? That's often what happens?

[00:36:44] **Kim B:** Well, a, is it offered to French immersion students? So that's the question parents need to ask my chosen French immersion empowers an English. Can my child still access it? Hopefully the answer is yes. Secondly, why are we offering English language programs or French immersion students?

If we trained all of the teachers in structured literacy, which is what empower is based on. I mean, I've spoken to enough people to know that they go through all the elements of a structured literacy program using the empower program, but then French immersion students would have access to it. In fact, not just six of them.

All of them. So I feel we would get more bang for our buck if we use that money and train teachers rather than, than just purchase licenses. Yeah. I feel like money is short money short. We have, money doesn't grow on trees. We have a shortage of, of funding. So I would like to say, okay, let's use this money to train the teachers so that our French immersion students have access to.

An evidence-based program because that is what empower is. Yeah.

[00:37:54] **Delphine:** Okay. Let's get back to human rights cause we break right to read. So let's, let's take the train back to the right to read cause all of that is important and you know, definitely worth the conversation. But I also want families to know about right to read.

And my guess is by the time this, this episode is live, that the right to read will be, you know, widely available and will have been finished and we'll be out. So hopefully I'll link it in the description so people can go and look at it, but let's talk. Absolutely

[00:38:22] **Kim B:** well. And I'd like to also go back to, just how, how I've changed my reading approach with regards to the HRC.

, I am hoping that their recommendations include, SST support for students with. With, uh, reading exceptionalities in French immersion. And I am looking at this through a French immersion lens. Obviously this applies to the OHSE or applies to, uh, the English language program too, but not just throwing money at things.

One thing I'm a little bit worried about is the recommendations are going to come out and the government's going to throw money at things. What I think we really need is curriculum reform. We right now we have a curriculum that is outdated and doesn't use evidence-based reading instruction. Um, it does.

Connect research to classroom practice. And what we need is for a revised curriculum to, abolish the reading expectations that are based on the three cuing system. And we need a curriculum reform that integrates reading expectations that are evidence-based and include all the elements of a structured literacy program.

Overall, I just hope to see the Ohr CS report create a more even playing field for students in French immersion and in English. , I'd like to see more equitable access to essential reading instruction for all students and not just for those students who have access to empower or those who are in the English language programs or who have parents who can advocate for them.

I really do hope that the HRC sheds light on the, curriculum and the need for curriculum reform. Yeah.

[00:40:07] **Delphine:** So if we look at the idea of reading and how we teach reading and how we're sort of beginning to evolve that a little bit, and we're beginning to understand, we're beginning to be able to move forward with the idea of how we teach reading.

How is, how is this changing the approach to French immersion and reading?

[00:40:27] **Kim B:** So I, I read a quote, not that long ago, that actually perfectly summarizes the way I feel about reading instruction in French immersion. , the quote is if a child can't learn the way we teach, then maybe we should teach the way they can learn.

And I really liked that because as a student support teacher, I am the go-to person, Kim, this child can't read, what are you going to do about it? And prior to my OG training, I thought, well, I'll put them in a small group and I'll just hammer in those same strategies that you're using in the classroom.

[00:41:00] And that's when I thought. This isn't working. I need to put more tools in my toolbox. Um, so the way I have approached reading instruction since doing my M ed, but also getting my OJI training is looking at the research, staying informed, informing myself, having. An understanding of why I do things. I feel like I was told what to do, but I was always missing the why.

So an infographic that I find to be very impactful, , the infographic is in English, but it applies to FSL classrooms too, is Nancy Young's reading ladder. Nancy Young is a Canadian and she is an experienced special education teacher and researcher. And she developed the ladder of reading in which was updated, I think in 2017 to illustrate what percentage of students learn to read as if through osmosis and which students need explicit, direct instruction.

And so I'll just summarize it really quickly for people who aren't familiar with. The letter of reading, 5% of the general population can learn to read almost effortlessly. And I'll be honest that. I was a straight a student. My parents read to me and somehow I woke up one day and I knew how to read.

