

How can

early

primary teachers explicitly

teach students to make a

web that shows main ideas?

Why?

Generally speaking, most nonfiction text in grades two and three is relatively simple enough that most students are able to *find a way to show that they know what an article is about*. Unfortunately, by the time students move on to grade 4 and beyond, ***all of our vulnerable students are completely lost when asked an open-ended, basic question like this.***

This kit was created in an effort to address this district-wide issue. After many trials; some successful, and some not-so-successful, we found a creative and concrete method of capturing the attention of all students combining oral language with colored visuals.

In K/1 classrooms these lessons are designed to have access for all learners and include the explicit oral instruction all learners benefit from, not just for our vulnerable students. ALL students benefit from explicit instruction. Your most capable will take this information and run with it.

Like any primary skill, this one also requires lots of repeated practice. We joke that students should be rolling their eyes at you saying, *“Enough already! I know how to do this!”* before moving on.

Offered in this kit are also a few suggestions to keep the eye-rolling to a minimum! In other words, we offer a few extra pieces for your most capable students to tackle. Their examples will help others.

p.s. We intentionally leave out **details** to web making until students fully understand how to set up a **main ideas** web.

Carol Walters



“How many arms do you put on a web?”

When most primary students are asked this question, you usually hear a variety of numbers offered as a response. But does anyone offer an answer that connects with the text? The organization of nonfiction text is so important, yet quite often we jump to the content or information, because we want our students to learn it. But when we back up a bit and ask students what they notice, think and wonder about how the information is put on the page, we prepare them for reading skills that will transfer to any text at all. Questions such as:

“What do we notice, think and wonder about how this text is organized?”

And ...

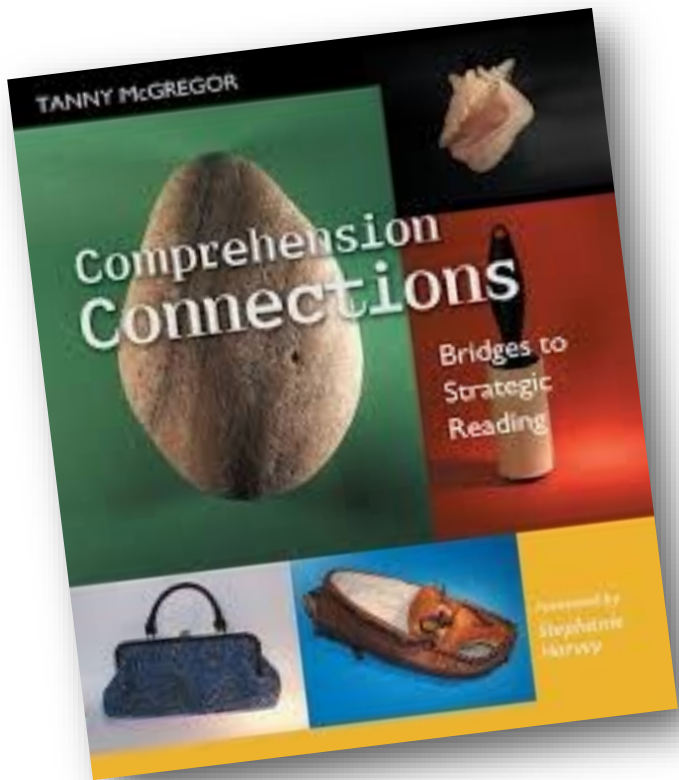
“How do writers of nonfiction text help their readers to figure out the main ideas?”

Do you think writers of nonfiction text want their important ideas to be understood by their readers?”

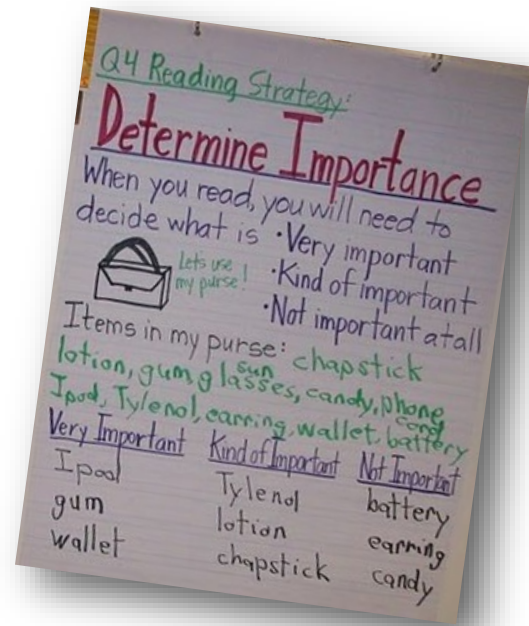
How do they make sure this happens?”

