

Using *Chirp* to Support Learning Success — in the Classroom, in the Library and at Home.

One of the toughest challenges I face as a teacher is hunting down reading materials that will engage my students, inspire creative lessons, and encourage learning across the entire curriculum. Fortunately, I have *Chirp* – Canada’s only magazine specifically designed for young readers aged 3 to 6.

My favourite thing about *Chirp* is the way it gets my students excited about reading. *Chirp* uses age-appropriate language throughout the entire magazine, which makes it easy for readers and pre-readers of all levels to pick it up and flip through the pages with confidence. Add to that a wide range of high-interest subject matter – everything from insects to music to trains – and you’ve got a magazine that really “gets” kids.

Of course, *Chirp* is also a great jumping-off point for all kinds of fun and meaningful lessons.

I have found that *Chirp* makes a wonderful addition to any reading or phonics program. As we all know, teaching reading at the primary age means that you have to be able to work with students who are at a number of different reading levels. So you can have your emergent readers working on their blending with a simple **Chirp & Friends** comic, while your more advanced readers can use the **Let’s Read story** for a comprehension activity.

Best of all, there’s a huge range of writing in each issue of *Chirp* – it’s got everything from cute stories to fascinating non-fiction to funny jokes, which means every one of your students will have no problem finding something that speaks to them.

It can be a real struggle to get some kids writing, but using *Chirp* as inspiration will fire up even your most reluctant authors. Writing new captions for the comics, publishing a class-created magazine, sketching the monthly **Amazing Animal**, and writing a story to go along with the drawing — the list of lesson ideas is endless.

But *Chirp* doesn’t just help you with your reading and writing programs — it can also be a valuable part of your math, science, and social studies curriculums. The many puzzles found each month in *Chirp* will help your students develop the spatial thinking and visual discrimination skills needed for higher level-math work. The engaging **Look + Learn** and **Amazing Animal** sections are tailor-made for introducing students to the world of inquiry-based thinking. And, of course, nothing beats a good old-fashioned get-your-hands-dirty **Chirp Craft** or **Chirp Science Corner**!

At the end of the day, teaching young kids is all about getting them excited about learning.

And when you see your students high-fiving each other because the new issue of *Chirp* arrived in the classroom mailbox that morning, you'll know that you're doing your job right.

- *Mark Magee is a writer and a daddy, who also happens to teach kindergarten in the independent school system.*