Triple R Teaching

Hello and welcome to Episode 103 of the podcast! Today I have a very special interview with Kate Winn. I reached out to Kate to ask her if she would speak on my podcast when I saw a wonderful webinar she had given about structured literacy in kindergarten. So in this episode we talk about Kate's movement from balanced to structured literacy and what teaching reading with a structured approach looks like in her kindergarten classroom.

Anna Geiger: Hello everyone! Welcome to the podcast. Today I'm very excited to welcome Kate Winn. I watched a YouTube webinar that she had given about teaching with structured literacy and it was amazing. It was how she teaches it in kindergarten, and I knew we needed to talk to her about how she made the move from a balanced to a structured literacy approach and also to hear how she applies all this information in her day to day teaching. I was so excited that she agreed to come on the podcast. Welcome, Kate!

Kate Winn: Thanks so much, Anna. I was thrilled when you asked me and I'm so happy to be here talking to you today.

Anna Geiger: Before we turned on the recording, you said that you transitioned from second and third grade down to kindergarten. Can you talk to us a little bit about that and how you realized there needed to be some change in how you were teaching?

Kate Winn: Sure. So I've been teaching for 22 years, a huge range of different grades and subjects and I had, as you said, spent a couple years, or a few years, in the sort of grade 2, 3, 4 range, and then I moved down seven years ago to kindergarten.

That was when I first started to realize maybe something was wrong with balanced literacy because in kindergarten you really are responsible for that, for introducing that foundational piece, right? And so I had some tools that were okay and some tools that weren't and I was realizing, "Okay, the kids are really not reading, they're guessing." It just kind of struck me that, "This can't be the right way to do it." So that's when I started my deep dive into the science of reading.

I can remember one story where I was sending home all of those things like eagle eye and those little tips that you're supposed to be using with your kids with balanced literacy and look at the picture and all that stuff. And then I remember following up with one parent and gently reminding them they hadn't sent back the leveled book that their child had been practicing at home. The mom emailed me back and she said, "Oh yeah, I'm waiting until she can do it with the pictures covered and then we'll really know she can read it."

I remember thinking, "Well, that's kind of mean. She's not going to be able to do it with the pictures covered. How's she going to know which animal you're on if she's not looking, right?" And then that got me really thinking, "Okay, that can't be right. There's something else going on here."

So in my deep dive, I mean I was getting hardcore into books and podcasts and webinars and everything I possibly could. I should mention at the same time too, because I know sometimes when I share my story people think, "Well, how did you have the time?" because classroom teachers don't. Classroom teachers do not have the time to delve into every single subject you teach and to actually be looking for the science and looking at the actual primary sources, research and all of that stuff. So one thing I will mention is that I was diagnosed with breast cancer in November of 2020 and ended up with some months at home.

For me months at home are just not good unless I have something to do. So that actually kind of helped me with a bit of a focus and gave me some time for that too. So if anybody's listening and thinking like, "How did she find this time?" That is one of the reasons, is I just kind of did have that time at home.

Then of course with COVID too, just prior to that, with so many things being shut down and when you're doing online learning and all of that stuff, just being home also provided me with a bit of extra time too. So many circumstances came into play to allow me to get into all of this information.

I'm so glad that I did because as you mentioned, I totally changed my practice and what I was doing in kindergarten, and I shifted to a structured literacy approach. It made such a difference last year at the end of the year.

I teach in Ontario, and our kindergarten program is probably what most states would think of as a pre-K and kindergarten mix. So I've got the kids who are four or turning four, plus the kids who are five or turning five mixed together.

At the end of last year, the year twos who were leaving me for grade one were all reading, and then I also did my Acadiance screener, the end of the year screener, and they were where they needed to be benchmark-wise. So that was kind of my evidence that they were where they needed to be and that this was really working. And I think when you see it working, it's just so motivational.

Anna Geiger: Mm-hmm. Well that was a lot. You talk faster than I do!

Let's go back to what you were doing before you started making the switch. It's very interesting that you mentioned 2019 and 2020 because for so many people I talk to, it's the same time frame that they learned the difference and started making changes. Were you using a particular curriculum or how did you approach teaching reading before you started looking into that research?

