

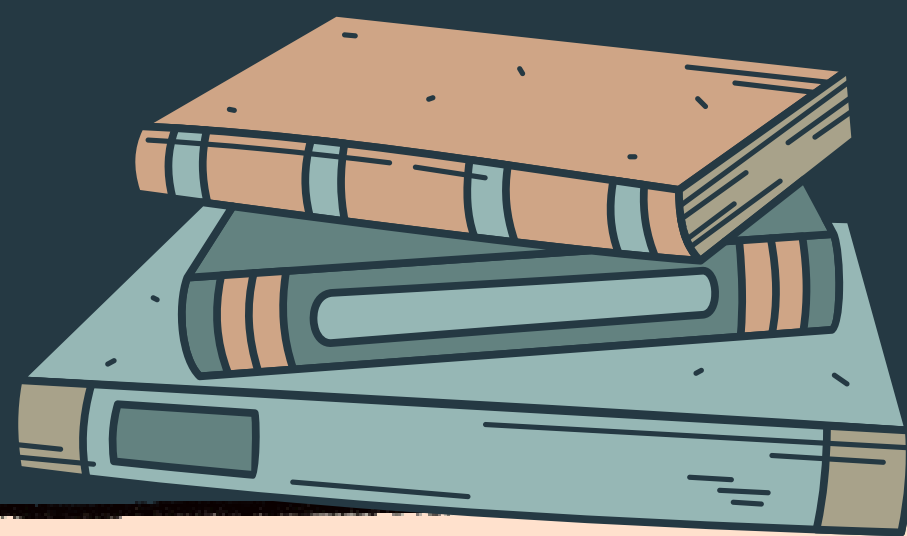
Using Talk to Motivate Readers

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Sringboards 2026

Who am I?

ELA teacher at Joliette High School since

2004: Teaching in an English school with a large percentage of predominantly francophone speakers in a socio-economically disadvantaged area poses the challenge of finding literature for students at different reading comprehension levels.



Who I teach

About a third of the students at my school have an IEP, half of which include language-based needs and adaptations. The majority of my students in need are reading at two levels below their grade level. This is most prominent with younger students.



Why Talk is Important

I have always emphasised Reading and Writing
However, in engaging with my students in more informal
talk, I have noticed:



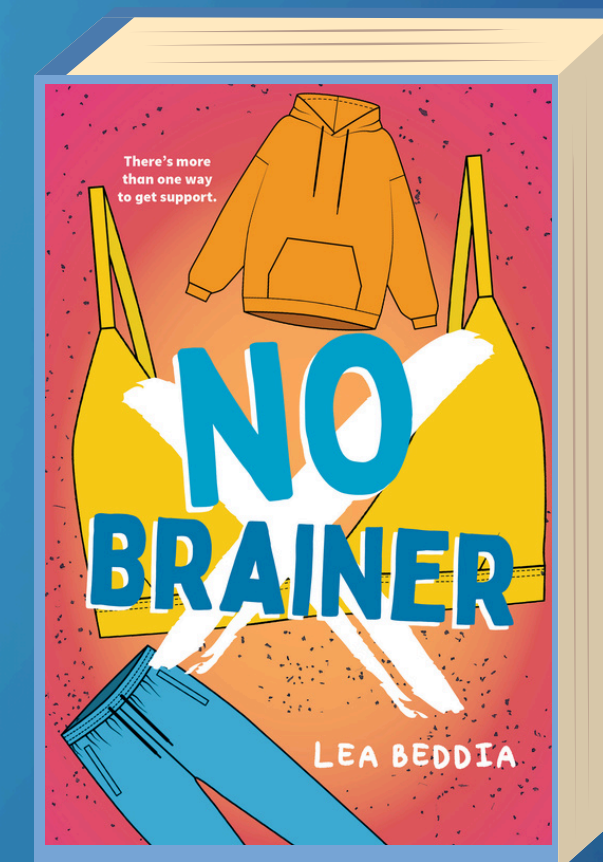
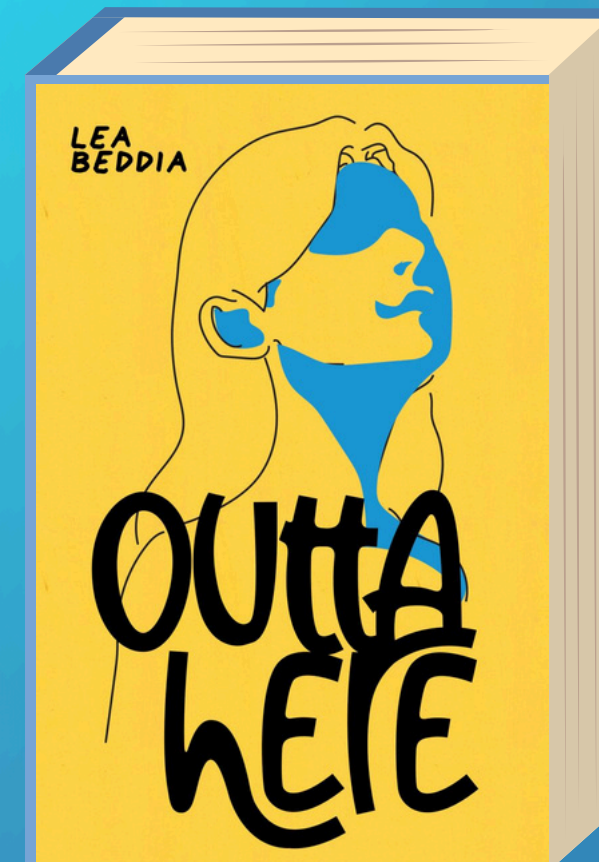
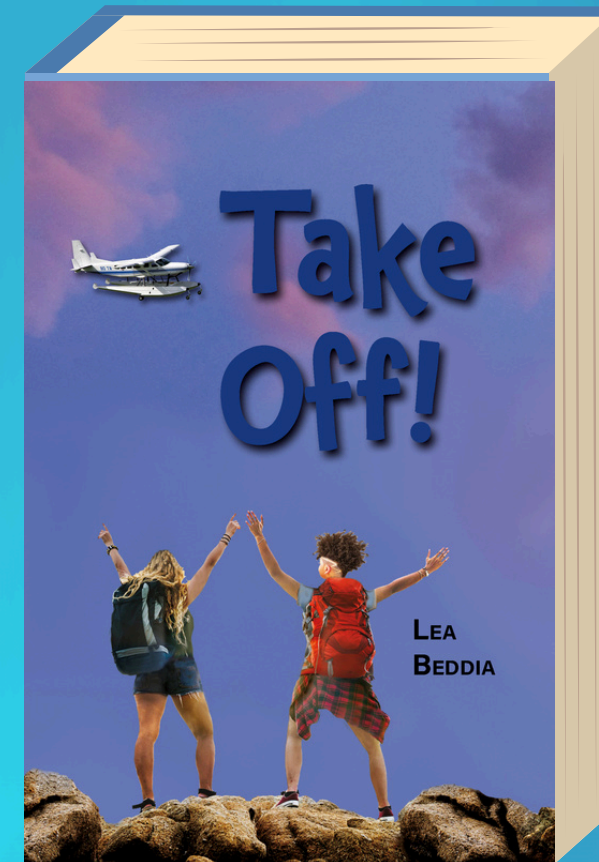
- Easier time for students to articulate ideas in writing.
- Reading with greater fluency. (Especially for second language learners).
- Stronger ability to recognise correct words in sentence contexts.

**More positive interactions with students = less discipline
issues**



As an author...

I am also the author of four novels for struggling readers (Hi-Lo). My goal is to provide accessible literature to all readers, and to get students **TALKING about books.**




What We'll Cover Today:

- Finding time for natural talk.
- Using talk to build community.
- Making Students accountable for talk.
- From Talk to Literacy



**FINDING TIME FOR
TALK.**





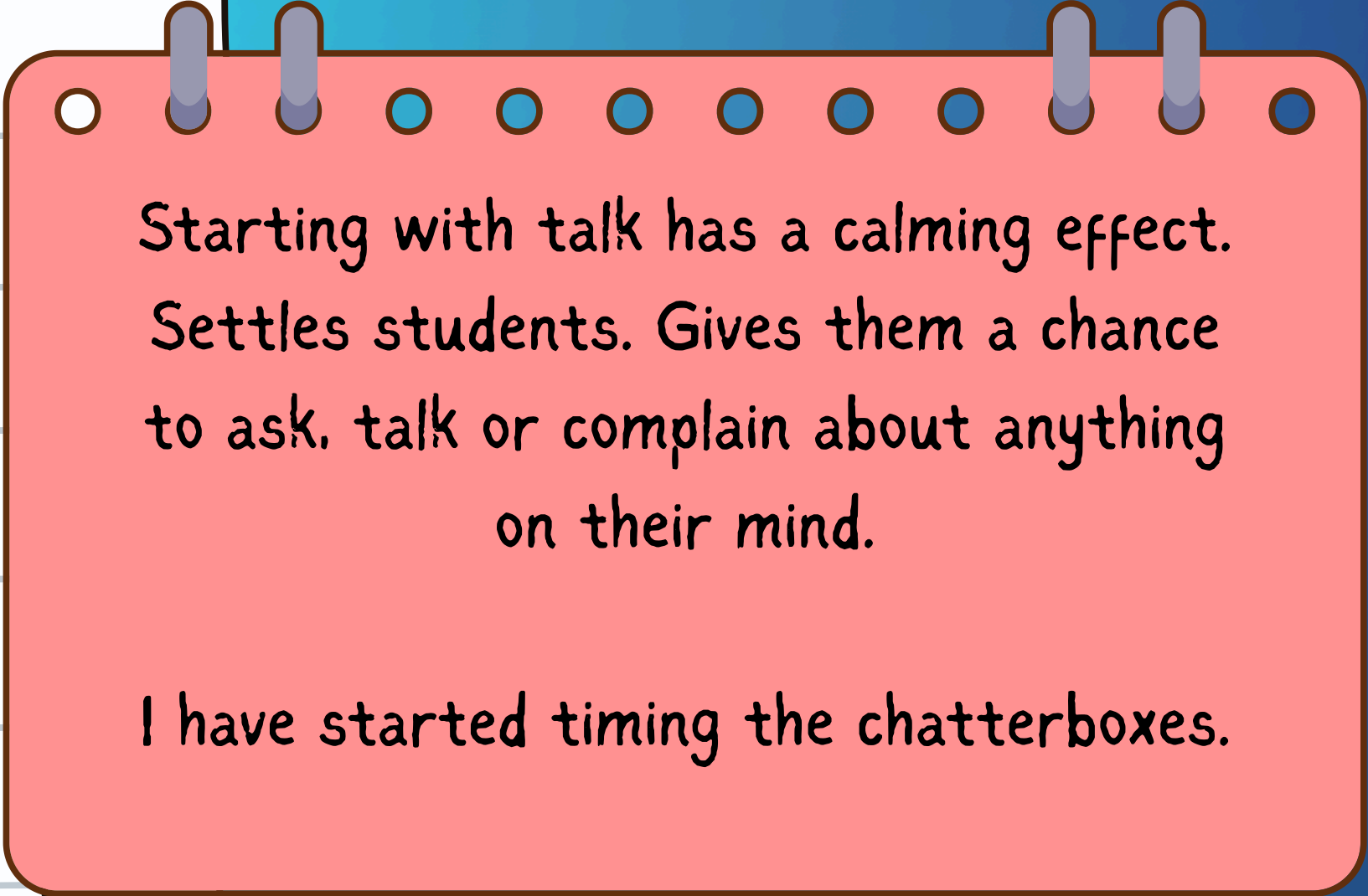
How I split up a 75-minute class

Welcome, and a little about my day so far.
Something relatable.