However, I was one of the lucky ones, 35% of the general population learn to read with broad instruction. So they go to school, they hear stories. They're in a literacy, rich environment. They do picture walks and things like that. And they learn to read. So that's 40% of the population who falls under that umbrella.

However, Nancy Young says 40 to 50% of students require explicit code based phonics instruction. And at the very top of the ladder, 10 to 15% of students are dyslexic and require explicit systematic multisensory [00:43:00] instruction in reading and writing with frequent and many repetition. So what we need to do is figure out which of those kids.

Are dyslexic and which of those kids just haven't had the instruction they need, because right now those two tiers are getting a little bit mixed up, like which ones just haven't had the instruction they need and which ones are actually dyslexic. So what I finding is we're seeing a lot more students with learning difficulties in French, second language programs, since the Ontario ministry of education released the French for all document.

Um, so we need to ensure that we provide them with explicit, systematic. And I'm a big fan of the multisensory component too. So I'm going to throw that in there, the multisensory instruction, I've got some busy little guys and busy little girls and they need to keep their hands busy. So I do include a very multisensory component.

I've also in addition to, Orton-Gillingham taken other training programs like Deb glaciers, top 10 tools and the big dippers program. And it's opened my eyes to new ways of thinking and approaching reading. This, this, I wish I had found this 20 years ago because this is a life changer and I know, , Duffin you've seen this, but it's an infographic called the simple view of reading.

And the simple view of reading was developed by golf and Turner in 1986. So it's definitely not new, but it has shown to, well, it hasn't been shown. It has never been discovered. Despite numerous attempts, no one has been able to disprove the simple view of reading and what it is. It's an equation that simplifies the reading process.

So in order to achieve reading comprehension, students must be able to do two things. They must be able to decode, which is read the words off the page. Look at the print, put sounds to the print and read the words off the page. They must also be able to attach meaning they have to have oral language skills.

They have to have language abilities in order to attach meaning to those words. And one of the examples that I often use is, after graduating from the faculty of education, I moved to Mexico. I thought it'd be fun to travel Mexico. And I lived there for three years teaching at an American, international school.

It was a big school. And at the end of my first year, I could. Decode. I sounded like a great reader for anyone who knows Spanish. It is very phonetic. One letter makes one sound. So I could, I sounded like a great, great reader. I'm trying to think of some sentence I can say now, but it, it is very phonetic and it's very easy to read.

Um, so I sounded like a great reader. However, I didn't have reading comprehension because I had no clue what I was reading. And so that really opened my eyes to second language learning as a French immersion teacher, I realized I'm doing a great job teaching my kids, how to decode. I've taught them the code in French.

They can decode send them back to the classroom. They can't, they don't have a clue what they've read. They can't tell you. They sound like they can read, but they don't have the language comprehension. They don't have the, the lexicon. The, the word bank per se in their head. So we really need to make sure as French second language teachers, that we are really building on student vocabulary.

So when they do decode the words off the page, they can attach meaning to those words. And the Scarborough reading rope is a similar infographic, but it shows multiple strands of the reading process and those strands in discover a reading road. Actually, I made one for my classroom. I was very excited. I wish this was visual because I could show you my Scarborough reading group.

I put it up on the bulletin board and I walk the students through a structured literacy lesson. We're going to target all of the different strands of the Scarborough reading rope. So overall and just, I know we need to sum things up. I just want to say, like, I know changes. Uh, w it's not chain, no one said change would be easy.

And we're asking a lot of teachers, we're asking a lot of FSL teachers to change the way that they have been teaching for 25, maybe 30 years. It's a mind shift change. It's not going to happen overnight. But the more I read about the science of reading, the more I realized how much I still have yet to learn about the reading process.