“What do writers do to make sure their important ideas are almost jumping off the page?”





In Tanny McGregor's book, Comprehension Connections there are lots of amazing lessons to launch this '**determining importance**' work.



A fabulous lesson for launching main ideas work with your early primary learners is offered on page 80. It requires cooked spaghetti, water, a colander, and a pot. You know kids are going to love it when the list of ingredients includes spaghetti! The idea is to talk about nonfiction text and ask if it's possible to remember every single bit of information an author writes about? When the spaghetti and water are poured through a strainer or colander, the water pours away and the main part is left! A tactile lesson like this will help students to understand the connection to reading and how it's just like that.

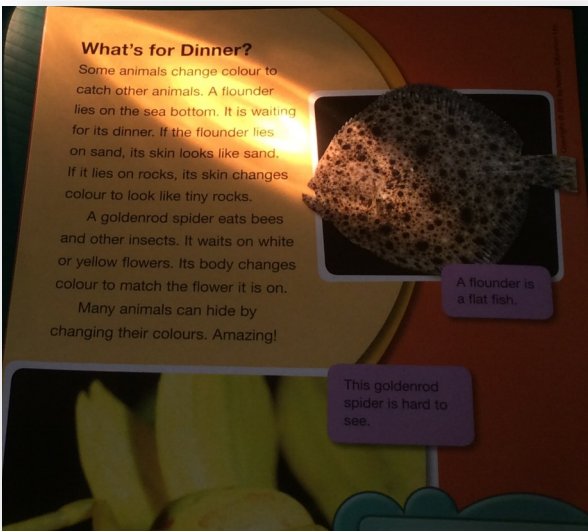
We pour away all the parts that don't really matter and stick with the important stuff.



“How do writers of nonfiction text help their readers to figure out the main ideas?”

When you asked your students to search for the ways in which nonfiction writers help their readers figure out the main ideas, did anyone mention headings or subtitles? Headings are usually in a larger font than all the other text and they are usually in bold. Making headings stand out is one way that authors alert us to their main messages. **And it’s these heading that are used to make a main ideas web. So we really want students to notice them.** We can nudge them to notice this nonfiction text feature using another strategy from Tanny McGregor.

In a darkened room, invite students to shine a flash light on the parts of the page in which the author is helping us to find the main ideas. There are many parts of nonfiction text that alert us to main ideas, so there are lots of places to shine a flashlight. Pictures are a valuable source of main idea information. Labels and picture captions also help us determine importance. But



when setting up a main ideas web, our vulnerable students are confused with all these options. Narrowing it down to headings can be a relief to students who don't know what they're supposed to do.



The next step adds another layer of tactile reinforcement to these previous lessons ... and serve as a lifeline for many.

P.s. We particularly like some on the Nelson Literacy nonfiction articles because the main ideas are in a circle. This makes shining a light on sections really easy.

Amazing Animals Series
 Author: Valerie Bodden / Kate Riggs
 Illustrator: Various
 Publisher: The Creative Company

