



Bilingualism – A Superpower Accessible to All at SWLSB


Caroline Erdos, PhD, S-LP(C)

April 29th, 2025

The Special Education Advisory Committee is pleased to offer a

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 **FREE WEBINAR**

LEARNING AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE in the context of special education needs

April 29, 2025 • 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

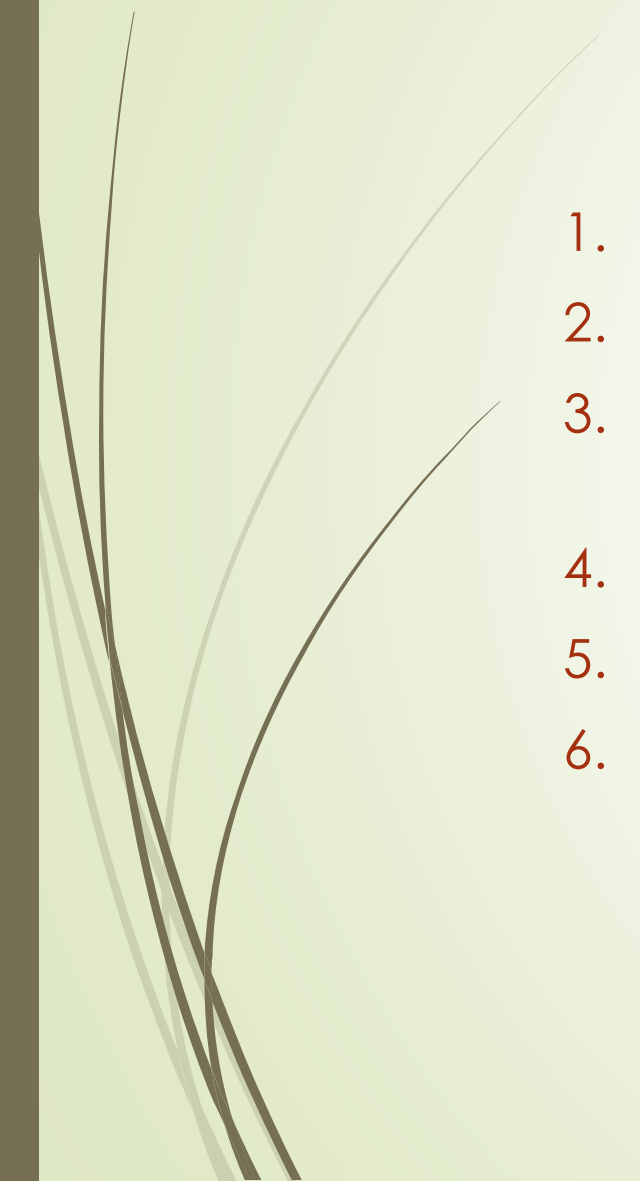
- Explore the advantages of bilingualism
- Debunk common myths
- Examine language and academic outcomes of bilingual children including those with special education needs
- Provide strategies to support students who struggle
- Offer practical ways for caregivers to help their children succeed in a bilingual environment

 **zoom** CLICK on the link in the description to join

Caroline Erdos, PhD, is the Coordinator of Professional and External Services at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board. Previously, she led the Advancing Learning in Differentiation and Inclusion (ALDI) project, supporting resource teachers across Quebec's English-language school boards. With over 20 years of experience as a pediatric speech-language pathologist in a university health center, her expertise includes multilingualism, reading and language disorders, learning disabilities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and craniofacial differences. She has lectured at Canadian universities, presented at conferences across North America, and contributed to various publica-



We will answer these questions and more

- 
1. What are some of the most common language learning myths?
 2. Immersion 60 years later – what does the evidence say?
 3. What does research evidence tell us about bilingualism and biliteracy in the context of diverse education needs?
 4. What does bilingualism and biliteracy look like in our classrooms?
 5. How does dual language school differ from French school?
 6. How can caregivers help?