15- minute discussion where students get to share whatever they want, guided by me.

30 minutes of writing (can be a writing mini lesson, grammar, or story writing)

30 minutes of reading or reading comprehension work.



Starting with talk has a calming effect. Settles students. Gives them a chance to ask, talk or complain about anything on their mind.

I have started timing the chatterboxes.



Finding Time for Talk and how to make it natural.



Eavesdrop and build on
students' conversations.

How? When?

Be the first one in the class, door open.

Just before the bell, "tune in" to what
they're saying.

Address it, add to it. Ask them a question.
Let them continue talking after the
bell, then address the class*.

*Only when it's appropriate to do so!



Dedicated time
for talk

15 minutes at the beginning of each class. Choose topics that generate opinions, or spark personal experiences. Here are a few I use in rotation:

Bragging Rights

Apology, Appreciate, Acknowledge

What has to Change?

What's Good?

If I could, I would...

In the news...

**USING TALK TO
BUILD COMMUNITY**



Elevate Turn and Talk

Topic Ideas

- What's your problem?
- What needs to change?
- Apology/Appreciation/
Acknowledgement
- Have you heard about?
- If I could I would...
- Eventually, kids start off the class by striking up a conversation.

Why Do It:

Promote belonging and build community.
Get to know your students.
Build trust.

Barriers: Students with language difficulties, or who are shy, anxious or need time to think of what to say: Read this.

Overcoming
Barriers: Ensuring you
include all learners in
the discussion.

Provide students with
choice cards:

Agree, disagree, Yes/No,
etc to keep responses
simple.

For open-ended questions,
white boards work too

Disagree

Agree

Overcoming Barriers

Provide
students with
reasoning cards
to answer why
they
agree/disagree

Feeling

What I
saw/heard

Personal
Experience

Ensuring meaningful talk



- Make thoughtful pairings.
- Give student groups ice breakers.
- Sentence starters to help keep them on track.
- Walk and Talk
- Hero Groups and Gifts.
- Anchor charts



**STUDENT
ACCOUNTABILITY
FOR TALK**



Making Students Accountable for Talk

Every Two weeks (or so) students are given a sheet to fill out where they record their participation and talk.

A lot of our time for talk is informal, sparked by my student's curiosities, gripes, questions, etc. I indulge their complaints (and balance that with asking them to find solutions)

This EMPOWERS them to talk more.

I pick up the sheet for evaluation.



The process takes
preparing for
talk from this



To this



Talk Evaluation Sheet

How it works:

Fill out any 3 to 5 of the following.

Explain, in detail, how you
participated

Each entry counts for two points

Three entries will give you a 6/10,
four an 8/10 and Five a 10/10. 10 points
is the maximum

Double Points: Talk about a book, any
book and you get FOUR points!!!

Name: _____

Collected every day _____

Teacher: _____

Evaluating Talk

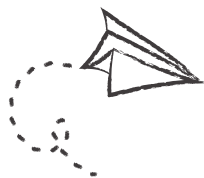
To be evaluated for your talk competency, you will be expected to fill out and return this checklist once a cycle. Each entry is worth 2 marks. The total is marked on 10 (look for double points!). Informal discussions outside of class can also count! Keep track. Give a clear EXPLANATION. Remind me of when and how you participated!



Read aloud

To get your marks here, you need to read at least a page, or read several short paragraphs over time that are equivalent to a page. Tell me what you read, not just the page number.

EXPLAIN WHAT YOU READ



Answered a Question

What was the question and what was your answer? Give context to the question: explain what we were doing in class at the time.

EXPLAIN WHAT WAS ASKED/ANSWERED

Asked a question

What thought-provoking or curiosity-driven question did you ask the teacher or the class? Was it part of a discussion? How did it contribute to what we are learning? What answer did you get?





