



Charting the Cs
Conference 2025:

*To Literacy and
Beyond*

Cooperation
Communication
Collaboration

Refusal to Grade Level: My Story of Unlocking a Successful Braille Reader

April 30, 2025

Kim Wilke

Teacher: Blind/Visually Impaired
Saint Paul School District

Hello, There!



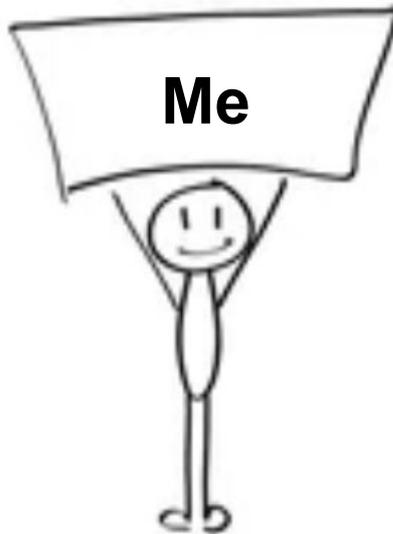
“Confidence is the willingness to TRY. It is the willingness to take action, even if it’s not perfect. It’s the secret to everything.”

- Mel Robbins

Flip Flop

General Education

- Teaching reading skills & strategies through print.
- Concepts of print.



Special Education

- Teaching reading skills & strategies through braille.
- Concepts of braille.

Warm-Up Print Versus Braille:

“Progression from the basic mechanics of decoding letters to actively using reading to acquire new knowledge and information.”

- American Printing House for the Blind



Braille Reading Simulation

Ready, Set...



How did you do?

When Jim saw what was under the rock, he gasped.



Reading braille is very different. The memory itself gets a workout!

Reading is complex



...braille readers must rely more on memory to decode and understand words.

-Rex, Koenig, Wormsley, & Baker, 1994

Morphology Matters

Word: REREADING

Print

rereading

- prefix: re
- base word: read
- suffix: ing

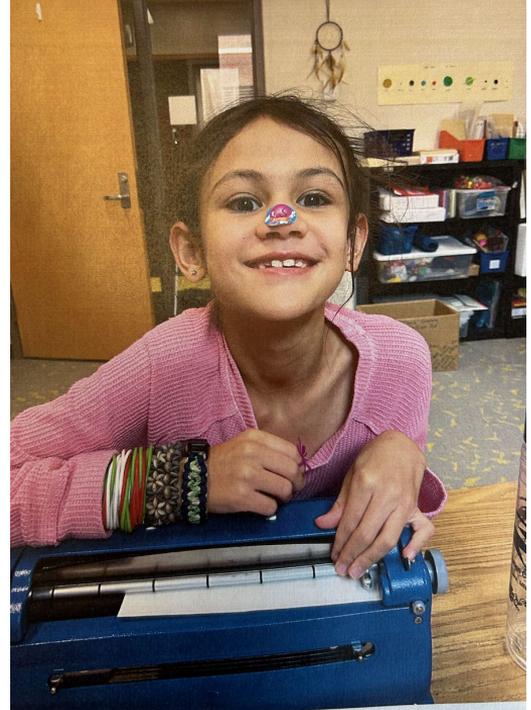
Braille

r(er)(ea)d(ing)



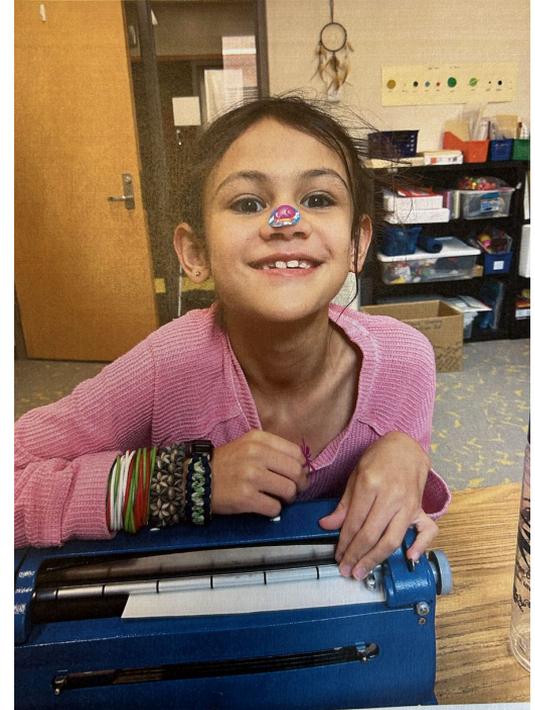
Meet Doob!

- Curious fifth grade student.
- □ 's music, baking, yogurt covered raisins and her Ojibwe culture.
- Visual diagnosis of Optic Nerve Hypoplasia-no light perception.