Kate Winn: So I think if you look at the... Well, Scarborough's Rope for example, I think for the language comprehension side, I was doing a good job with that. I would say kindergarten teachers in general are doing a good job with that, probably a better job than on that word recognition side.

So I know that in our board we had Jolly Phonics. Jolly Phonics is seen to be an effective program so there's nothing wrong with using that one.

We were still doing sort of that letter of the week idea though, whereas we know now that kids can move a lot faster. Then I think the biggest issue was that the reading material I was giving the kids to use was completely undermining any phonics instruction that they were getting.

I think sometimes there are teachers who are kind of new to all of this and they're saying, "We do phonics. Everybody's always done phonics. This is so silly," but it's HOW you're doing the phonics. We know the whole explicit, the systematic, and those kind of key words.

But I was using leveled readers that basically required the three cueing. They required kids to guess kind of that whole sight word. It's not what scientists would call a sight word, but what a lot of educators call a sight word, that kind of high frequency word where you learn it as a whole and then just drill it kind of thing and then you'll be able to read some of these books as well. I was doing a lot of that stuff.

Well I have learned now that is not the best way to teach kids to read. So that was kind of what was going on in my classroom with that.

Phonological awareness I might have dabbled in a bit of it in the more broader stroke stuff like the syllables and onset and rime, that sort of thing. I definitely wasn't doing that phonemic level awareness kind of work in the class either until I learned all about that. So yeah, those were definitely two improvements that I made.

Anna Geiger: I'd like to go back to talking about the leveled books that you were using. You mentioned "guess" and I know people really get defensive about that word. I know that I used to get defensive about that because I didn't think I was teaching them to guess, I was teaching them to be strategic. That's what I thought. Can you explain why you use that word and why people need to accept that that's really what's happening when we're using those leveled books?

Kate Winn: So now since I've shifted to decodables, the idea is if they need the picture at all, they're not reading the words. So I mean pictures are still so useful for context and comprehension and getting more out of the story and maybe even checking what you've read, but if you can't decode the words that are there... And again, I'm talking about kindergarten, so I'm talking about kids who are sounding words out for the first time, they shouldn't need the picture. They shouldn't have to use that whole eagle eyes kind of cue that is guessing. If it's like we are at the zoo in this book and it says, "We saw a monkey." My kids don't know how to sound out monkey, so they have to look at the picture and then go, "Monkey."

And I was seeing things too where even when kids should know how to sound out the word, like for example with... I don't know if we want to name any not-good assessment tools, but the assessment tool that we would use. In a book, they could sound out the word "truck," but they would just look at the picture and go "dump truck." It starts with T, why are you saying dump truck? Because they're not even bothering to look at the word.

Or there was another example where it was the same thing where they should be able to sound it out and they just totally didn't. They just looked right to the picture. It was "bus," and they said "school bus." Now school bus is a great big long word that starts with S. This says B-U-S. Why are you saying school bus?

So again, the idea of totally guessing. I know some people might think, "Oh well, if

they're learning to sound out and they're doing this, no big deal." But the science tells us that it is a big deal especially when we get into functional MRIs and all of the brain research and things like that. Kids who are using those strategies of poor readers, different things are going on in their brain, not the things that we want to see going on in the brain of a skilled reader.

And so it is really important.

I know in my webinar I said some habits are kind of neutral. I mean they might not be worth your time, but it's not going to hurt kids if you're using them, whatever. But a thing like this, having kids guess when they're reading, that is harmful and that is something that we don't want to be encouraging anymore. So that's definitely a big shift I made to go from those leveled readers where it was basically either looking at the picture or just following the pattern because if it's like, "My dad is..." that sort of thing on every page, they're following the pattern too. So if they need to do that stuff, they're not actually reading. And our job is to teach them to read.

Anna Geiger: And what you mentioned too, you said something about habits, and I think that is even a bigger thing than the guessing. When we teach them that your eyes have to go off the words to figure out what they are, it can be very hard to break for some kids, I know. Especially I think in the primary grades you maybe don't notice it as much because the books you're giving them are designed for that. But the teachers that come after us will notice that more because now the picture cues aren't there, the context may not be useful for a word they've never read before, and now they don't have what they need. So those are good things to keep in mind when you're teaching kindergarten and first grade.