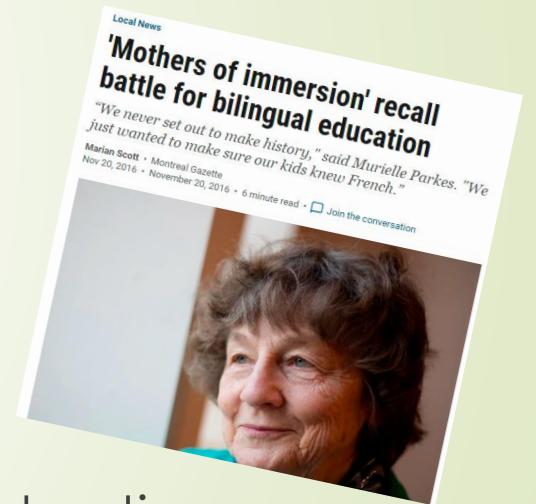


Popular language learning myths

- Learning an additional language is hard
- Bilingualism is a zero sum game
- Code mixing is a sign of confusion
 - Mirror environment
 - Linguistic resource
- A child should master one language before learning another
- Learning to read in two languages is more difficult than learning to read in one
- See also <https://www.ecsd.net/language-mythbusters> (Dr. Nancy Wise)

60 years of French Immersion in Quebec

- French Immersion **program** = subject other than language arts in French
- French Immersion **school** = at least 50% French instruction in one grade level
- Early Immersion
 - French K, grade 1, and grade 2
 - Begin English language arts in grade 2 or 3
 - English reading and writing usually on track after 1 to 2 years of formal English reading and writing instruction



What parents and students should know about bilingualism and multilingualism

1. More than 2/3 of the world speak at least 2 languages
 - Europe (67%)
 - Canada (40%)
 - India (25%)
 - United States (20%)
2. Bilingual advantages include
 - a) higher employment rate and higher income



Financial Post

<https://financialpost.com> › business-essentials › bilingu... ⋮

Bilingual employees earn more money than those who ...

Aug 16, 2021 — **Bilingual employees** can earn between 5 per cent and 20 per cent **more** money per hour than those who speak only one language. In a world where ...

What parents and students should know about bilingualism and multilingualism

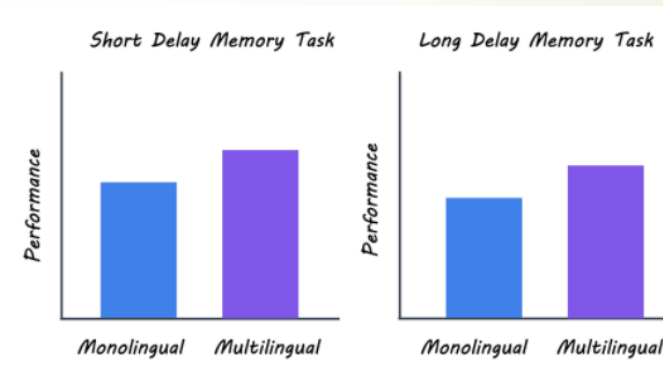
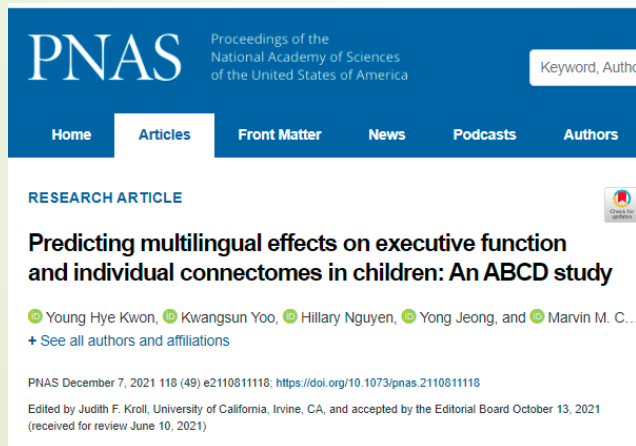
2. Bilingual advantages include
 - a) higher employment rate and higher income
 - b) increased possibilities for socialization and travel
 - c) increased opportunities for community support – including health and social services
 - d) a greater openness to differences