An informal talk with your teacher

Feel free to strike up a conversation before or after class: at recess, lunch or after school. If you find me and I am available to talk, then I want to hear what you've got going on.

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT

Talk about a book you've read: Double Points!

We can talk books all day, but go ahead and talk about what you're reading. Is there something you'd like to read? Your teacher might have tonnes of recommendations. Or maybe you'd like to recommend something to them!



I shared my work

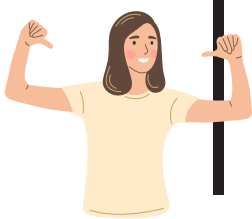
The best way to get feedback is to share your work. To the class or one-on-one, feel free to read what you've got so far.

WHAT I SHARED/FEEDBACK I RECEIVED

Bragging Rights

Tell us something you're proud of, something you've accomplished or something you're looking forward to. Be prepared to answer some follow-up questions.

WHAT'S WORTH BRAGGING ABOUT?



**FROM TALK TO
LITERACY**



Talking about books:
Know your readers.



Educators tend to label struggling students as *reluctant* readers, but most students want to read. They are striving to do what comes naturally to others. Fostering discussions about books is one way to build curiosity and excitement about books.

Consider Hi-Lo Books (High interest low pressure)

Why they're great for the classroom:

More proficient readers notice subtext and emotional character arcs. When it comes to literal questions about the text, struggling students get to shine. No one feels left out, and everyone can share.



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Books Made for Struggling Readers

STYLE

Simple sentence structure and vocabulary. Short chapters. Little to no use of metaphor. Linear plot. Few characters. Action, high stakes, high emotional resonance.

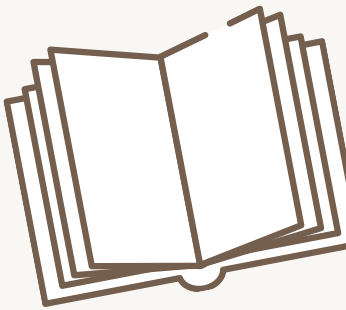
FORMAT

Large print and margins.
Line spacing. Between 8,000 and 16,000 words.
(60-120 pages)



AUDIENCE

Struggling readers. Students with learning difficulties. Students with neurological differences. Second language learners. Everyone who loves a good book.



Where to find the Books

A few Canadian Publishers publish Hi-Lo Books for Middle Grade and Young Adults:

Orca Books offers Fiction and Nonfiction for all levels. They have teacher resources, translated books, digital books, audio books, accessible books, and you can request FREE review copies to read before ordering. They create books with the classroom in mind!