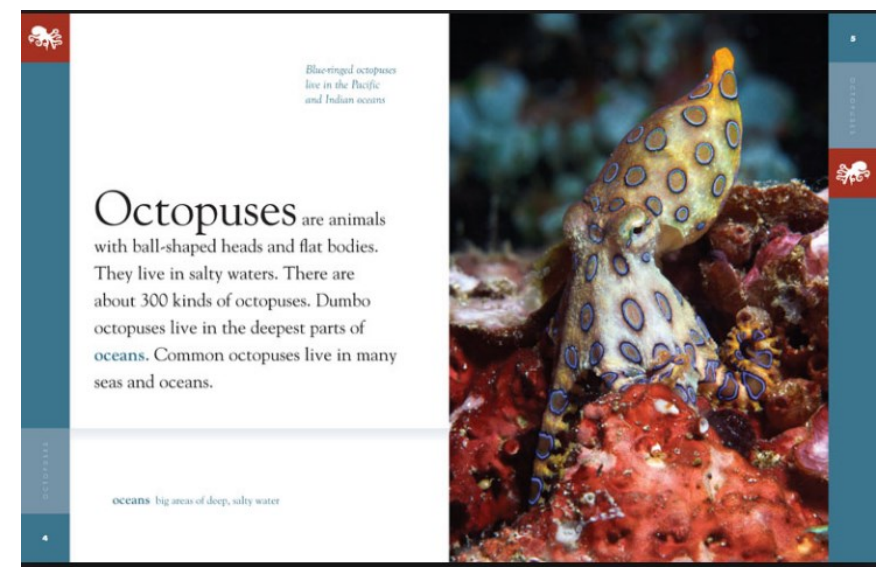
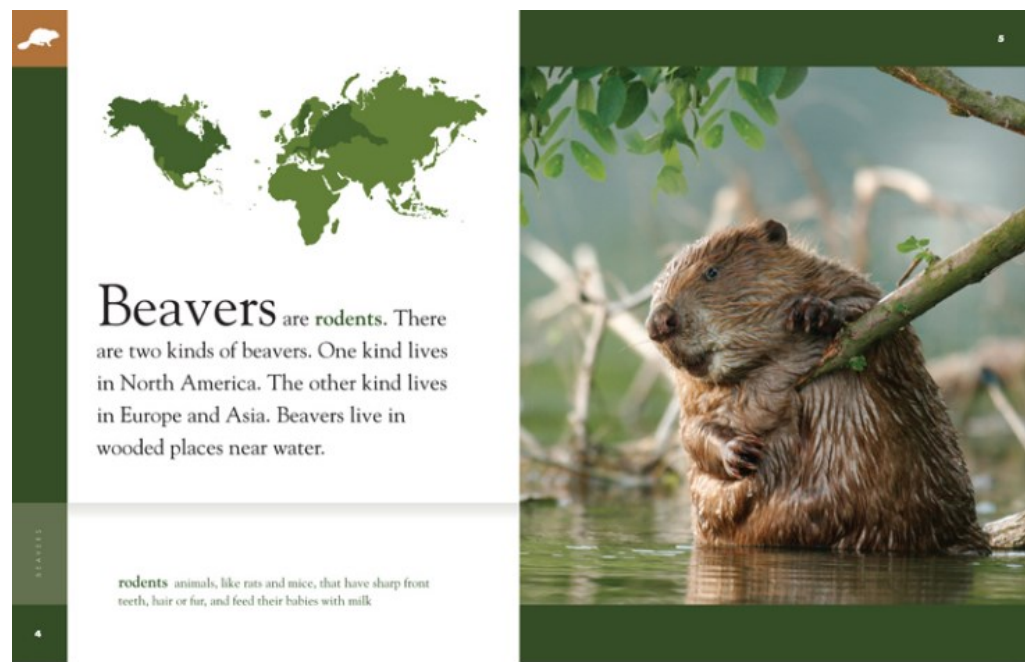
Some text just lends itself to listen deeply and sort and categorize information!



These non-fiction titles have beautiful images and rich text but *NO headings*. This launches a beautiful inquiry:

How can we organize the main ideas if the author has forgotten headings?

How will we know and remember the important ideas?



Suggested lesson sequence for developing a **main ideas web** through oral language with early primary:

- Create a KWL chart from student thinking on the topic of a local amazing animal: What do I know? What do I think I know? What questions/wonders do I still have?
- Ask students how non-fiction authors help us to find their main ideas? Record their suggestions.
- Use the Determining Importance object lesson with spaghetti (see pg. 4) to discuss: “Do we have to remember every word and every sentence that this writer has told us or do we remember all the important stuff? What does the water represent flowing from the cooked spaghetti pot (details)? What is the spaghetti representing (main ideas)?”
- Use the class-created KWL chart and categorize their ideas. Underline and colour code sections suggested by students:

Movement and Behaviour

Predators/Danger

Lifecycle

Species/types

Appearance

Habitat

Food

- Read aloud the Amazing Animals book on the topic (we’ve chosen local animals for the kits there are others in the LRC).
- Students use the pictures and text to figure out the main idea. Single facts are recorded on sentence strips to categorize and create a carpet-sized web of main ideas. Teacher records the facts using a colour for each section/category and facts can be stored in a *bucket-o-facts* to sort later.
- The final step is to place a topic card in the center of the carpet and then categorize the facts. Stand back and be amazed with how quickly students learn to determine the main ideas and categorize the details.
- Repeat the sequence with another Amazing Animal text or any non-fiction text in your collection.

Possible categories derived from the students KWL

Movement and Behaviour

Predators/Danger

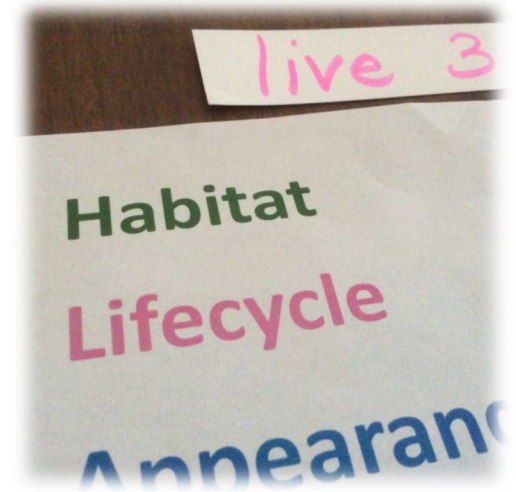
Lifecycle

Species/types

Appearance

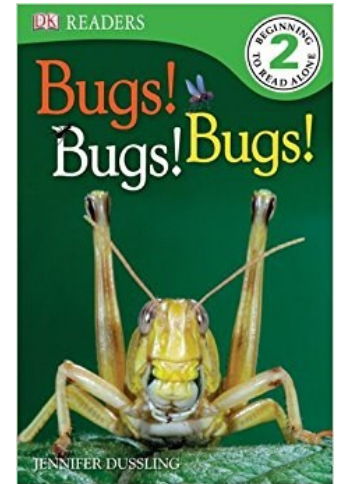
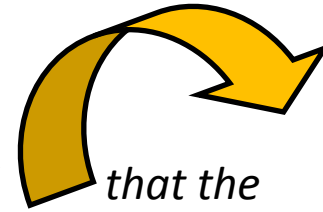
Habitat

Food



Determining Importance through oral language

“Do you recall that when we read non-fiction books we noticed that the author comes right out and tells us a main idea on the first page? You might think: ‘Oh. That must be what the whole book is about, since that’s what she wrote in the introduction.’ Sometimes that is true ~ what’s stated in the introduction is what the whole book will be about. But I also know I need to be aware, always thinking , always paying attention. I can think about each page as I read and consider if it fits with the same first idea, or if the author has gone to a new main idea.” J. Serravallo
The Reading Strategies Book p.222



In the Amazing Animals series the authors words do match the rich photographs, however, they do not always tie to one specific idea per page, making these books perfect for gathering facts and sorting and categorizing under main ideas.

*The authors in the series seem to switch gears a bit.
The authors include many main ideas and interesting details that can be sorted.*



This whole lesson series builds from students knowledge of the non-fiction topic.

Co-create an ideas chart at the outset of each new animal topic.