What parents and students should know about bilingualism and multilingualism

2. Bilingual advantages include

- a) higher employment rate and higher income
- b) increased possibilities for socialization and travel
- c) a greater openness to differences
- d) Increased opportunities for community support
- e) superior cognitive outcomes
 - i. working memory advantage




<https://www.brainpost.co/weekly-brainpost/2021/12/14/multilingual-language-experience-affects-cognitive-function-and-modulates-functional-brain-connectivity>

What parents and students should know about bilingualism and multilingualism

2. Bilingual advantages include
 - e) superior cognitive outcomes
 - i. working memory advantage
 - ii. selective attention advantage
 - iii. metalinguistic awareness advantage
 - iv. delayed age of appearance of dementia symptoms
3. THE most effective way to learn an additional language well enough to function in that language – Immersion programs
 - i.e., teaching subjects in another language
4. Students in Immersion programs do **as well or better** academically than their peers in English-only programs
 - when assessed in English or in French
 - across different subjects







Factors that influence the rate of acquisition of an additional language

- Age of acquisition
- Structure of the first language
- Language ability
- Personality
- Motivation
- Quantity of exposure and practice
- Quality of exposure

**What about
students with
diverse learning
needs?**

The background of the slide is a light green color. On the right side, there are several thin, curved green lines that sweep across the space, adding a modern, abstract design element. A single vertical green line is positioned to the right of the text.



Children raised in monolingual versus bilingual homes

Comparing profiles, severity and language abilities of monolingual versus bilingual children with

- ▶ language disorder
- ▶ Down syndrome
- ▶ autism*

BILINGUAL ≥ MONOLINGUAL

* Superior outcomes in some cases

Children raised in monolingual versus bilingual homes

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder from Bilingual Families: a Systematic Review

Review Paper | Published: 29 July 2014

Volume 2, pages 26–38, (2015) [Cite this article](#)

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[Heather Drysdale](#), [Larah van der Meer](#)  & [Debora Kagohara](#)

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Abstract

Because social communication impairment is a defining feature of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), making the right decision regarding language use for bilingual families of children with ASD is pertinent. The present review evaluated eight studies identified as addressing bilingual language development in 182 children with ASD and issues/perceptions of bilingualism in 62 parents of children with ASD. Studies were summarized in terms of participants, languages spoken and communication level, assessment/intervention, instruments, main findings, and evidence of bilingual language development. Findings suggested bilingualism does not have a negative impact on language development for children with ASD, but the majority of parents reported that practitioners predominantly advised against providing a bilingual environment. Evidence-based recommendations regarding the adoption of bilingualism for families of children with ASD are discussed.

[Drysdale et al., 2015](#), [Paradis & Govindarajan, 2018](#); [Wang et al., 2018](#)

Diverse needs in the context of Immersion versus non-Immersion education

Students with **language disorder, learning disability, developmental delay, emotional problems** in dual language (Immersion) programs

- Same English-L1 outcomes
- Same or superior academic outcomes (history, science, math)
- Superior L2 outcomes

Students with **reading difficulty** learning to read in 2 languages

- Superior phonological awareness
- Superior decoding
- Faster rate of reading comprehension growth

Diverse needs in the context of Immersion versus non-Immersion education

Home / Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education, Volume 9, Number 2



Access and outcomes of children with special education needs in Early French Immersion

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Authors: Kay-Raining Bird, Elizabeth; Genesee, Fred; Sutton, Ann; Chen, Xi; Oracheski, Joan; Pagan, Stephanie; Squires, Bonita; Burchell, Diana; Sorenson Duncan, Tamara
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References
Citations
Supplementary Data

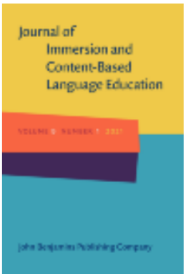
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Abstract | References | Citations | Supplementary Data

Abstract

This study investigated access to and outcomes of Early French Immersion (EFI) for students with special education needs (SEN) attending a large school board in Canada. Data analysis was carried out on: provincially mandated achievement test scores for all Grade 3 students with SEN participating over a three-year period ($n=705$) who attended either EFI or English programs; standardized French and English language and reading scores for a small subset of students ($n=20$); and interviews with parents of Grade 4 students in EFI ($n=9$). Results revealed lower participation but higher English academic and language performance for students with SEN in the EFI program as well as development of French language and reading skills. Interviewed parents often believed children with SEN 'could not handle' EFI and that withdrawal should be an option in response to learning difficulties. Implications for inclusive practices in EFI are discussed.

