Project Description

The project aimed to improve our Morphology expertise by providing explicit vocabulary acquisition strategies. We began by setting short-term and long-term goals to effectively use the release time dedicated to our project.
Throughout our collaborative time and discussions we were able to:
- Reflect on the best structure for good morphology lessons
- Brainstorm and create new materials
- Reflect on our expectations and criteria for assessment
- Share our experiences testing the Morpheme Magic program across the school year

Based on the goals we had initially set for ourselves, we feel like we have been able to successfully implement the program and meet most professional development objectives along the way. We have also reflected on our process and found the following strengths and challenges:

Strengths
- Ability to collaborate with colleagues across cycles helped develop a scope and sequence of morphology rules and practices.
- Troubleshooting between staff members to help with the understanding and implementation of morphology practices.
- Time allocated to training in an area of literacy that is often overlooked.
- Opportunity to reflect on practices with the goal to refine and improve morphology knowledge and implementation.

Challenges
- Starting the project with limited knowledge of morphology.
- Initially trying to figure out what the scope and sequence would look like across grades 4 to 6 with the Morpheme Magic resource.
- Lack of resources available on the topic of morphology
- Addressing motivation and engagement with students

Project Goals

- **Goal 1: Achieved**
  We set out to learn about prefixes, suffixes and roots, as well as the etymology and meaning of English words, through the program Morpheme Magic. This was accomplished and we now feel better prepared to teach morphological awareness.
- **Goal 2 : Achieved**
  We divided the content presented in the program Morpheme Magic and created a clear scope and sequence of lessons across grades 4-6. This goal was fully achieved as evidenced in the accompanying chart.
- **Goal 3 : Achieved**
  We developed explicit lessons on the mechanics of language to captivate students' interests and foster vocabulary acquisition and spelling accuracy. We had several

opportunities to share experiences and bounce ideas off one another. This goal was fully achieved with the creation of full lessons including introductory hooks and wrap-up assessments.

- **Goal 4 : In progress**
  We had professional development on vocabulary instruction strategies (text talk and tier-based selection); however most of our time was invested into creating instructional materials to complement the morphology content. Therefore, the vocabulary strategies were not as explicitly developed.
- **Goal 5 : In progress**
  While we have not yet implemented evaluations, we developed grade-specific criteria and assessment tools to track progress of vocabulary acquisition.

Project Outcomes

Professional growth outcomes

Given its innovative nature, this project brought about changes both in perceptions and practices. Even if it was fruitful in creating tools and content for classroom use, the most important gains for long term changes are the less tangible ones: enthusiasm for new content and collaboration between teachers. Reflecting on this experience, we feel that we have developed more enthusiasm for teaching a lesser known area of language arts. We also feel that we have a deeper understanding of its importance in acquiring a solid foundation in literacy. We have also become more open to how engaging it can be for students. Moreover, this project has given us the opportunity to meet with teachers from another cycle and increase our ability to collaborate thus creating a more cohesive program to offer. From this experience, we have learned the importance of giving ourselves time to learn together and implement programs as a team rather than as individuals.

Practice-specific outcomes

We familiarized ourselves with the Morpheme Magic program and increased our knowledge of morphology through reading and discussion. With this new awareness and confidence, we were able to shape the program to our students' needs.

Mopheme Magic is designed for use with students in grades 4-12 and it is not broken down by grade level, but rather by morpheme types. To avoid gaps and excessive overlap in our teaching, we needed a clear progression from Grade 4 to Grade 6, so we created a scope and sequence, dividing the morphemes from each section (suffixes, prefixes, and roots) among each grade. This allowed us to differentiate the lessons for each level and focus on the content that is most appropriate for elementary students.

After trying out a few lessons from the program, we agreed that there was a need to enhance the existing lessons by creating "hooks". This led us to create games and activities to increase students' engagement in the lessons. We will be able to use the materials we created when we teach morphology in upcoming school years.

One important area of focus was how to assess our students' acquisition of morphology knowledge. We came to the conclusion that the main goal was to support reading

comprehension as students encounter unfamiliar words in their reading materials. This is particularly important in the upper grades when more texts contain specific, academic vocabulary compared to texts for younger grades, which contain more familiar words that are already part of the students' spoken vocabulary.

Secondary goals would be correct spelling and usage of the words learned in morphology lessons. In the hope of informing our teaching, we decided to look into different formats for informal and regular (weekly) check-ins with students. Consequently, we researched assessment materials and found two resources that would simplify our assessment process. One resource provides reading passages with selected words based on the affix targeted. The other has pre-made questions to recall the meaning of targeted affixes.

Our discussions and research allowed us to add to our morphology profile with grade-specific expectations. With those observable descriptors in mind, we were able to create some assessment tools such as a basic rubric and self-evaluation tools for students.

Reinvestment

We agree that teaching morphology is an important addition to our curriculum in the upper grades. It bolsters our students' vocabulary and reading skills, which enhances their learning across the curriculum. It also provides a smoother continuum in ELA instruction from the younger grades to the final cycle.

Initially, the teaching team is planning on presenting the results of their project to the school's staff. It is important that the faculty is aware of the changes we have made to the curriculum. We also think that having morphology instruction alongside our other Structured Literacy practices sets us apart from other schools as a significant benefit to our students. In that spirit, we have already welcomed visitors to our school to see our team in action. A group of teachers from an English private high school spent time in our classrooms and sat down with us to learn about our practices.

Given prior experience presenting at LCEEQ, some faculty members would definitely be interested in presenting on morphology at a provincial conference again. Having undergone the ups and downs of implementation, we believe we would have much to share with a wider audience.