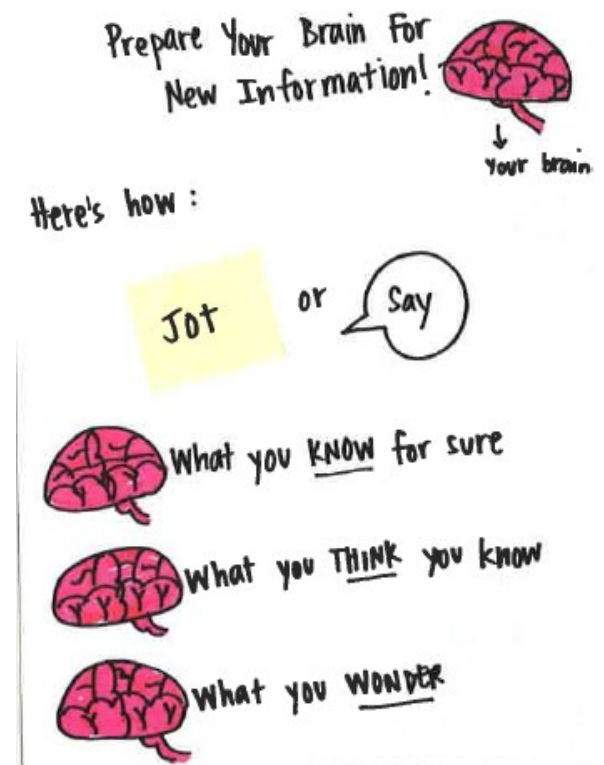
The Reading Strategies Book J. Serravallo offers a **spin on KWL** p. 252 . Her version is a before reading/ listening strategy about *what you know for sure, what you think you know, and what you wonder.*

Then prepare yourselves to listen and get ready to learn new information.

Setting the stage.... establishing curiosity and the *need to know...*
building from background knowledge.

Possible Prompts:

- ◇ You can start with, “I’m not sure, but I think...”
- ◇ What’s something you’re sure you know? How are you sure?
- ◇ What are you wondering about your topic?
- ◇ What do you know a little about? What do you want to learn about more deeply?
- ◇ What are you learning now that you’ve heard this part?

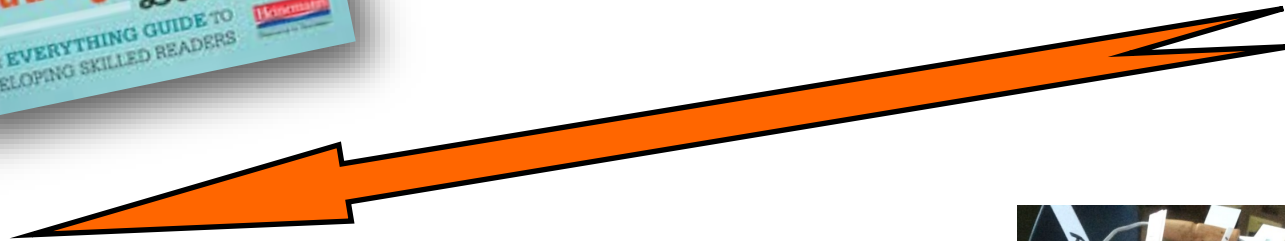




And even more Strategies to

Teach Main Ideas S L O W L Y!

Many new resources are really well organized with quick grab and go strategies. Jennifer Serravallo's book, The Reading Strategies Book has a fabulous table of contents and one-page, quick-to-read, quick to use, solid strategies.



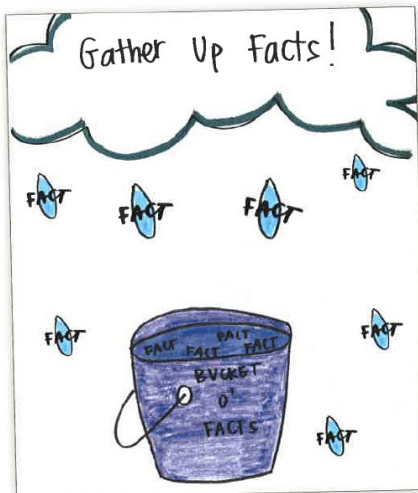
Goal 9 which starts on page 246, contains a series of lessons about **Supporting Comprehension in Nonfiction: Determining Key Details**. Her language is a bit different than other texts, which is unfortunate, but this section isn't about gathering details. Rather she calls them, 'Key Details'



Bucket of Facts

Goal 9	Supporting Comprehension in Nonfiction:
246	Determining Key Details
	Strategy 9.1 Compare New to Known 250
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	9.3 A Spin on KWL 252
	9.4 Check Yourself 253
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	9.7 Click and Clunk 256
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	9.17 Following Procedures 266
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	9.19 Event Connections 268

which means they are facts that support each main idea.