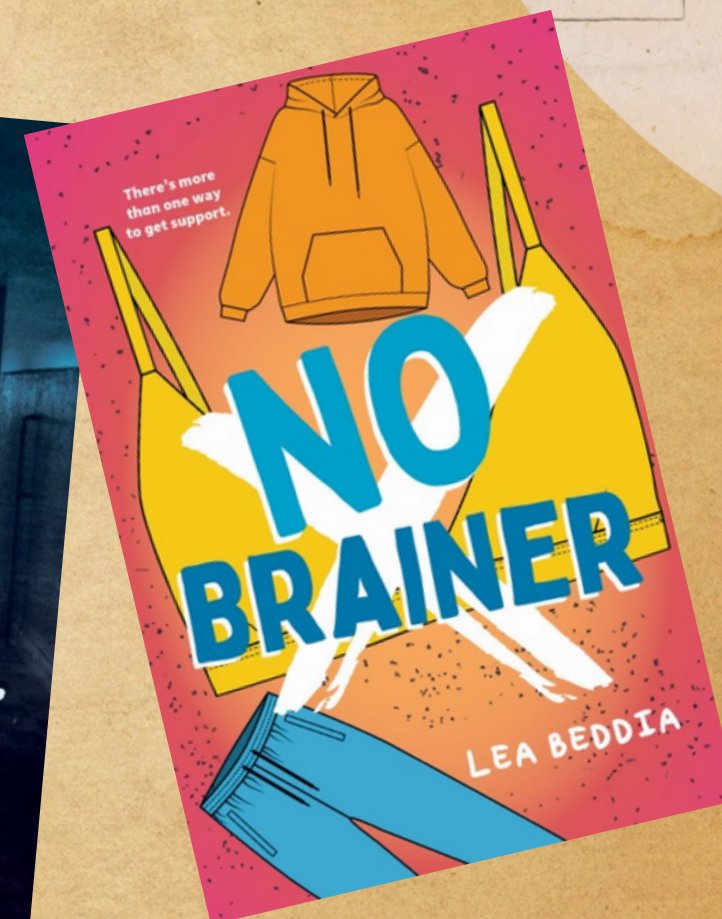
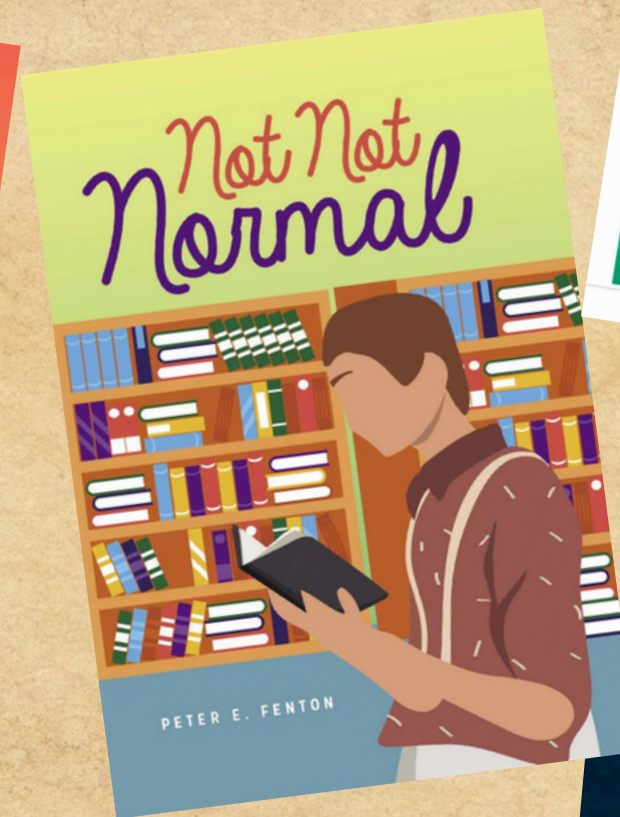
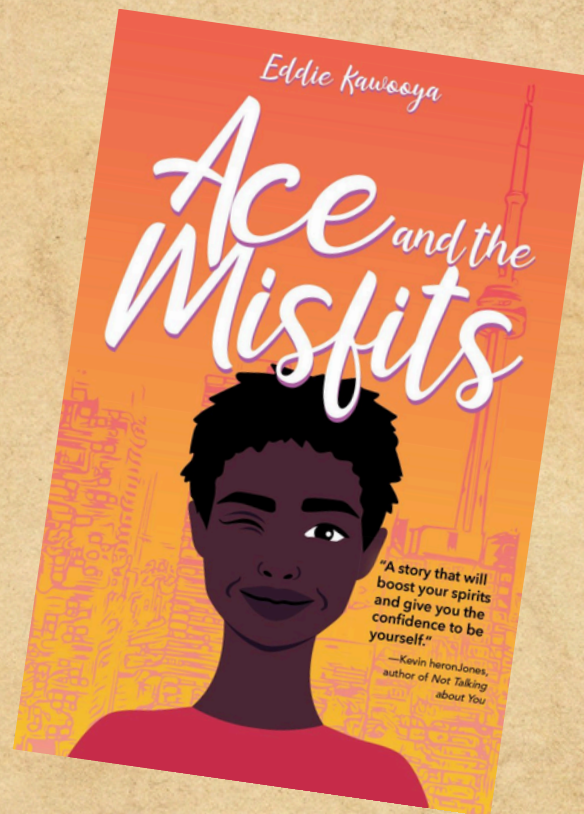
www.orcabook.com



Lorimer Children and Teens offers Fiction, Nonfiction and several fiction and nonfiction series along with educator resources.