Kate Winn: Even a special education teacher that I work with who gets kids down the line and is working with them, she'll tell me how they'll be looking at a text with absolutely no pictures and they're just looking around anywhere but down at the paper as if somehow the answer's going to magically come to them. So you're right, I mean those habits are very, very hard to break. Especially the kids who perhaps are going to be more prone to difficulties with reading that are going to latch onto those early on, and then that's going to be even harder for them when we're trying to intervene or remediate down the line.

Anna Geiger: So when I watched your webinar, it was very clear to me that you've done your research, I recognized so many things you were talking about. Can you tell us where you went, what did you start studying, and what was most useful to you as you made this big shift?

Kate Winn: So I'm definitely a book person, but the funny thing is people always ask

what I would recommend for a person starting out, and I see people recommending Louisa Moat's Speech to Print or Mark Seidenberg. The funny thing is those were two of the first books that I read. However, those are not the best books for beginners.

I'm definitely a book person, and Know Better, Do Better by David and Meredith Liben is excellent. The Art and Science of Teaching Primary Reading by Christopher Such, I did a book study in my school board last year using that one, which was just excellent. So I mean for me I enjoyed books, being able to read stuff.

I also got into, of course, a lot of podcasts, including yours, and that sort of thing.

Again, I'm in Ontario, so the International Dyslexia Association in Ontario has just outstanding resources, and not only on their website that I could find. I actually came to them because I was assigned an article on this for a magazine here in Canada and I wanted to interview an expert. And so I ended up talking to the president of the IDA Ontario, and then that's how I got involved in a whole bunch of things with them and they put on my webinar and that sort of thing.

And through different workshops and inservices, and then finding mentors and people who are doing the same thing, maybe in other boards, and learning from them. I found that that really helpful as well.

I don't have higher education courses in this and I know in terms of teacher prep courses and even some courses that we do now for inservice teachers, a lot of them haven't covered the science of reading. Even if you may have taken a reading specialist course or something like that in past years, that doesn't necessarily mean that it had anything to do with structured literacy. So it's really about knowing the best sources to find all of that information.

So for the most part I'd say it was really self-directed, but there's a whole variety of different media to get you there.

Anna Geiger: Now, you took a break from teaching because of your cancer, is that correct? Were you spending all that time studying and then when you went back, everything was different for you? Or how did that go?

Kate Winn: Yes, so I had started learning about this before my medical leave. At the

beginning of that school year, the beginning of 2020, I thought, "Okay, here we go, I'm going to do this," and then I ended up going on leave. And then you have a different teacher filling in for you and I couldn't really tell that teacher, "Don't be doing sight words anymore" and that sort of thing so I had to sort just let that go for those months that I was at home.

Then when I came back we were online, and by that point my school had bought Heggerty and there were a few things kind of heading in the right direction. So I was using some of that.

But it was really the start of last school year. It was really the fall of 2021 when I could just throw myself in it hardcore for the entire year and do it the way I wanted to do it. And of course having the kids physically in school I found very helpful as well.

Now an interesting point is that our kids wore masks until March, and I know there's a lot of concern about kids and their literacy abilities and things like that, but I do know that that ours were able to be quite successful even though they did have masks until then. But it's so nice now because I know last year I didn't bother with mirrors for phonics or anything because they can't see their mouths as they've got a mask covering them, right? Whereas this year it is so nice that I know they are seeing my mouth and I am seeing their mouths. So I would say that's definitely a difference that I have seen since before.

Anna Geiger: So I know I'm going to definitely send people to your webinar where they're going to learn a ton about how this looks day to day, but can you give us an overview of how it looks in your classroom? I know right now as we're doing this, it's October. So I know it's the beginning of the year, but how are things looking now and then maybe how will things look a little bit farther in the year towards the end of the year?

Kate Winn: Well, that's a really good question, the way you posed it about the now versus the end of the year, because in something like kindergarten, I came from June having them exactly where I wanted them. And then you come back in September, and I had several three year olds, and a whole bunch of other things going on, besides trying to get kids reading. So you have to remind yourself that you've got the whole year to do this.

Now I'm at the point now where we are doing our phonics every day. I'm actually using the new UFLI Foundations program, which is amazing. I absolutely love it.