There are several great lessons within this section, but using a bucket to gather up facts, is kid-friendly through and through. With this strategy students are now reading the paragraph below the heading. Key details are listed and connected to the heading. They can be tossed in the bucket and pulled out and sorted under the headings from the text to reinforce their connection to the main idea.

Texts Get More Complex



“Bear in mind that as texts get more complex, this task of supporting an idea (or topic) with related details becomes more challenging. In ‘primary’, the text is often very cohesive and it would be hard to find a detail that strays from the main topic of the book. As texts get more complex, the density of information increases, meaning there is more information on every page. In books at these levels, not all of the details align to the main idea. And by four or fifth grade, the texts are often complex enough to have multiple main ideas, a greater increase in words on each page, and even text features that add extra information to complement the information in the main text, meaning the reader needs to sort through even more facts from a variety of locations within the book.”

Serravallo p. 247

All of this adds up to the importance of teaching these skills orally really well at the early primary level. If we do this, our vulnerable students and all learners will approach text with the intent of determining what’s important? And How will I remember the main ideas I am hearing?

Visuals to support this AMAZING ANIMALS

Determining Importance with Early Primary

- p. 13 MIKE ~ Learning intention Main Ideas Keep Everyone Focused
- p. 14 Detective DI ~ Learning Intention for Raccoon Facts
- p. 15 Detective DI ~ Learning Intention Generic for gathering animal facts
- p. 16 A spin on KWL ~ What I know. What I think I know & What I am still wondering.
- p. 18 Other KWL samples
- p. 19 Carpet webs with topic, main ideas and details



Main

Ideas

Keep

Everyone focused !



I can use the pictures and text to figure out main ideas.



Detective DI

I can use the pictures and text to gather and sort raccoon facts.



Detective DI

I can use the pictures and text to gather and sort facts.

A spin on KWL:

What I know for sure, what I think I know and what am I still wondering.

What we KNOW about beavers...

- They make dams.
- They have long orange teeth.
- They have buck teeth.
- They swim under water to get ^{to} their home.
- Their front teeth grow fast.
- They slap their tail when they're scared.
- They use their tail to call each other.
- Their homes are called lodges.

What we WONDER about beavers

- How do they slap their tails?
- How do they breathe under water?
- Can they climb trees?
- Why are their teeth orange?
- How many beavers can fit in their home?
- I wonder if a beaver could survive in salt water?
- I wonder if beavers trap salmon and eat them?
- I wonder if they use cedar to make their dam?

More facts we know about beavers...

They use their teeth to cut down trees.

They are a mammal.

They are on the back of a nickel.

They swim in the water.

They really like to chew trees.

Otters can steal their babies.

They are industrious.

They help other

What we KNOW about beavers...

They make dams.

They have long orange teeth.

They have buck teeth.

They swim under water to get ^{to} their home.

Their front teeth grow fast.

They slap their tail when they're

their tail to call each other.

es are called lodges.

Know

What do we know about raccoons.

- They look like they have a mask.
- They are scavengers.
- They steal garbage.
- They are smart.
- They make homes in trees.
- They are good climbers.
- Before they eat food from the trash they wash it in the river.
- Their claws are dangerous. Their claws are long and sharp. They have 5 claws on each paw.
- They are wild.
- They have good eye sight.
- They can camouflage.
- They are nocturnal.
- They are greedy.
- They are mammals.
- They eat fish.