Students with diverse needs from minority home language contexts in Immersion


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Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education

Academic achievement of minority home language students with special education needs in English language of instruction and French immersion programs

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Author(s): Ann Sutton¹ , Fred Genesee², Elizabeth Kay-Raining Bird³, Xi Chen⁴, Tamara Sorenson Duncan⁵, Stephanie Pagan⁶, Joan Oracheski⁶


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Source: Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education


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 **Abstract**


 Full-Text


 Figures & Tables

 References (56)

 Cited By

 Supplements


 Metrics

 Related Content

Abstract

This study explored the academic achievement of students who speak a minority language (ML) at home (i.e., a language other than the official languages of Canada, English and French) and who have special education needs (SEN), in two educational programs that differed in language of instruction: English language of instruction (ELoI), and Early French Immersion (EFI). The proportion of students ($n = 131$) meeting the provincial standard in reading, writing, and mathematics and the effect of gender, place of birth, socio-economic status, English proficiency level, and program were analyzed. Writing was the strongest domain, followed by reading and mathematics. ML-SEN students were equally likely to meet the provincial standard whether in ELoI or EFI, and there were few significant predictors of achievement. Participating in EFI did not increase students' risk of academic difficulty. Additional supports may be beneficial to ML-SEN students in ELoI and EFI programs.

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Taken together, students with or without diverse learning needs can benefit from bilingual programs

Despite less exposure to each language than students in monolingual programs, students in bilingual programs

- acquire comparable levels of conversational and reading and writing proficiency in **English**. Adding more English does not change anything
- perform **as well or better** in terms of **academic achievement** (math, science, history) **in English and French**
- attain proficiency in **French that is significantly superior** to that obtained through regular FSL (core)


This is equally true of students with diverse learning needs for whom the **social and health support benefits may be even more critical**.



Why might students in bilingual programs do as well or better academically than their peers in monolingual programs?

- ▶ Common Underlying Proficiency (Cummins, 1991)
- ▶ Greater intensity of 2nd language instruction = more time spent on literacy
 - ▶ Second chance to learn to read and write
- ▶ Boost to self-esteem and self-confidence because teachers expect all students to still be acquiring the language
- ▶ Interactive and multimodal teaching strategies critical for diverse learners are at the core of second language instruction

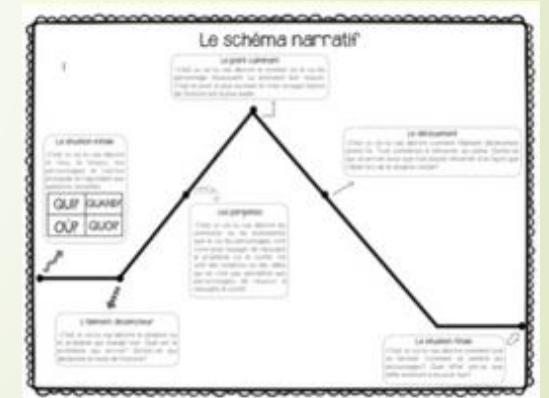
**What does
bilingualism
and biliteracy
look like in the
classroom?**

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Maximizing second language outcomes by reducing barriers



- Optimal pedagogical practices
 - Avoiding language silos
 - Ensuring that content is cognitively engaging
 - Setting expectations that are not too low or too high
 - Alignment with curriculum
 - Alignment with student ability
- Maximizing teacher collaboration
 - Learning routines
 - Themes
 - Classroom management
 - Visual supports
- Providing supports in both languages
 - Teacher support
 - Technology



Facilitating language transfer with literacy instruction

- Similar dependence on syllable structure:
 - go – got
 - vélo – sol
- Syllable reduction obscures vowel sounds in English; look to French cognates for help.
 - animal; animal
 - dinsaur; dinosaure
 - indestructible, possible vs. capable, adorable



He saw fish of multiple different colours.