And I, I sometimes make the comparison of teachers to GPS, general physicians. I feel like classroom teachers are now being asked to be specialists. So it's like going to your GP and saying, I need, I need heart surgery. I need quadruple bypass surgery. And they'll say, but I'm just your GP. We're asking costume teachers to almost be dyslexia experts, because we don't have special programs for students with dyslexia in the early years.

And so we're asking classroom teachers to adjust their teaching practice, to meet the needs in the regular classroom. And that is not, that is not easy, but I really hope that, you know, the knowledge I have that I can share, it sparks some hope in some teams that they can embrace some change to.

[00:48:25] **Delphine:** Well, and I think part of it too, is that, you know, as teachers, we don't want to be doing it wrong and it's not that we've been doing it wrong.

We just, we didn't know better. Right. At the time what we were doing, what we have been doing has been seen to be the thing to do. And so now what we need to do is be a little bit compassionate to ourselves and say, it's okay, but now we're going to do better. Right? Because again, it goes back to that know better do better.

It's that whole, that whole idea.

[00:48:58] **Kim B:** Well, can I, can I just add to that? I think there's a lot of myths floating around about structured literacy. I think some people think structured literacy is going back to drill and kill. You know, all we do is just drill the kids, drill the kids, and that's not what structured literacy is.

If it has, if it is done effectively, the kids soak it up. They love it. There is not a child I have met who doesn't want to feel successful. And that is what feeds my soul every single day. When I go into work, if I can give this child the confidence to take risks and a few strategies to help them read the words off the page and feel like a successful reader and be a successful reader, I feel like I've done a small part of my job.

, interestingly, there was a. A research article that came out this past week, Dr. Van Bergen. I don't know if you've heard of Dr. Van Bergen. Uh, she's an educational achievement researcher and she published a paper, a research paper called, sorry, which showed that literacy skills actually fuel literacy enjoyment rather than vice-versa.

And I thought this was hilarious because there are still some people, some educators out there in the field who don't know very much about science, of reading and they think structured literacy is drill and kill it. And you're going to kill kids, enjoyment of reading and Dr. Van Bergen's paper actually shows that kids who know how to read, enjoy reading more than those kids who don't know how to read, go figure.

[00:50:36] **Delphine:** Right. Go figure strange. All right. So. How can parents support their kids in learning to read French? So we've talked about sometimes in French immersion, we have parents who are not French language speakers, and that is touted to be okay, all school boards say, it's fine. You don't have to be a French language speaker at home, but if you're not, it can be a little challenging to read French. So I'd be curious to , to kind of, to hear what your thoughts are on how parents can do.

[00:51:06] **Kim B:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, I mean, having done my M ed in supporting parents of children with learning disabilities in French immersion programs, I. Always tell parents that the reading process is cross-linguistic the strategies that you are using in English.

They can be applied to a French language program to also when you're reading aloud to your child, you're actually showing them and teaching them indirectly might not be direct explicit instruction, but you're showing them indirectly the reading process and syntax showing them like the structures of language that, you know, we have a noun and we have an action word, a verb and sentences, and you're you're modeling is essentially what you're doing, but modeling isn't enough, but parents for sure can model.

Fluency and reading expression and pausing it punctuation and pointing out punctuation. I did some videos during school closures that parents felt found very helpful. And these videos taught parents how to use specific instructional tools using magnets, using recipe cards, using whiteboards, using things that you could just find at home.

And I was showing them how to use that, those instructional strategies at home and teaching them the phonics. This letter in French says this, this letter in French says this, but if you have an M and an a, and you blend them together, it says math. Now, when we get to. The alphabetic language in French, not every letter says the same sound as it doesn't English.

So that can be a little bit tricky, but I found that one way I supported, , parents in my school community was by creating these mini videos. They were just five minute videos, very quick and easy to watch and was strategies that give them the most bang for their buck. They didn't have to sit cutting out apples in that had been laminated or anything like that.