Wonder

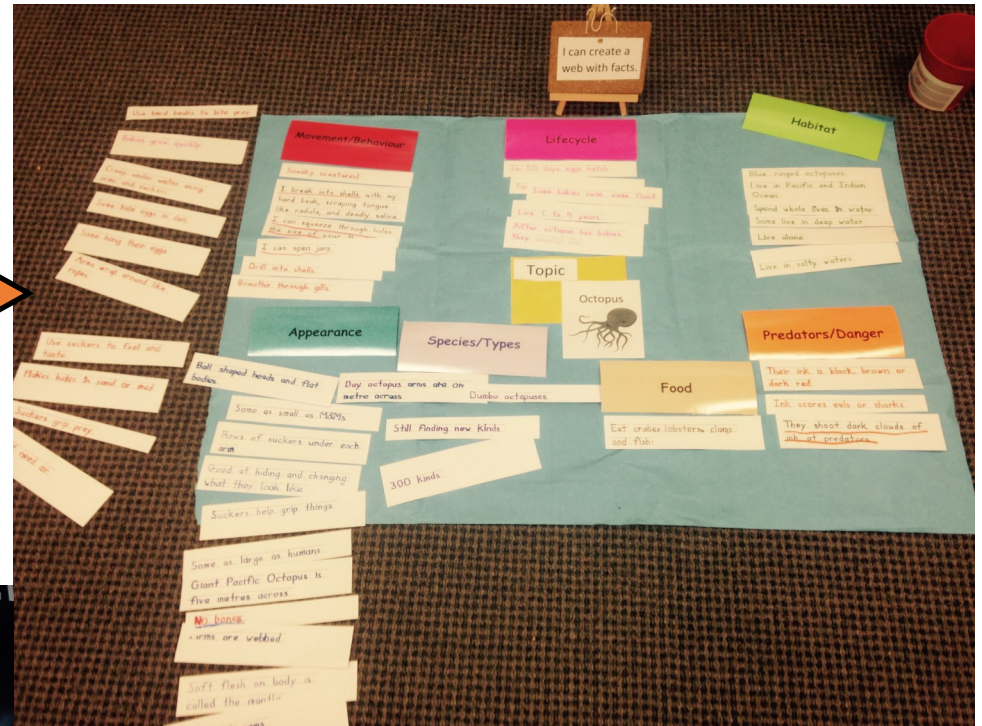
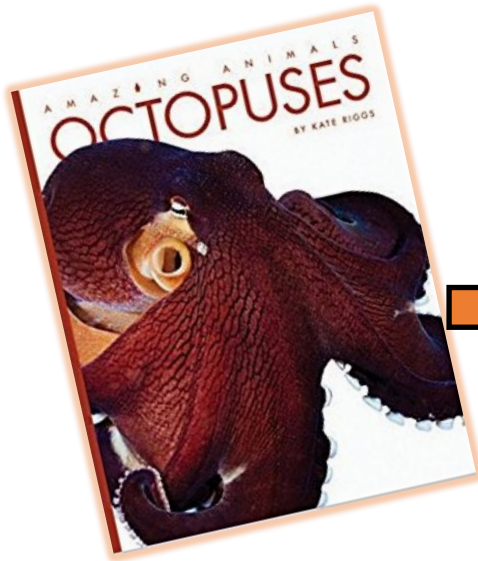
What do we wonder about raccoons?

- I wonder if they are part of the rodent family?
- I wonder if they've entered someone's home?
- I wonder how quiet their claws are?
- I wonder how old they can get?
- I wonder how big they can get?
- How long does it take it takes to make their home?
- I wonder what their home is called?
- I wonder how heavy they'd be if we weighed them?
- How do they eat baby crocodiles?
- How do they dig with their tiny claws?
- Why do the raccoons steal the food and clean it?

Learn

What do I want to learn about raccoons?

- How will I find out?
- How long do they wash their food?
- How do they hear with their tiny ears?
- Why do raccoons eat eggs?
- How do they see at night with their black eyes?
- Why do they have a black mask?
- How will we find out?
 - use the internet
 - watch a Nature Show
 - use books
 - use a Wonder Wall
 - ask a raccoon expert



Know	Wonder	Learn
<p>What do we know about raccoons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They look like they have a mask. They are scavengers. They steal garbage. They are smart. They make homes in trees. They are good climbers. Before they eat food from the trash they wash it in the river. Their claws are dangerous. Their claws are long and sharp. They have 5 claws on each paw. They are wild. They have good eye sight. They can camouflage. They are nocturnal. They are greedy. They are mammals. They eat fish. 	<p>What do we wonder about raccoons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wonder if they are part of the rodent family? I wonder if they've entered someone's home? I wonder how quiet their claws are? 	<p>What do I want to learn about raccoons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will I find out? How long do they wash their food? How do they hear with their tiny ears? Why do raccoons eat eggs? How do they see at night with their tiny eyes? Why do they have a black mask? How will we find out? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use the internet watch a Nature Show use books use a Wonder Wall ask a raccoon expert