Engaging pedagogical practices

learn


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EDUCATORS STUDENTS PARENTS COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

SECONDARY CURRICULUM
Ludopédagogie

I WANT TO TEACH > SECONDARY CURRICULUM > FRANÇAIS, LANGUE SECONDE > LUDOPÉDAGOGIE



Chaque homme cache en lui un enfant qui veut jouer.
Friedrich Nietzsche- Artiste, écrivain, Philosophe (1844 - 1900)

En français, langue seconde, le jeu permet d'aborder ou de renforcer les concepts langagiers des trois compétences dans un milieu plus détendu, moins menaçant surtout pour des apprenants pour qui l'acquisition d'une deuxième langue peut être un défi. Cela met l'accent sur les rapports, sur le savoir-être en groupe tout en traitant le contenu à apprendre et cela permet aux apprenants un peu moins forts académiquement de contribuer en utilisant d'autres forces ou habiletés telles la dextérité, la résolution de problème ou le leadership.

Voici un article sur la ludopédagogie afin d'en apprendre davantage. [Visiter la page](#)

Télécharger tous les jeux en un seul document PDF


+ Des jeux d'équipe

[Sample video](#)

SECONDAIRE

Guide de l'enseignant

ENSEIGNER > SECONDAIRE > FRANÇAIS, LANGUE SECONDE > GUIDE DE L'ENSEIGNANT



Guide pour l'enseignement du français, langue seconde
Persévérer et progresser en milieu anglophone minoritaire

+ À propos

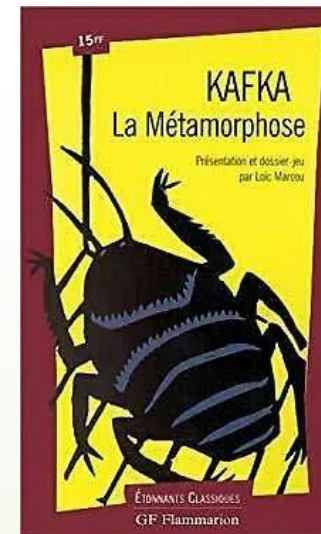
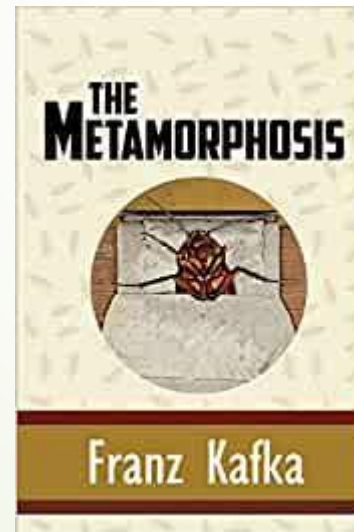
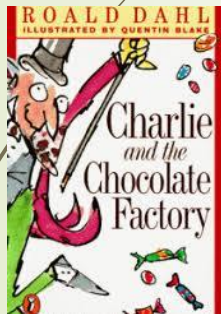
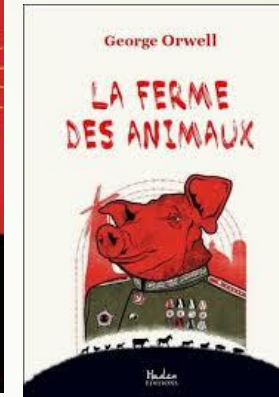
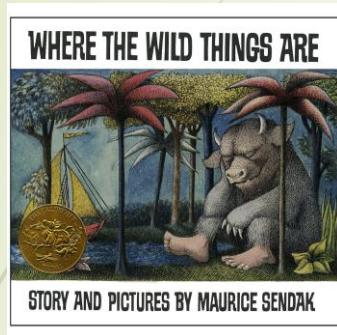
+ Objectif du guide