It was just using the eight tools you have at home. I also have made a few choice boards and I have made these, you don't speak French that's okay. Choice boards that really emphasize and really reiterate the importance of phonological awareness. So rhyming games, when you're walking around the neighborhood, I spy with my little eyes, something that rhymes with purred.

I see a bird. So yes, the vocabulary is in English, but then when I bring them into school, And now we talk about Lee Milky cream. They hopefully will make that connection and understand that rhyming words means similar ending sounds. So,

[00:53:55] **Delphine:** yeah. The other thing that you know is good to do, if you're a family who doesn't speak French is instead of listening to the radio in English, put the radio on in French, instead of watching that Netflix show in English, if, especially if it's a show they've watched over and over again, just watch it once in French or a couple of times in French, you know, those sorts of things so that they're hearing the language, it's not, , yeah, it's not meant to be complicated.

So for those parents who were like, ah, I don't speak French. No, just it's okay. Like there are other ways

[00:54:26] **Kim B:** to do it well, and exactly, and the listening comprehension is a huge component of the reading comprehension. Um, so the more vocabulary words students have in their minds, the. Better off they are. So I often recommend audio books or public library has done a great job of bringing in some great French books,some audio books.

[00:54:59] **Delphine:** Um, so, so yeah, there, I mean, thanks to technology, we have questions nowadays. There's lots of ways So speaking of libraries, speaking of technology, speaking of resources, you got any good suggestions for, , books that parents can look at. If they're wanting to learn more, whether it's in English or in French, by the way.

But learning more about the science of reading and structured literacy and all of that are there, or even educators who are listening and want to learn more. So not even just parents, what do you think?

[00:55:25] **Kim B:** Absolutely. So what I recommend for every parent of a child, either with dyslexia or for a pint, a parent who suspects that child has dyslexia is.

Apparent document that is found on the international dyslexia associations main page, it's called what every family should know, and it's 16 pages and it truly is what every family should know. If they suspect your child has dyslexia or has dyslexia the other great handbook for educators or the other great [00:56:00] read I would recommend is dyslexia in the classroom, what every teacher needs to know, and that can be downloaded as a PDF on the Ida website.

Parents will often ask me for specific resources for French immersion students with learning difficulties in French immersion. I often don't hand my notes because what I know now versus what I knew in 2015 is huge. So when I did my masters. I didn't know what I know now, but the science of reading and if I could do my EMED all over again, it would all be about the science of reading in FSL programs.

So I'm going to gently suggest these resources for parents, but they don't align with the science of reading. And that would be the Nipissing Parry sound, Catholic district school boards guide for families. It has some great suggestions, some great advice in there, but like I said, knowledge is key.

And so, you know, having your child on an IEP, absolutely that will help, but what's more important is what is on that IEP. And if your child has dyslexia, giving them more time and preferential seating probably won't teach them how to read. So when you're looking at this, these resources specifically for parents of children, with learning disabilities and French immersion, You have to know, you have to educate yourself.

And so yes, IEP is important. Yes, IPR C's are important, but what's more important is actually what's being done in the classroom. And is it the instructional approach that's going to work? In terms of books, uh, I've actually started a science of reading book club for SSTs. And I'm super excited about this because I feel that French immersion students support teachers who don't have the empower program, who don't have as much SST support in their schools who are responsible for the kids in the elementary virtual school are feeling.

A little bit, left in the wind. So there's a lot of support, in this book club and a few of the books that we have read so far are shifting the balance by Jan Burkins and Carrie Yates, , the art and science of teaching primary reading by Christopher Sssshhh and language at the speed of sight by Dr.

Seidenberg, I would also highly recommend to parents and educators reading Louisa moats reading is rocket science, also Louise spear swirling, structured literacy introduction. And if you are not a reader and you find reading difficult the podcast by Emily Hanford at APM reports. So Emily Hanford is a journalist and she has done three groundbreaking podcasts.

They're called hard words. Why children aren't being taught to read. And how a flawed idea is teaching millions of kids to be poor readers. And those are three podcasts. I think every educator needs to listen to.