They take a letter sound lesson and split it up over two days. So I do a little bit the one day and then a little bit the next day and then move on. So I'm covering two letters and sounds a week. Then there's time built in there for review as well.

So we'll sit at the carpet and we'll do that little lesson. The kids have their cookie sheets with magnet letters and that sort of thing to be doing to some of that work, and some of it's smart board slideshow lessons and that as well. So that's kind of how the lesson component looks.

Then I'm finding decodable books are just so excellent for practice. So my year two students who were in my program last year and are already reading, I know where they are skill-wise and so they read to me from decodables, and I'm just ready right about now to start the take home program.

So instead of leveled readers... Because I know that's what a lot of teachers wonder too, "Okay, I'm supposed to stop sending home leveled readers, but what can I send home for my kids to read?" because parents want reading material and reading is definitely something, if you are going to have any sort of homework, reading is the one thing that you would want to focus on. So having those decodable texts is helpful for that too. Then when my year ones get to that point, they'll be doing that as well.

Then of course a lot of people when they talk about the science of reading and they just think it's all about the phonics, I mean we don't want to miss mentioning the whole other side of it, right? So of course lots of rich read alouds.

Something I started last year was chapter book read alouds at snack time, which I found was really great. I could read the first book in a series and then take a little picture and put it in the Seesaw app and share it with parents. And then I would find out that they had bought number two or number three and they were doing it as bedtime reading at home.

Anna Geiger: Oh, amazing.

Kate Winn: That's really neat because we want kids to be exposed to that vocabulary, the content, all of that stuff as well. So certainly I wouldn't want the conversation to go by and make it sound like it's ONLY about the phonics. However, I do think that for a lot of people, it's more the foundational skills area that needs work.

Anna Geiger: So I have the UFLI manual because I just wanted to see it, and it looks amazing. And I know I'm pretty sure in there they do letter names and sounds, correct?

Kate Winn: Correct.

Anna Geiger: So I was just recently at a Reading League conference in Wisconsin. Steven Dykstra, you've probably heard of him, he talks a lot about the science of reading and what really is the science of reading and what people would like to think is proved by research. And he talked about how there's a huge debate between the letters and sounds together or just sounds to begin. And then if you get people like that in the same room together, they could break out in fist fights, which I hear that all the time!

So I would just love to hear from your experience. Some people who are very much for just sounds to begin, talk about how kids will get those things confused and that knowing letter names they say confuses them when they're trying to sound out words, can you speak to your experience with that and any thoughts you have about it?

Kate Winn: For sure. And I mean, like you said, it's my experiences and my thoughts because I have done no research on this myself, right? So I'm just going to share what I have seen. So I know some of the things that I've read talk about how letter names can actually be helpful for kids because if the sound is in the letter name, then that's actually going to help trigger them to remember.

I know what I have done in the last year when I saw so much success in my class. I taught the sound and the letter name and we would work with both. Even when I was doing flashcard practices or whatever, it would be letter sound, letter name, letter sound, letter name. So they were doing both. And when I get parents to practice, maybe I've got a child who's still struggling with a few, I get them to do the same thing; letter sound, letter name.

Eventually they do need to know both. So certainly my experience has been that it hasn't been a problem to work with both of those. One thing I do, I know there's a lot of debate too... Even talking about UFLI, I was in one of their webinars about the program and somebody said, "Well, is this a speech to print program or is this a print to speech program?"

And Dr. Holly Lane basically said, "I don't really think that needs to be a question. We want to go both ways when we're teaching kids like the decoding and encoding and backwards." And she said, "Most people I know aren't having this sort of debate, so I wouldn't really worry about it." So it kind of reminds me of something like that because they do need to know both and do both.

But one thing I have done in my slideshow for this year, I've taken theirs and I've tweaked them a teeny bit to talk about the sound first before the letter name just because that's the way I did it last year when I had really no resources and I was borrowing from another teacher and putting it all together that and I knew how successful that had been.

So within the same slide show, within the same lesson, we're just talking about the sound and breaking down the articulation and all of that stuff, what words would start with it and we've got pictures. And then, "The way we spell it is with the letter P. And this is what letter P looks like" and kind of going from there. So they're definitely getting both. For me, the way I'm kind of doing things right now is sound and then letter, but it's within the same lesson.