They also have a “Real Love” series featuring Queer romance. They also publish for adults.

lorimer.ca/childrens



How to incorporate talk with reading



... and fell in love with it.

A Day Off To READ!!!

Students walk into a class filled with books, and are allowed a free class to shop around.

The mindset about reading becomes positive.

Bring candy, hot chocolate, whatever works.

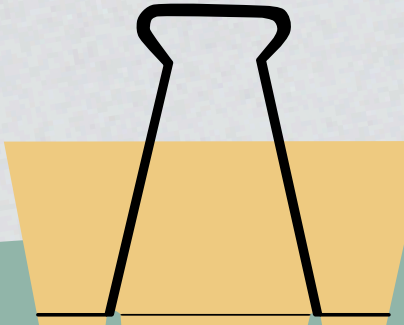
I often start with picture books (with older students). It's low pressure, nostalgic, fun and quick.

Engage them in conversation about the books.

It starts with A Day Off to Read

This Works best When:
Teachers adapt their
mindset. Our goal tends to
be to get students to
finish a book.

Keep in mind the ultimate
purpose: Get kids excited
about books by talking
about them and ultimately
choosing to read for
pleasure



Allow time for discovery
Allow students to choose
their book.

Allow them to read aloud to
each other, question each
other or talk about their
books.

Prioritize
Talk

Talk first,
Write later

Take Think Pair
Share and turn it
around

Talk, Repeat,
Reflect

All in the
context of what
they're reading.

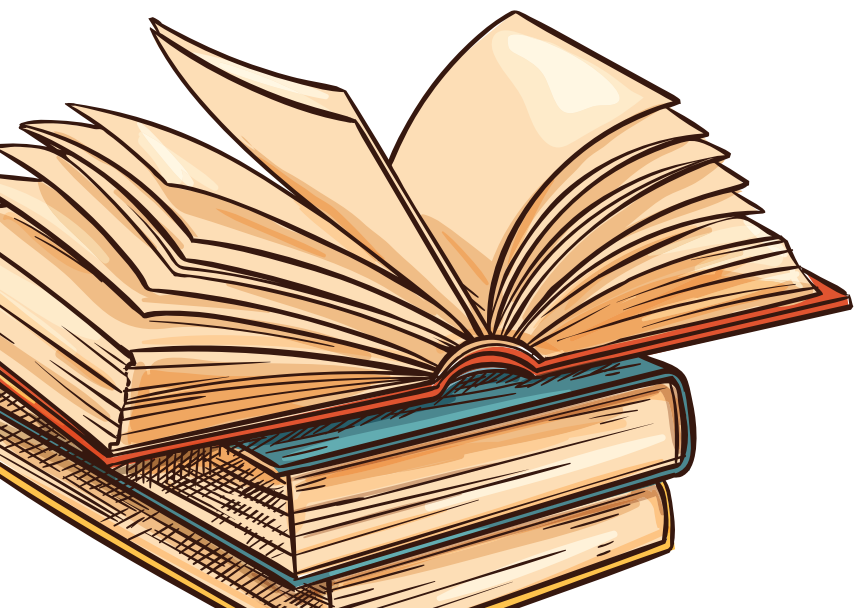
Click for reading sprints

**A secret to getting students to talk
about books**

**(Including the trouble-makers.
Including the kids who don't read.)**

Talk the talk. Walk the walk.

Literally!





Talk About Books!

Let students see you read books. “Read” in Detention hall, or during supervision duty.

Have a book in your hands as you walk in the hall. They will ask you what you’re reading. Tell them.

If they saw the movie based on the book, talk to them about the movie. Create connections with your students.

They will recognize it when you bring it to class. Lend it to them. They know you’re giving up something special to you!





Reach Out



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