[00:59:15] **Delphine:** Those are good ones. I have listened to that one, and the, reading is rocket science.

I've read that one as well, which is a lot of aha moments while I read down. What about, websites? I know you talked about podcasts, but there are, you know, I, I certainly find myself at 2:00 AM when I can't sleep going down the Google rabbit hole of how can I help my students do, or how can I help my children do so, where would you guide parents or, and educators,

[00:59:39] **Kim B:** you know, the international dyslexia association of Ontario has a tab for French re with French resources.

So the Ida of Ontario chapter has everything you need. It has the background information on dyslexia screeners, but more importantly for FSL teachers, they do have a list of. Cherry picked resources. And one of those resources I would highly recommend for educators is funny. Meek una Malcolm is a PhD researcher in Toronto, and she has paired with two French immersion teachers, , Nelly Caruso, and Lindsey Cochran.

And they have developed a French resource that mirrors Dr. Kilpatrick's equip for reading success. And it has. Phonological and phonemic awareness intervention activities in French. So yes, phonological awareness skills, art cross-linguistic. Are you going to get more bang for your buck by using French words?

Absolutely. You can throw in a couple of literacy lessons that if you're clapping the syllables for the word peppy young. Ensure that they know cause cause they in Pepe on and know what, what the word means and not just know how to clap the syllables. Also decoding dyslexia, the Ontario chapter D D O N.

That is a phenomenal resource for parents of students with dyslexia. [01:01:00] They also have a roadmap to help parents navigate the education system and the special education services available to their child. So I would look very closely at that and as well, dyslexia, Canada, in fact, dyslexia, Canada is putting on some events specifically for FSL teachers in the coming month because this is a read October market read.

And if you are on social media, , I did create. , Facebook group, , just for the record, this is not a business. I'm not making any money. Every time someone joins this Facebook group, but, um, it's called resources and support for parents of Phi students. And simply it's putting resources out there. So parents don't have to find them themselves.

I've put all of those documents that I just talked about from the Perry sound Nipissing Catholic school board. Also the Algonquin lake shore Catholic school board has a resource, a French immersion resource for parents, and then also there is a great Facebook group called the science of reading.

What I should have, what I should have learned in college. And that, , has a wealth of information as well. So

[01:02:15] **Delphine:** there's so much out there. It's really it's it's I love the best. Those are the best and there's lots of there and it's, it's, it's really great to see. So I'm, I'm excited that, that the shift is coming

[01:02:27] **Kim B:** it's or more.

Isn't always more sometimes it's more. Yes. If you have those four things on your radar, I think your

[01:02:37] **Delphine:** you're doing all right, Kim, is there anywhere else people can find you other than the Facebook group,

[01:02:44] **Kim B:** you can find me in my classroom.

[01:02:47] **Delphine:** I'm not sure that they, that they'll all come running to you.

[01:02:50] **Kim B:** I mean, my classroom, I'm at home, I'm at ballet.

I'm at horseback riding with my, I, I literally am. I'm a teacher. I, and I love my job. [01:03:00] I'm passionate about my job. I'm not a consultant. I, yes, I have my master's, but my, I only did my master's so that I could be a better classroom teacher at the end of the day. I'm trying to help. Parents who don't know the system on the inside.

Like I do. I'm trying to help educators who want to be better, but don't know how. And most of all, I want to help students. I want students to feel successful in French immersion, and I want students to feel like they can be good readers in English and in French. And that is why I'm here.

[01:03:41] **Delphine:** Kim, thank you so much for this conversation tonight there. The, the description notes will be long tonight, so thank you for all of the information that you have shared. I'm excited to get this episode out and share it, your knowledge with others.

[01:03:55] **Kim B:** Well, thank you so much for inviting me and thank you for all the advocacy you do too. You're making a huge difference.

[01:04:02] **Delphine:** One child at a time.

[01:04:03] **Kim B:** Small people can make a big difference.