Anna Geiger: Now you have a very unique situation compared to what we have in the states. I know my sister lived in Canada for nine years and she actually homeschooled, but she told me about that, about how very young children are in the early program. And you said you had three year olds. So when you're teaching reading or phonics and everything to this whole group, how does that work? Do you differentiate your instruction initially? Are all of them learning a few letters and sounds at a time and then starting to decode words? Are they getting more of phonemic awareness foundation first? How do you attack that?

Kate Winn: So I am actually doing whole group, this is what I did last year, though last year I had more year twos, so more older kids in the group. This year I have more year ones, more younger kids. But we do that part whole group. The little ones are actually doing well with it. The problem is more at the other end now. It's the ones who are way too advanced to be spending too much time on /m/ right? For right now they're part of the whole group.

One thing that I found too with the ones who are doing really, really well, I started taking some of the UFLI, they have like a sentence, almost an assessment dictation sentence to go with each lesson once you get to a certain point. What I've been doing with a couple of kids is pulling them aside in small groups and using the dictation sentences from all of the lessons just to see where they are because there are some points where they can read it but they're not quite writing it yet or there's things like that because you want to make sure they've really consolidated that skill. So I'm making sure that they've sort of got all of that.

But for me this year, I think the whole group is fine to be that whole UFLI and that phonics piece and then I'm going to be more concerned about the small group that needs enrichment, that needs extension to kind of move on because they're already there. We want everybody to learn to read and we want everybody to continue to grow, even the ones that are doing well. So that's a balancing act right now.

Anna Geiger: Sometimes I think in the science of reading discussion, the more advanced kids are dropped out of the conversation because we're really focused, as we should be, on kids who are struggling and kids who may have dyslexia. But yeah, we want to make sure that everybody is being challenged.

Can you speak to what the rest of the kids are doing when you're working with small groups?

Kate Winn: Well, I'm really lucky again in Ontario because the way the program works, there is a certified teacher and an early childhood educator who are partners in the class. Certainly either one could take a lead on literacy or any other subject. In my class, because this is my passion, this is sort of the thing that I do but I'm lucky that sometimes it's when my partner is doing something else with whole group that I can take kids, even when I'm just doing assessments. I would never take big groups from her lessons or anything like that, but it's just if I want to pull a kid for an assessment or that sort of thing, I can do that.

Then also we have a big focus on play-based learning in kindergarten as well. So there are times in the day where the children are playing and I don't think there's anything wrong with the kids being pulled for small groups there too. You can play, you get pulled out to do a little activity with the teacher, then you go back and play.

I think I have heard the question like, "Oh, does that devalue play? Or make kids think that it's not as important?" But I think kids just learn there's lots of different things you do at school and sometimes Mrs. Winn needs you at the back table and so you go. That's been another way I've been able to make things work as well. Much harder I know if you're in grade one and you're in grade two, and you're all by yourself in terms of trying to figure out what the kids are doing when you're taking small groups. I know it takes a lot of creativity there.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, well that's great you've got that built in support that makes a huge difference.

Can you maybe talk to us a little bit about your comprehension piece? You said you were starting to do chapter books. Do you have a list of questions written out? Do you have some vocabulary that you're going to work on? Do you revisit those? How does this look in your school day?

Kate Winn: So sometimes it's more formal. For example, I have taken some children's books and come up with explicit vocabulary lessons that kind of follow those text talk lessons that were written many years ago. So sometimes we're taking a few vocabulary words and we're being really intense with those and then maybe the next day we're going to read the book again and be really intense on another word. So sometimes it's like that.

Or other times it's something like, it's Canadian Thanksgiving and I wanted to read this lovely book about Canadian Thanksgiving so you just sort of flip through it quickly and think about what parts are you going to stop and question the kids with? So that sort of thing.

And then I find even with my chapter book read alouds, I like to stop, and there are certain things where you can almost quiz the kids. Like the word "glance" kept coming up. "She glanced at him and he glanced at her and they were glancing around" or whatever. And so when it would come to glance, I'd just say, "Okay, everybody, glance at the door." And then you can look and see are they glancing at the door, did they get what they were supposed to do? Right? So just almost those little kind of mini assessment sorts of things. But I mean, I certainly don't have in kindergarten any big long comprehension assessments that they do or anything like that.