+ Historique du projet

+ Approches influençant les pistes proposées

[Sample resource](#)

Facilitating language transfer with books



See also <https://www.storybookscanada.ca/>

Translanguaging

A learner-centred approach that supports the use and development of all the student's languages

Phonological awareness



Vidéos - Laboratoire Élodil (3:23-)

Translanguaging

A learner-centred approach that supports the use and development of all the student's languages

Vocabulary



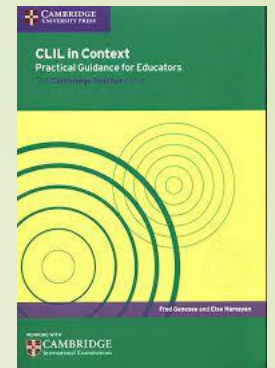
Vidéos - Laboratoire Élodil (3:23-)

Written production

- Outline – L1 or L2
- Rough draft – L1
- Final draft – L2

I can use
all of me!

Providing content and language integrated learning opportunities



122 | Fred Genesee and Else Hamayan

APPENDIX 4:A UNIT-PLANNING TOOL

Topic:	
Big ideas:	
Time frame:	
Content objectives:	Content-compatible language objectives:
	Content-obligatory language objectives:
Cross-linguistic objectives:	
Cross-cultural objectives:	
General learning-skills objectives:	
Background knowledge needed:	
Assessment:	

123 | Planning for content and language integrated instruction

PREVIEW PHASE: Teaching activities: Assessment:	Grouping arrangements:
FOCUSED-LEARNING PHASE: Teaching activities: Assessment:	Grouping arrangements:
EXTENSION PHASE: Teaching activities: Assessment:	Grouping arrangements:
Materials:	
Assessment at the end of lesson:	


**How does
attending a
bilingual program
differ from
attending French
school?**

First, a few more myths

- French is harder to learn than English
 - Word spelling – English
 - Grammar - French
- Only French high school can provide high-level written French

	Enrichi
Interagir en français	33%
Produire des textes variées en français	33%
Lire des textes courants et littéraires en français	34%

- « We are francophone so my child will obtain better grades in French school »



How does bilingual English school differ from French school?

- Significantly higher graduation rates (English vs. French public system)
- Bilingual setting culture is different from monolingual setting culture
- High value placed on multilingualism and multiculturalism
- A focus on pedagogical strategies that maximize learning for bilingual students
 - Interactive
 - Multimodal
 - Use one language as a bootstrap for the other
- A more accurate student portrait of strengths and areas to work on
- A second chance to « get it »



I can use
all of me!

**What do
interventions &
supports look like in
the context of
bilingual
education?**

The background of the slide is a light green gradient. On the right side, there are several thin, curved green lines that sweep across the space, adding a modern, abstract design element. A single vertical green line is also present, positioned to the right of the main text block.



Language(s) of intervention and supports

- **Bilingual intervention** leads to superior gains
 - Not usually available in French schools

Ebert, Kohnert, Pham, Disher, & Payesteh, 2014;
Côté, Savage, & Petscher, 2021; Paradis,
Genesee, & Crago, 2021

Aligning technology to the need in both languages

31



**How can
parents help?**

The background of the slide is a light green gradient. On the right side, there are several thin, curved green lines that sweep across the space, adding a modern, abstract design element.


Families can help support language learning

- Rich communicative exchanges in the **home language**
- Preview classroom themes in the home language
- <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeq/ressources-pedagogiques/Transfert-apprentissages-langue-seconde.pdf> (page 42)
- In conversation, show that you value the second language
- Explore extracurricular activities in the second language (e.g., karate, soccer, piano)
- Treat languages like any other subject that is necessary
- Now that you know, help debunk the myths and share the advantages of bilingualism





Supporting learning at home

- Target precise area of difficulty
 - Phonemic awareness
 - Letter-sound knowledge
 - Vocabulary
 - Reading comprehension
 - Inference
 - Text structure
 - Comprehension
- 

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Questions/comments:

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