Meet Doob! (2)

- IEP Team: Orientation & Mobility, Occupational Therapy, Developmental Adapted Physical Education, & Social Work. -Therapy expected



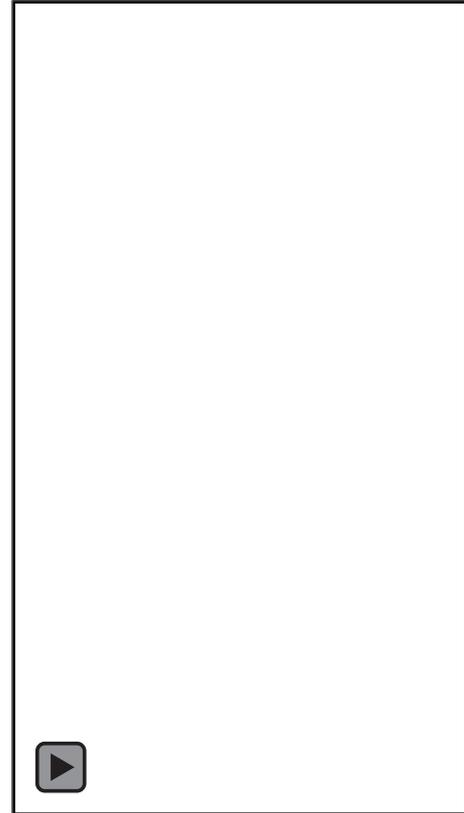


The Starting Line (then)

- 2nd grade
- Pre-reader, isolated skills
- Number system (10)
- 1 year after starting to build rapport with Doob, her family, and her Individualized Education Plan Team.

(Video play on next slide...)

The Starting Line (then) - video

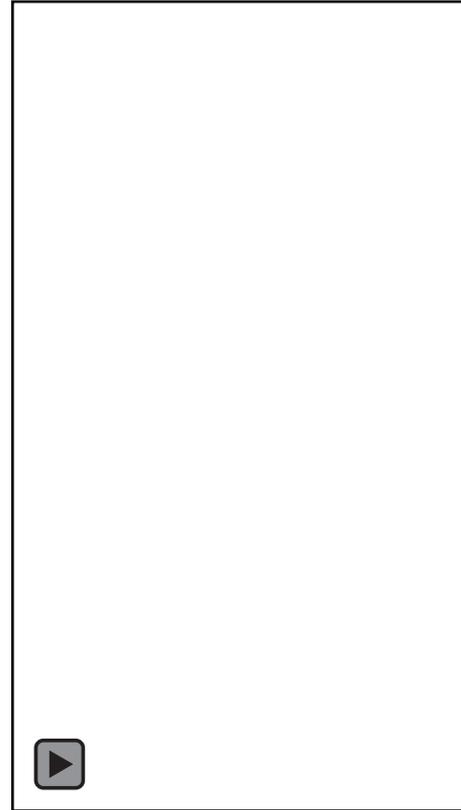


The Finish Line (now)

- Beginning of 5th grade
- Guided Reading Level: R-S
- Emotional Regulation is showing growth.
- Respect and Approachability has reached a new level.

(Video play on next slide...)

The Finish Line (now) - video



The Messy Middle

How Did We Get Here?

- Building Relationships & Integrating Culture
- Repetition and Routine
- Let's Make This Fun!



Building Relationships & Integrating Culture

“One’s content knowledge & cultural knowledge in one’s family & community, affects one’s reading comprehension.”

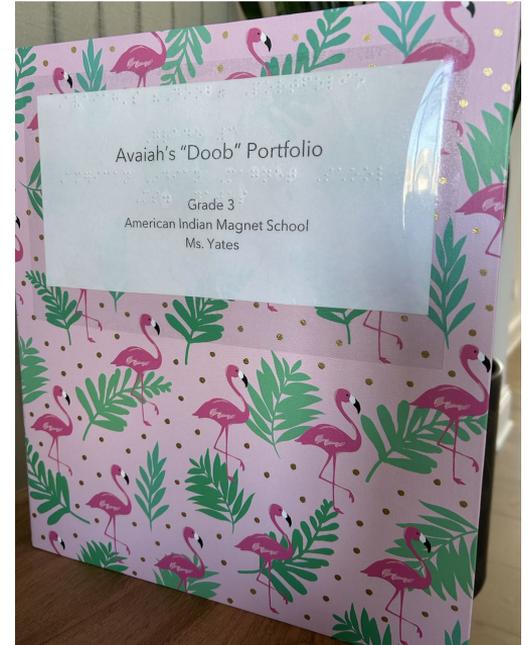
-Duke, Ward & Pearson, 2021
Book Reading Connections