I know with decodable text, some decodables are trying to be as good as they can for giving some kind of meatiness that allows for a question at the end. But sometimes it's like, "What did the dog sit on?" The log. There's not a whole lot, but maybe you can connect it. "Do you have a pet at home? Where do they like to sit?" or whatever.

But in terms of the books that they're reading independently, they don't really lend themselves to that and I don't feel like they're supposed to. I don't think writers of decodable books need to make them so that they're so deep and rich that they're going to provoke huge discussions. I don't think that's the role of those. I think it's more of the teacher read alouds that kind of do that piece in kindergarten and it's such an investment for down the line, with all that vocabulary and content knowledge.

I know it's important too. Our kindergarten program in Ontario's kind of set up differently, but in most grades you would have science expectations and social studies expectations. You don't want to skimp on those. It's not like, "Oh, I need more literacy time so I've got to cut that stuff out." Because you can build that in as well and use texts from your science and from your social studies and make sure kids are getting all that content background because that's going to help them the most with comprehension down the line.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, for sure.

What about other things that we might think about as being more balanced literacy? Do you do shared reading and things like that where you do more concepts of print type things?

Kate Winn: I do. One of the favorite things that we do on a weekly basis, it's kind of a shared writing where I have a star of the week every week. And so at the carpet the kids ask the star questions like, "What's your favorite this and what's your favorite that?" and whatever. And so then I kind of do a shared writing of that paragraph and then that becomes of shared reading that we have those together. So we do some of that. And then we do some big books and that sort of thing.

I'd say really, I can still use, for example with UFLI, they have little decodable pieces that go with their lessons and that sort of thing. So you can still talk about capitalizations and punctuation and different things like that. Those sorts of concepts of print and the left to right and all of that stuff still comes up even just using your decodables. I think I probably overcompensate too much in not wanting to put text in front of them and have them think they're supposed to read it when they haven't been taught how to read it. So I think that's something that I'm probably almost too cautious of, is showing texts and having them for any reason think they should be guessing at a word.

Anna Geiger: Can you talk to people who are more balanced literacy and they're hearing all this about the science of reading and they don't feel good about it because then it sounds very boring. It's going to take away all the things they love about teaching. Their kids aren't going to like it. They're not going to like it. What can you speak to in terms of enjoyment of this whole process for you and your kids?

Kate Winn: Well, for me, I mean I've said before, and it sounds really cheesy, but I have rediscovered my joy in teaching because of structured literacy. I feel so purposeful. I mean even with something like the screening tools, when you're kind of color coding where the kids are at in different skills and you see them going from that

kind of yellow maybe at-risk and into the green zone, a lot of that stuff, it's so motivational as a teacher. I think once you see that yourself, you want to keep doing it more.

So I would say just try. Just get your feet wet a little bit and when you see this happening, I can almost promise you you're going to want to keep it up. And in terms of the kids' enjoyment of it, I mean, like I said, there's that other side of the rope. They want to hear rich texts, they want all of that stuff, yes, for sure.

But in terms of kids actually reading themselves, they know they're not reading when they're, I know I keep saying the word guessing, but when they're using any of those different strategies and just following a pattern. I feel like I was kind of a fraud, but I'd be like, "Oh, you read that book!"

Because I'm sure the kids would be looking at me, like "Is that? I did? Okay, if that's what reading is." And maybe they did think they were reading, but I was convincing them that reading was something that it wasn't.

But the joy I see now, and it does sound boring when they're starting out, like when it's just like "/ĭ/-/t/, it. /ĭ/-/s/, is. A, a cat," right? That's what you're hearing, but that is exactly what their brain needs. And then when they go, "It is a cat. It is a cat. Mrs. Winn, it is a cat." Yes! And then I try to play that up too.

Even when we're doing our little lessons, every time we add a new letter, a new sound, we can make a few more words, right? And so every time we'll do those on the board and I'll be saying, "You can read more words now! You can read this word that has /p/ in it and this word that has /p/ in it." And you just try to build that up in them and you just see their joy. They're so proud of themselves. And then when you pull them to read a text to you and they're doing it independently, it's really something.

Now anecdotal experience is one thing. So that's all just me telling you. But we have to be careful because in balanced literacy, people might have their own, "Well, I saw a joy in kids" and whatever. So it can't just be about that.

But there is research, there are studies done, to show that being able to read accurately or skillfully leads to joy. It's not just something where there's a correlation like, "Yeah, yeah, of course. Good readers like to read." It actually is a causation that they have found in studies that the better a child gets at reading, the more they like to read, and the more joy that comes.

The fact that you can be the person with that power and that ultimate responsibility of getting them started on that, it really is an incredible thing. So I would say do not worry about the joy part.

Anna Geiger: Thank you. Thank you for sharing that.

I want to switch real quick. Now we're kind of winding up, but I want to talk to you about Twitter because you said that Twitter is where you do most of your talking about literacy. That is the one social media platform that I have not really gotten into mainly because there's only so much time. But now my kids are all in school, so that may be something I can get to. Can you talk to us about, for teachers that may not be interested in using Twitter, how that's useful for learning about teaching reading?

Kate Winn: Yeah. So I have been on Twitter forever, but there were years where I barely touched it until I kind of got into all of this. So I love following the researchers that I trust or institutions that I trust. I find sometimes if you're just in Facebook groups and that sort of thing, one little pet peeve that I've been finding is I think it's amazing that people who are still learning pose a question in those groups. Like, good for you, and I hope people are gentle and supportive and whatever, but sometimes I'm seeing a whole bunch of answers that aren't accurate. And so some of those things I feel like, "Okay. People should only weigh in if you know that you actually have accurate information to help this person because you're just going to mess them up."

Whereas I find on Twitter, people are very science-based, and evidence-based. They kind of want receipts for something if you're promoting. And I know sometimes I'll share a resource and someone will say, "Does that align with the science of reading?" They'll want to know. So I found that really helpful.

And the funny thing is, I know a lot of people talk about negativity on any social media platform for sure, but people talk about Twitter, but I have actually found it to be so incredibly supportive. I mean, like I've said, the mentors that I've found and other friends, and I'm not even just talking Ontario, I'm talking across the country and in other countries. I mean, I got to know somebody who's a professor in Ireland, and when I went there this summer, she and I met in Dublin and had lunch together to talk about things.

Anna Geiger: Wow.

Kate Winn: So it was just... Yeah, I just find it's a really, really good place for learning. And I find too when new research comes out or there's something interesting, even if it's just in general media, like maybe a newspaper covers a big story about literacy or whatever, Twitter is where I see it first. So to keep up to date with that sort of thing, I find it's a great platform for that. So I'm @thismomloves if anyone wants to find me there.

Anna Geiger: @thismomloves, okay, you're convincing me. I think I need to get started over there. I love the idea of being able to follow researchers and get access to that. Because it can be hard to know where to get all that new stuff as it comes out. To know that people are sharing it over there is awesome.

Well, I know that people are going to hear this and just want to learn a lot more from you, so I'll definitely share that webinar that you shared and your Twitter handle. Anything else, any other places I can send them to learn more from you about teaching?

Kate Winn: So my website is thismomloves.ca, and as you and I were talking about before, it's always been sort of a general lifestyle site so there are lots of different things. I mean, I share my favorite books and things that aren't even education related. There are other things that I share in there as well. But I do have pages for print articles that I've done and links to those. I've written for parenting magazines about education and that sort of thing. And I also have a link on there to a page with all of my TV segments. I do a lot of TV segments about education as well. So you can find those there if you want to learn more too. There's a lot of it, some of it's broader than education, but those two pages definitely have a lot of educational info on them.

Anna Geiger: Wonderful. I'll be sure to link to those in the show notes as well. Well, thank you so much for taking time to talk to us, Kate. People are going to be so appreciative hearing about structured literacy and how that looks in the kindergarten classroom.

Kate Winn: Thank you, Anna, for having me. It's been such a pleasure.

Anna Geiger: Thank you so much for listening. One of these days I will get my mic set right when I do an interview. Thankfully, Kate came in loud and clear. And if you would like to hear more about all she has to share, you can find all the links we mentioned in the show notes, reachallreaders.com/episode103. Talk to you next time!