Relationships & Culture



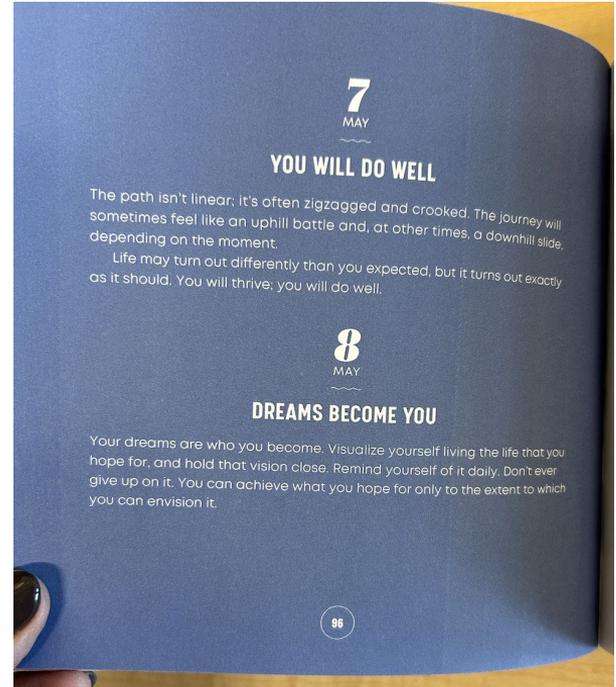
Relationships & Culture (2)



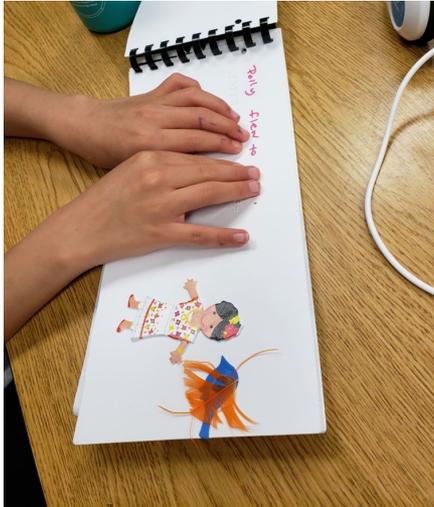
Daily Repetition and Routine



Repetition and Routine



Repetition and Routine ...in Literacy!



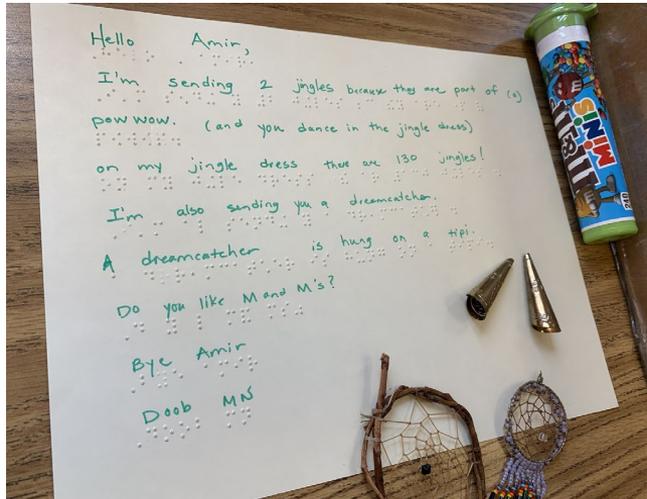
Let's Make This Fun!

Adapted Bulletin Board



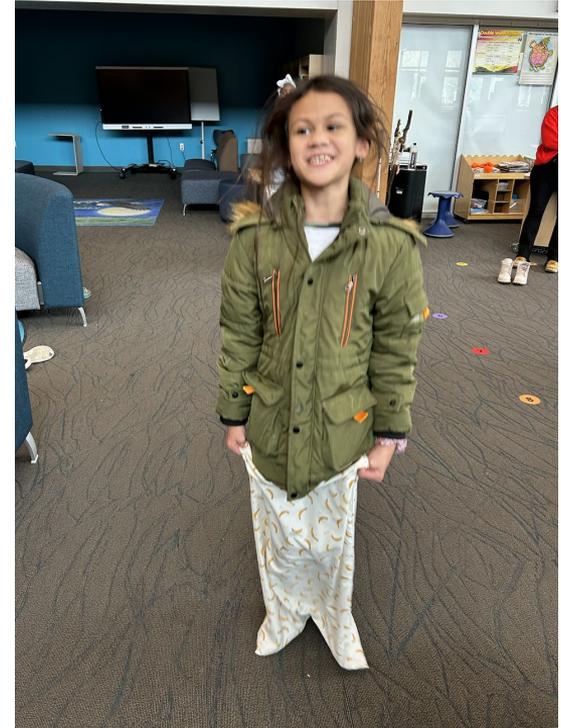
Let's Make This Fun! (2)

Pen Pal Letters From California



Let's Make This Fun! (3)

What's a Potato Sack Race?



Let's Make This Fun! (4)

Lifesize Ojibwe Constellations





THANK YOU!

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Resources

- APH Hive Online
Course: Unlocking the Foundations of Reading for Students with a Visual Impairment (Science of Reading.)
<https://aphhive.org/#/home>
- Building on Patterns. <https://aphbop.org/>
- Paths to Literacy, <https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/resource/braille-mechanics-guidance/>

Resources (2)

- Project Life Craft Cards

<https://www.shopbeckyhiggins.com/collections/project-life-card-collections>

- Reading Connections:
- Reading Connections: Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments